

## Results of Vocational Guidance in France

*The Vocational Guidance Recommendation adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1949 refers to the desirability of carrying out sample surveys "to measure the results of vocational guidance in individual cases and to evaluate vocational guidance policy and methods". An enquiry of this type was undertaken last year in France—a country with considerable experience of vocational guidance.<sup>1</sup> The methods used in the enquiry and some of the results obtained are summarised in the following article.*

There has been a great development of vocational guidance in France, and the 200 centres functioning under the Ministry of Education are now counselling young persons at a rate exceeding 200,000 a year. The National Labour Research and Vocational Guidance Institute therefore undertook a survey in 1950, with the support of the Government and the help of many of the centres, in order to ascertain the immediate and long-term value and effectiveness of the guidance provided, and the relative usefulness of the various sources of information used in giving guidance. Since vocational guidance is no longer in the experimental stage but is now capable of general application, it was also hoped that the enquiry would strengthen the link between practitioners on the one hand, and the teaching and research branches of the Institute on the other.

### *Method Used*

The survey was carried out by means of questionnaires and covered young persons who had been given vocational guidance between 1 October 1942 and 31 July 1948.<sup>2</sup> In the case of those counselled within one year of the survey, the family was asked to complete a questionnaire; 4,021 completed forms were forwarded by 35 vocational guidance centres. In the case of those counselled

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. LX, No. 4, October 1949, p. 391: "Vocational Guidance in France" by Mrs. C. BENASSY-CHAUFFARD.

<sup>2</sup> For the text of the questionnaires used and other details of the survey, see INSTITUT NATIONAL D'ETUDE DU TRAVAIL ET D'ORIENTATION PROFESSIONNELLE: *Le contrôle de l'orientation professionnelle* (Paris, 1950).

three years previously, there were two questionnaires, one to be completed by the family and the other by the school or (in the case of apprentices) the employer; completed forms relating to 489 young persons were collected by 17 centres. In the case of those counselled five years before the survey, the questionnaire was to be completed by a social worker or vocational guidance officer after an interview with the person concerned; 144 completed forms were sent in by five centres.

### *Checks*

Difficulties in interpreting the replies were to be expected. As the survey covered only a sample of the population, there was no information on 65 to 75 per cent. of the children counselled. The persons who answered the questions might have misunderstood them in spite of the clear instructions given. There might also be differences in the standards applied by employers and teachers, or dissimilarities between the populations of different areas and between the children regularly counselled at the end of the elementary school course and other young persons coming for guidance individually. However, after applying statistical checks (including the use of a random sample of 100 cases as a control group), the Institute found a remarkable degree of homogeneity, which showed that the effectiveness of the guidance given in the various centres in France was fully comparable. This homogeneity was attributed mainly to the high degree of standardisation in the organisation of vocational guidance and to the fact that all guidance officers receive the same training. Tests of homogeneity as regards the extent to which the advice given had been followed ("advice followed in full", "advice partly followed" and "advice not followed") and as regards the degree of satisfaction expressed by the young person ("very satisfied", "satisfied", "dissatisfied", "no reply") gave similar results. No attempt was made to ascertain the degree of homogeneity as regards the other questions in each questionnaire, since this would have involved extensive statistical calculations.

### *Mode of Analysis*

Each item in the enquiry (e.g., sex, degree of satisfaction, degree of success, distribution by occupations, etc.) was considered in relation to the three degrees of implementation of the advice, and the results were expressed in percentages. The percentages noted under "advice followed" and "advice not followed" were then compared and the pairs presenting a significant difference were picked out. The threshold of significance was in all cases taken to be 0.05.

### *Selected Results*

Of the young persons who had received guidance one year before the survey, 83 per cent. had followed the advice and 17 per cent. had

not. More than half stated that they were very satisfied, and 1.7 per cent. that they were dissatisfied. Of those who had followed the advice in full, 66.5 per cent. were very satisfied, and of those who had not followed the advice, 39.5 per cent. were very satisfied. The proportion of "dissatisfied" was 0.8 per cent. in the former group, and 4.4 per cent. in the latter. The percentage of young persons in the "waiting" category (mainly unemployed persons) was 1.8 in the case of those who had followed the advice in full, and 11 in the case of those who had not followed the advice. (The effect of vocational guidance is very marked here.) Of the young persons following a general education course—a category relatively uninfluenced by the guidance officer—the number studying as a result of following the advice in full (20.5 per cent.) was slightly greater than the number studying against the advice of the guidance officer (18.5 per cent.). On the other hand, the proportion of young persons who were "very satisfied" was higher among those studying on the advice of the officer than among those studying against his advice (48 per cent. and 34.8 per cent. respectively). Of those apprenticed to employers, 13.9 per cent. had followed the advice in full and 32.6 per cent. had not followed it; but, taking all the young persons placed with an employer together, 76.3 per cent. of those who followed the advice in full and only 47.6 per cent. of those who had not followed it were stated to be "very satisfied". The conclusion drawn was that the vocational guidance officers only encourage young persons to become apprenticed with an employer when they have made sure that such training is in every way suitable for them. It was found that the number of juveniles advised to take a technical course was much larger than the number advised to enter private apprenticeship.

As regards distribution by occupation, out of the youths entering machine trades, there were 19 per cent. of those who had followed the advice in full and 12.3 per cent. of those who had not followed it; in the furniture trades there were 13.2 per cent. of the former category and 8.6 per cent. of the latter. In the food trade and clerical employment, the percentages were reversed—2.5 per cent. and 4.9 per cent. in the food trade; 1.1 per cent. and 3.7 per cent. in clerical work. The reasons for this may be that counsellors favour complete training for all young persons who can possibly benefit thereby and that they incline to advise general training for one of the large industrial groups rather than immediate specialisation in one of its branches. In the food trade on the other hand, many juveniles are employed as errand boys and shop assistants. Only 0.2 per cent. of the youths who had followed the advice in full were employed as labourers; 2.7 per cent. of those who had not followed the advice were so employed. The guidance officers only direct youths towards unskilled employment if they are incapable of anything else, and even in such cases prefer to send them to a vocational education centre so that they may improve their general education. Similarly, the guidance officer will avoid sending a girl of 14 years straight into a job as a

saleswoman, but often recommends that she attend a commercial school to learn office work, even if he thinks that she should become a shop assistant later.

As regards the young persons counselled three years before the survey, it was hard to maintain the distinction between those who had followed the advice in full and those who had partly followed the advice; these two groups were therefore combined. The percentage of persons who had followed the advice was only slightly smaller than in the case of those counselled one year before the survey, and was still in excess of 75 per cent. The persons covered had either been placed in schools (mainly technical schools) or apprenticed to employers. Only a very small number—both of those who had followed the advice and of those who had not followed it—stated that they did not like the trade learnt. However, 9.6 per cent. of those who had followed the advice, and 30.5 per cent. of those who had not, said that they would have preferred a different trade, so that the contentedness of those who had not followed the advice was perhaps more apparent than real.

The percentage of young persons taking a general education course was much smaller than in the group who had received guidance one year before the survey; this is because the guidance officers frequently recommend a further year of general education before directing the young person towards a definite trade. In the technical study courses, only 7.3 per cent. of the young persons who had followed the advice were unsuccessful, as against 26.1 per cent. of those who had not followed it. Maladjustment was found in 2.8 per cent. of those who had followed the advice and 17.4 per cent. of those who had not. In the case of young persons apprenticed to employers, the percentage who had followed the advice of the guidance officer was much lower, since this manner of entering a career is often chosen by those who have not the means to attend a training school as recommended by the guidance officer. In this group, as in the group who had been counselled one year before the survey, the guidance officers seem to have been particularly successful in their choice of employers. There was greater stability and a higher degree of success in general among those who had followed the advice given.

The follow-up after five years covered too small a number of persons. There were very few cases where the difference between the percentage of those who had followed the advice and of those who had not was definitely significant, but such cases as there were showed that those who had followed the advice had an advantage. Again, the majority of young persons were satisfied with the advice; nearly three-quarters of those who had followed the advice said that they were satisfied, as against 55 per cent. of those who had not. A quarter of those who had not followed the advice would have liked to be in some other trade, but only 10 per cent. of those who had followed the advice expressed the same feelings. On the other hand, exactly comparable percentages were found in the replies to the question

"Is your foreman or employer satisfied?" ; but it should be remembered that this questionnaire was completed by the individuals themselves and not by the employers. In this group also, stability was definitely greater among those who had followed the guidance officer's advice.

### *Conclusion*

The survey may be regarded as proof of the usefulness of vocational guidance. Greater contentedness, stability and success in employment were found among those who followed the advice given, and a lower proportion of unskilled labourers. It must moreover be remembered that these results do not bring out the qualitative side of the vocational guidance provided, which was not within the scope of the survey.

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