France total land area is 547,030 square kilometers of land comprising 545,630 square kilometers and water of 1400 square kilometres. The whole area of metropolitan France is 543,965 square kilometres and has about 1 square kilometer, estuaries and rivers. The geographical location of France is in Western Europe. The country shares its national frontiers with various other nations. To the North is Belgium and to the East is Switzerland and Germany. Luxembourg lies to the North East while Italy is located to the South East of France. The Pyrenees mountain range is extended throughout the country. The Atlantic Ocean coastline runs through the Western part of France. The Mediterranean Sea is to the south of the country while the English Channel is to the North. England is one of the premier neighbours of France.

The Geography of France largely influences the climate. The temperature of France is on the moderate side. The climate is basically ruled by the mild summers and cold winters. The southwest portion of the country receives heavy precipitation during the winters. The mountainous regions of Auvergne, Pyrenees, and Alps experience snowfall in the winters. Climatic and geographical factors have little effects on the education system at least in the metropolitan France, apart from the existence of boarding schools system in the mountainous regions of Alps and Pyrenees, which is gradually dying out.

The administrative set up of France consists of 22 regions. The regions come under seven premier `cultural regions'. They are Ile de France, Northern France, Northeast France, Great West, Central France, Southwestern France and Southeastern France. The 22 regions are
further divided into: 96-service departments are divided into 329 districts - in addition divided into cantons 3879 - and the township divided into common 36568. According to the enrollment figures for 2004, there were 6.7 million students in primary, 4.8 million in secondary and 2.3 million in post secondary institutions.

The French educational system is highly centralized, organized, and ramified. It is divided into three different stages:

- Primary education (enseignement primaire);
- Secondary education (enseignement secondaire);
- Higher education (enseignement supérieur).

Primary and secondary educations are predominantly public. However there is a sizeable number of private schools also exist, in particular a strong nationwide network of primary and secondary Catholic schools. Education has both public and private elements.

While the French trace the development of their educational system to Charlemagne, the modern era of French education begins at the end of the nineteenth century. Jules Ferry, a lawyer holding the office of Minister of Public Instruction in the 1880s, is widely credited for creating the modern Republican school (l'école républicaine) by requiring all children under the age of 15 to attend. He also made public instruction free of charge and secular.

Educational programmes in France are regulated by the Ministry of National Education (officially called Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche). The head of the ministry is the Minister of National Education, one of the highest-ranking officials in the cabinet. The teachers in public primary and secondary schools are all state civil servants, making the ministère the largest employer in the country. Professors and researchers in France's universities are also employed by the state.

At the primary and secondary levels, the curriculum is the same for all French students in any given grade, which includes public, semi-public and subsidized institutions. However, there exist specialized sections and a variety of options that students can choose. The reference for all French educators is the Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale, de
l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche (B.O.) which lists all current programmes and teaching directives. It is amended many times every year.

Structure of education in France

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education (nursery school) created in 1881 is for children aged 3 to 6. Although it is not compulsory, virtually all 3-year-old children attend nursery school, majority in the public school system. They are state funded, attendance is optional and placement is not guaranteed especially for younger children; children as young as two can attend but must be potty trained. With a dual educational and pedagogical objective, children learn how to live among others, shape their own personality and develop language skills. Nursery school is the strong point of the French education system and what sets it apart from other systems. Many parents start sending their children earlier though, around age 3 as nursery classes (maternelle) are usually affiliated to a borough's primary school. Some even start earlier at age 2 in pré-maternelle classes, which are essentially daycare centres. The last year of maternelle, grande section is an important step in the educational process as it is the year in which pupils are introduced to reading. They accept children from age of 2 to five years. It also makes primary education more effective. Nursery school teachers have the same training as primary school teachers and can teach in all primary education grades. The pre school education is well developed and teachers in the ‘ecoles maternelles hold the same qualifications as the primary school teachers. Virtually all French children are scolarise’ before starting primary schools.

Primary education

After nursery, the young children move on to primary school. Primary school is compulsory for all students, French and foreign alike, starting at age six. Primary education lasts for five years and caters for the 6-10 age group. It aims to teach children some degree of autonomy and the basics about citizenship. It is in the first year (cours préparatoire) that they learn how to write and develop their reading skills. Much akin to other educational systems, French primary school students usually
have a single teacher (or perhaps two) who teaches the complete curriculum, such as French, mathematics, science and humanities. There is no structural difference between the private and government schools. School attendance is compulsory between the ages 6-16 years. Most of them are co-educational at all levels and classes are held in the morning and afternoon. The primary school attendance has dropped because of a drop in birth rates. Grade repetition is on the decrease, as it is believed that repeating would jeopardize the pupils' future and that's why Pre School and primary school are related. Grade repetition is common with pupils from underprivileged groups.

**Secondary education**

French secondary education is divided into two schools:

- the *collège* for the first four years directly following primary school
- the *lycée* for the next three years.

The completion of secondary studies leads to the *baccalauréat*.

**First cycle: Junior High Schools**

Children aged 11 to 15 attend *college* that are considered comprehensive because theoretically children study the same core curriculum. A diploma awarded upon the successful completion of an exam at the end 3'ème marks the conclusion of *collège*. Pupils spend four years in a college (6th, 5th, 4th, and 3rd) that correspond to the final year of compulsory education. Grade repetition rate remain the same overall. The average number of pupils per class is 24.3 and majority goes through the system from the 6th to 3rd, which is the final class. The Brevet descollege is the first official diploma a pupil has to sit. It is not required in order to enter *lycée*. Until 2006 the school marks for the whole of the final year (3eme) were taken into account for half of the mark. The other half of the mark consisted of the final exam, the brevet. Pupils were only tested on French, mathematics and history/geography for the exam. The curriculum of study at this level included humanities, languages and science. The students study French language and literature, history and geography, a foreign language or French regional language, art and craft, music education and civics. In the sciences they study mathematics, biology and
Second cycle: Lycée

Adolescents aged 15 to 18 attend the lycée, taking them from 2ème (seconde) to their final year (terminale). Lycées offer a large range of education and training possibilities. There are two types of lycées. General and technical education lycées culminate in a "general series" baccalauréat. Vocational lycées culminate in a certificat d'aptitude professionnelle (CAP- which sanctions training in a specific vocational skill), a brevet d'études professionnelles (BEP - which sanctions the completion of adequate training within a range of technical skills in a particular trade, industrial, commercial or social field) or a "vocational" baccalauréat. Majority of the students continue to the second cycle due to social aspirations. The baccalauréat (also known as bac) is the end-of-lycée diploma students sit for in order to enter university, a classe préparatoire, or professional life. It is generally taken at 18 if the pupil has not repeated a class during secondary school. The term baccalauréat refers to the diploma and the examinations themselves. There is also the baccalauréat technologique and baccalauréat professionnel. Created in 1808, the baccalauréat is a diploma in the French education system that has two special features. It marks the successful conclusion of secondary studies and opens access to higher education.

General lycées

The lycées prepare pupils for three years (2nd 'eme, 1st 'eme and terminal) for the baccalaureate, which seven out of ten pupils sit. Most students sit for the baccalauréat général, which is divided into three streams of study, called séries. The série scientifique (S) is concerned with the natural sciences, physics or mathematics (many streams exist, one of which is called série scientifique sciences de l'ingénieur (SSI), a série scientifique baccalauréat with two more specialisations, génie électrique and génie mécanique. There is also the Bac STI, Sciences & industrial technologies. There also exists the option génie mécanique and the options electrotechnique), the série économique et sociale (ES) with social sciences, and the série littéraire (L) focuses on French and foreign languages, art and philosophy. The third série involves
economique et sociale (ES) that includes the study of economics, social sciences and mathematics. However, these séries are not exactly specializations and every bac-possessor has the right to integrate any public university in the catchments area if this applies to the subject they wish to apply for. Students having followed the L series does not have enough scientific knowledge from their secondary education alone to succeed in science university courses, therefore some combinations of baccalauréats and university courses are very rare. The introduction of specialization into preferred careers among students in the secondary schools before entering universities is exemplified in the series. Enrolment comprises of 40% of the age cohort and grade repetition is high at this level with 10% for the first year (2nd 'eme) and 12% of the second year (1st 'eme). Private schools enroll a fifth of this cohort group. Three quarter of those sitting for the baccalaureate pass the exam and one third of the cases are technical baccalaureate. Pupils from less privileged groups benefits from passing the baccalaureate compared to those from good backgrounds. Those from wealthy backgrounds favour the sciences while those from poor favour technical sections.

**Technical/Vocational high schools (Lyc'ees professionale)**

This is the other stream of the second cycle of secondary education. There is high drop out rate of about 40% despite the increase of those attending them. After lower secondary education (lasting four years), pupils may opt either for general/technological or professional education in lycées preparing for the Baccalauréat, the Baccalauréat technologique or the Baccalauréat professionnel in three years; or for technical/vocational education in lycées professionnels preparing first for the Certificat d'Aptitude professionnelle (CAP) or the Brevet d'Etudes professionnelles (BEP) in two years and then, for those who want to continue, for the Baccalauréat professionnel in two more years. Initial vocational training or the vocational track offers concrete studies in relation with enterprises and their trades so that students can gain knowledge and expertise in an

Occupational field. After completing form 3, students can study in a vocational lycée to obtain a CAP or a BEP in two years. Students enrolled in initial vocational training courses can obtain a degree quickly to help them integrate into working life. This cycle is divided into
two streams that of general lycée and technical high schools. A quarter of the pupils attend private schools. Pupils can go direct to work or go to general technical high school or stay on in vocational high schools to prepare for one of the vocational baccalaureate (bac’s pros) created in 1987. Majority of the students are female in second cycle of secondary education. Those who reach baccalaureate are from southwest and West France rather than in Northeast. Majority passes the baccalaureate leading to great demand for higher education.

Higher education

Higher education entails all studies after the baccalauréat. France has very old universities dating back between 1208 and 1210 A.D. They remain traditional offering general rather than professional education. Universities (including Instituts nationaux polytechniques) are open to a large number of students, whose programmes are generally geared towards research and its applications. Higher education is funded by the state and fees are very low. Students from low-income families can also apply for scholarships. Academic councils called académies are responsible for supervising all aspects of University education in a given region.

Two systems exist side by side:

An open system in the universities. Most students’ study under this system and women are the majority. All baccalauréat holders have the right to enter this system without any prior selection procedure. Universities offer an extremely wide range of studies. They can specialize in humanities, social science, law, economics and medicine. There is high drop out rates at this level. Professional training courses within the university system have been created since 1970s catering for all levels. Entrance to the courses is selective and technical training courses are organized in the top classes of high schools. In this country there is no open university.

University level studies:

University level first stage: Premier Cycle (2 years in the pre-Bologna system; 3 years in the post-Bologna system):

The first cycle of university courses passed from 2 to 3 years after the implementation of the Bologna Degree structure. It leads, three years
after the Baccalauréat, to the Licence corresponding to 180 ECTS. The Diplôme d'Etudes universitaires générales (DEUG) used to be the diploma awarded in the old system after two years of studies; it has been maintained in the new system as an intermediate diploma corresponding to 120 ECTS. In Medicine, the first cycle is called PCEM. Two years in Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Ecoles (CPGE) are required to enter a Grande Ecole.

**University level second stage: Deuxième Cycle (2 years in the post-Bologna system):**

The second cycle in the post-Bologna system leads to the Master Recherche (formerly Diplôme d'études approfondies - DEA) or to the Master Professionnel (formerly Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées - DESS) corresponding to 120 ECTS after the Licence. In the pre-Bologna system it used to lead to the Licence, one year after the DEUG, and to the Maîtrise one more year after the Licence. The Maîtrise has been maintained as an intermediate diploma and can be awarded one year after the License upon request of the student. The "Grade de Master" has been awarded since 1999 to holders of DEA, DESS, of some Engineering degrees (Titres d'ingénieur) and of some écoles de commerce degrees (diplômes visés). In professional fields, the following Maîtrises can still be awarded: Maîtrise des Sciences et Techniques (MST), Maîtrise des Sciences de Gestion (MSG), Maîtrise des Méthodes informatiques appliquées à la gestion (MIAGE). The Magistère was awarded three years directly after the DEUG (or the DUT). It is not a national diploma, but rather a "diplôme d'université" (DU) accredited in the past by the ministry of education. It associates fundamental and scientific knowledge, professional applications and introduction to research. It is possible to distinguish between general magistères, prepared together with a DEA or master recherche, leading to a doctorate, and the professionally oriented magistères, usually prepared together with a DESS or master professional. Not being a national diploma, the magistère has no legal protection and accreditation procedures stopped in 1988 - 1989. With the implementation of the Bologna system in 2004, some magistères disappeared. Maîtrise holders of Instituts universitaires professionnalisés and engineering students in their last year of engineering school can be admitted to a Diplôme de Recherche technologique (DRT) (Technological Research Diploma), a third cycle diploma issued after completion of a course
centering on innovation through technological research in the industrial sector and service industries. The DRT marks the successful completion of a programme of 18 months to two years that is carried out in an industrial or service-oriented scientific environment. In Medicine this cycle (DCEM) consists of four years of study and hospital internship. In Dentistry and Pharmacy, it leads to the Diplôme d'Etat de Docteur en Chirurgie Dentaire and to the Diplôme d'Etat de Docteur en Pharmacie after six years. In the Grandes Ecoles, a Diploma is awarded in Engineering or Commerce, generally three years after two years at university or at CPGE. The Titre d'Ingénieur is conferred upon successful completion of five years of study beyond the Baccalauréat. Some école d'ingénieur accept students on the basis of a competitive examination generally taken two years after the Baccalauréat (in this case, studies last three years at most) or according to the Baccalauréat results, followed by aptitude tests and an interview (in this case, studies last four or five years). The établissements d'Enseignement supérieur catholique, besides preparing to State diplomas at this level (in agreement with a public university), offer four-year and six-year ecclesiastic canonical qualifications.

**University level third stage: Troisième Cycle:**

In the pre Bologna system, the third cycle was devoted to specialization and training for research. It offered two paths: a professional one, leading in one year to the Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées (DESS), and a doctoral one leading in one year to the Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies (DEA) and then to the Doctorat. The latter was obtained three or four years after the DEA and after extensive research, either individual or as part of a group supervised by a Directeur de Thèses (thesis director) and the writing and successful defence of a thesis. In the post Bologna system the third cycle corresponds to doctoral studies; a doctorate is usually obtained after at least three years of extensive research, under the supervision of a thesis director, and the writing and successful defence of a thesis. Several schools of Engineering, Business and Management offer a Mastère spécialisé to students who are recipients of Engineering degrees or the DEA. The Mastère spécialisé is a specialized 12-month programme (including four months' training). It is not recognized by the State. It is a label that is controlled by the "Conférence des Grandes Ecoles", given to a specific programme organized by a school that is a
member of the "Conférence des Grandes Ecoles", and after an accreditation procedure. In general Medicine, the third cycle culminates in the Diplôme d'Etat de Docteur en Médecine after two years' further study following DCEM. In specialized Medicine, it leads to the Diplôme d'Etudes spécialisées (DES) after four to five years' further study.

**University level fourth stage: Post-doctorate:**

The Doctorate may be followed by a post-doctoral degree, the Habilitation à Diriger les Recherches, which constitutes the highest national award and is offered to academics who display the ability to carry out high level scientific research and to supervise thesis.

**A selective system with a limited number of places.** They make up the second largest sector of higher education. They mostly involve engineering schools, business school and school of administration. Mostly they are private institutions and are attended by limited number of students. Admission is by competitive examination, entrance examination or applications, sometimes accompanied by an interview. This is the system in use in post-secondary establishments such as the *instituts d'études politiques* (political science institutes), engineering and business schools, *instituts universitaires de technologie* (IUTs - university institutes of technology) and the *instituts universitaires professionnalisées* (IUPs – university institutes of vocational education) and "top tier" establishments such as the *grandes écoles*, (prestigious higher education institutions with competitive entrance exams) such as the *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* (ENA – which trains top civil servants) the *écoles normales supérieures* (ENS - which prepare students specializing in fundamental or applied scientific research to teach at university level and preparatory programs for entrance examinations to the *grandes écoles*) and Polytechnique. The "Grandes Ecoles" offer a high standard of professional education in three or more years after two years of "classes préparatoires" and the passing of a very selective competitive entrance examination. They offer scientific training, teacher training or advanced business studies. Five "Etablissements d'Enseignement supérieur catholique" prepare for either national or professional diplomas or for church diplomas. Universities confer national diplomas. These institutions mainly train public sector and private sector senior and middle leaders and managers. They are a direct route to leading posts in France society
and student from the upper strata enroll in these courses rather than the university.

Lycées also offer non-university higher education courses leading to the Brevet de Technicien supérieur (BTS). Whereas most institutions come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research, some "Grandes Ecoles" come under the responsibility of other Ministries. Universities are made up of units offering curricula in academic fields and of various institutes and schools - such as the IUT - offering courses in Engineering and Technology and special programmes in Management, Political Science, Languages and Physical Education, the IUFM (Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres) which offer training courses for primary and secondary schools teachers, the IUP (Instituts Universitaires Professionalisés) which offer technological courses and practical training with an introduction to research and foreign languages.

Non-university level post-secondary studies (technical/vocational type):

Short-study courses last for two years after the Baccalauréat and lead to a terminal diploma: Brevet de Technicien supérieur (BTS), a national diploma awarded in vocational and service areas. Courses are provided in Lycées; Diplôme universitaire de technologie (DUT) offered in Instituts universitaires de Technologie to train middle-level managers in Industry and Commerce; Diplôme d'Etudes universitaires scientifiques et techniques (DEUST) offered in various fields related to national or regional needs. DUT and DEUST diplomas are offered in Universities and are equivalent to a first cycle in a Université. A DUT graduate may, in some cases, pursue higher studies leading to the Licence and other degrees.

Special education

Some students have special educational needs because of their physical disabilities, language and health problems, but also if they have severe learning difficulties. There are structures that respond to these students' needs, which work to integrate them into, mainstream schools. Special education takes place in state schools. Primary education may be in special classes within ordinary schools or in special institutions Children with special needs continue their
secondary education in special secondary schools where they receive vocational training. There is a policy of integration and early diagnoses of some problems.

ADMINISTRATION, SUPERVISION STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

The French education system is highly centralized. The principal of centralism was introduced by La Chalotais in 1763 and was supported by the writers of the revolution. Napoleon adopted it to facilitate the control that he needed in training an elite to run his empire. In France, authority is centralized in the Ministry of Education under the control of parliament. The country is divided into seventeen academies for the purpose of administration of education. A Lector who is appointed by the president of the republic heads each academy. The Lector is directly responsible to the minister of education. He is chosen from among the professors and has total control of an academy from nursery school to the university. He over sees both the state and private educational institutions.

There are inspectors in each department of the academy. They are specialist in respective types of education provided in each department. The departmental councils administer the whole primary education and it is responsible for the recruitment, training, and promotion of primary school teachers.

At the central level, the minister and his advisers are assisted by a body of inspectors of national education who visit educational institutions and keeps the minister informed of the general picture of education in France. The inspectors plan the programmes of studies for the schools including the methods of instruction.

The administration of examinations is centralized. All examinations are state examinations. This means that any type of examination in the education system is merely a school leaving examination. Any child anywhere in France as long as he/she has reached the right age can present himself/herself for the appropriate examination anywhere in France. The various institutions do give their certificates and diplomas but they are of no use. This ensures that every body has covered the programmes of work for a particular certificate or diploma; it ensures uniformity in coverage of programmes of studies and even the
approaches. Some examinations are competitive and the numbers of those who qualify depend on places available.

DECENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT

Since the 19th century, communes have been responsible for running primary schools.

Major measures to decentralize powers in the early 1980s marked an important stage in the evolution of the French education system giving a greater role to departments and regions. The Act of 13 August 2004 on local authorities and freedoms increased the powers of local elected authorities when it comes to education. While the initiatives of local and regional authorities are growing in number, it is still the central government’s responsibility to decide on curricula, educational guidelines, recruitment and teachers’ salaries.

EDUCATION FINANCING

The education system consumes 6.4 % of the Gross National Product (GNP). Education is financed by the state. However, the regions, departments and communes have increased proportions of funding leading to a decrease in state funding from 1982-83 decentralisation. Employers contribute in form of apprenticeship tax and households also contribute. Much of the expenditure goes to teachers’ salaries. In universities there is no fee paid by the students. Universities and institutes of technology consume much of the resources due to their heavy operational costs and the large teaching staff. Families take care of school supplies and clothing. The Ministry of education provides grants and only those disadvantaged in secondary are eligible for the grants. Those in vocational secondary schools are considered. School textbooks are free in primary and first cycle of secondary education. In higher education 23 % of the students receive some form of aid and majority are based on the background of the family. The government guarantees the loans provided

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

There are strict stipulations concerning the number of hours to be devoted annually to programmes at primary and secondary levels. The
national programmes committee composed of outside experts appointed by the minister draws up the programmes. There are no regional variations and programmes are adopted at national levels. School textbooks and teaching materials are produced by private enterprises and there is no control and approval. In secondary schools ten languages are offered and at least three languages have to be taught. Inspectors verify the covering of the programmes and all subjects are examined in the baccalaureate. Universities are free to choose their programmes and the minister must approve the content of the diplomas. Promotion to the next grade is not automatic. Teachers decide who is to move on to the next grade. In primary school level teaching staff decides but at college and lycees the class council takes the matter. The family is made aware of the decision and they can appeal especially in the second cycle if they are not satisfied.

RELIGION AND EDUCATION

Religious instruction is not supplied by public schools. Laïcité (secularism) is one of the main precepts of the French republic. Pupils therefore have civics courses to teach them about la République, its function, its organization, and its famous motto Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). In a March 2004 ruling, the French government banned all "conspicuous religious symbols" from schools and other public institutions with the intent of preventing proselytisation and to foster a sense of tolerance among ethnic groups. Some religious and libertarian groups showed their opposition, saying the law hindered the freedom of religion as protected by the French constitution. This was further supported by 1905 law that granted religious freedom in predominantly Roman Catholic France but also withdrew financial support and formal recognition from all faiths. Religious education and symbols had been banned from public schools. Laïcité (Secularism has become the state religion and the republican schools are the temples. In France highly centralized education system, the national curriculum mandates no religious instruction beyond general examinations of religious tenets and faith as it occurs in history lessons. Religious instructions such as Catholic catechism, is strictly voluntary. In return for teaching the national curriculum and being open to students of all faiths, the government pays teachers salaries and a subsidy per students in the private
religious schools. Catholic schools are free to allow girls to wear a headscarf. Many others impose the state ban, but several others tolerate a discreet version.

The various educational reforms since the revolution of 1789 contained efforts to secularize education. In the laws of 1882 and 1904 made the state system stronger and eventually four fifths of compulsory age group was attending secular schools. In 1936 when free education was introduced in the lycées and colleges, the catholic schools were loosing grounds despite the support they had from the Marshal Petain from 1934. On the other hand the socialist and the communists favour a state monopoly with prohibitions of denominational schools under the church control, whilst the Catholics want to integrate the voluntary catholic schools with the state system with general acceptance of religious instructions and church influence. It has been difficult to achieve either of the two situations and therefore France has returned to the old dualism of catholic and secular systems to avoid a split that could cause an open civil war.

PRIVATE EDUCATION

In France private education was recognized in several stages starting in the mid-19th Century. Private education for primary school was organized by the Act of 30 October 1986, secondary education by the Act of 15 March 1850 (Falloux Act), higher education by the Act of 12 July 1875 and technical education by the Act of 25 July 1919. It's the Debré law of 1959 (added to the Education Code in 2000) that governs private education today. The government announces and respects the freedom of education and ensures its exercise in legitimate private institutions. One primary student out of 7 and 1 lower and higher secondary student out of 5 attend private schools.

In return for public funding, private schools must adhere to requirements and public service obligations that limit the freedom they have. Private schools are connected to the State through various types of contracts. Two thirds operate under partnership contracts and the remaining third operates under a simple contract that is less binding but provides for fewer subsidies as well. In order for the more popular partnership contract to be granted, private schools must meet the following requirements:
• it must meet a recognized educational need;
• its facilities must be adequate;
• it must have a faculty-student ratio that corresponds to the public;
• it must hire teachers with the same qualifications and degrees required of public school teachers.

In a school under partnership contracts, the central government pays the salaries of teacher and other staff. The local government pays for the running of the school; equivalent to the aid it grants public schools. However, families bear the cost of facilities and religious activities.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Training of pre-primary and primary/basic school teachers

Training lasts for one year following success in a competitive examination. “Professort des écoles” (formerly known as “instituteur”) candidates must hold at least a Licence or a three-year diploma from any state, and they have to be European Union citizens to be allowed to sit for the competitive examination. In order to prepare themselves, candidates can decide to be trained in one year at an Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maitres. They must present a portfolio and/or pass an interview. This year of preparation is not compulsory.

Training of secondary school teachers

Secondary school teachers train for one year following success in a competitive examination. “CAPES”, “CAPET” and “Agrégation” candidates must hold at least a Licence or a three-year diploma from any state, and they have to be European Union citizens to be allowed to sit for the competitive examination. In order to prepare themselves, candidates can decide to be trained in one year at an Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres. They must present a portfolio and/or pass an interview. This year of preparation is not compulsory.

Training of higher education teachers

The Doctorate is a prerequisite to sit for competitive examinations leading to the positions of Maître de Conférence and Professeur
d'Université. In the fields of Pharmacy, Law and Economics and, now, in many other fields, positions are restricted to holders of an Agrégation de l'Enseignement Supérieur. The Habilitation à Diriger les Recherches is required to become a Professeur d'Université.

Non-traditional studies

Distance higher education

Télé-enseignement universitaire is offered to students who are unable to attend regular courses. 35 universities cooperate in this. The Centre national d'Enseignement à Distance (CNED) provides training leading to a large variety of diplomas, to adult education courses and to competitive examinations for civil service positions.

Lifelong higher education

Education permanente is a system of continuing education allowing people with full-time careers to attend evening classes in universities and thus obtain a degree without interrupting their working schedules. The Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) offers such facilities leading to the award of an Engineering diploma. Catholic universities organize upgrading traineeships and courses leading to diplomas.

Higher education training in industry

Several higher education institutions (public and private) offer professional training "en alternance" (sandwich courses), consisting in theoretical training and practice periods in business or industry.

Other forms of non-formal higher education

Both private and public institutions have "Universités du Troisième âge". In these universities, senior citizens are offered two options: either to follow university courses with other students or attend seminars and lectures especially devised to improve their life and cultural background; their advice is also sought when it comes to choosing study topics of common interest. Finally, cycles of physical education, handicraft, cultural visits and outings are also organized.
CHALLENGES OF THE FRENCH EDUCATION SYSTEM

i. There is need for better trained teaching personnel

ii. The system has to deal with the growing cultural differences within the schools and student population

iii. The system has to streamline the pupils in the lycees and colleges with a democratic education.

iv. The system needs to reduce the discrepancies in order to balance the education between whole generations and individual personality.

v. There is the problem of shifting of financial implications from the state to the local communities.

vi. There has been a problem of strikes especially in 1968 that affected the education system.

ACTIVITY

i. Discuss how the historical factors have shaped the development of the French education system

ii. Describe the structure of education in France.

iii. Discuss the main challenges facing education in France.

REFERENCES


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