



After-school tutoring between popular education and a service industry

The spectacular rise seen over the last few years by tutoring businesses has generated numerous reactions, highlighting the socio-economic and cultural inequalities that this situation both generates and exacerbates. The French National Education system, concerned about the phenomenon, has implemented a series of measures designed to understand this movement better and also to attempt to intervene wherever possible in this out-of-school activity. There seem to have been five key stages over the last two years:

- the publication in December 2004 of a report, entitled "[Le travail des élèves pour l'école en dehors de l'école](#)" (Schoolwork carried out by pupils outside the school environment), commissioned by the HCEE (high council for school evaluation) and carried out by Dominique Glasman (professor of sociology at the University of Savoie, who devoted fifteen years of research to after-school tutoring issues), with the collaboration of Lelsie Besson. This report is the fruit of a significant amount of work, summarising studies carried out both in France and abroad;
- the [recommandation](#) made public in May 2005 by the HCEE, following this report;
- the holding (in November 2005) of a national seminar on the theme "[Accompagnement à la scolarité, égalité des chances et TIC](#)" (Homework support programmes, equal opportunities and ICT), backed-up by the publishing on-line of a rich [documentary resource](#);
- the launch in 2006 of a [proposal tender](#) on the same theme, the [results](#) of which were published in July and implemented at the start of the 2006 academic year;
- the publication by the French Ministry of Education (in May 2006) of a guidelines report on [L'accompagnement à la scolarité : pour une politique coordonnée, équitable et adossée aux TIC](#) (homework support programme, moving towards a co-ordinated, equitable and ICT-supported policy).

It consequently seemed a good time to us to examine this issue more in more detail. The previously mentioned sources provided a focal point and a significant reference for the preparation of this *Newsletter*, in which we attempt to highlight the most salient research points. We were also keen to take the analysis a step further by evoking other recent studies, both in France and abroad, focusing on educational issues but also the economic sector. This should make the data easier to interpret and shed some interesting light on the commercial issues at stake in the tutoring sector.

Homework, parental aid, support programme, private tutoring and the commercial market, on-line tutoring... each of these issues could easily be the theme for an entire *Newsletter* in its own right. It nevertheless seemed important to us to approach this very topical debate from a more global perspective, combining all these different aspects.

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We would especially like to thank Dominique Glasman for so kindly giving up his time for an interview.

Warning to readers

- Most of the links correspond to the relevant files in our [bibliographic database](#), which includes complete references and, where applicable, access to the articles quoted (some offer free access and some require payment, depending on the article and the electronic subscription taken out by your institution);
- You can inform us of your reactions to this Newsletter, suggest relevant themes or ask for more specific details by leaving a comment beneath the corresponding [post](#) in our blog: "[Écrans de veille en éducation](#)".

The aim of this *Newsletter* is to explore the different forms of support for school success that are implemented on a voluntary basis, *outside school time*, and which are given by *teachers that do not belong to the school*.

An overview of after-school tutoring

The ongoing Survey on household living conditions carried out by the INSEE (National institute for statistics and economic studies) includes a section on education. Taking the 2003 figures as a reference, the Studies and Prospecting Division of the Ministry of Education produced (in February 2006), a [Memo](#) on the analysis of data concerning **help with homework outside class**. This study offers a general overview of after-school tutoring in France.

We learn first of all that it is the **mothers that provide the most support**, going as far as they can in the schooling of their children (95% of the mothers questioned help at elementary level, and 53% continue to help until senior high school level). **Fathers** tend to provide less support (from 70% at primary school level to 38% at senior high school level) and more often than not offer a back up for the mother's contribution. Children that are only helped by their father are few and far between. However, fathers who are teachers offer a great deal more support than other fathers, whereas this distinction is not significant in the mothers questioned.

Parental aid can be evaluated at 15 hours per month on average and this decreases in inverse proportion to the age of the child (19 hours at primary, 14 hours at junior high and 6 hours at senior high level). Parents that offer aid with all their children's homework have much higher ambitions with regard to their schooling. The higher the school level, the more this population segment can be stereotyped. At senior high school level, the majority of the parents that help their children are teachers, combining a high level of tuition, investment (or over-investment) into school issues, care with regard to quality of work and availability in terms of having time to help their children with their homework.

Brothers and sisters (and sometimes grand-parents) play a lesser role in providing support for younger children (12% at primary school level and 20% at secondary level). However, the level of their support increases when their younger sibling is re-taking a year. Help between **classmates** is rare at the elementary stage but intensifies as pupils go through the schooling system (23% at junior high and 34% at senior high level). Children who benefit from no support other than from their siblings or their friends have no academic problems at school.

A smaller population segment turns to **free homework support**: 7% at primary, 13% at junior high, 8% at general or technical senior high and 3% at vocational secondary schools.

Whilst parents justify tutoring through the poor or very poor level shown by their child in the subject concerned (French at primary school and maths at secondary school level), it is generally the teacher who is behind the decision (2/3) rather than it being their own initiative (1/4). These parents belong to a "less socially, culturally and economically privileged" category and their child is generally at school in priority education zones. One also observes a larger proportion of single parent families. Free homework support is generally held within the school itself. Only 20% is held in a different structure (local administration, for example).

NB: by cross-checking the Ministry's data (MEN, 2006), it would seem that the INSEE survey has grouped together remedial education (tuition given by the National Education system during school time), with the homework support programme services.

Private tutoring (i.e. paid) is almost exclusively used at secondary school level and increase in intensity as one progresses through the school system (8.5% at junior high and 15% at senior high school level), particularly prior to an important decision with regard to choosing subjects. Pupils at vocational secondary schools use this service very little. Pupils at junior high use this type of aid when they are struggling in a particular subject (maths more often than not). However, **25% of secondary high pupils are "good" pupils, who see private tutoring as part of a strategy of excellence, targeting a better level of further education.** It is rarely the teachers that are behind the decision to take private lessons; it is more often the parents or the children themselves (23% at junior high, 40% at senior high). These parents belong to a more privileged social category – teachers, managers, company managers, retailers etc; they turn to private tutoring either because they lack the time or because they do not feel capable of keeping up with the subject's curriculum. Children that attend private schools are also more numerous in their decision to opt for private tutoring. Private tuition is rarely given by the child's normal teacher. One usually turns to a student (34%), another teacher (31%) or a private organism (21%).

Whether the tuition is free or not, 80% of the parents questioned consider that it helps their child with their schooling. Nevertheless, free tutoring is seen to be more beneficial at elementary level (87%) than at junior high (75%) or senior high school level (71%). With paying tuition, this trend is reversed. Moreover, the quality of the tutor significantly increases the evaluation of the benefits received by the child: tuition **given by a student is considered to be the most efficient** (95% at junior high and 88% at senior high school level), **ahead of one-to-one tuition given by a teacher** (78% at junior high and 87% at senior high school level) **or via a private tutoring establishment** (67% and 82% respectively).

Finally, whilst the percentage of children that receive **no help** is very low in the early years, it increases as one progress through the school system (7% at junior high and 20% at senior high school level). At junior high, these pupils show the same socio-economic characteristics as those who attend free homework support, but they have a better school profile (half are good or excellent pupils). At senior high, this social characterisation is less pronounced, and the profile of these young people moves closer towards that of the senior high school pupils, who rely on help from siblings or friends.

Homework

In his approach to "pupils' schoolwork outside school", [Glasman](#) (2004) primarily highlights the obligatory tasks assigned by the school, i.e. exercises and homework, but also draws attention to additional and optional tasks (initiated by the pupil or by a third party outside the school) i.e. going over basic issues when there are gaps, revision, learning exercises, going into a subject in more depth, or even working on the coming curriculum...

The obligatory work is often the central issue, which is the main focus of the parents' attention and can highlight a need for "help with homework" either within the family or outside. Even though supplementary tutoring (whether free or paying) can represent help with homework, it generally refers to the optional work the child is consequently involved in. In the following sections we will see how the nature of this type of work (i.e. not assigned by the school), and the resources made available, contribute to marking a difference between homework support programmes and paid private tutoring.

Work assigned by the school

Homework is a sensitive subject in the child/parent relationship, and one that also divides the educational and scientific communities in numerous countries. The first stumbling block is the question of the amount of time that it requires, which, added to the time spent at school, makes inroads into a child's leisure, socialising and rest time. This question is related to the issue of the efficiency of working at home and its effect on school achievements (which has by no means been clearly proven). To escape the recurring controversy concerning the beneficial and negative impacts of homework, certain research studies have focused on the necessity for the teacher to rethink very carefully the tasks that he assigns to his pupils on the basis of precise and very clearly explained objectives.

❑ Workload

In France (since 1956), schoolteachers are not supposed to assign any written homework to primary school pupils. Only exercises can be assigned for learning. Up until the present, texts have regularly confirmed the application of this regulation. Yet this does not apply to the secondary school. However, according to Glasman, **80% to 90% of primary schools do not apply the official texts and regularly assign homework.**

In France, homework suffers from a fairly negative image in the eyes of pupils. This primarily stems from the amount of time that it takes out of their day and also the poor division of the daily workload (due to a lack of any real co-ordination between teachers of the same class). According to the REP d'Echirolles (quoted by Glasman, 2004), the time required to complete homework is significantly underestimated by teachers, both in primary and secondary schools.

A survey carried out by the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), comparing the practices of 18 countries, reveals that, for the 13 year old category, French children are the most numerous (nearly 50%) to devote at least two hours to homework, ahead of the Koreans (40%) and the North Americans (nearly 30%) (quoted by [Van Voohris](#), 2003). Another study shows, however, that teachers assign much more homework in the United States than in any other country ([Baker & Le Tendre](#), 2005).

Glasman advocates caution when interpreting these comparisons, stressing that both school time-table policies and the different educational environments within each country should be taken into account when evaluating the time devoted to homework.

❑ Relative efficiency

Out of a body of 20 studies, Glasman picks out 14, which show that pupils assigned homework are higher achievers at school than those assigned no homework. Out of 50 other studies, 43 show that the pupils who devote more time to homework are higher achievers.

According to Cooper, Robinson & Patall ([2006](#)), there is almost no correlation at primary school between the time devoted to homework and success at school; at junior high level, the correlation is still weak. Even at senior high school, spending "too much" time doing homework (more than 2 hours per day) can become counter-productive.

But, in conjunction with Trautwein & Köller ([2003](#)), Glasman questions the direction of the causality link: is a pupil better because he works harder at home or is he more motivated to work because he is already a good pupil? If we look at the case of pupils experiencing difficulties at school: although they devote more time than others to their homework (especially girls), is this not perhaps solely due to the difficulties they are facing?

What is certain is that the time factor is not a very precise indicator of the efficiency of homework. It would seem more interesting to take into account qualitative criteria concerning the type of homework assigned and its purpose.

In France, **the official texts provide teachers with very few indications** as to the nature and conditions of the homework that they can assign. They merely stress the supposed and expected positive values of this type of work. And it seems that **no serious studies have been carried out on homework** in the IUFM (teacher training institutes).

Researchers note that the **importance of homework is rarely appreciated by the children** (or even by their parents), as this requires a degree of maturity that is only reached in the later stages of the schooling process.

Pupils encountering difficulties at school see this work as a succession of disjointed activities, that are part of the 'here and now' rather than a regular part of life. The frequent lack of guidelines with regard to personal homework is often quoted as an aggravating factor.

For Philippe [Meirieu](#) (2004), "*what one must learn at school is how to do without school*". Meaning that one must learn to do at school, whilst being guided, "*what one will have to do progressively [...] on one's own*", i.e. homework in this case.

Certain teachers have been applying themselves to this task for a long time, but others are concerned about the workload that preparing and correcting pupils' homework represents. And if there is still a certain amount of doubt over the efficiency of homework, why spend so much time on it, especially as the inspectors do not treat this as a determining factor in their evaluations?

Susan [Hallam](#) (2004) advocates that teachers should assign homework on the basis of precise and clearly identified objectives: if it is a case of encouraging autonomous work, the task must motivate interest and its level of difficulty must be graded to enable each pupil to accomplish it successfully; if it is a case of involving the parents, the task must allow parents to offer their experience rather than require expert knowledge; if it is a case of preparing for an exam, the task must be oriented towards specific exercises... These objectives can of course be combined and alternated throughout the year, thereby creating a diverse range of tasks and preventing the work from becoming too repetitive.

Pamela [Coutts](#) (2004) suggests that educational institutions should closely examine the situation and announce a clear and coherent homework policy, thereby removing any ambiguities and misunderstandings between teachers, pupils and parents.

❑ And also

- In the United States, more than anywhere else, the question of homework is still at the centre of a lively controversy. [Gill & Schlossman](#) (2004) have retraced its twists and turns over the last 150 years.
- The research review by [Sharp, Key & Benefield](#) (2001) makes a very specific point on the principal results and contributions made by Anglo-Saxon research over the last decade.
- Issue n° (43)3 of the review *Theory into practice* (2004), under the control of Harris Cooper, a professor of psychology at Duke University, is entirely dedicated to homework.

Parental involvement

Most of the studies agree on the fact that parental involvement can positively influence the achievements of their children in school. This aid, however, has to be well directed.

As shown by the INSEE survey presented in the first section, numerous parents invest their time and efforts in their children's homework. Nevertheless, some tend to give up when they no longer feel capable of "keeping up" with the school curriculum. This creates a very significant divide between parents, according to their own level of education, which itself is often correlated to the socio-economic profile of their family. And as we know that children encountering difficulties at school are more often from the least privileged backgrounds, they may benefit less from parental aid than others from more privileged backgrounds.

This lack of confidence in their own academic capacities should not, however, put parents off from helping their children with their homework, because the nature of parental contribution differs from that of a teacher. Parental involvement often goes far beyond mere academic knowledge.

With this in mind, the psychologist Frances [Van Voohris](#) (2004) shows how basic *communication* between parents and children with regard to homework is a beneficial factor in school success; regular attention paid to this exchange can even reduce the impact of socio-economic characteristics that might otherwise have been unfavourable. She consequently presents the [National Network of Partnership Schools](#) (NNPS), founded in 1996 by the Johns Hopkins University, a network of schools in which teachers implement a special partnership programme with parents: Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). According to her, one of the strongest features of this programme is the building or restoring of a positive relationship between parents and children, revolving around homework.

Teachers, however, are not always keen, and indeed are even reluctant, to promote such a relationship (i.e. between teachers and parents): *"When parents offer help, teachers consider that they are merely interacting within the 'contract' negotiated between themselves and the pupil. When, however, they do not provide their child with any support at all, the parents are accused of absenteeism and being neglectful [...]. Are these not contrary instructions?"* ([Glasman](#), 2004).

Other studies assign parents an essential role as providers of a favourable environment for working at home. But this "favourable" environment does not necessarily correspond with how parents might perceive it. They do not understand how a child can study in conditions that they see as ill-chosen: one child, for example, may say that he can only study whilst lying down on the carpet, book in hand; another needs to have the radio on to stimulate him while he is working... The parents, however, are convinced their child would be more efficient seated at his desk in silence. They consequently engage in a sterile conflict. [Hong, Milgram & Rowell](#) (2004) observe a very broad range of working habits and environments adopted by adults – in this case amongst university researchers and teachers – and consequently advocate that the individual preferences of each child in terms of their working environment at home should be respected.

Philippe [Meirieu](#) (2004) suggests that parents should act as "teachers of intelligence" when helping their children with their homework. This means finding a happy medium between discipline and disinterest, and most importantly focusing their support on organisation, methodology and the search for meaning, so that their help is generally beneficial in the medium and long term. Meirieu reviews the type of task most commonly assigned, and provides parents with concrete advice on the possible ways that they can approach their contribution. They must never solve the problem assigned by the teacher, for example, but rather help the child to solve it himself. So when children have to learn text or vocabulary, for example, parents can help them to find a good way to check that they know it. The parent and child can then work together to find ways in which this new knowledge can be applied. When it comes to homework exercises, the parent can help the child to carefully read the instructions, determine the type of result expected and to bring together the necessary material and information to achieve this result. And if the child is in difficulty, the parent's role is to help the child locate the information, rather than whispering the answer in their ear. For larger scale projects (such as a presentation or exam), the best type of support a parent can offer is aid with planning the different stages of the work to be accomplished.

One wonders, however, if this meta-knowledge with regard to an efficient personal work methodology is not a skill that indeed requires a high degree of familiarity with intellectual work, which the better educated parents will be better able to transmit to their children than others...

Glasman concludes by observing that, whatever the point of conflict between the parents and the children (difficulties with getting down to work, mutual misunderstanding over the nature of efficient support, lack of confidence in their own capacities, excess of affection etc...), **the usage of an outside form of after-school tutoring** often offers a solution that **displaces the tension linked to homework** and restores a better climate in the family home.

□ And also

- *Lettre d'information* VST: « [Parents and Schools](#) » (November 2006).

Free homework support programmes

Thanks to various initiatives, free after-school tutoring has been available in France at least since the Seventies, but it wasn't until 1981 that the public authorities officially acknowledged it, creating a framework and a name: "accompagnement scolaire", translated in "homework support programme". The [Charter](#) on these homework support programmes gives the following definition: *"a group of actions designed to offer, alongside the school, the support and resources that children need to be successful at school. This support is not always available in their social and family environment. These actions, which take place outside school time, revolve around help with homework and the cultural contributions necessary for school success. These two complementary fields of educational intervention contribute to the personal fulfilment of the pupil and provide him with better chances of being successful at school. The homework support initiatives acknowledge the central role played by the school".*

Overview

A very thorough [documentary resource](#), published on-line in November 2005 and regularly updated, is available on the Educnet site. It specifies the concepts involved with after-school tutoring and the importance of the issues at stake, whether educational, cultural or social. It presents the statutory framework and the different reference texts, and then summarises the different types of services proposed and the organisms involved. A bibliography and sitography are also included.

□ Management and organisation

Homework support programme, as defined by this inter-ministerial charter, specified by circulars and successively involved in various initiatives designed to promote school success and fight against exclusion, is part of a complex structural and [statutory framework](#), which is acknowledged by the report produced by the Ministry of National Education ([MEN](#), 2006). This complexity is to a certain extent inherent to the diversity of the partners involved, i.e. four regulatory ministries (National Education, Employment, Health and Social Security), different financing networks and 2,000 operators in the field.

□ The way in which these homework support services operate

In view of the broad variety of services offered locally by the operators, the activity can take a very diverse range of forms. According to Glasman (2004), one can nevertheless distinguish:

- Group tutoring: by far the most common approach, encompassing up to 15 children on municipal, community and sometimes even school-based premises (although this is just the property being made available). Two tutors hold the sessions and the groups are often very diverse, covering a broad range of ages, classes and levels. The children essentially have one thing in common, the area where they live. In accordance with the texts, each session (of 1½ hours and held twice a week) is split into two sections: the first is devoted to homework and the second is reserved for cultural activities. In practice, priority is generally given to homework, often by the children themselves, focusing on the immediate utility of the work. This factor also explains why the children are less ready to accept work that is not assigned by the school: going over the basics, revision etc;
 - Individual tutoring: provided by a tutor at the child's home. Aside from the free aspect, *"there is hardly any difference between this type of tutoring and private lessons"*. This option is the specific domain of a few operators, and notably the AFEV (the association of the student foundation for towns), where 4,000 volunteer students provide support for 7,000 children as part of the "helping hand" initiative (Afev, 2005). In 2004, Glasman estimated the total number of children benefiting from individual aid at over 10,000.
- Without directly calling into question the structure of the individual homework support services, the report by the MEN (2006) nevertheless recommends that children should be given individual tutoring on public premises rather than at home.

The homework support services are particularly prevalent at primary and junior high school levels; furthermore, pupils about to make important decisions as to which subjects to choose tend to turn to this type of solution more than other pupils.

A vast field of action for non-formal education

Out of the 2,000 operators listed by the MEN offering homework support programmes, 52% are associations and the remainder are institutions in the public or semi-public sector (the socio-educational services of local administrations for example). They represent a group of operators, therefore, working in a sector that is generally referred to as the "social economy".

It was initially social workers and volunteers that invested their time and effort, via local associations, in homework support programme, thereby expressing a militant "local" commitment. It was not until the middle of the Nineties, however, that movements emerged demanding popular education. Although already firmly established in the organisation of leisure activities, up until then they had not been involved in schooling (Glasman, 2001). The significant investment made by these movements in homework support programmes over the last ten years has enabled them to catch up this initial 'lost ground', and also to contribute to a new rise in popular education, re-examined by the "non-formal education" trend, which, for over fifteen years now, has been working on the recognition of knowledge transmitted and acquired outside the school institution. The appropriation of the principles of non-formal education has enabled the leaders of popular education movements to construct an argument that gives a strong meaning to their commitment to homework support programme.

- **A position of complementarity in relation to the school institution.** Philippe Meirieu (in Afev, 2005) summarises the position of popular education as a movement that has simultaneously *"battled against the institutional self-importance of a school system that claimed to be able to handle the entire knowledge and value transmission process [...], and against the abdication of the State, which systematically passed its responsibility to guarantee social justice onto the community fabric, in the name of the principle of subsidiarity. So popular education has always promoted a form of complementarity [...], of reciprocal fertilisation of the "institution" and the "association"*. At the seminar entitled "A cross-examination of formal and non-formal education" (13/04/06), Meirieu noted, however, that this desire for "complementarity" and "partnership", requested in the texts and implemented in the policies and agreements signed between the operators, is, in practice, extremely difficult to implement efficiently. Hostility from the teaching body or the social centres, regional prerogatives and different ideological approaches represent obstacles that frequently generate conflicts in the field. Meirieu also qualified homework support programmes as *"a very high risk issue"*, i.e. the risk of seeing the school system rid itself of a proportion of its democratic duties via volunteer operators, driven, as a result of their generous ideals, to play a compensatory role for the most underprivileged.

However, Jean-Claude Richez, in charge of research, studies and training at the INJEP (national institute for young people and popular education), expresses his concern over the shift in direction taken by non-formal education, which is tending to position itself/be replaced under the thumb of formal education. In his eyes, this slide towards "the school structure" stems from both the community operators, who tend to comply with the dominant school model when it comes to homework support programme, and the school system itself, which is re-appropriating homework support programme to an increasing extent, and is notably ignoring the "cultural openings", which are nevertheless an integral aspect of the approach.

- **Non-formal education: a different form of education for a different approach to knowledge.** For Meirieu (in Afev, 2005), *"non-formal education gives rise, alongside the family and the school system, to a specific educational positioning, which is absolutely necessary"*; it offers *"a chance to meet adults who have no parental authority or teaching authority, but are nevertheless on hand to offer their support"*. They can hear and say what cannot always be heard or said by parents or the school, and *"their point of view is especially well received in view of the fact that they cannot impose it"*. They are described as *"close, without being complicit"* and consequently serve as "middle-men" who are especially precious considering that *"this intermediary function [...] is tending to disappear in our societies"* writes Meirieu, referring to the positionings formerly adopted by chaplains, youth movement organisers/tutors and elderly people... The tutors *"unlike the teachers, are not in a situation of 'teaching certitude'. What could be seen as a handicap can, if used properly, be turned into an advantage: the tutor works alongside the pupil in a role of 'researcher'".* As a result, *"the pupil approaches knowledge from the perspective of its generation, construction and appropriation"*. "Homework support programme consequently becomes an opportunity to re-discover the taste for learning, understand the extraordinary nature of the confrontation with knowledge, see the pleasure to be gained from resolving knowledge enigma, and finally experience learning as a challenge and as a chance to surpass oneself, as opposed to only seeing the threat of personal failure..."

With regard to children encountering difficulties in school, François Dubet (in Afev, 2005) considers that there is a "moral

imperative" for popular education to "force society to respect these children and acknowledge that one can be intelligent without being academic".

- **A militant, inter-dependent, inter-generational and intercultural "social link"**. At the same conference (13/04/06), the consultant Pascal Bavoux, representing the Afev, summarised the commitments made by the students of this association as an expression of active citizenship: *"the world of success reaches out to that of failure"*. In other associations, it is often retired people that work as tutors for children young enough to be their grandchildren. And in almost all the different organisations, the idea of reaching out to help the most socially and culturally underprivileged children is a major motivational factor for a large number of tutors, whether volunteers or paid staff. *"For some, the motivation to be charitable and the will to help others is enough [...] For others, the justification is not so much one of providing aid for others, but is more related to acknowledging the rights of children from a working-class or foreign background with regard to receiving from the community the tools necessary for succeeding at school"*, observes Glasman. *"It is possible that it is the 'homework tutors' of working-class or foreign origin that are the strongest promoters of this concept. Thanks to this approach, public opinion is changing. The public is not seen as a segment of the population to whom one offers school support as a charitable act, but rather as a population segment which has rights that must be acknowledged if the integration policy is to be coherent and consistent."* Meirieu (in [Afev](#), 2005) considers that this form of militant commitment *"is responsible for moulding, modestly but obstinately, the most essential of all ingredients, i.e. the social link. A link between people who otherwise would tend to show each other contempt, a link between generations that otherwise hardly speak to each other, and a link between institutions that operate, all too often, in their own separate corners."*

Whilst the question of professionalisation remains a subject that divides the community, most of those involved would like to see better recognition of the skills and qualities required in non-formal education. This was the objective of the Council of Europe when it tested a ["European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers"](#) in March 2006. The definitive version should be launched at the beginning of 2007.

□ And also

- With regard to the epistemological consistency of "non-formal education", we would draw attention to the thesis proposed in 2002 by Denis Poizat, *Éducation non formelle : la forme absente. Contribution à une épistémologie des classifications internationales en éducation*.
- Castellani Gérard (2000). *Accompagner la scolarité des enfants*. Arles : Actes Sud.
- Fustier Paul (2000). *Le lien d'accompagnement : entre don et contrat salarial*. Paris : Dunod.
- Paul Maela (2004). *L'accompagnement : une posture professionnelle spécifique*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Evaluation attempts

Between 1991 and 2004, Glasman analysed more than 25 evaluation reports produced by researchers on the different homework support approaches. On the basis of this body of work, he qualifies the question of evaluation as *"an issue that could not be more sensitive"*, given the necessarily restricted field of each study, and the diversity of the approaches explored as well as that of the evaluation method implemented.

□ The impacts on school achievement

When it comes to measuring the efficiency of extra-curricula approaches, the decision-makers are clearly awaiting information concerning the academic progress shown by the pupils that have benefited from it. Whereas, globally, it would seem, on the basis of the different evaluation studies, that *"the decision to turn to homework support programme does not systematically lead to significantly higher achievement at school; it does not seem that the impacts are negative, rather that they are somewhat un-apparent or not sufficiently sustained. In all circumstances they are extremely variable according to the approach, evaluations, pupils and even the sites used"*. A position that is both modest and prudent, given the significance of the reservations that it seems cannot be ignored:

- The underlying reservations, relating to the legitimacy of the issue itself, as well as to the fragility of what one is attempting to evaluate. *"Given that the principal objective of is not so much to improve a pupil's progress at school, but, quite simply, to help the pupil "achieve what is required of them at school" (and not to serve as a remedy for failure), is it essential to evaluate whether any progress has been made?"* Furthermore, *"one year is clearly too short a period"* to assess the progress of a pupil. And finally, how can one *"distinguish between what can be attributable to homework support programme and what is attributable to other influences on the pupil", i.e. the school, friends and entourage, the fact that he is growing up and changing etc?"*
- Reservations concerning the methodology: the community of researchers *"has not yet constructed the know-how capable of meeting the evaluation requirements of this specific field"*, outside the school system. Indeed, *"it is not clear [...] that the protocols and issues experimented with in the evaluation of schools or classes can be re-used in the evaluation of after-school tutoring"*. Amongst the avenues explored, the multivariate method of analysis used by the IREDU researchers seems to offer the best prospects in the eyes of Glasman, who is keen to see more systematic research studies carried out on this issue.

Whilst the evaluation attempts made by the researchers do not reveal any clear trends, several of them have nevertheless observed a disturbing phenomenon, i.e. a significant variance between external, "objective" evaluations and "subjective" evaluations made by the partners concerned, i.e. the tutors, parents and teachers. With this in mind Céline Piquée, author of a [thesis](#) on the evaluation of homework support programme, observes that *"the teachers consider that the service tends to provide the most benefits for the strongest primary school pupils at the beginning of the year, whereas, on the contrary, the external evaluations show that the pupils who really seem to benefit from this tutoring are those encountering the most difficulties at the beginning"* ([Interview](#) by the Centre Alain Savary with C. Piquée, 2003).

In another study, Céline Piquée and Bruno Suchaut (2002) observe that parents and teachers have a very positive view of the children's achievements, whereas the evaluations reveal no real differences in the progress made between a group of pupils being tutored and the sample group. This observation, once again, would cast doubt over the validity of the evaluations and their usage by the decision-makers. But *"what does the sample group actually show?"*, asks Glasman, who is sceptical with regard to the relevance of such an evaluation method because the group receiving supplementary tutoring and the "sample" group show characteristics that cannot be considered as identical.

❑ Impacts on socialisation

All the evaluation studies analysed by Glasman acknowledge the fact that homework support programme has a significant impact on the behaviour of the pupils who use it and on their relationship with their school. These evaluations are clearly subjective. Furthermore, whatever the changes in attitudes observed vis-à-vis homework support programme, Sicot & Payet (quoted by Glasman, 2004) note that their transposition into the school environment cannot be considered as an automatic consequence and should be tested. This point is rarely raised in the evaluation studies.

The tutors are above all sensitive to the psychological benefits: **improvement in children's self-confidence** and self-expression; an observation that highlights the quality of the relationships that they have been able to forge with the children.

Teachers are quicker to stress the **improvement in the pupils' relationship with the school** and schoolwork in general, when previously their attitude had been negative or even disruptive. For them, it would seem easier to acknowledge the progress made in the way children go about their life as a pupil, rather than to admit *"that improvements to school work could be credited to people other than the teachers"*.

For the children, the changes attributed to their homework support programme *"are reflected in a new attitude on the part of the parents"*, which for them is *"significantly encouraging"*. At this point Glasman refers to the sociology of deviance, which has shown that *"the attitude shown towards the pupil contributes as much in defining him as the acts that are attributed to him"*.

Finally, for the regulatory institutions, another social impact is much awaited, if not fully evaluated: homework support programme *"contributes to removing children from the streets in difficult districts", "thereby protecting them and at the same time preserving the law and order"*. This concern for public order is illustrated by *"the frequent inclusion of homework support programme in district councils' budgets for the prevention of delinquency [...]" and by the fact that the open school system was created in 1992 as part of the "anti hot summer" initiatives"* (Glasman, [2001](#) & [2004](#)).

Parents and children vis-à-vis homework support programme

Maria do Céu Cunha ([1998](#)) examined parental attitudes with regard to homework support programme. *"By existing alongside the school system, homework support programme seems to have found a genuine degree of legitimacy with parents"*, who generally praise its *"efficiency in terms of helping with the success of their children (which no evaluation has ever been able to determine)"* together with *"the commitment and dedication of the various parties involved"*. Researchers are attempting to decode the reasoning behind this parental perspective. First of all, homework support programme provides parents with some breathing space, removing from the home the issue of homework, which is often beyond their capabilities and is also a recurring source of conflict with their children. Furthermore, parents feel that they are *"doing what is required"* for the success of their child – even if their attitude is sometimes interpreted as the opposite by certain tutors, who consider that *"parents are landing them with both their children and their parental responsibilities"*. Belief in the efficiency of the tutoring sessions is closely linked to the hope for a possible change that would make it possible to maintain the tuition, a hope that teachers sometimes seem to abandon. The acknowledged dedication of the tutors together with their proximity contrasts with the attitude of the school, often suspected of showing too little interest in the child, especially if he is *"bottom of the class"*.

Children generally share this attitude of confidence in homework support programme. Glasman ([2001](#)) observes that a larger percentage of girls turn to this form of tutoring. This percentage also increases when they reach adolescence: *"the issue of gender is perhaps twice as important as social origin when interpreting girls' school achievements"*.

Re-orientation of the homework support programme policy

❑ Moving towards a mass approach

According to the report by the MEN ([2006](#)), at least 275,000 elementary and junior high school pupils received homework support programme in 2003, i.e. nearly 3% of this school population segment. As the percentage of pupils *"in difficulty or socio-culturally underprivileged"* is estimated at between 10% and 15%, there **still remains a further 700,000 to a million pupils that need help**. Nevertheless, the inclusion in the target segment of pupils *"encountering difficulties at school"* is a stumbling block that Glasman ([2004](#)) had already drawn attention to. Indeed, according to the texts, these children above all require the *"support"* offered by the school institution. Their presence in an homework support programme group *"is a waste of time if they have not already been helped, at school, to overcome the obstacles that they are encountering in their learning"*; furthermore, the demands often exceed the capabilities of the tutors, giving them the feeling that the school has *"landed on them the heavy responsibility of handling this type of pupil"*. The report by the MEN, moreover, refers to this a little further on, acknowledging *"the necessity for the most difficult cases to be handled by specifically trained professionals capable of offering a suitably tailored educational solution"*. But could this not be seen as a means of ratifying the more run-of-the-mill school difficulties? This is a view expressed by François Dubet (in [Afev](#), 2005): *"The National Education system [...] has integrated the idea that 30% to 40% of pupils fail, but does not want to bear the responsibility"*.

❑ The National Education re-structures its management approach

The report by the MEN ([2006](#)) firstly presents a summary of the *"insufficiencies of the current homework support programme policy"*, and then develops the modifications to be made in order to construct a new *"equitable, co-ordinated policy, supported by ICT"*. Five out of the six priority objectives suggested in the final *"recommendations"* directly concern the new tighter management approach to homework support programme (the sixth concerns ICT in education and will be evoked later):

- To provide the **national, inter-ministerial**, homework support programme **policy with renewed coherence**: making the monitoring of the budget easier to interpret within the Lof; and defining specific indicators and objectives to evaluate the results;
- To give back a **central role to the National Education system** *"in the management, at all levels, of the homework support services"*: fixing the guidelines for the chief education officers, and drawing up *"tools to help with diagnostics and assessments"* and *"parameters for a quality label"* etc;
- To improve the **link between the school system and** homework support programme from an educational perspective: building co-ordination structures, using teachers, involving tutors in school life; sharing information with them with regard to the pupils' schooling etc;

- To take better advantage **of the school's potential**: making use of the school's premises and equipment; "*recruiting educational assistants for the end of primary school and the beginning of junior high; bringing back evening study sessions; implementing specific systems for rural zones etc.*"
- **Involving the families**: making the involvement of families obligatory for the granting of public aid; developing systems of type "parent" school etc"

Outside France?

Despite the fact that homework support programme in the form outlined above can only be applied to the French context in view of its statutory framework, we know that systems of free (or almost free) tutoring exist abroad, orchestrated by local administrations and/or local associations if not by the State. This is notably the case with the administrations that belong to the International Network of Educating Cities. This network encompasses 300 cities (including 51 in France) from 32 countries in southern Europe, Latin America and Africa, which all share a determination to be involved in the educational sector, alongside schools and other systems. At the [9th International Congress of Educating Cities](#), which was held in Lyon in September 2006, numerous initiatives were evoked for young people from working-class districts, in which homework support is sometimes combined with broader cultural activities. Nevertheless, as far as we know, no research work has yet attempted to carry out a more systematic study and comparison of these systems (as far as this is possible).

Paid private tutoring

A sector subject to greater research

Given the increasing scale of the private tutoring phenomenon, and the lever that it holds on society, the attention paid by researchers and decision-makers to this issue remains modest. In France, *the only* research work entirely dedicated to private tutoring dates back to 1994 ([Glasman & Collonges](#)). Studies carried out abroad focus on countries where the phenomenon has reached such proportions that it is considered as ordinary, or even essential. Several reasons are evoked to explain the rarity of the research work: i) it is a great deal easier to observe the educational system than the private tuition system (which operates "in the shadow" of the former), ii) State data on the issues are rare, iii) private teachers and parents are rather disinclined to reveal the sums exchanged in these transactions, and finally iv) researchers do not have the authority they require to access the relevant information concerning private tutoring agencies.

In this context, Mark Bray, at the time a professor at the University of Hong Kong, initiated an international comparative research study on this phenomenon, publishing [The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Planners](#) (1999), under the aegis of the International Institute of Education Planning (Unesco). Basing his study on the body of work produced over the last decade on private tuition in different countries, Bray draws up a comprehensive overview of the variety of situations observed locally. He highlights the principal reasoning and policies in place, which are governed by the cultural, educational and economic characteristics of the countries concerned.

We will first all provide a general overview of the private sector abroad and then return to the specific characteristics of the French situation.

The worldwide situation

According to Bray ([1999](#); [2003](#); [2005](#)) the countries where private tutoring is the most developed figure most prominently in Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe. In these countries, the percentage of pupils using this solution can be as high as 50%, and even higher in some countries (certain studies evoke figures of over 70% of the school population in the Korean Republic and Taiwan...). Western Europe, North America and Australia are more moderate in their approach and are ranked second in the world landscape.

This phenomenon concerns both rich and poor countries, but in all cases it is more accentuated in urban zones than in rural regions.

In certain Asian countries, private tutoring is implemented on a daily basis and frequently covers several subjects. It can exceed 10 hours per week. The pupils receive tuition in the evening after school, but also at weekends and during the holidays; to such an extent, in fact, that their working day (9hrs) is often longer than that of their parents (7hrs).

Bray identifies two, clearly separate "markets": in one the tutoring is given at home by a private teacher, and in the other it is given in classes with numerous pupils (the *juku*, for example, in Japan). He also differentiates two types of situation, i.e. whether or not the teacher is the pupil's usual teacher in the formal education system.

The study clearly shows that "***the dominant group is of students whose performance is already good and who want to maintain their competitive edge***", despite the fact that, once caught up in the daily spirit of competition, most pupils have a more negative perception of their level and justify the use of tutoring through the fact that they consider their achievements to be "insufficient". The demand for tuition is higher in the secondary system than in the primary system, particularly in the countries where further education is governed by exam results. The most popular subjects are generally the most selective, i.e. the sciences and languages.

□ The motivations

Mark Bray highlights four essential motivations (sometimes combined) that in all cases contribute to the development of private tutoring:

- **To provide additional revenues for teachers, whose basic salary is insufficient.** In this case it is supply that imposes the demand; teachers are poorly paid by the mainstream school system, and are consequently obliged to increase their revenues by giving private lessons. They create the demand through a form of blackmail, giving incomplete or mediocre education at school and ensuring that their private tutoring is of the highest quality. Some don't even hesitate to "*deliberately fail students in order to create a market for their services*". Certain States, aware of the risks of this corruptive practice, have stopped their teachers from accepting payment for private tutoring given to their own pupils; however, teachers can still organise their approach amongst themselves, so that they receive each others pupils on a reciprocal basis;

- **To offset the insufficiencies of the educational system in place.** This position is dominant in countries where the school institution struggles to attain its objectives, given the increases in the pupil population segment, and a lack of resources, skills and organisation... This situation can come about as a result of the previously mentioned one. Indeed, in certain countries (Cambodia, the Lebanon and Eastern Europe), the combined impact of inflation and the stagnation of salaries in the mainstream teaching sector has caused a good number of teachers (amongst the most qualified) to abandon the formal system and join the private sector, a phenomenon which has exacerbated the decline in the quality of the teaching offered by the national education system;
- **To meet the social demands of "qualifications".** This factor is important in the countries that are still behind in terms of development, and where there is a major differential between the traditional economy and the modern economy, creating major inequalities in the employment market, centred around the difference between the qualified and the unqualified;
- **To invest in a strategy of excellence.** In the Asian countries, a high level of education generates honour and respect from one's fellow citizens, and consequently this in itself represents a sought-after objective. In other countries, the ambition to be successful is more directly linked to the economic and social position that might be attained by having a lucrative profession. By choosing private tuition, **one is not only hoping to succeed, but also to be more successful than the others**, as well as to obtain better exam results and consequently open up avenues towards better sectors and the most prestigious schools, colleges or universities. The system in countries where schools, colleges or universities are graded on the basis of exam results encourages this approach of course, which can begin very early (at primary school for example), thereby conditioning access to the best rated secondary establishments and later the best universities.

□ The implications

As we have already seen with regard to homework support programme, *"identification of the impact of private supplementary tutoring on individuals' academic achievement is difficult because so many other factors are involved. Also, [...] populations of students who do and do not receive supplementary tutoring cannot easily be compared because they are rarely uniform in other characteristics."*

Whilst the characteristics of the educational system can have an impact on the practices that are developed 'in its shadow', Bray reciprocally observes that, *"unlike most shadows, private supplementary tutoring is not just a passive entity but may negatively affect even the body which it imitates"*. The researcher lists these effects, which can sometimes be positive but more often than not are negative:

- An impact on the dynamics of teaching and learning in the mainstream teaching system: the teachers may have their workload lightened with pupils that respond better; however, **the tutoring sessions attended by some pupils increase the gap between the different levels within the class**. Some teachers react by providing help for the least gifted, whereas others adopt as a standard the level of those that opt for homework support programme and consequently allow the gulf between the different levels to widen. **This phenomenon creates pressure and gradually encourages other pupils to give into the temptation of private tutoring** as a way of keeping up;
- In certain cases, private tuition can provoke a lack of interest in pupils vis-à-vis their mainstream education, which they may see as lower quality than the private lessons;
- In the countries where homework support programme is very intensive, it becomes a source of fatigue for both the pupils and the private teachers. This fatigue can encourage both parties to rest... during school time;
- The public educational systems are supposed to favour access to a broad range of objectives, including the personal fulfilment of pupils. However, *"the tutorial institutes, which focus on preparation for exams, distort the overall curriculum which has been designed with careful balance by specialists in that task"*.

With regard to the social implications, **most of the observations made confirm that after-school tutoring maintains and often accentuates the existing inequalities**, i.e. socio-economic inequalities, geographical inequalities between urban zones and rural regions, inequalities between the sexes and sometimes also inequalities between different cultural origins within the same country (which reflects a different stratification of the values associated with education, according to the cultural group).

□ The public authorities' responses

The last section of the report by Bray (1999) with regard to the educational planners is particularly rich, and focuses on an analysis of empirical experiences to anticipate the choices available to decision-makers faced with the development of private tutoring:

- **A 'laissez-faire' approach.** This attitude reflects either a deliberate choice to let the market regulate itself, or a reluctance on the part of the public authorities to intervene in an area that is out of their 'comfort zone'. Bray nevertheless recommends a more active approach;
- **Monitoring, but not intervention.** This attitude consists of collecting data on the market, in view of being able to control the gulf between the official education system and private tutoring (being aware, for example, of the salaries of the private teachers in order to re-adjust those of the state school teachers etc);
- **Regulations and control.** With this approach, the public authorities can monitor and re-adjust any excesses in the private sector (e.g. they can regulate salaries, the work-force involved in private tutoring and the right for teachers to teach in the official school system whilst at the same time offering private tutoring etc);
- **Encouragement.** This option revolves around a positive approach and the benefits that it can offer both the pupils and the society as a whole (for example, if the tutoring is given by non-profitable organisations, or if it offers a means of absorbing unemployment...). Encouragement from the State consequently takes the form of directives, helping pupils come into contact with teachers and vice-versa, and even subsidies and tax incentives;
- **Prohibition.** This is the most radical approach, aimed at evening out social inequalities. It can lead, for example, to authorising only non-profit making organisations to give after-school tutoring. Nevertheless, Bray considers this approach to be somewhat inefficient, as it is difficult to implement.

Bray then develops several strategies, already implemented by certain States or to be envisaged by others:

- **Reduce economic differentials** that exist within the economic market and the employment market, and which create major stratification in the education sector. This is an ambitious objective that Bray acknowledges is easier to prescribe than to attain...

- **Make education systems less elitist**, by favouring, for example, the standardisation of levels, and by restricting the grouping of pupils according to their abilities and their achievements, especially at primary school level;
- **Reform systems of assessment**, by avoiding the pupil grading system, which "*creates a sense of success for the top pupil, but creates a sense of failure for all pupils from the second place down*". As we have already seen, the spirit of competition boosts the popularity of after-school tutoring, and so it is better to "*encourage pupils to do their personal best against their all standards, rather than against the standard of the mass*";
- **Encourage teachers to be more supportive of slow learners**, through an attentive, more flexible and more encouraging attitude. This nevertheless requires higher qualification levels on the part of the educational staff;
- **Ensure that the curriculum is not overloaded**, which can make supplementary tutoring almost obligatory;
- **Find ways to make mainstream classes more interesting**, by developing more innovative methods, diversifying the learning forms, removing the teacher's focus of attention from the pupils themselves and integrating ICT into learning approaches;
- **Promote public awareness**, both via media campaigns and by encouraging non profit-making initiatives for less privileged pupils.

□ And also

- With regard to North America, we can recommend the work by the Canadians Aurini & Davies (2003; 2004; 2005). Their understanding of the phenomenon and their assessment of the market trends shed some interesting light on the issue, considering the resemblances with the French situation.
- Ireson Judith. (2004). « Private Tutoring: how prevalent and effective is it? ». *London Review of Education*, vol. 2, n° 2, p. 109-122.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (2006). *The Market for Parental and Family Support Services*. Department for education and skills: London. <<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/RRP/u014971/index.shtml>>

The situation in France

Glasman explains first of all that, given the current thinness of the research carried out on private tutoring... "*if we had limited ourselves to the research results alone we would have overlooked a major phenomenon*". He consequently decided to make use of the data collected during his survey, together with those published recently in the press. This is also why (in this and the next section) we refer to information taken from the report by Glasman (2004) as well as from other more recent sources, such as the [sectorial study](#) on the after-school tutoring market, carried out by Ludovic Melot from the company [Xerfi](#) (2005).

According to these sources, the annual estimate of the number of pupils that opt for private tutoring varies between 850,000 and 2 million. The private market is split into two categories of operators (to which one can add a specific public operator, the [CNED](#) (the national e-learning centre), which offers a distance learning service [dealt with later on]):

- **The private teachers that act on an individual basis.** Parents and teachers contact each other through recommendations or via classified ads, and increasingly via the Internet. This direct contact between the family and the teacher is still the most widespread approach. The teacher may be experienced (either still active or retired), a student or a young graduate looking for work. The transaction is generally not declared, but a tax incentive is gradually encouraging private teachers to legalise their work so as to make their proposal more attractive for families who can benefit from it;
- **After-school tutoring companies.** These companies represent a more modest slice of the market but have seen spectacular growth (approximately 10% per year) over the last few years. The tuition proposal is broader, more detailed, more reactive and can rapidly adapt to families' emerging requirements:
 - **Private lessons**, given at home by a teacher sent by the company, or given in small groups on the agency's premises. An educational assessment is often proposed prior to the tutoring sessions, thereby making it possible to fix objectives, personalise the programme and also commit the parents to paying for a "batch" of hours for a given period. This option is the most popular and is seeing considerable growth;
 - **Intensive courses** to boost a pupil's level or prepare for exams, organised in small groups during the holiday periods. This option is developing slowly;
 - **Composite proposals**, which combine after-school services (nursery) with homework support, or even combine work with leisure activities during the holidays. These options, clearly designed for the convenience of parents rather than to cater for the needs of the children, are starting to emerge;
 - **On-line tutoring**, still rather undeveloped but expanding (we will come back to this later on);
 - **School coaching**, this private service is like sports coaching. It focuses on the work that the child must carry out *on himself* in order to become capable of succeeding at school, i.e. developing self-knowledge confidence, motivation, organisation methods etc... This proposal is emerging but it is still reserved for an elite.

Families are not the only clients of these tutoring companies. Indeed, some insurance companies offer their clients the possibility of having a teacher sent to their home in the event of their child suffering an extended illness. In order to do this, they may sign partnerships with tutoring companies. The study by Xerfi anticipates the "risk" that large banking and insurance groups may soon see the appeal of integrating this new activity into their holdings. A good example of this is the Calistea association, which became the limited company Domicours in 2003, following its takeover by three insurance companies. In reference to its origins, Domicours nevertheless defines itself as "*a tutoring service proposed by the social economy*".

We should also note that the market is dominated by a few leaders (including Acadomia, which is listed on the French Stock Exchange) and that the proposal offered by the franchise agencies is developing on an ever-increasing basis. As a result, the company Sylvan, a leader in the American market, is currently gaining ground in Europe with the introduction of agencies that adopt the American "learning centers" model.

Glasman shows how "*private tutoring exists and is developing in a situation of counter-dependency on the school system, which it works alongside, supports and [...] competes with*".

Homework support services "*are adapted and tailored to school academic expectations*". By focusing directly on the school system's expectations, and more specifically on the evaluation methods that it adopts (exercises, tests, exams or entry-

exams etc...) in order to assess the level reached by each pupil, the private tutoring strategy is somewhat opportunist. It primarily teaches the pupil to better understand the school system's expectations, to adapt to them, respond to them efficiently and even anticipate them; in other words, to control them. **Private tutoring consequently gives priority to learning and revision exercises, repetition work, standard responses and targeting the subjects** that are most likely to appear in exams...

Creating competition with the school system, because the private tutoring sector contributes to presenting the school as "*a sort of counter-model*". It puts heavy emphasis, through both its existence and its operational mode, on "**what the school fails to achieve, or does not do to a sufficient extent or do well enough**". It can, however, highlight a range of values that carry a positive image: reactivity to a pupil's difficulties, the individualisation of teaching, communication and transparency vis-à-vis parents, choice of teacher, (i.e. who best suits a pupil), and finally a guarantee of achievement and not merely an obligation to implement the resources... These are the factors that make the difference.

Glasman proposes an interesting interpretation of the gradual change seen in the positioning of private operators, through the names chosen during the different periods:

- In the Sixties and the Seventies, private tutoring was happy to define itself within the realms of *remediation*: *Math-Assistance*, *Math-Secours*, *Ortho-Math*;
- In the mid-Eighties the sector positioned itself within the realms of *competition*: *Performance*, *Études Plus*, *Stud Avenir*, *Progress System*;
- The most recent generation "*prefers 'normal' or relaxed connotations vis-à-vis tutoring*: *Complétude*, *Après la Classe*, *Keepschool*, *Domicours*"... This image of serenity conveyed today by private companies is particularly suitable for negotiating the anxiety that a certain school reality (and consequently a certain employment market reality) can arouse in parents and children.

Communication media and strategies have been adapted to suit these developments. Whereas private companies used to remain in the shadows, they no longer hesitate to show themselves and launch aggressive advertising campaigns.

In the first section we noted that, for a sizeable minority of "good" pupils, private tutoring is part of a strategy of excellence. This strategy can be linked to the desire to access "good" schools and colleges, already highlighted in the *Newsletter* of last month on [Parents and Schools](#).

Private tutoring service-providers "benefit from any factors that increase academic competitiveness and tension at school, such as privatisation, competition between schools or deterioration of certain segments of the school system etc".

These factors allow providers to offer their services for a limited investment, as all they need is an office to open a private agency, if the sessions are held at the pupil's home. The performances of such a company essentially revolve around two factors: its commercial dynamics on the one hand (marketing, publicity etc...), and, on the other hand, its capacity to recruit (and keep) private teachers. As we will see below, these teachers are rarely employees of the company. It is the families that employ them; the company only acts as an intermediary and administrator between the two parties. The difficulties encountered by these tutoring companies in recruiting qualified tutors represent one of the sector's weak points highlighted by the Xerfi study. There are several factors behind this:

- Qualifications: everyone is aware that 4 years of higher education is not a guarantee of educational competence;
- Consistency: the availability of the students or young graduates who are often employed by these private tutoring companies can change at any given moment (exams, recruitment for a stable job etc);
- Payment: the low payment levels encourage tutors to deal directly with the parents.

Teachers are essentially motivated to work for a private company by two factors: not having to find their own clientele and accumulating sufficient hours to earn enough money (or sufficiently add to their salary).

We should note that some tutors form groups in order to create networks, thereby providing parents and pupils with an alternative proposal to the one offered by the private operators.

The economic equation

In France, **the total after-school tutoring market is currently estimated at 2 billion Euros**, encompassing both the homework support services offered by associations, local administrations or insurance companies, and the private tutoring organised by companies or by individual teachers (declared or not) (MEN, 2006; Oddo, 2006). One can attempt to break this figure down, despite the fact that it is difficult to corroborate the different partial estimates coming from different sources:

- The private tutoring market represents approximately €100m, if one bases one's calculations on the total amount of financing allocated to this sector (MEN, 2006), i.e. a market share of 5%;
- The "visible" proportion (i.e. the declared proportion) of the private tutoring sector totals over €600m, according to the Xerfi study (2005), or €800m, according to Acadomia (2004); i.e. between 30% and 40% of the market;
- This suggests that the 'black market' proportion (i.e. the non-declared percentage), is between 1.1 and €1.3bn, i.e. 55% to 65% of the total market.

In 2003, 275,000 children attended an annual average of 36 hours of **homework support programme**, i.e. a total of **nearly 10 million hours x children**. The total budget allocated to the public financing of private tutoring has risen significantly, as a result of the recent funds contributed by the educational success programme: €60m in 2003, €92m in 2005 and €99m in 2006. Not taking into account expenses linked to premises, the average 'cost' price comes out at approximately **€6 per hour, per child**. This figure is reconciled with the average cost of an hour of 'schooling' for pupils preparing for entrance exams to further education establishments: between €15 and €20 (Glasman, 2004) or an hour of private tutoring: €28 (MEN, 2006).

"After-school tutoring and homework support" are part of the "personal services" approved by the French Labour Code. According to a [study by Darès](#) (2005), **more than 6 million hours of private tutoring were declared in 2003**, i.e. 1% of the total family employment sector.

The personal services sector, which is considered as a segment with strong development potential, **has been the subject of a "social cohesion plan"** launched in 2005 by the minister Jean-Louis Borloo. **The objective of this plan is to create 500,000 jobs** by the end of 2008, and to bring any undeclared work out into the open. The two essential components of this policy are i) a tax benefit and ii) the implementing, in January 2006 of the "universal service employment cheque" (CESU), a new social currency that will eventually be used to pay for approved "personal services".

Given this environment, **the economic model for private tutoring is currently enjoying a series of measures, the benefits of which are unequally divided between the different players (both direct and indirect).**

The following presentation attempts to summarise the information essentially provided by the [site](#) of the French national agency for personal services and the [report](#) by the ministry of Employment.

- **For approved tutoring companies**, the *Vat rate in force* is 5.5%. Furthermore, the *salaries* paid to the teachers they employ directly or make available to the families are *exempt from employers' social charges*. Finally, by declaring themselves as "representatives", they acquire the *right to be paid in 'CESU'* by the families and to carry out the administrative formalities when required.
It should also be noted that these companies (whether private or public), as well as the social services organisations, benefit from advantageous conditions for acquiring these 'CESU' with a view to redistributing them to their employees or their beneficiaries, i.e. free or at a reduced price (same principle as the 'chèques-vacances' system). The benefits linked to "pre-financing" the 'CESU' cheques can only contribute to increasing the population of users and consequently to stimulating the personal services market.
- **For families subject to income tax**, a *50% tax rebate* is applied to the sums paid for these services. Furthermore, the 'CESU' system considerably *simplifies the employers' obligations*, serving as a means of payment, payslip and record of social charge payments (charges, as we have seen, that are exempt from the *employer's charge*).
- **For families that do not pay tax** (nearly half of all households), the granting of 'CESU' (partially or totally pre-financed by the employer or via a social services agency) represents an incentive to make use of 'personal services'. We do not know, however, to what extent these 'CESU' cheques will be used to pay for private tutoring.
- **For the private tutors themselves**, the sole benefit seems to be *the increase in the potential market*, which in turn improves their chances of working. However, if a tutor is given work via a private tutoring company, he must generally pay for the "introductory" service that this company provides with regard to the family that employs him. Furthermore, the total income that *he is obliged to declare* for this activity does not correspond to the sums actually received but rather to the *total paid by the family (excluding charges)*, i.e. approximately twice the teacher's salary.

In order to illustrate the functioning of this economic model, here is an example based on figures that are part of a financial analysis report on the company Acadomia, produced in 2006 by the brokering firm [Oddo](#).

For the registration of their child, parents must first pay a registration fee of approximately €75, which is not tax deductible. Then, for each hour of tutoring, they will pay an average sum of €32, out of which a net total of €14 (sometimes less) goes to the teacher, €5 for employee charges and €13 to Acadomia. Out of this total of €32, €16 is tax deductible for the parents. Ultimately, therefore, the overall cost of an hour's tutoring comes out at €16. The tutor must declare an income of $14 + 13 = €27$, but can nevertheless deduct the €13 paid to Acadomia as "expenses".

We do not have any information on the total tax rebates granted annually to families for private services. It would nevertheless be interesting to obtain this data and compare it with the total subsidies granted to the homework support programmes sector.

After-school tutoring and ICT

In 2001, Claude [Borgel](#) reviewed 40 French sites offering on-line tutoring services (either free or paid-for). He observed that most of these sites merely transferred onto the Internet the contents of schoolbooks or extra-curricula textbooks and proposed a distance learning service. Only the Paraschool firm set itself apart from the others, offering both personalised programmes and an interactive dialogue interface, integrating the answers supplied by the pupil and an interpretation of any mistakes. Following this review, he set about defining the qualities expected of a digital tutoring service, and then creating a way of integrating Paraschool's proposal into a concrete project.

An article by Aude [Inaudi](#) (2005) analyses the respective positioning of two digital homework support platforms, chosen for their presence in the catalogue of the "Canal numérique des savoirs" and the "Kiosque numérique de l'éducation", and for the scope of their proposals, which offer several subjects and academic levels. These two platforms, Paraschool and Maxicours, both set up by companies formed at the beginning of this new century, specialise in the on-line after-school tutoring market niche. In the analysis, the author highlights other aspects that these two platforms have in common: "*the close link between what the system provides for reading on the screen and the educational environment, i.e. in this case the educational policies in favour of digital resources*", "*the determination of these publishers to provide the school system with resources that implement specific knowledge, at the moment rarely available at school*", (whilst complying with institutional expectations with regard to the transparency and the simplicity of the interface), "*a determination to integrate the founder-values of the national education system, notably the free aspect and the concept of equal opportunities*", and finally "*the wish to acquire the type of legitimacy represented by a specific stamp of approval, i.e. the school institution*".

At the [conference](#) entitled "*Les institutions éducatives face au numérique*" (the educational institutions and the digital era) organised at the end of 2005, Jean-Pierre [Archambault](#), responsible for monitoring technological developments at the SCE-REN, provided an overview of the school publishing sector and observed "*an offensive by the service activities*" in terms of after-school tutoring offered by the publishers, which "*sell mediation and services, which focus on the programmes [and] software that can be acquired for free*". Archambault, who supports the culture of open source software and Creative Commons-licensed tools, and promotes collaborative practices (which he considers maintain "profound affinities" with the educational environment), observed that this deteriorating situation was "*the fruit of the State's neglect*", resulting from the "*progressive abandoning of [its] determination to control and to intervene*". But beyond the commercial aspect, he questioned the educational potential of on-line tutoring, which raises the same questions as distance institutional e-learning. "*This system is a precious educational tool, providing it is used as a supplementary tool and not as a substitution. E-learning can offer benefits for an autonomous and motivated adult segment [...]. However, one must not treat pupils as if they are already autonomous, when in fact they are merely being taught to become autonomous. The acquisition of this autonomy requires human mediation*".

What is the current situation with regard to usage? In the sense of mutual aid, there are various free sites that are more than just standard programmed, guided and tutored sites. These sites also offer exchanges between the different players involved, i.e. pupils, teachers, parents and the various operators. [Cyberpapy.com](#), for example, created in 1997, was constructed on the basis of a forum, structured by school subjects, which enables pupils to obtain help from volunteer adults. The young

pupil asks a question or outlines his homework and, in return, he receives explanations and avenues to explore, which can help him to overcome his initial difficulty. Other pupils also sometimes provide input on the subject, which results in a genuine collaborative approach, and often leads to a positive outcome, if the enthusiastic thanks expressed by the initial poster are anything to go by. Another example, although not solely dedicated to schoolwork, is the site Momes.net, which also hosts a forum (although more mixed), where the exchanges consist of help with homework, swapping practices or offering advice. These exchanges can be between teachers, pupils and even between young people and adults. Furthermore, this site plays host to a database of downloadable resources (classified by subject), which consists of voluntary contributions made by the users. Teachers place exercises or educational sequences on the site concerning such and such an aspect of the curriculum, and pupils make available their personal work, presentations etc...

The existence of these mutual-aid sites, stimulated by the rapidity and reactivity offered by ICT, will undoubtedly be examined in greater depth by researchers and practitioners. For example, how should one assess the spontaneous collaborative practices observed? Personal gain is clearly a factor with regard to these Internet exchanges (starting with the gain of the initial poster asking the question), but the generosity and spirit of mutual aid dominates these exchanges, and to a certain extent represents the bond that holds these virtual communities together. The usage of a site such as this also offers an opportunity to learn ethics, as the new user quickly discovers that the acts of giving and receiving are inseparable.

Thot proposes a recently updated [list](#) of "70 quality sites" that help with schoolwork preparation and revision, and offer homework support programme and additional resources to help pupils be successful at school.

The Café pédagogique francilien dedicated its first [report](#) in September 2006 to the contribution made by ICT to homework support programme. It examined an on-line maths tutoring service, tested over three years in senior high secondary schools in the Île-de-France region. The report presents the viewpoints of four teachers who took part in either the supervision of the initiative or in its testing in the field. Three digital resources were initially used in class, under the supervision of the maths teacher, which the pupils were subsequently able to use on an unlimited basis from their homes. Whilst the experiment enables private publishers to improve their products' functions, the results are not totally satisfactory in terms of educational benefits. *"There is still a great deal of work to be done in order to develop an homework support programme culture for the most under-privileged, which is efficiently stimulated by resources such as this"*, concludes Michèle Artigue, ICT manager for IREM Paris 7, a maths teaching research institute. One can read a [full report](#) on this initiative, and notably the 2004 [evaluation report](#) carried out on the request of the Île-de-France region.

The aim of the "Accompagnement à la scolarité, égalité des chances et TIC" (homework support programme, equal opportunities and ICT) [seminar](#) held in Amiens in November 2005 was to define the specifications for the proposal tender launched in the spring of 2006 on this issue. The projects were required to focus on systems of homework support programme, in terms of organisation, management and financing, and to integrate the usage of a well-adapted digital platform. They were also required to function on a "significant scale" and be subsequently generalised, so as to avoid the multiplication of small-scale local experiments, which are often successful but are difficult to reproduce or transpose. In July 2006, the Interministerial Committee for the Information Society published a list of the 8 [chosen projects](#) (out of the 33 proposals received).

The most ambitious project was the joint initiative implemented by the CNED (the national e-learning centre) and Maxicours, under the name of [MaxiCned](#), designed to provide tutoring for 3rd year pupils at primary school, and more specifically *"20% of an age category encountering school, social and digital difficulties, which represents approximately 500,000 pupils"*.

The report by MEN (2006) considers that *"across-the-board usage of ICT in education seems to be a determining factor in attaining the homework support programme development objectives"* evoked above. These technologies must be used *"as a tool for ensuring the continuum between the school system and the tutoring"*. In order to achieve this, the authors notably recommend:

- Studying, in conjunction with the local administrations, the possibility of providing **the most underprivileged families with the necessary equipment**;
- Creating a professional certificate for the tutors;
- Integrating, from the outset, support systems into the digital work environments, *"so as to combine the school environment with the extra-curricula environment via a single digital workspace"*;
- *"creating a means of certifying the tutoring systems on the basis of specifications or a quality charter"*.

In this section, we have seen that the distinction between "homework support programme" and "private tutoring" is no longer relevant with the advent of digital resources as they can be used in class or at home without any distinction, either via paid access for the families or via free access granted through state approval and direct financing with the publishers. If the resource in itself is identical, it is clearly then the nature and the quality of the service that is primordial.

Prospects

The [Recommendation](#) n° 15 expressed in May 2005 by the HCEE (high council of school evaluation) on *"Le travail des élèves pour l'école en dehors de l'école"* (School-work carried out by pupils outside school) provides a summary of the principal observations and results listed in the report by Dominique Glasman. The conclusion drawn in terms of recommendations for the public decision-makers is for *"a more efficient and more equitable national policy"*:

- **Better awareness of the after-school tutoring sector** and its developments through:
 - The launch of a joint programme of studies focusing on the different systems, the time devoted to them by pupils, the expectations of teachers and parents, and their impacts and cost according to social category,
 - The introduction of a system to monitor the development of educational products and activities outside school (games, software programmes etc...);
- **The immediate implementation of measures concerning homework:**
 - Educational specifications for defining the objectives and the amount of homework to be assigned by teachers;
 - A better link between homework support programme and the school system, revolving around these educational specifications;
 - The development, within the schools themselves, of a co-ordinated and transparent approach with regard to assigning homework (which needs to be monitored by the school heads and education inspectors);
- ***"The problems associated with private tutoring, which maintain, and even exacerbate, inequalities must no longer be tolerated"***. The question of *"the purpose of the public education system"* needs to be raised again: *"ensuring*

that all pupils succeed", does not mean *"ensuring that some do better than others"*. In order to achieve this, the following factors are important:

- Explicit integration of the acquisition of learning methods and support with individual work into school hours and the teacher's vocational assignments;
- Organisation of a time and place for schoolwork exercises and revision within the school;
- Conclusions to be drawn from the "Zep conventions" (Priority education zone agreements) made between the "École des Sciences Politiques" and senior high secondary schools in working-class districts, in order to develop, at every stage of the schooling process *"decisive behaviour that will lead to success"* in the most underprivileged pupils.

The HCEE concludes in these terms: *"The resources for attaining this objective exist. **The allocation to the public education system of resources that the national administration is currently allocating to aid with private tutoring (notably through tax benefits)** should enable the public educational authorities to be more efficient and ensure greater equity in the level of success"*.

The report produced a year later by the ministry (MEN, [2006](#)) (although not specifically aimed at responding to these HCEE recommendations) examined some of these ideas in greater depth, such as the organisation of a time and a place for "controlled study" within schools and, of course, a closer link between homework support programme and the school system, thereby giving substance to the numerous recommendations described in a previous section.

In their introduction to this report, the authors, whilst outlining the threat that commercial tutoring poses to the equality of opportunities, evoke the two types of solutions that *a priori* could be implemented. One consists of *"adapting the existing state run homework support systems, which are free for families, to the current problems"*, (and this is the approach chosen in the ensuing sections of the report). The other involves ***"having confidence in the market and reducing or eliminating the inequalities that it produces, by creating new systems of financial compensation for families on a modest income"***, but this approach was not explored further as it was not within the remit of the authors.

In addition to the difficulties encountered by the National Education system on the edge of its remit, it also has no authority in terms of taxation, which is the exclusive domain of the ministry of Economy. Furthermore, we have seen that the tax incentives benefiting the private tutoring services result directly from an employment policy that is unlikely to be changed according to the observers of the economic sector.

Herein lies all the complexity of the problem: on the one hand, homework support programme is under the control of four ministries: the national Education system, Health, Social Security and Employment; on the other hand, the ministry of Employment and the ministry of Economy are both involved in the development of the commercial forms of after-school tutoring. In these conditions, it seems that it can only be at the highest level that the political equation concerning after-school tutoring could be resolved, thereby creating a system that promotes equal opportunities for everyone, such as the National Education authorities would like to see.

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