

## Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

# France case study report 1 Initiation Programme for Pupils who are Newly-arrived in France

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# Initiation programme for pupils who are newly-arrived in France

## Rationale and Aims

In France, more and more migrant workers arrived during the 80s and the 90s. With the accessibility of secondary school, there was a new problem for those who disrupted work in class and in school: they had to attend school up to the age of 16 years old. It was thought that the problem came from linguistic disadvantage. That explains that migrant children had to spend a year to learn the French language before joining the ordinary class. They were called 'primo-arrivants' and it's like a disease (prime infection!). In 1998, the Ministry used a new expression: Newcomers in France (*Élèves nouvellement arrivés en France*: ENAF). Each Region (in France ie Academy) had to develop a new way to integrate these children.

The ambition of the Government was to have an equality of treatment after a year in learning French. If they are many ENAF in primary schools, then they will be taught in Initiation Class (CLIN for *Classes d'initiation*) with teachers who have learned French as a Foreign Language (FLE: *Français langue étrangère*).

## Description, Implementation and Financial aspects

Teaching in a CLIN (classe d'initiation) is based upon one principle: to integrate a non French speaker into the school. The teacher has to teach French as a Second Language (FLS) and/or French as a Language for School (FLSCO). Pupils have to learn specific school vocabulary, its gibberish (blackboard, textbook or pencil) and all that is implicit but well-known by other pupils who learned it during all the years spent in school. A pupil cannot stay more than two years in a CLIN.

According to French Minister Jack Lang (2002) there were more than 25000 pupils and 1250 classes to provide schooling for newcomers. The policy is always the same: each pupil is in a class with other children but he has to learn FLSCO for two years (primary school) or one year maximum (secondary school) in a CLIN or in a CLA (Class for Adaptation). If they are not a sufficient number, they have to learn French in another structure: CRI (*cours de rattrapage intégré*): for some hours, pupils are taken from their class and learn French as a school language.

CASNAV (Academic Centre for Providing Schooling to Newcomers and Travellers) is in each Region a resource to train teachers and to publish pedagogical tools. But, a recent report (IGEN/IGAEN, 2002) underlined disorganisation on a national level. Texts are not very imperative and partnership with other ministries is not very easy.

## Evaluations, Outcomes and Recommendations

“Our conclusion is based on three points:

- The first is positive: in the whole country the educational system supports newcomers even if in some Regions there has been a big wave linked to economic and political reasons. But it is sometimes in a NGO's logic that it is not convenient even if inspectors, heads and teachers are very involved in providing schooling and French learning to these pupils;
- The second is less positive because answers are different, inventive but they need time for a serious assessment of their efficiency

- The third underlines weaknesses in management, hesitant partnership, vague and uncertain statistics, bad allocated resources.

Considering that assessment, we discovered common needs and positive initiatives which are precious to get a new support for providing school to non French speakers” (2002: 19).

But there is an issue for pupils who did not go to school in their country. It is difficult to understand school and what is required during work (FLSCO: French as a Language for School). In some Regions, CASNAV realises a ‘diagnostic evaluation’ and pupils can learn at the same time French and School attendance (Verdelhan-Bourgade 2003). “What we need, and what is at the heart of school difficulties is some culture and we do not have enough time to build scholar learning” (Cousquer 2001: 214).

“There is no Fate. We can act and progress, we can support newcomers. Then they will learn and achieve their schooling” (Guyon 2008).

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