In all that we have said so far, apart from in the preceding chapter, we have made practically no reference to administrative structures apart from the educational and cultural districts. Does this mean that national central structures have completely disappeared? Certainly not, and we shall see on the contrary that although their rôle must change in the future, in that greater powers will be delegated to regional administrations, the power of the central administration becomes all the more important because of this, at many levels.

The national structures and institutions must in fact:
- translate into operant terms the policy drawn up by nationally (or internationally) elected delegates in the form of an overall plan, and ensure that this policy is implemented;
- organize public participation in the definition of objectives and keep the public informed both of results achieved and methods used and, in a more general manner, bring the public into discussion of educational problems as a whole;
- take charge of and implement teacher-training and management policies and policies concerning the development of technological aids and educational research.

DEFINITION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Education, because it demands such a wide range of aids and means, must necessarily be rationalized at central level, this rationalization to a certain extent involving a reinforcement of the executive powers of the central administration. It may appear paradoxical to try to reinforce the central authority whilst at the same time doing everything possible to develop the autonomy of institutions, districts and peripheral services in general.
However, this is in fact the case and we entirely agree with the following remarks by Becker, when he says: "What is needed is at the same time greater rationalization at the centre and wider autonomy at the base. All those who are concerned in cultural education (teachers, parents, pupils and students and society in general) must participate directly in making decisions. To achieve this, the hierarchical administrative structure must give way to a rationalizing administration and independent institutions . . ."

After showing how difficult it is within traditional modes of thought to escape from the dilemma of bureaucratic centralization versus decentralized independence, Becker goes on: "Of course, the model proposed is not a source of harmony but rather of conflicts. But these are indispensable if we want to avoid both the danger of feudalization at the base and technocratic manipulation at the top. This conflict between central planning and independent work in educational establishments must be considered as a fact of life and accepted as such by all institutions."

What therefore are the fields in which the central administration authority can best act to rationalize the educational system at national level? In those which in fact provide conditions for greater autonomy at the base. There are, in our opinion, four of these fields:

Predicting demand and planning
Responsibilities can only be exercised at local level with the help of a central forecasting system which, like a data bank, supplies at any time all necessary information concerning the quantitative and qualitative nature of the needs to be met and the trends in social demand on a national scale. These forecasts do not need to be detailed, but they must be translated into a plan extending over several years and with a mobile horizon, emphasizing only the goals to be achieved. This plan obviously requires an estimate of the corresponding means and resources which are necessary. The distribution of credits (the responsibility of the central administrative body) is based on these main objectives and credits are granted in the form of lump sums allocated to those responsible at regional level. The regional administrations then distribute these resources to the districts. Finally there is an a posteriori check on results in relation to the objectives of the proposed plan.