



Training and Development of Professional Skills: An Analysis of activity in Professional Skills

Zakaria Habybellah¹, Mustapha Bassiri¹, Said Belaaouad¹, Mohamed Radid¹, Said Benmokhtar¹

¹Laboratory of Physical Chemistry of Materials LCPM, Ben M'Sik Faculty of Sciences, Hassan II University of Casablanca. Morocco

ABSTRACT

A body of research has shed light on the question of skills development in term of acquisition and training. Research in skills development has become of essence especially in the field of adult education. Most researches have focused on the development of professional skills and their implementation. In other words, in order to understand skills development phenomena, approach the question from the point of view of doing the action, an analysis of the strategies adopted to achieve such development is of utmost importance.

Key words : Development, skills, action, employment, training of adults.

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenge of professional skills development has taken a prominent place in the field of adult education. Such enthusiasm is linked in part to the enormous evolution of traditional models of knowledge transfer and assimilation. Faced with the need to adapt to profound socio-economic changes, vocational training programs are now focused on "skills development" to "contribute to cultural, economic and social development". A review of the different studies conducted in the field of training shows that the problem of skills development is generally perceived in reference to two approaches.

The first approach considers the development of professional skills a process and attempts to perceive the "dynamic structure" [1] of training and improvement of skills. In other words, it is about understanding how skills develop and occur within a complex combination of the environment and the relational system in which the actors are placed. This approach asks questions such as: how are the skills produced in the work organized? What are the mechanisms and springs of their evolution? To shed light on these questions, most studies rely on the analysis of the subject's activity. As pointed out [2], only "an analysis of the activity both in production and training situations makes it possible to report on the development of skills [...] Because in any case, it is also in the

reports from the subject to his own activity, [...] that skills are formed and transformed".

In a second approach, the authors no longer wonder how professional skills are produced and developed in and for effective action. Instead, they question the conditions that guarantee their development, the situations that promote the production of skills individually or collectively, as well as the factors and conditions that positively or negatively influence this evolution. The authors, in this respect, investigate how to create a favorable environment for the emergence of competent actions. They focus on how to design training devices that are conducive to acquisition, maintenance and development of professional skills. Such investigations allow them to re-examine the engineering and the construction of training devices adapted to skills approaches. To this consideration, the analysis of the activity also occupies a central place but this time as a tool. Used in an instrumental perspective, it "acts as one of the means for the analyst in the study of skills, their development, and in the design and analysis of training situations with a view to their transformation" [3]. If the problem of the development of professional skills is mainly approached from two perspectives, how they develop, and how they are taught. These approaches are not necessarily independent. We find that they are interdependent, for example, professional teaching proposes to analyze the processes involved in the transmission and acquisition of professional skills with a view to improve them through the construction of adequate didactic situations.

In doing so, all of the studies that have hitherto sought to grasp how professional skills develop address the question from the point of view of doing the action. In other words, understanding the phenomena of skill formation requires an analysis of the strategies mobilized "in and for" the action from which these productive activities take place. This allows the researcher to understand the organization of the mental structures that underlie the effective action and to describe the dynamic constitutive of "representational and/or deductive constructions" [4] at work in the said-action. It appears that research in this area emphasizes the importance of cognitive aspects of the development of professional skills; "know-how"

and "knowing how to do it" are needed to act effectively. However, since competence necessarily implies the commitment of an actor in an action oriented toward efficiency and legitimacy, it is important to know more about the processes that support this commitment. Certainly, different works, undertaken essentially in the field of social psychology (Lawler, 1971, Nuttin, 1985, Kanfer, 1990) in (Carré, 2005); (Aumont & Mesnier) [5]-[6] show how motivation is an essential factor in explaining what drives the individual to act. The decision or the intention to act would be linked to an articulation of the cognitions and affective aspects that the individual feels concerning the action he or she has to perform. Still, these findings are limited because the analysis remains focused solely on the dimension of "wanting to act". To say that competence implies the existence of mechanisms that allow the individual to dare to act should not lead one to ignore the importance of the context in which these risks and decisions take place. In this respect, to develop professional skills, one must also "be able to act", that is to say, be able to engage and/or engage in action. Rather than focusing on the cognitive and motivational factors involved in the individual construction of professional skills, the exploration of what allows the individual to engage in the action oriented toward "efficiency" and "legitimacy" seems to us to be a particularly interesting way to understand how these skills are built. Therefore, this research asks, what leads the employee to take the initiative to engage and/or engage in action? What allows the employee to allow themselves to act and accept the risks associated with the action? What supports his passage in professional action?

2. METHODOLOGY

Research is a systematic and methodical exercise that is based on the study of a problem or phenomenon or issue by questioning facts that must be verifiable to achieve a goal. [7] For that, questioning the importance of the "power to act" in the development of professional skills, in other words, the power that allows the collaborator to take the initiative to engage in the action, seems to be particularly relevant to the employee's representation of his move to action, particularly his first action, in the learning phase. As a result, this study sought to verify the hypothesis with "former learners", confronted with the implementation of their knowledge in the effective action related to the exercise of their professional activity [16]. In total, the study relied on 8 semi-structured interviews with "trained" young people, exercising a professional activity at the time of our interviews. The choice to speak with young professionals rather than with people in training because is justified because of the importance to analyze the experience of the employees who are engaged in their professional autonomy and thus able to bring a distanced and sufficiently critical look at their initial training. Also, to give more consistency to this study, it seemed essential, as this

work progressed, to select very different collaborators as well by gender, level of experience, as the field of professional activity (Director, line managers, entity manager, engineer, HR executive, employees). All the interviews were conducted using a canvas based on the initial hypothesis and reworked following exploratory interviews conducted with four former trainees from the various professional training programs selected. The questions asked to young professionals all revolve around the following themes: the question of commitment to action, preparation for professional practice, the role of training and the relationship to others in the development of professional skills.

3. RESULTS

To understand the different logic in what the employee does and says about his commitment to action, the study has chosen to carry out a qualitative analysis based on the deductive activity of the actors. The results highlight four factors that operate directly on the decision to act: self-confidence, the need to refer to the other, the need to use one's experience, and finally, the inculcation of the training model.

3.1. Self-confidence

This comes back to all the professionals that were interviewed. According to Bandura [8], who likes to use Pasteur's phrase "luck smiles on well-prepared minds", "self-confidence" is the foundation of all success and human achievement. Considered the result of confidence in oneself with regards to one's body, body language, impulses, and emotions, "self-confidence" can be defined as a sense of self-assertion, and one's ability to cope with the different circumstances of life. Thus, Bandura explains through his theory of self-efficacy that the confidence that the person places in his capacities, to produce the desired effects, influences his aspirations, his choices or his resilience to the adversity. [8] Thus, it appears, on the one hand, that it would be a kind of internal body that gives the collaborator enough confidence to embark on action oriented towards efficiency and legality. On the other hand, to take the initiative to take professional action, one must feel "put in trust". It would then be the gaze of the other that would allow the collaborator to legitimize himself. Before going back on the role of these "others" about which the professionals expressed themselves much, it is necessary first of all to make explicit the primordial importance that the latter gives to their previous experiences

3.2. The need to refer to the other

All the professionals interviewed, whether they are engaged in technical or human activities, unanimously state the need

to refer to other people before they can get started. Indeed, this result is not surprising in itself. [9]-[10] Many studies carried out within the framework of the socio-cognitive approach show that it is the social interactions which lead the collaborators to regulate their own activities of reasoning and action on the world. This postulates that it is the characteristics inscribed in social representations that will constrain the practices developed by collaborators, particularly when they are confronted with complex or ambiguous situations or when situations are emotionally charged. However, more than a simple elaboration and progressive re-elaboration of social representations, the confrontation with other people, sometimes partners, sometimes initiators, allows above all the collaborator to activate this "formidable interior dynamism" [6] which gives him all the audacity to engage in action. As a result, this study has identified three categories of different collaborators here. The professionals surveyed recognize that in making their decisions, they refer as much to their co-workers, members of their training "group" as to someone who represents a figure of authority for them. However, it must be stated that, paradoxically, professionals who recognize the need to refer to someone else at any given moment often have trouble revealing their inability to react to events. If it is possible to read in this attitude something of the illusion of the omnipotence of the narcissistic self, it must not be forgotten that the professional is permanently subjected to the pressure of social judgment. Revealing the limits of one's "power to act" where one must show one's full assurance of risk, where one must constantly prove one's efficiency and ability to dominate any new situation seems almost insane. This is perhaps why the people interviewed are more inclined to seek some form of authorization from their peers or, more generally, from those they consider to be colleagues, rather than their "leader" or authoritative figure.

3.3. The need to use his experience

Professional experience is, for the "old-timers", except managers and line managers, another essential element of the move to action. According to them, recourse to their prior learning would enable them to feel ready to engage in difficult situations. On this point, many studies have already examined the role of experience in the cognitive development of employees. It is generally accepted that the repetition of an experience of the same nature generates know-how to be in control. In confronting problems that are considered analogous, the worker actually gains certain automatisms that allow him to adopt effective solutions and to anticipate his actions [12]. In other words, if "it is only at the price [of] a critical distance that [this experience] can claim to be [...] emancipatory" [14], one can think, according to the professionals interviewed, that the understanding of "his experience" provides the subject with the ability to act on his

context. Therefore, it is possible to assume that by reflecting on one's past experiences, one is not only led to modify one's own practices to acquire new "know-how" and "how to do", but also to develop one's "Power to act". However, this is not the most important element. More prosaically, the results of the analyses show that it is above all the need to refer to the Other that is the main source of this momentum for action.

3.4. The inculcations of the training model

According to Simon, one of North America's leading experts in expert systems, the characteristic of any real professional in any field is to "use a multiplicity of action models and strategies that he developed during his years of training" [6]. According to the professionals interviewed, we could even add "and he has integrated". Therefore, the inculcation of the training model is one of the most unexpected aspects of allowing engagement in professional action. Professionals show a real phenomenon of internalization or even reproduction of a certain number of "attitudes" advocated by their home institution and directly or indirectly promoting the audacity that leads to an action. From openness to the possibility of confronting others through self-improvement, all "old-timers" recognize that their training has given them the "means" to cope with the professional reality. It is obviously through a set of situations in action, professional or not, that this capacity develops to meet the challenges of uncertainty. Admittedly, such statements essentially highlight the importance of the impact of training on the dimension of "wanting to act" but at the same time, they show that professionals feel prepared for the complexity of reality. In other words, why not take the initiative to take action when one considers themselves ready to face up to the risks and dangers that such action may bring about? Certainly, it seems that these recommendations to question situations, to doubt at the right moment, to take a step back, and generally, to react to the problems of a professional action, allow to develop this ability to engage in action, which is usually considered a personal trait or disposition.

4. DISCUSSION

Finally, what one can take away from this study concerning the processes by which employees can develop their "power to act" is that this objective is a little complex. Paradoxically, the young professionals who are directly concerned by the question of commitment to action have found it very difficult to answer the interviewers. To listen to these "old school learners", it seems that one can easily talk about the meaning one gives to what they do, to say how they do it to succeed; but to reveal what makes it possible "to have the initiative to do and try again" leaves undetermined all those we interviewed. For the one who "does" and "acts", it seems difficult to explain how he allows himself to start in one direction rather than another or to describe what allows him to overcome his fears

and hesitations related unpredictable nature of the action. However, one is not always able to cope with events that arise unexpectedly during the exercise of a professional activity. Thus, this exploration of the determinants of effective and efficient engagement in professional action, emphasizes that it is not possible to attribute the action solely to a sufficiently strong personality. Of course, it is in oneself that one has this ability to do, acquired and constructed both by the accumulated professional experiences and the "complex effects of education" takes shape [15] but this image of the man of action who would govern himself alone must be relativized. If (Vergnaud, 1995) or (Rogalski & al., 1995)[11], to name a few, emphasize that the human being is constantly influenced by the decisions of others, this research shows more specifically that the possible transgression of the action is part of a quest for recognition by others. Indeed, this study observed that before "starting", professionals often look to see how others have done. The exchanges and the confrontations with the other then represent necessary moments that the collaborators look for justifications to consolidate themselves in the way of acting [17]. At the same time, the strong internalization of a training model would also be a determining factor in the development of the actor's power of action. In short, to engage in professional action, one must of course feel "safe", to use the expression of B. Cyrulnik [13]. However, what allows the person to embark in this direction rather than another is not only the individual and personal aptitude in a project of self-realization. The process of legitimation by which he authorizes himself to do or remake is always part of a quest for socialization and recognition by others.

5. CONCLUSION

Beyond the methodological limits specific to any research, reservations are to be noted in the conclusions to draw from it since this is the experience as an object of speech. It would probably be wise to observe what is actually implemented by young professionals in situations where they have to face the difficulties of the practice. We should note that these results are part of a more global work in which the study has brought together the points of view of "old school learners", pedagogical directors, instructors and tutors, traditionally considered the privileged interlocutors in professional training. In this respect, the analyses of the interviews with these two categories of actors also highlight the importance of human interaction at the heart of the construction of professional skills. However, given the difficulty encountered, in general, among most of this study's interlocutors in answering the question of commitment to professional action, it seems essential to pursue research in other fields of vocational training, decision making and dealing with difficulty, which constitute an ongoing challenge.

REFERENCES

- [1] V. M. Baudry, É. Deshayes, C. Groliere, F. Tissot. **G. Malglaive, The alternation in the training of engineers**, in: The Vocational and Vocational Guidance, Volume, 21, No. 3, September 1992, p. 269-282. In: Job Training. N.53, 1996. The new formations of engineers. p. 104.
- [2] Y. Clot, "**Competency in activity**". Wittorski, Richard. Professionalisation in training: Basic texts. Mont-Saint-Aignan: University Presses of Rouen and Le Havre, 2016, pp. 159-168.
- [3] R. SAMURCAY, P. PASTRE, "**Ergonomics and didactics. The emergence of a new field of research: professional didactics** ", in Proceedings of If Journées "Research and ergonomics ": ergonomics and cognitive sciences. Ergonomics and the sciences of man. What is ergonomics research? SELF / LTC / CNRS / Toulouse-Le Mirail University, 9-11 February 1998, pp. 105-112.
- [4] R. Bernard, "**BARBIER Jean-Marie, Olga GALATANU (eds.) (2004) Action knowledge: a wording of skills?**" Paris: The Harmattan, Research and Training, volume 51, 2006, pp 165-167.
- [5] C. Frégné. **P. Carré - Learning: towards a new relationship to knowledge**. In: French Review of Pedagogy, volume, 153, 2005, pp. 151-152.
- [6] Mr. Aumont and P.-M. Mesnier. **The act of learning** In: French Review of Education, volume 106, 1994. pp. 116-118.
- [7] M. Zihisire, **Research in social sciences and humanities**, Paris: Harmattan Great Lakes, 2011, pp. 15
- [8] Mr. Rondier, "**A. Bandura. Self-efficacy. The feeling of personal evaluation** ", Educational and Vocational Guidance, Volume, 33/3, 2004, pp. 475-476.
- [9] P. Astier. **Learn from others**. Continuing Education, Volume, 2 (151), 2002, pp. 138.
- [10] R. L'Hermitte. **Vygotsky, Thought and Language, P. 1985**, Social Editions. In: The Grammatic Information, Volume 32, 1987. pp. 44-46.
- [11] G. Vergnaud. The cognitive development of the adult in P. Carré and P. Caspar (dir). Treaty of sciences and techniques of formation. Paris: Dunod, 1999, pp. 189-202.
- [12] G. Bonvalot. **The company, experiential training space**. Continuing Education, Volume 100/101, 1989, pp 151-159.
- [13] B. Cyrulnik, **Impressions and Emotional Styles**, 7th Biennial of Education and Training, NPRI, Lyon, April 14-17, 2004
- [14] J. Habermas, in **J.-G. Nadeau, "A praxeological model of experiential training"**, Permanent Education, volume, 100/101, 1991, pp. 98.
- [15] J. Ardoino, **Current Comments on Education: Contribution to Adult Education**, Paris, Harmattan, (Critical Diagonals), 2004. In: Job Training. Volume 87, 2004. pp. 133.
- [16]] A. Boulahouajeb, M. Bassiri, M. Tridane, S. Belaouad. **The ICT-Empowered Pedagogy of**

Educational Supervisors and the Engineering of their Accompanying Role as Conductive to Quality Teacher Performance. International Journal of Advanced Trends in Computer Science and Engineering, Volume 8 No. 1.4, 2019, pp. 434 – 438.

<https://doi.org/10.30534/ijatcse/2019/6881.42019>

[17] J. Muftisada, M. Bassiri, M. Tridane, S. Belaaouad. **Engineering Emotional Intelligence in Moroccan University.** International Journal of Advanced Trends in Computer Science and Engineering, Volume 8 No. 1.4 , 2019, pp. 288 - 293.

<https://doi.org/10.30534/ijatcse/2019/4481.42019>