

About the French primary school teacher's history: “universitarization”, professionalization and relative deprofessionalization (end of XIXth – beginning of XXIth century)

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Abstract:

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the “universitarization” of the French primary teachers (“instituteurs”) training triggered a profound change in their professional identity, which has been widely described and analysed by the literature. Insofar as, from a sociological point of view, the notion of professionalization process calls for comparisons between an earlier state and a present state of a profession in terms of actual status and symbolic recognition between the profession itself and the neighbour and / or rival professions, one can first emphasize the gains of professionalization obtained in a few decades by the “instituteurs”. However, each process positively evaluated resulting in more or less favourable results, it is possible to identify elements in the direction of a certain deprofessionalization understood from the same sociological perspective. Indeed, during the last two decades, the managerial turn and the rise of accountability have strongly affected the professional autonomy of teachers. Some interviews we have driven show this tendency to a form of deprofessionalization.

Keywords:

french primary teachers; deprofessionalization; professionalization; professional project.

Sobre a história dos professores da escola primária em França: “universitarização”, profissionalização e de-profissionalização relativa (finais do século XIX - início do século XXI).

Resumo: No decurso do último quarto do século XX, a “universitarização” da formação de professores do 1º ciclo do ensino básico francês causou uma profunda mudança da sua identidade profissional, amplamente descrita e analisada pela literatura. Na medida em que, de um ponto de vista sociológico, a noção de profissionalização leva a que se façam comparações entre um estado anterior e um estado atual de uma profissão em termos de *status* real e de reconhecimento simbólico, equacionando a profissão em si e as profissões afins e / ou rivais, pode-se primeiramente destacar os ganhos de profissionalização obtidos num tempo bastante restritos por esses professores. No entanto, em cada processo positivamente apreciado conduzindo a resultados mais ou menos favoráveis, é possível identificar elementos que vão no sentido de uma certa de-profissionalização, compreendida na mesma perspectiva sociológica. Com efeito, no decurso das últimas duas décadas, a virada gerencial e a ascensão da “accountability” afetaram significativamente a autonomia profissional dos professores. Algumas entrevistas que realizámos mostram esta tendência para uma forma de de-profissionalização.

Palavras-chave: professor primário francês; de-profissionalização; profissionalização; projeto profissional.

A propos de l’histoire des enseignants du primaire en France : universitarisation, professionnalisation et déprofessionnalisation relative (fin XIXe – début XXIe siècle).

Résumé: Au cours du dernier quart du XXe siècle, l’«universitarisation» de la formation des instituteurs français a provoqué un profond changement de leur identité professionnelle, largement décrite et analysée par la littérature. Dans la mesure où, d’un point de vue sociologique, la notion de professionnalisation appelle des comparaisons entre un état antérieur et un état actuel d’une profession en termes de statut réel et de reconnaissance symbolique mettant en regard la profession elle-même et les professions voisines et / ou rivales, on peut d’abord souligner les gains de professionnalisation obtenus en un temps assez restreint par les instituteurs. Cependant, chaque processus positivement apprécié aboutissant à des résultats plus ou moins favorables, il est possible d’identifier des éléments qui vont dans le sens d’une certaine déprofessionnalisation, comprise dans la même perspective sociologique. En effet, au cours des deux dernières décennies, le tournant managérial et la montée de “l’accountability” ont fortement affecté l’autonomie professionnelle des enseignants. Certaines interviews que nous avons menées montrent cette tendance à une forme de déprofessionnalisation.

Mots clés: enseignants primaires en France; déprofessionnalisation; professionnalisation; projet professionnel.

Acerca de la historia de la escuela primaria de Francia: universitarización, profesionalización y desprofesionalización relativa (finales del siglo XIX - principios del siglo XXI)

Resumen: En el último cuarto del siglo XX, la «universitarización» de la formación de los profesores de primaria franceses («instituteurs») desencadenó un cambio profundo en su identidad profesional, que ha sido ampliamente descrita y analizada por la literatura. En la medida en que, desde un punto de vista sociológico, la noción de proceso de profesionalización requiere comparaciones entre un estado anterior y un estado actual de una profesión en términos de estado real y reconocimiento simbólico entre la profesión misma y las profesiones vecinas y / o rivales, uno puede enfatizar primero las ganancias de la profesionalización obtenidas en algunas décadas por los «instituteurs». Sin embargo, cada proceso evaluado positivamente resulta en resultados más o menos favorables, es posible identificar elementos en la dirección de cierta desprofesionalización entendida desde la misma perspectiva sociológica. De hecho, durante las últimas dos décadas, el giro gerencial y el aumento de la «accountability» han afectado fuertemente la autonomía profesional de los docentes. Algunas entrevistas que hemos conducido muestran esta tendencia a una forma de desprofesionalización.

Palabras claves: profesores de primaria franceses; desprofesionalización; profesionalización; proyecto profesional

Introduction

For a long time (more than a century), French primary school teachers have been called '*instituteurs*' and have developed a very special identity forged within the *Ecoles normales* (ENI, standard training schools), special institutions situated completely out of the University. They were considered as the specialists of pedagogy and often despised for their lack of true scientific knowledge. So, they were strongly distinguished from the '*professeurs*' who taught at the secondary level (in the *collèges* and *lycées*) and were scientifically (but not at all pedagogically) trained within the universities. This situation has changed a little more than 25 years ago (1990) when were created the IUFM (*Instituts de formation des maîtres*), new training institutions belonging to higher education and gathering primary and secondary teachers. Precisely on this occasion, '*instituteurs*' became '*professeurs*' ('*professeurs des écoles*', PE¹), with the same title (and the same status) than their colleagues of the secondary level. Consequently, their image and identity positively evolved, until a new recent (2013) transformation of their training within the ESPE (*Ecoles supérieures du professorat et de l'éducation*) which take place of the IUFM.

It is possible to interpret these changes through the prism of the professional groups sociology by using (and asking) the term of profession and regarding the link between *universitarization* and professionalization process. When obtaining satisfaction (in this case by an extraordinary change in matter of recruitment and status), is the professional project of the group, notably expressed by their unions, extinguished? After their remarkable wage and symbolic gains, what problems are remaining at the French PE professional project agenda? I will try to briefly synthetize the French primary teacher's history since the end of the 19th century and clear its possible meaning from the viewpoint of the sociology of professions.

The notion of professionalization as theoretical framework:

'Professionalization' is strongly associated with the notion of professional development. This development can be done in a variety of ways: in the workplace, through the incorporation of skills, through the acquisition of experience, through self-training and informal learning, through peer exchanges and professional socialization, by reflexivity about one's own activity, continuing education, *etc.* Regarding teachers, Lang (1999) distinguishes three dimensions of professionalization: it is well linked to the ongoing development of methodological, relational and communication skills; in a context of rapid evolution, it is considered as a response to the need to develop a new profession, and a new professional culture in the context of school reforms whose meaning can be debated; it is finally, undeniably, the means of a social revalorization of the teaching

profession. According to Bourdoncle, there is also in the professionalization a strategy and rhetoric deployed by the professional group to claim a rise in the social ladder and, in connection with the previous meaning, an individual adherence to the rhetoric and standards collectively established, through which socialization and professional affiliation are also realized (Bourdoncle, 1991, 1993).

Referring to the functionalist point of view, as “occupations” and other non-eligible activities should be distinguished (Carr-Saunders, 1928, Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933, Parsons, 1968), it is possible to retain at least six distinctive professional attributes of certain jobs: a right to practice full-time activity based on theoretical knowledge and high-level technical skills; long-term vocational training in specialized establishments ; entry into the profession and practice controlled by the profession itself, this control being the subject of an agreement between the profession and the legal authorities (relative professional autonomy); provision of specialized services geared towards altruistic service (“work on others”, driven by an “ideal of service”) even before the search for wage gains ; formation of professional associations in order to manage the relative autonomy, ensuring the respect of an ethical code and deontology; delimitation of “real communities”, which members share identities and specific interests that strongly bind them; prestige and power recognized in the society, both symbolically and materially, as higher and locating them in the “upper fractions of the middle classes” (Chapoulie, 1973).

Even though these criteria may differ considerably from one functionalist author to another, it appears that only certain activities belong to so-called ‘professions’. These are considered as prestigious or established, like liberal professions such as medicine (Parsons, 1955), judicial authorities and lawyers, high-level professors who, through their specialized intellectual technique stemming from a prolonged and formalized training, render services deemed more essential than others to society. If we stick to this approach, the profession of teacher, as constituted in the nineteenth century, could in no way be qualified as a profession since primary school teachers were employees who had no university education or the income and prestige of the upper fractions of the middle classes (Peyronie, 1998). Without any autonomy, French primary school teachers have for a long time been very far from real scientific knowledge; their training was centred on pedagogy, then remained empirical, made up of pedagogical techniques of adaptation. They were civil servants since 1889, and completely subject to their administrative hierarchy. During the 20th century, the occupation involves more and more women.

In their relationship with second degree teachers, this difference was emphasized by their most aggressive rivals, some not hesitating to treat them as “incapable pretentious” (Isambert-Jamati, 1985). Thus, with regard to functionalist sociology, the profession of the first degree teacher could not claim the rank of profession, because its members are civil servants (thus dependent, a priori not endowed with autonomy),

and more and more are women (this last argument, very questionable in itself, being however advanced as a criterion with regard to objective male domination in most societies); this profession would at most constitute a “semi-profession”, “a would-be profession” (Etzioni, 1969), intermediate between a real profession and more ordinary laborious occupations.

This approach has been widely criticized as it essentializes activities by starting from an *a priori* definition (Abbott, 1988); at the time of its development (early 1930s), this thesis was linked with the social division of labour in the United States and with the promotion of certain activities, including precisely that of sociologists (Desmarez, 1986). Studies have also shown that wage-earning jobs subordinated to an employer, such as the legal profession in the United States, did not escape the prestige and recognition of high-profile professions that functionalism had among the liberal professions almost exclusively (Maurice, 1968).

Contrary to this conception, of which certain elements useful for the understanding of the professional phenomenon can nevertheless be preserved as a suggestion (Dubar and Tripier, 1998), the interactionist approach emphasizes the concepts of processes and relations in constant evolution ; it calls itself sociology of professional groups in order to stand out from a reference to the functionalist model of “established professions”, and maintains that professional activities of all kinds can be studied through processes or professionalization strategies, not in systematic intention to become “professions” but to obtain a monopoly and legal protections. As Magali S. Larson states: “Ideal-typical constructions do not tell us what a profession is, but what it pretends to be [...] Everett-C. Hughes and his followers are the principal critics of the ‘trait’ approach and ask instead what professions actually do in everyday life to negotiate and maintain their special position ... “ (Larson, 1977). In this perspective, how do the actions engaged by associations or unions, on behalf of a particular professional group, involve strategies, or at least tactics, professionalization?

In this interactionist perspective, any occupation is driven by the desire to obtain a license, the authorization to practice, which is recognized to the exclusion of other suitors, and a mandate, an obligation of mission valuing. Hughes calls “guilty knowledge” knowledge, touching on things called “sacred” or in a less dramatized way considered more essential, which would place certain trades in a better position for this acquisition, such as “lawyers, police officers, doctors, journalists, scientists, teachers, diplomats or private secretaries “(Hughes, 1958). License and mandate are thus, diachronically and synchronically, objects of political struggles between groups (and segments within these groups) for a better recognition and a monopoly of the activity. With this in mind, Keith M. Macdonald puts forward the notion of “professional project” by placing on the research agenda the study of the way in which “a professional group was formed, launched its professional project, how it established its respectability and its expertise, marked out

its knowledge base and its jurisdiction and obtained state recognition “; the sociologist adds : “the story has no end” because the occupation members have “to continue their efforts to maintain their present positions and to seize and even create opportunities for professional work, if the professional project is not to fail “(Macdonald, 1999). In practical terms, it is a matter of conquering and maintaining a monopoly on a market for rendered services, based on a group’s own skills, as well as a status in the social stratification.

It is in this perspective that I question the history of French primary teachers: their desire to conquer and maintain a monopoly of activity and to develop their autonomy. The very gradual *universitarization* of training on the one hand, and the greater or less degree of autonomy with regard to political prescription and the relationship with teacher’s unions on the other hand, are good indicators I will try to explore the professionalization process of French primary teachers.

The Past



The picture above shows the so-called “black hussars» of the Republic, that is to say future primary teachers, at the end of the 19th century. They were thus baptized by the writer Charles Péguy who compared them to the horsemen belonging to the « cadre noir » in the town of Saumur (Loire valley): « our teachers were beautiful as black hussars, slim, severe, strapped ...»². On the photography, these are the Ecole Normale boy’s students in the town of Orléans (around 1880). During the second part

of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th, there was a masculine *Ecole Normale* and a feminine one (since 1879), strictly separated, in each French department³. The students were recruited very young (15 old) and trained without any contact with the University; they had no access to the *baccalauréat* (BAC) exam⁴. We can say that the primary teachers training was then at a degree of *universitarization* equal to zero.

During a long period, since 1920, primary teachers are represented by a quasi unique union, the SNI⁵, which gathers the majority of teachers (more than 300 000, retirees included). This union acts as a « total institution » in the meaning of Goffman (Goffman, 1968). Its journal « L'Ecole libératrice » had a great ideological and pedagogical influence on the primary teachers. So, without major conflict, this organization carries the group's professional project. It paradoxically defends the maintenance of primary culture and claims equal classification and pay with secondary school teachers, which implies a true *universitarization*.

In the 1940's, a second way of recruitment for BAC holders (17-18 old) is open in the *Ecoles normales*, these new students benefiting from a vocational training post-BAC for one year, although the other path (which was hitherto unique) is temporarily maintained (recruitment at 15 old), but with the necessity to prepare the BAC. Since this time, all the primary teachers must pass and obtain the BAC. In 1969, the traditional way of entry into ENI at 15 old is abolished, while only the post-*baccalaureate* recruitment remains, now accompanied by vocational training in two years (Compagnon and Thévenin, 2001). So, in a socio-political context where educational questions have taken a major place, we can talk about the beginning of the “normal and sacral model” abandonment (Laprévôte, 1984). Even if consequently disappears a form of professional socialization, which began at an early age (15 years old) and shaped in a very specific way the teacher's ideology, the beginnings of *universitarization* are then at a very minimal stage. If officially, in the French jurisdiction, the *baccalauréat* (BAC) founds the first rank of higher education, the training offered has only a tenuous connection with the University: an official circular allows a « teaching provided by academics, and makes compulsory four hours of university teaching in linguistics and mathematics (Bourdoncle cit. by Prost, 2014).

In 1979, the training, which is still held in the *Ecoles normales* (ENI), is set at three years after the *baccalauréat*. There is a timid beginning of *universitarization*: primary teachers must obtain a diploma called university diploma after two years and devote the third year to vocational training. University teachers are supposed to take part in the *Ecoles normales*, but these training schools remain primary institutions. The result of this somewhat improbable “montage” was a lot of blurring and possible frustration, insofar as this degree did not allow the continuation of licence studies (at a time when the certified secondary teachers were recruited after the ‘licence’ – i.e. BAC + 3 – and the professors called ‘*agrégés*’ after the master's degree – at BAC + 4). Primary teachers

are poorly regarded, despised by their colleagues from other levels of teaching who often refer to themselves as « academic » (*versus* non-academic). A contemptuous expression expresses this type of relationship: “The primary teachers, those pretentious incompetents” (Isambert-Jamati, 1985).

For ten years, from 1979 to 1989, the *universitarization* was chaotic with constant change and confusion. In 1986, after a very confused transitional period (Bourdoncle, 2014), the data still changes because, from now on, the pupils-masters can integrate the ENI only after obtaining an undergraduate, no longer specific (this one is actually deleted) but in any academic discipline (all mentions). Therefore, it is now an effective *universitarization*, preceding the entry into the primary institution, in which the students remain two more years in order to receive their vocational training. Addressing students who had completed a course at the University, this model has been described as “post-normal” (Laprévôt, 1984), but it did not resist in turn for a long time because it remained hybrid and finally undecided.

Concerning the project of primary school teacher’s professionalization, the SNI union will obtain satisfaction in the late 80s, despite an internal crisis revealed in 1985. Indeed, the 1989 Jospin Act integrates primary teachers in the category of “professeurs” meaning an equal status with secondary teachers; it creates the IUFM, *Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres*. Henceforth, the common training of all types of teachers will take place in these institutions called academic but remaining outside the traditional universities. The primary teachers lose their ancient name of « instituteurs », stemming from the 18th century, and become « professeurs », precisely « professeurs des écoles » (PE), when secondary teachers are « professeurs des lycées et collèges ».

In spite of this professionalization decisive conquest, the primary teachers social group enters a serious identity crisis:

- On one hand, it has obtained a new status, a salary increase, a new sort of training in University institutions (BAC + 3 years and one year for professionalization) , that is to say significant *universitarization* and relative autonomy advances
- but, in the other hand, it risks to lose its pedagogical and ideological specific culture; according to some observers, feminization, more important here than in other parts of teaching occupations, does not mean an attractiveness of primary teacher’s job.
- another point must be mentioned: the young women who become primary teachers are mainly issued from the middle and upper parts of middle classes, which may mean a feeling of social declassification.

In the same period (beginning of the nineties), a no less serious crisis affects teacher’s unionism. Many members left the SNI. In 1992, the unionism landscape changed: instead of one organization, two competed for leadership (SNI⁶ versus SNUipp).

A large number of small unions are developing, giving rise to a situation of fragmentation instead of the professional unity which previously existed. Trade union effectiveness is diminished at the national level, although locally demonstrations and demands can be successful because they have very specific and limited objectives.

Nowadays

The question of vocational training

Two major decisions mark the first decade of the 21st century in terms of teacher's training: firstly, the IUFMs integration in universities as university schools, thus losing their autonomy (2005) and, secondly, the so-called mastering reform (2008-2010). Under Sarkozy presidency, the level of recruitment is fixed at BAC + 5 (after obtaining a master degree), that is to say a new increase of *universitarization*.

At the same time, formal training as well as IUFMs are suppressed and replaced by a year of tutoring during which the young professor teaches under the responsibility of a mentor in an ordinary classroom. In the French tradition, this abolition of formal training in a special institution is considered as a professional regression that the governments under Holland Presidency will strive to correct by creating the current ESPE (*Ecoles supérieures du Professorat et de l'éducation*).

In 2013 July, a decree established the repository of professional qualifications relating to the teaching and education professions. Five professional skills are defined for all sort of teachers (with precisions for primary teachers, PE). It is evidently necessary to master the scientific knowledges and their didactics (1), to master the French language in the context of teaching (2), to build, implement and animate situations of teaching and learning by considering the diversity of pupils (3), to organize and to ensure a mode of operation of the group promoting the learning and the socialization of pupils (4), finally to evaluate the progress and the acquisitions of these. About the skill 1, the text stresses in particular the need to take advantage of the PE *polyvalence* (professional versatility) in order to promote continuity between the areas of activity in kindergarten and ensure the cohesion of learning in elementary school. Concerning the skill 2, it is necessary to be able to identify difficulties of certain pupils in oral and written language (including reading) to build adapted learning sequences or/and alert specialized personnel. With respect to the skill 4, the school teacher is bound by the following requirements: "In kindergarten, know how to accompany the child and his parents in the gradual discovery of the school, its rules and its functioning, or even by adjusting the first schooling, and, if necessary, by involving other partners". More generally, it is asked to acclimate one's ways of communicating to situations and activities (posture, interventions, instructions, shoring practices), by defining " the aids necessary for the performance of the proposed tasks, while leaving the children with the initiative and

with the trial and error of learning “, by managing the time at best while taking into account “ the needs of the pupils, the necessities of teaching and other activities, especially in kindergartens and multi-level classes, by organizing the space “to promote the diversity of experiences and learning, in complete physical and emotional safety ». The fifth skill is: evaluating pupils progress and their acquisitions.

At the end, it can be noted that, in about fifty years period, the primary teacher's occupation in France has made a formidable professional leap forward, passing from a recruitment at BAC less 3 to a current recruitment at BAC + 5. Appreciated in terms of the occupational groups interactionist sociology, this represents a considerable gain compared to secondary teachers, an increase in professionalization and nature of skills, thus - on principle - an improvement in relative autonomy, that is to say in the self-driving group's ability. The professional project pursued by the unions seem to succeed entirely. What is now the situation at the level of daily teaching activity, according to some teachers I have recently interviewed?

The current experience of daily teaching activity

Even if, before that of 2013 mentioned above, the previous skill repository dating from only 2010 (itself having cancelled a training specification published in 2007), the multiple changes, the accumulation of norms, and its internal variations over a short duration, tend to provoke, among the oldest professionals, an impression of overflow, in link with the multiplication of missions now assigned to the school institution.

The experience of work itself, and the feeling of greater or smaller autonomy, are significant indicators in terms of professionalism, taken in its sociological meaning. Among PE, the notion of pedagogical freedom is highly appreciated, while the constant increase in administrative requirements is almost unanimously rejected. According to a large national survey (5500 interviewees, 2015) the good working atmosphere and the quality of the taught knowledges are prioritized, while administrative obligations heavily criticized.

This phenomenon of “heaviness” is formulated in specific examples by Sophie, 43 years old, a rural school teacher for three years at the time of the interview: “We fill a lot of papers, we do not know why. The sheet of 108 hours⁷, I fill it but I do not give it to my headmaster who asks me it once (but not two!). [...] This sheet is meant to stay in a closet. It's the same for school outings, at least three sheets to sign and sign. There is also one that is used to coordinate the activities inside the school levels, between my colleague and me. This sheet is between us: in addition to the ones that exist, we create ourselves! The paperwork is heavy in the end”.

Our discussions with PE's involved in the job during the last ten or more years have revealed the same lamentation. Thus Françoise, 36 years old, perceives a “cut” between her debut (ten years ago) and today: « The school atmosphere is very good, but there is something heavier that oppresses us “. Jennifer, 34 years old, PE for 12

years, says she has a distrust of the institution and “its binding administrative character”. She tends to reject official instructions, programmes, successive reforms because of their too fast growth. Saying that she regretted “the suppression of pupil’s support [as existed] before “ and refused “the succession of reforms”, she conceded, however, that “this is part of the game” (thus implicitly she recognizes there is a need for national framing decisions; she wants not to be diverted from her priority, the pupils). Albert, who worked in a private company before turning towards National Education, says: « When I was in C. [the private company], it was necessary to increase the income. Now, we have to increase student’s achievement”. He assesses what he has experienced in national education for the last twenty years: ‘We are in a ‘project City’. Everything is project before, everything is evaluated after. Colleagues are exhausted from making projects.... You have the sensation of a machine. It’s not what it takes for our students, but we do it anyway. We are in the presence of a bureaucratic phenomenon. It was not like that twenty years ago.... Now we have to increase the student’s results. I find myself in the same situation. To make the students succeed, it is more difficult than it was fifteen years ago because two hours were eliminated “

Such criticisms of the current professional prescription can be multiplied. Romain, 28 years old, recognizes in turn: “As teachers who want to do well, we have to do a lot of things and it becomes complicated. There is a disconnection between the pedagogical and the administrative plan. We are asked a lot of things and we have not truly updated our status. Compared to my parents [teachers themselves], they were more deliberately and exclusively allocated to the pedagogical practice than me”.

Based on his good knowledge of the national territory due to his duties, Sébastien, a teacher union leader (SNUipp) also tackles this aspect of general pressure that is linked to a too rapid accumulation of decisions and an administrative overload, experienced by the PE: “Obesity, Digital, road accidents, handicap, values of the Republic, secularism, *etc.*, these are legitimate concerns, but the boat is continually made heavier with new missions, as if the school should solve all the problems of the society. [...] The PE have a feeling of powerlessness in relation to everything they are asked to do. They are proud of their profession but feel helpless [...] Teachers have the sensation of being alone, insufficiently supported, they feel that, on the side of the institution, the work expected is more to fill sheets than to educate, than to solve concrete problems [...]”.

Our qualitative investigation confirms this feeling of overloading and ‘ too much ‘ expressed by the PE in administrative matters on the one hand, too fast succession of reforms without the possibility of really assimilating them, on the other hand. Sociologists are able to note the same feeling of pressure experienced by teachers who have to reconcile constrained work (courses, meetings, administrative work) and relative free work (preparations, corrections, personal training). These sociologists use the expression “heterogeneous overprescription” to translate this phenomenon, which forces teachers

to carry out “*renormalisatrices* translations⁸⁹”: in their day-to-day activities, teachers must now constantly deal with a plurality of overly-laden norms and injunctions, in order to implement their action (Lantheaume, 2013). This normative heaviness is now inscribed, with variants, at the heart of the PE professional identity. This could be related to the teacher’s strong exposure to psycho-social risks (Jégo, Guillo, 2016). It is not surprising in these conditions that we are talking more and more of « teacher uneasiness».

Conclusion

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the *universitarization* of primary school teacher’s training triggered a profound change in their professional identity, in their image for themselves and for others. The professional project aiming to reduce the difference and the feeling of inferiority compared to secondary school teachers, which began in the years 1970’s, has found an almost complete culmination. However, a feeling of disadvantage, in relation to the secondary teachers, subsists; it is linked in particular, but not only, to the differential of the weekly schedule due for the same salary. A total alignment on the second-degree teachers (in number of hours and scientific specialization instead of ‘polyvalence’) does not seem however on the PE professional project agenda: “No union says such a thing (that would seem crazy to the old generations of *instituteurs*), nevertheless this is heard here and there in the profession,” can say Laurent Escure (SE, Syndicat des Enseignants leader).

On the side of the job experience, the accumulation of prescription and administrative injunctions, without being unique to the first degree, is undoubtedly the subject of a more sensitive feeling among the PE, which can be translated by the long-standing notion of “malaise” (uneasiness); I have just tried to describe its contemporary characterization. Having in charge of a large part of the child’s time and the primary responsibility of his learning, many PE live as a shift from their core business the administrative and bureaucratic obligations annexes in increased number. This phenomenon, of an international nature, which takes place in the new context of school effectiveness, accountability injunctions and obligation of result, is defined by Georges Pasquier (former SER president, Syndicat des Enseignants Romands, in Switzerland) as “administrative hypertrophy” and “a thing which is hiding a healthy practice of pedagogy”.

If primary teachers place their pedagogical freedom at the root of their first professional advantages, that is to say their relative professional autonomy, everything that contravenes to that (like administrative pressure) may be implicitly interpreted as deprofessionalization. So, the teacher’s unions responsibility is to place on the professional project agenda the fight against this risk of deprofessionalization and for the relative autonomy constant increase. As said Macdonald, the professionalization process proper to a social group has no end ; so, French primary teachers, along with their trade

unions and other associations, have yet to put on their agenda the struggle to improve their situation in the division of labor.

Notes

- ¹ Since now, written 'PE' in this text.
- ² Cf. Péguy, Ch., L'argent, 6^e Cahier de la Quinzaine de la 14^e série, 16 février 1913.
- ³ Chief administrative division of France (95 in metropolitan territory).
- ⁴ In France, the *baccalauréat* is the terminal examination of the second-degree cursus (*lycée*) and also considered as the first diploma of higher education.
- ⁵ Syndicat National des instituteurs et institutrices.
- ⁶ Today SE, Syndicat des Enseignants.
- ⁷ A new obligation to justify in detail, on a document, 108 hours of the annual service, in addition to the hours of teaching.
- ⁸ That is: invent new standards to adapt itself to the new injunctions.

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