Emotions, Learning Process, and Success: Which links?
A case study on students at the Vocational School Leaving Certificate Level in France

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A case study on students at the Vocational School Leaving Certificate Level in France

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Purpose of the paper:
The current development on education are nowadays focused on competencies, such as to know how to think by our self, to solve problem, to reduce conflicts, and to develop autonomous, strategic and self-learning processes as well. In this direction, learners have to develop independent attitudes and active behaviours, with a focus on self-regulation and self-direction. This is what I observed during a research (Leonardo project) led on social representation of vocational education, especially on students at the vocation school leaving certificate level (baccalauréat professionnel) in France. Learners in such tracks, for most of them who experience failure at the junior high school (collège unique) are oriented toward vocational track at the senior high school level. Entering with a negative representation of those tracks, thought as relegation tracks, nevertheless they exit the senior high school with a positive one when they earn the vocational school leaving certificate. This change or turn out can be explained by the pedagogical methods which are innovative promoting learners emotions, giving sense to the different knowledge taught (Rochex, 1998 et Charlot, 1999), helping them to re-build this not-chosen vocational guidance and orientation (Gendron, 2001) and to develop their autonomy and self-management.

Those different approaches and procedures rest upon the autonomous and personalized development of learning strategies which ease a better self-knowledge, the development of emotional intelligence (Goleman). All these factors which help them to regain their self-confidence, self-esteem, are so many medium which allow to come back on a success track. This is what I will evoke in my paper.

Data and Methodology:
The methodology of the enquiry and of the analysis belongs to the social psychology approach (Moscovici, Doise et Palmori, Aebischer et Oberlé, et Sallaberry). I conducted through focus group, semi-direct interviews of 2 (methodology adopted by the European research team) and individual interviews. This research has been carried out on 6 senior vocational high schools (one private) of 3 different departmental locations of the Low-Normand region (La Manche, Calvados, Orne). I interviewed in its all, more than 60 persons: 4 groups of learners (26 persons) at the leaving certificate level of different specialities. They were between 18 and 22 years old learners, and all of them had already some work experience via internship periods or at least had experienced work on situation during several weeks. I also interviewed 4 groups of teachers (of vocational and general topics), guidance counsellors, pedagogical counsellors, senior high school principals and 3 groups of young vocational high school leavers now at work and 4 employers. The data collected has been analysed with two textual analyses softwares ALCESTE (qualitative analysis of textual data) suggested by the Regional Observatory of Higher Education (Observatoire Régional des Formations Supérieures) of Caen and a second analysis with the MODALISA software (quantitative analysis of textual data) for the European project part.

Reports
Research Leonardo contract «Vocational Education and Training-Culture», untitled «Analysis and Comparison of Social Representations of Vocational Education and Training in Different European Countries» supervised by Michael KUHN, University of Bremen, Germany


INTRODUCTION

Good morning, I will introduce briefly myself

I am an associate professor at the university of Montpellier III in France

And A Researcher at the CEREQ Ile-de-France,

Céreq which is the French National Center for Research and Studies on Qualifications and Employment

I am an economist. Nobody is perfect.

But I got the chance to do a post-doc at UC Berkeley where I have been exposed to multidisciplinary approaches on education policy which was a real enrichment

Since then I attend a Master degree in Psychology.

That the reason why today, the research that I will present to you is not at all economics.. but it’s still dealing with an evaluation perspective but this time not a quantitative one but qualitative.

The result that I will present here are the main findings on the French part of an European Leonardo Project untitled “Analysis and Comparison of Social Representation of VET in Different European Countries”

In the French part, I tried to capture the French social representation of VET and its dynamics through the investigation of the Vocational Baccalauréat diploma.

To report the main findings of this research, my talk will be organized as follow.

- Before starting, I will briefly talk about the logics and place of the Vocational baccalauréat to locate it, in the French Education system framework
- Then, I will present the methodology of this research
- And will give some main results from the Learners groups
- But would like to discuss the following
I PLACE, PRINCIPLES AND LOGICS OF THE VET BACCALauréat IN THE FRENCH INITIAL SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

- The Vocational Baccalauréat place
  - The map of the French education system
  - 2 years program after the BEP or CAP diploma,
**Figure 1. A simplified diagram of the French Secondary and Tertiary Educational System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Education Type</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Certification Via Apprenticeship in Apprentice Training Centre-CFA-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>15 to 18</td>
<td>3 to 4 years</td>
<td>BEP, CAP (lower grade vocational certificates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Technical school</td>
<td>15 to 18</td>
<td>3 to 4 years</td>
<td>(baccalauréat technique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Undergraduate diploma and Higher-grade technical diplomas</td>
<td>18 and over</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>DUT, BTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II-H</td>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>18 and over</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>(DEA or DESS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>18 and over</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Engineering diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctorate (below new architecture in the Bologna process)</td>
<td>18 and over</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Higher Education

- **Level III**: Undergraduate diploma and Higher-grade technical diplomas (DEUG - Diplôme d'études universitaires générales), (DUT - Diplôme universitaire de technologie), (BTS - Brevet de technicien supérieur)
- **Level II**: Master Degree (previous Maîtrise + DEA or DESS)
- **Level I**: Doctorate

### Senior High School (lycée)

- **Level V**: General school leaving certificate (baccalauréat general)
- **Level IV**: Technical school leaving certificate (baccalauréat technique)
- **Level III**: Vocational school leaving certificate (baccalauréat professionnel)
- **Level II**: Vocational school leaving certificate (baccalauréat professionnel)
- **Level I**: Vocational course (Vocational course)
The Vocational Baccalauréat principles

Still a recent diploma : 1985

A Complaint from the Employers’ Union of the Metalworking and Mining Industries (UIMM) in 1983, facing: important structural changes in the production and labor organisation implying news training and qualifications the technical baccalauréat holders studies’ pursuit a pressing demand for vocational skills and qualification at the level IV

Primarily a vocational certificate leading directly to a job i.e terminal diploma (final cycle in the vocational route)

16 weeks of internships

Its Purpose:

- to promote and re-value Vocational Education with a “baccalauréat” level dignified title of “general and technic education schools students”.
- The will of making Education more democratic objectives of the “Guidance 1989 Law”: “80% of a typical age group to the baccalauréat level”.
- objective that VET education system has to took part.
II METHODOLOGY AND DATA OF THE FRENCH CASE-STUDY RESEARCH

Why the *VET baccalauréat* an interesting case?

- **Some previous interesting findings: mainly from Céreq studies,**
  - Vet-baccalauréat young workers and VET learners have or keep a positive social representation of their VET Baccalauréat training, despite:
    - differences between Jobs and their training,
    - VET learners enter in VET system with a negative image (because not by choice)

- **Issues raised :**
  - What are the factors which make change learners’ social representation of VET ?
  - Which factors is it possible to capture to explain this dynamic of VET representation ?
Presentation of the ground of investigation and the data collected

- Characteristics of the Ground of investigation:
  Vocational baccalauréat diploma in the Low-Normandy region

- Characteristics of the population:
  In its all, more than 60 people were interviewed:
  - 4 groups of learners (26 people):
    - 18-22 years old,
    - last year of the 2-year- VET-baccalauréat programme,
    - experience of an in-company training periods of sixteen weeks
  - VET Training Specialities:
    - Work primarily with people (commerce and sales, business, waiter)
    - Work primarily with products (maintenance in automated mecanical installations, climatic engineering, graphic industry)
    - Work primarily with documents(accounting, secretary)
  - 4 groups of teachers (VET & "general education"), advisor-counselors, 4 deans, 3 groups of young VET baccalauréat workers, 4 employers

- Interviews Methods: interviews (2 hours) in focus group or of individuals

- Topics discussed: what do they think about:
  1. VET in general
  2. Their guidance in VET track and Project of life,
  3. The VET Bac-training and Social and vocational Identity
  4. VET Employment
  5. VET Integration: their internship
  6. Preparation for the work and changes (new economy)

- Analysis Methods: a Textual Data Analysis Software : MODALISA
III MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE LEARNERS GROUP BY PROFILES: MALES LEARNERS

- **Man: Learner: Production**
  - Four modalities: deepen and adaptation, guidance influence, evolution of VET view, life project:
    - To reach the vocational baccalauréat level gives students more responsibilities
    - To be directed in VET studies: a good choice afterward
    - From a negative image of VET to a positive one
    - A precise life project for students prepared for jobs in production

- **Man: Learner: Contact**
  - Three main modalities: VET Image/others, guidance useful-choice, the BEP Following
    - “A happy VET student must have happy parents regarding VET”.
    - From an auto censorship toward general education to the VET useful guidance choice
    - Steps by steps toward the vocational baccalauréat diploma

- **Man: Learner: Document**
  - No main important categories.
    - The vocational baccalauréat diploma is the BEP following
    - A “happy” VET student makes his choice by his own
    - As Alice in Wonderlands, VET students build their road by walking
III MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE LEARNERS GROUP BY PROFILES: FEMALES LEARNERS

- **Woman: Learner: Production**
  - What they learn at school can be already out-to-date.
  - “We don’t have to be proud or ashamed of VET until we like what we are doing”

- **Woman: Learner: Contact**
  - “We are taken into consideration“
  - “The vocational baccalauréat, that’s good because that combine education and work situation in the companies”
  - “I am almost sure that I will never use internet to sell something”
  - “The vocational baccalauréat is completely different regarding methods.”

- **Woman: Learner: Document**
  - New way to teach and new teachers expectations
  - The vocational baccalauréat, on the way to the BTS
A DIFFERENT WAY TO SEE LEARNING AND TO LEARN IN 2 SENSES : THE CONTENTS AND THE METHODS

➢ A new way to see and to learn: times for transition

- School combined with Work (to go back and forth) –alternative learning and education-: *toward more responsibilities*

- Built or rebuilt their project life: *an important matter*

- To make their choice: *the first time of an own choice*

- New competences: *autonomy, responsibility, adaptation...as new knowledge*

- Diverse methods of assessment (culture of evaluation vs notation): *to take up with good mark matters*

- Consideration of another reasoning process: *from the concrete to the theoretical knowledge*: “in BEP, they master the know-how, in Bac they think about it” (deepen knowledge)
A new way to think pedagogically methods of teaching in VET:

Selection at the entrance (motivation) and small size of the class impacts:

- Personalized teaching (flexible rhythm, dealing with personal problems, follow up)
- Going step by step (2-years + 2-years)
- Autonomy, mutual help, work in group
- Motivation: the VET project as a tool (to build an professional identity) and the Bac title impact

Another way to think teaching mission:

- To help them to regain their self-esteem, their self-confidence,
- An opportunity to revalue students who faced difficulties at the secondary school
- To build or rebuild individuals, citizen and workers
- *To the chrysalis”bad student” to take its flight in a “good student” butterfly* (Tassard and Davidenkoft, 2000).
If I have captured some explanation of why students who went into VET track with a negative social representation of VET but who left the VET system this time with a positive and moreover their own positive social representation of VET,

I would like to finish by raising very important issues.

If this alternative training sounds the ideal system, a great ideal learning system, which develops and combines:

- existential learnings, academics learnings, business and work learnings, personal learnings…which has been developed in those VET pgm

It turned out that this VET program doesn’t received the echos it should be in France, !!!! or more correctly speaking VET is not attracting students at that level of education…

because this VET baccalauréat training is now facing real problem …a problem of disaffection…

for cultural reasons… because VET in France at the opposite of the dual system reputation in Germany, VET education is not value by the French society as it is in Germany…

In France it has always been considered as relegation tracks… even by teachers from “academic” education at the French college level , and by consequences by families..and students considere it as a remedial or relegation pathway.

That one of the first reason,

Another reason which is related in a way with the first one, is the problem of the access to continuing training for such a level of education : they are quickly stuck in their professional carreer because they cannot access to continuing training (the same problem that actually BTS and DUT were facing) because as all studies on continuing education shown in France : lower skilled people have a very weak probability to access
to continuing training because, employers focus their effort on training on higher educated workers more than low skill workers)

Therefore, as a parent who would like to send their kids in such a track when they know and fear to be stuck in their future if they go through VET system too early?

Also, even right now and right after student earn their VET baccalauréat, as I told before, the baccalauréat title gives the right to go on higher education, but for VET baccalauréat that is just in theory;

in reality VET baccalauréat are not accepted as for example, in BTS or DUT training (which are technological higher education studies) because of the selection at the entrance. (they can go at the university but they are not prepared for that),

So again, those VET baccalauréat find closed doors to higher education,

Which parents, would like to send their kids in such a training? if you know that you will be stuck…and no future

And actually teachers from college and lycée, because of the demographic gap use this kinds of argument to retain student in general and technological lycée to be sure to fullfill their class, despite the fact that kids would like to go in VET… !!! Therefore those VET track endured as the VET Minister wrote, the 2/3 effect of the demographic decrease despite the economic recover.

(but as you can see there are a lot strategies and stakes which are going on here).
So, What could be the great VET system?
I don’t have the answer to that question as far as I am only a modest researcher but I can have some suggestion or recommendation already discussed at the European level, (previous ministry of education)
it should be offered a real VET track to students i.e starting from the secondary education level to engineer level even PhD under CIFRE contract…that Betsy talked about yesterday (where doors would be open at the different stages).

What should be done?
Or say in another way, a Huge Work should be done in France on information about VET at
Helping families and people to change their social negative representation of VET to a noble track as the academic one,
By ensuring families and students that VET diploma holders will not be stuck in their career
through the possibility to access at anytime and anywhere to VET or general higher education either through the initial education system or either through the continuing education system,
using as for example, the accreditation of prior learning through work or experience (VAP, validation des acquis professionnels and VAE, validation des acquis d’expérience)
to ensure or guarantee families and students of real Lifelong learning access And not only the theoretical access
**What could or should be a great VET system ?**

- a real VET track to students: starting from secondary education level to engineer level even PhD under CIFRE contract…

**What needs to be done ?**

- a Huge Work on Information about VET
- at Helping families and people to change their representation of VET
- By ensuring families and students that VET diploma holders will not be stuck in their professional career
- Through the possibility to access at anytime and anywhere to VET or general higher education
- Either through the initial education system or the continuing education system,
- Using the Accreditation of Prior Learning through work or experience (*VAP, validation des acquis professionnels and VAE, validation des acquis d’expérience*)
- To ensure or guarantee families and students real and effective Lifelong learning access (And not just a theoretical one)
Two more words or quotations

A Happy VET student must have Happy Parents

Tassard & Davidenkoff, 2001

"With the inequality of the education,
I challenge you never to have the equality of rights
(Not theoretical equality but real equality)"

Jules Ferry

« Avec l’inégalité de l’éducation, je vous défie de n’avoir jamais l’égalité des droits
(non pas l’égalité théorique mais l’égalité réelle) » Jules Ferry
**Space of survival of old myths:**

- The myth of the culture which "raises", and disqualifies a pedagogy based on the manual intelligence,
- The myth of the long studies which protect from unemployment

**Space of real success and time for transition:**

- Transition from school-to-work, and reconstruction of the individual
- The recognition of the students’ competencies (which were badly recognized in the general education system)

**Myths or reality? But for sure:**

- A happy student in Vocational secondary school is a student who loves what he is doing
- A happy student in Vocational secondary school has at first happy parents Tassard & Davidenkoff, 2001
- to inquire efficiently and to be well informed to choose, it is already to be on the rails of the success road; That’s growing to succeed.
- And what it is required, it’s to create a real vocational track (from the secondary level to the doctoral one),
- "With the inequality of the education, I challenge you never to have the equality of rights (Not the theoretical equality but the real equality) " Jules Ferry

*Avec l’inégalité de l’éducation, je vous défie de n’avoir jamais l’égalité des droits (non pas l’égalité théorique mais l’égalité réelle ) » Jules Ferry*