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Emigrating to improve one's living conditions in a society seen positively, rooted in the will to escape from difficult economic or political constraints. But Canada and Quebec, through the media, consular agencies or delegations, convey in foreign countries the image of societies with high living standards, flourishing economic activities, respectful of their citizens, open to immigration, not inclined to racism and valuing cultural diversity with a multicultural or intercultural policy, encouraging cultural diversity by maintaining original identities. This description seems to convey that the insertion of new immigrant¹ is easy, creating special expectations for these immigrants (Lenoir-Achdjian, 2006). However, several researchers point out the disparity between the official image and reality. Actually, as far as immigrant economic insertion is concerned, professional exclusion is a very important challenge for their integration in Quebec's society. In Quebec, where almost 45,000 persons immigrate each year, the permanent immigrants are more and more educated as a result of the stricter selection performed in their country of origin. While in 2001, 56.2 % of immigrants older than 15 had 14 years or more years of education, compared to 64.3 % in 2005 (MICC, 2006). Studies performed before September 11, 2001 (Germain, 2001; Renaud et al., 2001) showed a persistent unemployment rate for several groups of immigrants, including Maghrebians. The 2001 census confirmed this trend, and during the investigation, the rate of unemployment for Occidental Arabs and Asians (22%) living on the island of Montreal exceeded the rate for Blacks (18.4%) and Latino-Americans (15.7%). At the same time, the new immigrants had an unemployment rate of 21.9 % in Quebec, 22.2 % in the

Metropolitan census area (CMA) and 22.9 % in the Urban Community of Montreal (2006). At that time, Morocco was ranked tenth among the main countries of birth of new immigrants in Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2001). Persons born in North Africa² now make up 18.4% of the immigrants admitted in Quebec, and that region is now the main country of birth for immigration (MICC, 2006). Nevertheless, despite the fact that immigrants are selected by Immigration Quebec on the basis in particular of their French language proficiency and their potential employability, Maghrebians jobs searchers make up a large part of the clientele receiving employment assistance. While their poor knowledge of English partially explains their difficulties, the negative perception of Islam since September 2001 probably contributes to prevent these job employment searchers from accessing the labour market. This hypothesis is supported in particular by the studies of Germain (2005), Helly (2004, 2006) and Vatz Laaroussi (2002). Because of their specific problematic (immigrants potentially discriminated against on the labour market), this article is specifically interested in labour market measures offered by the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities and Emploi-Québec, via the local employment centres, Carrefours jeunesse-emploi and authorized community agencies³. We will address the expectations articulated by these job searchers concerning their economic insertion, the definition of the difficulties leading them to require help from job assistance agencies and their opinion concerning the assistance and how their needs and expectations were received. We will also compare the definition of disincentives to employment that the persons who work for these agencies expressed compared with the opinion of the Maghrebian job searchers that we met.

¹ The expression “New immigrant” is derived from the Statistics Canada’s definition, which qualifies the persons who immigrated to Canada in the last five years or less (Statistics Canada, 2003).

² This area covers the Canary Islands, the Maghreb, Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Western Sahara, Egypt, Sudan, and the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Mellila.

³ It explains the results obtained during an investigation performed in 2004 and 2005 concerning *Les effets des mesures d’aide à l’emploi auprès d’une clientèle d’origine Maghrebienne*. This research received the financial assistance of the CRSH. Fifteen employment assistance agents and 22 job searchers born in the Maghreb (12 from Morocco and from Algeria) were met individually in Montreal (25, including 12 employment assistance agents and 17 job searchers) or in Sherbrooke (12, including 7 employment assistance agents and 5 job searchers).

Job searcher service organisation

Since April 1, 1998, Emploi-Québec is the organisation responsible for the national, regional and local implementation and management of the measures and services of the ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MESS) in the labour and employment sectors (ministre d'État au travail et à l'Emploi, 1999). It is also responsible for the performance of public employment services (*Ibid.*). To execute its mandate, Emploi-Québec has developed local Employment centres (CLEs) which offer various activities, actions and services, and have the responsibility of matching the resources and of managing the available budget for their territory concerning the delivery of employment services (ministre d'État au Travail et à l'Emploi, 1999). Emploi-Québec also uses various external resources to perform fixed time service agreement contracts: for-profit companies or persons in the private sector, quasi-public entities or community agencies for assistance to the labour force. They include the Carrefours jeunesse-emploi [CJE], employment insertion companies and employment research clubs, generally address a specific clientele (youth, handicapped persons, woman, immigrants, etc.), experiencing specific or multiple problems (immigration, single parenting, etc.) and/or dealing with various difficulties (discrimination, violence, drug dependence, etc.). The interventions generally apply two types of activities, to prepare for employment and to offer employment assistance services (*Ibid.*). Agreement with the values of Emploi-Québec (autonomy and social integration through work), integration in the labour market, and ideally employment retention, is the main objective of the intervention, as Pierre⁴, an intervenor in a Montreal CLE, comments:

- The first mandate of Emploi-Québec is job integration. Therefore my objective when working with the clients is finding the shortest path to get on the labour market?

For its part, the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, responsible for the selection of the immigrants in foreign countries and for their integration in Quebec concerning the Province's economic and demographic needs, and enters into agreements with the community agencies (non governmental and non-profit making) committed to providing various integration services (such a offering information about Quebec, French courses, etc.) to help them prepare for the socio-economic reality in Quebec.

The search of Maghrebian job seekers for the service at their disposal

Almost all the Maghrebians come with the hope of improving their socio-economic situation, the intervenors comment, and start looking for a job during their first days in Quebec. Usually, these job seekers begin their search using the activity provided by the MICC, during a week of “integration”, where the new immigrants acquire basic knowledge of the Quebec society (history, culture, labour market, presence of professional orders, etc.). Several agencies, including the CLEs, consider this as an essential condition to offer their services. The job searchers are referred to the Local Centre of Employment (CLE) serving the sector or to an insertion community agency mandated by Emploi-Québec or by the CLE. The agency allows reading documents concerning employment research, finding the education or professional information and accessing a computer to prepare a *resume*, or Internet searches related to employment or education, but where they also will have an information meeting with an intervenor who will support them in identifying their needs (tools to develop, information to be acquired on the labour market, updating of the initial education, etc.). After a waiting period of a few days to a few weeks, depending on the demand and available resources, the job searchers who so wish, accede to more concrete support. An intervenor will assist them during individual meeting, to find for example the best path to acquire the useful competencies related to the initial education, and eventually to make a professional reorientation by using their acquired knowledge, to avoid the eventual obstacles to their job insertion search. Auxiliary formations, of two to several weeks, may be combined to these meetings, during which the job searchers will learn with groups to prepare their *resume*, to write a letter of presentation, to be interviewed and to learn the various useful sources of employment research in Quebec. They will also learn about the Quebec work culture, the job search methods efficient in Quebec, the principle of equivalence, the labour and social standards prevalent in Quebec, including men-women relationships. Some will also benefit from adaptation of their technical knowledge (usual software, fiscal system, usual tools, etc.) through an updated education. Others, recruited from criteria defined by Emploi-Québec, may benefit from job insertion programs (such as a stage in a company for example).

⁴ The first names of the respondents were modified to preserve their anonymity.

The difficult reality of the new Maghrebian immigrants

For all job searchers questioned, migration to Quebec concerns a professional and familial project. In this context, choosing Quebec is explained by their unanimous desire to realize the American dream in French. Such a dream, they comment, was developed in foreign countries, including on the basis of educations performed, through the media, consular agencies or intermediaries:

- Some people begin their immigration project. They sell their cars, their house, everything they own, and everything that they accumulated for years, to come here. But they will get a big shock, because Quebec was presented differently when they were in Morocco. These families will get a big shock. Abdelwahad, a Montrealer born in Algeria.

For their part, the intervenors that we have met, as for those interviewed by Germain (2005), unanimously affirm that the differences that they see between the immigrant selection criteria and the needs of the labour market is the first explanation of the difficulties encountered, by the Maghrebians in particular. The Maghrebians, unlike several other newly arrived groups, with made up of less or more educated persons, are generally overeducated (master's degree or doctorate) considered by the intervenors they meet as being inappropriate for the local needs expressed by the employers that they deal with; these employers are in fact looking for good technicians or even labourers. Another problem, the specialties related to these diplomas (engineering, administration, chemistry, pharmacy, medicine, veterinary sciences, etc.) are exactly those that are regulated by the professional orders⁵. The great majority, forced to earn a living quickly, and considering the cost and the efforts to succeed in the examination imposed by the professional order to which they are subjected (with no assurance that the accreditation thus obtained guarantees access to a position related to the diploma obtained), would prefer, as the intervenors indicate, to invest their energies in the search for a job... for which they will assuredly be overqualified. They also feel that the under valuation of the diplomas, competencies and work experiences acquired in foreign countries is a second major obstacle. There is also another barrier, the mistrust of the employers for the education received in foreign countries (because they are considered as unadapted to the realities of the local market) and the manners of doing things,

⁵ That was the case for 11 of the 16 job searchers with university diplomas that we met.

of consider and organize work different than in Quebec. The mistrust is especially present in the common requirement of a Canadian work experience. Finally, as specifically concerns the Maghrebians, the events of September 11, 2001 have considerably modified the game. The employers seem less open to hiring, either to avoid upsetting their clients, to avoid the problems posed by reasonable accommodations, or to diminish their insurance premiums:

- *Since 2001, the insurance companies have had to pay a lot of money. In certain sector of employment, I am told that the insurance companies will consider this as a problem [The Arabs]. They will charge more money because they are at risk. Is there a way we can counter this perception? We cannot even say that it is racism, although...* H  l  ne, intervenor in a Montreal CLE.

Thus, the job insertion itinerary appears extremely perilous for the Maghrebian job searchers. Most job searchers said that their job research experience (for a duration of 2 to 4 months) was proven to be very disappointing. 18 succeeded in getting at least one interview with a potential employer, but many did not go past the first selection:

- *It is always the same question: "Do you speak and write perfect English?" They know that only the Montrealers do that, they know that we come from Francophone countries. I can't understand that.* Karim, a Montrealer born in Algeria.

Only 11 of our 22 respondents had work experience in. For 7 of them, this experience resulted in a few days of employment (4) after a telephone call (2) or part time (2) or for an indeterminate period (1). Three of them had obtained a student job (not necessarily related to their studies), but the other 8 ones did not get a job related to their qualifications, or even with their education. All earned the minimum salary. Finally, 2 of the respondents chose to quit a job deemed incompatible with their professional identity, 2 more lost their job after the bankruptcy of their employer, and the other 7 had been fired. Also, almost all the Maghrebians we met were interpreting their quasi-permanent state as job searchers as proving the failure of their migratory project concerning their individual career plan. For those whose initial education is regulated in Quebec by a professional order, the existence of the professional orders is understood as a measure of protection used to reduce even more the possibilities for the new immigrants to get a job related to their initial education:

- *I sent and faxed resumes. I got no answers. Then I decided to change my strategy. I called [the companies], and they told me: "No, we want an experience in Quebec. Have you worked with companies in Quebec?" I answered: "Electricity is the same everywhere in the world." They said: "No, here there is Order." Then I started to discover things I didn't know about, that I need qualification cards to get work.* Amin, a Montrealer born in Algeria.

Many also strongly feel the negation of their professional identity:

- *I tried to accept something, to go work. But when you like something, it is difficult to forget. When I went to work as a machinist, I was crying in front of the machine. How can I change this? I spent nights studying; should I take my diplomas and throw them in the garbage?* Amin, Montrealer born in Morocco.

Many end up believing that there is an institutionalized system, by the Quebec and Canadian governments, allowing and even encouraging the employers and professional order to keep them in a status of *cheap labourer*:

- *I also felt that there was a form of discrimination. The immigrant accepts the dirty jobs. You accept that or you shut up.* Abdo, a Sherbrooker born in Algeria.

The intervenors recognized that a certain form of discrimination is practiced by the employers, but they explained that the difficulties encountered by the Maghrebians to insert in the job market explaining the lack of competence (misconception of the functioning of employment, regulations for the presentation of a *resume*, importance of developing a professional network, etc.) and their deficient knowledge (misconception of attitudes and behaviours deemed acceptable, little adaptability to compromise concerning religious practices, overestimation of their competencies) that would reduce their potential attraction for a future employer⁶.

The intervention strategies proposed

Before continuing, it is important to comment that our respondent intervenors are distributed within 3 distinct groups, according to their university education. These initial educations seem to influence their representation of their mission. The persons trained in assistance relationships (psychology, social work) give great importance to supporting the job searchers in their itinerary, with an ecosystemic approach (taking into account the various aspects of their life: familial, professional, social, etc.); others, educated in orientation, consider themselves as mediators between the labour market and the job searchers (to inform) or the employers (to raise awareness). Still others, educated in public administration consider themselves as government intervenors (they manage the programs, the actions). These intervenors are also very different as concerns their personal or professional itinerary with foreigners. Some are themselves immigrants (3 persons) and they insist on the importance of *accompanying* the immigrant persons in their approach and are

⁶ The intervenors questioned by Germain (2004) or by Emploi-Québec (2006) made similar comments.

especially sensitive to the discrimination experienced by the immigrants. Those who experienced life in a foreign country, usually for work purposes (4 persons) try to morally *support* their clients, while simultaneously performing employer awareness work. Finally, the intervenors with no life experience in a foreign country, wish on their part to tool their clientele by *educating* them.

However, despite these perceptions, different from their work, several similarities appear. On the one hand, they have a common mandate, finding employment for their clientele. On the other hand, despite the fact that their respective mandate diverges somewhat, depending on their employer (MICC, Emploi-Québec, quasi-public or community agencies), we also find that the discourse of the job assistance intervenors that we met, concerning the job insertion problems encountered by the Maghrebians, and the strategies and actions chosen to support them in their approach, is similar from one organisation to another. Thus they all explain their intervention philosophy on the principle of autonomy. They also have the mission of assisting the job searchers in developing a proactive approach (assuming responsibility) in their job search. The perception that these intervenors have of their work also influences automatically the perception they have of their clientele and of the difficulties that it encounters. Thus the Maghrebian clientele is seen by many of the intervenors as being particularly difficult, because of its important expectations toward the intervention work and as concerns the role of Canada in their social and economic intervention process (assuming responsibility, quick job insertion, getting a job consistent with their competencies, etc.):

- I think they are expecting that we assume responsibility. Sometimes, they come from countries where they are mothered. For example countries like the Maghreb, where the State is omnipresent. They know that here it is not the same because it is America, but they still expect to get something... They expect the State to give them courses, provide stages, and coach them, many things... I don't know how to say it... They have more expectation; this is easy to see... Luc, intervenor at the MICC.

The many difficulties that hamper the implementation of the job insertion process generate frustration, depression and discouragement. The reaction to this problem often is to stop the search for a job and return to their studies. The objective, the Maghrebian job searchers indicate, is either to find new motivation for the migratory project, by recovering the social status lost because of the absence of a Canadian diploma, or to assume

responsibility through professional reorientation to insert the labour market by other means that look more promising. However, persuaded that returning to studies only postpones the employment insertion problem, since the main problem of these job searchers is the absence of a Canadian experience, and that the new debts thus created will increase the distress of their client, certain intervenors, too many of them, according to the our Maghrebians respondents, refuse to give the green light to the execution of this project. On the contrary, to counter the decision to stop job searching, the intervenors tend to tell their clientele on the fact that migration is the result of a conscious choice and has consequences that they must assume; in particular, having to reinsert on a new job market for which the initial education may be inadequate. Consequently, they point out, this process can be long and induce a more or less important, but temporary, exclusion⁷. They also add that, far from specifically seeking immigrant job searchers, the lack of employment in certain areas also affects the natives, who also must wait several years before getting a job matching their competencies. Finally, these intervenors say that access to a job depends mostly on the attitude of the persons concerned and their aptitudes to search for a job (knowledge of the market, ability to make the appropriate approaches, to sell themselves during an interview, etc.) and that the new immigrants, like the young Quebeckers, have some learning to do. They thus agree, without unintentionally, with the thesis of the vertical mosaic that claims that the various modes of assimilation to the host society depend on the status of the immigrant (immigrant, refugee, assisted parent), on the age at immigration, on knowledge of the official languages and on the level of schooling (Reitz, 2001). However, the 90s having had an almost zero growth of full time jobs, the new immigrants would have been the first to be affected, and they would have been concerned by the requirement increase of the level of schooling of the natives with which they are now competing. As Fontan (1996) explains, if the mobility, precarity and exclusion come about without proper evaluation of the characteristics of the populations wishing to enter the job market, the growth of structural unemployment and underemployment adversely affects the individuals without recognized work experience, without the support of a social network and whose school education is inadequate or

⁷ On this subject, we can only see an important difference in perception of the exclusion vehicled by the Maghrebians wsho estimate that it stays acceptable only if it is done in their field of competencies.

undervalued. Consequently, certain categories of workers, like the new immigrants and the members of visible minorities are particularly vulnerable:

- *For the immigrants, what I see is really a demand for knowledge of the job market. They wonder why they are not called, but it is the same thing for the Quebeckers... Young persons go to the look at the job market and don't find anything. What is different relates to the confidence to contact the employers... The older Quebeckers don't consider the employers in the same manner.* Marie, intervenor in a CJE in Sherbrooke.

This awareness of autonomy (non existent for Maghrebian job searchers, for cultural reasons), of migration (as a decision to be assumed⁸) and of the immigrant job searchers (similar in their job search strategy to young persons entering the job market), has an influence on intervention modes earmarked for the newly arrived immigrants in Quebec. Two schools of thought emerge: some favour job insertion, and others professional insertion. These various perceptions result in different approaches: individual or group. But the meaning given to individual intervention largely depends on the meaning given to the notion of autonomy: take charge of yourself (be autonomous) or recuperate control of your life (or develop *empowerment*).

Employment insertion or professional insertion?

In summary, job insertion is built on access to jobs, despite the eventual lack of qualifications or absence of conformity between the job searcher's professional field and the job offered. The intervenors who prefer this approach say that they respect the wishes of their clientele and the immediate need to get a job, for financial reasons. They justify this approach by insisting on the strategic aspects of the first job for the professional long-term insertion of the immigrant. In fact, the intervenors who use a job insertion viewpoint consider the first job as a first work experience in a long-term action and not as an end in itself. They are trying to gain the confidence of a specific Quebec employer in particular. They add that, aside from the fact that the first job gives added value to their *resume*, it allows the new immigrant to get self confidence (he can work in Quebec) and to learn the Quebec culture while keeping his self-confidence by not being on welfare:

⁸ To this idea the questioned Maghrebians react strongly by saying that this decision was taken on the basis of partial and partial information.

- *I always tell them: "It is not because you accept a job below your competencies that you will keep this job. It must be considered as a period of transition and learning in the Quebec work environment. It will be easier to find work in your field of expertise because the employers will have confidence you if you have proven yourself."* Julie, intervenor in a CLE in Sherbrooke.

Professional insertion, according to the intervenors who use it, favour an insertion on the job market which respects the professional field of competencies of the job searcher and which should not have an important lack of qualifications at least in the long term. The respect of the professional project of the new immigrant is justified by the wish to avoid potential risks to his mental health of the adverse effects of the exclusion (depression, loss of self esteem, anger, etc.) but global integration (recognition of their social and economic contribution to Quebec) is a source of profit for society in general:

- *I find that you do a lot of short-term work. We have no vision of our clients' problems in the short or long term. Integration of an immigrant shouldn't be done like that. If an immigrant wishes to be in a winning situation, I believe he should concentrate on what he has already acquired and not to work at anything available. This person will not be happy doing his work, he will not feel fulfilled.* Lysanne, intervenor in a Montreal CLE.

Individual or group intervention?

The difference in the definition of insertion in the labour market (be active and choose any job, be patient in finding a job relating to his abilities) induces another important difference, between intervention with an individual or group approach. Nevertheless, if the philosophy of the intervenor can help to selection one approach in particular, it is the agency that, depending on its mandate, dictates the priority given to one of the two options.

The individual intervention rests upon the idea that each job searcher has an education, an appropriate professional itinerary and objectives. As a result, the individual intervention seeks to customize the support by taking into account each person's education. Several intervenors have insisted on the importance of using a complete approach with the job searchers (not limited to their needs concerning the actions to be performed but to take into account the migratory and professional itinerary and their life project). However, it seems that this approach is limited, in the case of immigrant job searchers generally, and for the Maghrebians in particular, by the difficulty of the intervenors to establish a relation of trust. It seems that the job searchers, wishing to increase their chances of obtaining support

(education, stage, etc.) have the tendency to hide certain information that could really help them:

- *We have difficulty with the Maghrebians, but also with other cultures, in establishing a relationship of trust. I sometimes tell the Maghrebians: "I can help you more when you are able to give me pertinent and useful information. But when someone tells me that he lacks knowledge and cannot tell me what he lacks, I cannot send him to get an education."* Pierre, assistance employment intervenor in Montreal, in a CLE.

Aside from the objective of developing a certain competency in job searching, group intervention also seeks to allow job searchers to be in contact with the Quebec reality, to get out of the isolation by using meetings with other job searchers sharing the same reality, to keep their motivation in searching jobs through a routine and the spill-over impact of the peers. It is this aspect, according to the intervenors, that gives power to the approach. However, several persons say that despite the heterogeneity of the groups, the Maghrebians tend to favour contacts with other immigrants instead of with the Quebecers:

- *They need to integrate in our society. They don't have many Quebec friends. They stay in community with other cultures. I can see this during the education. It's surprising that people go to other cultures and have difficulties with the Quebecers.* Sophie, intervenor in a community agency in Sherbrooke.

The intervenor who favours a vision of job insertion uses the group to transmit technical knowledge to develop the autonomy of his clientele in the search for a job. This approach rests on understanding a labour market insertion process anchored in neo-liberalism and functionalism. By correctly tooling the job seeker, we contribute not only in making it functional on the labour market, but also we send him the following message: "Since you now have all the tools needed to find a job, your success is in your hands." This is an individualizing strategy. If it is applied as is, there is great risk of isolating the person searching for a job by eliminating the macro-sociological conditions that establish the job market, such as systemic discrimination, and imposing barriers decreasing his insertion possibilities. Far from releasing the immigrant job searcher of his responsibilities, we must nevertheless question the real power he has to eliminate these barriers.

The group intervention rests upon the idea of the similarity of the problems of the clientele searching for a job, whether they are immigrants or not. This is why, if certain educations are specifically aimed at the immigrant clientele, several do not need that the group be professionally homogenous. Nevertheless the great heterogeneity of the groups of

clients is a source of great frustration for the Maghrebians that we met. This confirms for these job searchers the fact that they are respected professionally, but also induces a feeling of being abandoned:

- *Well, I've had the education. But to come with people with very different profiles, and make a job search for factory jobs at the minimum salary, is not very bright. They have provided education for many people, with different profiles. They made us visit production factories, everyone. The message I get is: "I want you to work as a labourer."* Rachad, from Sherbrooke, born in Morocco.

The intervenor who uses a professional insertion approach favours a more personalized intervention while adding group sessions for the acquisition of technical knowledge. This intervenor, with the goal of inserting the person in its professional field, helps his client to make a useful network in its domain and instructs him of his rights and the manner to defend them, even to become a mediator/negotiator with the potential employers. This approach is based on understanding the job market insertion related to the interaction and sociocritical process, which aims to deconstruct the perceptions and prejudices and to work on the links and structures. The objective is to address the job search problems as an unequal relationship of the society with its immigrants. This fact is rarely mentioned, but some studies (from Rudder et al., 2001; Jounin, 2003) have shown that in France we can observe an ethnicisation of the socioprofessional relationships that in results in restriction of the employment possibilities, but also by the imposition of barriers to promotion. We can only suppose that in Quebec, the majority-minority relationship also has an important impact on the perception of the employers, most of them being "Québécois de souche", of the job searchers issued from immigration. More than tooling the persons to help them become more efficient in the job search, it is important to do some work with the other actors, in particular the employers.

Some tension results from the intervention related to the conception of autonomy, a concept at the heart of intervention work. Most of the intervenors we met support their intervention on the principle of individual responsibility, which, according to them, needs from the job searchers to learn how to take charge and prepare an educative project; others, in the minority, favour an intervention based on the principle of *empowerment* for their clients, and which, by insisting on their capacity for action places the clients at the centre of the reflection about their professional future and the approaches to make. This mode makes

the intervenor an accompanier and not an educator. What is important with this approach is not so much the knowledge that it is more pertinent to intervene with a group or an individual, but more the knowledge and purpose of the type of coaching to implement: job insertion or professional insertion. This seems evident when we examine the kinds of individual interventions from one organisation to another. If the CLEs and some employment insertion organisations consider this as the fact of *guiding* the job searcher in his various actions, by counselling him, for example, on the means learn and the modalities of communication to entice him to act alone, but give effect to the intervention by individual *coaching*, for example by searching with the client, as relates to his professional project, the jobs that could be good for him, to help him break the barriers of discrimination and to use the forces developed during the migratory process (resourcefulness, motivation, bilingualism, etc.) as levers in the coaching for his socioprofessional insertion (Rachedi et Vatz Laaroussi, 2004). Nevertheless this approach is exceptional and the intervenors who use it say their colleagues consider them:

- I gave a lot of importance to autonomy, to individual visits. When the person comes to see us, I do everything with him or her. I refer people everywhere, to the universities, the high schools. I call all the employers according to the clients' needs. I'm often accused, rightly or wrongly, and I won't answer this question, of helping people too much, and of not helping them in developing their autonomy. But I have people working all over [this city] today.
Élise, intervenor in a quasi-public agency in Sherbrooke.

What the Maghrebians think about the intervention strategies

The persons we met expressed a very positive general perception of the employment intervention despite not getting a job: development of self confidence, a better self esteem, knowledge of Quebec, getting out of their isolation, etc. are some of the recognized strong points of this intervention. Also, the persons we queried blame the companies (qualified as not being very positive in hiring new immigrants) more than the intervenors (competent but with limited resources), but they are often critical of the CLEs. Because of the problems they face as soon as their search for a job starts, their lack of professional experience on the local labour market preventing their insertion on the market, they expect a lot from their stages in companies. However, because they depend on agreements established with the entrepreneurs, they are limited in numbers. This constraint forces Emploi-Québec to

establish selection criteria that strongly restrain the access to what is considered as an open door to job access.

The complaints also concern the very long delays (several months in Montreal sometimes) before they get real support, the multiplicity of the measures offered, which disperse the energies in actions considered as useless because they are constantly repeated from one agency to the other (for example, the constant rewriting of their *resume*), the education measures designed to facilitate job insertion, but which rarely gives them access to a job (visits of companies, “5 to 7” with potential employers, employment shows), group intervention that does not contribute to the construction of a useful professional network. In fact, because of the migratory currents prevalent during a given period, the job searchers automatically meet other job searchers born in the same countries, sometimes from the same region, even of the same city, which mainly contribute, they say, to enlarge their “ethnic” network. This kind of network favours the strengthening of strong links, but is not very useful for research and especially for getting a future job. The Maghrebian job searchers we met in Sherbrooke and Montreal regret the intervenors’ lack of interaction with the companies, which directly penalizes them in the development of their own professional network. On the other hand, the respondents recognize the real interest of some intervenors for their situation, especially those who try to respect their profile and accompany them in their job insertion.

Some consequences of the intervention on the Maghrebian clientele⁹

These results show an important lag between the proposed intervention and the expected or expressed needs of the Maghrebian clientele. This lag is explained by various elements, including the quasi-complete obliteration of what sets their clientele apart, to wit

⁹ Concerning the measure of job assistance, several authors consider that the definitions of the needs by the targeted clienteles, the intervenors and the public services are different (Chambon et al., 2001) and that they don’t take into account their stigmatizing effects, can increase the problems of the targeted clienteles (Ninacs, 1997; René et al., 1999). If they were to do, it would place the intervenors in a difficult dilemma. applying formal criteria and thus to become involuntary intervenors in the deterioration of the social conditions that they should improve, trying to fill their mandate by ignoring these criteria as much as possible and by applying their own theory of explanation of the insertion problems (Ninacs, 1997). Thus, certain researchers (Jenson, 2000; Vultur, 2005) insist upon the fact that the definition of the needs of the targeted clienteles, the intervenors and the public services are different because they apply to divergent

the migration and its related difficulties (loss of professional, familial and social network, poverty and insecurity, family burden and the various actions to perform to be accepted in the Quebec society [sickness insurance, driver's permit, social insurance number, etc.]). This fact appears evident with the insistence of almost all the intervenors on the apparent need to take in charge of this clientele, while our data indicate on the contrary the unease of Maghrebians to depend on the intervention. In fact, it seems that the approaches made by the Maghrebian clientele and their anticipated consequences are often negatively interpreted, rightly or wrongly, by the intervenors. Thus, based on their expert knowledge, the intervenors favour offering services elaborated from their own perception of the clientele's needs over those identified by the clientele itself. This lag between the discourse on the autonomy to favour and the paternalistic practices of some contribute to the emergence of very real dissatisfactions by the clients.

This paternalistic view is also accompanied by real misconceptions about the Maghreb, making them develop a miserabilistic representation of the society of origin of their clients (important economic crisis, unemployment and poverty, weak education, poor quality of higher education). This representation leads them to adopt a helper-helped communication that not only reinforces the stigmatization felt by the Maghrebian clientele that they are not economically contributing to their new society but also contradicts its representation concerning the right to work acquired on the basis of their selection as immigrants. In fact, this paternalistic and miserabilistic approach produces an association between the Maghrebians and young natives: the two clienteles have a poor knowledge of the way the local job market works; both have no experience on Canadian soil and both forget to develop certain tools when they start their actions [*resume* and letter of presentation] and some abilities [interpersonal skills, autonomy, how to present themselves, etc.]. This childlike approach of the job insertion problematic for the Maghrebians is thus translated in particular by an intervention based on reducing their socio-economic expectations (often deemed too important, too ambitious), on an intervention that does not take into account their professional identity and their lack of a professional network, but which accepts their exclusion (on a temporary voluntary basis), on educations that sometimes forget their family

responsibilities (inadequate schedules, child care problems, etc.) or on a discourse that minimized their specific difficulties by comparing the situation of the Maghrebians to that of young natives, also having job insertion problems.

Thus, not only is the proposed intervention insufficient in great part, but is also contributes to increasing the discriminations experienced by this clientele. In fact, although the intervenors sometimes mention and even denounce the prejudices expressed by the potential employers¹⁰, they feel that when they do not have themselves a foreign migratory or life experience, they tend to evacuate this aspect of the question in their intervention and insist on the contrary of the personal characteristics of the clients (passivity, unadapted attitudes, poor experience of the Quebec job market and inappropriate education). This explains why these intervenors usually favour interventions by upgrading, better knowledge of the Quebec socio-economic society and the development of their “autonomy”. In this sense, because the intervention with the Maghrebian job searchers, when it is performed by intervenors insensitive to the migration experience, is supported upon negative categorisation of the clientele, on the invisibilisation of their professional competencies or its integration efforts and because it does not dispute the discrimination experienced by the clientele in its job insertion process, certainly and paradoxically constitutes one of the first obstacles to the job insertion market¹¹.

The path of integrated intervention

This article does not have the objective of criticizing the employment intervenors; however, we do question the conditions under which the intervention is made, the means used by the intervenors to act and their potential influence concerning the program of

and concrete situations of the clientele to evaluate the real scope of the employment insertion programs.

¹⁰ Their situation would then result in part from a discrimination report that excludes them and keeps them away from spaces bearing employment opportunities. Since September 2001, this report would be constructed, as Helly (2004, 2006) indicates, by an important mediatization of people born in Muslim countries, but also by an association in peoples’ minds of Islam with violence, terrorism, opinion radicalization. A recent survey, where certain elements are controverted, performed between September 2006 and January 2007, by the Léger Marketing firm, seems to confirm this hypothesis. Fifty percent of the 1,000 Quebecers questioned declared having an unfavourable prejudice against the Arabs, while only 36% had the same prejudice against the Jews and 27% against the Blacks.

¹¹ These result agree with those obtained in recent surveys performed by other researchers who examined the situation of the “disengaged” (René et al., 2001; Vultur, 2005). If the intervention values education, they all

services offered to the immigrant job searchers. On this subject, our data indicate that the intervenors employed in the CLEs, the CJE's and the community agencies have only very limited liberty (in terms of financial resources and services to offer, clientele to serve, or concerning the approaches to favour in the intervention) and that they have no power to modify the existing structures or to force the employers to hire their clients. Also, the employment intervention work, as all the intervention work is submitted to a profound modification, concerning their more and more heterogeneous clientele culturally, confessionally, professionally, etc., and concerning its financing which, despite the needs, is very insufficient, creating as a consequence problems of accessibility to services, personnel resources and duration of the intervention (the accent is placed on the short term and the absence of continuity). This transformation, which affects the overall intervention work, also affects the discourse of the intervenors depending on the subsidies of Emploi-Québec (whether for internal or external resources, for representatives of organisations located in Montreal or Sherbrooke) concerning the interpretation of the difficulties encountered by the Maghrebian clientele, the interventions implemented (for groups, favouring the short term), as well as the general powerlessness expressed by these intervenors not only to execute their mandate (insert the clientele on the job market), but also their mission (to help, support, inform, educate their clientele). However, despite these multiple constraints, we have witnessed a real will on the part of the intervenors we met to do things differently, to make a difference. Of course, the courses of action are limited by the organizational cultures. Nevertheless, since this will is considered by the Maghrebian job searchers, it contributes to reducing the tensions linked with the intervention.

This is why we believe that it is important to give to the employment intervenors, following an appropriate education, the resources and power for their mission. The employment intervenors could become pivotal intervenors, as proposed by the model of social work case managers. Adoption of such a model could result in giving a better framework to the job searcher by avoiding the redundancy in the content of the job educations and to increase the efficiency of the intervention. Also, by working closely with the client, the intervenor would be more able to understand his profile and to accompany him

say that it has little impact on the capacity to avoid social exclusion. On the contrary, it would tend to create

in the development of real *empowerment*, even of his professional network. This approach would result in favouring the sense of being respected as persons and also as *competent* persons. Consequently, the intervention should aim, we believe, at working on structures by helping the relationships between the intervenors and the employers to sensitize the employers and evaluate with them the obstacles in the hiring of immigrant workers and, to find and create paths of solutions. This new orientation of the employment intervention work would contribute to reduce the sense of powerlessness of the intervenors, to sensitize them to the reality proper to immigrant job searchers, to favour adaptation to services related to the real needs of their clientele, while reducing dissatisfaction, frustration and discouragement. As a result, all the intervenors-client relationship would benefit.

Conclusion

In fact, it is the complete economic insertion process for the new immigrants that must be redesigned as a social and structural problem and not as an individual problematic affecting only job searchers. We must question the dispersion of resources, the frequent redundancy of the services offered but also the lacks in the services (absence of continuity, difficulties of acceding to the stages and short term upgrading etc.). We also question the sharing of the responsibilities between various ministries (MICC, MESS and MELSQ) that does not allow using a global approach of the various aspects related to the integration (employment, immigration, recognition of acquired knowledge). This result is great suffering for the new immigrants. We are concerned, like Helly (2004, 2006), of the presence even in the support services to immigrants of the utilitaristic vision of immigration (fill the demographic deficit, contribution to cheap labour). This vision is reflected in present intervention to respond to the needs of the companies by adapting the resource (the job searchers) to the demand. Finally, we insist on the importance of reacting to the discrimination experienced by the immigrants in general and in particular by the Maghrebian job searchers, a discrimination that exists mostly from the general population (and therefore by the employers) of the benefits of immigration to the Quebec demography or to its economy, but also to its culture and social development. This process is made even

more disturbing by the fact that it determines, as Helly (2004, 2006) point out, a classification of the immigrants as being “integrable” to “nefarious”, “near” to “far”, “enriching” to “alienating” that contradicts the official discourse on the equality of the chances. The case of the Maghrebians thus reflects the influence of the “social classification”, concerning their job insertion, and also as related to the support that they have the right to expect. The Maghrebians feel that they have been lied to during their selection; our analysis shows that they may be right. Not because they have deliberately been lied to, but because the conditions for their integration are lacking. Thus, it is essential to ask questions concerning the social position that the Quebec and Canadian societies are ready to recognize to the immigrants: citizen-partners or second zone citizens?

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