

## Activity System Model, Perceived Self-Efficacy, and Newcomer Integration Behaviour

### Système des activités, sentiment d'efficacité personnelle et conduites d'insertion des nouveaux recrutés

### Sistema de actividades, sentimiento de eficacia personal y conductas de inserción de los nuevos empleados

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Résumé de l'article

La recherche présentée s'inscrit dans les débats actuels relatifs aux effets du sentiment d'efficacité personnelle (SEP). Ces débats portent, d'une part, sur le niveau de généralité auquel il convient de mesurer le SEP (voir, par ex., Pinquart, Juang et Silbereisen, 2003) pour examiner ses effets (sentiment général d'auto-efficacité ou sentiments d'efficacité personnelle spécifiques), d'autre part, sur l'éventualité d'effets négatifs du SEP (Vancouver, Thompson et Williams, 2001; Vancouver *et al.*, 2002; Bandura et Locke, 2003; Vancouver et Kendall, 2006).

À partir d'une recherche centrée sur la problématique de l'insertion des nouveaux recrutés dans les organisations de travail, il s'agit de montrer comment la référence au modèle d'une socialisation plurielle et active (Baubion-Broye et Hajjar, 1998; Almudever, Croity-Belz et Hajjar, 1999; le Blanc, Dupuy et Rossi, 2001), qui prend en compte les relations que les sujets instaurent entre leurs différentes sphères d'activités et s'appuie sur une approche systémique, permet de prendre position dans ces débats. Visant à étudier le rôle du SEP dans la régulation des effets des décalages perçus entre les attentes et la réalité professionnelles sur les conduites d'insertion des nouveaux entrants, la recherche met à l'épreuve des faits deux hypothèses générales.

La première concerne les *conditions d'efficacité du SEP* : elle pose que l'efficacité du SEP dans la régulation des effets des décalages entre attentes et réalité professionnelles dépend du niveau d'échanges que les sujets instaurent entre leurs domaines de vie. Considérant que le système des activités des sujets peut être plus ou moins cloisonné selon que les sujets activent ces échanges ou, à l'inverse, les inhibent en cherchant à limiter l'interdépendance des différentes sphères, on postule que *c'est un degré médian d'échanges entre les domaines de vie qui constitue la condition la plus favorable à l'efficacité du SEP général dans la régulation des effets des décalages sur les conduites d'insertion du sujet.*

La seconde concerne l'*orientation des effets du SEP* : elle pose que les effets du SEP sur la relation entre décalages et conduites d'insertion des sujets varient en fonction de la nature des décalages envisagés, en raison des enjeux différents dont ils peuvent être porteurs pour les sujets.

L'étude a été réalisée auprès de 157 professeurs des écoles de l'Académie de Toulouse (France), venant d'intégrer leur premier poste. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire portant sur : les conduites d'insertion des sujets (conduites de recherche d'information; conduites d'innovation et de conformité); les décalages entre attentes et réalité professionnelles (décalages relatifs aux caractéristiques du travail et décalages relatifs aux compétences requises); le degré d'échanges entre domaines de vie (trois sous-groupes ont été constitués : degré d'échanges faible, fort, médian) et le sentiment général d'efficacité personnelle (mesuré à l'aide de l'échelle de Sherer *et al.*, 1982).

Les résultats montrent que :

- le rôle modérateur du SEP au niveau des effets des décalages perçus sur les conduites d'insertion des sujets ne s'exerce que pour les sujets présentant un degré médian d'échanges entre leurs domaines de vie ;
- face aux décalages relatifs aux compétences requises (et mettant en question l'image de soi), un SEP élevé favorise la recherche d'information par demande directe et réduit le recours à des conduites de conformité ;
- face aux décalages relatifs aux caractéristiques du travail (et mettant en question la représentation de la situation de travail), un SEP élevé inhibe les conduites de recherche d'information par demande directe et par observation.

Aucun résultat significatif n'a pu, par contre, être établi à propos des conduites d'innovation.

À travers ces résultats, le modèle théorique d'une socialisation plurielle voit ici conforté le postulat de l'intersignification des conduites qui le fonde : des phénomènes observés dans un domaine de vie particulier – ici l'impact du SEP sur des variables relatives à la *sphère professionnelle* – ne peuvent être expliqués indépendamment des relations que le sujet instaure entre ce domaine de vie et ses autres sphères d'activités. Par ailleurs est confirmé l'intérêt qu'il y a à distinguer différents types de décalages. Selon les dimensions sur lesquelles ils portent, les décalages entre attentes et réalité sont significatifs différemment. C'est à cette différence de sens – pour le sujet – plus qu'à une positivité/négativité du SEP – qu'il nous semble devoir référer l'observation d'effets *parfois inverses* de ce même SEP. L'absence de résultat significatif portant sur les conduites d'innovation incite à faire des propositions pour approfondir au plan théorique, la modélisation et, au plan méthodologique, l'opérationnalisation, de ces conduites d'innovation.

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# *Activity System Model, Perceived Self-Efficacy, and Newcomer Integration Behaviour*

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*The research presented here contributes to the current debate on the effects of perceived self-efficacy (PSE). The study, undertaken with 157 schoolteachers who had just started their first teaching position, examined the moderating role of PSE on the effects of mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions on newcomer integration behaviour. Based on the theoretical model of multiple socialization, the results suggest that: 1) the degree of exchanges that subjects establish between different areas of their life influences PSE efficiency; 2) PSE effects can be positive or negative depending on the nature of the disturbances to which PSE is applied.*

In the current occupational contexts marked by uncertainty and growing individual responsibility, perceived self-efficacy (PSE), defined by Bandura as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1997: 3), takes on a special connotation. Many studies have examined the determinants of PSE, as well as its effects or even its specific courses of action (Bandura and Locke, 2003). The development of these research avenues and the testing of concurrent hypotheses have been accompanied in scientific debate by several controversies, two of which are particularly noteworthy.

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The first is linked to Bandura's own definition of the concept. It contrasts the conceptualization and measure of a general self-efficacy—applicable to regulating a broad variety of situations—with the conceptualization and measure of task specific self-efficacy, directly applied to clearly identified tasks (for this debate, see, for example, Pinquart, Juang and Silbereisen, 2003).

The second controversy, which is more recent (Vancouver, Thompson and Williams, 2001; Vancouver *et al.*, 2002; Bandura and Locke, 2003; Vancouver and Kendall, 2006), proposes that PSE, which had always been considered as a positive resource under any circumstance for adjusting to challenging situations, could have negative effects.

Using research into the problem of integrating newcomers into work organizations, this article proposes: (1) to show how employing a model of multiple and active socialization (Baubion-Broye and Hajjar, 1998; Almudever, Croity-Belz and Hajjar, 1999; le Blanc, Dupuy and Rossi, 2001) can facilitate the adoption of a fresh position in these debates and the testing of new hypotheses concerning PSE efficiency conditions; and (2) to present empirical data examining the role of PSE in regulating the effect of the perceived mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions on how newcomers are integrated.

### *Different Levels of General Self-Efficacy*

Initially developed by Bandura (1997), the first debate concerns the distinction between general self-efficacy, defined as “the belief a subject has in his capability to act successfully in a variety of challenging situations” (Eden, 1996: 9) and task specific self-efficacy, which reflects a subject's belief in his ability to successfully carry out specific tasks at a specific level of performance (Gardner and Pierce, 1998). The question that arises then is which measurements, general or specific, are the most relevant in predicting a subject's behaviour?

Bandura (1997) chooses the latter. Arguing that “human competency is structured and is expressed in many ways rather than uniformly in various areas of activity” (Bandura, 2003: 69), Bandura specifies that his theory of personal efficacy concerns “the system of efficacy beliefs not as a global characteristic, but as a differentiated set of beliefs in self linked to distinct areas of functioning” (*ibid.*, 62). Saks (1995) proposes this point of view in his measurement scale for newcomers that examines their perceived efficacy in the specific tasks required in their work. Nonetheless, researchers are increasingly interested in the general nature of efficacy beliefs (Yeo and Neal, 2006) and in new tools for measuring it (Chen, Gully and Eden, 2001, 2004). This is because, on the one hand, they consider that the

general feeling of efficacy permeates specific situations (Sherer *et al.*, 1982; Sherer and Adams, 1983), and, on the other, that integration and transition situations require greater mobilization of extra-role behaviour (Morrison and Phelps, 1999) and contextual performance (Speier and Frese, 1997), not directly connected to specific tasks.

In literature on the subject, different options have been proposed that transcend the debate between the supporters of task specific self-efficacy measures and those in favour of general self-efficacy measures. One option is to introduce another intermediate level of generalization/specificity. Woodruff and Cashman (1993) distinguish task specific self-efficacy, domain self-efficacy and general self-efficacy. Another option is to jointly consider specific efficacy beliefs and general self-efficacy and to examine the relationship between these two variables (Chen, Gully and Eden, 2004; Yeo and Neal, 2006). We specify our position in this first debate by proposing another interpretation of the problem below.

### *Negative Effects of Perceived Self-Efficacy?*

The second debate concerns the possibility that PSE might have negative effects on subject performance. A lively controversy has been engaged between Bandura (Bandura and Locke, 2003) and Vancouver and his colleagues (Vancouver, Thompson and Williams, 2001; Vancouver *et al.*, 2002; Vancouver and Kendall, 2006). Vancouver and colleagues point to certain negative effects of PSE on subject performance. Using Powers' perceptual control theory (1978, 1991), which posits that it is the mismatch between the goals targeted by the subject and the perceived goal achievement that prompts action, these authors support the idea that a high PSE is likely to have negative effects on subject motivation and performance for one of two reasons: either because subjects reduce the perceived mismatch; or they anticipate rapid goal achievement and thereby ignore the need to mobilize resources.

Bandura and Locke (2003) contest both the premises and results of this research. At the theoretical level, they criticize employing a control theory that only envisages negative feed-back loops and ignores the proactive aspect of anticipatory behaviour in regulating subject behaviour. At the empirical level, they refer to the results of nine meta-analyses which show PSE's functional value.

In the research field of interest to us, namely organizational socialization and the integration of newcomers into work organizations, a number of contrasting results confirm that the effects of PSE on proactive behaviour can vary (see the reviews by Major and Koslowski, 1997 and by Bauer, Morrison and Callister, 1998). By proactive behaviour, we are referring

to behaviour demonstrating the newcomers' propensity to participate actively in their socialization process rather than submitting passively to the organization's adaptive influences and "tactics." This behaviour was operationalized in the 1980s through information seeking (Comer, 1991; Miller and Jablin, 1991; Ostroff and Koslowski, 1992; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Major and Koslowski, 1997), which involves seeking information through direct inquiry or monitoring, and role orientation (Nicholson, 1984; Jones, 1986), which involves either role innovation or a more conformist adaptation to a prescribed role.

With regard to information seeking, Worchel and Cooper (1976) and Miller and Jablin (1991) demonstrate that the more certain people are of their capabilities, the more they turn towards others to obtain information. The opposite hypothesis is, however, supported by other authors (Koslowski and Ostroff, 1987; Northcraft and Ashford, 1990; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b) who state that subjects with a weak PSE become more involved in seeking information from others.

As for role innovation, the longitudinal study by Jones (1986) is a reference point. This study shows that newcomers with a weak PSE tend to conform to the expected occupational role, while those with a high PSE are more innovative in the personal interpretation of this role.

More recent studies (Crant, 2000) stress the relationship between PSE and other modalities of proactive behaviour: development of "extra-role behaviour" (Organ and Ryan, 1995); activation of "personal initiative" (Frese *et al.*, 1996; Speier and Frese, 1997); propensity to "take charge" of certain extra-role aspects of work (Morrison and Phelps, 1999; Axtell *et al.*, 2000). While this work supports the idea of a direct and positive relation between PSE and innovative behaviour, other work (Speier and Frese, 1997) emphasizes the mediatory and moderating role of PSE in the relationship between certain characteristics of the work situation (control and complexity) and personal initiative.

All of this work confirms the hypothesis that PSE effects can vary. Bandura and Locke agree on this point, affirming that "no psychosocial factor, or any other factor for that matter, ever bears an invariant relation to human behaviour" (Bandura and Locke, 2003: 96). But how do we account for this variability?

### ***THE MODEL OF MULTIPLE AND ACTIVE SOCIALIZATION***

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The model of multiple and active socialization was developed by our research team to analyze the psycho-social processes at play in various occupational transition situations (unemployment, work organization entry, occupational mobility). From this theoretical perspective, we consider that

the subject is engaged in numerous activity and social spheres (family, occupational, personal and leisure) which may be concurrent and which may contain antagonistic norms and reference values. To overcome these contradictions, the subject must actively consider and choose from among possible options, prioritize values and goals, and organize the heterogeneous experiences.

These active steps become particularly necessary during transition periods which disrupt previously established balances and relatively stable representations of self, others, the future, and so on. When one of these activity spheres (areas of life), such as the occupational sphere, is especially affected by such perturbations, the subject gives meaning to these perturbations by taking into account both the relations established (or not) between his occupational activities and his other activities, as well as the significant people who make up these different spheres.

In other words, we consider that the activities carried out by a subject in the various areas of his or her life constitute a system. The importance given, from this perspective, to exchanges that the subject makes or inhibits between different areas of life is at the basis of operationalization work which resulted in the concrete formulation of the "Activity System Model" (Curie and Hajjar, 1987; Baubion-Broye and Hajjar, 1998) and the fine-tuning of the "Activity System Protocol" (Curie *et al.*, 1990; Almudever *et al.*, 1995). This tool records the exchanges of resources and constraints made by the subject between the various areas of his life, and measures the intensity of these exchanges. This theoretical model provides a new perspective on the above-mentioned debates.

With regard to the first debate, our systemic approach of multiple socialization leads to a line of questioning related less to the degree of PSE generalization/specificity than to the conditions of efficiency (i.e., in the relationships between areas of life) of these efficacy beliefs. Given that the subject's activity system can be more or less compartmentalized according to whether he inhibits or initiates exchanges between areas of his life, we postulate that the degree of compartmentalization/interdependence of the activity spheres influences the efficiency of a resource such as general self-efficacy.

When a sphere of activity—for example the occupational sphere—is affected by a disturbance, it is expected that a high degree of compartmentalization (low degree of exchanges) between the different activity spheres makes it difficult to mobilize a "general" resource to tackle this particular problem, but also that a low degree of compartmentalization (high degree of exchanges) between the different spheres of activity can make the general self-efficacy inoperative by allowing the occupational disturbance to spread

to all areas of life. The subject thus risks being “overcome” by the effects of the disturbance.

To support this hypothesis, we demonstrated in a recent contribution (Almudever *et al.*, 2006) that PSE moderated the deleterious effects of the perceived mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions on the psychic health of newcomers (i.e., on their psychological well-being and occupational satisfaction) for, and only for, subjects with a moderate degree of exchanges between the different areas of their lives. In the research presented here in this article, we tested this same hypothesis for PSE impact on the integration behaviour of newcomers.

As for the second debate concerning the positive or negative effects of PSE, our active socialization approach leads us to emphasize the meaning the subject assigns to the situation he is facing. We thus propose the general hypothesis in which PSE effects vary according to the situation the subject has to contend with, as he defines it.

In the integration situations under discussion here, the perceived mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions (Wanous, 1977, 1983; Wanous *et al.*, 1992) are an important part of this situation’s meaning for the subject. All the research dedicated to the effects of the “surprise” or “reality shock” (Hugues, 1958) on the behaviour of newcomers has primarily focused on the mismatches linked to the subject’s representation of the work situation (mismatches in work characteristics), for example, “my new work situation does not match my expectations concerning the variety of tasks.”

However, we believe it is relevant to consider another kind of mismatch that is also critical in the meaning assigned to the integration scenario. These mismatches are related to how the subject represents himself in the new work situation, for example, “I do not think I’m capable of performing the tasks entrusted to me.” To this end, we proposed a tool for evaluating the perceived mismatches in required job skills (Croity-Belz, Almudever and Hajjar, 2004; Almudever *et al.*, 2006). We thus consider that the disturbance generated by these two types of mismatches does not have the same meaning for the subject, and that the general PSE is likely to have different effects from the outset according to whether we are considering one or the other.

When studying the effects of PSE on information seeking and innovative behaviour, we cannot underestimate the issue of relationships with others. Indeed, both contribute to an integration behaviour that implies risk-taking in interpersonal relations (Bandura, 1997; Depolo, Fraccaroli and Sarchielli, 1994, 1998): risk of “losing face” when making a direct inquiry to colleagues or supervisors that may reveal “weaknesses”; or risk of a hostile

reaction from work colleagues who interpret a newcomer's innovative behaviour as a questioning of established and proven ways of operating. Faced with these risks, the perceived mismatches in the representation of self or of the work characteristics do not have the same meaning: they raise different issues.

Faced with perturbations where self-representation was in question (mismatches related to the required skills), we expected that subjects with a high PSE would rely on this element of personal reassurance to display more relational commitment behaviour (information seeking using direct inquiry and innovative behaviour) and less relational withdrawal behaviour (information seeking using monitoring and conformist behaviour) than would subjects with a low PSE.

On the other hand, if the work situation representation was in question (mismatches in work characteristics), subjects with a high PSE, who were confident in their own capabilities to analyze and deal with a problem, would be less likely to develop relational commitment behaviour than would subjects with a low PSE. Therefore both hypotheses were tested in the empirical study presented below.

With regard to the first debate, we tested the conditions of PSE efficiency using the following hypothesis:

- H1: the moderating effects of PSE on the information seeking and innovative behaviour of newcomers are observed for subjects with a moderate degree of exchange between the areas of their lives, but not for subjects with a low or high degree of exchanges.

Concerning the second debate, the issue of the variability in PSE effects was approached using the general hypothesis that these effects vary according to the different aspects of a situation that a subject considers when analyzing the perceived mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions. This general hypothesis can be postulated as follows:

- H2: when faced with negative mismatches in required job skills, subjects with a high PSE display more information seeking through direct inquiry and less information seeking through monitoring than do subjects with a low PSE;
- H3: when faced with negative mismatches in required job skills, subjects with a high PSE display more innovative behaviour and less conformist behaviour than do subjects with a low PSE;
- H4: when faced with negative mismatches in work characteristics, subjects with a high PSE display less information seeking through direct inquiry than do subjects with a low PSE but also less information seeking through monitoring (because in general, they would be expected to focus on themselves in such cases);



H5: when faced with negative mismatches in work characteristics, subjects with a high PSE display more innovative behaviour than do subjects with a low PSE and less conformist behaviour (in this case, innovation being a strategy subjects with a high PSE employ in an attempt to make the situation better conform to their expectations).

## ***METHOD***

### ***Sample and Procedure***

The study was carried out among 157 schoolteachers from the *Académie de Toulouse* (France), who had taken their first jobs 6 months earlier. The data were collected using a questionnaire that had been pre-tested on twelve schoolteachers in schools. This questionnaire was sent to all the schoolteachers (N = 250) by regular mail along with a stamped addressed envelope to be returned to the researchers. The addressees were teachers who had finished their training at I.U.F.M. (*Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres*) at the *Académie de Toulouse* (France) in the last academic year and who had taken their first job in a primary school (kindergarten and elementary schools). In total, 157 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 63%. The research sample was made up of 134 women and 23 men with an average age of 28.5 ( $SD = 4.77$ ; minimum = 23; maximum = 49). They all had a *Licence d'Enseignement Supérieur* (bachelor's teaching degree, which was required to take the entrance examination for the I.U.F.M) and almost 46% had four (4) or more years of university study.

### ***Measures***

#### ***Integration Behaviour of Newcomers***

In reference to the work on organizational socialization, we included in our study two types of integration behaviour used by subjects entering a new workplace, that is information seeking and innovative and conformist behaviours.

*Information seeking behaviours.* There are two facets to this type of behaviour, namely "inquiry" and "monitoring". To identify these behaviours, we applied the Morrison scale (1993a), adapting it to our study population. This scale distinguishes between five types of information: normative information (concerning expected and valued attitudes and behaviours in the organization); technical information (concerning how to carry out particular aspects of the work); reference information (concerning the tasks involved in the roles and functions assigned to the subject); performance feed-back (evaluations of the subject's performance compared to what is expected of

him); social feed-back (evaluations of the way the subject behaves with others in the organization). For each type of information, the subjects received a series of items to measure—with a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (very frequently)—how often they sought information in the last three months. The questionnaire also had questions about the style of information seeking, that is direct inquiry versus monitoring, and the preferred information sources, that is the immediate superior (school principal), a more experienced colleague, the educational adviser, a fellow teacher, their live-in partner, a friend, or a family member (Almudever, Croity-Belz and Hajjar, 1999; Croity-Belz, Almudever and Hajjar, 2004).

Two scores were established: 1) *intensity of information seeking using direct inquiry*: after verifying the homogeneity of the scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ), this score was calculated using the subjects' answers to the 35 items (7 items corresponding to the 7 information sources likely to be called upon for each of the 5 types of information). The weighted score ( $M = 2.45$ ;  $SD = 0.79$ ) varied from 1 (low intensity) to 6 (high intensity); and 2) *intensity of information seeking using monitoring*: after verifying the homogeneity of the scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ ), this score was calculated using the subjects' answers to the 10 proposed items (2 items for each of the 5 types of information). The weighted score ( $M = 3.63$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ ) varied from 1 (low intensity) to 6 (high intensity).

*Innovative and conformist behaviours*. There are also two facets to this type of behaviours: 1) frequency of innovative behaviours, and 2) frequency of conformist behaviours. To measure the *frequency of innovative behaviours*, we used the answers supplied by the subjects to a series of 5 items (Almudever *et al.*, 2006) such as "I suggest new educational material, methods and/or teaching activities to my colleagues" or even "I am working on topics that are not foreseen in the program." After verifying the homogeneity of the scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .60$ ), we calculated a score ( $M = 2.90$ ;  $SD = 0.72$ ) varying from 1 (low intensity) to 6 (high intensity). The *frequency of conformist behaviours* was measured using the answers supplied by subjects to the following two items: "in preparing my teaching, I refer to official instructions"; "as a member of the national education system (*Education Nationale*), I strive to transmit the values and norms it represents." After verifying Cronbach's  $\alpha (.60)$ , we calculated a score ( $M = 4.84$ ;  $SD = 0.9$ ) varying from 1 (low intensity) to 6 (high intensity).

#### *Perceived Mismatches between Expectations and Actual Work Conditions*

As stated above, two indicators were used for these mismatches, namely those concerning work characteristics and those involving the skills needed to teach.

*Mismatches in work conditions.* Based on the pioneering work of Porter and Steers (1973), these mismatches were assessed using Sarchielli, Depolo, Harpaz and Jesuino's assessment instrument (1992) as adapted to our study population. We thus employed a series of 17 items related to various aspects of work (latitude, work conditions, job security, task variety, relations with colleagues, etc.). For each of these items, the subjects were requested to indicate the mismatch they perceived between their current situation and what they had expected using a 5-point Likert scale (1: "the actual work conditions are much worse than I expected"; 2: "worse than I expected"; 3: "as I expected"; 4: "better than I expected"; 5: "much better than I expected"). After verifying the scale's homogeneity (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .68$ ), we calculated a weighted score ( $M = 3.07$ ;  $SD = 0.34$ ) varying from 1 to 5. A dichotomy distinguished between subjects who considered work characteristics as less satisfactory than expected (a low score reflects a perceived negative mismatch) and those who considered work characteristics as more satisfactory than expected (a high score corresponds to a perceived positive mismatch).

*Mismatches related to the skills needed for teaching.* The same procedure as above was employed to assess the perceived mismatches between the previously formulated expectations and the actual work conditions. This time, however, the items measured how subjects represented the required skills. A series of 5 items was proposed to the subjects (Almudever *et al.*, 2006) such as "preparing and organizing the students' work" or "adapting teaching to different audiences." Subjects were requested to indicate the perceived mismatch between their current situation and what they had expected in terms of difficulty or, on the contrary, of easiness, using a 5-point Likert scale (1: "conducting this task is much more difficult than I imagined"; 2: "more difficult than I imagined"; 3: "as I imagined"; 4: "easier than I imagined"; 5: "much easier than I imagined"). After verifying the scale's homogeneity (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .68$ ), we calculated a weighted score using the sum of the responses provided by the subjects to the 5 items ( $M = 2.45$ ;  $SD = 0.47$ ). A dichotomy based on this variable was used to form two groups: subjects who considered that the required occupational skills were more difficult than they had expected (a low score translates as a perceived negative mismatch); and subjects who found these skills to be easier than they had expected (a high score corresponds to a perceived positive mismatch).

#### *Perceived Self-Efficacy*

We applied Sherer *et al.*'s (1982) 17-item scale. This scale is used to measure general self-efficacy, whose monofactorial structure has been validated on several occasions (Pierro, 1997; Sherer and Adams, 1983).

Items include such questions as: “when I undertake a project, I am generally certain of succeeding”; “when there is something unpleasant to do, I do my best to do it”; “when I decide to do something, I do it right away”; “when I am faced with an unexpected problem, I am unable to deal with it in a casual manner.” For each of the items proposed, the subjects indicate their answer on a graduated 6-point scale (from 1: “do not agree at all” to 6: “I agree completely”). After verifying the scale’s homogeneity (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .85$ ), a total score was calculated ( $M = 73.27$ ;  $SD = 9.41$ ). A median-based dichotomy was applied to distinguish subjects with a low general self-efficacy from those with a high general self-efficacy.

#### *Exchanges between Sub-Systems of Activities*

The exchanges between sub-systems of activities are understood using the subjects’ answers to one of the exercises in the Activity System Protocol (Hajjar, 1995; Baubion-Broye and Hajjar, 1998; Croity-Belz, Almudever and Hajjar, 2004). For this exercise, subjects designate their priority objective from among a series of 36 items (9 items per area of life) in each of the four areas (family, occupational, personal, social). They then specify to what extent the activities carried out in an activity sphere help (aids) or hinder (obstacles) or are without consequence in reaching the most important goals in the other areas of life. The interdependence index is equal to the sum of exchanges of resources (aids) and constraints (obstacles) between the four activity spheres ( $M = 0.79$ ;  $SD = 0.29$ ). Based on this index, we divided the population into three sub-groups with a balanced number of participants to test our hypothesis on the role of the degree of exchanges between areas of life in PSE efficiency. Sub-group 1 ( $N_1 = 58$ ) was composed of subjects with the lowest degree of exchanges between their four areas of activities; sub-group 2 ( $N_2 = 52$ ) was made up of subjects having the strongest degree of exchanges; and sub-group 3 ( $N_3 = 48$ ) was located in the intermediary position, subjects in this sub-group being characterized by a “moderate” level of exchanges.

## ***RESULTS***

In order to test hypothesis H1, we examined the effects of the interaction between perceived mismatches and PSE on the integration behaviour of the subjects in the three sub-groups, namely: sub-group 1: subjects with a low degree of exchanges between areas of life; sub-group 2: subjects with a high degree of exchanges; and sub-group 3: subjects with a moderate degree of exchanges. Before analyzing these interaction effects using a two-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA), the descriptive statistics of and the correlations between the study variables for each sub-group are presented below.

### ***Descriptive Statistics and Correlations in the Three Sub-Groups of Subjects***

*Sub-group 1: Low degree of exchanges between areas of life.* It can be seen in table 1 that there was no statistically meaningful correlation in sub-group 1 (N = 58) between the independent variables of our hypotheses (perceived mismatches and PSE) and the variable to be explained (integration behaviour). There was only a positive correlation between the two types of information seeking, inquiry and monitoring ( $r = .57$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

*Sub-group 2: High degree of exchanges between areas of life.* As was the case for sub-group 1, no statistically meaningful correlation was observed between perceived mismatches and PSE on the one hand, and integration behaviour on the other. By contrast, there were more correlations between the different types of integration behaviour. In sub-group 2 (N = 52), unlike the previous group, information seeking through inquiry was negatively correlated with information seeking through monitoring ( $r = -.58$ ;  $p < .01$ ) whereas innovative behaviours and conformist behaviours were positively correlated ( $r = .31$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Moreover, it seems that information seeking (in both forms) was positively correlated with innovative behaviours ( $r = .43$ ;  $p < .01$  for direct inquiry and  $r = .31$ ;  $p < .05$  for monitoring).

*Sub-group 3: Moderate degree of exchanges between areas of life.* The results for sub-group 3 (N = 48) were characterized by the low number of statistically meaningful correlations between the different types of integration behaviours. However, there were many links between perceived mismatches and PSE on the one hand, and integration behaviours on the other. As in sub-group 2, there was a simple negative correlation ( $r = -.67$ ;  $p < .01$ ) between direct information seeking and monitoring. It thus seems that the negative mismatches related to mastering the required skills were associated with more intense information seeking through inquiry ( $r = -.40$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and monitoring ( $r = -.36$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Moreover, a high level of PSE was linked to less intensity in innovative behaviours ( $r = -.31$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and information seeking through monitoring ( $r = -.33$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Finally, the negative mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions, whether in terms of work characteristics or required skills, were associated with a lower PSE level ( $r = .36$ ;  $p < .05$  for the former and  $r = .33$ ;  $p < .05$  for the latter).

A comparison of these three tables shows that, on the one hand, there is no difference between the three sub-groups concerning the means of the different variables; and, on the other hand, considerable differences can be seen in the way these variables are linked between themselves within each table. Moreover, it is only in sub-group 3, with a moderate degree of exchanges, that perceived mismatches and PSE had links to integration

TABLE 1  
**Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistency Reliabilities and Correlations**  
 (sub-group 1: low degree of exchange)

Variable	Scale			Correlation						
	M	SD	N	1a	1b	2	3a	3b	3c	3d
1. Mismatches related to:										
a) Skills needed for teaching	2.47	.44	56	(.66)						
b) Work characteristics	3.02	.27	42	.18	(.62)					
2. PSE	4.25	.51	51	.16	.29	(.81)				
3. Integration behaviour:										
a) Inquiry	2.46	.77	45	-.19	-.15	-.06	(.91)			
b) Monitoring	3.52	1.32	52	-.17	-.06	-.04	.57**	(.95)		
c) Conformist behaviours	4.9	.94	56	.14	.01	.07	.51	-.27	(.57)	
d) Innovative behaviours	2.90	.72	53	-.08	.09	.08	.20	.13	.38	(.62)

\*  $p < .05$     \*\*  $p < .01$

TABLE 2  
**Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistency Reliabilities and Correlations**  
 (sub-group 2: high degree of exchange)

Variable	Scale			Correlation						
	M	SD	N	1a	1b	2	3a	3b	3c	3d
1. Mismatches related to:										
a) Skills needed for teaching	1-5	2.35	.46	50	(.73)					
b) Work characteristics	1-5	3.07	.34	42	.06	(.76)				
2. PSE	1-6	4.4	.55	46	.29	-.03	(.85)			
3. Integration behaviour:										
a) Inquiry	1-6	2.49	.9	36	-.24	-.12	-.15	(.93)		
b) Monitoring	1-6	3.69	1.12	46	-.06	-.13	-.12	-.58**	(.90)	
c) Conformist behaviours	1-6	4.8	.8	51	.18	.22	.20	-.00	.31*	(.63)
d) Innovate behaviours	1-6	2.90	.67	49	-.07	.04	.05	.43**	.15	.31* (52)

\*  $p < .05$     \*\*  $p < .01$

TABLE 3  
**Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistency Reliabilities and Correlations**  
 (sub-group 3: median degree of exchange)

Variable	Scale		Correlation								
	M	SD	N	1a	1b	2	3a	3b	3c	3d	
1. Mismatches related to:											
a) Skills needed for teaching	1-5	2.5	.49	48	(.66)						
b) Work characteristics	1-5	3.09	.28	40	.38*	(.60)					
2. PSE	1-6	4.29	.59	46	.36*	.33*	(.88)				
3. Integration behaviour:											
a) Inquiry	1-6	2.42	.71	40	-.40*	-.02	-.12	(.90)			
b) Monitoring	1-6	3.69	1.27	47	-.36*	-.12	-.33*	-.67**	(.94)		
c) Conformist behaviours	1-6	4.75	.94	47	.07	-.09	.06	-.08	.03	(.64)	
d) Innovative behaviours	1-6	2.86	.76	46	-.26	.14	-.31*	.12	.10	.18	(.63)

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$



behaviours. We will now examine the effects of interaction that are the focus of our hypotheses.

***Effects of Interaction between Perceived Mismatches and PSE on Integration Behaviour in the Three Sub-Groups***

*Sub-group 1: Low degree of exchanges between areas of life.* As projected in H1, there was no statistically significant effect of interaction in sub-group 1 between the two indicators of perceived mismatches and PSE on the various integration behaviours. The interaction between the mismatches in work characteristics and PSE had a non-significant effect on: 1) information seeking by direct inquiry ( $F(3,33) = 0.37; p > .05$ ); 2) information seeking by monitoring (the model cannot be retained:  $F = 2.3; p > .05$ ); 3) the development of innovative behaviours ( $F(3,34) = 1.1; p > .05$ ); and 4) conformist behaviours in line with the organization's norms and values ( $F(3,35) = 0.86; p > .05$ ).

Similarly, no significant interaction effects were observed between perceived mismatches in required skills and PSE regarding: 1) information seeking by direct inquiry ( $F(3,40) = 0.11; p > .05$ ); 2) information seeking by monitoring ( $F(3,45) = 1.37; p > .05$ ); 3) the development of innovative behaviours ( $F(3,48) = 0.65; p > .05$ ); and 4) conformist behaviours in line with the organization's norms and values ( $F(3,49) = 0.6; p > .05$ ).

*Sub-group 2: High degree of exchanges between areas of life.* In keeping with our hypothesis H1, the same observation was made for sub-group 2: the interaction between the perceived work characteristic mismatches and PSE had a non-significant effect on integration behaviours. The results of these interaction tests were as follows: 1) information seeking by direct inquiry ( $F(3,33) = 0.55, p > .05$ ); 2) information seeking by monitoring ( $F(3,36) = 1.19, p > .05$ ); 3) innovative behaviours ( $F(3,39) = 0.07, p > .05$ ); and 4) conformist behaviours ( $F(3,39) = 0.18, p > .05$ ).

The same is true for the effects of the interaction between perceived mismatches in required skills and PSE on these same behaviours, which gives: 1) information seeking by direct inquiry ( $F(3,31) = 4.49, p > .05$ ); information seeking by monitoring ( $F(3,39) = 0.47, p > .05$ ); 3) innovative behaviours ( $F(3,40) = 3.99, p > .05$ ); and 4) conformist behaviours ( $F(3,42) = 0.28, p > .05$ ).

*Sub-group 3: Moderate degree of exchanges between areas of life.* Conversely, and in confirmation of hypothesis H1, several statistically meaningful interaction effects were observed between perceived mismatches and PSE on integration behaviour in this sub-group of subjects with a moderate degree of exchanges between areas of life. As shown below, these interaction effects were tested with hypotheses H2, H3, H4 and H5.

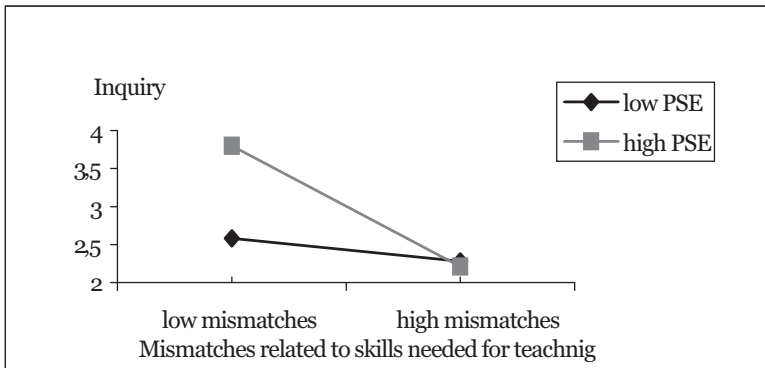
***Detailed Presentation of the Effects of Interaction between Perceived Mismatches and PSE on Integration Behaviours in Sub-Group 3***

First, we will present the results for hypotheses H2 and H3 concerning how PSE moderates the effects of the perceived mismatches in required skills (and thus in self image in its relation to work) on integration behaviours.

Hypothesis H2 anticipates that “when faced with negative mismatches in required job skills (and calling into question their self image), subjects with a high PSE display more information seeking through direct inquiry and less information seeking behaviours through monitoring than do subjects with a low PSE.” Figure 1 shows, in keeping with this hypothesis, that when freshly recruited subjects with a high PSE were faced with negative mismatches in the required skill set, they were more likely to ask others through direct inquiry than were subjects with a low PSE ( $F(3.37) = 4.65$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Conversely, no significant interaction effect regarding information seeking behaviours through monitoring was observed ( $F(3.44) = 1.55$ ;  $p > .05$ ). H2 was therefore only validated for information seeking using inquiry.

FIGURE 1

**Inquiry as Function of Mismatches and Self-Efficacy**

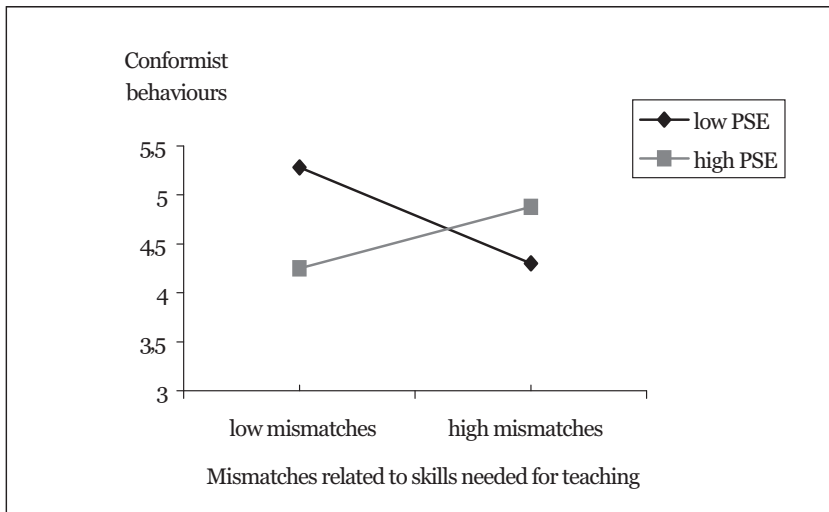


Hypothesis H3 predicts that “when faced with negative mismatches in required skills (questioning their self image), subjects with a high PSE display more innovative behaviours and less conformist behaviours than do subjects with a low PSE.” Though the results do not indicate that the interaction between perceived mismatches in required skills and PSE had

a statistically meaningful effect on integration behaviours ( $F(3,43) = 2.31$ ;  $p > .05$ ), they do show that there was such an effect in terms of conformist behaviours. Figure 2 shows that when negative mismatches in required skills were perceived, subjects with a high PSE were less inclined to conform to the institution's norms and values than were subjects with a low PSE ( $F(3,44) = 8.09$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Hypothesis H3 was thus validated for conformist behaviours.

FIGURE 2

### Conformist Behaviours as Function of Mismatches and Self-Efficacy



The results for hypotheses H4 and H5, which concern the moderating role played by PSE on the effects of perceived mismatches in work characteristics on integration behaviours, are shown below.

Hypothesis H4 predicts that “when faced with negative mismatches in work characteristics, subjects with a high PSE display less information seeking through direct inquiry and less information seeking through monitoring than do subjects with a low PSE.” Hypothesis H4 was validated for both types of information seeking, inquiry and monitoring, through two statistically meaningful interaction effects. The first effect (see figure 3) shows that when negative mismatches in work characteristics were perceived, subjects with a high PSE made fewer inquiries for information from other people than did subjects with a low PSE ( $F(3,33) = 5.15$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Similarly, the second (see figure 4) indicates that when negative mismatches were perceived in work characteristics, subjects with a high PSE

displayed less information seeking through monitoring than did subjects with a low PSE ( $F(3.36) = 4.6; p < .05$ ).

FIGURE 3  
Inquiry as Function of Mismatches and Self-Efficacy

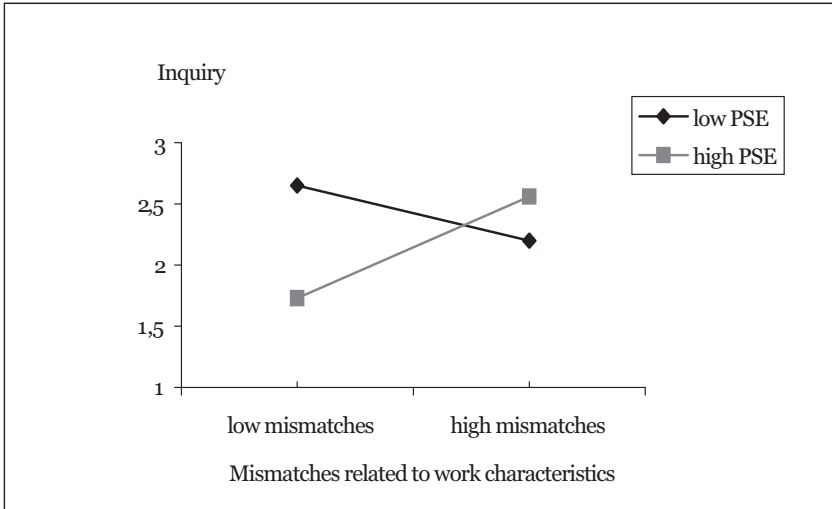
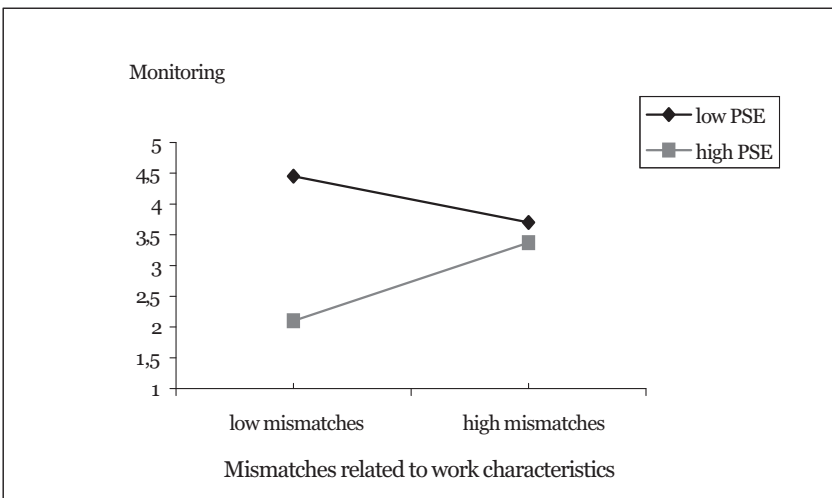


FIGURE 4  
Monitoring as Function of Mismatches and Self-Efficacy



Hypothesis H5 states that “when faced with negative mismatches in work characteristics, subjects with a high PSE display more innovative behaviour and less conformist behaviour than do subjects with a low PSE.” The testing of this hypothesis showed that neither the effect of the interaction between perceived mismatches in work characteristics and PSE on integration behaviour ( $F(3,36) = .57; p > .05$ ), nor the effect of the interaction between perceived mismatches in work characteristics and PSE on conformist behaviour ( $F(3,36) = 2.05; p > .05$ ) yielded any statistically meaningful result. Hypothesis H5 was thus not validated.

## ***DISCUSSION***

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This study makes two main contributions: the first concerns the conditions of PSE efficiency, which is generally approached in terms of the degree of generalization/specificity; the other concerns the variability of PSE effects, which is generally approached in terms of positive or negative effects.

### ***Exchanges between Areas of Life and PSE Efficiency***

The first and most important contribution in our view is theoretical. It concerns the validation of the hypothesis that an optimal degree of exchanges between areas of life must be achieved if PSE is to be efficient in regulating a transition such as organizational entry. Accordingly, a moderating PSE role was only observed in subjects with a moderate degree of exchanges between areas of life. The results presented here confirm those of a previous article (Almudever *et al.*, 2006). For the subjects of this latter study, we showed that a high PSE mitigated the negative effects of perceived mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions on occupational satisfaction and psychological well-being only for those with a moderate degree of exchange. The same holds true for the effects of perceived mismatches on the subjects' integration behaviour in the present study. These behaviours were particular in that they directly involved, in risky transition situations, relationships with others: information seeking through inquiry (versus monitoring) and innovative behaviours (versus conformist behaviours). It was observed that it was only in subjects with a moderate degree of exchanges between areas of life that PSE moderated certain effects of the perceived mismatches on integration behaviour (and on the implied relational commitment/withdrawal). In other words, this confirms our theory of behaviours intersignification, which underpins the model of multiple socialization that our team is developing: phenomena observed in a particular area of life—here the impact of PSE on variables from the occupational sphere—cannot be explained independently of the

exchanges that a subject has between this area of life and other spheres of activity.

***Variability in PSE Effects when Confronted with a “Reality Shock”***

Another contribution of this study would seem to be the interest in differentiating between various types of mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions. When joining a work organization, can we speak of “reality shock” or “surprise” in a general or one-dimensional fashion? Can we speak of the shock of confronting reality, or the surprise linked to discovering a new organizational context? As previously stated, most studies of the impact of perceived mismatches between expectations and actual work conditions on the integration behaviour of newcomers have focused on one kind of mismatch: the perceived mismatches relating to work characteristics. By introducing another type of mismatch related to the mastery of the required occupational skills, we wanted to raise the issue of the significance of a given mismatch in order to interpret its effects. Above and beyond the intensity or direction of mismatches (i.e., positive or negative), it seems important to be aware of how subjects represent mismatches in terms of what is at stake. What is at the heart of one’s perception of dissonance between expectations and reality? Is it one’s representation of one’s own future in an organization and the desire to become involved? Is it one’s self-representation through work and the desire to preserve and develop this representation? Depending on the activity spheres involved, the mismatches between expectations and reality had different meanings. And it is this difference in meaning for the subject, more than a positive or negative effect of PSE itself, that we wanted to refer to by noting that PSE sometimes had contrasting effects. The results from inquiry-oriented information seeking were particularly telling. When a subject perceived mismatches in required skills, a high PSE and a moderate degree of exchanges between areas of life was associated with more intense information seeking through inquiry; the opposite, however, was observed for mismatches in work characteristics. In the first case, there was very likely a real risk of “losing face”; in this case, a high PSE mitigated the temptation of a wise relational withdrawal and gave the subject enough confidence not to “run away” from people. This result was supported by the fact that, in the same case, a high PSE was associated with less of an “overcautious” withdrawal in terms of conforming to official values and documents. In the second case, a high PSE led the subject away from relational commitment by making him believe that he had sufficient internal resources to tackle his work dissatisfaction alone. Thus, since subjects attribute different values to their PSE according to the type of situation at hand, PSE can have totally

contrasting effects without our being able to determine its “positive” or “negative” effect *a priori*.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The limitations of this study, which open up other avenues for future research, stem mainly from the absence of significant results concerning the impact of PSE on innovative behaviours. This variable, which is essential when studying the process of active socialization, did not appear to be sensitive to any type of perceived mismatches (in any of the three sub-groups), or to any of the interaction effects between perceived mismatches and PSE proposed in our hypotheses. In the sub-group of subjects with a moderate degree of exchanges between areas of life, only one direct relationship was observed between PSE and innovative behaviour. This is a counter intuitive result since a high PSE was associated with less intense innovative behaviour.

This absence of significant results from the proposed hypotheses should encourage us to strengthen, at the theoretical level, the modelling of innovative behaviours and, at the methodological level, their operationalization. Our work suggests a possible research avenue. Unlike the other dependent variables of the study—for which significant results were obtained—the way in which “innovative behaviour” was discerned did not indicate whether this behaviour implied direct relationships with others or not. We think the absence of stated results may be due to this lack of discrimination. From now on, it would thus be useful to enhance our measurement scale for innovative behaviour by distinguishing between two dimensions: innovative behaviour brought into play by the subject by involving others (other-centered innovative behaviour), and innovative behaviour arising from a personal initiative to implement a change alone in one’s work (self-centered innovative behaviour). We believe such a clarification would provide a more than appropriate research avenue given the current interest in extra-role behaviour (Morrison and Phelps, 1999).

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## **RÉSUMÉ**

### **Système des activités, sentiment d'efficacité personnelle et conduites d'insertion des nouveaux recrutés**

La recherche présentée s'inscrit dans les débats actuels relatifs aux effets du sentiment d'efficacité personnelle (SEP). Ces débats portent, d'une part, sur le niveau de généralité auquel il convient de mesurer le SEP (voir, par ex., Pinguet, Juang et Silbereisen, 2003) pour examiner ses effets (sentiment général d'auto-efficacité ou sentiments d'efficacité personnelle spécifiques), d'autre part, sur l'éventualité d'effets négatifs du SEP (Vancouver, Thompson et Williams, 2001; Vancouver *et al.*, 2002 ; Bandura et Locke, 2003 ; Vancouver et Kendall, 2006).

À partir d'une recherche centrée sur la problématique de l'insertion des nouveaux recrutés dans les organisations de travail, il s'agit de montrer comment la référence au modèle d'une socialisation plurielle et active (Baubion-Broye et Hajjar, 1998 ; Almudever, Croity-Belz et Hajjar, 1999 ; le Blanc, Dupuy et Rossi, 2001), qui prend en compte les relations que les sujets instaurent entre leurs différentes sphères d'activités et s'appuie sur une approche systémique, permet de prendre position dans ces débats. Visant à étudier le rôle du SEP dans la régulation des effets des décalages perçus entre les attentes et la réalité professionnelles sur les conduites d'insertion des nouveaux entrants, la recherche met à l'épreuve des faits deux hypothèses générales.

La première concerne *les conditions d'efficience du SEP* : elle pose que l'efficience du SEP dans la régulation des effets des décalages entre attentes et réalité professionnelles dépend du niveau d'échanges que les sujets instaurent entre leurs domaines de vie. Considérant que le système des activités des sujets peut être plus ou moins cloisonné selon que les sujets activent ces échanges ou, à l'inverse, les inhibent en cherchant à limiter l'interdépendance des différentes sphères, on postule que *c'est un degré médian d'échanges entre les domaines de vie qui constitue la condition la plus favorable à l'efficience du SEP général dans la régulation des effets des décalages sur les conduites d'insertion du sujet.*

La seconde concerne *l'orientation des effets du SEP* : elle pose que *les effets du SEP sur la relation entre décalages et conduites d'insertion des sujets varient en fonction de la nature des décalages envisagés*, en raison des enjeux différents dont ils peuvent être porteurs pour les sujets.

L'étude a été réalisée auprès de 157 professeurs des écoles de l'Académie de Toulouse (France), venant d'intégrer leur premier poste. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire portant sur : les

conduites d'insertion des sujets (conduites de recherche d'information ; conduites d'innovation et de conformité) ; les décalages entre attentes et réalité professionnelles (décalages relatifs aux caractéristiques du travail et décalages relatifs aux compétences requises) ; le degré d'échanges entre domaines de vie (trois sous-groupes ont été constitués : degré d'échanges faible, fort, médian) et le sentiment général d'efficacité personnelle (mesuré à l'aide de l'échelle de Sherer *et al.*, 1982).

Les résultats montrent que :

- le rôle modérateur du SEP au niveau des effets des décalages perçus sur les conduites d'insertion des sujets ne s'exerce que pour les sujets présentant un degré médian d'échanges entre leurs domaines de vie ;
- face aux décalages relatifs aux compétences requises (et mettant en question l'image de soi), un SEP élevé favorise la recherche d'information par demande directe et réduit le recours à des conduites de conformité ;
- face aux décalages relatifs aux caractéristiques du travail (et mettant en question la représentation de la situation de travail), un SEP élevé inhibe les conduites de recherche d'information par demande directe et par observation.

Aucun résultat significatif n'a pu, par contre, être établi à propos des conduites d'innovation.

À travers ces résultats, le modèle théorique d'une socialisation plurielle voit ici conforté le postulat de l'intersignification des conduites qui le fonde : des phénomènes observés dans un domaine de vie particulier – ici l'impact du SEP sur des variables relatives à *la sphère professionnelle* – ne peuvent être expliqués indépendamment des relations que le sujet instaure entre ce domaine de vie et ses autres sphères d'activités. Par ailleurs est confirmé l'intérêt qu'il y a à distinguer différents types de décalages. Selon les dimensions sur lesquelles ils portent, les décalages entre attentes et réalité sont signifiés différemment. C'est à cette différence de sens – pour le sujet – plus qu'à une positivité/négativité du SEP – qu'il nous semble devoir référer l'observation d'effets *parfois inverses* de ce même SEP. L'absence de résultat significatif portant sur les conduites d'innovation incite à faire des propositions pour approfondir au plan théorique, la modélisation et, au plan méthodologique, l'opérationnalisation, de ces conduites d'innovation.