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Philippe Bongrand. From the Promotion to the Neutralisation of Emotions in Student Assessment: Instituting the Fiche Scolaire for Vocational Guidance in France, 1918–1922. Cristina Alarcón & Martin Lawn (ed.),. Cristina Alarcón & Martin Lawn (ed.), Assessment Cultures. Historical Perspectives, Peter Lang D, 2018, 10.3726/978-3-653-06867-2 . hal-03184361

**HAL Id: hal-03184361**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03184361>**

Submitted on 1 Apr 2021

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# **From the Promotion to the Neutralization of Emotions in Student Assessment: Instituting the School *fiche scolaire* for Vocational Guidance in France, 1918-1922**

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## **Introduction**

Today, the French assessment culture in schools, and in particular in secondary schools, has three dominant characteristics. First, the primary instruments of formal evaluation are grades<sup>1</sup>. Second, the main criterion for grading students is their performance in various disciplines, especially in certain “fundamental” disciplines (the humanities until the 1960s, mathematics ever since). Finally, the main function of grading is to rank students relative to one another: students are evaluated on their performance in comparison to their peers rather than on the skills they have mastered<sup>2</sup>.

These dominant traits cannot be explained by any consensus. The low reliability of the grading system has been established and widely discussed at least since the creation of docimology, the science of tests and exams, in the 1920s<sup>3</sup>. The importance given to certain disciplines has been denounced as an instrument for imposing one culture over others by the advocates of “comprehensive education”, already identifiable by the mid-19th century<sup>4</sup>, for example, or, since the 1960s, by sociologists who have it as the cornerstone of how schools legitimize inequality<sup>5</sup>. The logic behind ranking students has never been endorsed as an explicit single objective; the avowed aim of the French republican school system is, on the contrary, national unification<sup>6</sup>. This dominant culture is sometimes denounced as the mechanism of an educational system that teaches docility rather than emancipating its pupils, skews their (dis)tastes for certain subjects and turns tests into a vector for experiencing injustice or anxiety<sup>7</sup>. This criticism is widespread and hardly new but has had little influence on this or on other pillars of educational culture<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Merle, “L’école française et l’invention de la note. Un éclairage historique sur les polémiques contemporaines,” *Revue française de pédagogie* 193 (2015): 77-88.

<sup>2</sup> Pascal Bressoux and Pascal Pansu, *Quand les enseignants jugent leurs élèves* (Paris: PUF, 2003); Joanie Cayouette-Remblière, *L’école qui classe* (Paris: Puf, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Jérôme Martin, “Aux origines de la ‘science des examens’ (1920-1940),” *Histoire de l’éducation* 94 (2002):177-199.

<sup>4</sup> Frédéric Mole, *L’école laïque pour une République sociale. Controverses pédagogiques et politiques (1900-1914)* (Rennes: PUR, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Inheritors. French Students and their relation to culture*, trans. R. Nice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 [1964]).

<sup>6</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen. The modernization of rural France 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

<sup>7</sup> Fabrizio Butera, Céline Buchs and Céline Darnon, ed. *L’évaluation, une menace ?* (Paris: PUF, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Towards Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

To understand the dominance of this quantified, subject-matter based, normative assessment culture, one research strategy consists in studying the limited scope of attempts to evaluate students differently, in other words to focus on their unfulfilled possibilities<sup>9</sup>. In this perspective, the present chapter will focus on the promotion of tools that might enhance the affective aspects of student assessment. This goal is not only pursued by “alternative” schools and “new” pedagogies, which have often emphasized assessment without grading, freedom from official curricula, respect for the individual or the quest for “well-being”<sup>10</sup>. Alternative assessment tools, which valorize the affective aspect, can also be promoted by those most directly responsible for developing school policies, which are particularly centralized in France. This was true of the multiple attempts made to adopt a *dossier scolaire* (school record) in France in the 20th century.

A *dossier scolaire* is a type of school record that follows a pupil throughout his or her studies and contains information from various actors (teachers, doctors, psychologists, parents...) that might concern his or her mastery of disciplines but also his or her family, health, physiology or psychology. Through the diverse kinds of information it gathers, this school record questions categories of student assessment that are otherwise mainly quantitative, normative and based on subject mastery. “Psychological” categories in school record forms can reveal the role of the affective aspect. For this reason, the school record constitutes a possible terrain for the history of emotions<sup>11</sup>.

In this perspective, I would like to look into the conception, development and implementation of school report files in order to observe the status that they give to students' feelings and, at the same time, to examine their importance in relation to the dominant culture of student assessment. This chapter focuses more specifically on the adoption, in 1922, of a national model for the “*fiche scolaire*” given to teachers in order to contribute to the vocational guidance of their pupils. This new report card was an instrument of change: it asked teachers to fill in extra-curricular rubrics, going beyond the habitual grade record (sometimes called the “*livret scolaire*”), and it did not aim at classifying students in relation to a given academic norm (in order to pass on to the next grade level or to provide certification) but instead in relation to differentiated futures. In the 1920s and 30s, movements in favor of prolonging and unifying education would transform this vocational guidance report card into a component of the *dossier scolaire*. The original developer of this report form was asked in 1937 to create the first model of a student record that would be adopted on a national scale, and whose relationship can be seen with the school records instituted after the Liberation of France and used during the following decades. The episode examined here thus offers a possible starting point for the history of the school record in France, which remains incomplete and little studied to this day.

In the first part of this chapter, I will show how the different projects for developing a school record form around the 1920s give new emphasis to children's emotions among the preoccupations of educators. Using different approaches and terminologies, they consider the affective aspect as a

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<sup>9</sup> Quentin Deluermoz and Pierre Singaravélou, *Pour une histoire des possibles. Analyses contrefactuelles et futurs non advenus* (Paris: Seuil, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Marie-Laure Viaud, *Des collèges et des lycées différents* (Paris: PUF/Le Monde, 2005); Laurent Gutierrez, Laurent Besse and Antoine Prost, ed. *Réformer l'école. L'apport de l'Éducation nouvelle (1930-1970)* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> The term “emotions” is here used somewhat loosely in order to avoid imposing anachronistic meanings, while at the same time remaining sensitive to the terminology in use during the period in question. Cf. Frevert, 2011.

source of meaningful data, as a goal to reach or as a tool to mobilize. The second part of this chapter will show that, while the academic institution encouraged teachers to use this new report card to assess pupils, the version that was adopted and the initial elements of its implementation reveal its meager influence, at least in the short term, on the culture of student assessment.

## I. Evaluating Students' Emotions to Aid in their Vocational Guidance

The *dossier scolaire* is a type of school record that came to exist when the public education administration imported into the school system the objectives and instruments belonging to vocational guidance. This type of counseling, which had up to that point been carried out mainly by people involved in labor policy and in the labor market, aimed at guiding students to apply for jobs that matched their tastes and aptitudes after they finished their studies<sup>12</sup>.

The promoters of a public vocational guidance service saw it as a way of contributing to the emergence of the affective state that is happiness<sup>13</sup>. This argument is found in the writings of the two most important authors of this movement. For Fernand Mauvezin, an engineer who directed the service of vocational guidance of the Chamber of Trades of the Gironde and South-West regions, "there is no doubt that the child will gladly seize upon the opportunity to learn a trade if it has been proven to him that this is the field that offers him the highest chance of success. Because he likes his trade, he will want to learn it in depth [...]", whereas those who take the wrong path will become "failures", "malcontents", "put off by everything", and "must suffer because of this"<sup>14</sup>. According to Julien Fontègne, a teacher who took part in the creation of the office of vocational guidance at the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Geneva in 1918<sup>15</sup>, then organized a similar office in Strasbourg starting in February 1921, "guiding the child towards a professional that suits his tastes [is] the only means to lead him to happiness. [...]. And this happiness and individual well-being, this superior morality of the individual, cannot help but exert a highly positive influence on the *community*"; on the other hand, bad career guidance is a "moral influenza virus" that provokes "the hatred of failures, social malcontents for their community"; "leaves [them] all the more abandoned to individual passions or hereditary inclinations"<sup>16</sup>. F. Mauvezin's and J. Fontègne's writings, which were broadly disseminated and very influential, allow us to study in detail — beyond a mere slogan, however foundational and long-lasting — how vocational guidance, in particular with the help of a student record file, might have ended up with the production of happiness as its goal.

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. André Caroff, *L'organisation de l'orientation en France. Évolution des origines à nos jours* (Paris: EAP, 1987); Jérôme Martin, "Le mouvement d'orientation professionnelle en France. Entre l'école et le marché du travail (1900-1940). Aux origines de la profession de conseiller d'orientation" (PhD Diss., University of Paris-Sorbonne, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Rémi Pawin, *Histoire du bonheur en France depuis 1945* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Fernand Mauvezin, *Rose des métiers. Traité d'orientation professionnelle. Qualités et aptitudes nécessaires à l'exercice de 250 métiers différents et défauts rédhibitoires* (Paris: Éditions littéraires et politiques, 1922), 15, 64, 75.

<sup>15</sup> Astrid Thomann, Bernard Schneuwly, and Valérie Lussi, "L'orientation professionnelle et les sciences de l'éducation: deux voies contrastées," in *Émergence des sciences de l'éducation en Suisse à la croisée de traditions académiques contrastées. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> - première moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Rita Hofstetter and Bernard Schneuwly (Berne: Peter Lang, 2007), 291-320.

<sup>16</sup> Julien Fontègne, *L'orientation professionnelle et la détermination des aptitudes* (Neuchâtel/Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1921), 12.

## *The conception and promotion of evaluation forms to be used by teachers*

Encouraging teachers to handle the elements of a school record is one of the major points of both Fontègne's and Mauvezin's proposals. It can be found in the various publications that they addressed to children, teachers, employers or administrators<sup>17</sup>. These brochures indicate, first, the type of information that must be collected and the resources (tests, questionnaires) that can be used for the "examination" of the child. They also contain "professional monographs" that explain the qualities necessary for carrying out different types of tasks. The use of common descriptive categories thus makes it possible to identify which type would correspond to a given child. According to the writings of Fernand Mauvezin, in Bordeaux in 1918 at the latest<sup>18</sup>, this system of correspondences took on the form of a compass rose, under the title *Rose des métiers* (Rose of Trades). This tool intended for parents and "vocational counselors" was already well known when it was published as a book in 1922<sup>19</sup>. Julien Fontègne published articles in various journals of psychology, pedagogy and vocational guidance, and then a book in which he developed these articles further<sup>20</sup>. These publications encouraged schools to keep a file of information on each pupil and to have teachers contribute to it. Let us examine how these two authors conceived of this record.

Evoking practices already in use in Bordeaux and Strasbourg, F. Mauvezin suggests that, for every student, the teacher or principal should fill out a *fiche scolaire* made up of a "physiological report for vocational guidance" and a "pedagogical report for vocational guidance". Far more than a simple grade record, this "report card" (*fiche scolaire*) (which might today be called a "school record" (*dossier scolaire*)) is quite a long document:

"In it one can find everything that it is useful to know about each pupil: surname, given name, date and place of birth, school background, rankings, absences, successes, economic situation of the family: parents' professions, number of siblings, orphans, various gratuities, school mutual fund; vision, hearing, general health, accidents, operations, infirmities, vaccinations; notes regarding the pupil's aptitudes, morality and discipline; the wishes and observations of families; the teacher's personal observations. In other terms, the experience of each pupil is gathered before teacher's eyes on a small chart. At the end of each school year or when the student leaves, the teacher, with total sincerity and independence, adds notes from his personal experience. And this goes on until the end of each pupil's schooling."<sup>21</sup>

Filling out this report card was thus a step away from the assessment culture centered on academic testing, which, as F. Mauvezin regretfully writes, assimilates passing tests to intelligence, whereas "other qualities, very seldom mentioned, have as powerful an effect on a child's success as

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<sup>17</sup> See especially Fernand Mauvezin, *Avant de choisir son métier ou sa profession, conseils aux enfants (garçons et filles), aux parents, aux éducateurs* (Paris: Éditions littéraires et politiques, 1921); Julien Fontègne, *Avant d'entrer en apprentissage. Nouveaux entretiens sur l'orientation professionnelle* (Paris: Eyrolles, 1924).

<sup>18</sup> This date varies according to different authors. This is the one given by Mauvezin in his book in 1922.

<sup>19</sup> Some elements were published in the first issue of the journal *L'orientation professionnelle*: "Une école de vocation," *L'orientation professionnelle* 1 (1919), 29-31.

<sup>20</sup> Julien Fontègne, *L'orientation professionnelle et la détermination des aptitudes* (Neuchâtel/Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1921).

<sup>21</sup> Mauvezin, *Rose*, 18.

intelligence. By these I mean reflection, perseverance, strength of will”<sup>22</sup>. To convince teachers to expand their professional viewpoint, F. Mauvezin argues that these reports can nourish their pedagogical thinking and allow them to examine such questions as these, for example: “Are very nervous children, or very apathetic children, moving toward a better balance over the course of their schooling?”; “Attention, intelligence, sensitivity, willpower, morality, taste, character—have these improved during the pupil’s schooling?”<sup>23</sup>. He speaks of reforming the objectives of school (vocational guidance) in association with the use of new instruments (the report card or “*fiche scolaire*”) and of new assessment criteria (which, as we shall see *infra*, reconsider the role of emotions).

This can be found in the method of vocational guidance that J. Fontègne tested in Geneva and later in Strasbourg. A vocational counseling session would be based on a file (“individual report”) containing eleven documents or “folios” full of information about the child, provided either before the consultation by various adults (parents, doctor, teacher) or during it by the vocational counselor himself as he interviewed the child (Fontègne favored this over the questionnaire that Mauzevin had the child fill out) or administered tests as part of a “psychological examination”. The child’s teacher filled out four “folios” concerning his grades in each subject, his physical and intellectual activity and his moral behavior. In 1921, J. Fontègne helped create the office of vocational guidance of the of Chamber of Trades in Strasbourg<sup>24</sup>, and one of its missions would be to distribute vocational guidance forms to schools<sup>25</sup>. Fontègne held meetings with groups of teachers during which he asked them to carry out a “meticulous study of the child in his games, in the street, in class, alone, among his peers, in order to give the Office of Vocational Guidance as much useful information as possible regarding his physical and intellectual activity; his moral and social behavior and his diverse aptitudes”<sup>26</sup>. As an annex to his 1921 book, J. Fontègne provided a template for the booklet with eleven folios used in Geneva and, perhaps aware of the ambitiousness of the longer version, also provided a template of the smaller, simpler report card that was used in the vocational guidance office that he ran in Strasbourg.

These publications, which became inevitable references for all other works on vocational guidance, contained templates that were ready for immediate use by their readers, especially by guidance counselors. F. Mauvezin and J. Fontègne disseminated assessment forms throughout the regions where they worked, and provided models for similar forms in order to encourage their use as a national policy. Fontègne emphasizes the reformative potential of his book: “I am not unaware that this ‘individual report’, as I have envisaged it, will not become standard in our schools right away. I have nonetheless chosen to provide it here, for I am convinced that there are educational centers that will be interested in it and will adopt it as soon as they truly begin to take interest in the question of vocational guidance.” In each of these models for a report form, interpreted from the perspective of their authors, we can see the degree to which affective elements are taken into

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<sup>22</sup> Mauvezin, *Rose*, 61.

<sup>23</sup> Mauvezin, *Rose*, 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> Reports and other preparatory documents for the opening of this office may be found at the French National Archives F<sup>17</sup> 14 404.

<sup>25</sup> Hubert Ley and Julien Fontègne, *La chambre de métiers d’Alsace et de Lorraine. Son organisation administrative, sa mission et les résultats de son activité* (Paris: Association française pour la lutte contre le chômage, 1921), 10. Julien Fontègne, “L’office régional d’orientation professionnelle de Strasbourg,” *Manuel général de l’instruction primaire* 26 (1921), 336-337.

<sup>26</sup> “L’école et l’orientation professionnelle”, *Gazette des métiers d’Alsace-Lorraine*, 25 (1921), 238.

consideration as part of student assessment. It is at this point that the report card's power to affect the dominant assessment culture came into play.

### *Urging teachers to evaluate children's preferences*

Compared to the usual assessment criteria (aptitudes, academic performance, etc.), one new characteristic of these reports is that they focus on children's feelings, specifically on their tastes—which would prove to be only one among a number of occurrences of the affective aspect. Identifying and materializing these tastes was of central importance in the forms filled out by counselors. Mauvezin produced long questionnaires to be completed by children (sometimes with the help of teachers), inviting them to write down their likes and dislikes, because becoming aware of their tastes was supposed to help them turn towards a field that they enjoyed, to end up doing a job that they liked, and thus to lead a happy life. This wish to objectify tastes can also be seen in forms designed specifically for teachers to fill out, thus broadening the field of formal assessment. In the *fiche pédagogique* section in Mauvezin's record file, the teacher must indicate the student's "particular likes" and "particular dislikes". On Fontègne's form, the teacher mentions whether the student prefers rest or action, "likes to read", and what his "dominant tastes" are.

Teachers are not merely asked to identify and describe pupils' tastes. To keep students from aiming for careers not suited to their aptitudes, it is also necessary to modify their preferences and orient their affects. The vocational counselor "will sometimes have to deflate excessive enthusiasms" during interviews<sup>27</sup>. To discourage a child from aiming for a career that is too high in the social hierarchy, he can use not only the maxims of conservative morality but also warnings of the misery of discovering that one is not cut out for the career he has worked for, or the shame of one who, having reached a higher social status through work, has to "blush" over his family background. Mauvezin argues in favor of counseling students when they are young and their tastes are still malleable. Work must be carried out on the child's emotions, and for this task Mauvezin recommends that teachers rely upon emulation:

"Being inferior to one's age in knowledge, intellectual and even physical aptitudes, is always a painful thing to realize, and is sometimes humiliating; it inspires effort when all other pedagogical methods have resulted in inaction. Being superior to other students of one's own age is a satisfaction that maintains the zeal of the best students. Average students make an effort at least to maintain their rank, which the inferior students would like to snatch from them and surpass. As soon as he starts school, the child gets used to noticing superiority without being jealous. Superiority is, in his eyes, legitimate, whether it be a gift of nature or gained through an honorable effort of will. This principle of emulation is easy to use and is always effective. Appropriate commentaries must accompany this when it seems too harsh for children of good will but ill-favored by nature."<sup>28</sup>.

While J. Fontègne also encourages teachers to carry out an emotional labor, his goal is to modify students' attitudes towards manual labor. In Strasburg, the vocational bureau gathered teachers annually not only to give them individual school report forms (*fiche individuelle scolaire*) but also

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<sup>27</sup> Mauvezin, *Rose*, 33.

<sup>28</sup> Mauvezin, *Rose*, 22.

to encourage them to "exalt the value of work at all times"<sup>29</sup>. Deeply inspired by Kerschensteiner<sup>30</sup>, J. Fontègne considers that in order to "make [children] enjoy work", teachers should find examples from the world of work to fit into their curricula, offer outings to factories, workshops and museums, use films for educational purposes, reassert the value of instructive manual labor, all this in order to "introduce a bit of practicality into teaching" and to place the child in a "professional atmosphere". In order to create a true learning environment and help the child develop his own "professional mentality", Fontègne recommends emotional pedagogy<sup>31</sup>. While this pedagogical work of guiding "tastes" is not explicitly part of the school record file, the file follows up on this work and benefits from it.

Though they are opposed on other political or methodological points, Mauvezin, like Fontègne, thus shows how children's preferences must be modeled in order to be simultaneously experienced as personal and, in substance, specified as reasonable. The two have an analogous viewpoint on this, and argue not only for guiding students according to affect but, indissociably, guiding them using affect or even guiding their affects.

### *Differing roles and definitions for affective phenomena*

From a semantic point of view, it should be noted that the term "emotions" does not appear on most of Mauzevin's or Fontègne's forms, whereas affective phenomena may be found under a number of headings. "Tastes", evoked previously, is only one meaning of the term.

A second meaning, biological in this case, for affective elements is found in Mauvezin's "physiological report card". The teacher, if possible with the help of a doctor, fills in information in two affective categories: "temperament" (which, in the tradition of the Hippocratic humors, refer to being "sanguine, nervous, bilious, lymphatic, strong or weak") and "character" (which, following psychological discussions from the end of the previous century, are divided into "sensitive, intellectual, strong-willed, indifferent, balanced"). These innate properties reduce the space of the child's possible preferences: "The apprentice who is indifferent or nonchalant will be forced to acknowledge that he has perhaps made a mistake, for every person beginning his trade should consider it the most beautiful and is interested in it with all his heart. He should thus seek another line of work, unless his apathy comes from inveterate laziness, in which case there is no remedy"<sup>32</sup>. Similarly, Fontègne indicates that, if they are "predisposed to nervousness (trembling — overexertion during the high season)", young women should not become telephone operators. In the file that he proposes, the "nervous" type appears under the physiological heading.

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<sup>29</sup> Fontègne, "L'office."

<sup>30</sup> André Caroff. *Julien Fontègne. Un pionnier de l'orientation professionnelle* (Paris: INETOP, n.d.), 12-17.

<sup>31</sup> Later, in 1928, as the preface to a work in which this pedagogy is developed, J. Fontègne would include composition prompts, dictations, recitations, songs, maxims and ideas for essays, drawings or arithmetic problems exalting the values of work and of choosing a profession. These subjects illustrate emotional pedagogy: "French composition subject: 'People often speak of the joy procured by working. They also sing of the pleasantness of doing nothing. Have you experienced one or the other, and in which circumstances? Which did you prefer? Why?' "Demonstrate that work is a serious affair but not a sad one." "'Work, put yourself to the trouble', said La Fontaine. Why must we work, and is work always 'trouble'?" Teachers can thus appeal to their students' emotions in order to "teach them to love and honor all workers"; they must "call on the noblest sentiments that are latent within most students". Henry Lefebvre and Marcel Henry, *La préorientation professionnelle à l'école primaire* (Paris: Librairie de l'Enseignement technique, 1928).

<sup>32</sup> Mauzevin, *Rose*, 93.

Finally, a third meaning given to affective phenomena can be found in "moral" qualities. Mauvezin and Fontègne both consider that career guidance must be based in large part on students' "aptitudes", which they divide into physical, intellectual and moral categories. If we look closely, the moral aptitudes attributed to children or demanded by certain professions can be understood in current terms as emotional competencies. The person who wishes to become a telephone operator must have "the ability to adapt, calmness, awareness, an even temper, a sense of teamwork..."<sup>33</sup>; a milliner must have "good manners, curtesy, patience, affability"<sup>34</sup>. In J. Fontègne's model, the sheet to be filled out by the teacher about the student's moral aptitudes focuses mainly on affective elements:

*Folio n° 7. Indications about the child's moral behavior*

- 1) *How would you describe his nature? (cold, warm, passionate, easily excited, indifferent)*
- 2) *Does he show an aptitude to repress the expression of his emotions? (to dissimulate fear, worry, surprise, pain)*
- 3) *Violent or gentle character? (irritable, choleric, phlegmatic)*
- 4) *Does he seek out sensations, risk, danger?*
- 5) *What are his dominant tastes, his particular interests?*
- 6) *Is he conscientious? Does he have a sense of duty? Of responsibility?*
- [...]
- 11) *Is he sincere? (lying, bragging)*
- 12) *Does he easily bend to discipline?*
- 13) *Is he shy? Arrogant?*
- 14) *How does he behave in regards to punishments? Rewards?*
- 15) *Does he demonstrate a special strength (or weakness) of will? Does he control himself easily?*<sup>35</sup>

Characterizing the status of emotions in these files is all the more complicated because it is not only the meaning given to emotions that differ but also their bearing on the student's career guidance. Tastes, which, as we have seen, are supposed to be guided by educators, are secondary in the choice of orientation. For F. Mauvezin, they are less significant than other criteria, the most important of which are the subject's aptitudes and his family background. He advises against letting career guidance be too strongly influenced by the desires of children:

"The vast majority of parents do not dare broach the subject of their children's vocational guidance for they feel that the question is very serious and delicate, but instead, without emotion, let the matter be decided for them by a 13-year-old kid.

"If we listened to the desires of rural children, we would soon have in France hundreds of thousands of workers more or less vaguely qualified as mechanics, knowing nothing about agriculture, whereas we have a great need of agricultural workers who are knowledgeable about their field and who perhaps could make use of a few notions of mechanics."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. *L'Orientation professionnelle* 8 (1920).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *L'Orientation professionnelle* 30 (1922).

<sup>35</sup> Fontègne, *L'Orientation*, 234.

<sup>36</sup> Mauvezin, *Rose*, 59, 15.

Fontègne also distances himself from the subjective expression of the young person, inevitably "mentally anarchical", who must "make choices at an unfortunately troubling and confusing period of his life"<sup>37</sup>. This secondary status given to the preferences of the subject appears in the advice that, during the orientation meeting itself, "one should, as much as possible, avoid thwarting a *reasonable* wish on the part of the child"<sup>38</sup>. Tastes are an insufficient but necessary condition. Fontègne congratulates himself on having managed to "guide young people away from careers in which they would certainly not have succeeded due to a lack of inclination, for instance"<sup>39</sup>.

Emotions, in their moral or physiological sense, are given the characteristic status of "aptitudes" in Fontègne's writing during this period of the vocational guidance movement; this is to say that they are innate, often hereditary, not very trainable, and are thus a source of indications or counter-indications<sup>40</sup>. An example of a counter-indication related to emotive qualities appears when J. Fontègne acknowledges the usefulness of graphology:

"Young men, even brilliant ones, who are too nervous (choppy handwriting even in moments of rest) or too impressionable (handwriting that is constantly uneven) or too reckless (disorganized handwriting, without downstrokes and upstrokes, with neglected punctuation and accents) must, in general, be discouraged from careers that require a difficult entrance examination demanding presence of mind; nor should they enter into professions that, at some time, may require a great deal of attention or composure (those in which one's life may be at risk, sailor, explorer, mechanic, driver, roofer, etc.). For them, agricultural professions, which calm and relax the nerves and maintain health, seem the mostly highly recommendable [...]"<sup>41</sup>

These aptitudes are less discriminating factors for Mauvezin: while they are found in the report file, moral aptitudes are not found in the professional monographs.

## II. The Vocational Guidance File is Appropriated and Redefined by the School System

Around 1920, the national vocational guidance policy began to follow the practices extolled by Fontègne and Mauvezin. The new policy required teachers to fill in forms that, according to their overt objective (vocational guidance) and their topic headings (which could include affective elements), seem to promote a new kind of assessment. However, despite this unprecedented call to fill in these forms, the composition and the implementation of the forms themselves reveal certain mechanisms that, in the short run, limited their influence on the assessment culture.

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<sup>37</sup> Fontègne, *L'Orientation*, 106, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Julien Fontègne, "L'école primaire et l'orientation professionnelle," *Manuel général de l'enseignement primaire* 44 (1923), 840.

<sup>39</sup> Fontègne, *L'Orientation*, 62.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine Dorison, "Orienter selon les aptitudes. Enjeux institutionnels et pédagogiques, 1936-1959," in *En attendant la réforme. Disciplines scolaires et politiques éducatives sous la IV<sup>e</sup> République*, ed. Renaud D'Enfert and Pierre Kahn (Grenoble, Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2010), 37-50.

<sup>41</sup> Fontègne, *L'Orientation*, 73.

*An unprecedented national campaign for a report card model with few innovations (1921-1922)*

Within the ministry of Public Instruction, the general inspector Maurice Roger pushed to rehabilitate the role of school in career guidance, which had up to that point been managed by the Labor Ministry and by trade groups. When, starting in 1917, the annual report on the complementary work of public schools ("*Oeuvres complémentaires de l'école*", encompassing such things as continuation classes for adults and other community services) was assigned to him<sup>42</sup>, M. Roger took the initiative of highlighting vocational guidance in this report and of listing teacher participation in filling out career guidance forms among practices that he wished to disseminate. Already in the 1917-1918 report, he praises a school in Paris where teachers "write a text about each pupil mentioning his qualities and his degree of manual skill. These notes are then compared and can provide precise information." The following years' reports mention similar student records used in other cities: Libourne (1919-1920), Nantes and Paris (1920-21), Marseille, Alençon and Châlons (1921-1922). One report (1918-1919) expresses regret that some schools inform students about different trades (through films, visits or workshops) without making a connection with information about the students themselves — information that could specifically be found in student records. In most of these reports, the writings of J. Fontègne and F. Mauvezin are cited as essential references.

In February 1921, a national commission was set up as part of the Under-Secretariat of the State for Technical Instruction in order to coordinate the ministry's initiatives in the area of vocational guidance<sup>43</sup>. This commission was made up of eight representatives, four each from the Labor and Public Instruction Ministries respectively, with Maurice Roger and Julien Fontègne among them. In its first doctrinal text, from May 1921, the commission once again brought up the argument that vocational guidance should aim at "the highest possible satisfaction and well-being", "inner contentment", "the happiness of the individual and, by the same token, that of society"<sup>44</sup>. Vocational guidance was to be handled by specialized "offices" with the help of teachers, who had representatives in the oversight council and were required to fill out the forms. These "individual school reports", the printing cost of which was included in the budget, contained information about grades, moral aptitudes and, if the student had received any technical training, his manual skills. This text written by the Under-Secretary of the State thus considers schoolteachers to be competent to evaluate the emotions, understood in the sense of moral competencies. Furthermore, the forms were only supposed to be filled out after the students were exposed to "judicious propaganda, free of any charlatanism" intended to guide their aspirations towards fields with good job prospects. This recommendation presupposes intervening upon students' emotions, here understood in the sense of tastes or preferences. From the perspective of teachers, urged to "apply all their knowledge and all their hearts to the careful observation of the child", the dominant assessment culture appeared to be at stake.

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<sup>42</sup> This annual report addressed to the National Assembly was published in the *Journal officiel*. The reports for the years 1916-1928 can be found in a document kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Nr. FOL-R-646.

<sup>43</sup> Caroff, *L'organisation*, 61-62.

<sup>44</sup> "Projet de modèle-type d'Office d'Orientation professionnelle," Archives nationales, F<sup>17</sup> 14404. This document was disseminated by a circulary (May 14, 1921) and by the journals *Formation professionnelle* (June 1921) and *L'orientation professionnelle* (September 1921).

On a national level, the administration reinforced its request by providing a ready-to-use assessment tool as well. A memorandum from January 20, 1922, requests from the national commission "a pedagogical and physiological report card [...] to serve as a model and be communicated to all schools in order to be put to use everywhere". On July 10, 1922, the national commission adopted two forms, one medical and the other academic, that were sent "not as models but rather as examples" to vocational guidance centers<sup>45</sup>. In substance, these report card forms are direct descendents of the form created by J. Fontègne for the vocational guidance office in Strasburg. Below are the contents of one of these two forms intended for use in schools, to be filled out by students and teachers.

### **Model School Report Card**

#### **I. Information to be provided by the student**

- 1° Name of school. Grade.
- 2° Last name and given name(s) of the graduating student
- 3° Date and place of birth
- 4° Address
- 5° Name and profession of parents
- 6° Number and ages of siblings
- 7° Profession desired by the student
- 8° Reasons for this choice of profession
- 9° In the event the student cannot enter into this profession, what other profession(s) would he consider?
- 10° Would he agree to go into an apprenticeship outside of...
- 11° Can his parents house and feed him?
- 12° Can his parents pay the apprenticeship fees?
- 13° Do the student or his parents have any other plans for him?
- 14° If they do, where and starting on what date?

#### **II. Information to be provided by the teacher**

- 1° Behavior. Effort. General results. Did he receive his primary education diploma?
- 2° How well does the student express himself? Orally? In writing?
- 3° Yearly grade point average (out of 10) in spelling. In written arithmetic. In mental arithmetic.
- 4° What type of drawing does he prefer to do? How successful is he?
- 5° Have you noticed any special talents in this student?
- 6° Does he demonstrate any strong aptitudes?
- 7° Does he work fast or slowly?
- 8° Complementary observations: attention, memory, judgment, orderliness and cleanliness, character.
- 9° Grades in gymnastics.

#### **III. Information to be provided by the manual work instructor**

- 1° Type of work carried out
- 2° Results obtained
- 3° Would you advise this student to go into his desired field? If not, which field would you suggest? <sup>46</sup>

Compared to the model developed at Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau and reproduced above, this report form seems rudimentary. The usual categories of academic assessment ("behavior and effort", grades in each subject) are preeminent, while there is no "psychological" form to fill out. The evaluation of emotions is here reduced to noting a student's taste for drawing, "observing" a possible moral propensity for order and cleanliness and, finally, evaluating his character. This

<sup>45</sup> "L'orientation professionnelle et le Sous-secrétariat d'État à l'Enseignement technique," *L'Orientation professionnelle* 41 (1922), 18-22.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

watering-down is all the more surprising because the national commission simultaneously adopted a model of a professional monograph in which emotions play an important role (with questions such as: "Can this trade be recommended to persons with unhealthy tendencies towards impatience? Melancholia? Worry? Lack of self-confidence? Nervous troubles?"<sup>47</sup>), thus calling for an affect-oriented examination of the child.

This contribution to establishing the school record file thus seems to show that there was the potential, though it would remain unrealized, for the value of emotions to be reasserted in teachers' assessments of pupils. Without any archives from the commission's debates, I will try to identify elements of an explanation for this within the context of the development of the report card and later of its implementation.

### *A result of the perceived fragility of psychology?*

The discreet role played by emotions in this form may arise from the impossibility of delineating a clear and acceptable repartition of all the assessment objects, instruments and skills between teachers and psychologists<sup>48</sup>. This hypothesis — which may appear overly retrospective when we consider the major role that psychology would later play — emerges from a comparison between the various publications of M. Roger. These publications, which reveal selected hints of the shifting ideas and practices of vocational guidance, show that expectations of psychology were quite unstable between 1917 and 1924. Initially, in 1917, M. Roger placed teachers at the center of the guidance process: "what are the child's aptitudes? Who reveals them to parents, if they are unaware of them, who confirms or clarifies the suspicions that they may have? Teachers. No one is in a better position for informing parents of the degree and quality of [the child's] intelligence or attentiveness"<sup>49</sup>. Then, during the years 1918-1919, M. Roger shifted to the position that certain aptitudes are inaccessible to teachers and must be subjected to psychological testing—which, he regrets, is little used ("Binet-Simon tests are widely used, but not in France"). He clearly endorses Fontègne's positions: he quotes his conferences and publications (including the work that came out in 1921, a book which reproduces the Geneva school report form), the methods that he proposes (favoring interviews and tests, unlike Mauvezin), his examples from the German sphere (which Roger adds to examples that were initially exclusively Anglo-American) and his arguments in favor of creating a specialized office in charge of centralizing data for vocational guidance. M. Roger even presents the "rigorous method" of the Geneva office as an "indispensable model" in which the teacher, if he indicates in a report devoted to the student "all that he knows about his intelligence and his manual abilities" and his aptitudes<sup>50</sup>, takes part in the work of a counselor. Roger expresses his confidence in "experimental psychology [, which] makes it possible to measure faculties with sufficient rigor, [... and] at the very least provides some clues and contributes to determining aptitudes." Finally, during a third period, in writings from the years 1920-1921, M. Roger adopts an

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> This hypothesis recalls professional group dynamics as highlighted by Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions. An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> Maurice Roger, "L'orientation professionnelle et l'école," *Manuel général de l'instruction primaire* 2 (1917), 13.

<sup>50</sup> Maurice Roger, "Le choix du métier," *Manuel général de l'instruction primaire*, 21 (1920), 277.

intermediary position. Seeking support in the work of Théodore Simon<sup>51</sup>, who along with Binet invented the first metric scale of intelligence, he insists on the inability of the fledgling field of psychology to provide the tests and information needed to understand the tastes and character of a child. Failing this, "the experience of schoolteachers, acquired through practice and proven by results, provides indications that can be trusted"<sup>52</sup>. Thus, in late 1921, M. Roger placed intellectual and moral aptitudes within the realm of competency of teachers, and saw the intervention of psychologists as pertinent only on rare occasions, regarding the "very special qualities" required by certain professions — such as aviation.

Reservations regarding psychology can thus be detected during the 1921-1922 school year, while the national commission was at work. When he gave his political support to the career guidance movement, Édouard Herriot, president of the Radical Socialist party, turned this reserved attitude into a characteristic of the French approach to vocational guidance: "as in everything, excesses must be avoided; the Office must be scientific without pedantry and must not, as the German method sometimes does, overuse weights, measures, indexes of nervousness"<sup>53</sup>. These reservations resonate with the notable absence of any consensus among guidance experts. The authors of school report forms present affective aspects, be they tastes, moral aptitudes, temperament or character, as riddles to solve much more than as objects of expert assessment. F. Mauvezin, not especially concerned with being scientific, writes against psychological testing: "willpower, intelligence, sensitivity, character, temperament, likes, dislikes, must be sought out by other means [than measurements]"<sup>54</sup>. Mauzevin, following the approach of F. Parsons<sup>55</sup>, proposes a self-administered questionnaire for the child to fill out. J. Fontègne rejects this questionnaire but, while he shares with contemporary psychology a concern for not reducing personality to intelligence<sup>56</sup> and a certain posture of humility<sup>57</sup>, offers no scientific alternative:

"We all know that moral values play a very important role in the professional life of an individual. Why do psycho-professional questionnaires [...], laboratory experiences, surveys, grant such little space to this factor? It is because psycho-moral research is extremely difficult: the child does not 'expose' himself morally as he does physically; often, in fact, he is ashamed to let himself be known as he truly is and many a child who would not hesitate to his reveal visual deficiency or memory problems would be extremely embarrassed to admit to the anxiety he feels about making decisions [...].

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<sup>51</sup> Théodore Simon, "La connaissance de l'enfant et l'orientation professionnelle," *L'orientation professionnelle* 20 (1921), 1-10.

<sup>52</sup> Maurice Roger, "Rapport sur les œuvres complémentaires de l'école publique en 1920-1921," *Journal officiel de la République française* (1922), 196-197.

<sup>53</sup> Édouard Herriot, "L'apprentissage," *Manuel général de l'instruction primaire* 9 (1921), 111-113.

<sup>54</sup> Mauvezin, *Rose*, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Frank Parsons, *Choosing a vocation* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1909).

<sup>56</sup> John Carson, *The Measure of Merit. Talents, Intelligence, and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750-1940*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006), 240-242.

<sup>57</sup> A similar disparity may be seen between the existence of sophisticated intelligence tests and the perceived difficulty of evaluating character in Great Britain in the mid-1920s; cf. Pamela Dale, "A new approach to vocational guidance for school-leavers in the 1920s? Exploring key themes from an influential 1926 report," *History of Education*, 41 (2012): 607, 610.

Psychologists attempt to discover moral aptitudes through experimentation: there have been numerous experiments involving recollection, the association of ideas, suggestion, simulation, the electro-dermic reflex, etc., but nothing so far makes it possible to determine exactly what a vocational guidance service could borrow from these studies. Most of the time, therefore, we must rely on the observations about the child that his parents and teachers agree to share with us."<sup>58</sup>.

In the absence of an agreement on the value of psychological testing and student questionnaires, asking teachers to evaluate emotions appeared as a last resort. The commission members then had to formulate a request in such a way as to make it acceptable to teachers. Giving teachers an assessment form with numerous and original headings, such as the Geneva report form, would not only have increased their workload but would also have harshly emphasized the lack of any legitimate instruments for carrying out these tasks. Conversely, removing all original emotional categories from the form, while waiting for counselors equipped with testing material to be trained and hired, would have delayed and hindered the cause of vocational guidance. We may hazard the hypothesis that, in this context, disseminating an acceptable version of the report card form was accomplished by mobilizing a number of standard, traditional assessment categories (not supplementary ones) and, furthermore, by limiting the scope of the more groundbreaking categories of student "observation". Disqualifying any recourse to psychology would have also disqualified the evaluation of emotions as extra-curricular categories.

#### *From opposition against report cards to their neutralization*

In addition to disagreement regarding the categories to be included on the form, two series of objections seem to have undermined — at least temporarily — the influence of the new school report card on the dominant assessment culture. An initial wave of opposition came from parents. Their attitude, mentioned discreetly in a footnote in Roger's report for 1921-1922, became a major focus in the report for the following school year — during which the report card was put into circulation. The report expresses misgivings regarding families who are "rather hostile and [who] only grudgingly provide indispensable information", or families who are "indifferent". The argument that these report cards were excessively objectifying was relayed by the press at the start of the 1922 school year, when a "long controversy"<sup>59</sup> began after a teacher decried that "individual student records are getting longer: the teacher, doctor and tradesman all add their observations to the file and the child is catalogued, measured and enlisted, and his future is determined"<sup>60</sup>. We may hypothesize that these criticisms, in addition to explaining the diminished use of these report cards, were already known or anticipated while the commission was developing the model for the report card and that they led to the reduction of the most explicitly psychological categories, and in particular the emotional ones. A second series of oppositions to the new report card system came from teachers pleading lack of time, or lack of competence, or disagreement with the principle of orientation. At the Congress of the French Federation of School Principals, in 1923, the recorder,

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<sup>58</sup> Fontègne, *L'orientation*, 75.

<sup>59</sup> Jeanne Clément, *Le mouvement d'orientation professionnelle* (Aix-en-Provence: Paul Roubaud, 1924).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. "L'orientation professionnelle et la 'papillonne' de Fourier," *L'Orientation professionnelle* 40 (1922).

Labrunie, presented these arguments and concluded that the report card was useless and dangerous<sup>61</sup>.

It is especially enlightening to observe how the report card was defended in the face of this opposition. First, to convince families, the argument was given that report cards were filled out by teachers, who traditionally benefited from parents' trust. Second, to convince teachers that they were indeed competent to fill out these forms, it was argued that the new report card only recapitulated the usual assessment criteria. In a short article, J. Fontègne retorts, for example, that a gymnastics class is sufficient to characterize a pupil's level of "composure", and enumerates the categories in the report card to illustrate their lack of originality — though he significantly omits to mention the categories related to "character"<sup>62</sup>. A third tactic presented the school report in a way that was completely unconnected with vocational guidance, thus avoiding the issue of opposition to the principle of guiding students. F. Duffieux, a school principal who worked in Bordeaux with F. Mauvezin, extolled the virtues of the report card as a tool for improving teaching and suggested filling it in not with psychological categories but rather with the usual classifications of academic assessment<sup>63</sup>. These three ways of defending the report card converged to neutralize, and decisively so, any reformative impact that this new assessment tool might have had. This was all the more true because these rhetorical arguments were accompanied by practical suggestions, encouraging teachers to apply their own habits of assessment to the report card. When J. Fontègne associated a school subject (gymnastics) with the aptitude (composure) of the child, he made a decisive connection that would work to safeguard school culture. This connection, which could later be seen as central in the history of the school record file<sup>64</sup>, was brought up in 1922 in response to the obstacles against adding extra-curricular categories to teachers' assessment work. The innovative characteristics and the impact of the *fiche scolaire*, a modest but key element of the advent of the modern school record (*dossier scolaire*), were thus held in check. It remains to be seen whether this hypothesis is confirmed by the implementation of report cards in local career orientation offices. In Nantes, the activity report for 1921-1923 suggests that the apparent success of the report card, used for nearly every school pupil in the city, was achieved by limiting the originality of its categories of assessment<sup>65</sup>.

## Conclusion

In France, scholastic assessment culture is notoriously centered on subject-matter tests and intellectual aptitudes. Consequently, pupils' tastes, ambitions or personalities appear to be of secondary interest in the way their instructors establish judgments of them. The origins of this situation can be understood through the failure of the *dossier scolaire*, a long-term school record conceived as an alternative or complementary means of evaluation to grades and examinations. This

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<sup>61</sup> Caroff, *L'organisation*, 89-90.

<sup>62</sup> Fontègne, "L'école".

<sup>63</sup> F. Duffieux, "Le classement des élèves pour l'orientation professionnelle," *L'école et la vie* 5 (1922), 59-60.

<sup>64</sup> See for example Jean-Yves Seguy, "Aptitudes, disciplines scolaires et orientation, entre approches pédagogique et psychologique", in *Problèmes de l'école démocratique, 18<sup>e</sup> – 20<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Bruno Garnier (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2013), 153-174.

<sup>65</sup> City of Nantes, *Le placement public et l'orientation professionnelle à Nantes et dans la région* (Nantes: Imprimerie du Commerce, 1921), 33-34.

document contains student assessments based on both academic and psychological criteria. This chapter more specifically examined the case of the *fiche scolaire* (report card), a student report card that teachers were asked to fill out starting in the early 1920s for use in career guidance. Situating this report card in relation to other models that were in use at the time showed the status that it reserved for students' feelings, and the mechanisms that prevented it from drastically challenging the dominant assessment culture.

The conception of a national model for a report card or *fiche scolaire* was a turning point in the history of the advent of the modern school record file or *dossier scolaire*. It involved various changes: the objectives of vocational guidance were appropriated by the education system; psychological categories came to affect the work of teachers; the modification of school practices led families to question their legitimacy.

At the specific moment of the years surrounding 1920, the introduction of the school record was part of a merger between the school system and the vocational guidance movement. This convergence had clear pedagogical effects: teachers were given a newly important role in providing professional guidance and information (through talks, field trips etc.). However, there seems to be scant institutional interest accorded to emotions. Discourses inspired by the development of psychology and/or by vocational guidance, embodied by Mauvezin and Fontègne, certainly suggest that schools should take an interest in pupils' likes and dislikes and in their moral aptitudes. But different mechanisms — the absence of any alternative assessment technology for providing expert assessment, the constraints of legitimizing the orientation process in the eyes of students' families — made it necessary to meet the new objective of orientation using the traditional methods of school assessment, even if this required teachers or other specialists to reinterpret or reformulate them. They can thus be seen as mechanisms of neutralization.

1918-1922 was nonetheless not an isolated episode, although the scope of the present study has been limited to its short-term effects. In the longer term, it can be seen as a turning point. The principle of the report card was adopted and began to be used on a national scale. Later in the decade, the focus shifted instead onto the mechanisms that would neutralize the new developments. Over the course of the 1920s, scientists worked to develop more rigorous observation forms, advocates of educational system reform reinterpreted the report card as an instrument of internal orientation within the school institution, and pedagogues would see in it an instrument of modernized education.

The elements that have been described here all came together to bring about a form of "governmentality". Reformers worked to perfect material technology, supported by specialized knowledge, in order to govern people by promising them individual and collective happiness, and by urging them to develop self-knowledge and follow their interests in order to reach this happiness. These technologies objectified people's individuality and inserted them into collective nomenclatures. They worked to define the personality of the student and at the same time to make the student aware that he was a person. In this context, the school record was able to place the psychological concepts of moral aptitudes, character and emotions in a performative situation. But the origins and development of these record forms show how much they filtered and recomposed these categories of apprehending individuality, so that we may say that they favored not so much psychologizing mores as scholasticizing them.

To find out if and how these categories effectively modify the experience of the self, it would be necessary to study the emotional experience of students — as the history of emotions invites us to do<sup>66</sup>. While it has been shown here that the professional culture of teachers tended to reduce emotions to kinds of subject mastery, this approach, which appears unemotional, could in fact have very real effects on students' emotions. Behind the controversies surrounding the best way to assess students, there is a consensus that they must be assessed, categorized, graded, commented upon... which promotes the experience of being graded and ranked, an experience that, as we know, cannot help but provoke an emotional response.

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<sup>66</sup> Noah Sobe, "Researching emotion and affect in the history of education," *History of Education* 41 (2012): 689-695.

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*The author warmly thanks Ute Frevert, Margrit Pernau and the members of the Center for the History of Emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, where this research found its starting point.*

*Translation: Sarah Novak*