

Jean-Claude Abric, Pedagogical Projects Manager

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ABSTRACT

This article, written in tribute to Jean-Claude Abric, depicts his educational project leader qualities as its ability to initiate and bring together on training projects, projects focused on applied social psychology and specifically on work psychology. So from a project called "DPSI", he initiated almost half a century ago in Aix-en-Provence, we find now an increasing social psychology of work and organizations.

Keywords: work psychology, applied social psychology, project management, training, DPSI.

Several events and publications honoring Jean-Claude Abric have stressed his work and scientific skills. We would like to highlight what was another essential skill of his: the ability to initiate and lead major educational projects. We present in section 2 some of these projects related to the psychology of work and we will try to identify the methodological scope in section 3. But it seems first necessary to present briefly our activities and functions within what was the

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University to which Jean-Claude Abric (from hereon JCA) belonged, namely the former University of Provence, Aix-Marseille University today.

"[...] When we speak of someone, we say something about ourselves" concludes Benjamin Jacobi in his communication in honor of JCA. Here we could reverse this proposal. To talk about our activities and functions is to say something about a major project of JCA's: the creation and development of a diploma, then an academic fields to form versatile professionals in work psychology.

Jacky Singery has been part of the first class of the DPSI (Social and Industrial Psychology Diploma), University Diploma created by JCA which began in 1970. Recruited in 1976 as assistant in Work Psychology he succeeded as JCA responsible for the degree in 1979 and worked with JCA for the implementation of course units organized into a new work psychology academic field within the University of Provence (Aix-Marseille 1).

Marc Souville was part of the graduating class in 1990, enrolled at the University of Provence as an assistant professor (lecturer) in 2005, he succeeded as manager; Jacky Singery's diploma has meanwhile become a Master specialty "Social Psychology of work and organizations" (PSTO in French).

Formed directly and indirectly by JCA and heavily influenced by the same individual, we wanted to recognize this heritage to thank Jean-Claude Abric, but also to try not to deviate from the principle of neutrality reiterated by Benjamin Jacobi in his chapter.

DPSI OF THE MASTERS OF APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

JCA has initiated and led many educational projects either as Vice President for International Relations, Director of the EBU / Faculty of Psychology, Director of Social Psychology and Work Psychology Department, etc. Among all these projects those related to the creation of DPSI and a "pathway" for training in work psychology, seems particularly exemplary of the expertise of JCA in project management matters.

The History

The first steps of the graduate programme date from the early 70s and in 1972 came the first 26 graduates at a time when labor psychology diplomas were very rare in France. Initially the DPSI was done in two years and then rapidly training was concentrated over a year and almost as fast on the occasion of the establishment of new graduate diploma (DESS and DEA) has become the Diploma Specialized in Work Psychology. After almost 30 years of existence, the Bologna process requires that the training comes under the so-called "LMD" to become in 2004 a Master Specialization "Social Psychology of Work and Educational Organizations "over two years, the first year then corresponded to the old Masters. Whether before or after the change, the diploma has always evolved to adapt to changing professional fields of work psychology, whether by incorporating new dimensions as employability, GPEC, health at work, etc., or advancing the selection in the first year and becoming one of the first mixed or polyvalent French masters, i.e. a diploma that opens up both the professional world (employability) and the research world (start a PhD), while having to adapt to the time reduction in average (at constant means, even with drastic reduction in the number of course hours in the LMD).

Upon the establishment of the DPSI, JCA perceived the interest and the need to create a real industry training in psychology and psycho-sociology of work, from the licensing year to the DESS. Indeed, in his view, only such a line could afford;

- To have a sufficient budget of training hours
- To establish and maintain a certain chronology in acquisitions, chronology to facilitate and consolidate the progress of trained students
- To improve the visibility of the discipline.

Professionalization And Versatility As Axe Director

While revealing the wealth of educational projects initiated or facilitated by JCA, this brief history may mask what was a direction of JCA: his willingness to set up a training and professionalizing axis. We stress here the word "therefore" as this term sums up how JCA conceived the training of occupational psychologists: at the end of training students should be able to occupy the field of functions of professional work psychologists.

Now the analysis of the functions occupied by psychologists work showed already at the time of the creation of the DPSI that they were very diverse and even a professional was often

necessary to combine several of them or pass regularly from one function to another (for example, earn trainer functions and management consulting or organization) or to continuously change from one to the other in his professional career.

On this basis, JCA has always believed that labor psychologists training should be versatile, i.e.:

- Expanded to all main areas of intervention of psychologists work: personnel selection and careers, training, management, ergonomics, integration etc.
- Leaning on the main scientific fields of work psychology reference: Social Psychology, Ergonomics, Cognitive Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Differential Psychology and Developmental Psychology etc.

It is appropriate here to emphasize that the DPSI was not only one of the first graduate programs of Psychology of work, but also one of the first if not the first, to integrate the two approaches that fell mostly in training time different: "Human factor" approach (Ergonomics, working Conditions, Security etc.) and the psychosocial approach (Animation and management, Communication, etc.).

Driven by this desire to train practitioners of psychology and versatile operational work, JCA has been able to design and implement appropriate teaching methods;

- Selection at the entrance diploma
- Internship and experiential training realization from internships
- Field work closely articulated to teachings
- Group work
- Opening the world of business and management issues and management.

These arrangements may now seem very ordinary but proved more innovative at the time of the creation of DPSI and remained as such for long. Far from limiting his actions to the major orientations of the educational basic teaching methods, JCA always attached great importance or priority to seek for actors who may constitute a network of professionals, real support and resource for teaching and opportunities diploma:

- Exterior university teams supporting some lessons with the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Lab J. Leplat) INFA and CUCES of Nancy, the IRT of Aix-en-Provence, etc.

- Public Sector Applied Research Centers hosting interns or students of field work (ONSER then INRETS and INRIA IRIA, SNCF research service.)
- Managers of companies or firms that support certain teachings or intervening more in a timely manner (Quintard, Fouilhé, etc.)
- Specialists from related fields such as economics or management.

Among other benefits (quality and quantity of opportunities, high motivation of students, etc.), the policy of openness and versatility enabled spread well beyond the borders of the IPSD / DESS / Master PSTO. Thus, in the early promotions of DPSI we find many colleagues who, like Daniel Rolland, founded and directed the Master of the IAE of Human Resources Management of Aix-en-Provence or Joëlle Singery-Bensaid who was responsible for training at the IUT of Aix-en-Provence, then to the Institute of Public Management and Territorial Governance (IMPGT) University from Aix-Marseille. Marie-Dominique Giraudo who created and directed the Master in Ergonomy of Sports and Physical activities of the University of the Mediterranean. Or Jean-Pierre Parrocchetti who has held responsibilities in the Department of Psychology of the University of Corte or Mireille Betrancourt who was Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Geneva.

JEAN-CLAUDE ABRIC AND CONDUCT OF PROJECTS: KEY POINTS

As shown in the previous section, JCA has been able to initiate and lead educational projects of great significance for students, for the University and for Work Psychology. It therefore seemed interesting to us, for the sake of capitalization, to identify the main strengths of his practice, strengths that may explain its success.

We will insist on six highlights:

- His ability to perceive the needs and expectations in order to "exploit" the form of projects.
- His ability to assess and take into account the human and institutional feasibility of the various possible design options.
- His strong emotional investment in the projects he initiated.
- His ability to create a network of carriers actors or facilitators.

- His power of influence.
- His ability to adjust, if necessary, to defend the projects.

Needs and Expectations

JCA did not only train students in listening techniques, he excelled in the implementation of these techniques and knew how to "listen to" his interlocutors needs or expectations, often with little or no explicit: reported difficulties, problems encountered, recognized gaps, etc., if keeping any JCA impulsivity kept in memory or these tracks fragments needs analysis, waiting to see if they were confirmed or were in other speeches. One might here venture an analogy with the decision models grouped under the term "model of the trash" JCA "piled" these layers diffuse tracks until some of them emerged as sufficiently substantiated to justify working reflection and further analysis and data-based (research and collection of further information, requests for opinions from people and resources.). However, during this phase of maturation and in the contacts he was developing, he always associated needs analysis and assessment of human feasibility.

Institutional Assessment of Feasibility Of Human And Design Options

In the eyes of JCA, the perceived need was not a sufficient working basis to consider the development of an educational project. He also sought, through contacts he was developing, to assess how the various players directly or indirectly involved in the project would posit themselves: who would hold and under what conditions, who would be against, who would wait, what are the risks to be considered and the probabilities of facilitators events, what precautions would be required and so on.

Although informal and largely intuitive, these analyzes were based on the mastery that JCA had of game theory, not only scientific mastery, but also a practical one. This therefore allowed a usually reliable assessment of the human and institutional feasibility of the various possible design options.

Strong Affective Investment

“Perceived need”, “feasibility assessment of humans”, “game theory” etc., this terminology might suggest that JCA had essentially a rational approach to the projects he initiated. Anyone

who has worked on these projects knows that was not the case: JCA hardly ever engaged with a project if the project was not "liked" or if he did not feel for this project a genuine enthusiasm.

Several criteria could lead JCA to invest emotionally in an educational project:

- Was the project consistent with his conception of psychology and, more specifically, with his conception of social psychology and work psychology?
- Was the project in line with his interests and pedagogical convictions (linked with practice and professional circles)?
- Did the project overlap his field of scientific interests (communication studies, social representations, etc.)?
- Did the project allow him to work with people he liked or friends (see below the item of network resources and communication actors like Benjamin Jacobi)?
- Did the project have a share of difficulty and risk?

Among all the criteria, non-exhaustive, which we quote above, the latter was probably for JCA an essential motivator: JCA was more so engaged in a project that he represented in his eyes as a "challenge". Conversely, it was difficult to get motivated for a project that does not have a "playful" or "competitive" dimension.

But if he was involved with a project, JCA strongly committed to it personally: although still working as a team, JCA felt a failure of "his" project as a personal failure!

Strong Power of Influence

As a specialist of social representations, JCA knew perfectly well how to present and defend the projects based on the cognitive universe of his interlocutors (expectations, values, level of information and knowledge, beliefs, etc.), hence his often surprising ability to understand and accept their projects.

While keeping away from a too personal or anecdotal approach, it is impossible here not to mention the working sessions with JCA when he was delegating the presentation of a project to some of us: the advice or guidelines on what was to say or not to say and how to say it!

Establishment of a Network Of Actors Carriers or Facilitators

The attention that JCA gave to the various institutional players positioned them in relation to his projects, combined with his strong power of influence and conviction, allowed him to identify and establish what was in his eyes a critical factor of success, namely the network for resources on which it would be possible to rely to make the project:

- The project team would take over the detailed design of the project and its realization, the team consisting of people closest to JCA and most promising for the project. It is impossible here not to mention JCA's charisma with which he managed to "weld" around him a committed and driving team, despite differences of perspective and internal disagreements.
- In addition to the project team, the institutional alliances that JCA had the art of building and preserving (alliances based on common interests or common "enemies", "paybacks" and so forth.).
- Key stakeholders (decision makers, financiers, etc.) favorable to the project.
- Supports that can be mobilized on time in case of need.

Project Adjustment

If the resistance to a project proved too strong and a "forced passage" was too risky, JCA knew how to detect when a compromise was necessary. He demonstrated great strategic control by modifying or abandoning some secondary project components in order to preserve better the foundations: overall direction of the project and objectives, basic principles and so on.

This ability to adjust and adapt, if necessary, the content of a project, was for JCA, a basic strategic principle, this principle can be summarized in a saying often expressed by him in different forms: "It is very dangerous to try to win at any cost: when you cannot win, you have to evaluate and achieve limit losses. "

IN CONCLUSION

The expertise of JCA in project management matters was not limited to a few highlights outlined above.

We are indeed limited, as is the rule in all capitalization approach, the components of his practice are most easily assimilated and repeatable by others, which has led us to ignore other

components including those most linked to his personality: the playful pleasure he took in managing and sometimes causing conflicts, his capacity to "bluff", at least to take some liberties with the reality of the projects and the reality they unfold (did he not conduct several searches on lies?), his enthusiasm, relational style full of warmth, but also availability of care, the care he took to develop its contacts and so forth, attitudes and traits that made JCA, not only a project leader with a rare efficiency, but also a colleague and a friend of the most endearing types.

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