

ENTERING A PROFESSION: OCCUPATIONAL INTEGRATION STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS



ANDRÉ DORÉ
Educational advisor
Cégep de Sainte-Foy

The forum on *Entering the profession: occupational integration strategies for teachers* was held in last June, at the request of *Pédagogie collégiale* within the scope of the AQPC annual symposium. It provided an opportunity for the participants, about twenty educators working in different college positions, to discuss this quite important issue within the current context of teacher renewal.

FORUM OBJECTIVES

To begin, Marielle Pratte, moderator and *Pédagogie collégiale* director, assisted by Odette Lussier and Nathalie Vallée, members of the publication's editorial board, announced the objectives of the forum. Its purpose: To sketch a portrait of what is happening in the college network today relative to the various measures used to welcome and integrate new teachers. Furthermore, the editorial board wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to launch the creation of a collaborative network which would deal with the question.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The question of occupational integration is vast. With a view to sharing a common vocabulary, is it possible to classify the different measures? The moderator suggests grouping them according to three levels: institutional integration, departmental and program integration, teaching or occupational integration.

The first level of integration, *institutional integration*, deals with everything that relates to the culture of the institution, more specifically educational projects and services that are available for teachers and students at their college.

Logistically speaking, tangible information and the distribution of documents are also included in this category. Activities relative to institutional integration focus on communicating values and particulars of their institution to new teachers.

The second level of integration, *departmental and program integration*, deals with the support given to new teachers in relation to departmental life, more specifically departmental guidelines relative to course planning, etc., and participation in program life.

It seems that the first two levels of integration often occur spontaneously, through interaction with colleagues, the work of the department coordinator, and a variety of other means. However, this does not eliminate the need to facilitate the work of new teachers in these two areas. To this end, several colleges already offer integration measures in this area.

The third level of integration, *occupational integration*, requires analysis, especially since it represents the focal planning feature of this forum. The debate on this issue revolves around a number of questions. How can we ensure that every specialist regardless of the discipline, sociology, nursing or philosophy, considers himself a teacher first and foremost? How can we provide support so teachers are at ease with their teaching responsibilities? What must teachers master to accomplish their teaching interventions? The answers to these questions provide means for the development of teachers' competencies. All these measures originate with what we call *teaching or occupational integration*.

OBJECTIVES TARGETED BY OCCUPATIONAL INTEGRATION

On a more formal level, what objectives are targeted by occupational integration? Intervenors try to support new teachers so they may:

- Feel at ease, have the appropriate tools and be able to develop their own tools.
- Become involved in the pedagogical life of the college and the department, participate in discussions and be active players.
- Be in a position to establish contacts, know where to go for help when facing teaching difficulties.
- Develop a relationship with the students.
- Be able to plan, communicate and teach efficiently.

Also, in the mind of several participants, although the integration measures are not formal objectives, they nonetheless motivate experienced teachers, help develop bonds between all teachers and energize the environment. In the end, integration could help narrow the gap between the different perceptions of a teacher's role that exist in the environment, particularly as regards the importance of teaching competencies.



Obviously, the fact of tackling the question of occupational integration can quickly lead to the question of new teacher evaluations, including administrative evaluations. However, the debate is focused on what assistance and support to offer. Insofar as we want to evaluate teachers, should we not therefore facilitate the integration of new teachers? As a matter of consistency, should we not implement formative assessments before resorting to summative ones?

Some have implemented self-help groups, learning communities based on the transfer of expertise and also workshops to analyse reflective practices in reality.

MEASURES ALREADY IN PLACE

Over the last few years, more and more measures to welcome and integrate new teachers have become available. The range is varied: timely interventions, training programs (MIPEC, master's degree in teaching, etc.) and integration programs offered by colleges such as Jonquière, Maisonneuve, Sainte-Foy and Vanier that are relatively complete. The following examples illustrate the various measures implemented by the different colleges. Thus, several institutions prepare material for new teachers such as an integrated guidebook or an information handbook on various data. Furthermore, workshops are offered that focus on class management, the first experiences in teaching and the evaluation of learning. In some institutions, a whole day is set aside to welcome the new teachers.

Some colleges have developed mentoring or pairing activities. Whether the mentor is from the same department or not, the pairing is based on teaching strategies rather than content. Some have implemented self-help groups, learning communities based on the transfer of expertise and also workshops to analyse reflective practices in reality.

When it comes to feedback, inspired by work done at Collège Lionel Groulx, colleges use direct observations by a mentor in class and also student questionnaires to collect feedback. They then provide support in interpreting the results.

CONCLUSION

Even though an increasing number of new teachers have received teacher training or training in related fields, many find themselves immersed in the reality of college teaching without any professional training. Therefore teachers learn their trade "on the job". For this reason and many others, particularly the dynamics resulting from exchanges with new teachers, occupational integration measures remain more pertinent than ever.

Discussions held during the forum on *Entering the profession: occupational integration strategies for teachers* help us highlight what is being done in college networks with regard to welcoming and integrating teachers.

As regards development paths under consideration, the many interventions point to extending the duration of the integration process and even creating places conducive to exchanges such as communities of new teachers. ●

Since 1999, André DORÉ has worked as an educational advisor at Cégep de Sainte-Foy. Prior to that, he taught economics at Cégep de Saint-Félicien and at Cégep de Sainte-Foy. As educational advisor, he spends most of his time welcoming and integrating new teachers as well as developing and implementing ongoing training programs. His main objectives are to meet the needs of those he works with in the best way possible and promote their professional development.

andre.dore@cegep-ste-foy.qc.ca