

Arts & Culture in French Schools

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Abstract

After a brief discussion regarding terminology and a historical and institutional presentation of French art and culture education, this article presents the new system for education to image and especially the brand new teaching of the history of arts. The author who is both an academic and an advisor to the Minister of Education then addresses in a critical way the issue of the evaluation and monitoring of the art education system.

Key Words : Arts and Culture, evaluation, drawing, education to image, history of arts, monitoring, plastic arts, visual arts

In France, artistic training in schools and universities has progressed much over the past forty years, but - one must admit - with uneven success, depending on the levels of education. At university, which for a long time only offered art history courses, applied arts, visual arts, dance, cinema and audiovisual, music and musicology, theater, etc. have gradually found their place, both in theory and practice. A similar observation can be made in high school, where quality resulting from the diversification of artistic fields now prevails. In junior high school, the public service has gradually managed to meet the regulatory obligations it could not achieve in elementary school, which is still the essential basis of the education system, in which, one must admit, the situation remains largely unsatisfactory.

In an attempt to bring some clarity to this contrasting and controversial situation, I propose: Firstly: To immediately address a problem of terminology by speaking of 'Arts and Culture in the School' rather than 'artistic and cultural education.

Indeed, if the term 'artistic and cultural education', currently being frequently used, remains perfectly relevant to elementary school and junior high school (levels corresponding to the period of compulsory schooling in arts), however, it is only partially suitable in high school and becomes totally inadequate in higher education, university or not.

On the other hand, the term Arts and Culture in the School covers quite legitimately and justifiably the four levels mentioned above, subject to the only reservation that the term School (with a capital S) is considered as encompassing all levels of training for the young, from infancy to adulthood. I will therefore use this term from now on.

Secondly: This terminological issue settled, I will address the issue of arts and culture in the School in three stages:

- A: Current situation, from elementary school to secondary education.
- B: Place of fine arts and visual arts in this context.
- C: Monitoring and evaluation of the system.

CURRENT SITUATION, FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

The School education we address here includes elementary school, junior high school and high school (the latter with its three sections: general, technological, and professional).

To designate what is achieved in the field of arts and culture, we can agree on the formula:

Arts and Culture in the School = *art teaching (practical and theoretical)* + *artistic and cultural activities* + *history of arts*.

WHAT IS ACHIEVED IN SCHOOL?

Echoing the term 'Arts and Culture in the School', we will consider successively and briefly the three essential components listed above: *art teaching (practical and theoretical)*, *artistic and cultural activities* and *history of art*, such as they appear at the beginning of the school year 2008/2009.

Art teaching (practical and theoretical)

It is characterized by a specific institutional framework: timetables, curricula and examinations set by the Ministry of Education. It is provided by specialist teachers recruited through competitive selection ('*concours*'). It is evaluated by the educational recruiting bodies. This framework is determined by a combination of official texts, periodically updated, which each person in the system must consider as unavoidable and prescriptive.

Thus defined, art teaching is present from elementary school to high school:

a) Art teaching in elementary school.

It is mandatory for all pupils (2 hours per week) mainly divided between visual arts (plastic arts + cinema and audiovisual) and music education.

In addition, but more flexibly quantified, dance in the context of physical education and sports and drama in French courses.

In addition to this generalist teaching common to all pupils, there are more specialized courses: Specially timetabled music courses ('Classes à horaires aménagés musicales' or CHAM) or dance (CHAD). With a duration of 3 to 5 hours per week, these classes involve relatively few pupils, who, to some extent, have been selected.

b) Art teaching in junior high school.

It is compulsory too, at 2 hours per week, shared between visual arts (1 hour) and music education (1 hour).

c) Art teaching in high school.

It becomes optional or voluntary and is organized in three sections: 'general', 'technological', 'professional'.

* In the general section, six subjects: visual arts, cinema and audiovisual, dance, history of art, music, theater and circus arts. Timetables are substantial: 5 hours for the mandatory option (Literary section), 3 hours if optional (all sections). Evaluation during the Baccalauréat with high coefficients (6 out of 42 in the literary and arts section).

* In the technological section, two subjects:

- Design and applied arts. Up to 20 hours per week of specialized education.
- Music and dance techniques: 8 to 9 hours plus supervised individual practice, with a variable but always considerable duration.

In both cases, evaluation during the technological Baccalauréat with high coefficients.

* In the professional section, the curriculum is more complex, even if it is dedicated to only one artistic domain common to the various sections, that of applied arts. This includes:

- At level V.¹ Preparation for professional qualification or CAPs² Certificats d'Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP Art trades) with around

¹ The levels I, II, III concern tertiary education and will therefore not be discussed in this article.

sixty specialties. Here, a generalist, artistic and cultural education is added to a more technical training in workshops specific to a trade (wood work, book binding, metalwork, glass work, etc.) for around twenty hours per week;

- At level IV. Four training courses leading to diplomas: the Brevets des Métiers d'Art or BMA (Diplomas in Art trades) with nine specialties; the Brevets de technicien arts appliqués or BT (Technical diplomas in applied arts) with seven options; the Baccalauréat professionnel or Bac pro (Professional Baccalauréat) with seven sections and finally, the Brevets professionnels or BP (Professional diplomas).

Artistic and cultural activities

These courses form the 'backbone' of the art education received by young people. For decades, these courses were the only ones to perform this function, a function focused on the transmission of knowledge, until the will to supplement, clarify and open them up has appeared and become more defined.

Trying to date precisely this emergence means risking generating unnecessary disagreements. Let's simply say that this movement has clearly spread in the years before or after 1968, its libertarian slogans, its questioning of the teaching guidelines, its challenging of institutions considered as frozen and restrictive.

At that time, the educational system has for once felt the change coming, a change mainly driven by the youth. Instead of opposing it - which it would surely have done a few years earlier - it has skillfully accompanied it then subtly appropriated it, and finally digested it.

What has then been gradually added to artistic teaching itself (see above) is what we call, for want of a better wording, 'artistic and cultural activities'.

² The Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnel confirms that the holder is capable of undertaking a specific, real and technical occupation that requires true expertise.

This very general and simplistic term comprises of different devices, more or less stabilized, long or recently established, focusing on a single class or gathering several, provided by a teacher or by a team of teacher and artist.

In this multiple and changing context, we can quote, for example:

a) Elementary School

- * Classes with an artistic and cultural project combining teachers and artists;
- * Classes of artistic and cultural discovery (classes taking place in artistic surroundings);

b) Junior high school

- * Art workshops (12 artistic disciplines)³;
- * Choirs and instrumental ensembles;
- * Classes with an artistic and cultural project (identical to those found in elementary school);
- * Heritage classes (classes taking place in a cultural heritage site);

c) High School

- * Art workshops (as in junior high school)
- * Choirs and instrumental ensembles
- * Classes with an artistic and cultural project

d) At these three levels of school education, There are also specific programs, such as *École et cinéma* (School and cinema), *Collège au cinéma* (Junior high school and cinema) and *Lycéen au cinéma* (High school and cinema) which allow pupils to see selected movies in cinemas. All these artistic and cultural activities are not subject to the same constraints as teaching. They have an autonomy of action and a flexibility of interpretation that often attract students and teachers. With variable hours and not being mandatory, these activities often offer an opportunity for teachers and artists to collaborate.

³ The Art workshops comprise of twelve artistic areas. There are added hours (Three hours instead of one hour of standard teaching), there are less pupils in each group, pupils and teachers volunteer to take part, and the latter benefit from greater educational freedom, which offers more opportunities for creativity and creation.

e) A transversal issue: education to image.

In education, as well as in artistic and cultural activities, a recurring issue comes to the fore, explicitly or not: how to teach pupils to 'read' images whether still or moving, artistic or not.

In 1977, the Ministry of Education launched an experiment (with no follow-up, as with most experiments!) entitled '*Jeunes téléspectateurs actifs*' or JTA (Active Young TV viewers). In 1982, an academic responsible for renewing French language programs in junior high school, proposed to base his approach on the 'Reading / Writing / Image analysis' trilogy. At the same time, visual art teachers in junior high school were claiming the specific right to work with and around image (mostly fixed) as they were themselves producing images. In 1984, experimental courses in cinema and audiovisual (both artistic) were created, they focused mainly on the moving image, with or without sound, in fictional or documentary films. As for history teachers, without making a fuss, they continued to use images to visualize the historical facts addressed in their courses. This interest in image that mainly became official in the eighties has never faltered and even grown in its role in the French educational system. A role that has no real equivalent in other European Union countries.

But observing the large number of actions undertaken regarding this method is not enough, one should consider the qualitative aspects. All these educational activities focused on image indeed prove a genuine commitment (although sometimes slightly naive) aiming at controlling one of the major driving forces of contemporary society. Who would complain? One can regret, however, that they are organized without any actual contact with scholarly research, thus highlighting the disconnection between the university on one hand, and junior high school and high school on the other, a disconnection that once again proves disastrous.

History of arts

This discipline is a newcomer to the system and perhaps the most innovative for decades. Upon the decision of the President Sarkozy, *history of arts is compulsory for all pupils* in elementary school, junior high school and high school. Destined to have a significant development, it will eventually include 11 million pupils.

This teaching:

- is linked to a chronology, that of the history program which runs from Prehistory to Modern times;
- focuses on all art disciplines ('spatial art', 'art of language'⁴, 'day-to-day art', 'art of sound', 'performing arts', 'visual arts');
- is based on sensibility and the scholarly study of the works;
- combines all disciplines;
- is evaluated at all school levels.

It is a teaching which uses artistic culture as the *common foundation* of all disciplines taught at School. It aims at creating a 'bond' or a 'link' where there was so far only separation, disjunction or even antagonism. It is a true 'quiet revolution' which brings us back to the glorious era of the Third Republic, when the Minister Jules Ferry declared compulsory education for all.

An important difference: here it is not the decision of a Minister but of the President. The anecdotes surrounding this decision speak volumes about politicians and their way of managing (or creating) problems and controlling the system. Here they are, drastically summarized.

Upon his arrival in power, President Nicolas Sarkozy was contacted by a delegation of major academics asking him to implement compulsory education in the History of ART. The President reacted positively to the demand of art historians, decisions were taken immediately and the State

⁴ The arts of language consist of literature and all writing practices.

released a public statement regarding this project. The Minister of Education obeyed but made his own calculations: a new compulsory teaching discipline would require 9,500 jobs. But, in the context of reducing the number of civil servants, he has just axed 11,200 jobs. It was an unacceptable contradiction but the government has to give in. The solution proposed by the Minister was to incorporate History of ARTS into each existing program instead of adding history of art teaching to the existing curriculum. Regarding the budget, the cost was reduced to zero (no jobs to create.)⁵ Regarding teaching, the progress was significant: art and culture were no longer ostracized; they fed the entire system through the combined effects of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity.

One had therefore switched from a backward-looking solution to a modern solution providing a promising future. For once, the financial approach used in managing this problem had led to an innovative and positive educational solution, which would never have been chosen if our country had not been experiencing an economic downturn! Such is the paradox.

PLACE OF PLASTIC ARTS AND VISUAL ARTS IN THE SYSTEM

In this environment, the role of visual arts is not minor. Quite the contrary. It has never ceased to grow in importance over time, often changing in shape, incorporating various ideologies with mixed results and content denominations that are regularly challenged. Here is what can be remembered of the 160 years from the Second Empire (1852/1870) to the present day.

Historical landmarks

1. 19th century: a difficult beginning

⁵ The teaching of History of Arts being included in the teachers' timetable, it does not require any additional expenditure from the State.

The intention of the State to add some artistic training to the basic education provided to French pupils focusing on learning to read, write and count, dates from the 19th century and specifically the second half. Because they hoped it would provide them with some success in industrial competition (especially with Great Britain), the governments of the Second Empire, and then of the Third Republic, first focused on the 'training of taste' with the practice of drawing. Workers and artisans had to learn 'useful drawing' to become more efficient, to preserve and develop the physical and aesthetic qualities of the French artifacts which served as models in most European countries, notably in the 17th and 18th centuries.

If the 19th century decided to be realistic, it nevertheless tried to theorize about educational practice. A debate then began, illustrated by the famous opposition between two major figures of Fine Art, Eugène Guillaume and Félix Ravaisson. The first was a recognized sculptor, overloaded with commissions and decorated with awards. He was for a systematic teaching of drawing. To this end, he designed a method called 'the geometric method'. The second, Félix Ravaisson, was a philosopher interested in the same issue. In the 1860s, he had presided over a committee made up of recognized artists such as Delacroix, Flandrin, Ingres and Meissonnier. History does not recall their real contribution, but the result was poor and lacked innovation. On a personal level, Ravaisson adopted a less instrumentalist position than Guillaume. He believed that the discovery of art and its most beautiful outcome could raise the level and spirit of the pupils. But he did not go so far as to propose an effective method to achieve this.

Simultaneously appeared humanist trends that can be perceived in the instructions given by Jules Ferry in 1883, in which the Minister was concerned about expanding and opening art education notably by including music. It is likely, if not certain, that these instructions hardly changed the situation in the School. However, they began a new trend but the evolution is slow, very slow.

2. First half of the 20th century: little progress is made

The first half of the century was marked by two World Wars. A reflection on the artistic training of young people is not a priority, which can be understood. Practices remain the same. Drawing, sometimes referred to in the official vocabulary as 'drawing of imitation', maintained its dominant status. It was considered the safest way to reflect reality and what is 'already there' in all its forms.

Unfortunately, the training of those responsible for implementing this *doxa*, the drawing teachers, had long remained deficient despite the implementation of a 2 level competitive recruitment exam: 'First degree' and 'Higher degree'. This exam, to which fine art schools prepared the candidates more or less efficiently, did not facilitate the integration of these teachers in the teaching staff and in other disciplines which were considered more important.

The years following the Liberation brought, as early as 1947, the creation of a training center for drawing teachers in a famous Parisian high school, the *Lycée Claude Bernard*. After passing an entrance exam, the candidates entered this establishment and its 'Higher level drawing classes' to prepare for the 'First degree' and 'Higher degree' diplomas. Scholarships were awarded to students, mainly provincial and often of modest means, who were required to hold the *Baccalauréat*, which was an important new development.

In 1952, the former 2 level entrance exams were replaced by the *Diplôme de dessin et d'arts plastiques* (Diploma in Drawing and Plastic Arts), a very demanding entrance exam comprising of four certificates: *decoration, drawing, history of art, sciences related to drawing*. In total, more than twenty disciplines to pass. But this restrictive method which aimed at respectability concealed a wish: to resemble a Bachelor's degree, in the hope that one day this pseudo degree would equal the status of a certified teacher⁶. Which did

⁶ A certified teacher is a teacher who has earned credentials from an authoritative source, such as the government.

not happen then (but will twenty years later).

3. Second half of the 20th century: the great upheaval of 1968

1968 shook the current system to its foundations⁷. The 1970s reduced it to rubble. Teacher training was transferred to the university and joined all the other disciplines. The administrative process was triggered. A *Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement secondaire* or CAPES (Certificate of Aptitude to Teaching in Secondary Education), with a Plastic Art department was created in 1972. A diploma for agrégé professors (*Agrégation*⁸) followed in 1975. The old system was gradually dying out. The higher level drawing classes at the lycée Claude Bernard closed down.

At the same time, any reference to the term 'drawing' in official designations disappeared. An artistic discipline which for centuries was regarded as a fundamental foundation, drawing became suspect. Judged imperialist, sterilizing, out of date or even reactionary, it was eliminated from teaching practices as well as from theoretical discourse. Simultaneously, it left the field of living art. Everywhere drawing became shameful. Artists of a certain age, who had always been proficient in drawing, have kept a low profile for two or three decades.

However, drawing did not totally disappear. In fact, it shifted to the area of *Applied arts*, (*Design*) and of course, *Comic strips* with their growing popularity.

Outside these two areas, the concept of *Plastic art* (free from drawing) prevailed, with a certain arrogance.

Yet, less firmly established than its aging followers thought, it progressively lost its sharpness due to the ambiguity of its vague definition. Almost everywhere one now progressively started to talk about 'visual arts'. The Ministry of Education itself followed the trend in 2002 when the curricula

⁷ In 1968, the protesting against the power and ideology in place is radical. On the other hand, if 1970 is not as radical, it allows for focusing on innovative reconstructions that benefit from a new mindset permitting reforms so far impossible to implement due to the autism of political power.

⁸ A teacher in secondary or higher education who has passed the agrégation examinations for secondary or higher education.

for elementary schools were rewritten. The term 'Plastic arts' was therefore replaced by the more open term 'visual arts' that incorporates moving images (film, video, animation, digital arts, etc.).

As often, the evolution of language reflected the transformation of mindsets and practices. Thus, in a century, one had passed from 'drawing' as the reigning discipline to 'drawing and visual arts', a transitional discipline, then to 'Plastic arts' full stop, the penultimate stage of a slow evolution that has recently led to 'visual arts'. Lately, but not 'finally', because there is no guarantee that a new term, so far unknown, will not appear soon, translating a new advance. Unless – who knows – an ideological return or a revival of some aspects of the past brings back into fashion art and technical teaching or... drawing!

Art and Art teaching: The Case of visual arts.

While art and teaching art are two different things, the first being upstream, the second downstream, their relationships are nevertheless real. What is related to art in the making has, sooner or later, to be reflected in the teaching of art.

This fact can make one happy or concerned. Happy because this life-giving link can only be stimulating. Concerned because, in some areas at least, it could invalidate many educational criteria and methods.

We think that teaching means, for a significant part, transmitting knowledge, formulating rules and methodological, technical, artistic, principles, etc. and knowing, understanding and applying them, at least initially, before transgressing them in full knowledge. If that is true, one deduces that the actual impact of contemporary art on artistic education can be positive only if this art has its own methodological, technical, artistic, etc. rules and principles, transferable to art teaching.

But all artistic disciplines do not have the same attitude towards rules and principles. Those that require a certain level of method and technique, considered as a prerequisite for personal expression and the discovery of innovative solutions, are a legitimate model for a rigorous and strictly limited educational teaching which supports pupils in their learning and progress.

This applies, for example, to cinema and audiovisual, dance, instrumental or vocal music and the performing arts in general. In all these areas, methodological, technical, artistic, etc. skills (a 'trade') are required and acquired through hard work and continuous training.

This is not the case in the field of plastic arts.

Indeed, what one calls contemporary art has implicitly made '*everything is possible*' its fundamental dogma. A liberating and challenging dogma, certainly as good as any other, that is also totally elitist, favoring the *nomenklatura* of the initiated, and considers itself as the only one empowered to differentiate what is good and what is not ... anymore.

The impact on the teaching of plastic arts is not always constructive, at least for younger pupils and those less advantaged in cultural terms. Despite the new mindset that now dominates, certain excesses are to be deplored. It is the case of the preference systematically given to the spontaneity and creativity of the pupil at the expense of technical teaching. This approach, which meets the expectations of pupils from dominant classes penalizes those from a disadvantaged background. The abandonment of the teaching of drawing, an austere discipline, which requires a long learning curve, with no guarantee of success, is an example of these excesses.

Everyone can understand that the transfer of the 'everything is possible' concept of contemporary art to the teaching of plastic arts is not without difficulties. The abandonment of rules and principles can only make many school teaching practices appear uncertain or even arbitrary, as they now tend to only favor personal expression at the expense of fundamental foundations and the argument of authority carried by the person who 'knows', the teacher, at the expense of the educational argument expected by the person who 'does not know', the pupil.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE SYSTEM

The current situation of Arts and Culture in School as we have briefly described above, only focuses on quantity and not quality, an obscene question, that nobody dares discuss... not to offend anyone. But everyone

knows that the situation, though it has been greatly enriched, diversified and modernized, has areas of light but also shadow and that because neither the monitoring nor the evaluation are what they should be.

Monitoring.

Let's say from the outset: it is uncertain and above all disorderly. But why? The reasons are twofold.

a) First reason: a clear and shared lack of strong motivation.

Although they swear to the contrary, neither the politicians, nor the democratic society that votes them into power think it is necessary to give an important place to arts and culture in the fundamental teaching that School offers the pupils who are entrusted to them.

Undoubtedly, the elite who attend museums, exhibitions and go to the cinema (art house cinema), to the theater and concerts, do not underestimate the importance of arts and culture. They are able to share the interest of art with their children and as insiders close to decision-making bodies, they could even use their contacts to improve the situation. But they do not because they have the possibility of implementing alternative personal strategies to favor their children when they see School is failing.

For other parents, who have no personal contacts with the artistic and cultural world, the possible shortcomings of the institution are not visible. They therefore have no concern or desire to tackle them.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that it took many decades for things to improve and for *sensibility* to gradually become a respected component of the education system whose first trend is to only focus on *sense*.

The opposition between what one calls *sense* and *sensibility* deserves explanation. In the French system, *sense* refers to the disciplines of knowledge: literature, humanities and above all exact science (mathematics, physics), etc. *Sensibility* refers to the artistic and cultural disciplines which encourage emotion, promote expression, develop creativity, use the body, etc.

In the hierarchy of academic values, the former are considered a fundamental priority while the latter are seen as complementary at best and, at worst, incidental. The former are based on logic and rationale, they are reassuring. The latter are deemed to defy the norm and the rules of good behavior, they provoke disquiet.

This opposition is of course exaggerated. Literature teachers argue that they too are concerned with emotion, inventiveness and creativity. Mathematics teachers know the value of intuition. On the other side, so to speak, art teachers emphasize the power of reasoning that is part of the act of creation, which obeys a certain logic and does not always take refuge in the irrational. Music teachers know what discipline is.

In fact, it is indeed about ideology, corporatism, the effect of power and the false dispute that an easy approach is trying to hide behind a slogan: the opposition of *sense* and *sensibility*, these long-standing enemies...

b) Second reason: a lack of continuity in national policy.

Over the past thirty years, every Minister of Education – often under pressure from the Minister of Culture – makes sure, at any time during his mandate, to show his ‘deep personal interest’ (as he says) for arts and culture in School. To prove it, each time or almost, he requests a report on this issue from such or such a person (winning low cost respite). The report takes stock of the situation and opens some new perspectives. But it comes too late or is badly received. The Minister therefore does not take any notice of it. But he does not remain inactive and gives the appearance of change by launching some new measures – mostly of minor importance – for arts and culture in School. These measures add to existing ones or replace those launched by his predecessor, now deemed inadequate by the new Minister.

If one considers that the lifespan of a Minister is 18 months on average, it is clear that nothing solid and sustainable will resist the passage of time.

In these circumstances, it is almost surprising that quality innovation stands the test of successive governments, settles permanently into the system and becomes an asset that nobody challenges anymore. And,

surprisingly, this has happened on several occasions in recent decades.

Evaluation

At the Ministry of Education, evaluation remains a constant priority. Everything is evaluated: the system, the teachers and the pupils. A complex method made up of investigations, assessments, reports, scores, recruitment selection and exams is continuously taking place. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education does not foresee the logical consequences and does not undertake the reforms which should result. Among factual and symbolic devices, a typical example: the *Baccalauréat*.

It not only evaluates each student but it reflects the efficiency of the system as a whole.

It has indeed a specific and disproportionate position. Extremely costly, particularly complex to organize, always under the threat of absolute disaster, with periodical failures that the press tries to highlight while the administration tries to sweep them under the carpet, the *Baccalauréat*, hated by some, considered as insignificant of the students' level by most, a diploma that is useless when you've obtained it and only has importance when you haven't, makes France hold its breath every year, stresses parents even more than students, makes the Minister tremble as he knows very well that a major mistake would be fatal, the *Baccalauréat*, a first step to University with no relevance to the competence and skills of its holder, is in fact the sole rite of passage that our society has preserved, the only challenge that gives an adolescent who has passed it the feeling to have finally become an adult!

In these circumstances, the *Baccalauréat* resists all attempts at reform or destruction, survives the storm and, like the phoenix, reappears each June, opening to its graduates the doors of the university that half of them will leave after one year without any degree.

After this collection of information and comments, let's adopt the viewpoint of Sirius. In France, the Ministry of Education (whose wording changes frequently) has the largest budget of the State. Every day, it is

responsible for 13 million pupils/students, entire families and, as a result, 40 million French people. A few years ago, one said that it was the largest organization in the world after General Motors (USA) and the Red Army. Today the first goes bankrupt, the second is licking its wounds in the nostalgia of the years when the USSR ruled half the world, while the Ministry at Rue de Grenelle, is still there and persists, '*fluctuat nec mergitur*' (tossed by the waves but not sunk) although still accused of all evils.

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In these circumstances, it is not surprising that it fascinates all politicians who dream of confronting what a former Minister of Education called the 'mammoth', of leading it and succeeding where everyone else has failed... to leave a few months later, exhausted, bitter and discredited.