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NOVEMBER 30, 2015

TEACHER TRAINING KEY IN EDUCATION REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

- **New teaching academies** offering two-year master's degrees established
- **An emphasis** placed on practical training
- **First graduates** were given full-time positions in the 2015-2016 school year

The French government's school reform program of July 8, 2013 established new teaching academies, and a new policy in regard to teacher training and continuing education. Called ESPEs (Écoles supérieures du Professorat et de l'Éducation), these new educational facilities opened their doors on September 1, 2013.

At that time, a two-year master's degree in education (Masters des métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation, or MEEF) was initiated.

The beginning of the 2015 to 2016 school year marked the occasion when the first students in this new program were granted full-time positions.

These students were able to follow one of several special fields:

- Teaching in primary education
- Teaching in secondary education
- Non-teaching school staff
- Adult training

“Teacher training is a key determinant of educational success,” said French Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem. “All studies show that the progress of a student depend significantly on the quality of its teachers and thus the quality of the training received by the teacher which it is entrusted. This is why teacher training has such an important place in our school reform program.”

A Focus on Practical Training

According to the OECD, the most effective initial training programs are those that guarantee an appropriate balance between theory and practice and collaboration between teachers. In the new program, future teachers have early contact with pupils, spend considerable time in classes and receive quality support, including through tutoring by qualified teachers. The training program of teachers and educational professionals includes a core curriculum offered to all students. This might included but is not limited to:

“Managing a class and preventing violence at school; taking diversity in the classroom into account, in particular students with disabilities; methods for adapting to different learning styles and support for struggling students; career guidance; combating discrimination and promoting gender equality.”

This new training also better prepares teachers for the diversity of their missions, because much is demanded of teachers today.

For example, particular attention will be paid to mastering digital tools. The objective of this training will be to not only master digital tools on a technical level, but above all, to put them at the service of classroom learning, to create the pedagogical resources adapted to individual students and to better communicate with families.

Instructors with Experience in the Field

The ESPEs are led by both specialized training personnel, and professors and personnel from the National Education Ministry. In addition, the teaching academies welcome many professionals in the field: teaching staff, inspection and management staff, speakers on cultural and artistic education, citizenship education, etc.

Students in the master’s program must take a competitive exam at the end of the first year; during the second year they are placed in schools for practical experience, as state civil-service trainees.

Key Dates and Figures

- July 8, 2013: New school reform program
- September 1, 2013: ESPEs open their doors
- 32 ESPEs throughout France, with 179 training sites
- About 60 000 students in ESPE programs currently
- In 2016, the French Education Ministry will recruiting 25,000 new teachers.

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