THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM… ON OUR WAY TO DEVELOPING A UNIQUE PROFILE OF COMPETENCIES FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION?

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It has been almost ten years since the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (CSE) linked the professionalization of college teaching to the development of a system of competencies adapted to practical teaching. The primary concern in this problematic was the "identification" of competencies actually required for a professional teaching practice at college, both within the scope of initial training as well as for continuing education, and to do so in the near future" (CSE, 1997, p. 57). The educational community followed up on this expectation, not once, but three separate times.

The repository of techno-pedagogical competencies available to college teachers (Bérubé et Poellhuber, 2005) is the most recent in a set of propositions identifying skills required for teaching. This particular work contains a unique repository proper to a specific field of competencies[1], elsewhere the profile of competencies targets a specific educational level, and elsewhere still, it serves as the basis for a training program[2] or a framework for evaluating teachers[3].

Beginning in the year 2000, the investigation into a repository of competencies for the teaching profession experienced three important events: the back-to-back publication of two competency profiles characteristic of college teaching (Laliberté et Dorais, for PERFORMA, 1999 and CSE, 2000) and a repository of competencies specific to teaching at primary and secondary levels (MEQ, 2001). The variations on similar themes that took place following publication revealed the relevance of the exercise for education, but also an appropriation that requires an adaptation of the profile to environment realities, such as work teams.

Nevertheless, by comparing initial profiles, we will quickly see that convergence outweighs divergence.

COMPARING THE PROFILES

At college level, the PERFORMA team recommends an organization based on the concept that teaching is a professional practice that requires first and foremost, the adoption of an ethical stance relative to three fields of action: the educational community, the program, and the course.

The 55 profile entries suggested by the *PERFORMA* team upgrade the CSE version that includes 20 synthesized profile entries. Once again, four fields of competencies make up the set: disciplinary mastery, teaching strategies, collaboration with intervenors in the field and professional development.

The MEQ repository of competencies has 75 entries. The work defines general orientations, professional competencies, and exit profiles at end of training for future teachers at primary and secondary levels[4]. In fact, 12 competencies were found for teacher education in a progressive report that ranges from the positioning of the professional role of teachers to the stages of course design, realization, and evaluation; through class management to the use of information technologies. Upon course completion, competencies that are required to work cooperatively in the milieu and manage the ethical positioning of the profession are identified.

The following tables[5] present profiles of competencies specific to college teaching and teacher education. We have highlighted competencies that received greater attention from one or more of the profiles (see text in blue).

[1] The complete set amplifies the profile provided by Laliberté et Dorais (PERFORMA, 1999) with regard to techno-pedagogical aspects.

[2] For example, the MIPEC (Microprogramme de 2e cycle d'insertion professionnelle en enseignement collégial) was inspired by Laliberté et Dorais (PERFORMA, 1999) and presents a profile of competencies based on training. [on-line)] http://www.usherbrooke.ca/programmes/micro/inserpro.html.

[3] For example, a profile of competencies derived from the MIPEC profile, found in the appendix of *Politique institutionnelle d'évaluation des enseignantes et des enseignants*, in use at Cégep de Saint-Jérôme (2003).

[4] The adapted document was the subject of a specific work in the professional training sector: *La formation à l'enseignement professionnel – Les orientations – Les compétences professionnelles*. [On-line] http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dftps/interieur/PDF/form_ens_prof.pdf. The CSE, *Un nouveau souffle pour la profession enseignante*, (2004, p. 28) reviews this profile and specifies it is a revised version subsequent to reform in teaching at primary and secondary levels.

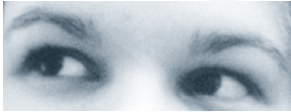[5] The original format for the three profiles has been modified for this article.

Table 1

A PROFILE OF COMPETENCIES FOR COLLEGE TEACHING PERSONNEL (PERFORMA)

-1- BUILD A PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE BY DEVELOPING ONE'S OWN SYSTEM OF THOUGHTS AND ACTION IN ACCORD WITH SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Commit: Make a commitment to students, to their progress and success • to the department to which we belong and the program in which we work • to the institution where we work • to the teaching profession • to the collectivity that we all serve.

Take one's own professional development in hand: Have available in on-going fashion, a directory of resources sufficiently complete, reliable and coherent • Bring disciplinary, didactic and pedagogical expertise up to date through regular diagnosis and continuous improvement • Practice reflection and permanent research on teaching practices within a perspective of continuous improvement in action.
Reinvest knowledge from past experiences into current practices.

Be accountable for our actions: Position ourselves vis-à-vis current educational values in today's society, social values, the orientations and rules of our department and the institution where we work • Assume an ethical stance that respects both the public service nature of education (equity, respect for others, etc.) and our personal values • Be accountable for our decisions and actions and their consequences.

-2- PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE OF THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

Based on our expertise and field of responsibility, collaborate in: Conceiving, implementing, and evaluating the mission statement of the educational institution, its traditional policies, orientations, and departmental activities

Participate in the intellectual, cultural, and scientific life of the institution, the college network, and the world of education.

-3- TAKE PART IN THE REALIZATION OF A TRAINING PROJECT CORRESPONDING TO OUR STUDY PROGRAM

Based on our expertise and field of responsibility, collaborate in: The analysis of the educational situation in the program(s) where interventions occur (analysis of specific characteristics of the student body registered in the program and identification of the subsequent training needs, etc.) • The design of program(s) where interventions take place (identification of training objectives–exit profiles, etc.–, objects of learning and learning activities and their scheduling, etc.) • The implementation of program(s) where interventions take place (teaching, supervision, etc.) • Continuous improvement in program(s) where interventions take place (follow-up, analysis, evaluation of program underway and upon completion).

Adjust personal decisions and behaviours to correspond with collective and concerted decisions made by the whole of those in the program

-4- TEACH FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF BASIC TRAINING

Analyze the educational situation: Position the role and place of the course within the program • Appropriate learning objects • Identify characteristics of students and foresee the potential influence on learning • Identify obstacles to learning • Determine the objectives of learning.

Design the teaching intervention: Select and structure contents relative to targeted objectives and the specifics of the situation • Design and organize learning activities adapted to the characteristics of the situation and likely to generate active and responsible participation by students as well as facilitate integration and transfer of learning • Design and organize evaluation strategies adapted to the specifics of the situation • Choose, develop or adapt the relevant didactic material.

Accomplish the teaching intervention: Establish a teaching relationship with the student, individually and as a group, likely to favour learning and nourish student motivation • Communicate with students orally and in writing in a language that is clear, concise and accurate • Introduce contents that are organized and structured so as to facilitate the construction of their own knowledge by the students • Structure time spent in class so as to maximize learning activities that deepen the commitment level of students • Suggest learning activities based on a progression that challenges students and allows them to anticipate their success • Manage the classroom to create a climate conducive to learning • Supervise the learning and provide students with frequent feedback, likely to encourage learning as well as integration and the transfer of learning • Adapt the intervention to the needs and specifics of the situation • Perform a summative assessment on student learning.

Control our actions: Analyze the effects of our teaching practices on the learning of students and if need be, make changes for future interventions.

Source : Laliberté et Dorais, PERFORMA,1999, p. 52-54.

Table 2

A COMMON REPOSITORY OF COMPETENCIES FOR TRAINING OF COLLEGE TEACHING PERSONNEL (CSE)

-1- MASTER ONE'S DISCIPLINE OR PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM OF STUDIES

Master the different aspects of one's discipline.

View one's discipline from an epistemological perspective.

Project and actualize the contribution of one's discipline in social and employment spheres.

Discuss in a language that is accessible and master the language of instruction.

-2- DEVELOP AND APPLY EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES CENTERED ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Facilitate the integration and transfer of learning.

Put the accent on student participation.

Develop a closer link between evaluation and teaching from a dual perspective: Support during progress and a constant adjustment of practices to better adapt them to students' learning needs.

Make use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies.

Position one's teaching within program dynamics and therefore help reach study program objectives.

-3- ACT IN MEANINGFUL COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERVENORS INVOLVED IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

With regard to departmental activities: Assume some of the responsibilities inherent to departmental life.

With regard to programs: Make a significant contribution to the different activities required for the pedagogical management of training programs.

With regard to institutional activities: Cooperate with participants in projects from other institutions, get involved in the institution's own inner life, initially at school level (teaching and supporting individual progress), but also on social and cultural levels.

With regard to learning activities as a whole: Make a contribution to projects that involve other players from the educational system and act cooperatively with other participants in the immediate environment (civil society) for educational ends (view the environment as a reservoir of resources, a learning place, a learning object and also the recipient of services).

-4- MASTER THE EVOLUTION OF ONE'S OWN PRACTICE AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE GROWTH OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Analyze one's practices and reinvest the results in one's daily work, in the management of one's continuing education and in the definition of a professional identity characteristic of teaching.

Contribute to the development of knowledge.

Make use of information and communication technologies and contribute to their development, in an educational context.

Source : Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2000, p. 54.

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Table 3

A REPOSITORY OF COMPETENCIES FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION (MEQ)

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-1- FOUNDATIONS

Act as professionals who are heirs, critics, and interpreters of learning and cultural objects in the exercise of their profession.	Identify the fundamental reference points and intelligibility axes (concepts, postulates, methods) of knowledge in one's discipline to make meaningful and in-depth learning possible among students • Keep a critical distance with regard to the discipline taught • Establish relationships between the culture prescribed in the training program and the existing culture of students • Transform the classroom into a cultural arena, a multiplicity of perspectives under one common roof • Take a critical look at our origins, cultural practices and the social role we play.
Communicate clearly and accurately in the language of instruction, both orally and in written documents, throughout the various contexts in teaching.	Use varied and appropriate spoken language during interventions with students, parent and peers • Respect grammar rules in work destined for students, parents and peers • Be prepared to take a stand, argue ideas and debate them effectively and coherently in a constructive and respectful manner during discussions. • Communicate one's ideas with scientific rigour, using precise vocabulary and accurate syntax • Correct errors committed by students in oral and written communications • Constantly seek to improve one's oral and written expression.

-2- THE ACT OF TEACHING

Design learning-teaching situations for the upcoming content relative to the type of students and the competencies targeted for development in the training program.	Base the selection and content of interventions on data from recent research on didactic and pedagogical subjects • Select and interpret disciplinary knowledge with regard to objectives, competencies and training program content • Plan teaching and evaluation sequences that take content logic into account as well as the progression of learning • Take into consideration the prerequisites, mental representations, social differences (type as well as ethnic, socio-economic and cultural origins), particular needs and fields of interest of students in the development of teaching-learning situations • Select a variety of didactic approaches appropriate for the development of competencies targeted by the training program • Anticipate obstacles in learning upcoming contents • Foresee learning situations that allow for the integration of competencies in a variety of contexts.
Initiate and direct teaching-learning situations for the upcoming contents based on the type of student and the competencies targeted for development in the training program.	Create situations to involve students in problem-solving situations, tasks or meaningful projects while taking into consideration their cognitive, affective and social characteristics • Place resources required to accomplish the learning activities at the disposal of students • Guide students in the selection, interpretation and comprehension of information available from various resources, as well as in grasping the key elements in a problem-situation or understanding the requirements of a task or project • Manage the students' learning using strategies, processes, questions, frequent and pertinent feedback to promote the integration and transfer of knowledge • Teach the students to work cooperatively.
Evaluate the learning progress and degree of acquisition of competencies in students relative to the upcoming content.	During the learning process, gather information in order to identify student strengths and weaknesses; review and adapt your teaching so it favours learning • Do an assessment to determine the degree of acquisition of competencies • Develop or use tools to assess the progress and acquisition of competencies • Communicate expected results and provide feedback on learning progress and the acquisition of competencies to students and parents in a clear and concise manner • Collaborate with the pedagogical team to determine the rhythm and progressive stages of the teaching cycle.
Plan, organize, and verify the functioning of the classroom-group to promote learning and student socialization.	Define and put in place an effective operating system for regular classroom activities • Communicate clear expectations to students on appropriate behaviours for school and social contexts and ensure conformity • Adopt strategies that help prevent inappropriate behaviours and allow for effective interventions should any emerge • Maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning.

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Adapt interventions to the needs and characteristics of students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Promote the pedagogical and social integration of students with learning or behavioural difficulties and those with disabilities • Collect relevant information from resource-personnel and parents as regards student needs and progress • Present students in the classroom-group with learning activities, challenges and roles to help them progress along their learning path • Participate in the development and implementation of an adapted intervention plan.

Integrate ICT (Information and communication technologies) in the planning and direction of teaching-learning activities, teaching management and professional development.

Exercise a critical and reserved attitude relative to the advantages and limitations of ICT's as support tools for teaching and learning, as well as how ICT's impact society • Evaluate the didactic potential of electronic tools and networks in the development of competencies within the training program • Communicate using a variety of multimedia tools • Use ICT's to effectively research, interpret and communicate information and resolve problem situations • Use ICT's effectively to generate exchanges and continuing education networks relative to one's own discipline and teaching practice • Help students become familiar with ICT's, use technology in their learning activities, evaluate their proficiency in the use of technology and judge in critical manner the data collected in networks.

Cooperate with school staff, parents, various social partnerships, and students in order to reach the school's educational objectives.

Collaborate with other members of the school staff to define orientations as well as develop and implement projects dealing with educational services and areas of responsibilities belonging to school establishments • Involve parents and keep them informed • Coordinate interventions with the various school partners • Support students in their participation in management structures or school activities and projects.

Work together with members of the pedagogical team to realize tasks that allow for the development and evaluation of competencies targeted in the training program, and based on the type of students.

Determine which situations require the collaboration of other members of the pedagogical team in the design and adaptation of teaching-learning situations, in the evaluation of learning and the mastering of expected competencies • Define and organize a project based on the objectives targeted by the pedagogical team • Participate actively in an ongoing manner with the same students, in pedagogical teams planning interventions • Work towards obtaining a consensus among the members of the pedagogical team, when required.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Make a commitment to an individual and collective process of professional development.

Take stock of one's competencies and implement means to develop them using available resources • Exchange ideas with colleagues as regards the relevance of one's pedagogical and didactic choices • Reflect on one's practice (reflective analysis) and reinvest the results of the reflection into one's action • Lead pedagogical projects to resolve teaching problems • Have peers participate in research projects linked to mastering the competencies targeted in the training program and the school's educational objectives.

Behave in an ethical and responsible way in the exercise of one's profession.

Identify the values at stake in interventions • Operate democratically in class • Provide students with the appropriate attention and support • Justify decisions made relative to students' learning and education, if required by third parties • Avoid all forms of discrimination with regard to students, parents and colleagues • Using major current schools of thought, identify moral problems that are unfolding in the classroom • Use the legal framework and regulations governing one's profession judiciously.

Source: MEQ, 2001, p. 59-134.
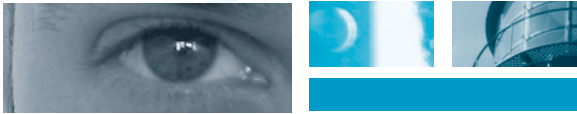
TOWARDS A UNIQUE PROFILE?

Most competencies and their components overlap in all three profiles while presenting certain characteristics common to each. In round 1, PERFORMA places the accent on ethics, specifically on the professional commitment expected of CEGEP teachers (no 1). The program as field of action is dealt with insistently, thus detailing the specifics of college networks relative to instructional management of programs (no 3). While amplifying the proposal of Laliberté and Dorais (PERFORMA), the CSE re-emphasizes that a college teacher is first and foremost a person who is competent in a disciplinary field (no 1). This second profile provides us with more precision on techno-pedagogic competencies (no 4), for instance. On the whole however, due to its level of generality, it offers fewer operational paths. By round 3, the MEQ produces a very elaborate profile. The emphasis placed on certain competencies reveals key areas of interest to players in primary and secondary teaching levels, primarily mastering the language of instruction (no 2), evaluation (no 5), classroom management and integrating students with special needs (nos 6 and 7). Finally, we see a strong presence of competencies in relation to the use of new information technologies (no 8).

There is intellectual pleasure and formal beauty in the act of classifying competencies within a profession. There is a feeling of putting into words a fundamental quest for recognition. Heads lift up and backs straighten: "Teaching is a complex task, and here is what must be mastered in order to succeed". When comparing profiles, the reader has the arduous task of identifying similarities and differences. However, limiting oneself to comparative reading would be cutting short much-needed reflection on the ideological aspects that influence profile design on one hand, and objectives sought by these profiles, on the other. In a statement to the Ministère (2000), the *Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement* highlighted the fact that some competencies such as the responsibility of a competent teacher require a commitment from all participants in the school system in order to be acquired. This is especially true for the integration of students with learning or adaptation difficulties or those with disabilities (no 3). As the reader will see, there are ideological biases in college profiles, for example in the third element of the CSE profile "Develop closer links between evaluation and teaching […]". Does this not imply that these links are currently considered too lax?

At what point in the professional path of teachers do these profiles get used? Obviously, the answer is during initial training or ongoing improvement activities. We are only one step away from extracting a grid from this practical exercise designed for the selection or evaluation of teachers. In the absence of consensus on any given grid, such a process could prove premature. These are further reflections to be added to the question of whether or not there is a vast difference between teaching levels: Does the profession require distinct profiles?[6] When all is said and done, the desirable competencies for teachers at primary and secondary levels are not contrary to those required of college teaching personnel. Having said this, is there a deeper reason behind the quest for a unique profile of the teaching profession? The answer undoubtedly lies in the use we hope to make of these competency repositories.

[6] The university level also participates in this reflection. For additional information, please consult the competency repository for university teaching, [On-line] www.ipm.ucl.ac.be/articlesetsupportsIPM/10CompetencesProf.pdf.

According to the CSE, the construction of a professional identify in teachers is hindered at college level by the absence of common initial training prior to exercising the profession (CSE, 1997). This area of interest could be a wake-up call for intervenors to join forces in a concerted attempt to move forward. ◗

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