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Chapter 3

Educational success: a multi-actor project in a learning territory approach

3.1. Summary

From the 1980s, a new conception of public action emerged: intervention had to be global and territorialized. It was recognized that there were territorial inequalities and, gradually, specific policies were developed known as urban and priority education policy. The “success-in-education project” made it possible to understand how education became a collective and shared competence. The educational success concept was above all a principle of action which aimed at mobilizing professionals from different institutions as well as volunteers. They needed to work together and networks of actors were formed. Institutional logics, learning representations and professional cultures were questioned. Commitment in a learning territory approach enabled the actors to include the transformation process in two main areas: territorial anchorage and the need for collective learning.

3.2. Introduction

In the 1980s, the issue of territorial inequalities was part of the political agenda. In the 1960s, in order to respond to the housing crisis, residential neighborhoods called “housing estates” were quickly built on the outskirts of towns. Although they were initially satisfactory to everyone, due to the comfort of the dwellings and quality of facilities, their sociological composition quickly evolved. The incentive to become owner of a house in the countryside favored the departure of the wealthiest households. Only the lowest income families remained. They were the hardest hit by the crisis and therefore felt like captives. Young people, in particular, found it difficult

to cope with this situation. They regularly burned cars and engaged in conflicts with the police forces and this attracted attention towards what we call “neighborhoods,” that is areas where the inhabitants were faced with more housing, health as well as social and occupational integration difficulties. Education was at the center of the problem, as learning difficulties and graduate success rates far below the national average were regularly put forward.

In a context of economic crisis, access to rights alone was not enough to address inequalities. France therefore based itself on Great Britain’s and the United States’ model and from 1981 initiated a policy of positive discrimination. According to the policy applied, this involved “giving more to those who have less.” At the same time, the over-centralization of our public action was being questioned. The decentralization process began and it has not been completed till date. This consisted in strengthening the power of local and regional authorities followed by that of inter-municipalities and gradually transferring them more and more competences. Local development theories were taken into account, and henceforth development was no longer to be based on a strong central authority but on the initiative of local actors. Project and evaluation concepts started being introduced into government vocabulary. Public institutions had to be decompartmentalized and in principle, partnership was increased.

Under the headings “urban policy” and “priority education,” a territorialized public policy has gradually developed, which can be analyzed as the experimentation of new public action (Hammouche, 2012) and particularly educational policy (Rocheix, 2011) modalities. Our purpose will not be to address the issue regarding the effectiveness of these public policies. They are regularly strongly criticized¹, as analyzes often forget that these are corrective policies that can not reverse the major trends of our societal functioning. We consider that if the government has just reaffirmed the need to pursue this positive discrimination policy towards certain neighborhoods and their schools, it is because it makes sense in the context of a reformulation of public action undertaken in the 1980s.

The management of children and young people in difficulty has through successive reforms become an increasingly shared responsibility among local actors. They must come together and design as well as implementation a global project. We question the concept of educational success to show that it links urban policies with priority education and thus facilitates the mobilization of institutions and their stakeholders to work much more collectively.

1. See in particular the report of the Public Policy Institute on the evaluation of the programs of educational success published in March 2016.

We will specifically analyze the “success-in-education project” (PRE) mechanism, to highlight the way in which networks of actors are constituted at various levels. Our analysis will be based on the study of institutional literature, the urban contract of Plaine Commune urban area and the operation of the PRE of the city of Saint-Denis as well as on qualitative interviews conducted with professionals. As a mobilizing principle, educational success is now placed under the responsibility of local actors. It is made up, more or less formally, of multiple networks that are platforms for action, reflection and collective learning.

3.3. Educational success: responsibility of local actors

In France, the 1980s marked a break in the conception of public action. Situated between the supranational bodies that were becoming increasingly significant and territories that demanded more autonomy, the central authority lost its legitimacy. Reforms radically changed decision-making organization and modalities.

Long before the laws on decentralization, which gave autonomy to the regional authorities (1982) and entrusted them with the management of school premises (1983), the government formed after the 1981 elections affirmed its intention to reinforce public intervention in certain territories deemed to be in greatest difficulty. The principle of a global and territorialized public action was established and reaffirmed as further reforms were implemented.

Education became a major issue and the educational success concept became increasingly significant.

Here, we will develop the hypothesis that this concerns above all the mobilization, thanks to this emerging principle, of local actors around a new reference framework of actions.

3.3.1. An increasingly global and territorialized action

Starting with the realities, better associating inhabitants, acting locally, working in partnership: a new approach was adopted regarding public action. This was implemented in the design of “priority zones” later called ZEP (priority education zones) and DSQ (social neighborhood development) operations that prefigured urban contracts and urban social cohesion contracts. There was breakthrough in the educational policy in 1980s with the introduction of a new approach to the territorial issue.

3.3.1.1. Collectively designing projects for “priority zones”

From the beginning of the 1981 school year, the ministry of Alain Savary embarked upon a process of change. A first circular, published on July 1, asked

schools, secondary schools and high schools to define “priority zones” by considering the specificities of their environment:

“It will be up to you to take into account the situation of each sector: its geographical location; the socio-economic composition of families; presence of foreign or non-French-speaking children; educational setbacks; and secondary school drop-out²”

The zone was not chosen on the sole criterion of students’ academic difficulties or schools internal problems. Diagnosis had to largely take into account students’ living environment (access to facilities, link with the city center for example) and the social practices of their families:

“As much as the maladjustment of the education system, it is the combination of difficulties due to the shortcomings observed in different fields, and in particular those of work, leisure, habitat and security that characterizes a priority zone³”

From the outset consultations with users and local elected authorities were defined as priority:

“The short timeframes that separate us from the start of the school year, the importance you have to give to consultations with National Education staff, users and elected local authorities do not allow you to carry out detailed and in-depth studies⁴”

Each zone had to develop a specific project based on a diagnosis of the territory and it was the collective nature of its development that guaranteed its success:

“It is important that the preparation of these projects should be subject to close collaboration between the educational teams of the different institutions concerned, users, elected local authorities directly involved including other partners of the education system so that the various specific interventions adapted to the public concerned are chosen⁵”

2. Circular No. 81-238 of July 1, 1981 of the Ministry of National Education addressed to academy rectors and inspectors, and directors of the departmental services of the Ministry of National Education.

3. Circular No. 81-536 of December 28, 1981 addressed to academy rectors and inspectors, prefects, presidents of regional public institutions and presidents of general councils.

4. Circular of July 1, 1981, *op. cit.*

5. Circular of December 28, 1981, *op. cit.*

On July 13, 1983, at the Summer University of Priority Zones, the Minister reaffirmed the breakthrough introduced and experimental nature of an approach that had to involve the transformation of the entire education system:

“The approach adopted is based on three essential data: first of all, opening up the education system to the outside world. Since academic difficulties are closely linked to the socio-economic environment, an effective struggle against its difficulties must begin with a preliminary study of all the educational deficiencies of a zone and the positive factors upon which school can rely. A broad range of partners and methods must therefore be brought together. Then, decentralization and autonomy. Projects built by the actors themselves are an essential factor for success. Finally, consistency with the overall renovation of the system. In no case should the objectives of educational actions in these zones be altered to avoid isolating them from other educational institutions, preserve the unity of the education system and ensure that their achievements can benefit others”⁶

3.3.1.2. *Opening the school to its environment*

But National Education was no longer the sole administration body concerned with the issue of school. It was through the problem of neighborhoods in difficulty that other State administrations took up the matter of education. In 1981, Hubert Dubedout was assigned by the Prime Minister to design “local economic and social development plans comprehensively addressing problems relating to buildings and transport, education, vocational training, employment, social action, etc”⁷.

The report stated that there was a need for comprehensive action that included educational issues:

“The Commission's action is, of course, based on a new approach to the problems it faces [...]” Programs initiated should not only be based on urban landscape transformation and housing rehabilitation but also education, vocational training, health, social and cultural life as well as judicial and police action”⁸

6. Quoted by Anne Armand and Béatrice Gille in “La contribution de l'éducation prioritaire à l'égalité des chances des élèves” (The Contribution of Priority Education to Equal Opportunities for Students), Report presented to the Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research, p. 6, October 2006.

7. Mission letter from Pierre Mauroy, Prime Minister, to Hubert Dubedout. Lettre.

8. Dubedout H., “Ensemble refaire la ville” (Rebuilding the City Together), Report presented to the Prime Minister of the President of the National Commission for Social Neighborhood Development, p. 14, January 1983.

This is why the Commission's members felt justified in making recommendations on the ZEPs. They clearly specified the need to break the principle of school as sanctuary:

« School must open. Practically through access to school and its activities. But it should especially open to the concerns of families and social groups and therefore work with their representatives”⁹

They also insisted on the need to renew teaching methods as well as adapting the project to the neighborhood, its problems and realities:

“The educational team is in charge of designing the pedagogical project on which the ZEP should be based. This project shall not produce new teaching methods, consider the diversity of social demands regarding schools, change students and teachers knowledge relations without the effective participation of all education partners, in the first place parents, in its development”¹⁰

3.3.2. Education at the heart of the territory project

3.3.2.1. Institutionalization of territorialized intervention

What we now call “urban policy” and “priority education” are public policies that were gradually established going back and forth between the implementation and design of the action. There were some hesitations about the areas to be taken into account as regards urban policy, which resulted in a multiplication of mechanisms: social development of neighborhoods, urban contracts, sensitive urban areas (ZUS), and urban social cohesion contracts (CUCS). Zones developed anarchically, leading to a nesting of territories and perimeters, each with its own funding: from 148 DSQs in 1982, sensitive urban areas moved to 751 in 1996 then 2492 CUCS neighborhoods in 2007.

For its part, the priority education policy experienced both periods of decline and many revivals (1990, 1997 and 2006). The number of schools concerned continued to steadily increase through successive reforms. Thus, the number of secondary schools rose from 503 in 1982 to 1,099 in 2002. At the time of their creation, there were 363 priority zones. The 2006 reform introduced the “ambition success” networks, driven at the national level, and academic success networks, managed at the academic level. These 1,076 networks involved 20% of students in the education system.

In 2014, the joint redesigning of urban policy and priority education integrated past experiences to propose a more targeted and readable policy which was better anchored in the territorial dynamics. To facilitate adoption by the actors, a simplification was

9. Hubert Dubedout, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

10. *Idem.*

carried out. We returned to more explicit titles such as “urban contract” or “priority education network.” Previous mechanisms were cancelled. The urban contract became the sole contractual mechanism which enabled the various actors concerned to agree on the objectives, allocated resources and evaluation criteria. To align the action towards priority neighborhood(s) in a wider dynamic, the urban contract had to be developed and implemented at the level of intermunicipalities. Three basic principles were reaffirmed: intervention had to be territorialized, basing on a mobilization of local actors and integrating educational issues. The contractual document necessarily included an education component in order to clearly articulate the various mechanisms at the territory level. A note, jointly signed by the Minister of National Education and the Minister of Youth and Sports, recalled the importance of joint management and the necessary mobilization of National Education in the preparation and implementation of urban contracts:

“It is up to each rector to take into account the knowledge of priority neighborhoods as regards urban policy and to put in place working procedures to enhance the proper consideration of educational issues in urban contracts to which he/she will be consignee. In each rectorate [...] a political correspondent of the city is designated, who covers all the mechanisms under this policy¹¹”.

3.3.2.2. *Education, a priority for the transformation of the territory*

To understand the importance of education in the territorial dynamics and the way in which collective action is structured, let us examine Plaine Commune’s urban contract, a territory situated at the northeast of the new city of Grand Paris. This agglomeration, consisting of 9 communes, had to face a strong deindustrialization in the 1970s. Today, it is in the process of succeeding in its transformation as it has stopped its demographic decline and is able to welcome new companies. However, in terms of social cohesion, many difficulties remain: one third of households live below the poverty line (10% in Île-de-France) and 37% of young people are unemployed (25% in Île-de-France). In the field of education, there are also deep territorial inequalities: 73% of students obtain the Brevet de Collèges “*French Certificate of General education*” (83% at the national level). The rate of students with a year of delay for entry to Sixième (6th grade or form 1) is 19.3% (6.7% at the national level). The share of young people above 15 not attending school and without a diploma is 35.8%, whereas it is 18% in Île-de-France.

The territory benefits from the complementary resources provided by the urban policy and priority education. To continue the action undertaken within the

11. Instruction on the integration of education issues within urban contracts, November 28, 2014, addressed to the prefects, rectors and academic directors of National Education and signed by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Urban Affairs, Youth and Sports.

framework of the new provisions, the agglomeration initiated the preparation of a territorial project organized around six priority thematic areas¹². In this new urban contract, signed in 2015, education is at the forefront of employment, integration and economic development, housing including living conditions and health.

The analysis of the educational component shows that all issues, including those specific to the school system, were taken into account, such as mentoring towards the taking over of duty or the deployment of the “more teachers than classes” mechanism. Four general objectives were adopted: stabilizing educational teams, developing innovative teaching practices, monitoring children and young people in fragile situations, and strengthening cooperation between parents and schools. For each of the 26 actions announced the managers, public and partners were clearly indicated. National Education was involved in the conduct of 19 actions, either alone (11 actions) or in partnership with cities (8 actions). It was, of course, adequately involved in its own spheres of competence, such as the recruitment of teachers or their training. But there was also the involvement of academic services on a more global action such as the development of school and extracurricular projects to combat discrimination.

3.3.2.3. *Educational success, a unifying principle*

To involve National Education staff in the preparation and implementation of a “partnership educational project,” Plaine Commune’s elected authorities, supported by the State services, mobilized the concept of educational success:

“This concerns, in the years to come, the creation of conditions to ensure the educational success of the territory’s students”¹³.

Among the actions, we note the need to “continue and strengthen the dynamics deployed within the framework of the Educational Success Program”¹⁴

To address this complex concept, we will mobilize the tools of cognitive analysis of public policies to demonstrate that a new normative and cognitive framework is being established. We have observed that, from the design of “priority zones,” the principle of a global and territorialized action had been agreed. This could be seen from the change in the sectoral reference framework (Muller, 2005), since up to the 1980s, education remained the monopoly of an educational system organized at national

12. The six themes are in the order: education; employment, integration and economic development; housing and living environment; health; public peace, security and crime prevention; social activity and cultural life of the neighborhoods.

13. Plaine Commune's urban contract, p. 13, July 2015.

14. *Idem*, p. 43, July 2015.

level, generally focused on disciplinary knowledge, which was not open to families' social issues and closed to territorial realities.

Our hope is to develop the hypothesis according to which the principle of educational success would be a vector for this new sectoral reference framework with the function to unite the actors around an objective that can be widely shared. In effect, which professional, political or association official (whatever their organizational affiliation or personal convictions), can say today that they stand in opposition to children's and young people's success?

3.3.2.4. *From academic failure to educational success*

The issue of academic success is constitutive to public schools. From the end of the nineteenth century work had begun on "school maladjustments" or "academic delay" (Ravon, 2000). In the 1970s, the concept of academic failure became a public problem that went beyond the school setting. Concerned about the professional integration of students in difficulty, local and regional authorities as well as associations intervened "at the school margins" (Glasman, 2001) by setting up school support or homework assistance actions.

Alain Savary's circulars legitimized the school system intervention by providing a new vision of academic difficulty. Until now, it had been viewed mainly as an individual problem (socio-cultural handicap, absence of donation), which prevented students from taking an interest in academic learning. We move here from a psychologizing approach to a territory approach:

"The analysis of the problems encountered in specific geographical areas by the most disadvantaged groups reveals strong relationships between failure and dropout rates including the socio-economic environment"¹⁵

From the 2000s onwards, the educational success concept replaced that of academic failure. It was mobilized in the educational policy as well as in the urban policy. In 2004, Thélot's report stated that schools must act "for the success of all students." Those who did not have sufficient knowledge and skills could, since 2006, benefit from a "personalized educational success program"¹⁶. In 2013, the "educational

15. Circular of December 28, 1981, *op. cit.*

16. It followed a national consultation that took place from 2003 to prepare the law of orientation and program *For the future of school* voted in 2005.

success pact”¹⁷, was signed, a document which served as a reference for the elaboration of the educational components of urban contracts¹⁸.

Within the framework of the urban policy, the 2004 social cohesion plan was the driving force behind the “educational success mechanisms” to support students in difficulty. The objective was to target a school audience:

“Educational success mechanisms carry out support actions for the benefit of primary and secondary school students and their families. [...] They are implemented from nursery school”¹⁹

The management of these mechanisms was entrusted to the municipalities, but the partnership work with National Education was indispensable since, as far as the actors were concerned, this meant working on the basis of identified children's academic difficulties.

3.3.2.5. *A renewed framework for action*

Regulatory texts and contractual documents largely mobilize the educational success concept but do not clearly specify its content. The educational success pact gave an idealized definition:

“Educational success is defined as the search for the harmonious development of children and young people. It [...] tends to reconcile personal fulfillment, relationship with others and academic success.”

In reality, it is presented more as a process than as an objective in itself. Partnership is always put forward. Thus, the Paris public interest group for educational success specified to professionals that:

“Educational success allows the social and educational support of a child or adolescent who shows signs of fragility by a global approach and by the cross examination of all educators and professionals of the territory”²⁰

17. It was prepared by a minister delegated to educational success, 2012 innovation in the composition of the government. This function was not renewed in subsequent governments.

18. It is specified in the annex to the instruction of November 28, 2014 on the integration of educational issues within urban contracts.

19. Law No. 2005-32 of 01/18/2005 relating to programming for social cohesion, Article 128.

20. Plaque de présentation du dispositif destiné aux professionnels.

There is often confusion between educational success and academic success, the latter being easier to assess on the basis of simple indicators such as obtaining a diploma or academic delay. Fabienne Fédérini, a member of the Directorate General for School Education of the Ministry of National Education, points out that educational success is not to be seen as a complement to academic success. This involves taking a new look at the education system:

“It (educational success) promotes a certain conception of the educational act by making it a global education act that takes into account both the uniqueness of the child / adolescent in all its components (social, cognitive, psychological, physical and emotional) and the territory within which they are registered²¹”.

A study on representations would probably show that the perception of educational success varies according to the social positions, value systems and ethical choices of individuals and groups. Consequently, the educational success concept aims above all at mobilizing the actors in new mechanisms of public action which require their personal commitment and their own creativity. National Education henceforth dares to expose the difficulties it encounters in fulfilling its mission (school dropout, poor PISA results). Beyond the resistances of each other, change is essential for professionals through a new normative and cognitive framework. The new reference framework has four main characteristics: decision is taken at the local level; the project is global and specific to the territory concerned; education is a shared competence and networks of actors are formed.

One of these mechanisms is particularly interesting to note, as it lies at the intersection between urban policy and priority education policy. This is the success-in-education project (PRE). This is one of the two aspects of the educational success program of the 2004 social cohesion plan, the second being the success-in-education boarding establishments. The aim of the PRE is “to support vulnerable children and adolescents from the first years in nursery school until they reach school leaving age, taking their entire environment and difficulties into account²²”.

The PRE should not act as a substitute for other structures. In order to fulfill its mission with regard to children between the ages of 2 and 16, it is obliged to develop and promote networks of actors involved in the fields of education, social work, health, leisure and culture.

21. Fabienne Fédérini, ministère de l'Éducation nationale, conférence prononcée dans le cadre des journées d'étude organisées par le centre Alain Savary sur le thème : « Quelles collaborations locales et institutionnelles pour améliorer l'accompagnement à la scolarité ? », 26 mars 2015.

22. Note of 04/27/2005 from the Interministerial Delegation on Cities to the prefects.

3.4. Networks of actors in the field of education

The PRE was not the first mechanism based on the need to develop a local partnership including the school. Between 1985 and 1998, action programs aimed at achieving better use of children's time (blue contract, CATE contract for example) were supported. Then, from 1998, the logic of territory project emerged through the "local education contracts" which had to ensure the coherence between the extracurricular and after school activities and those organized during school time.

The innovation offered by the PRE is to cross the logic of intervention on territories and that of intervention with individuals. Indeed, we move out of an approach which was still compartmentalized with school on one side and the socio-educational on the other, by including the social issue. The main objective is to focus on individual paths, by combining individual and collective actions. From an organizational point of view, the aim is not to create an additional structure, but to facilitate the intervention of professionals from existing structures. This method of functioning significantly changes the nature of partnerships: on the one hand, by including the social issue, the number of partners increases and on the other hand, partnership is more rooted in practices and is found at several levels. In the networks that are formed, an institutional partnership could be distinguished, in which are found political officials and executives of the organizations involved, as well as a close partnership in which professionals and social actors are present.

3.4.1. Reformulation of social and educational action

Though there was a general framework established by the 2006 circulars, each territory that engaged in a PRE specified its own objectives and structuring method. To understand the implementation conditions of the mechanism, we will present the case of Saint-Denis. This city comprises 110,000 inhabitants, it is located in the north of Paris and belongs to the agglomeration of Plaine Commune. It has its specificities both in terms of its dynamism and the difficulties encountered by the population. The challenge in terms of education is significant since 30% of the population is under 20 years of age. The rapid increase in population required the opening of 10 new schools since 2008.

Saint-Denis' PRE was created in 2006 and has recently benefited from the new priority education to redefine its project, expand its team and improve its organization. The PRE supports about 250 children and young people per year. Partnership and multi-professional support are at the heart of its strategy. It works in close collaboration with all the schools in the city, since they almost all benefit from the priority education ranking (4 REP+ and 5 REP for a total of 34 school groups, 9 secondary schools and 4 high schools).

3.4.1.1. *A complex mechanism*

The complexity was inscribed in the design of the mechanism, which had to allow the co-construction of a local project implemented by a team composed of stakeholders with varied professional cultures and intended for a school audience. There were three levels.

At the macro level, the regulatory and normative framework was set: law, circulars, financial resources, evaluation. After a first experimental period, a methodological guide was drawn up by the interministerial delegation on cities and specified the institutional expectations. To facilitate understanding, some projects were chosen as models, “good practices.”

At the meso level, we had an initial adaptation to territorial realities with the incorporation of the mechanism in territorial dynamics: here, the PREs of each city were included in the educational component of the urban contract. At the departmental level, prefects and academic directors of the departmental services of the Ministry of Education appraised the projects and gave an opinion.

The more operational objectives that took the territorial realities into account were conceived and put into practice at the local level.

– A local and collective decision

The legislator included the local partnership in the system’s structure. Indeed, it had to be managed by a local structure (existing or to be created) with legal independence, public accounting and a board of directors composed of representatives of the various institutions concerned and users. Among the possible choices, Saint-Denis retained the school fund, a public institution chaired by the Mayor, but also where partners’ representatives meet and, in particular for National Education, the three district inspectors and the city’s secondary school policy adviser²³.

The main function of the Board of Directors is to validate the project and its funding. The State provides its contribution to the mechanism only on the basis of a realistic project and a provisional budget which highlights the various contributions. These could be paid as grants or provision of staff and premises. Negotiations between the State and school fund resulted in the signing of an annual agreement which formalized the commitment of both parties.

23. We should note with interest the renewal, in connection with the educational success program, of school funds which had been created before the French Jules Ferry laws to encourage public school attendance.

– An operational team

The management of the mechanism is based on a team composed of a coordinator and career representatives. Their role is to identify children's needs, make a diagnosis of the situation, propose (in agreement with their families) an adapted educational path and to follow the children's development. This path could be made up of specific interventions, carried out within an individual or collective framework, and non-specific actions falling under existing mechanisms. Saint-Denis' operational team is composed of 11 people: an official who acts as both team coordinator and adviser for projects registered under the education component of the urban contract; four career representatives (3 for primary schools and 1 for secondary schools), a psychologist, the coordinator of success workshops, a secretary and an accountant. A socio-cultural mediator offers semi-collective activities aimed at the discovery of public facilities. There is an educator responsible for coordinating action with regard to temporarily suspended students.

There is no typical composition of teams whose constitution adapts to local possibilities. The career representative is the guarantor of the smooth progress of the pathways to success. He/she has an overall view on the implementing methods of these pathways and the evolution of children. He/she connects children, their family, the school and the existing structures in the fields of health (CMP), social action (social services, child welfare), sports (sports clubs) and recreation (recreation centers, community centers). At Saint-Denis, the multidisciplinary support team brings together the operational team and its partners and validates the educational paths to be implemented.

– A close partnership with schools

Facilitating relations with schools is the priority objective of Saint-Denis' project. To this end, the PRE modified its intervention areas to adapt to the National Education's constituencies map. Thus career representatives for the primary level and priority education coordinators can work in pairs. The PRE is rather well known to primary schools since 70% of the orientations of children enrolled in primary school are made by National Education. It is observed that new schools do not adequately understand the PRE, which reveals the importance of partnerships.

Two actions highlight the strong links between the educational success team and schools: success workshops and "Parenthesis" action. Success workshops host for a period of 9 weeks, school children with special needs in CE2 and CM2 (Grades 3 and 5 or classes 4 and 6). In order to provide intensive support, they propose a timetable which has been developed without breaking the link with the class. These workshops are managed by National Education staff.

The “Parenthesis” action aims at maintaining the link with temporarily suspended students and facilitating their return to school after they have carried out the punishment. It falls within the ACTE (Management of temporarily suspended students) mechanism of the Departmental Council which provides its financial support. Each week, it manages young people who have been punished over a period of three days. Prior to this, a meeting is held between a representative of the secondary school, the students concerned, their family and the action coordinator to define a contract. The student undertakes to respect the mechanism’s framework as well as the institution and to submit the school work required to be done during the punishment time. A new meeting is held upon their return to school with the aim of reviewing the three days, organizing their return to class and proposing support actions to avoid other punishments.

3.4.1.2. *A mobilizing mechanism*

The PRE which is an observer of the suffering expressed at school and also a mediator between facilities and families in difficulties, aims at mobilizing the territory’s actors in the fields of education, health, sports, culture and social action. It functions more according to the horizontal logic of the network than the vertical logic prevailing predominantly in organizations. Contributing to new methods of implementing public action, the PRE is a mechanism as defined by Abdelhafid Hammouche (2012):

“In the current context, the mechanism is becoming a *modus operandi* that aims to smooth the relations between agents and administration, and also to promote adaptations, experiments, contractualizations and other intersectoral actions under the urban policy and promoted as such. In this sense, it participates in the modernization of the role of the State.”

Based on educational success principle, the PRE can be described as a mobilizing mechanism, since its function is to constitute networks of actors at different territorial levels. Some are more formal, such as the advisory council on educational success, others are more informal, such as those formed by each member of the educational success team.

- The advisory council on educational success

The advisory council is the mechanism’s coordinating structure. It allows exchanges between the different institutions and the various professionals. At Saint-Denis, the advisory council is composed of 35 people. The majority are representatives of the city of Saint-Denis: 2 elected officials, 9 department or equipment managers, and the entire educational success team. National Education is also very present with two inspectors, one secondary school principal and one nursery school director including

the three REP coordinators. There are also State representatives (including the sub-prefect of Saint-Denis), departmental council and a specialized prevention association.

The advisory council is prepared beforehand by a technical committee which rather brings together the actors on the ground.

– Local partnership

The PRE's objective is to go beyond institutional partnerships as established in the previous mechanisms (local education contract for example). The methodological guide specifies that it is also necessary to create conditions for a meeting between all professionals and more broadly between professionals and social actors:

“Beyond the institutions that participate in the various decision-making bodies, local, professional and associative actors must mobilize, because they are at the core of the process. These include primary and secondary school teachers, school social workers, school doctors and nurses, RASED (network of specialized assistance for students in difficulties) members, CCAS (Community Center for Social Action) social workers, social workers of the General Council, particularly in charge of PMI (mother and infant protection) including support for parenthood and child welfare, coordinators of social and recreation centers, children's homes, including sport clubs, cultural institutions and associations officials, actors of child psychiatry services etc..²⁴”

Beyond the more institutional network composed of decision-makers and funders, there is a more informal network developed around each member of the educational success team according to their area of intervention and the specificity of their action. Thus each career representative will develop partnership relations based on needs-related issues of the students they support. Indeed, as specified by the interministerial delegation on cities, their function is to “articulate competences, actors and existing actions in the service of individual situations of children in difficulty²⁵”

The career representative will include his/her action in a network of actors which put him/her in a double position: be mobilizing or mobilized. For example, he/she will seek assistance from the recreation center to facilitate a child's registration or be contacted by the social worker to manage a student.

24. *Projet de réussite éducative: Guide méthodologique*, Éditions de la DIV, p. 25, June 2007.

25. *Idem*, p. 24.

This also concerns collective actions, as could be analyzed from the “Parenthesis” action. A specific network is formed around secondary school representatives who solicit the program (CPEs in particular), actors who coordinate the afternoon workshops and which belong to the city's facilities (media library, museum, archeology service), other public services (maison de la justice et du droit) “*Legal Advice Centers*” or associations (Radio déclic).

– PRE coordinator, at the heart of networks management

The PRE Coordinator has a key function. As guarantor of application of the project, he/she establishes the link between the different networks and in particular the supra-communal network (the educational component of the urban contract) and sub-communal networks constituted either on territories (career representatives intervention area), or around specific actions. At Saint-Denis, the coordinator is an official of the city and will thus also constitute the link between the PRE and other municipal services, especially the directorate of education. To analyze employers' expectations when recruiting PRE coordinators, Véronique Laforêt analyzed the content of the advertisements published. She thus establishes an average profile of the tasks entrusted to coordinators and shows that they are recruited at 68% on the following missions: team management and coordination; partnership and networks management; programming, administration and finance including management of steering bodies²⁶. The competences expected by employers are primarily knowledge of institutions and mechanisms (21%), followed by interpersonal skills (15%) and writing and office skills (15%).

The central function of the PRE coordinator is the networks management. It can therefore be said that he/she is a mediator as perceived by Pierre Muller (2005), that is, he/she contributes to disseminating the new public action reference framework as described above within the different bodies in which he/she participates.

3.4.2. Towards a “learning territory” approach

This reformulation of public action upsets institutional and professional cultures, and the difficulties of implementing the partnership are regularly put forward. Dominique Glasman (2000: 32) rightly points out the ambiguities of the word partnership:

26. See “L'éducation le dispositif et le professionnel” in *Cahier de l'action INJEP*, p. 25.

“It remains that, from injunction to implementation a certain distance persists; the rhetoric of partnership is more abundant than the reality it covers. Not to mention that under the term partnership, we find alongside parity collaborations in which all partners are satisfied and find their own objectives, situations of vassalization or substitution of some partners by others or cases of pure and simple service provision.”

We are in a process of change and the regulatory and normative framework may not establish the conditions for relationship that the actors, who always have a margin of autonomy (Bernoux, 2004), will nurture between them. Will they develop competitive and rivalry relationships or cooperative relationships? Collective learning is at the heart of the issues and, basing on a prospective analysis, we will mobilize the learning territory concept to include the PRE in a transformative dynamic.

3.4.2.1. Partnership relations and collective learning

In 1981, the Dubedout Report denounced the gap between the objectives stated during the creation of ZEPs and reality. In their 2006 report on the priority education policy review, Anne Armand and Beatrice Gille also noted a difficult articulation between school and outside school. They noted within National Education a far too one-sided or overly restrictive conception of partnership. But the difficulties do not only concern relations with school. A study conducted by Véronique Laforêt with the PRE coordinators in Seine Saint-Denis between 2012 and 2013 shows that these professionals also question their own structures, which hardly take into account the fragility of certain families (carrying out registration procedures, accompanying your child to the health center, for example) in their functioning.

These very real difficulties, often sources of professional suffering, must, however, be placed in a process of change that can only be understood over a long period. The authors of the 2006 report cited above report developments that they believe need to be pursued. Members of the PRE team in Saint-Denis talk about the need for a “pathway” in the construction of partnership relations. With regard to the “Parenthesis” action, they explain that at the beginning there was a difference on the issue of time. For the school, the student was to be managed as soon as the punishment decision was taken. For the PRE, which wishes above all to lead a prevention action and use the punishment as a lever to set up support for the young person, there was a protocol to be necessarily complied with. This protocol involves a meeting between the young person, his/her family, the college and the coordinator of “Parenthesis” action to establish the management framework and thus give meaning to the action. At times, this meeting can not be hastily organized and this therefore defers the young person’s management. The members of the PRE team hold that explaining the action and its aims require a lot of work. Practices are changing as they

now notice a greater presence of head teachers at pre-admission meetings. Similarly, the mechanism is no longer solely solicited by the CPE but also by some teachers.

The PRE facilitates a learning process that has many dimensions. The methodological guide insists on the institutional aspect:

“It is essential to know everyone’s areas of competence, understand each institution’s logic of action, identify each other’s constraints to allow everyone to know each other better and thus recognize themselves better²⁷”

One of the PRE coordinators explained that thanks to the discharges now granted to teachers, he can organize training times which he conceives as meeting times between the different actors. Thus during a one-day session on parenting, the PRE was presented. Similarly, the PRE team was invited during the intervention of a researcher on educational inequalities.

But learning goes beyond the provision of knowledge, since working with children in difficulty raises more fundamental issues such as pedagogy and parenting. It is collective representations and professional cultures that are questioned.

3.4.2.2. *Questioned representations*

Meetings between the actors allow a questioning of their roles. Thus, a priority education coordinator coordinates a think tank on homework assistance to update the meaning of this action. It is a sensitive and often conflicting subject, because it questions each one’s place in learning: teachers, parents, structures that offer their support outside school. The strong belief that academic success requires homework is being questioned (Rayou, 2009).

As a result, the ongoing change questions organizations that need to be less prescriptive, but also representations on learning and working cultures. Abdelhafid Hammouche (2012) has very clearly demonstrated the way in which urban policy questions the professional identity of social workers who are dispossessed of their specificity which was relationship and personal assistance. This author notes their reluctance to get involved in new mechanisms because they fear being instrumentalized. He shows that for these professionals, the political arrangements of the city result in a situation where they move from a rewarding position to an exposed position in the context of partnership work. The same analysis could be made for teachers who find that everyone appropriates the educational issue without accurately defining its outlines and without the pedagogical and ethical principles being clearly explained.

27. *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

This explains why the PREs do not all function in the same way. Beyond the relative freedom given by the institutional framework, the positions taken by actors (facilitators or the resistance) will explain the PRE's development modalities, especially in its relations with schools. If we look at it from the point of view of continuous improvement of the mechanism, the challenge today is to move from a more or less valued individual learning to a more formalized collective learning. To this end, we propose the mobilization of the learning territory concept.

3.4.2.3. Learning territory and transformation process

We have shown that around the PRE there are networks that can be analyzed as a system of actors (Crozier, Friedberg, 1977), a learning organization (Argyris, Schön, 1978), a community of practice (Wenger, 2005) or a learning territory (Jambe, 2001, Dussaux, 2011). We adopt this last concept to propose a definition. We consider the territory not in its current sense (political or administrative boundaries) but as a system of actors rooted in an appropriate space (Hoener, 1996) and constructed around a mechanism: the PRE in this case. We have seen above that we can not consider the PRE as a communal mechanism since it is designed at the national level, financed at the inter-municipal level and implemented at a sublocal scale. Meetings can also be carried out at the departmental level with a view to analyzing and pooling methodological tools. The mechanism produces an organization with undefined borders, consisting of several networks that are interdependent. The common point between the actors is the mechanism: its design, funding, implementation, valuation and evaluation. Some members do not meet, but others, like the PRE coordinator, will belong to several networks and thus facilitate overall consistency.

The strength of the learning territory concept is to base on two essential pillars of the transformation process implemented in public action: territorial anchorage and the need for collective learning.

The operation of the organization will be specific to the territory for three main reasons. First, as we have seen, designing of the mechanism must take the local particularities into account. Then, the actions undertaken will be specific to the territory. For example, young people managed within the framework of "Parenthesis" action benefit from a workshop with the archeology service which presents the city's history to them. They are based on material (equipment, public services, economic actors), human (mobilization of people, employees or volunteers, who agree to get involved in the system) and environmental (heritage, history, spaces, cultural events) resources. Finally, the functioning of the system of actors is part of a local culture which may or may not facilitate opening as well as dialogue and thus determine the nature of partnership relations. The PRE falls within a series of mechanisms that have helped build partnership relations in the territory.

Mobilizing the learning territory concept compels us to take a new look at the space in which the action takes place in order to better understand its issues and collective dynamic. It also requires us to question a simplistic representation of education that limits it to the transmission of stabilized knowledge during the childhood and adolescence period.

The learning territory replaces learning at all stages of life and in all situations of everyday life (Brougère, Ulmann, 2009). It is based on the learning concept (Carré, 2005):

“Learning is a stable set of affective, cognitive and conative dispositions favorable to the act of learning, in all formal or informal situations, experientially or didactically, self-directed or not, intentional or fortuitous.”

The learning territory can not be apprehended in its entirety. It is a perspective, a utopia within the meaning given by Guy Bajoit (2015, p. 109):

“Reference is rather made to ideology when a dominant actor seeks to preserve its privileged position by justifying it and utopia when a dominant actor invokes an alternative societal project to change the social order.”

This is why we can only talk about a learning territory approach with the idea of a progressive commitment of the actors in a learning process intended to be increasingly collective.

We should not confuse learning territory and educational territory. The latter can count its initial and continuous training venues, describe and evaluate the proposed mechanisms, design in partnership orientation schemes taking into account local needs, but it remains within the idea of individual training course and for younger people an increase in qualification through diploma-based training. Similarly, we can not talk of learning territory for a project that is not anchored in a specific local dynamic and implemented by actors with the same professional culture or organizational affiliation. The learning situation comes from the confrontation with cultural differences and is placed in the perspective of a less compartmentalized operation rooted in a territorial dynamic.

3.5. Conclusion

A double dynamic is implemented in the field of education. On the one hand, in the more general framework of a process of decentralization of the political-administrative

organization, the local authorities, with extended competences, get involved in an educational project that is increasingly taking local realities into account. On the other hand, our world is becoming more complex and education can no longer be conceived as the mere transmission of knowledge built during the childhood and adolescence period.

The “success-in-education project” makes it possible to understand this transformation since it is one of the urban policy mechanisms, implemented at the local level (and primarily within the scope of priority education) which takes its full meaning in the support of children whose difficulties are identified in school. It is a lever to include the school in an expanded network of partners composed of public institutions or parastatal or private organizations representatives as well as those of associations. The stakeholders can be professionals with different training courses or volunteers.

The constantly mobilized concept of “educational success” is mainly a mobilizing principle that will give meaning to action and enable actors to have common objectives within the context of a reformulation of public action. We have highlighted the emergence of a new reference framework that is described as follows: decision is taken at the local level; the project is global and specific to the territory concerned; education is a shared competence and networks of actors are formed.

Obviously, the implementation of mobilizing mechanisms such as the PRE is not easy and is stymied by the defensive routines related to the questioning of vertical institutional logics and professional cultures. Facilitating and valuing implemented collective learning therefore seems essential. We propose the concept of learning territory to be mobilized for this purpose which is a change of view on both the territory and education. It makes it possible to design a training mechanism closely linked to action as well as the consideration of local practices and peculiarities of professional and organizational cultures. Attempting to apprehend the learning territory by confounding it with the educational territory, for example, makes it lose its transforming power. The learning territory does not exist in itself but it defines a prospect, and it is the concept of approach that seems central. It helps to foster an intensification of collective work by focusing on possible improvements rather than on constraints and resistance; concentrating on the territory's resources rather than on its difficulties. The learning territory can not be solely conceived on the basis of school, because on certain territories school is not ready to take its place in collective action. Entry through a mechanism like the PRE makes it possible to give meaning to the action of the actors conditioned to work together.

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