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- 1 The future of humanities and social sciences teaching (sometimes referred to simply as “the humanities” or “the arts”) is regularly discussed. The debates are often passionate, sometimes contradictory but always productive. This is as true outside France, where the questions are asked in a very different way and yet still converge on the same essentials.
- 2 How should the humanities be taught? That is the pedagogical question. Why teach the humanities? That is the question of social utility. In what framework should the humanities be taught? Deep down, that is the question of European and international comparison.
- 3 These questions explain the steps taken by the CIEP (*Centre international d'études pédagogiques*) regarding innovative teaching methods in higher education and the future of the humanities and social sciences.
- 4 For a long time, in France at least, the done thing was to recruit graduates in these disciplines, who formed a recognised, powerful and highly valued *intelligentsia* of sorts. Now, this seems to be giving way to graduates of other disciplines, from the natural sciences to economics and management studies.
- 5 Today, changes in research patterns and in the international ranking of universities are inspired mainly by the natural sciences, structured around very large laboratories, sometimes with thousands of researchers. The humanities and social sciences are structured in small teams, usually around eminent individuals. Some are predicting their rapid demise, even though academics from these disciplines are involved in discussing most of today's big questions.
- 6 What skills can the humanities and social sciences produce and how are they defined? What is their sphere? Are they relegated to becoming “supporting disciplines”, bringing a bit of polish or a “finishing touch” to other fields? Why and how should they be taught in both secondary and higher education? All these questions and more are being asked, both in France and abroad.
- 7 The *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres* is devoting its 49th edition to this issue, which has rarely been approached systematically, looking at the cases of Algeria,

Brazil, Denmark, France, Italy, Kenya and Russia, as well as studying the situation in European universities.

- 8 These reflections on little-studied national situations reinforce the wider question, on a global scale, of the future of humanities and social sciences. They also form an indispensable support for the activities of the CIEP in these fields.
- 9 The collection clearly identifies a particularly fruitful field of research, whose intellectual, cultural, social, economic and political implications calls for the full attention of scientists, experts, decision-makers and ordinary citizens alike.