VOCATIONAL TRAINING - FRANCE

Students who have never left the education system can begin a vocational training from the age of 15 upon completion of secondary school. From here there are two pathways leading to two different National diplomas:

- The first one is **CAP** (professional aptitude certificate). This prepares students for a definite career path such as hairdresser, baker, plumber etc. This Diploma is prepared over a 2 year period. More than 50% of the training is related to professional skills. The other part covers core subjects such as mathematiques, French, history and geography, English, etc.

- The second option is **BAC Pro** (professional baccalaureate). This offers a professional training in a definite field, larger than in the case of CAP. For example: carpentry, agriculture, building… This training takes place over a 3 years. At the end of the second year, students can pass a first certificate, often represented by BEP (professional education brevate) or CAP. During the last year of training, students take exams in every subject as well as in their professional skills. Some of the subjects are also evaluated by continual assessment.

Senior secondary education

Junior secondary education (14 -15 years old)
With these diplomas, students are ready to enter into the job market. However some choose to specialise by continuing in Bac pro -with a CAP- or in higher education -with a bac pro. The usual choice in that case is to prepare a BTS (superior technician brevet) in the same vocational field. That gives them a higher qualification and could lead to quicker career progression. They can also try to follow a DUT (technology university Diplom) but this is more abstract and corresponds a little less to their previous qualification. Entry to university is possible but it is not the best way forward because students coming from this route don’t present the necessary entry requirements. Sometimes, some universities can propose special foundation courses for these students to prepare them to entry to a Bachelor -Licence in French- at university.

All of these professional diplomas can also be reached by way of an apprenticeship. This involves working 3 days per week and studying on the other days. The apprentice receives a little money depending on his/her age and the year he/she began. (Roughly between 350 euros and 600 euros per month)
On the other hand, adults (workers or unemployed) who want to undertake a vocational qualification can also take these diplomas: CAP, Bac Pro, BTS, licence pro... with organisations for adult education. That system is called «continued education» in opposition to «initial education» for students. Furthermore, it is also possible for mature students to complete a certificate in a shorter time: from 3 to 18 months. All certificates are presented in a national repertory of professional certifications called RNCP: www.rncp.fr

In certain cases, financial aid is available from ongoing policies. Apprenticeships are also offered with a «contrat de professionalisation» to offering up to 80% of the minimum wage.

However, Apprenticeships -both for students and adults- are accessed by finding a job which fits with their professional training needs.