The Impact of Professional Experience on Teaching Conceptions in University -Case Studies from Tunisia-

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**Abstract**  
Higher education is a contract between professor and student; which specifies what each pole can expect from the other (Johnson, 1995). The strategies, techniques and devices used by teachers to achieve their personal, scientific and technical purposes during their lessons are the subject of various researches in didactics. This research is in line with the scientific orientation of clinical didactics, which is characterized by a double theoretical and epistemological affiliation: didactics and clinical psychoanalytic inspiration. We are interested in the singularity of the subject teachers *taken in didactics*. In Tunisia, most higher education teachers do not have professional and continuous education in pedagogy and didactics, and no follow-up in their careers. As if the question did not arise and the ability to accompany students, to develop their critical thinking skills and to promote their learning was self-
evident. The aim of this work is to insist on the importance of continuing education and professional development of experienced university teachers.

**Keywords:** University didactics, clinical didactics, professional experience, experienced university teacher, continuing education.

1. **Introduction**

University environment have known, in Tunisia and all around the word, many transformations in the recent years as an answer to different factors. Among these factors, we can cite the great development in new communication and information technologies, the accelerated mutation of knowledges, the consideration of social, affective and psychological characteristics of students and the increasing improvement in number and the massification at university (Henkel, 2000; Romainville, 2004; Fozing, 2013; Scott, 1995).

Recent researches estimate that the observed changes at the level of students, compared to that of social and cultural environment, encourage as to rethink in university mission and in our teaching methods at the same time, which makes clear the necessity to declare the following statement: the preoccupation, tasks and professor function, are supposed to evolve in order to adopt the deep mutation that the university is witnessing (Renault, 2002; Romainville, 2000).

According to Peterson (1979), a well-known researcher in pedagogy, « to teach, it does not consist only in knowledge transmitting to students and/or to dispense knowledge from a high position (chair), but teaching is also to demonstrate susceptible and pedagogical devices to help students optimize their apprenticeship and also help them acquire new theoretical, practical and professional knowledge » (Peterson, 1979, pp55-56).

We are going to focus on teaching practices analyzed at university level via the relationship of knowledge to teaching conceptions of two-experimented university Teachers. Here we refer back to the EDIC1 Analysis Framework (Terrisse & Carnus, 2009; Carnus & Terrisse, 2013) which questions the contents of teaching in comparison with transmission conditions and the appropriation of the subject (teacher or learner). This approach is based on a theory that subject takes on its full meaning during the « case by case » analysis. The subject teacher is considered as a liable and divided singular (Terrisse, 1999; Carnus, 2004).

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2. Problem setting and research questions

With what the subject teach is caught in teaching? Is he struggle to exert his didactic and professional action? Is he fits student needs? These are the question that promotes us to bring some elements of the answer that contributes to uncover the veil of teaching practice in university. In this context, it is better to remind that university teachers are supposed to carry on two main missions, i.e. a teacher or a former and a researcher. University teachers are supposed to articulate these two functions together and proved to be out taken or out stripped through time letting an open path to be contextualized and/or recontextualized knowledge construction. This is possible for them via a scientific and professional development process and a permanent apprenticeship process of profession (Maulini & Perrenoud, 2005).

Massification, low level, university teaching crisis, university weaknesses, a reality to be believed that the university is not what it used to be and students are not what they used to be. To face this discourse of lamentation, one must see to what the disappointed does not think. It should be noted also to put in evidence that university failure is knowing an impressive augmentation (Romainville, 2000). In this way, the pedagogy at the university level was supposed to tackle fundamental problems more than that of knowledge genesis, their sharing, their appropriation and their mobilization. It is also responsible about the democratic repartition of responsibilities at the level of knowledge management. The idea consists in what the student of the university shares with his teachers the responsibility for defining the objectives, the conceptual and interactive modes of the teaching/apprenticeship and the systems of evaluation. From this point of view, it is possible to explain this "crisis" or the teaching insufficiency of teachers / methods, resources, abilities and competences. According to the prism of their professional experience, their professional developpement, their continous formation and their teaching practices. This research aims at providing answers to the following questions:
1- Is the teacher professional experience in university could have an impact on teaching conceptions, relationship to knowledge(s), link to job (Buznic, Terrisse & Margnes, 2007; Buznic, Terrisse, Lestel, 2008) and on their teaching practice, didactic and professorial action?
2- Is there a relationship between teacher’s professional experience and the development of student apprenticeship process?

3. Conceptual and theoretical framework
3.1 Relationship to knowledge

Within the framework of this research, we focus on the notion of the relationship to knowledge in an orientation particularly turned to the analysis of the teacher « as author and creator of knowledge » (Beillerot, 1996). This
notion is defined by Beillerot (Op. Cit.) as «the subject disposition towards the knowledge which takes into consideration his entire history: His way to know, to learn, and his desire to know». This author persists on the creative voice of this notion reaching the intervention possibility. According to Leonardis, Laterrasse & Hermet (2002), the study of the relationship to knowledge involves the consideration in «the way the subject is affected by the transmitted knowledge and the way the signified it and how it is related to». The expression «relationship to knowledge» also based on total systematic steps which in fact implies to three types of relationships (or links) to knowledge (Chevallard, 1989); the institutional relationship to knowledge, the official relationship and the personal relationship to knowledge. But in the framework of our research, we limit ourselves to both registers that we have already studied; the official and the personal relationship to knowledge.

In the field of the clinical didactics, Carnus (2013, p24) considers that the subjects taken in didactics are taken in triple relationships: to knowledge(s), to the proof test, and to the institution. In fact, for Carnus (Op. Cit, p24), «the relationship to the institution is the product of a singular history and weaves with the relationship to the knowledge and the relationship to the proof test an “already there” upstream of the decisions of the teacher subject». In this study, we have the intention to spot and to analyse, from this relationship to knowledge, the teaching and apprenticeship conceptions through considering the external influences, to conjugate and to interlace internal factors that are proper to the subject and are «taken from didactics». Some of these internal factors are lifted up from the unconscious process during the didactic functioning that have diet and indirect affects on the «taught» or «learned» knowledge.

3.2 The impossible to endure

The impossible to endure is one of the definitions of reality as it is stated in lacanian topology of the structure of the subject (Lacan, 1966). Since the teacher could not master everything from a didactic point of view. He tries to engage to do the best to each student. But his «already-there» orients his didactic choices (Ben Jomaa, 2014) in situ, his capacity to manage the didactic time (Mercier, 1997), student heterogeneity, issue diversity and didactic steps in a complex and moving class situation. The «already-there» contains various aspects of the relationship to knowledge(s). Indeed, it is about structural aspects, with regard to his conceptual, experiential and intentional elements, functional aspects, in view of his influences on the taught knowledge(s) and dynamics aspects seen his evolutionary character in a constructed temporality (Carnus, 2015, p64). So, we postulate, with the EDIC works, that his «already-there» that is actualized in the reality of the class, orients his choices without knowing that Makes him incapable to support some
of the didactic functioning aspects. For his paper reasons and because of that he is not usually conscious.

3.3 Teaching conception

According to Charlier (1998), we define the conceptions as subject proper mental constructions which elaborate in function of the subject himself and his interactions with environment. From an operational point of view, they are self-reported states relating to the cognitive dimension and to the teacher way of thinking. Many authors are interested in the links between the taught and teacher’s practice from the belief angle (Fang 1996; Guskey, 2002; Richardson, 1996), social representations (Spallanzani, Biron, Larose, Lebrun, Lenoir, Masselier, Roy, 2001) and conception (Charlier, 1998; Tillema & Knol, 1997). For Carnus (2015, p 64), the teaching conception is connected to the « conceptual already-there ». Indeed, the « conceptual already-there » articulates around the conceptions, the faiths and the values of the teacher.

4. Methodology

4.1 Study population

Our study population based on two experimented university teachers: Lina and Sirine. They have the same university grade (Assistant professor) and that exercise their profession in the Higher Institute of Sport and Physical Education in Tunis (Table 1).

Table 1: Presentation of the two cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional experience</th>
<th>Teacher 1: Lina</th>
<th>Teacher 2: Sirine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialization</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught discipline</td>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>Sports psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University rank</td>
<td>didactics and pedagogy</td>
<td>“Maître-Assistant”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Maître-Assistant”</td>
<td>“Maître-Assistant”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Data collection

We filmed two magistral courses to each teacher, each course lasts one hour and half between January 2016 and May, 1st of 2016. For ethical considerations we proceed by a pre-observation to familiarize the two teachers and students with our objective and of the presence of technology device to reduce its effect.

For the sake of congruence, the epistemological consequences that we have selected results in methodological consequences that we can resume in two inter-related points which draw the object of this text the study case and the recourse to a three-phase « temporal » methodology, « the already-there » the test, and « the after-stroke » (Terrisse & Carnus, 2009).
4.2.1 The already-there

The « already-there » is a theoretical notion heuristics and a didactic concept used by the researchers of the EDIC. It is also the first time of the research, it is designed like a « didactic action filter » which strongly influences « didactic interaction » (Loizon, 2009). It acts on decisions taken by the subject teacher starting from a swaying between conscious and unconscious state. His already-there is spotted starting from a prior interview and designed as Carnus clarifies (2003) « personnel inherited fifteen of experience, a conscious composant and unconscious one which affects the subject ».

4.2.2 The proof test

In clinical didactics researches, the proof test is the one at first of the subject (teacher). It is strongly associated with the question of the contingency, which is what can not be (Carnus & Terrisse, 2013, p 142). It is also the observation moment, the session and the confrontation of the teacher with his class and with knowledge. It is the second time of data collection which based on two filmed recordings (sound and visual trace). In the case of our study, the zoom is centered towards the subject teacher and it also recollects the teacher sayings (retranscribed to verbatim) and captures his movements and interactions with his students. The analyzer of the proof test is the category of the knowledge (official and/or personal) identified through the “transmitted knowledge” indicator.

4.2.3 The after-stroke

Besides data collection thanks to the post-session interview, the after-stroke interview allows to complete the informations through reconstruction and elaboration of the knowledge by the teacher himself from a focus of meaning reshuffle. The after-stroke is the third time of the research. It permits to use the effected analysis thanks to video-recording in a destined interview. It is also a process of reorganization, reconstruction of the mnesic sources (Freud, 1895). The teacher himself expresses another point view compare to that declared in his immediate reaction. Thus, the after-stroke is a conceptual tool. In fact, « what is looked for, they are the reasons of the didactic act » (Terrisse, 2009, p. 28).

4.2.4 Data triangulation

Analogically to the used triangulation in maths didactics, the triangulation of qualitative methods mode by the cross-use of different data collection technics. This crossing is called triangulation or « mixed-methods » and it is defined as « the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon » (Denzin, 1978; Jick, 1979). This method (figure 1)
allows to compare some filmed data (via video observation) to verbal data (via interviews and the session verbatim) or written (via synoptic sheets and the verbatim retranscription).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Already –there</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>After-stroke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior interview</td>
<td>Ante-session interview</td>
<td>After stroke interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation in situ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-session interview</td>
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Semi-directive interviews

Figure 1. Method of data triangulation.

4.3 Data analysis method

For the analysis of the collected data, we referred to the methodological qualitative approach which characterise particularly our clinic approach that allows us to work on qualitative data (pictures and words) and to move from the description towards the understanding by including certain significations and starting from the selected data analysis in addition to the recourse to didactic analysers doing this, we referred to the method of content analysis which represents according to Bardin (1997, p. 14): « one of the developed technics by and to human sciences. It aims to a second reading of the message to substitute to the intuitive and instinctive in interpretation to the constructed interpretation ». We have proceeded to content analysis relying on three categories of prior constructed knowledges which take into account our research question…relationship to knowledge, teaching conceptions and the impossible to endure. These categories serve to list, to codify, to classify and to condense the content body « floating » reading (Bardin, op. Cit) and many successive readings were realized with the aim to extract the general meaning of the professional experience of the two teachers. Moreover, we used the cutting technique of the text (Bardin, op. Cit) to extract some « significant » of the subject and/or « meaning units ». These significant extracts of verbatim allow to « describe the case » and to « construct the case with the analysis » (Passeron & Revel, 2005) in a relationship with our research problematic we also integrate proofs intake starting from extracted citations from the subject discourse. In fact, the construction of the case passes by the taking of the significant of the subject, because, as indicates it Lacan (1973, p. 626), « the significant represents the subject for another significant ». 
5. Results

Results of this study structure around three analysers, presented respectively to teach case: the relationship with the knowledge, the teaching conception and the impossible to endure.

5.1 Lina: « To teach, it is to like what we do »

- Official relationship to knowledge: Lina seems to obey institutional constraints (conventional, institutional texts, official program). In effect she has the intention to obtain an official relationship to knowledge in a way that the two objective courses she ensured are related to program as well as to the curriculum of the fundamental licence formation in physical education: « I am afraid of “zapping” the contents of the programs, I have to teach them ».

- Personal relationship to the knowledge: Lina confirms that she is usually in update compared to what is occurring or taking place in her research domain. All this has been done through her participation in seminars and research profile. This remarks allow us to emphasize the she undertakes a personal relationship to the knowledge of the experience which structure around her informal conception (depassing the formal framework of the institution). She teaches relying on her personal experience that is constructed along her career as a researcher and a teacher. She also affirms her narrow and « personal » relationship to structured profession surrounding the love and the pleasure of teaching the discipline (didactics): « the latter pleases me a lot as a discipline, this is mine » (a priori interview).

- Personal teaching conception: the teaching conception of Lina is particularly marked by « the pleasure of teaching the didactic discipline ». This conception is « personal » rested principally on an interactive note of teaching and a « pedo-centered » conception which fostering the integration of the student in his proper apprenticeship, through questions, discussions and constructive situation problems. From here, we noted that personal conception of Lina mobilizes frequently and intimately relied on personal relationship to knowledge. The extended and actualized deep knowledge of the teaching discipline and to a dynamic desire to teach (Mothes, 2016) relating to the class management: « To teach, it is to like, to like the discipline, the students, to like acquiring some experience, to like what we do ».

Lina assumes a very near position to the teaching knowledge or even an absence of distancing within a domain which is for her an intimate place of personal issues that she is inscribed in a long time ago.

- The impossible endure: Lina uses an interactive style as a didactic modality which promotes her to confront with her « impossible to endure » which is itself the issue modification of knowledge by the student and the denaturation of the wrong comprehension meaning: « no, it is not that, this does not have any relationship with what I’m explaining, why did you say that?"
Lina manifests « her impossible to endure » equally when students are not in concentration, she does not manifest their desire to learn or they maintain a distant relationship to the transmitted knowledge in class: « I explained this many times, why cannot your answer this question? » which explains the lack of desire to learn among students: « It looks like the students do not want to learn ».

It is a statement that is not noted at the level of the teacher that has the desire to teach the discipline.

5.3 Sirine: « I am not satisfied; I should have done better »

- Official relationship to knowledge: the highlighted knowledges of Sirine are in content to official programs (official instructions, institution project, and official knowledge). This allows us to note a recurrent reference to the accompanying texts. The teacher subject is “assujetti”. Indeed, « several institutional “assujettissements” may engender a game of co-determination resources-constraints for the teacher » (Carnus, 2015, p. 63). His relationship to the institution becomes updated in his official relationship to knowledge.

- Personal relationship to knowledge: when we called Sirine to describe her referential formation, she responds: « yes evidently, by the help of associations, trainings continuous formation, seminars, colloquies, Internet, books... »; « I refer to my personal knowledge and my personal experience in the university teaching ». This declaration allows deducing that she maintains equally a personal relationship to knowledge structured around her personal relationship to knowledge structured around her personal conception of teaching of his personal constructed experience as a researcher and as a teacher. In addition to this feeling of pleasure when she teaches, she accents on the importance of the issues concerning teaching the discipline to students. Sirine is marked by an « already-there » which influences her relationship to the discipline « psychology » the latter affects her and feels pleasure when teaching it: « the teaching of the psychology pleases me a lot; I speak about myself, about my experience ».

- Official conception of teaching: despite of the profound and personal knowledge of Sirine that are issued from her experiential and conceptual already-there. We noticed that she does not kin to an interactive mode of teaching with her students. In fact, she privileges to refer to an official register of knowledge(s) that are taught in a vertical way, through a direct and magisterial transmission situation. She uses a transmission mode of teaching, a referential conceptual, formal and official referential. It seems that this transmissive mode of teaching facilitates her the control of the class: « I am not satisfied, I should have done better, it was directed, I would have can be due to throw the debate with my students but I have in fear of losing control of the class ».
The relationship to knowledge of Sirine is particularly problematic, within an ambivalence that makes her declare that she favours to transmit issue problems from her experiential already-there. So that she transmits program and institutional project: « I did not teach what I wanted to teach, I limited myself to the contents of the lesson, it was simpler for me, I wanted to teach something else to enrich the content, but I had not enough time, ehh...I had to control the class ».

- The impossible to endure: « I cannot sustain the irresponsible behaviour of students ». In effect, Sirine expresses her discomfort towards student disinterest in this discipline « psychology »: « good, despite the importance of discipline we note unfortunately an average of a disturbing absenteeism, student do not treat things seriously ». During the after-stroke interview, Sirine carries a feeling of a wicked professional that she occasioned an important pedagogical change when she opted to a transmissive mode of teaching: « as I was unsatisfied and I was not well. I said: there is something between the lines at the level of students and here I decided to change the transmissive vertical mode of teaching ». Lina supports badly the irresponsibility of students, their distance in the knowledge and their indifference and recklessness via the taught discipline. This impossible to endure is clear in teacher’s answers of student question « out topic »; « what are you saying? »; « you did not understand anything »; « it is an hour now I have been speaking and explaining and you have other things that are more important, it is normal that you didn’t understand? ». All these mention the difficulty to imply students within apprenticeship.

6. Discussion

Our research inscribed within the didactic clinical framework. It is related to the analysis of teaching practices as deployed in university. The purpose of the present study articulates all around the apprehension of link to knowledge related to experienced university teachers. In fact, it this was verified through the clinical didactic analysis of the impact on their professional experience on their didactic and professional actions.

In the framework of this work, we have proceeded by an analytical step focusing on a qualitative study « case by case » of the teaching practice of two experimented university teachers as a service of a clinical focus on the teaching out of a considered subject teacher (EDIC works). We have tried to identify the revelatory elements of personal and professional experience of two university teachers. It is not to support the idea that experience is a measurable factor, starting from the number of years at work but in the manner or the way that it manifests though the didactic functioning mode. Professional experience develops in parallel with professional career and though the continuous practice of the job.
In this context we find Touboul works (2011), Ben Jomaa and al. (2016) supporting this idea showing that practitioners develop a specific knowledge which is not mentioned neither by institution or by programs. It is designed under the name of « experience knowledge » or the practice knowledge. The latter open the path in front of methods deliberations, personal technics and to meta-analysis situations that favors operative knowledge control.

According to the point of view from which we position ourselves (clinical didactics) the experience will be constructed through practice, personal and professional career. Thereby, the obtained results are sustained by those advanced by Touboul (2011) and according to them; this author notes that the knowledge cannot be used in class without being adapted to pupils and/or to contextual constraints. The acquisition of this knowledge is due to the profession practice and it sent back to problems and to prevention conditions of dysfunctionning which can be supervened to knowledge transmission and to class control (didactic anticipation).

We have described the case from a clinical analysis point-of view that it « requires the deepening of the description and of the methodological rigor » (Passeron & Revel, 2005), the didactic mechanisms of two different teaching conceptions and even contrasted (Kember, 1997). The first conception that characterizes the teaching activity of Sirine is called traditional. It is centered on the teacher. It belongs to a magistro-centered or transmissive conception. According to it, the teacher privilege the contents following a teaching model that is essentially transmissive when she delivers the knowledge. The second conception which characterizes the teaching activity of Lina is called pedo-centered. According to this conception teacher, Lina focuses on students accompanying during their apprenticeship and facilitates the knowledge to them with the help of many active methods of pedagogical interactions (Frenay, 2006).

We don’t pretend to generalize the results of these two study cases however study case results could show that taking into account the observed subject permit to understand the position of another subject teacher without taking the same form. To start from theoretical « functional » and « transferable » analysers of other cases could feed professional education and could bring in new perspectives.

7. Conclusion

As a conclusion we noted that this analysis leads to treat the subject singularity of the teacher experience in each of them. The analysis of their discourses, of their proper teaching practices that we have carried out allow to study how the experimented university teacher transmit a knowledge echoing to his proper and personal register of knowledges and mobilizes also his proper knowledge, his proper conceptions and his proper relationship to knowledge.
We focused on the involvement of the professional reveal “I” of the professorial action of two experimented university teachers. We are interesting in the teaching process. We were able to put in evidence that teacher’s thinking as well as their teaching conceptions are constructed though their experience and their relationship with the discipline which have an effect on class didactic functioning. In their teaching practice(s), Sirine and Lina seem to be shown « divided » between “proximity and distance”, “pleasure and suffering”. The two teachers are inscribed within ambivalence.

The two « discomfort zone » that reveal notably in their paradoxal relationship to the teaching knowledge are connected to a personal relationship for Lina and an official relationship for Sirine.

Thus, beyond the central interest brought to the subject teacher singularity, this study allows to consider new research perspectives that notably questions an analysis field which remains little explored, unfortunately it proved a « priority » (Altet, 1994) in Tunisia and all over the world as well. In effect this priority corresponds to the institutional will to develop an « effective professional formation » (Altet, op. Cit.) in terms of competences and of professoral challenges of university teachers’ status (Bancel, 1989). Rethink in education issues of university teachers and to be aware of the importance of the continuous formation leading to a professional development of university teachers which is the objective of this study.

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