

THE RESEARCH TRAINING INSTITUTE : A MODEL FOR PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Traditional faculty development programs have focused on activities which help individual teachers to acquire theory and skills which are related to teaching. We often use our program to teach the faculty concepts such as the theory of test and measurement or learning theory. Then we give teachers the opportunity to apply these principles in some fashion, such as writing objectives or developing a well-written test. We give our teachers feedback concerning the success of their applications. In sum, our professional development programs assist the faculty in acquiring a certain level of competence in specific areas on the assumption that the future use of these skills will result in greater learning on the part of the students.

Research is beginning to raise questions concerning this assumption, not because it is false in itself, but because there are elements missing. One of those elements is organizational development.

Although our traditional programs have had beneficial results for our faculty on an individual basis, they don't always help in the attainment of the college's objectives when we look at those objectives in a global way. Having said this, we can't deny that our traditional programs have helped the faculty improve their teaching. However, we must, at the very least, add approaches to professional development which are aimed at organizational development. This would allow our faculty the opportunity to study their teaching in a larger context as part of a whole as opposed to an individual act. If the faculty were to approach their professional development in this way, there is a good possibility that the results of such study would be generalizable throughout the college and perhaps even across the province.

Objective and hypothesis

Our objective, therefore, was to imagine a professional development program which would help the faculty change the focus of their professional development activity so that it would no longer be purely individual development, but would be linked with organizational development.

We hypothesized that if we created a support structure for encouraging college-based action research projects, we would be on the right track. Such a program in our minds had to create several conditions :

1. Faculty willingness and ability to participate.
2. An inquiry atmosphere in which teachers are free to identify research problems, to experiment with solutions, and to share ideas with colleagues and administrators.
3. Administrative support evidenced by :
 - a. recognition of the legitimacy of the project ;
 - b. time through a reduced teaching load ;
 - c. technical assistance and material support (clerical, translation, grant writing, documentation, designing data collection tools) ;
 - d. individualized training as needed in action research methodology.
4. An appropriate organizational structure which :
 - a. facilitates jointly-defined goals, frequent communication among participants, and showing leadership ;
 - b. emphasizes that the leader must be someone who can set a positive example as a collaborator.

UN INSTITUT DE FORMATION À LA RECHERCHE : OUTIL DE PERFECTIONNEMENT DES PROFESSEURS ET DE DÉVELOPPEMENT ORGANISATIONNEL

Depuis la création du réseau collégial, le perfectionnement des professeurs est centré sur l'individu sans référence explicite au développement institutionnel. Pareille orientation a donné beaucoup de bons résultats. Néanmoins, la recherche sur le développement organisationnel porte à croire qu'il y aurait avantage à ajouter une dimension organisationnelle et institutionnelle au perfectionnement des professeurs.

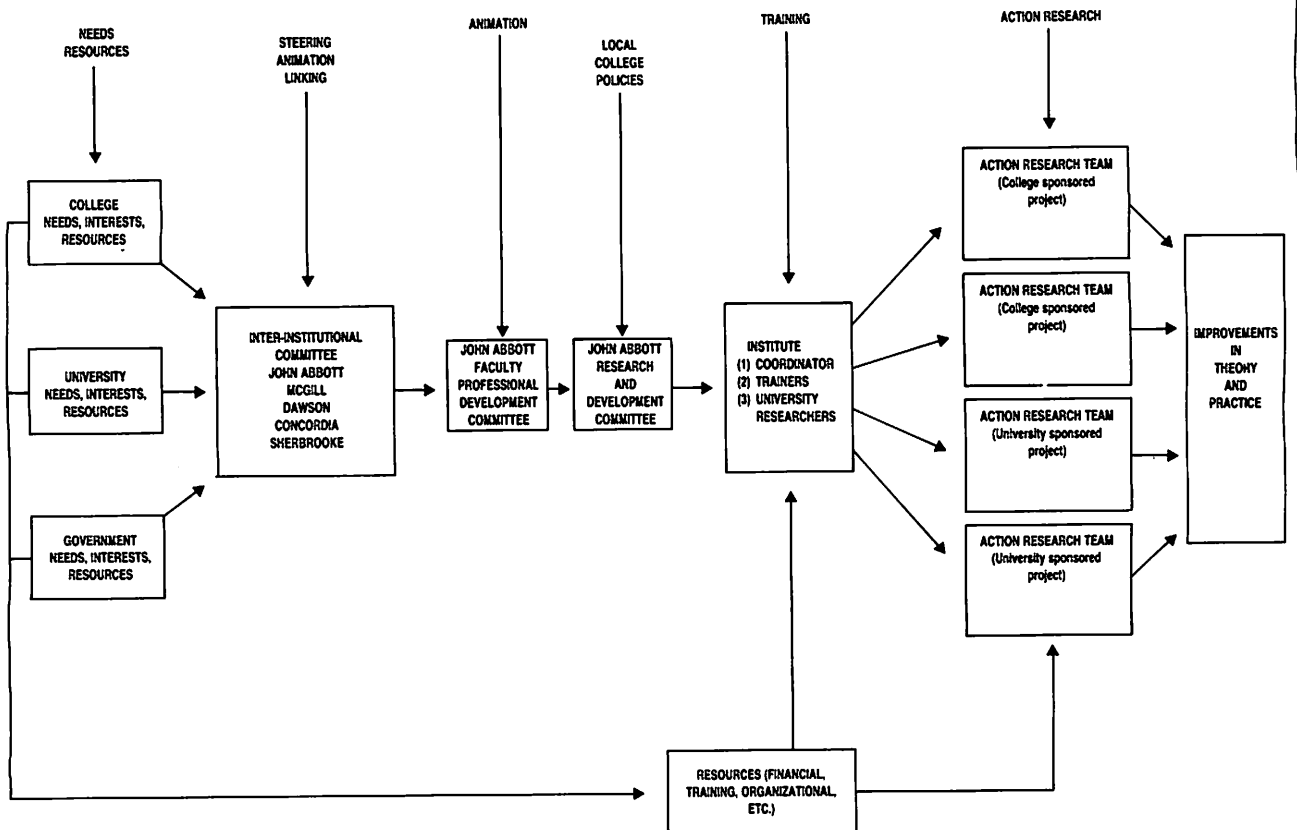
Mme Denise BOURGEOIS, coordonnatrice du Service de perfectionnement des professeurs au Collège JOHN ABBOTT, a présenté aux participants du colloque de l'AQPC un projet de recherche qui vise à mettre sur pied, dans son collège, un Institut de recherche-action qui contribuerait tout à la fois à la formation des professeurs et à la promotion d'activités d'analyse institutionnelle et de développement organisationnel.

Dans son exposé, Mme Bourgeois a précisé les conditions de réussite d'un tel projet : un désir du corps professoral de participer et une aptitude à le faire ; une atmosphère de remise en question qui permet aux enseignants d'identifier des problèmes dignes de recherche, de faire l'expérience des solutions et d'échanger avec leurs collègues et les administrateurs ; un soutien administratif s'exprimant à travers des

mesures et gestes très concrets ; une structure administrative bien choisie rendant plus aisés l'établissement de buts communs, des échanges fréquents parmi les participants et un fort leadership.

Après avoir décrit les caractéristiques générales de l'Institut que l'on veut mettre en place, son mode de fonctionnement, le type d'activités de formation et de recherche qu'il permettrait de réaliser, le processus d'identification des besoins et problèmes qui pourraient justifier la conception et la réalisation de projets de recherche, Mme Bourgeois a rapidement évoqué comment, entre 1985 et 1991, on entend : 1° analyser la situation au collège sous l'angle des conditions de réussite du projet d'Institut telles qu'évoquées plus haut (1985-1986) ; 2° expérimenter le modèle d'Institut à travers des activités d'animation, de formation et de soutien de même que des projets de recherche spécifiques (1986-1990) ; 3° évaluer l'impact de l'Institut et des projets de recherche-action menés sous son égide (1990-1991). Mme Bourgeois s'est plus particulièrement attardée sur les activités de recherche prévues pour la première année et sur l'utilisation des résultats de ces travaux. Sa communication s'est terminée sur une évocation des retombées principales d'un pareil projet.

TABLE 1



We have called this program the Research Training Institute. The aim of the institute is to use professional development resources to encourage and facilitate a systematic study of the educational life of the college. The institute will encourage the local academic community to identify areas which are problematic, will facilitate high-quality study of these areas with a view to implementing change as well as offer training and opportunities for research.

Table 1 gives you an overview of the institute itself. The training program is two-fold : an internship as well as study programs (table 2). Each project has a two year life cycle (table 3). We hope to experiment with the institute over four and a half years. Table 4 shows the distribution of projects.

The project be will animated in great measure by the Faculty Development Committee. An outline of the process follows :

Problem Identification. The Institute Coordinator in consultation with the Faculty Professional Development Committee (FPDC) will stimulate the identification of research questions from the John Abbott faculty. These topics will be submitted to the FPDC for initial screening. FPDC will select topics and send them to the Research and Development Committee for approval. (R & D approval of research topics is a locally required practice at John Abbott College.)

Intern Selection. The Institute Coordinator in consultation with FPDC will stimulate interest in the internship position and will call for applications to be submitted from the faculty to FPDC. FPDC will act as a selection committee and will submit the names of the candidates to the Research and Development Committee for approval. (R & D approval of researchers is a locally required practice at John Abbott College.)

Researcher Selection. The Institute Coordinator in consultation with FPDC will seek qualified university personnel interested in cooperating on the action research project. Applications will be reviewed by the Inter-Institutional Committee and a recommendation will be made to FPDC. FPDC will submit its recommendation to R & D for approval. (Submission of this type of recommendation to R & D is a locally required practice at John Abbott College.)

Grant Preparation. Grant applications will be prepared as necessary to seek funding for carrying out research.

Pre-Internship Training. The Institute Coordinator in consultation with the university researchers will carry out a preliminary needs assessment concerning the research skills needed by the interns and will design an intensive pre-internship training program.

Action Research Project — Internship and Training. The college interns will work with the university researchers and with the Institute Coordinator to carry out the research project and to produce a report.

Each year two projects will be initiated by the college and two will be initiated by the universities. Thus, four programs will be running concurrently. (See Table 4.)

Type of research

Up to this point, I have described a developmental project with which John Abbott College wishes to experiment over the next five years. Now I would like to discuss the *research* component.

The whole project is itself an action research project. Since there are so many definitions of action research, I would like to share with you our definition* :

« For us, *action research* is a planned intervention in the functioning of the college and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention by a collaborative and participatory research team with a view to improving the quality of instruction at the college.

The *research training institute* is a form of support which allows this type of research to take place.

Caractéristiques de la recherche-action

Situational

- concerned with diagnosing a specific problem in a specific context and attempting to solve it in that context.

Collaborative

- teams of researchers and practitioners work together on the projects.

Participatory

- team members themselves take part directly or indirectly in implementing the research.

* *La recherche-action : outil d'analyse institutionnelle et de développement organisationnel.* Cégep John Abbott de concert avec le comité de perfectionnement et avec un comité inter-institution, le 9 mai 1985.

TABLE 2
RESEARCH TRAINING INSTITUTE
COMPONENTS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

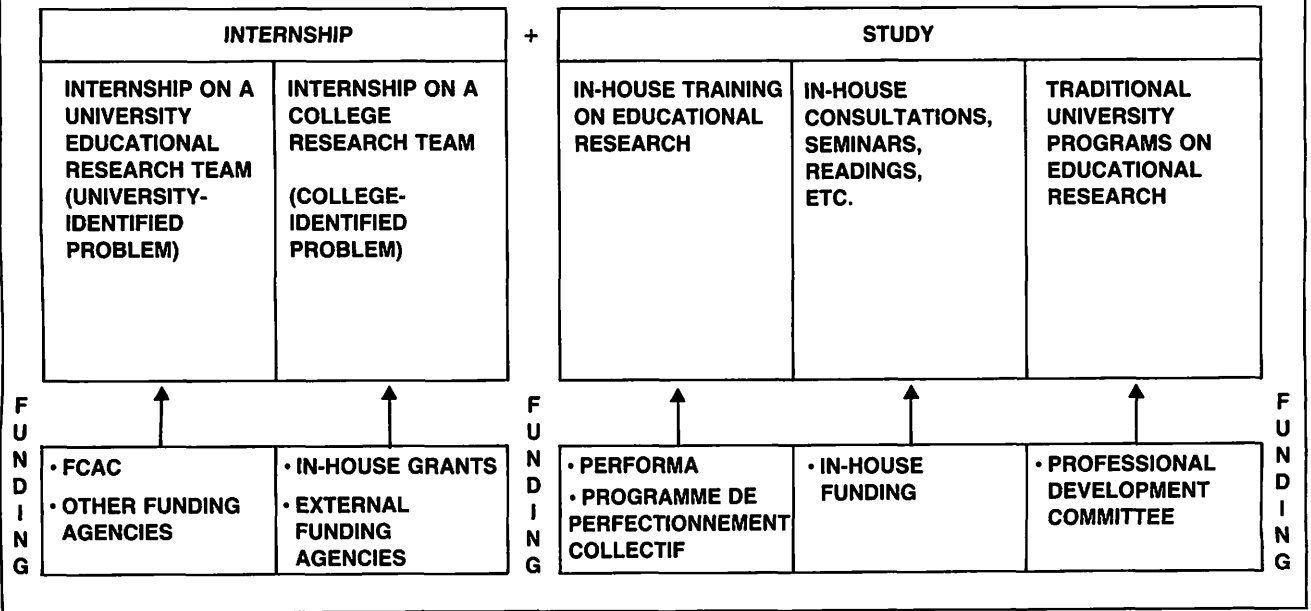
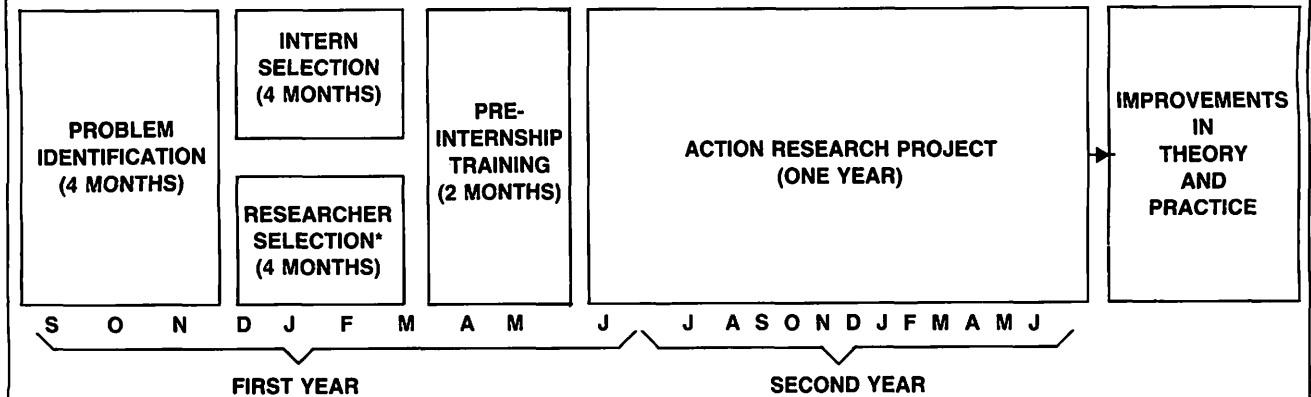


TABLE 3
RESEARCH TRAINING INSTITUTE
PROCESS AND TIMELINE
TWO-YEAR CYCLE



* This step is unnecessary for university-sponsored projects since it will be the university researcher who will initiate the project. Grant proposals will be submitted to appropriate agencies (Internal and/or external) according to appropriate deadlines.

TABLE 4

COLLEGE PROJECT 1	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION RESEARCHER SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
COLLEGE PROJECT 2	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION RESEARCHER SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY PROJECT 1	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY PROJECT 2	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
COLLEGE PROJECT 3	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION RESEARCHER SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
COLLEGE PROJECT 4	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION RESEARCHER SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY PROJECT 3	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY PROJECT 4	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
COLLEGE PROJECT 5	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION RESEARCHER SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
COLLEGE PROJECT 6	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION RESEARCHER SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY PROJECT 5	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY PROJECT 6	PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	INTERN SELECTION	PRE-INTERNSHIP TRAINING	ACTION RESEARCH
1985	1986	1987	1988	1989

TABLE 5

RECHERCHE

ACTION

ÉVALUATION

ATMOSPHÈRE
D'ENQUÊTE
AVANT
L'INTERVENTION

INTERVENTION

- ANIMATION
- FORMATION
- SOUTIEN
- PROJETS

ATMOSPHÈRE
D'ENQUÊTE
APRÈS
L'INTERVENTION

IMPACT DES PROJETS
DE RECHERCHE-
ACTION
STIMULÉS
PAR L'INTERVENTION

1985 - 1986

1986 - 1990

1990 - 1991

Self-evaluative

- modifications are continuously evaluated within the ongoing situation, the ultimate objective being to improve practice in some way or other.

Rapport avec la recherche-appliquée

For the purposes of our definition, it is important to note that there are times when action research will resemble applied research. The major difference for us is that we want all of our projects to be related to specific problems which have been identified at the local level and for which we want to find specific answers in order to improve the quality of education ».

Research methodology

The overall design of our research is shown in table 5.

The methodology for the first year is ethnographic. We wish to describe the current status at the college of the conditions which I outlined earlier :

1. Faculty willingness and ability to participate in research activity.
2. The inquiry atmosphere which currently exists.
3. The level of administrative support for research activity.
4. The appropriateness of the organizational structure to support action research.

During the second, third and fourth years, we will experiment with our model.

The methodology for the last year of the project is evaluative. We will evaluate the changes in the inquiry atmosphere which have occurred at the college as a result of our model and we will evaluate the impact on the college of the action-research projects which were stimulated by the model.

Research activities

In the first year of the project we will collect data using ten instruments which are correlated with the four variables we wish to study.

The tools include :

1. Three in-depth interviews with a random sample of twenty tenured faculty.
2. An analysis of historical documents from the college archives describing research activities at the college.

3. Four questionnaires to faculty at large, to professionals, and to the academic administration.
4. An in-depth interview with the Dean of Research and Development and with the Coordinator of Faculty Development.
5. An analysis of policy statements which describe current research policy at the college.

Follow-up activities will take place over the life of the project.

Use of research results after one year

It is expected that the research results from the first year of the project will be used as follows :

1. To describe the atmosphere which currently exists at John Abbott College concerning research and the inquiry spirit of the faculty.
2. To provide other colleges with tools they could use to measure the inquiry atmosphere of their institutions.
3. To provide baseline data against which later data can be compared in order to produce an evaluation report.

Conclusion

John Abbott College has been involved in research and development activity from its inception. Policy has been developed ; budget has been accorded ; a committee meets regularly to deal with R & D issues. The college now desires to link its research activity more closely to its development plans. It wishes to provide support to the faculty to carry out this function but within very clear boundaries. For this reason, we have developed a plan of action which will allow us to use research as a tool for professional development in the pedagogical sector. The plan includes the establishment of an infrastructure which provides animation, training and coordination. All research topics will be funneled through the college community. In order to be eligible, topics must :

1. Relate to the improvement of collegial-level instruction.
2. Arise from a problem currently faced at John Abbott College.
3. Be suitable to action-research methodology.
4. Be able to generate recommendations for action foreseeable after one year of study.
5. Have the potential for impact on a large segment of the college population.

Examples of the types of projects we would like to support are The Value of Remedial Programs, The Psychological Impact of Computer-Assisted Education, The Utilization and Value of Pre-Testing Techniques in the College, Predictors of Student Success.

John Abbott has already attempted action-research projects. However, predictable problems arise repeatedly : lack of sufficient number of faculty qualified to do action-research, lack of on-site research expertise, lack of availability of and/or coordination of release time for planning purposes.

The college and its personnel are interested in carrying out self-study. However, resources are lacking. We believe that the proposed model is a cost-effective way of assisting John Abbott to do self-study for the purpose of planned change. This model would permit local staff to work as interns on an action research team located on-site to address locally identified problems. Those staff would acquire skills which could be used with colleagues at a later date.

Furthermore, the model encourages inter-institutional cooperation. It was conceived by two colleges and three universities. One of the key elements of the proposal is that there is inter-institutional cooperation throughout — college/university and anglophone/francophone.

Not only will this model help the five institutions involved, but we believe that it will serve as an interesting pilot for the system as a whole. Its infrastructure can be adapted to other environments.

Finally, the climate is right to train faculty in the methods of collaborative action-research not only because of the pressures to change but also because several other forces have converged simultaneously. These forces include the government's current desire to encourage institutional self-study for the purposes of improvement, the priority set by the government for research training programs aimed at college faculty, the availability of public money for such an endeavor, the current concern of many faculty for a new challenge, and a renewed interest among educators in action-research.

It is hoped that the Research Training Institute will meet these needs.