# Exploring the interplay between organizational and professional identity. Communication at the 7th international conference on organizational discourse

Branka Cattonar, Hugues Draelants, Xavier Dumay

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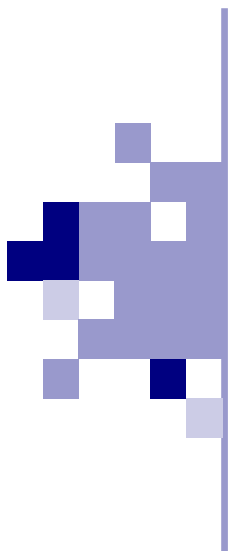## Communication at the 7th international conference on organizational discourse

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L'éducation et la formation constituent des enjeux fondamentaux pour la société contemporaine.  Deux équipes de recherche à l'UCL se préoccupent de ces questions : le Groupe interfacultaire de recherche sur les systèmes d'éducation et de formation (GIRSEF) et la Chaire UNESCO de pédagogie universitaire (CPU).

Le GIRSEF est un groupe de recherche pluridisciplinaire fondé en 1998 afin d'étudier les systèmes d'éducation et de formation, réunissant des sociologues, économistes, psychologues et psychopédagogues.  L'attention est portée notamment sur l'évaluation des résultats des systèmes éducatifs en termes d'équité et d'efficacité, sur leurs modes de fonctionnement et de régulation, sur les politiques publiques à leur endroit, les logiques des acteurs principaux ou encore sur le fonctionnement local des organisations de formation et l'engagement et la motivation des apprenants.  Sur le plan empirique, ses recherches portent essentiellement sur le niveau primaire et secondaire d'enseignement, mais aussi sur l'enseignement supérieur et la formation d'adultes.

La Chaire de Pédagogie Universitaire (CPU) a été créée en mai 2001 et a reçu le label de Chaire UNESCO en septembre 2002.  Elle assure également le secrétariat et la coordination du Réseau Européen de Recherche et d'Innovation en Enseignement Supérieur (RERIES), réseau européen des chaires Unesco sur l'Enseignement supérieur.  Elle a pour mission de contribuer à la promotion de la qualité de la pédagogie universitaire à l'UCL, en contribuant à la fois à la recherche dans ce domaine et en coordonnant une formation diplômante en pédagogie universitaire (DES en pédagogie universitaire).

Ces équipes se sont associées en 2004 pour proposer les **Cahiers de recherche en Éducation et Formation**, qui font suite aux Cahiers de recherche du Girsef, dont 25 numéros sont parus entre 1999 et 2003 .  La série des Cahiers de recherche en Éducation et Formation a pour objectif de diffuser les résultats des travaux menés au sein de la CPU et du GIRSEF auprès d'un large public, tant les chercheurs qui s'intéressent aux questions de l'éducation et de la formation qu'auprès des acteurs et décideurs de ces deux mondes.

La compilation de l'ensemble des onze cahiers parus en 2004 est maintenant disponible dans un volume imprimé qui peut être commandé à partir du site www.i6doc.com, notre partenaire éditorial.
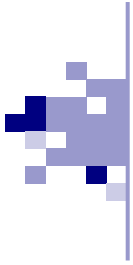
Par ailleurs, chacun des cahiers de la série, depuis le premier numéro, peut être téléchargé gratuitement depuis le site d'I6doc (www.i6doc.com) et depuis les sites du GIRSEF (www.girsef.ucl.ac.be) et de la CPU (www.cpu.psp.ucl.ac.be).

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# 1. Introduction

According to organizational and social identity theories and researches, members' individual identities and organizational identity are mutually and reciprocally linked (Scott and Lane, 2000; Pratt and Foreman, 2000). This communication investigates those links in the particular case of teachers and educational organizations and is thus centered on the relations between teachers' professional identities and schools' organizational identities. First, we will consider from a theoretical point of view the notions of professional identity and organizational identity. Before discussing how the teacher's professional identities are contextualised by the fact of working in one school rather than another school, we will consider the theoretical implications of applying the notion of organizational identity to the schools, usually depicted as loosely coupled organizations (Weick, 1976). In order to study the way schools' organizational context influences the construction of the teachers' professional identities, we will then present the results of a qualitative analysis (24 interviews with teachers working in three secondary schools of Brussels, strongly contrasted concerning the school public). Next, using a quantitative data base (including the answers of 3621 teachers working in 137 secondary schools of the French-speaking Belgium), we will analyse how schools differentiate on some key dimensions of the teachers' professional identity and how cohesion in schools on the same dimensions can occur. This empirical investigation show that the presence and the relative intensity of the schools' culture and identity actually depend on a series of organizational conditions. Finally, we conclude on the relevance of bringing together and making dialogue the concepts of professional identity and organisational identity in the field of education research in a momentum of accountability policies.

# 2. Theoretical setting

## 2.1. Professional identity

To study the professional identity of the teachers we adopted a socio-constructivist perspective (Corcuff, 1995) combined with the contributions of various sociological approaches of the identity (see Cattonar, 2001 and 2005). We consider initially the teaching identity like the individuals' self definition as teachers (in connection with their professional practice) and like one of the dimensions of the social identity of the teachers, which is mobilized firstly in the context of work (Blin, 1997) or in reference to the occupation.

To say it shortly, it is the answer to the question: what does it mean to be a teacher? It can be apprehended at the same time like a set of descriptive, prescriptive and evaluative meanings and representations invested by the teachers in the various aspects of their occupation (Blin, 1997; Dubar, 1996; Jodelet, 1999) and like a "internal feeling" of unity, coherence, membership and differentiation (Mucchielli, 1999).

The teaching professional identity is not regarded as an immutable and original essence, something that the teachers would have received and assimilated passively, once and for all, for example at the time of their formation. We rather conceive it like an active, dynamic and continuous construction. A construction at the same time individual and social, which is the result, more or less stable and evolutionary, of a biographical and relational socialization process, bounded to the particular context in which it fits (Cattonar, 2001 and 2005; Dubar, 1996).

More precisely, our framework of analysis states three assumptions on the nature of the teaching identities and the way in which they are built. The first assumption poses that the teaching identity is a collective and specific identity (Blin, 1997), which is partly shared by its members and who is the result of a particular professional socialization during which the teachers adapted actively the standards, rules and professional values suitable for the group. Taking support on (relatively) common experiences, like the initial formation, this socialization is a process of identification which calls upon available "identity types" (Dubar, 1996): ideal models of professionnality, which define what the teachers must ideally be, do and know and what can be used as identity resources or supports.

The second assumption poses that the professional identity is also a singular construction, specific to each teacher, related to his/her personal history and his/her multiple social memberships, past and present, familial, educational or professional (Bourdieu, 1980; Kaufmann, 2001; Lahire, 1998). In this sense, identity construction is a continuous biographical process and the identity can be seen like the result of a transaction between an identity inherited from the past and an identity aimed by the individual or imposed by the present situation (Dubar, 1996).

Lastly, the third assumption poses that identity construction is also a relational process. The identity is a relationship with oneself but also with others, of identification and differentiation, which is constructed in the experience of the relations with others (Sainsaulieu, 1988). It can be seen as the result of a transaction between "the self-identity" defined by the individual himself and "the exo-identity" which is allotted to him by the people with which he is in interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Dubar, 1996; Mucchielli, 1999), like the students, colleagues, principals or parents of the students.
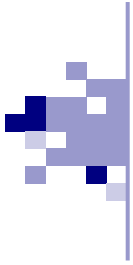
## 2.2. Organizational identity

Organizational identity is typically taken by scholars to be an organization's members' collective understandings[1] of the features presumed to be central and relatively permanent, and that distinguish the organization from other organizations (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Scott & Lane, 2000).

Identity consists of a social construction which can become institutionalized with time[2]. In other words, the notion of identity conveys, by definition, the idea of some permanency. But as Gioia et al. suggest in a somewhat Darwinian style, "organizations must possess the ability to adapt quickly to increasingly turbulent environments as an essential condition for well-being and even survival" (2000: 64). Thus, a vital stake for organization consists in learning how to change and yet somehow stay the same. Identity is then a relatively stable yet changing structure.

Following from the precedent assumption, we must admit that every organization doesn't automatically possess a clearly delineated identity. The minimal condition for the emergence of an organisational identity seems that of temporality. An organization needs time to learn and of stabilize its vision of itself as well as its environment's. That implies the group in question shared and crossed a significant number of common experiments, which define a common history.

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[1] The organizational identity has a reality independent of individual members. As Pratt and Foreman put it "identities reside in groups of individuals, as well as in roles, symbols, and other storage places of organizational "memory" (e.g., policies, rules, and procedures)." (2000: 20).

[2] As Selznick underlined it, organizations, to a variable extent and over time, are transformed into institutions : "By taking on a distinctive set of values, the organisation acquires a character structure, an identity. Maintaining the organisation is no longer simply an instrumental matter of survival but becomes a struggle to preserve a set of unique values. A vital role of leadership, for Selznick, is to define and defend these values." (Scott, 1995, p.19).

Can we truly speak about one and unified organizational identity? Insofar as it is the result of a collective identity, shouldn't we conceive the usually split and thus plural characters of organizational identities? Some scholars begin to investigate implications of multiple identities (see Pratt & Foreman, 2000). So we consider that the vision of the organization's distinctive values and features can be more or less shared by organization members.

Multiple organizational identities introduce the problematic of power upon identity definition. Regarding conflicting definitions of the organization, let us underline the fact that all actors of the organization do not possess the same capacity on the definition of the identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). From their function and their position of interface with respect to the organization's environment, the head and managers are the agents of an official version of the identity. Its significance depends on a collective audience whom there is some level of consensus (Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

Finally, our conception of the organizational identity construction is based on the framework developed by Hatch and Schultz (2002). According to these authors, the organizational identity can be conceived as a point of meeting between an organisational history (culture or self-definition) and images projected and allotted to the organization from the outside (external-definition). The identity is the result of a dynamic process of negotiation between the local culture and the environment of the organization which exerts pressures on it, in order to influence its functioning, or even define its identity.

In short, the production of an organisational identity requires relatively specific (socio-political, institutional, organizational) conditions, one will see it in details by applying this concept to the school organizations.

### 2.3. Professional and organizational identity: contextualizing professional identity?

As Pratt and Foreman put it, "we hold the relationship between individuals and organizational identities is reciprocal: just as organizational identities can influence individual behaviour, individual behaviour can influence organizational identities." (2000: 21). Assuming that mutual links exist, the next sections of this communication investigate on the one hand what supports a contextualisation of the teachers' identities at the level of the school organization and on the other hand what explains group cohesion and cultural development inside schools.

A strong and attractive (i.e. which contributes to self-esteem, self consistency, and self-distinctiveness) organizational identity should foster organizational identification on behalf of its members (Scott & Lane, 2000). In addition, following Hatch and Schultz (2002) conceptualization, we make the hypothesis the more the relations and cohesion between the members of the same organization get developed, the stronger organisational identity will be. However, in schools, classical investigations and theory leads us to think that cohesion is low, for reasons either due to the nature of the work activity or the way in which this one is organized. Indeed, the concept of organisational identity was not thought in reference to the educational organizations. It precisely appears that schools are singular organizations. Schools as organizations challenge and question some assumptions underlying the classic definition of organizational identity. Consequently, we discuss hereafter organizational traits of the schools and if and how the organizational identity literature fits the study of contemporary schools.

The schools' organisational characteristics are well-known (Bidwell, 1965). One generally summarizes them by saying that the schools are loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976). Because of the class system (juxtaposition of cells), the level of the school only exists, sociologically speaking, at the price of a specific building work (the teacher-student is the basic relationship). One can also underline the strong time constraints, dominated by the cyclic rhythm of the school year, which makes difficult the accumulation of a collective experience; the hierarchical structure is disconnected from the "technical" activity (the teachers are autonomous in their class; the head teacher does not directly control their activity); the "technical" activity itself is disconnected from its effects (the teachers have difficult to evaluate their effectiveness).

Consequently, since neither the hierarchical constraints nor the technical arguments can carry the decisions, the construction of a social contract between the actors is essential (Duru-Bellat & van Zanten, 2006). Nevertheless, that appears very complicated insofar as there are (today more than ever) a diversity of designs of the educational good and best methods of teaching. From such a point of view, the culture is thus split up and discussed by the members of the organization (Derouet & Dutercq, 1997). The schools should thus not be perceived like places of consensuses and composed of a teaching body which would agree on the methods and the objectives of its activity. It is then appropriate to question cultural and group cohesion.

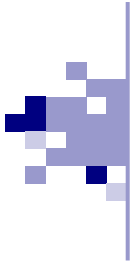## 2.4. Institutional framework, education policy and identities

In the case of educational organizations, we thus think that one cannot be satisfied to postulate the existence of an organizational identity. The institutional rules structuring the interactions between actors must be taken into account. There are institutional conditions at the level of the educational system (e.g. a parental freedom to choose the school; a decentralized educational system) likely to support a differentiation between schools and thus the development of organizational identities and of partial identifications of the stakeholders to the schools. It is precisely the case in the quite particular context of the Belgian school system[3].

The existence of social and teaching realities very contrasted from one school to another does not go back to yesterday in the Belgian education system.

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[3] A contrario, if one considers a context where the free choice disappears and where the schools are traditionally perceived like interchangeable units, not differentiated the ones from the others (for example in France, a system historically highly centralized and characterized by the republican value of universalism), it is probable that the organisational identities of schools are less marked there and that the need for identity work at the school level is less strong, since the definitions of the school are the subject of a more important consensus.

Indeed, this system rests on the principle of teaching freedom, legalised in the Constitution, at the moment of the creation of Belgium in 1831. Originally this principle was taken in order to safeguard the philosophical and religious choices and to make possible the peaceful coexistence of various sociological communities and education providers. It has a double significance: freedom for each one to organize a teaching according to its convictions and freedom for the parents to choose the school where they wish to place their child. In short, all the history of the Belgian education system was marked by this sacro-saint principle, who traces for the current policies a path of dependence (North, 1990; see Draelants et al., 2003).

In addition to this historically very decentralized character of the system and to this important pedagogical autonomy fostering development of differentiated schools' identities, the relevance to consider local educational spaces and schools is reinforced by the evolution of the education policy during the last fifteen years which promote the development of local initiatives and projects, through a participative logic from the schools. Indeed, the decree "missions" (1997) – a key text of the recent education policy – made compulsory two types of procedural devices: all schools must propose an "educational project" which will be supplemented by a "pedagogical project" and a "school project". Moreover, they are held to set up at the level of the schools a "participation council" gathering the various partners of the school: school board, direction, teachers, parents, students and representatives of the environment of the school. A particular prerogative of the participation council is to deliver an opinion on the school project (proposed by the school board or the direction of the school) and on the activities report relating to his implementation. School boards are however not held to follow the opinions suggested by the various bodies constituting the participation council (Maroy et al., 2003). The promotion of school project and participation council, show the significant symbolic valorisation whose school is the object. In French-speaking Belgium, like elsewhere in Europe, the school is perceived like a "decisive level of action" and the educational action is supposed more effective and adjusted to the local needs if it is directed by a shared project and legitimated by the dialogue. This symbolic

valorisation of the school is underlain by a redefinition of the school around a new model of reference which can be described "as mobilized school" (Dupriez, 2003).

The introduction of new regulation modes of the system (Dupriez & Maroy, 2003) thus reinforce, at least symbolically for the moment, the weight of the local entities within the system and pleads for an analysis of the schools identities and strategies. The next step in the improvement of the system's results and quality is related to the development of instruments of external evaluation –envisaged in the Contract for the School (*Contrat pour l'Ecole*), the most recent text planning forthcoming education policies (see Maroy, 2005).

Beyond the institutional and socio-political conditions determining the fact that certain national contexts are more favourable to the emergence of schools' organizational identities[4], we also consider that certain schools are more likely than others to develop an identity. In other words, as we'll see further, it means that organizational conditions can also foster identity dynamics.

## 2.5.  Explaining group cohesion: theoretical settings

A combination of two theoretical settings is now proposed to understand which factors can contribute to the emergence of the group cohesion (and of a stronger organizational identity). The role of the social identity threat is pointed out by the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979, 1986). That theory predicts that the homogeneity of in-group perceptions are enhanced when the collective identity is threatened. Next, the dynamic social impact theory (Latané, 1996) is mobilized to understand how the intensity of the communication between the members of an organization can produce shared representations of the professional activity.

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[4] The presence of favourable conditions supports identity dynamics but it never starts it mechanically (certain conditions can be said necessary but they cannot be regarded as sufficient).

### 2.5.1. SIT and the in-group homogeneity perception as a reaction to identity threat

The social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel, 1986) can be mobilized to understand under which conditions the strength of the organizational identity can be enhanced. That theoretical framework is articulated around the idea that people strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity and that this positive identity mainly derives from favourable social comparison that can be made between the ingroup and relevant outgroups. SIT also points out that different strategies of identity management can be developed to cope with unfavourable social comparison. Because it is difficult for low status group to claim their superiority on central status defining dimensions, members of low status group tend to adopt indirect identity management strategies instead of displaying explicit in-group bias. One of those indirect and collective strategy is to diminish intragroup variability on judgmental dimensions strongly associated with or defining of the in-group (Brown & Smith, 1989). That in-group homogeneity phenomena has been observed in minimal groups (groups only created by an experimental manipulation) as well as in real groups (see Oakes, Haslam, Morrison & Grace, 1992; Ryan & Bogart, 1997); and its intensity seem to vary according to the level of identification to the low status group, in that high identifiers tend to perceive their in-group more homogenous than low identifiers under threat.

That identity management strategy is particularly relevant for understanding the cohesion of the organizational identity of schools in French Belgium, because quasi-markets mechanisms implies inter-organizations competition and social comparison. We could thus make the hypothesis that the more the teachers of one given school think that their school is embedded into inter-organizations competition and threatened by other schools, the more they tend to reinforce the strength of their organizational identity by perceiving some central features - mainly the status of instruction – of their colleagues' professional identities as more homogenous.

*H1 : The more the teachers of one given school think that their school is embedded into inter-organizations competition and threatened by other schools and*

*images projected on them, the more they tend to reinforce the strength of their organizational identity by perceiving some central features - mainly the status of instruction – of their colleagues' professional identities as more homogenous.*

This in-group homogeneity effect and identity communality should also be observed, according to Tajfel (1971), when "one category of people are at the receiving end of certain attitudes and treatment from the outsides". Turning to the case of schools and politics of differentiation of resources relative to the composition of schools, it implies that teachers working in disadvantaged schools (unfavourable composition) would also tend to perceive the characteristics of their colleagues' professional identities more homogenous.
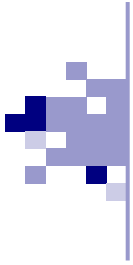
*H2 : The more the composition of one school is unfavourable, the more teachers of that school tend to reinforce the strength of their organizational identity by perceiving features of their colleagues' professional identities as more homogenous.*

### 2.5.2. An intra-organization and communicative approach

The SIT insists on the importance of the relationships between the organization and its environment. But we argue that it would be problematic to neglect intra-organizational aspects that contribute to the strength of the organizational identities, and particularly its communicative dimension. The interests of the dynamic social impact theory (DSIT, Latané, 1996) are discussed in that direction.

The DSIT aims to "account for how coherent structures of cultural elements emerge from the interactions of people located in space" (Latané, 1996) – for example in a given school. The main thesis associated with that theoretical setting is that the organizational culture (defined as the entire set of socially transmitted beliefs, values and practices that characterize a given society, or a given group at a given time) can emerge from individual experience and everyday interaction. Social structure is seen to "result from individuals, differing in their ability to influence each other and in their spatial location, affecting each other in a dynamic iterative process of reciprocal and recursive influence". The DSIT theory provides guidelines for understanding the effects of variables that affect the direction and the magnitude of the social influence impinging on the individual. "Three broad categories of variables, multiplicatively combined, determine the degree to which an individual is affected by a social force field" (Latané, 1996: 16). The first category of variables, named "strength", represents stable characteristics of the individuals who are the sources of the influence. The second, "immediacy", can mainly be defined by the inverse function of the physical distance. Finally, the "number" refers to the number of sources of influence. Our third hypothesis regarding intra-school cohesion derives from the immediacy characteristic and set that the more the collaborative processes are perceived as intense, the more the intra-school variability will decrease.

*H3: The more the communicative processes are intense within a school, the more the intra-school variability relative to several aspects of teachers' professional identity will decrease.*

# 3. Empirical investigation

## 3.1. Qualitative analysis

1. *An exploratory analysis of the relation between professional and organisational identity in three contrasted schools*

The analysis presented in this part is based on several empirical studies which aimed at the same time to describe the components of the teaching identity (ways of defining and of living the occupation) and to analyze the process by which it is built, on the basis of the subjective representations of the occupation while holding account of the objective conditions in which the professional experiences proceed (Cattonar 2001, 2005).

In order to seize the meaning the teachers give themselves to their work and to study identity dynamics in its biographical and relational dimensions, we will present here some elements of a qualitative research, by interviews. We have shown before that teachers' relations with their occupation strongly varied according to the context of work (Cattonar, 2002 and Maroy, 2002). In order to better understand this diversity, we decided to carry out interviews in three schools of Brussels, strongly contrasted regarding the socio-economic origin and the academic achievement of their students. This choice must be understood in the context of the French-speaking Belgium education system which is characterized by a strong academic and social segregation (Dupriez and Vandenberghe, 2004). 24 semi-directed and thorough interviews (with a duration going from two to four hours) were carried out. To contrast the three schools, we selected them according to the average school delay and according to social characteristics' of their public. The first school, qualified of "privileged school", recruit a school public of higher social origin (upper middle class) and whose school rate of delay is lower than the average; the second school, qualified of "average school", has a socially and academically heterogeneous public, in which the rate of school delay is close to the average; finally, the third surveyed school is a school known as "difficult", which is in "positive discrimination" (affirmative action), with a majority of its public of immigrant origin, living in deprived urban areas and whose rate of delay is higher than the average. The teachers interviewed in each school were then selected while varying the gender, the track and the level of teaching. Let us specify that the distinction between privileged "," average "and" difficult "school" is perceived and felt like such by the teachers of the three schools. They use themselves these qualifiers to describe their school.

2. *Link between professional identity and school composition*

A partly collectively shared identity which also varies according to the teaching context

The teaching identity is a construction which is partly common to the members of the occupational group. Certain representations of the profession are thus largely shared. Thus, the majority of the teachers are characterized by a professional identity primarily built around the activity of work and the relations with the pupils, and much less around the relations with employment or the statute (see Cattonar, 2002, 2005). Our investigations also reveal that the professional identity of the teachers is multiple. There are different ways of defining the teacher's work which strongly varies according to the context of work and especially according to social and academic characteristics' of pupils (ibid). In this sense, the teaching identity seems to be, at least partly, a contextual construction. In particular, our investigations reveal a true cleavage between those which work in "privileged schools" (where the rate of school delay is weaker than the average and where the pupils are described positively as motivated and disciplined) and those which teach in more "difficult" schools (where the rate of school delay is high or

closer to the average and where the pupils are perceived as not interested by the school lessons, undisciplined or passive in class).

More precisely, the teachers working with "good pupils" declare themselves more often satisfied with their situation and primarily define their work as the teaching of knowledge, while being centered on the intellectual training of the pupils. For these teachers, their work especially consists in teaching knowledge to the pupils, transmitting to them passion for the subject matter and the taste of knowledge, with final horizon the preparation of the pupils to high school. This is how they regard their "true work". Some teachers also evoke a more educational role, even psychological, but it appears to them limited.

The teachers working with more "difficult" pupils or more heterogeneous classes have a much broader conception of their work. They regard it more as a work on the students' behaviors. For them, the work of the teacher doesn't only consist in teaching a matter, it also implies to socialize the pupils, to build good relations with them, to manage their personal problems (social or psychological) and to manage the order in class. To define their profession, these teachers then refer very often to social or professional categories other than the teachers, such as the welfare officers, the psychologists, the parents or the police officers. These tasks which they exert are considered in the majority of the cases as "dirty work" which they are constrained to carry out in order to be able to teach their matter, objective which they are far from giving up, sometimes in an extremely defensive logic.
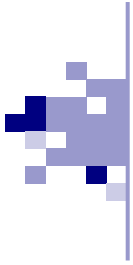
For these teachers, the work especially consists in building the conditions which make it possible to teach their course. The socialization of the pupils or the management of the order in class is not presented like aims in itself, but like necessary, painful and exhausting preconditions, the central objective remaining to teach their course. In addition, these teachers live more frequent and more intense professional dissatisfactions. They especially feel an intellectual frustration because they cannot fully put in practice their ideal conception of the profession, the one they had before becoming teachers

(sometimes since their childhood) and who influenced their choice of the occupation. Confronted with "difficult" pupils (or simply not in conformity with the ideal that they had in mind), the actualization of this ideal conception of the profession becomes problematic while remaining legitimate and ideal in their eyes.

*The school, a social space of construction of a legitimate identity*

The context thus plays a crucial role in the way of conceiving, of living and even of practising the profession. One of our assumptions is that it is the relations between the various actors in presence within the schools which underlie the construction of these identities specific to the context. Our investigation shows indeed that it is in the experience of the relationships to the pupils, the colleagues, the direction or the parents of pupils that are played, not only the feeling of recognition of the teachers and their job satisfaction, but also the definition of their work.

The school then seems the place of a certain local legitimacy (more or less conscious, directing and unifying) insofar as the various actors tend to share a relatively common and specific vision of the profession. This one is fed during the daily exchanges by mutual adjustments supported by various mechanisms which ensure the formation of local standards and the adhesion of the teachers to those: more or less direct and explicit remarks on behalf of the pupils or the colleagues underlying the constitution of the teachers' local reputation, more or less formal sanctions on behalf of the direction in the case of normative deviation, more or less selective recruitment of the teachers by the direction ensuring a certain homogeneity between them and their agreement with local projects and values, collective work of teaching coordination between colleagues and/or with the direction, implication of the direction in pedagogical animation, pressures exerted by the parents, etc. In particular, one can suppose that the exchanges between colleagues concerning their pupils is crucial to build a particular vision of the exercise of the profession. Obviously, that doesn't mean there is consensus between teachers or that

they adopt the same practices, but one can suppose that their exchanges feed a relatively common vision of the pupils and the manner of treating them. We thus believe that these exchanges processes participate in the construction of a local collective standard to which teachers can situate and compare themselves.

The consciousness to do a job particular to its school

If the professional identity of the majority of the teachers is primarily centered on the contents of their work, the schools as such is also and at the same time a major space of reference in their feeling of professional membership.

In particular, our investigation shows that teachers working in schools located at the "extremes" of the school hierarchy (those with a privileged public and those concentrating students from deprived areas) refer more to their school, in particular to specify their profession. In addition, one observes a "cross stereotypisation" or a "reciprocal typification" between the teachers of the "good schools" and the "difficult schools", each one taking the other as counter-reference.

Thus, the teachers met in "the privileged school" speak about the work by differentiating it and by comparing it in a systematic way with the one practised in other contexts: the "schools with high academic expectations don't develop much educational support services" (EP 1), the "in deprivated schools the children are not framed, and not followed by the family" (EP 2), the "schools of the centre of Brussels where there is much depression among the teachers" (EP 2), the "common schools or schools in positive discrimination where the work is harder" (EP 6) and where they estimate that "one made there more education than teaching" (EP 5), and that "teachers are prison warders "(EP 5) and "where it is necessary to have a social fibre to work there" (EP 6). By comparison, they are regarded then as "privileged people" and think that the teachers who work in these more difficult schools make an other profession than them: a "harder" work and more centered on the education of the pupils (what according to them does not correspond to what they were trained for). In other words, in their eyes, the

teachers of the difficult schools make the "dirty job" that themselves say to have the chance not to assume. This comparison with the underprivileged schools is sometimes accompanied by a feeling of "culpability" with respect to the teachers who work there and some express a kind of admiration for them: "they are teachers impassioned which does an extraordinary work" (EP 4).

The teachers met in "the difficult school" also compare in a systematic way their school with the "good schools". They highlight that working in their school is much more difficult as it is in these other schools, and they underscore the fact that it is necessary to be more solid there and than the work is less centered on the teaching of the matter.

At "the average school", the teachers also compare their experiences with those of teachers working in other contexts, but less frequently. When they evoke other schools, it is especially to highlight that themselves "do not have to complain too much because there are schools where it is even harder" (EM 9) and that "in any school, the work is not easy" (EM 9).

The "narrative" construction of the teachers' professional identity is thus based on various statements which delimit their space of intervention to a particular context and by doing so trace internal borders with the profession. They define their professional identity by "territorializing" it, in a double process of identification and differentiation compared to "others", in particular with their school-fellows working in other contexts. Their feeling to belong to a homogeneous body seems thus relatively weak insofar as they present their occupational group as being characterized by an internal differentiation and not sharing completely the same professional conceptions and practices. More precisely, one could say that they have in fact an ambivalent relationship with their profession insofar as they evoke unceasingly an "ourselves the teachers" undifferentiated when they speak about their profession, its evolution and its conditions of exercise, while perceiving at the same time great differences in the working conditions and in the manner of conceiving and practising the teaching occupation.

## 3.2. Quantitative analysis

*Sample and design*

3621 teachers coming from 137 secondary schools of the French Belgium system answered voluntarily a questionnaire about their professional identity and the life of their school. The number of teachers per school vary from 7 to 73.

*Variables*

### PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The teachers' professional identity is measured using likert scales relative to the importance (from 1 = not important at all to 5 = very important) of some teaching aims (like instruction, pupils' socialization, civility and person development, and pupils' professionalization), and to the centrality (from 1 = not central at all to 5 = very central) of some teaching abilities (like teacher's knowledge, pedagogical techniques, attitudes and personality, reflexivity, and past professional experiences).

### SCHOOL'S ACADEMIC COMPOSITION, PERCEIVED COMPETITION AND REPUTATION CONCERN

Two indices characterize the school's academic composition. The first one is the percentage of pupils within a given school who did repeat at least one year, and the second one is the percentage of pupils oriented in a professional track. The correlations between the two school's composition indices are 0.83. The school's perceived competition is the only index computed using principals' reports. It represents the sum of the perceived competition with two categories of schools (public and private). The competition is estimated on a likert scale ranging from 1 (no competition) to 3 (strong competition) for each category of school. It ranges finally from 1 (no competition perceived) to 6 (= very strong competition perceived). The school's perceived concern for the school's reputation is measured by a likert scale (from 1 = not concerned at all to 5 = very concerned). A mean by school is then computed.

### TEACHER COLLABORATION

The first index of teacher collaboration is the mean number of hours that teachers in one given school work collectively. The two others are the mean perceptions (by school) about the value of the collective work and about the intensity of the pedagogical collaboration.
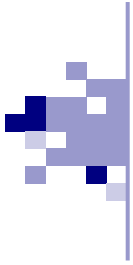
*Analysis*

### ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY STRENGTH

The aim of the first part of the analysis is to describe the contextualization of the teachers' professional identity. Two different indices of the organizational identity strength are computed. The first is an intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC). The intraclass correlation coefficient's formula for unequal group size have been used (see Kenny & La Voie, 1985). That index represents the part of the total variance of one variable that is situated at the school level. The second index – the $r_{wg}$ index (see James, Demaree & Wolf, 1984) - measures the degree of cohesion among one given school about the different aspects of the teachers' professional identity. A value of zero means that the teachers' judgements within a school are randomly distributed, while a value of 1 means that the teachers' judgements are perfectly concentrated on one scale's level. Such an index reveals a significant degree of cohesion if it exceeds .60. An $r_{wg}$ index for each variable is calculated for each school of our sample. Next an average of the $r_{wg}$ indices is computed for each variable.

### BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS

Finally, Pearson correlation coefficients are used to measure the intensity of the relationships between the intra-school variability coefficients (rwg) and the different correlates of organizational identity strength: school's composition, school's perceived competition, school's reputation and image, and teacher collaboration. The correlations are computed only for the first set of teachers' professional identity indicators, since the indices of teachers' central abilities' judgements revealed to be very contextualized at the school level.

*Results*

## 1. PART OF THE TOTAL VARIANCE SITUATED AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL (ICC) AND INTRA-SCHOOL COHESION ($r_{WG}$ INDICES)

The first part of the analysis aims at estimating the intensity of the contextualization of the teachers' professional identity. The first index, an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), represents the part of the total variance of the different indices of the teachers' professional identity situated at the school level. The analysis (see table 1) show that, except for the teaching aim relative to the civility development, the part of the variance associated with the school is significant for all the teaching aims' indices. 15 % of the total variance of the judgement about the importance of the professionalization as a teaching aim is situated at the school level, 8 % for the judgement about the importance of instruction, and 7 % for the importance of the socialization and the person development. The analysis also points out that the part of the variance situated at the school level is less important for the judgements of abilities' centrality than for the definitions of the teaching aims. What can be explained by the internality of such a judgement that implies *de facto* a very personal positioning. Except for the part of the variance situated at the school level for the index of teacher's central ability associated with teaching past experience that is significant at .01, the part of the variance situated at the school level is only significant at .05 for the indices relative to the centrality of the pedagogical techniques and of the teacher's knowledge, and insignificant for the two other indices.

Considering the indices of the importance of the teaching aims, the ICC's analysis confirms our first hypothesis. It reveals that the school is a significant level of self-definition for the teachers, even if the characteristics inherent to the school structure (that can be defined as a loosely coupled system) imply that the intensity of the contextualization of the teachers' professional identities is rather limited.

The next kind of index, an $r_{wg}$ index, measures the degree of intra-school cohesion. Such an index reveals a significant degree of cohesion if it exceeds .60. An $r_{wg}$ index is calculated for each school of our sample. Next an average of the $r_{wg}$ indices is computed for each variable.

The results show that the degree of cohesion is rather small. The values of the $r_{wg}$ indices are averagely .40 for the teaching aims' judgements, and averagely 0.29 for the central abilities' definitions. It also confirms that teachers' central abilities' judgements are less contextualized at the school level and are not central elements of the schools' organizational identities. However, if we only concentrate on the teaching aims' judgements, it can be assumed that the degree of cohesion exceeds .60 in 16 % of the schools' sample, since the normality distribution have been tested and accepted for all rwg indices and that the mean $r_{wg}$ + SD $r_{wg}$ exceeds .60 for three variables (socialization, person development and professionalization). Thus, that last analysis indicates that the degree of cohesion vary from one school to another and emphasizes the need to better understand the conditions under which intra-school cohesion can emerge.

**Table 1.** Intra-class coefficient, Mean and standard deviation for $r_{wg(1)}$

| Variables | ICC (%) | Mean-rwg | SD-rwg |
|---|---|---|---|
| Importance of the teaching aim : instruction | 8** | 0,32 | 0,17 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : socialization | 7** | 0,50 | 0,15 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : civility development | 2 | 0,42 | 0,14 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : person development | 7** | 0,45 | 0,17 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : professionalization | 15** | 0,31 | 0,26 |
| Teacher's central ability : teacher's knowledge | 4 | 0,18 | 0,18 |
| Teacher's central ability : pedagogical techniques | 5* | 0,32 | 0,19 |
| Teacher's central ability : attitudes and personality | 4 | 0,24 | 0,20 |
| Teacher's central ability : reflexivity | 5* | 0,33 | 0,18 |
| Teacher's central ability : teaching past experience | 8** | 0,38 | 0,18 |

\* significant at .05 ; \*\* significant at .01

## 2. UNDERSTANDING THE CORRELATES OF INTRA-SCHOOL COHESION

The aim of the second part of the analysis is to test our theoretical setting about the emergence of the intra-group cohesion. The first section investigates the role of the schools' environment. The second section turns to the intra-organizational aspects.

2.1. Correlations between intra-school cohesion and school's composition, the competition perceived and the interest for school's image

The results of the bivariate correlations (see table 2) indicates that the intra-school cohesion regarding the socialization and the professionalism development correlates negatively and significantly with the school's composition. It sustains the hypothesis that the more the composition of one school is unfavourable, the more teachers of that school tend to reinforce the strength of their organizational identity by perceiving features of their colleagues' professional identities as more homogenous.

As predicted also, the analysis shows that the more the teachers of one given school think that their school is embedded into inter-organizations competition and threatened by other schools, the more they tend to reinforce the strength of their organizational identity by perceiving some central features - mainly the status of instruction – of their colleagues' professional identities as more homogenous. The correlation between intra-group cohesion about the importance of instruction as a teaching aim and the perceived competition is indeed the only significant correlation.

**Table 2.** Correlations between the rwg indices, school's composition,
the competition perceived and the image concern

|  | School's academic composition (n = 70) | Percent of pupils in professional orientation (n=70) | Perceived competition (n = 70) | Interest for the school reputation (n = 136) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Importance of the teaching aim : instruction | -0,12 | -0,19 | 0,28* | 0,20* |
| Importance of the teaching aim : socialization | -0,36** | -0,24* | -0,08 | -0,05 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : person development | 0,08 | 0,08 | -0,10 | -0,13 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : professionalism development | -0,24* | -0,22* | -0,07 | -0,03 |

 significant at .05 ; ** significant at .01

As predicted also, the analysis shows that the more the teachers of one given school think that their school is embedded into inter-organizations competition and threatened by other schools, the more they tend to reinforce the strength of their organizational identity by perceiving some central features - mainly the status of instruction – of their colleagues' professional identities as more homogenous. The correlation between intra-group cohesion about the importance of instruction as a teaching aim and the perceived competition is indeed the only significant correlation.

2.2. Correlations between intra-school cohesion and teacher collaboration

Finally, the correlations between the three indices of teacher collaboration and the intra-school cohesion reveals to be modest and mainly insignificant (see table 3). Only the correlations between the intra-school cohesion regarding the socialization, the numbers of hour per week and the value of the collective action, and the correlation between the perceived intensity of the pedagogical collaboration and the intra-school cohesion regarding the professional development are significant. The hypothesis relative to the communicative intra-organization process seems to be only partially sustained.

**Table 3.** Correlations between the rwg indices and the cooperation between the teachers

|  | Hours of cooperation per week (n = 136) | Value of the collective action (n = 136) | Perceived intensity of pedagogical collaboration (n = 136) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Importance of the teaching aim : instruction | -0,06 | -0,04 | -0,02 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : socialization | 0,21* | 0,19* | 0,04 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : person development | 0,07 | -0,12 | 0,05 |
| Importance of the teaching aim : professionalism development | 0,06 | 0,01 | 0,18* |

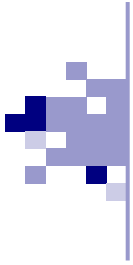significant at .05 ; ** significant at .01

# 4. Conclusion

Following Pratt & Foreman (2000), we have proposed that the relationship between individuals and organizational identities is reciprocal: just as organizational identities can influence individual behavior, individual behavior can influence organizational identities. We have thus tried to understand how the teachers' professional identity is contextualized at the school level, while taking into account that the diversity of the teacher professional identity can be considered - among other sources, like the structure of the schools - as a source of multiplication of the identities within school. As expected, the analysis of the between-schools differences and intra-school cohesion regarding the teachers' professional identity has shown that the degree of contextualization was limited. The qualitative analysis has next confirmed that the school level is important to understand the teacher self-definition, but that the main significant characteristic at the school level is the school composition. Finally, the analysis of the correlates of the intra-school cohesion has indicated that the emergence of a stronger organizational identity did not only depend on the school composition, but also on the relationships between the organization and its environment, and on the teacher collaboration within school.

In a political conjuncture characterized by the emergence of new modes of regulation fostering professional development and schools' autonomization[6], we believe there is a growing relevance to build bridges between the organizational identity literature and the sociology of

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[6] In addition, in the normative discourses, both are reciprocally linked : the professional development passes by collective work between teacher, which is supposed to support a dynamics of school; the development of a school identity is one in the ways suggested to mobilize the teachers...

education, in particular the sociology of schools and the study of their relationship with environment and external stakeholders. It has been showed that current systems of institutional regulation in several European countries are inspired by two great post-bureaucratic models of governance (Maroy, 2004) : the quasi-market model and the evaluative-State model. In short, in a quasi-market model, schools find themselves in competition in carrying out the task of education, in reference to centrally defined objectives. Users have the capacity to choose their "school provider". These schools can then have various statuses, public or private. The Central State, via a specialized agency, encourages informing users/clients on the performance, efficacy and efficiency of different schools in such a way that the rationality of users' choices puts pressure on the local teams to improve their ways of functioning. The evaluative State model, or "governance by results" also supposes that the objectives and programmes to be carried out by the education system be centrally defined and that teaching units should enjoy broad autonomy of pedagogical and/or financial management. For that matter, the latter are subject to contracts. The Central State negotiates "goals to reach" with schools and delegates responsibilities and increasing means of reaching these goals. Elsewhere, a system of external school performance evaluation and a system of symbolic or material incitements or, even, sanctions, are set up to favour the improvement of performances and the fulfilment of the "contract". The two models aim to boost organizational and professional learning hoping to improve the quality of education in the schools (Maroy, 2004).

Belgium is a good laboratory to study these evolutions. We saw that the historical context of the Belgian education system emphasized the relevance and the fruitfulness of a questioning on the schools' organizational identities. This relevance is still reinforced by the current political situation. Indeed, there was already a de facto quasi-market regulation, which could soon combine with a logic of accountability since the idea of piloting the system on the basis of a better knowledge of its "results" (via external evaluation) is strongly present in the political debates.

We suggest that post-bureaucratic modes of regulation will have an effect on the functioning of schools. With the rising of external evaluation, we could imagine schools can't be able to function much longer as loosely coupled systems. Informed by their results, perceived as potential identity threats (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), teaching teams would have to search for a greater coherence between projected images and the internal reality[7]. As an other effect, we can also envisage that organizational impression management will become a ever more decisive task for the head teachers (as it already is in the for-profit organizations). To date, pointed Elsbach and Kramer (1996), researchers largely have treated organizational impression management as a strategic tool, with emphasis on the maintenance of a legitimate image for purposes of resource acquisition. In a regulation context marked by quasi-market and accountability, this observation should undoubtedly apply oneself to schools.

The strategic importance of the presentation of a legitimate organizational image in organizational communications could lead to what Hatch and Schultz (2002) call an hyper-adaptation syndrome, in other words a definition of the organization entirely oriented towards outside and disconnected from the reality of organizational identity and internal practices. Fabrications, As Ball (2003) call it, are versions of an organization (or of a person) which do not exist, they are intentionally produced in order to be "accountable". Exactitude is not the question, but rather the effectiveness. To be audited, an organization must actively transform into a product "auditable". The choice of the representations privileged and cultivated by schools could be informed or guided by the priorities, constraints and climate fixed by the environment of the public policy (tests results, rates of retention, racial equality, social participation).  The relationship between teachers and their work could also be profoundly affected. According to Ball, 'service' commitments no longer have value or meaning and professional judgement is subordinated to the requirements of performativity and marketing.

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[7] Theorically, this could especially reveal effective if users are informed of the schools' ranking and become able to choose on another base than reputation.

In any case, our hypothesis in this conclusive discussion is that the organizational identity management literature open, in a context of transformation of school systems' modes of governance, promising avenues for future researches in the field of education research.

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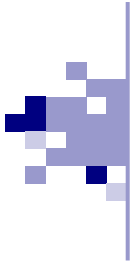*Les cahiers de Recherche en Éducation et Formation,* n°43

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