

## *Territorial inequalities and school dropout*

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### Introduction

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In France, is early school leaving a feature of areas of high social risk of academic underachievement?

Does its geographical distribution correspond to the present map of priority education (National Education Policy)?

Do the areas of risk of academic underachievement also correspond to the present map of priority education?

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### Plan

- 1/ Territory, spatial justice, educational inequalities and school dropout: some definitions
  - 2/ The social risks of academic underachievement and school dropout at the cantonal -level in France: correlations
  - 3/ The geography of priority education in 2014-2015 does not correlate with the maps of social risks of academic underachievement and school dropout.
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1/Territory, spatial justice, educational inequalities and school dropout: some definitions

#### Territory:

a portion of space designed and adapted by a society with a view to reproducing itself. Resources unequally distributed. Variables of social contexts. Cf. Territory-based public policies, sectoral policies within the territories.

#### Spatial justice:

“the spatial dimension of the idea, the conceptions and the practices of justice”, in *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, Jacques Lévy, Michel Lussault, Belin, 2003, p 531. Cf. the slogan, “equality of opportunity”, “equality” has a particularly strong resonance in Republican France !

#### Educational inequalities:

Inequalities in the field of education. They are “linked to the life context and living spaces of young people. Education relates to what is acquired from interactions between the individual and her/his physical and human environment, enveloping not only what is transmitted through voluntary actions but also through impregnation” (ANR Indéduc).

#### School dropout:

“a phenomenon involving a multitude of scenarios going from sporadic boredom in class to schoolphobia and absentism”. This has been a national priority of the government for some years. See G. Longhi, 2007, in

2/ The social risks of academic underachievement and school dropout at the cantonal level in France: correlations

The need to illustrate the territories designated by various accumulations and combinations of risk factors so as to target more efficiently the actions necessary to prevent and to deal with school dropout.

Publication in May-June 2014 of an atlas (prepared by Gérard Boudesseul, Patrice Caro, Yvette Grelet and Céline Vivent) in partnership with the DEPP (**D**irection de l'**E**valuation, de la **P**rospective et de la **P**erformance – Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance Department).

Territorial sensitivity to the risk of school dropout: a breakdown of the figures.

An approximation of the cumulative effects of school dropout:

- the proportion of young people aged 15-24 without academic qualifications and outside the education system

Grid used for selection:

- Canton = an administrative and electoral unit: living conditions and no more, no correlation with either the siting of schools or with level of employment.
- The geographical unit in the Census of the population: Canton/town
- Hypothetical levelling out of school dropout figures (low level of mobility of levels V, V+ and VI)

Identifications of the social risk factors using 7 indicators:

- Level of income (median income)
- Unemployment and precarious employment
- Education level of the parents (level of qualifications)
- Single parent families
- Large families
- Housing and living conditions (Social housing)

Statistics drawn from 3689 cantons and the 7 indicators calculated from the 2006 census by INSEE – and from the Local Fiscal Income of households for the indicator of income.

The cantons are divided into six categories

Two high risk classes:

- Class 1 “A combination of weak cultural, family and economic factors in an urban environment” (Nord-Pas-de-Calais)
- Class 6 “Economic hardship in the small and middle-sized towns” (Languedoc-Roussillon)

Two low risk classes:

- Class 2 “Difficulties arising from family life and living in social housing in an urban environment” (Académie de Créteil -- the Créteil school area)
- Class 5 “Cultural fragility in small towns” (Basse-Normandie)

Two relatively risk-protected classes:

- Class 3 “Economic security and cultural support” (Académie de Versailles – the Versailles school area)
- Class 4 “An ageing rural area” (Auvergne)

Proportion of young people aged 15-24 without academic qualifications and outside the education system  
(national average: 27%) NEET, Not in Education, Employment or Training

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### 3/ The geography of priority education

Help provided by the Ministry of Education to certain educational establishments: Selection of schools and colleges by the Ministry according to certain indicators, for example in 2014-2015:

- Proportion of parents in disadvantaged professions
- Proportion of pupils with grants
- Proportion of pupils in sensitive urban areas
- Proportion of pupils below average in the first year of secondary school (11-12 year-olds)

Priority education 2011-2013 (Ministry of National Education)

To narrow the gap in educational achievement between pupils in priority education and the other pupils in France:

- Since 2011, **ÉCLAIR** – acronym for **E**coles, **C**ollèges, **L**ycées pour l’**A**mbition, l’**I**nnovation et la **R**éussite – Primary schools, Colleges (pre-lycée), Lycées for Ambition, Innovation and Success ;
  - **RSS: Réseaux de Réussite Scolaire** – Networks for educational achievement

ECLAIR in 2013

- In 2013, 300 state colleges in France and the overseas *départements* provided education for more than 1 in 20 college pupils (143,400)
- 37 *départements* had no ÉCLAIR college
- 1/3 of the colleges were concentrated in 5 *départements*: Nord, Bouches-du-Rhône, Seine Saint-Denis, La Réunion, La Guyane

Source (*Géo de l'école 2014*, p.34)

% of college pupils in RSS and ECLAIR in 2013 (*Géo de l'école 2014*, p.35)

Discrepancies between risk areas and priority education areas in 2013

Examples of rural areas with a high social risk of academic failure and of dropout with a low incidence of priority education:

- *Académie* (School area) of Montpellier (Languedoc-Roussillon) and Toulouse (Midi-Pyrénées)
- Centre Ouest français
- Charentes Maritimes
- Drôme

The reactions of certain unions to the new policy for priority education 2014-2015 (UNSA - *Académie* of Toulouse)

- The maps published by the Ministry of National Education show that the Lavelanet and Vicdessos sectors can be considered to be “areas with a risk of academic failure”, where the number of those without any academic qualification in the 15-24 year olds no longer in education is more than 60%. How can the *département* of Ariège tolerate not benefiting from the priority education policy? Source: Antoine Loguillard, representative of the union, UNSA and its secretary for the Ariège in the article, “Inquiétude pour les ZEP: ‘l'éducation prioritaire menacée’ d'après l'UNSA”, *Journal La Dépêche*, 16/07/2014

Conclusion

- School dropout: a major social issue. Strong link between unemployment and school dropout, need for a sub-regional approach
- The relevance of studying together a school career and its geographical, economic and social context
- An on-going project (on risk of failure and school dropout) to be backed up with the most recent data
- Priority education policy in 2013 did not cover all the areas of high social risk of academic failure and of school dropout. Will the priority education policy for 2014-2015 be managed better?
- Need for an analysis of the distribution of the Pre-plans for educational success (another policy for helping pupils).