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Does the logic of ?competenciesa endanger school orientation ? Identity dilemmas of the Career Advisers in France.

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Recently, the French High Council of School Evaluation noticed that " the orientation school process concentrates criticisms on the education system", for 2 main grounds: for a large number of families and professional actors it is disconnected with the labour market to which the education system should prepare young people ; based on school evaluation, it is synonymous with failure in the general school way, and with derivation towards the vocational and training track, whose social image is largely negative. A "directed/oriented pupil" failed in the secondary school track driving to the general baccalaureat, the royal pathway to higher studies.

This paper aims at analyzing the effects of an educational public action recently concerned with "competences logica on the practices and professional ethics of the French Orientation Advisers. These are not the core of the institution, but their changing work could indicates all the best the recent philosophy of educational system. Thus, I would try to cross the sociology of the professions and the sociology of education, by raising the following question: up to what point is the division of the educational labour destabilized by new references promoted by the international institutions, like "the employability", or the "long life learning" of Lisbonne ?

Firstly, we will briefly analyze the pecularity of the professionnalization of the French orientation model. Then we will specify the structural elements which come to call into question, since the Eighties, the professional identity of COPsys (Conseillers d? Orientation-Psychologues). Lastly, we will review possible theoretical interpretations of this evolution before proposing our own conclusions.

1 - *Orientation Advisers - psychologists in the French school system and their missions : a long-term history*

Approximately 4500 COPsys exert in National Education as civil servants. They are now recruited by competittive examination open to the holders of a licence of psychology, and more than 1000 candidates present themselves each year for a hundred (job) positions. They have to follow a two years formation, which is remunerated, and that 4 universities in France are entitled to offer. After tests, it is sanctioned by a State Diploma (DECOP). Then, they are affected in an Orientation and Information center where they receive pupils and their parents, parallel to their interventions in school establishments - an adviser hopes on average 1 400 pupils to be followed. A 1991 decree specifies that "the COPS ensure the information of pupils and their family. They contribute to the continuous observation of pupils, and to the conditions of their school success. They take part in the development of

the school and professional projects of the pupils and the students to satisfy the right of guidance and information on the formations and the professions. In addition to this priority mission, they take part in the action in favour of the young people who, at the end of the compulsory schooling, did not reach the first level of qualification, and in favour of other groups, in particular of adults. "

This statutory situation results indeed from a long institutionalization in three phases (see H.Eckert 1993) :

- from 1920? s to 1950? s, a movement of ideas on the vocational guidance, which circulates in Germany as in France, configures gradually the profession and equips it with methods of measurement. The psychotechnical method assesses the individual aptitudes of the pupils pointed to the training way. In France as in many countries, the "professional careers advisers", trained in the INETOP (National Institute of Vocational Guidance and Work Studies) exert in the offices of vocational guidance.

- the fonction of vocational guidance enters the school system with the installation of the one-way middle school at the end of 1950? s. The same movement relates to Belgium or Italy : one helps the pupil to specify his desires of "career" than one assigns him according to the determination of his predispositions.

- from 1970? s to the end of 1980? s, the orientation is both informative and linked with the developpementalist psychology. The advisers obtain the title of "psychologists" in 1985.

- since 1990? s, the professional identity is more confused whereas the State has aknowledged the statutory. In the process of devolution and educational decentralization, the ministry tried to link the CIOs to the regional authority, which COPS largely refused

The functional definition of the mission masks in fact concurrent designs on the role. In 2001, sep, the Ministry held on an inquiry aboutordered a survey about "the policies in favour of education to the orientation in lower and upper high school" (Note of Information of the MEN). According to directors of CIOs, one of the most important deterrent which slow down education on orientation is "the frequent divergences between educational and psychological approaches" (40%). More generally, the review of the INETOP illustrates over long period four great designs of the role:

1 - *a utilitarian design*, which seeks to establish a relation of adequacy between the interests of the individual, his professional needs, and those of the society ;

2- *a psychometric design*, based on the theories of the individual differences, which tries to evaluate the potential of the pupils;

3- *a counselling design*, which regards the orientation of the individuals as a psychological problem of adaptation;

4- *the developpementalist approach*, which perceives the orientation of the individuals like a continuous and cumulative process stressing the self-knowledge and the development of autonomy.

Originally based on the first two designs, the French orientation model refers in practice to the developpementalist psychology. It turns from the testing to the profit of individual maintenance and the provision of selected information. It moves away from the counselling and the American model of an orientation considered as a psychological problem of adaptation to the present, linked with psychotherapeutic practices and referred with the movement "of education to the career". The users themselves took part in the evolution of the practices : the families "come (...) to receive the explanations about the school offer or information on the professional outlets, in order to built the best school strategy for their children" (Henri Eckert, 1993, p.255).

Nonetheless, the place of COPsy in the education system is more and more controversal . Thus, an investigation of the DPD (May 96) highlights that for the pupils, the COP is initially somebody who helps them to get information. They are most numerous to have had a maintenance about their orientation with their principal professor. Moreover, the French model of orientation has, since the post-war period, taken part to widen the gap of the training young people with the labour market.

First of all in an institutional way. In fact, the integration on the vocational guidance within the school system enabled it to profit from the school in its function of a growing social distribution ; at the same time, the service became increasingly endogenous with an educational system whose diversification is growing. Secondly, in an ideological way. The criticism of "adequationnism" (ie. the link between trained and emplyed people) is indeed regular in a professional body strongly structured by the FEN. Consequently, the rising social and poltitical concerns about professional insertion will weigh on the professional identity of COPsys.

2 - A sphere of activity destabilized by the reference to "professional insertion".

From 1980? s, a French model of youthful unemployment has taken place, which affects more particularly and more durably the least graduate, and which is manifested by a long school trajectory, a low number of jobs, with a stronger instablity, and an unemployment striking those who are precociously on the labour market, with a low training level. In 1989, the socialist government plan for education, proposed to realize not only "80% of an age group on the level of the Baccalaureat", but also the integrality of an age group on the first level of qualification. Thus, National Education set up a serie of actions intended for "young

people in difficulty". Since 1993, all young people have the right to a professional formation before they e ve gone out of the education system. Professional insertion becomes not only a priority in VET, but also in middle schools. The actions in favour of professional insertion developp, supported financially since 1997 by European Funds. Autonomous academic commissions on insertion are created and attached directly to the offices of the vice-chancellors, and their evaluations and recommendations fall under the academic projects.

A professional segment emerges gradually, the "Mission Insertion academic", which conquers the signs of their institutionalization: the staff analizes the requirements of school establishments by setting up an "observatory for the school breaks" and helps to coordinate the actions; offices of insertion and partnership (IBP) are built and engage individualized follows-up to find a solution of vocational training, to ensure a basic teacher training on "the job market" and to take part more largely in the coordination of the exchanges with the local companies and missions.

But the tools which make the reference frame of the staff of school insertion are much more different from that those the Advisers of Orientation-Psychologists use, and their methodologies are close to the human capital management. School insertion assesses pupils? performances, techniques of search of employment, wallets of competences... Questioned on the direction of these techniques in comparison with the school public to which they deal, the advisers insertion answer by a pragmatist argument :

"One should not be naive under pretext that one wants to keep the pupils until the Baccalaureat. Personally, I see pupils with whom it is essential not wasting time, because time spent to row in the general way with a certain failure to the final examination , it is of course not-qualifying time. " (Trainer-organizer, 53)

" Of course they have the right to continue to the general Baccalaureat. But how expensive it is ! My own objective is to maintain them in the play of the school qualification, provided that it is not a dead end. They start to realize that the general formation to the Baccalaureat is worth on the labour market only if they extend it by a higher formation. And that it? s better to be modest, but to ensure one? s situation.a (Trainer-organizer, 42)

Better protected from the school failure by a targeting action (*"one passes from loan-to carrying to a personalized dressmaking, and the pupils in difficulty feel supported."* (Formative, 55), the pupil must at the same time "pay his righta to qualification:

"One waits them that they define themselves their future professional identity and that they make it credible by all the resources which they can implement. The implied contract, it is their motivation against our support." (maintenance Trainer-organizer, 42 years)

These techniques return to the career of advisers-insertion within the school institution...

"*We come all from professional teaching, with a long experiment of the partnerships school/companies, and we know what competences the employers are seeking for recruitment."* (Adviser-insertion, 52)

... a career often lived like an alternative positioning with the "total-educative" of COPsy:

"I accepted the testing of these managerial tools in my previous Vocational and Training School, because I thought that the system itself was partly responsible in the school failure. In the vocational way, we were the first confronted with a school public in difficulty , the survival of the teacher and we had to cogitate and contrive. We looked ourselves, rather than we pointed out the families or the social conditions like culprits ." (insertion co-ordinator, 55)

Thus, within sight of institutional success that the actions of insertion in the school establishments meet, several of the Advisers of Orientation-Psychologists do not hide their fear to see a drastic change in the design of the orientation policies. Initially based on the notion of "project" structured by the pupil himself :

"The IBP are convenient, they answer more orientations of administrative and decision makers." (COPsy , 55)

The Mission insertion would serve short-term institutional interests rather than the authentic rythm of the pupil :

"We, have nevertheless an old professional culture which makes that we? re careful vis-ˆ-vis school establishments, which can expect evacuation of pupils in difficulty. Above all, we are engaged in the interests of the pupil as a person." (COPsy maintenance, 35 years)

Helping a project to mature, and detecting professional pre-skills do not raise of the same "philosophy", even if the two approaches have jointly to consider the pupil differently than by his school level. Under many aspects, the work of the MGI renews the traditional school frame of reference, by targeting the populations more, by using terminology and tools from the Employment Policies? ingineering, by mobilizing local professional partners.

The school public of the insertion-Mission is different from the pupils the COPsys meet. But with the diffusion of the concept of "competence" like a category of judgement in school public action, this distinction becomes more confused. Several authors connected the inflationary use of the concept to its polysemia (Rop? and Tanguy 1994), and showed how it was based on the development of evaluative practices. More recently, a parliamentary mission of information about school knowledges, recommended "to change the methods to define new adapted priorities", and in this direction "to promote knowledge but also competences". It critizes the approach by the disciplines "because it resists the fast and constant adaptation of the knowledges and runs up against the maximalist claims of the

representatives of each discipline". Finally, it proposes "not to oppose knowledge and competences". It defines six series of competences:
to know to communicate in its language; to know to work in team, to cooperate with others and "to live together", to forge a critical spirit, to know to validate and analyze information; to know to locate oneself in time and space; to develop its potential to be learned; to know to assume its responsibilities, to take part, imply, engage, carry out a project. (Information Report n?2247, april 2005). This very general definition of basic competences joins with the concept of "long Life learning": the increasing differentiation of the trajectories on work and employment, an employment market which appears more and more split up and flexible, require an adaptability which academic and partitioned knowledges could not provide. This is also the conclusion of the OECD report in 2001, which sums up the state of the orientation function in 14 countries - France refused to participate to the enquiry.

However the investigation notices that no country developed a general system of long Life orientation learning, most of them has reinforced their engineering in professional insertion through the logic of competencies. Confronted to international comparison, the French model of orientation allowed the COP to join early the public service, but since 1990 ? s, it had handicapped on the contrary the adaptation of the orientation function, and has producing a current confusion about the professional role.

3 - How to understand the current slips of the orientation function ?

A first analytical posture consists in replacing the development of concerns about "insertion" in a general background : the development of "the administrative spirit" (Ogien 1995) in the school field. The managerial rhetoric flourishes on a widespread criticism of the French model of social State (Laval 2003), and insertion seems the Trojan horse of a logic of workfare calibrated by the labour market, in favour of the construction of a employability, which would replace the protectionist logic of a school-providence in favour of the capitalization of the knowledges.

Although one can be satisfied of such a macrosociologic interpretation, an ethnographic work led us to pay a very detailed attention to the division of the labour in the establishments concerned with school insertion, and to use the theories and concepts of the sociology of the occupational groups. If we highlight the opposition between Orientation Advisers-Psychologists - frequently brought to defend the continuation in the general way to Baccalaureat, or at least to claim a strong motivation of the reorientation towards the vocational way - and formative organizers, more attentive with the fast professional valorization of school assets.

From a n?o-Marxist point of view, this polar divergence in the approaches of the school failure can be initially interpreted like a fight of classification between two professional

fractions. The increasing concern of public authorities with school failures induces a redistribution of the roles in the school organization. Through a ?strategista translation, one consider the school as a universe of social and professional stresses, where the main aim consists in maintaining the meadows square existing against new applicants, where professional fractions impose themselves by imposing its categories and practices, under the arbitration of public authorities whose subjects of concern determine the allowance of the resources and encourage the groups which benefit potentially to be mobilized, to move their investments, to adjust their social action (geay, Meunier 2003). This theoretical point of view externalise radically the State vis-a-vis the professions : the public authorities appears very powerful, proposing clear paradigms in the orientation of the sectorial public policies, and the professional markets have no other choice to situate their competing interests as well as possible. Conversely, it is only by obtaining from the State a statutory recognition that the public professions have the possibility of valorizing their practices and promoting their identity, and the certification obtained from a State makes it possible to delimit the edges of a mandate and to define which licence must obtain the new actors of this professional market. A second interpretative track is provided by the endogenous and dynamic analysis of the professions considered as "jurisdictions" under development. In its analysis of the relations between the State and the professions, Freidson (1986, 2001) thus describes the process of "professionnalization" as the acquisition of an autonomy in the technical organization of the activity, in the construction of the related labour market, and in the definition of a sector of the social life delegated by the State. On its side, the model "of ecology of the professions" developed by A.Abbott (1988) insists on the knowledges held by a profession like an essential asset to produce effective professional skills, to insure academic legitimacy next to the public opinion, and finallyto obtain a legal recognition by the legislator and the public authorities. In spite of their theoretical differences, these two authors refuse to follow a neo-Marxist point of view of, which tracks the roots of the professional domination in the inequitable distribution of the capacity of State, and considers the professional knowledgs as a reflection of the forms of social domination. Through this second analysis of constructions and destructurings of the professional jurisdictions, the current situation of the Orientation Advisers - Psychologists could be defined as a loss of monopoly in the content oftheir work, in the substance of their professional knowledges and in the methods they set out.

Concurrentiality of new professional segments like insertion Mission is a major ground of the professional crisis the Orientation Advisers are going through, in France but also in Quebec (Mellouki, Beauchemin 1994). But many other complementary phenomena take part in this de-professionalization process. Information about careers is now captured by "forums", "shows" and many demonstrations sponsored by the National office of Information on the Professions and largely financed by the local institutions on Trade and Industry.

Lessons about "education to orientation" are ensured by the principal professor (circular of July 31, 1996), who appears to be closer to the pupil than the Adviser. In the report initially quoted at the beginning of this paper, the High Council of the School Evaluation insists on ? specific internal recruitments, in particular of teachers. It is also essential to bring together the formation of the COPsys and that from which the teachers profit in their Institutes. "

At last, the gap between vocational guidance and school orientation, which was the condition of a statutory recognition in the public service, and the original factor of the professionnalization of the function, seems induce now an involutive effect. In the current context of insertion, and competencies, and of the development of a rhetoric of long Life learning, the autonomy of COPsys is becoming less legitimate. Because their work is hollowed out : what is the usefulness of a so specific service, with a so great number of potential school users, if the teaching evaluation remains almighty, if the market publicizes information, if the individualized psychological follow-up cannot be assured ? But also because of a deontologic contradiction. The professional ethics of the group was indeed built on the basis of internal criticism towards the selective system. If the reference frame of "competences" permeates training education as well as the non-vocational school, the claim of the maintenance of this difference between the two types of orientation sounds like a dualisation of the school public service.

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