Framework for competent action in educational consulting: Fostering student success

For pedagogical consultants in the Quebec school system

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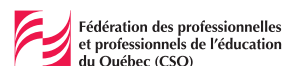Other titles: Référentiel de l'agir compétent en conseillance pédagogique en soutien à la réussite des élèves

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Preamble

In 2015 the Association des conseillères et des conseillers pédagogiques du Québec (ACCPQ) and the Université de Sherbrooke undertook a joint research project to develop a framework for competent action in educational consulting to serve the various professionals working in the Quebec education system. It was a far-reaching, long-term project. As no such framework existed, developing one had become necessary to clearly define the professional role of pedagogical consultants (ECs) in the school system. A wide range of stakeholders have contributed to this overview of competent action in the field of educational consulting.

Once the project was launched in 2015, an editorial team and committees were formed, and the project coordinators secured funding. The first steps were to formulate the research question, frame of reference, and methodology, with input from the editorial team and Scientific Committee. This groundwork equipped the research team to define its research approach: this would be a collaborative, appreciative research project. The data collection phase ran from May 2017 to June 2018. This data then served to define four emblematic professional situations, and the research identified three transversal professional requirements.

People involved in the research

Over the last three years, the following individuals have worked closely on the research out of which the Framework grew.

PROJECT COORDINATORS

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Professor

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Donald Guertin

Board member, Association des conseillères et des conseillers pédagogiques du Québec (ACCPQ)

Committee members

Framework audience

This Framework for competent action in educational consulting is designed, first and foremost, to serve ECs in the Quebec school system working in the elementary and secondary school, general adult education (GAE), and vocational training (VT) programs.

The Framework should also be useful for Quebec school boards, and specifically directors of educational services. In addition, it can provide tools to professional associations interested in educational consulting.

Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank the school districts that participated in the process, whose collaboration has certainly helped advance knowledge about the profession of educational consulting. The Framework is the fruit of multiple ECs sharing their professional practices. It is designed to be representative of small, medium, and large French-language school districts in Quebec.

We would like to thank the following **school boards** that allowed ECs to participate in group interviews aimed at collecting the initial research data:

- Commission scolaire des Chênes
- Commission scolaire de Laval
- Commission scolaire de la Seigneurie des Mille-Iles
- Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
- Commission scolaire Pierre-Neveu
- Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de-L'Ile
- Commission scolaire du Portage-de-l'Outaouais
- Commission scolaire René-Lévesque
- Commission scolaire de la Rivière-du-Nord
- Commission scolaire des Sommets

We would also like to thank the project **committees**.

The **Steering Committee**, made up of representatives of various associations, was responsible for verifying research feasibility by approving each research phase to ensure the approach was coherent with the desired outcomes. Members had the opportunity to accompaniement and propose actions to optimize the process.

The **Praxeology Committee**, whose members are active educational consultants, reviewed preliminary and emerging research data. The Committee's questioning, feedback, and proposals enabled us to clarify results. Concrete examples formulated by committee members also served to validate research data.

The **Scientific Committee**, comprised of university researchers, was tasked with interrogating the conceptual framework used by researchers, and suggesting changes to ensure methodological rigour.

Many **partners** contributed to the success of our research, including the following:

- Association des conseillères et conseillers pédagogiques du Québec (ACCPQ)
- Centre de transfert pour la réussite éducative du Québec (CTREQ)
- Commission professionnelle des services éducatifs de l'Association québécoise des cadres scolaires (AQCS)
- Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ)
- Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation (FPPE-CSQ)
- Université de Sherbrooke, Faculté d'éducation, Département de gestion de l'éducation et de la formation

We are grateful for their support and sincerely thank them.

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[1] The CAR project aims to strengthen the professional expertise of administrators and teachers and foster a culture of collaboration within schools.

Preface by Claude Lessard[2]

Originally, educational consultants in Quebec were known as educational development officers. In the 1960s, as part of the educational reform mapped out by the Parent Commission, a decision was made to abolish school inspectors — an entirely male profession under the province's Département de l'Instruction publique (department of public education). As the name suggests, inspectors were responsible for visiting elementary schools to ensure teachers adhered to Quebec's official curriculum[3]. The Parent Commission felt that giving educators greater freedom to act was more valuable than enforcing conformity. Teachers, it argued, should be granted greater autonomy and encouraged to take the initiative in implementing pedagogical and instructional innovations. The role of educational development officers, who reported to province's new ministry of education, and later of educational consultants, who are employed by school districts, was thus conceived, from the outset, as part of an imperative of innovation. The ultimate aim was to kindle a more active, student-centered pedagogy in the Quebec school system. This came at an historical moment when people were questioning the traditional order and calling for change, which was often seen as a good in and of itself.

Out of these revolutionary origins, a spirit of innovation and a call to revitalize the professional practice of teachers has been woven into the professional DNA of educational consultants, whose role is after all to breathe new life into teaching practices and school communities. There is ample evidence that teachers of the era were eager for this very breath of air.

Much water has passed under the bridge in the last quarter century. Our education system has undergone manifold reforms and innovations. Its decentralized nature has facilitated the proliferation of local experiments, with varying levels of success. These mixed results have led to calls for greater stability and rigour in educational innovation, due to the widespread feeling today that such changes are not as simple and easy as we once thought. As a result, scepticism toward the value of change has grown pervasive among stakeholders in the education system. Before making changes, people now demand evidence of their effectiveness. Often, there are calls for pilot projects to ensure that proposed changes are both realistic and feasible. Without necessarily embracing the status quo, the contemporary zeitgeist is more measured in its zeal for reform.

Over the last half-century, every new reform has included a role for educational consultants, who must take the new ministerial directives, designed for province-wide implementation, and make them meaningful and applicable for educators. The same holds true when school boards and institutions, in response to their own strategic planning exercises and success plans, undertake to reassess not only their own practices but those of classroom teachers as well. In response to changing times and local circumstances, educational consultants (ECs) have been assigned a range of mandates and tasks. Based on circumstances, contexts, and employer priorities, they have worked to establish a role for themselves, attain recognition, and define their purpose within a system often characterized by mixed messages. During periods of reform, educational consultants

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[2] This preface was originally written in French. Its translation has been approved by the author, Claude Lessard. To read the preface in the original, see the French-language version of this document: https://www.usherbrooke.ca/gef/conseillance/referentiel-agir-competent/

[3] It is germane to remember that inspector–teacher relationship was a gendered one, in which men held the position of power while women were confined to a subordinate role.

seemed essential; in times of budgetary constraints, they have often appeared dispensable. Teachers have also shown ambivalence: some appreciate the assistance available, while others resist any and all questioning of their methods, on the grounds of professional autonomy.

In the context of uncertainties about the roles of educational consulting, this Framework fulfills a vital function. It grew out of an analysis of the real work performed and evaluated by education professionals, and seeks to address what some stakeholders might view as a problematic subjectivity which leaves the profession vulnerable to a range of pressures and demands from all levels of the education system. This new Framework is a tool designed to help all stakeholders understand what educational consulting can contribute to the operation of the education system. It will also make it easier for fellow educational consultants to share experiences and better define a knowledge base specific to their four core roles: advising, training, guiding, and innovating. To the extent that the Framework formalizes the actual work of educational consulting, care must be taken to ensure it remains a working tool for clarifying concepts and sharing knowledge, under the ownership of a professional community, and does not promote an overly rigid or normative concept of the work educational consultants do. The fact is, there are many different ways to advise, train, guide, and innovate. I see the Framework primarily as a tool to analyze and compare some of these different ways, since professional practice will always be highly coloured by the local context and people who inhabit and bring these contexts to life. In other words, the Framework is a tool to situate and define, rather than determine, professional practice.

I would like to illustrate this point by discussing an activity integral to the work of educational consulting: questioning teaching practices. In their work with teachers, ECs exist within a constellation of tensions: between questioning and valuing existing practices, between recognition and suspicion, criticism and solidarity, respect for teachers' expertise and the evolution of the overall profession toward greater equity and efficiency, reinforcing existing strengths and debating fresh possibilities. There is a need for balance in order to avoid "excessive" questioning or criticism that can create an unproductive defensiveness and discomfort or, conversely, excessive complacency that may cause blindness and leave shortcomings unseen. This balance is not easy to achieve and maintain, though it becomes possible in the presence of the right conditions, such as long-term relationships of trust. This could be the subject of reflection and sharing of experiences among professionals, part of their use of the Framework to support their own professional development.

Pedagogical consultants cannot do their jobs without questioning the practices of teaching personnel. Yet this questioning can take a variety of forms. For the purposes of this preface, we will contrast two broad approaches without getting bogged down in the possible subtleties between these two extremes. On the one hand, we might promote an open questioning of teaching practices, with the ultimate goal of making teachers sufficiently autonomous to intelligently question their own practices (i.e., by making attentive, granular student observations, relating them to their specific teaching and pedagogical actions, and grasping what could be achieved by further refinements to their teaching. In this approach, the educational consultant attempts to "normalize" the process of questioning teachers about their practice, which will empower them to transform these practices themselves. This is what we mean by open questioning, a practice that aims to empower a reflective practitioner.

Even if we don't explicitly reference it, we are close to one of John Hattie's core principles: effective teachers are aware of the effect of their teaching; they actively seek to ascertain the effect of their actions on students, their learning, and their reactions. They give students high-quality, specific, personalized feedback, and will also seek to understand how their students understand, assimilate, and apply this feedback to further learning. In short, teachers and their students learn to get into each others' heads, hence the expression "reciprocal teaching".

To this approach we might oppose that of closed questioning, i.e., questioning designed to assess a real practice's degree of conformity to or deviance from a predetermined ideal proposed or imposed from outside. Such an approach, even when it doesn't openly adopt an inquisitorial tone, inevitably runs the risk of putting people at fault. Under certain circumstances and in some situations, closed questioning is of course perfectly appropriate. For example, accounting audits of organizations are designed to ensure an organization complies with a number of pre-established rules. In the event of deviation or non-compliance with a rule, the organization must make a correction, or face serious penalties.

Clearly, my own preference, and the one espoused in this Framework, is for open questioning of teaching practices designed to enhance educators' capacity for reflection. This choice is an important one, because it strikes a balance between the two major currents that have run through educational practice for the last century: continuity, which respects existing practices while promoting their development and evolution **from within** (through internships, immersion, mentoring, an analysis of practices, action-centered research, collaborative research and activity-based learning); and the option of breaking with current professional practice and effecting fundamental change **from without**, by imposing external prescriptions inspired and based on theories or, as we have seen more recently, on "hard evidence." Our profession has two competing models of professionalization: one that takes its source in the hands-on professional experience and expertise of teachers, and is designed to advance the profession by making educators more autonomous and reflective, and another that seeks to make teaching more effective by imposing actions from above and achieving (forced or voluntary) teacher acquiescence for "evidence-based" best practices (by implication universal and independent of context). The first

approach promotes professional judgment and autonomy; the second advocates strong regulation of a practice that is subject to overarching rules.

Some may object that I am opposing two ideal types that never appear as such in real life. This is likely the case, since the professionals working in the school system have a greater capacity to apply these "overarching" rules to their own practice than I have suggested above. Be that as it may, my goal here is to state, in no uncertain terms, that the work ethic of educational consultants leads them, first and foremost, to promote the empowerment of teaching staff: to enhance their ability to do the ideal work they wish to do in their class and with their students, in harmony with their colleagues. Practice in Finland would appear to demonstrate that competent, autonomous teachers generate more lasting student learning than robust systems to monitor and control results[4].

Let us hope, then, that this Framework will help to accompaniement educational consultants and empower teachers for many years to come!

Claude Lessard,
emeritus professor of sociology of education
Faculty of Education
Université de Montréal

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[4] There is great irony in the fact that the OECD, the major proponent of results-based management and competition, recognizes through its PISA program the excellence of a country whose strategy for improving education rests on premises that run counter to OECD recommendations.
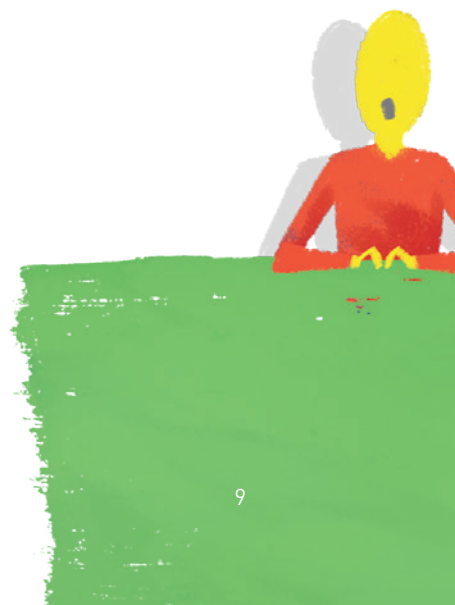
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Introduction

At a time when large organizations everywhere are prioritizing professionalization, it has become critical to develop a framework for competent action in educational consulting to enhance the sense of professional identity of educational consultants (ECs).

The resulting Framework identifies and outlines professional actions that foster students' educational success. It equips educational consultants with examples of emblematic educational situations faced by ECs. The great innovation of this Framework is to provide not just a list of expected competencies, but to identify typical situations representative of the profession. Our ultimate goal is to provide specific, consistent guidance for Quebec school boards.

1. WHY A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPETENT ACTION IN EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING?

Frameworks like this one are necessarily complex and specific to each profession. This Framework in particular can be seen as a structure to help us understand emblematic professional situations—those that capture the essential nature of this profession—thereby positioning and guiding our professional development.

The Framework for competent action in educational consulting helps define, recognize, and enrich the profession. It breaks new ground through its collaborative, appreciative approach to documenting real-life situations, outlining emblematic situations, and providing insights to inform EC's professional practice, all with a view to advocating for, supporting and highlighting the vital work educational consultants perform.

The Framework guides the professional development of ECs. It also provides a tool for the integration of people entering the profession (primarily teachers).

Finally, this Framework helps promote a common professional culture: it strengthens the shared professional identity of educational consultants.

2. FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

The Framework has two parts. The first is contextual, describing the problems and challenges our education system faces today. It presents multiple frames of reference that define selected concepts, and details the methodology of this work, including a discussion of best practices, operational steps and their implementation.

The second part presents the research results, and specifically the four emblematic professional situations and their components. These situations arise in the daily professional practice of ECs working to foster student success in Quebec. Each situation is broken down into sections—professional requirements; EC actions; resources, skills and attitudes; observable outcomes; and the facets of the reflective distance required of ECs. We then present the types of constraints on their work that ECs may encounter. Finally, we discuss how this Framework can help us situate educational consulting in the Quebec school system. A glossary of the concepts used in the Framework is included at the end.

1. Background

In 2017, the Quebec government published its Policy on Educational Success, whose policy orientations created new expectations around student success in the school system. The Policy describes an innovative shared vision of success, and sets objectives while defining three broad areas of intervention out of which challenges and policy orientations emerge. Since these issues reflect the core functions of educational consultants (ECs), the importance of defining the competent action of these education professionals is more timely than ever. While fostering continuity, Quebec's new Policy also seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the province's public education system.

Endrizzi and Thibert (2012, p. 6) stress the importance of acting to ensure that schools "are concerned with improving student performance by focusing on the teaching and learning processes"[1]. The research generally and literature meta-analyses specifically have shown that teachers are the primary actors in student success (Hattie, 2009). Other studies demonstrate how members of school administration also impacts student success (Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford, 2006; Hallinger, 2003, 2005; Hattie, 2009; Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, 2005). Often, school administration will use a school district's educational services resources to support its staff's professional development.

In recent decades, the mandates, roles, and responsibilities of ECs have evolved to meet the needs of school staff for support, training, guidance, and advising (Lessard, Héon, Ognaligui, and Verdy, 2003; Royal, Gagnon, and Ménard, 2013). Since 2000, ECs have worked primarily as trainers and guides overseeing the implementation of pedagogical reforms (Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement, 2014b; Guertin, 2013). However, they also sometimes model teaching practices in support of the professional development of teachers, with minor interactions with students. In 2008, in response to agreements with school administration, their work had already begun focusing on an advisory role (Royal et al., 2013). Quebec's Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (CSE, 2014, p. 73) recognizes four main areas of action in ECs professional practice:

- Consulting and advisory services in support of educational institutions.

- Training in support of the objectives in school boards' strategic plans.

- Training based on management agreements, school success plans, and statistical data on student results.

- Support for school administrators in their role as educational leaders.

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[1] Quotation translated from the French. To read the original quotation, see the French-language version of this document: https://www.usherbrooke.ca/gef/conseillance/referentiel-agir-competent.

Pedagogical consultants have played multiple roles over the years, from experts in teaching practices to facilitators, guides, and collaborators (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2014; Guillemette, Royal and Monette, 2015; Royal et al., 2013; Guertin-Wilson, 2014). As the profession has changed and the ECs' mandates grown more diverse and complex, the point has come where educational consulting needed a Framework for competent action. This Framework has mobilized a combination of human and material resources, within an awareness of varied situations and contexts. The ability to self-regulate our practices and professional action requires reflective distance.

From this perspective, the quality of EC actions is often measured by how they inform, train, guide, plan, innovate, document research outcomes, suggest organizational improvements, resolve complex problems or situations, collaborate, and more (Duchesne, 2016). As Lessard notes, the work of ECs will always be, by its very nature, challenging, because it is designed to help teachers become more critical and independent, which can in turn cause teachers to resist the influence brought to bear on them (Lessard, 2016).

Broad trends in the education world have demanded that that ECs work steadily, and often simultaneously, in a range of environments. Their work is complexified by the multiplicity of relationships established with various education system actors. The work of ECs therefore presupposes a culture of collaboration (Saint-Arnaud, 1995, 2008). Lessard (2016) notes that ECs intervene in the institutional sector in mandates that involve implementing policies designed to foster educational success or pedagogical and educational innovations. Their actions also have a relational character when they support people or groups for professional development purposes.

ECs are most often drawn from the ranks of teaching personnel. Though both professions work in similar contexts, the professional transition to educational consulting involves a change from front-line teaching to working on pedagogical practice. A further layer of complexity is woven into the very fabric of educational consulting practice. According to Lessard (2016),

conceptions color professional identity: there are subject-centred ECs, pedagogy experts within a specific field, ECs who focus on the student–teacher relationships, trainers for adults, agents of change, and, lastly, those whose work is defined based on a specific topic or targeted student population.

Having distanced themselves from the teaching profession, ECs must carve out their niche within the school district. To achieve professional autonomy, they require recognition for their practice. And because the profession of educational consulting is directed towards experienced adults, an adult education approach is needed. A dearth of adult-education-specific reference material has been detrimental to the construction of professional identity in educational consulting. ECs have compensated this shortcoming with professional development sessions and "modes of socialization specific to the profession"[2] (Dubar, 1991, in Orianne and Draelants, 2010, p. 16).

Unlike teaching staff and school administration, who use competency-based frameworks, ECs have a classification plan that sets out, with greater specificity, the tasks and attributes of the profession. This frame of reference is not well-developed enough to define a profession in which ECs are called upon to provide training, guidance, and advisory services (Guertin, 2013), while also fostering innovation. In recent decades, an evolving range of tasks associated with the profession of educational consulting, along with the cyclical requirements of school organizations, have made it difficult to define the profession of educational consultant and, by extension, to establish a professional identity. For all these reasons, we believe a framework for competent action for educational consulting will enhance recognition for the profession.

As Le Boterf (2007) has noted, frameworks serve professional development by defining core activities and professional requirements to be developed with a view to professionalization. Wittorski (2007, p. 167) notes that professionalization is meant to be an ongoing process. A framework for competent action can only be considered

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[2] Quotation translated from the French.

provisional, because it is linked to "a social dynamic in which situations, actors, objects, and learning methods are constantly evolving"[3].

To date, some research has defined professional competencies for educational consultants, with a focus on their role as drivers of change. In 2008, Lafortune(a), Lepage, Persechino, and Bélanger listed eight competencies for supporting professional change and developing capacity to influence innovation. And in 2012 Charlier and Biémar documented the skillset exhibited by group leaders who are drivers of change. It is clear that the definitions of competencies set out by these two studies are also mandates specific to ECs.

This Framework for competent action defines emblematic professional situations for educational consultants. Already, action research conducted at the Université de Sherbrooke has laid the groundwork for defining two professional situations for educational consulting. It has also

permitted us to identify the key professional actions, the necessary resources, skills, and attitudes, and professional requirements to be developed to improve professional action in these situations. Certain school boards have already established frameworks to better define the role of educational consultants within their organizations.

In this context, it is worthwhile to develop this Framework of competent action in educational consulting, to shape professional identity while specifying actions taken to support the educational success of students. This is precisely the purpose of the research behind this Framework. Three objectives were formulated to further guide our process: 1) Describe real professional situations that foster student success, 2) Identify emblematic professional situations, and 3) Formulate the components of competent action in educational consulting.

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[3] Quotation translated from the French.

2. Frames of reference

To better understand underlying issues facing educational consultants, we set out some elements that constituting a conceptual framework. We will also justify our choice of the term "competent action" over such notions of role, practice, or competence.

Figure 1. Connections between key concepts in the frames of reference

To understand educational consulting we must introduce two key concepts illustrated in Figure 1: **real** professional situations, and **emblematic** professional situations. We have chosen the concept of competent action (Masciotra and Medzo, 2009; Masciotra, Morel, and Mathieu, 2011; Le Boterf, 2013; Jonnaert 2006, 2009; Boutet 2005) to explain the attributes and characteristics of the professional work performed by ECs. We believe that the notions of role and competence are insufficient to place educational consulting practices on a footing of professionalism and professional identity. We find that this concept of competent action can more effectively situate ECs within their professional reality.

2.1 From role to competent action

Three concepts are traditionally combined to describe professional action: role, practice, and competence. It will be worthwhile to define them here, to show their limitations within this Framework of competent action.

2.1.1 ROLE

The role played by a given actor within an organization corresponds to their social position within a group, an organization, or society at large. Roles develop as a set of activities, behaviours, and tasks, which are sometimes fixed and sometimes evolve in response to the values and expectations of the entity to which the actor belongs. Roles provide a model of behaviours to be adopted. While they situate actors, their predominant definition derives from a position within an entity. But the concept of role cannot fully describe the attributes and characteristics of the profession; it positions the person within their organization, but does not confine them to a set of assigned tasks, as in a classification scheme (Gouvernement du Québec, 2011).

2.1.2 PRACTICE

Zapata (2004, p. 77) defines practice as an "activity performed upon reality with an express or unstated goal of changing something."[1] For B.

Charlier (2010, p. 141), practice is "comprised of representations, personal theories, rules, behaviours, know-how, emotions, knowledge, routines, and objects."[2] Unless it is situated within a context, practice does not give rise to full-fledged competent action in the way a real professional situation can. In other words, rather than reflect on reconstructed practice, we have chosen to build awareness around the intention to act, in connection with a professional activity, within a real situation, which fosters enaction. In this way, educational consultants act in such a way that the resources mobilized contribute to the meaning assigned to a situation (Varela, cited in Barth, 2002; Masciotra and Medzo, 2009). This concept better accounts for competent action.

2.1.3 COMPETENCE

We have defined competence as a form of knowing how to act that takes shape in one or more complex professional situations to achieve a precise effect. Competence arises out of the mobilization and combination of internal and external resources from which an appropriate, situation-specific professional practice emerges. Also inherent in competence is an analysis and explanation of an actor's chosen way of doing and acting. Le Boterf (2008) considers it overly restrictive to limit the concept of an actor's professional action to include only attributes and characteristics of the profession. A framework of competencies limits the fields of operation and action. However, the profession is at risk of being defined by expectations rather than by real situations of professional action. Le Boterf (2010) further notes that descriptions of professions are often essentially regulatory in perspective.

Role, practice, and competence are notions that have often been used to define the attributes of professions. We feel, however, that it is more accurate to characterize a profession through the competent action of its members. This competent action emerges out of real practices, and is defined in the light of emblematic professional situations.

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[1] Quotation translated from the French.

[2] Quotation translated from the French.

2.2 Competent action

Initially, competent action develops in and through action. Describing these actions can outline a system (Masciotra et al., 2011), and demonstrate an actor's ability to adapt to a professional situation. It then becomes possible to identify the situational intelligence that drives the actor in action, within the logic of "enaction" (Masciotra and Medzo, 2009). Since each situation is unique, educational consultants must self-regulate their professional actions to make them appropriate to a given context. They mobilize, combine, and adapt a set of resources to adjust their actions to a real situation.

Le Boterf (2013) defines competent action as the ability of professionals to mobilize internal and external resources to resolve a problematic situation or act on a complex situation. In addition, competent action relies on the actor's ability to pause and achieve the necessary reflective distance to assess how to mobilize resources in response to the real situation. By the same token, they are preparing to reapply their learning in later situations.

The interplay between resource mobilization, the real outcomes in a given situation, and reflective distance favour the development of operational schemes that include both cognitive and conative dimensions (Kolb, 1984). In this sense, professionals develop their ability to adjust their practice through self-questioning (Guillemette, 2017). Competent action can be seen in professionals in action when they transform a professional situation by mobilizing and combining their resources, including their professional experience, in a way that preserves their capacity for reflective distance from, or during, this action.

Initially, competent action develops in and through action—this is precisely what differentiates a framework for competent action from a framework of competencies. Competent action is the action itself; a competency is something different altogether: a theoretical, or distanced, description of the action. With competent action, we get closer to the core of professional practice. Professional knowledge cannot be reduced to the mere ability to make or do something, but must pass into action itself (Masciotra and Medzo, 2009). Like

Davel and Tremblay (2011, p. 83), we believe that "acting as a competent practitioner is synonymous with knowing how to successfully take one's place within a field of practice… Knowledge, the individual and the object of knowledge must be conceived as being produced jointly within a situated practice."[3]

Competent action manifests concretely in the unique context of a real situation. It is comprised of representative professional requirements; a collection of resources, skills and attitudes; representative key actions, expected results, manifestations of reflective distance, and constraints (Le Boterf, 2010; Jonnaert, 2006, 2009).

2.3 Emblematic professional situations

Competent action does not exist in isolation from the professional situations in which it is deployed and made concrete. This means that, once deployed, competent action becomes observable; this is in fact the very definition of "deployment" (Tardif, Fortier and Préfontaine, 2006; Le Boterf, 2010). Within this Framework, the profession of educational consultant is defined based on competent action deployed in real professional situations, rather than the study or analysis of work assignments, expected competencies, or assigned roles. As Masciotra and Medzo (2009) note, completing a task is insufficient to explain an individual's position of enaction. The task, in this view, does not constitute the entirety of the professional situation, but is merely one component of it. Competent action cannot be reduced to a practice, because practice itself is not competent action, but rather the locus where competent action manifests. Professional situations elicit competent action.

From an analysis of real professional situations, we can develop a conceptual map of what we will call emblematic professional situations. Emblematic professional situations will not correspond exactly to the reality observed in the field. Our map includes properties that are present in multiple real professional situations, and as such represents situations that are similar in both their aims and their activities. It gathers real professional situations with enough common and

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3 Quotation translated from the French.

convergent characteristics that they can be experienced repeatedly, either by the same person or by another person within a similar context. This is what Le Boterf (2006, p. 109) calls a "typical professional" situation, while authors like Allal (1999), Jonnaert (2006) and Scallon (2004) use the concept of "family of situations." In the context of these guidelines, the term "emblematic" used by Guillaumin (2012), is more suitable for formalizing the characteristics specific to educational consulting, as a typical and representative professional situation.

2.4 Situational intelligence

A distinction must be drawn between the objective of an activity, associated with its content; the situation's intent, which is tied to the meaning of an action; and situational intelligence, which is associated with the concepts of the actor organizing their action. Situational intelligence drives the self-regulation of, and attaches ethical meaning to, a given action. Everything occurs within a situation of professional action—the key concept of our research. Moreover, actors transcend the action itself by gaining awareness of their actions through their sensory-cognitive receptivity. Their action is then self-regulated based on the perceptible manifestations of the constructed conceptions. The act of educational consulting is supported by this awareness of professional action. Their conceptions, and the aim pursued, answer the following question: "Why are we acting in this way?"[4] (Guertin, 2012, p. 36). According to Vergnaud (1996, in Barbier, J.-M., p. 277–278):

"In interactions with others, in interpretations of intentional and unintentional signs in their behaviour, in choices involving speech and silence, the selection of what to say and its form, questions, doubts and affirmations, there manifests a knowledge that is at once highly important and decisive to the individual's adaptation to their environment."[5]

Situational intelligence refers to people's "understanding of situations and how to be effective in them, either by adapting existing assets, or by constructing new resources"[6] (Jonnaert, 2006, p. 23). Jonnaert (in Fabre, 2006, p. 37) adds that "competence is really situational intelligence: it makes possible the activity of a person within the problematized space of situations."[7] Attending to situational intelligence brings us closer to an idea of competence. In the words of LeBlanc (2001, p. 244): "Since any action is perceived as an intentional action, this imposes an interdependent relationship between the intention and the consequence of a behaviour. Such a conception makes it possible to envisage action as invested in a search for skills."[8]

In the course of interactions, actors "adapt" their behaviour according to the degree of acquiescence or resistance they perceive in their listeners. This dimension of action is difficult to define, as it is part of the actor's subjectivity and depends on their degree of receptivity. Therein lies the full meaning of enaction (Masciotra and Medzo, 2009), namely the ability to modulate and regulate one's interventions in real situations. It relates to the intelligence of actors with regard to situations (Masciotra, 2003, cited in Jonnaert, in Fabre, 2006): "Competence... is itself situated, and is inseparable as much from the person who develops it, as it is from their actions, and the situation constructed by these actions (Jonnaert, in Fabre, 2006, p. 33).

The meaning that an actor assigns to their action lies not in the context, but in the intelligent relationship they establish with the situation, elements of which have the potential to incite profound questioning. Meaning is constructed by the individual, through the relationship established between what is, what is perceived, and what is expected; it consists of awareness in action. However, the meaning ascribed to an action develops through internal dialogue. It

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[4] Quotation translated from the French.

[5] Quotation translated from the French.

[6] Quotation translated from the French.

[7] Quotation translated from the French.

[8] Quotation translated from the French.

brings us inexorably back to the relationship that the actor establishes with "knowing how to act a certain way"[9] (Guertin, 2012, p. 36).

2.5 Professionalization and professional identity

Wittorski (2007, p. 155) defines professionalization as an identity transaction between a subject and the environment which is part of a "dynamic of social construction of skills."[10] He explains the process thus (*ibid.*, p. 158):

> "Professionalization is… not merely a social intention (from the organization's standpoint), which has as its ultimate aim the development of people at work, but also an identity performance, or transaction of self-recognition (from the individual, through the acts performed) and effective recognition from the environment (attributing the qualities of competence and professionalism to a subject)."[11]

Professionalization is therefore a dynamic, ongoing process that enables us to develop a practice whose objectives are professional development and, more specifically, professional identity. It enhances the ability to respond to the high expectations within the education system, and to adapt continuously to independently resolve complex and varied problems.

Professionalization demands ethical action and encourages professionals to contend with the unpredictable nature of their unique work context.

Perrenoud (1994, cited in Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, 2014, p. 10) defines professionalization as "access to an ability to solve complex and varied problems by one's own means, within the framework of general objectives and ethics, without being constrained by the need to follow detailed procedures designed by others." By their action, and in their reflective attitude toward the profession, educational consultants "strengthen the construction of identity and an awareness of professional uniqueness"[12] (Perrenoud, 2001, cited in Portelance, 2010, p. 24).

Like professionalization, identity construction consists in a tension between the identity we attempt to ascribe to the profession, what the profession represents for the organization, and the vision actors have of their daily actions. For Kadourri (2002, cited in Wittorski, 2007, p. 154), "identity should be thought of in transactional terms, meaning that it is dynamic and not static: a process of managing disparities and tensions, rather than a stable state." Clearly, identity is negotiated socially, but also through action. Professionalization serves as an identity transaction between a subject and the environment which is part of a "dynamic of social construction of skills" (Wittorski, 2007, p. 155).

Thus, considering the professionalization of educational consultants for whom student success forms the core of their actions, there is a need to identify real professional situations that are relevant for supporting the educational success of students, in order to identify emblematic professional situations.

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[9] Quotation translated from the French.

[10] Quotation translated from the French.

[11] Quotation translated from the French.

[12] Quotation translated from the French.

3. Methodology

This Framework for competent action for educational consultants was developed using a collaborative and appreciative research approach, borrowed from the notion of "appreciative inquiry" (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, 2008).

3.1 A collaborative, appreciative research process

This research method is characterized first and foremost by its collaborative dimension, which engenders and develops close ties among stakeholders in the education system and academia. In the context of this project, this collaboration is evident in: 1) the establishment of three separate committees (Steering, Scientific, and Praxeology) and 2) the space accorded to ECs, community managers, school administration, and teaching staff. These actors also comprise the research sample.

In addition to being collaborative, the research approach is appreciative, insofar as we sought to recognize currently existing elements in the environment that contribute to success, rather than seek out problematic elements. In this Framework, our concern is to take into account the realities for ECs in the school system—a community of professionals—in order to formalize their competent action to foster student success. Moreover, to identify emblematic professional situations, we begin with the real-life situations experienced by ECs that, in their estimation, foster student success. We establish our hypothesis that

the way of acting in a real situation will usually have direct or indirect repercussions in the school environment in support of student success.

Appreciative action research is most often operationalized in five phases: 1) observation of an event or a successful project; 2) description of this success, and related practices; 3) extrapolation, from this success, of probable broader applications of these practices; 4) formulation of promising avenues by which the practices could be implemented concretely and, finally, 5) innovation in action by introducing projected practices based on the desired situation. For feasibility and cost reasons, it was difficult if not impossible to fully realize the fifth phase—to implement an iterative approach with the same people, over an extended period of two to three years, within several cohorts in a large area like Quebec. For this reason, our approach does not qualify as action research, but rather as collaborative and appreciative research.

Considering this context, the fifth phase of the process was adapted to the real contexts and geographical characteristics of Quebec school districts and schools. Our aim was to be truly representative of educational consulting professionals across Quebec, while taking into account characteristics specific to various environments (see sampling indicators at Point 3.3). With this

adaptation, the proposed approach has become wholly appropriate to achieving the project's three specific objectives:

- Describe real-life professional situations that support student success.

- Identify emblematic professional situations.

- Describe the components of competent action in educational consulting.

With a view to facilitating collaboration and ensuring research rigour, we worked with three committees, each of which fulfilled a specific role at various times during the research. Figure 2 details the research roadmap, including each committee's role.
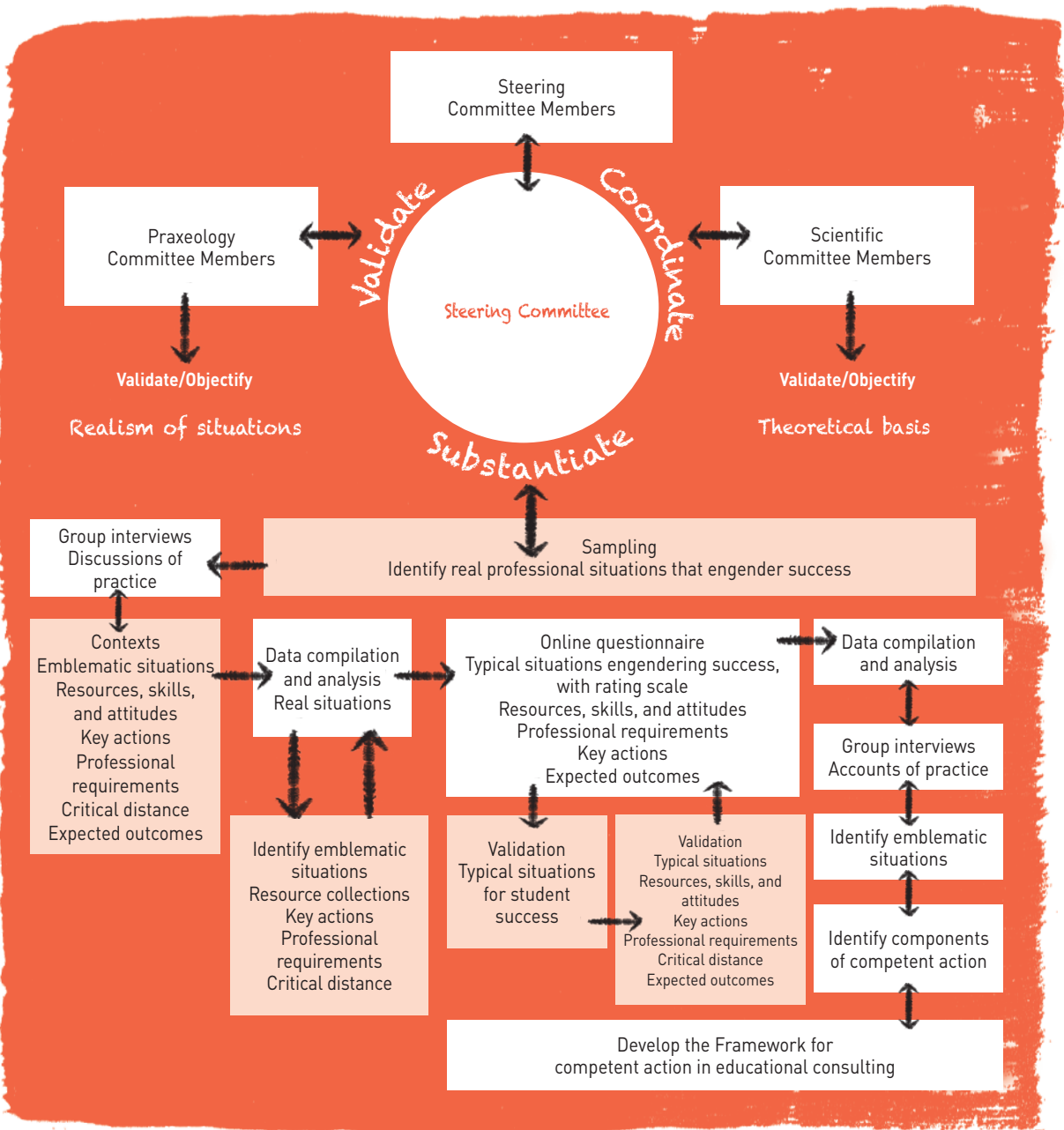

Figure 2. Roadmap for collaborative and appreciative research

3.2 Scientific, Steering, and Praxeology committees: Fostering collaboration, ensuring validation

Three committees are in place to connect actors in the field with university researchers. The Committees play critical roles in ensuring the methodological rigour of the approach. The Scientific Committee validates the research's scientific rigour[1], the Steering Committee ensures coherences and feasibility[2], and the Praxeology Committee is responsible for research reliability, appropriation, and adherence to values of respect and inclusivity[3].

The Steering Committee is made up of representatives from various associations[4] and professionals from Quebec school districts[5]. Committee members are tasked with ensuring research feasibility by approving various stages of the operationalization, to keep these focused on research objectives. Steering committee members met several times during various project phases: planning, implementation, operationalization, and impact analysis.

Scientific Committee members are university researchers. The Committee met several times to validate the conceptual framework and research methodology. Along the way, a third researcher was added to the Committee to validate the outline of concepts underlying the foundations of the research. Before the publication of the work, the committee validated the consistency between the conceptual framework, the project methodology, and the results.

The Praxeology Committee is made up of five educational consultants. In light of ethical values, and working from a democratic, inclusive, perspective, these educational consultants took an objective, critical, and realistic look at research data as it emerged. Their comments permitted us to evaluate the realism of professional situations, shed light on certain aspects of real and emblematic situations experienced by ECs, and question elements emerging in their professional environment. As part of the process, we held several meetings with the Praxeology Committee[6].

3.3 The sample

In light of the large geographic area and high number of educational consulting professionals and other school actors who collaborate with them—educational services, school administration, teaching staff, etc.—we adopted a convenience sampling method. This sample takes into account the size of school districts (SDs), geographic area, geographic type (urban or semi-urban), and the educational programs in which ECs work: general school population (preschool, elementary, and secondary school); general adult education, and vocational training[7].

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[1] The criterion of **scientific rigour** describes the accuracy of the conceptual framework, the rigour of the methodology and its capacity to achieve data saturation, through a perspective of objectivity.

[2] **Coherence and feasibility** refer to the demonstration that the operationalization of the research, as conducted, would in fact achieve specific objectives, particularly with regard to the choice of data collection tools, techniques used in data collection and data analysis methods. It also seeks to ensure that the research methodology is realistic and attainable within its context.

[3] **Reliability**, **appropriation**, **respect for values** and **inclusivity** are necessary to forge connections between the reality of the environment, what is documented and its validity. **Reliability** seeks to ensure that what is reported exclusively represents what participants actually said; **appropriation** seeks to verify whether participants recognize themselves in what is reported, while the **respect for values and inclusivity** ensure that participants feel heard, listened to, and represented in the research results (Guillemette, 2014).

[4] ACCPQ, ACSQ, CSPN, CTREQ, FCSQ, Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon, FPPE, Université de Sherbrooke.

[5] Educational services, School administration.

[6] ECs

[7] We counted 1,165 active ECs in 2013–2014, and more than 1,500 in 2014–2015 including 1,371 in French-language programs.

Table 1 – Sample

School district (SD)	Geographic type	Number of ECs	Program
3 SDs 3,000 to 10,000 students	3 semi-urban environments	3 to 5 ECs per district	Preschool Primary Secondary General adult education Vocational training
4 SDs 11,000 to 18,000 students	2 urban environments 2 semi-urban environments	5 to 8 ECs per district	
3 SDs 19,000+ students	3 urban environments	8 to 10 ECs per district (2 cohorts in 2 SDs)	
Total	10 geographic locations, 5 semi-urban and 5 urban	12 EC cohorts 75 ECs	

Table 1 illustrates the geographic type of the working environment of ECs interviewed in Quebec during research phases 1 to 4. Each cohort encountered was represented by 3 to 10 participants (Appendix 1). Depending on the school district size, two cohorts from the same school district participated in the research. In total, we met twelve cohorts, representing seventy-five ECs drawn from ten school boards. An open call was launched through school board representatives or the various associations that sit on the steering committee. Participants were contacted by email or by phone.

In phase 5 of the process, the sample was extended to all ECs working in schools and or vocational training centres in Quebec.

The survey, which received responses from hundreds of ECs, asked participants to indicate their area(s) of action and sectors of activity, with areas designating the fields of professional activity occupied within the school organization. Pedagogical consultants do, however, sometimes work in multiple areas. For example, they may work in both primary and secondary programs, or in primary alone. They might also be responsible for a school subject, assigned to a single secondary school, etc. When we speak of "programs," we are specifically referring to school clienteles. The overall picture is of a richly varied situation. Consultants may work with preschool and elementary students, or elementary and secondary, or secondary and adult general education, etc. The total number of answers received therefore exceeds the number of respondents, since a consultant can occupy several fields of activity and work in multiple different areas.

The questionnaire was sent directly to hundreds of ECs, and we received 238 responses out of approximately 1,500 ECs contacted[8]. A second questionnaire went to school administrators, including principals (n = 19) and teaching staff (n = 15), for a total of 34 people, including 8% administrators and 4.5% teaching personnel, representing 12.5%, of the total number of respondents (272: 100%). We have reached the target of 10% representation of respondents from administration and teaching personnel.

After analyzing new data that emerged in phase 5, we held a final group interview with five ECs from four separate school districts on the Island of Montreal and the South Shore of Montreal. These districts were selected for the sole reason that they had previously collaborated with academic researchers. Geographic proximity also facilitated this collaboration.

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[8] 2016–2017 data, sources including Quebec ministry of education (MEES) data collection system (PERCOS).

Table 2 – Statistical portrait of the ECs who responded to the survey

Professional fields of practice of ECs	Programs
115 in elementary (48.3%)	98 pre-school (41.2%)
92 in secondary (38.7%)	168 elementary (70.6%)
46 in special education (19.3%)	139 secondary (58.4 %)
65 subject specialists (27.3%)	31 adult general education (13%)
29 school-based (12.2%)	14 vocational education (5.9%)
45 general practice (18.9%)	2 special education (0.8%)
17 ICT specialists (7.1%)	9 others
41 other designations	
School district size Number of students	**Years of experience as EC**
Large district: 50.4%	0-5 years: 87 respondents (36.6%)
Average district: 23.1%	6-10 years: 78 respondents (32.8%)
Small district: 26.5%	11-18 years: 63 respondents (26.5%)
	19 years and +: 10 respondents (4.2%)

3.4 Research operationalization

Initially, data collection followed the process as planned: twelve group interviews (phases 1 to 4), followed by an online questionnaire (phase 5). Ultimately, it proved necessary to add a third data collection period (phase 6). This also meant creating an interview group on research and development, whose aim was to bring together innovative practices in support of student success in various settings.

3.4.1 GROUP INTERVIEWS (PHASES 1 TO 4)

The group interview approach we selected (Geoffrion, 2010) was based on a strategy of explicitation, as the concept is developed by Vermersch (2014, p. 34), namely ¨questioning based on the reflection of a particular experience.¨[9] Oral discussions were recorded, transcribed, and served to collect testimonies in the form of *story* which, as Robin, Delory-Momberger, and Boutinet (2006) note, enables the creation of spaces that leave room for the personal account of the individual describing a situation. The objective of these interviews was to describe real-life educational consulting situation that the EC believes concretely

contributes to achieving direct outcomes (for teachers) or indirect outcomes (for students), by fostering student success.

This phase involved a process of explictation based on an analysis of real practice (Guillemette, 2017), i.e., explaining by what means or how the context of the situation described was experienced personally, while also elaborating on the ways of acting to impact the professional action; the collection of resources, skills and attitudes; key actions, professional requirements, expected outcomes and reflective distance from, or during, the action. Among the situations reported, the group chose one to investigate in further detail. Then, ECs participating in the interviews listened to, questioned, and gave feedback on their colleague's story. Regarding the situation described, ECs other than the narrator described or evoked similar situations that impacted student success in their respective environments.

At each meeting, an interview outline was developed, including questions and themes, based on the four process phases (see the interview template, Appendix 2). More generally, Figure 3 illustrates how to accompaniement thinking according to the first four phases of the collaborative and appreciative research process.

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[9] Quotation translated from the French.

Phase 1 - Observe a successful situation

Describe a *real-life educational consulting situation* that has prompted educational and peda-gogical actions that foster student success: Describe the context.

Phase 2 - Describe the success, and associated educational consulting practices

Describe how this practice has been beneficial for the targeted personnel, students, col-laborators (if applicable), and yourself:

- Describe the action taken in practice: resources, skills and attitudes mobilized, tasks chosen, performance criteria, the anticipated outcomes;
- Describe how reflective distance was achieved (from, or during, action);
- Describe how the outcomes supported success;
- Describe the impacts on targeted personnel, collaborators, and yourself.

Phase 3 - Extrapolate, from this success, probable broader application within educational consulting practices

Describe similar situations you experience in support of educational success:

- Describe similar situations experienced by other ECs;
- Describe ways to act in practice: internal and external resources mobilized, tasks chosen, performance criteria, anticipated outcomes.

Phase 4 - Formulate pathways for future improvements in consulting practices to be implemented in the field

Describe what could be changed or adjusted to enhance the desired effects, if you had to repeat a similar practice:

- Describe elements to retain and improve;
- Describe difficulties experienced or the elements to be eliminated or adjusted.

Figure 3. Guidance for reflection based on collaborative and appreciative research approach (adapted from Cooperrider, DL, Whitney, DK and Stavros, JM, 2008.)

3.4.2 ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES (PHASE 5)

An initial online questionnaire was addressed to all ECs working for school boards or Quebec edu-cational institutions in the general program, gen-eral adult education, or vocational training. A second questionnaire was addressed to managers of educational services of school boards, directors of educational institutions or education facilities who work closely with ECs and teaching staff.

Questionnaires were built around typical situations that emerged from the analysis of the real situations explained by the group interviews.

For ECs, the questionnaire included the component parts of situations, specifically professional requirements that emerged from each typical situation. The Likert rating scale was used to assess how realistic the situations were, requirements relating to each situation, and the contexts of the professional action.

Questionnaires presented in Google Forms included a general statement for the three emblematic professional situations, each of which had two or three contexts for professional action. ECs used the scale to rate whether the contexts, for each of the typical situations formulated, accurately represented professional activities carried out within their organization. The choices were as follows: not at all; somewhat; mostly, with a few discrepancies; completely. Each statement literally described a context for professional action for each typical situation.

With the questionnaire for ECs, our aim was to validate how representative the professional requirements identified in each typical situation really were. Using the same rating scale–not at all; somewhat; mainly, with a few discrepancies; completely—we asked the ECs to provide a rating.

The questionnaire for administrators and teaching personnel was confined to rating the typical situations using the same scale. These respondents were not asked for their opinions on professional requirements.

At the end of the questionnaire, we asked respondents if, in their current educational consultant assignments, ECs intervened in professional situations other than those listed in the questionnaire. After analyzing their responses, we decided it was worthwhile to question ECs in greater depth about this dimension of innovation.

3.4.3 FINAL INTERVIEW GROUP

Considering the new context[10] that emerged from answers concerning other types of situations, we decided to explore the role of educational consultants with regard to innovation, from a research and development perspective, in collaboration with university researchers.

For the purpose of leading this group, the interview outline was revised, while retaining the guided reflection approach (see Figure 3). During this meeting, we considered it appropriate to open the discussion on the validity of the transversal requirements emerging from the analysis of real situations.

3.5 Analytical framework of data

Given the collaborative dimension of this research approach, we should recall that the sampling was designed to represent all ECs in the Quebec school system. This collaboration is intended to reflect the actual experiences in the community in relation to competent action of educational consultants. By tying together theory and practice in this manner, we favoured an analysis framework based on continuous thematization, inspired by the work of Paillé and Mucchielli (2012). The stage was then set to determine and analyze variants or specificities through an "ongoing approach to attributing themes built up throughout the research" (ibid., p. 166).[11] In operational terms, this cross-referenced, co-constructed portrait can be observed in methods of analyzing group interviews and responses to online questionnaires designed to identify typical educational consulting that foster students' educational success.

For the purposes of analyzing transcripts, and providing initial themes, the following aspects were examined: contexts (real situations, similar situations), resource collections, key actions, professional requirements, expected outcomes and reflective distance. A data analysis tool, QDA Miner, was used to code the first data set[12], and a

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[10] 52.2% of the respondents who were educational consultants, and 28.1% of administrators and teaching personnel, added a comment concerning development, research, change management and innovation support situations.

[11] Quotation translated from the French.

[12] QDA Miner is qualitative data analysis software designed for mixed-research with mixed methods. http://provalisresearch.com/fr/produits/logiciel-d-analyse-qualitative/#sthash.B0pTdXt7.dpuf

double coding process equipped us to draw connections with emerging elements. Based on iterations between the stories of real situations, their decontextualization, and our coding analysis, we have identified the first model situations. We have also developed the components of competent action for each typical situation. A second level of analysis was used to validate these first-level situations by recontextualizing them to better grasp the meaning and scope of the so-called typical situations in their intervention contexts.

Online questionnaires have validated the representativeness of typical situations within school organizations. This time, quantitative data (%) was added to the recognition of the situations and their respective contexts of intervention on the part of the ECs as well as managers and teaching staff. Through the questionnaires, we were able to document real situations not identified during the first group interviews. It was agreed, however (see the operationalization of the approach - phase 6) to continue the analysis approach based on the Paillé and Mucchielli model (2012), starting with a new question which dealt with related professional practices linked to innovation in pedagogy, didactics and educational practices. The same analysis criteria were used to define the new emblematic situation.

3.6 Ethics procedures

Ethics procedures set out the role of rules to be negotiated and updated, including "respect for difference and confidentiality of exchanges, and ensuring a relationship of trust and honesty within the group"[13] (Guillemette, 2014, p. 237). Each cohort was reminded of these ground rules. The ethics procedures underlying the approach required a form of moral contract establishing the rules of trust, honesty, and confidentiality;

beginning this process required taking into account the way in which the contract was to be respected. By providing a safe, inviting space through physical and material organization, where these ethical rules are to apply, benevolent interpersonal relationships are created, on which authentic discussions can be built. "It was therefore [necessary] to put in place protective factors, of an operational (material), ethical, relational and professional nature"[14] (Guillemette, 2017, p. 130–131).

Although interviews were recorded as audio, and subsequently transcribed for research purposes, the data was treated as completely confidential[15], including data coding and analysis.

The only inconvenience for research participants was time invested in the group interview (half a day) and time spent answering the online questionnaire (15–20 minutes). Otherwise, discussions (group interviews or the work of the Steering Committee or Praxeology committees) shed new light on the professional practice of ECs. We therefore considered the potential risks to ECs to be low, while their contribution to the advancement of thinking with regard to competent action in educational consulting was an advantage to them. No monetary compensation was awarded for participation in the research.

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[13] Quotation translated from the French.

[14] Quotation translated from the French.

[15] The data is kept securely locked at the university, or in password-protected electronic files. Participants are identified by alphanumeric codes. These codes are accessible only to the researcher, the research professional and a research assistant. Data will be retained for five years after the results are published. Results will be presented anonymously, and may be disseminated in conferences or in professional or scientific articles.

4. Results

Introduction

All research data has been recorded and analyzed, permitting us to identify four emblematic professional situations (APSs), which are of course distinct from the thirteen real professional situations analyzed. These professional situations are deemed emblematic because they can be clearly and accurately associated with specific contexts in which ECs perform professional interventions. Nominative data has not been isolated in the results. Therefore, the objective of describing real professional situations to foster student success is omitted from these research results.

Each emblematic professional situation (EPS) is made up of two or three distinct contexts that illustrate associated areas of action. An EPS imposes professional demands, to which ECs respond, through their actions, by mobilizing a varied collection of resources, skills, and attitudes; structuring their response through key actions; and making adjustments based on their reflective distance from their actions and behaviours. Expected outcomes are related to both the professional's actions and student success. Finally, there are professional requirements that cut across all four emblematic professional situations. Figure 4 illustrates how the elements of an emblematic professional situation (EPS) are related to each other.

4.1 Emblematic professional situations

In this section, each emblematic professional situation will be described under its title, with a definition of key concept and outcomes.

Professional situation

Context 1	Context 2
Professional requirements	Collection of resources, skills, and attitudes
Key actions	Critical distance

Transversal professional requirements

Outcomes in student success
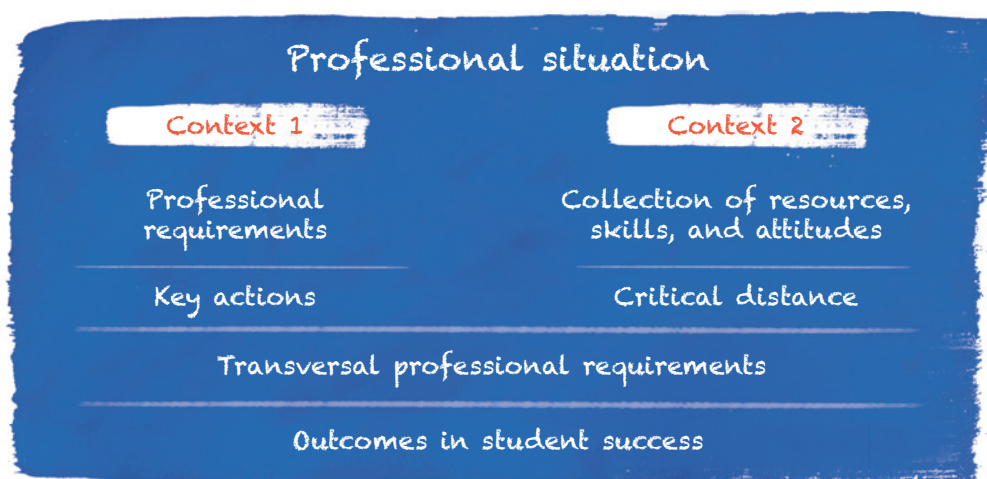
Figure 4. Components of emblematic professional situations

Emblematic professional situation

Advise school personnel on educational, pedagogical, and teaching practices within a problem-solving or coaching capacity.

In a school context, advising involves building, with individuals or groups, a relationship of influence based on knowledge of academic and professional literature, expertise, professional knowledge, and personal interaction skills.

During research interviews, it was noted that ECs act as resource people to resolve problem situations in 81.1% of consulting situations, and they dispense professional development in 87% of such cases. When analyzing survey responses, a third context emerged: giving an opinion at the request of school staff on pedagogy, teaching practice or broader educational matters.

THREE SPECIFIC CONTEXTS emerge from this emblematic professional situation:

- **Resolve** problematic situations with one or more member of a school team.

- **Coach** one or more school team members on educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.

- **Give an opinion** at the request of school staff on pedagogy, teaching practice or broader educational matters.

ADVISE

school staff on educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices in a problem-solving or coaching capacity.

Contexts

1
Resolve
problematic situations with one or more member of a school team.

2
Coach
one or more school team members on educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.

3
Give an opinion
at the request of school staff on pedagogy, teaching practice or broader educational matters.

EMBLEMATIC PROFESSIONAL SITUATION

Professional requirements

1. Establish a relationship of trust with staff;
2. Listen, observe, and ask questions to better understand the situations experienced by school staff;
3. Pay close attention to staff statements;
4. Use professional knowledge;
5. Base interventions on research data;
6. Adapt the intervention to the context;
7. Elicit a clear articulation of needs.

Representative professional actions

- Adapt messages to the situation (1);
- Ensure school personnel are valued and heard(1);
- Question and self-question about the situation and available resources (2);
- Prioritize or give advice based on intentions, to determine possible actions (3);
- Write out observations and recommendations on actions to be implemented (3-4);
- Share resources and tools from research or experience related to the situation (4-5);
- Identify school personnel's competency development level (7).

Resources, skills, and attitudes

- Problem solving skills;
- Mediation skills: listening, questioning, analysis, and feedback;
- Critical examination of the situation;
- Knowledge of educational and pedagogical practices related to the problematic situation;
- Guides or tools for educational or pedagogical practices to resolve the problem situation;
- Research-based references;
- Legal requirements;
- Educational administrators and educational services colleagues;
- Openness, positive intentions, empathy, transparency, neutrality.

OUTCOMES

TO FOSTER STUDENT SUCCESS

Direct relationship

WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- Develop school personnel's sense of professional effectiveness;
- Enhance understanding of the situation and existing resources to accompaniement actions;
- Enhance understanding of the needs, strengths, and challenges of students with special needs;
- Mobilize staff or team to implement educational and pedagogical practices appropriate to the intervention context;
- Develop a common understanding of frameworks.

Indirect relationship

WITH STUDENTS

- Decrease disruptive behaviour;
- Increase time available for classroom tasks;
- Give positive reinforcement to students for appropriate behaviours or for implementing learning strategies;
- Expose students to elements of the Quebec Education Program (QEP).

Critical distance

ON THE INTERVENTION CONTEXT AND ON OWN ACTIONS

- Earmark time for reflection with school administration and staff;
- Observe the impact of intervention with school staff, and keep records for subsequent interventions;
- Analyze the contribution of research to professional intervention;
- Identify EC's own abilities, values, beliefs and limitations pertaining to the situation;
- Make adjustments, based on an assessment of school personnel acquiescence or resistance to the situation;

- Recognize EC's own emotions while being able to accommodate the emotional reactions of school staff;
- Evaluate usefulness of tools based on personal experience;
- Suggest promising actions based on the intervention context;
- Improve communication skills;
- Assess the relevance of the frames of reference and approaches used during interventions;
- List continuing education needs for educational consulting.

Emblematic professional situation

Train teaching personnel and other school personnel on educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues in the classroom or within the organization (school district/school).

Training school personnel involves analyzing, planning, designing, leading and evaluating activities. Its aim is to develop professional knowledge in one or more people within an organization to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

During research interviews, participants stated that an educational consultant explaining practices related to educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues, to receptive teaching staff in a classroom setting, occurs in 52% of situations. It has been argued that, within an organization, school staff will assimilate or enhance their understanding of educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues in 92% of training situations.

TWO SPECIFIC CONTEXTS emerge from this typical professional situation:

- **Explain** practices related to educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues to receptive teaching personnel in a classroom setting.

- **Support** school staff in the context of continuing education with regard to educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues.

TRAIN

teaching personnel and other school personnel on educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues in the classroom or within the organization (school district/school).

Contexts

1
Explain
practices related to educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues to receptive teaching personnel in a classroom setting.

2
Support
school staff in the context of continuing education with regard to educational, pedagogical, or teaching issues.

EMBLEMATIC PROFESSIONAL SITUATION

Professional requirements

1. Create a climate of trust conducive to professional development;
2. Model practices stemming from research or experiential knowledge;
3. Interact with the teacher and students;
4. Observe teachers as they adapt their practices;
5. Encourage teachers to adopt a process of analyzing their approach;
6. Construct activities that challenge school staff's pre-conceived notions and perspectives.

Representative professional actions

- Establish an intervention protocol (2-3-4);
- Choose methods for selecting participants (1);
- Plan training content (2);
- Develop tools based on training needs (2-4);
- Break down modelled practice into clearly comprehensible components (2-3-4-5);
- Suggest appropriate methods for participants to apply and transfer strategies(5);
- Formulate the intervention's purpose, expected outcomes, and observable criteria (4-5-6);
- Draw on experiences of school staff (1-2-3).

Resources, skills, and attitudes

- Mediation skills: listening, questioning, analysis, and feedback;
- Critical perspective on the situation;
- Knowledge of educational and pedagogical practices related to training content;
- Knowledge of best practices based on research or experience;
- Adult education skills;
- Creativity and innovation in design of training activities;
- Books and other tools for educational or teaching practices;
- Research-based references;
- Legal requirements;
- Educational services colleagues;
- Various technologies;
- External experts;
- Professional development regulation tools;
- Training plan of the organization.

OUTCOMES
TO FOSTER EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Direct relationship
WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- Diversify the repertoire of teaching practices to achieve differentiation;
- Develop awareness of teaching practices;
- Use accurate, precise pedagogical vocabulary;
- Enhance feeling of personal effectiveness;
- Articulate a portrait of student learning;
- Develop the autonomy to act in a professional manner;
- Apply research in a way that is coherent with student needs;
- Engage in ongoing professional development.

Indirect relationship
WITH STUDENTS

- Foster student use of learning strategies at appropriate times;
- Drive tangible, active student participation in their learning process;
- Enhance student exposure to elements of the QEP and other frames of reference.

Critical distance
ON THE INTERVENTION CONTEXT AND ON OWN ACTIONS

- Adjust intervention practices in response to changes in teachers' practice;
- Adapt support practices to teachers' needs;
- Recognize the importance of the relationship established with the teacher;
- Detail strengths and challenges in discussions with colleagues, from a professional development perspective, with a view to ongoing professional development;

- Assess potential improvements to intervention protocol and tools used;
- Identify problem areas experienced during the professional intervention;
- Process feedback evaluations from the intervention to improve professional practice;
- Adjust attitude to foster teachers' commitment to ongoing professional development.

Emblematic professional situation

Accompany school personnel in a context of collaboration or mobilization to better support the improvement of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.

Accompaniement is an approach whereby a supporting professional assists one or more (supported) people through a process which is mutually defined and held over a fixed time-frame: it may involve the change, adaptation, or regulation of a practice. The strategies of the process are united by a practice of reflection.

During research interviews participants stated that educational consultants collaborate with one or more members of school personnel to support improvements of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices in 94.1% of situations. In addition, ECs mobilize one or more members of school personnel to support the improvement of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices in 92% of training situations.

TWO SPECIFIC CONTEXTS
emerge from this typical professional situation:

- **Collaborate** with one or more school personnel members to support the improvement of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.

- **Mobilize** one or more school staff members to support the improvement of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.

ACCOMPANIEMENT

school personnel in a context of collaboration or mobilization to better support the improvement of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.
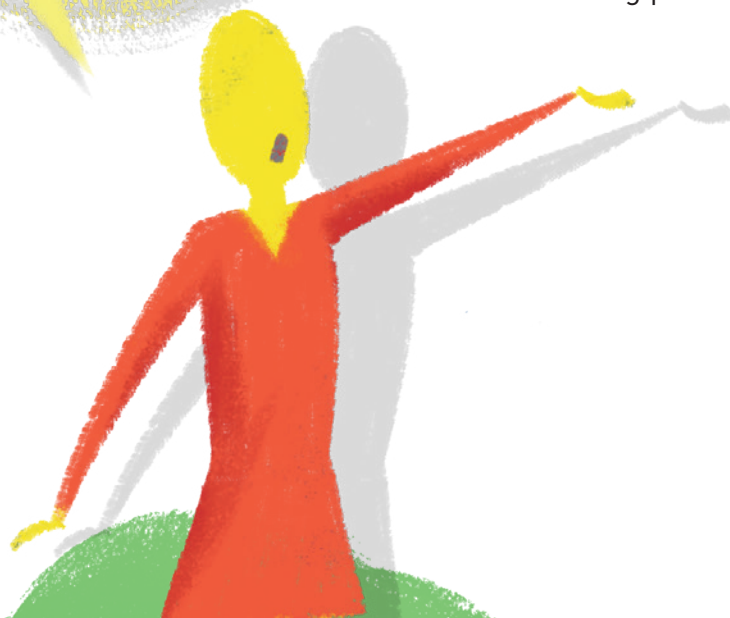
Contexts

1
Collaborate
with one or more school personnel members to support the improvement of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.

2
Mobilize
one or more school personnel members to support the improvement of educational, pedagogical, or teaching practices.

EMBLEMATIC PROFESSIONAL SITUATION

Professional requirements

1. Adopt a flexible accompaniement approach conducive to co-construction;
2. Voice their own questions concerning professional practice;
3. Manage the complexity of interventions to be performed in a given context;
4. Forge inter-professional alliances;
5. Act in an ethical manner;
6. Use a range of tools to maintain communication throughout the support process;
7. Accompany staff to adopt an approach that analyzes the practice in question.

Representative professional actions

- Create a working alliance (1-2-3-4-5-6);
- Plan and pilot actions based on the needs in the environment (1-3-4-5-6);
- Make use of colleagues' expertise (1-3-4);
- Explicitly identify resources useful in the context, drawn from research (1-3);
- Co-lead with school personnel (1-2-3-4-5-6);
- Ensure the sustainability of interventions (1-3-4-5-6-7);
- Implement conditions conducive to knowledge transfer (3-4-6-7);
- Advance the study of certain concepts (3-6);
- Take into account school personnel's proximal development zone (1-3-4);
- Publish results of the accompaniement process (5-6).

Resources, skills, and attitudes

- Mediation skills: listening, questioning, analysis, and feedback;
- Adult education skills;
- People skills;
- Diversified guidance practices;
- Knowledge of professional practices;
- Openness, positive intentions, empathy, transparency, neutrality;
- Openness to learn from practice;
- Concept of combined competencies;
- Legal requirements;
- Ongoing professional development;
- Interpersonal strategies based on theoretical constructs;
- Standards and operating procedures;
- Communication systems: technologies;
- School administrators and educational services colleagues;
- Frames of reference for support;
- Frames of reference based on research;
- Understanding of the local culture;
- Books and other resources on educational or teaching practices;
- Data on student skills development;
- Achievement indicators for professional objectives;
- Teaching journal, etc.;
- Models of professional communities;
- Experts.

OUTCOMES
TO FOSTER EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Direct relationship
WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- Cultivate an ability to question their teaching or professional practices;
- Explicitly transform teaching or professional practices;
- Perception of enhanced professional effectiveness;
- Personnel satisfaction;
- Participant engagement during continuing education activities;
- Favourable comments by school personnel responding to change;
- Positive reception of research data;
- Achieve real experimentation in classroom;
- Develop professional ties among school staff;
- Increased consideration of observed student needs;
- Achieve continuity of practices implemented;
- Receive acknowledgement from colleagues of changes in practice;
- Interest in further continuing education activities;
- Share teaching materials.

Indirect relationship
WITH STUDENTS

- Expose students to autonomous professional practices;
- Alter students' perception of the learning process;
- Improve academic results for certain students;
- Change working methods.

Critical distance
ON THE INTERVENTION CONTEXT AND ON OWN PRACTICE

- Adjust interventions based on group being supported;
- Analyze scope of interventions by gathering information;
- Balanced use of time according to the group's interventions;
- Assess effectiveness of communication methods;
- Consider side effects of interventions;
- Measure knowledge-transfer to class;
- Analyze position given to a "side-by-side" approach;
- Calculate effects of guidance role;
- Assess standards and methods of collaboration with a view to improving practices;
- Self-question on means of enhancing effectiveness of interventions;
- Jointly review implementation of combined competencies with partner;
- Determine whether initial indicators have been achieved;
- Estimate the effects of attitudes of openness, positive intentions, empathy, and transparency;
- Identify continuing education needs;
- Update teaching journal or create observation scorecards;
- Assess the relevance of the documentation distributed;
- Measure the effect of organizational variables.

Emblematic professional situation

Innovate in education, pedagogy, and teaching practice through research or development.

Finally, during the analysis of survey responses, after the second data collection round, a fourth emblematic situation emerged from the responses. This innovation in educational consulting refers to changes implemented to enhance student learning by transforming teaching practices through professional development.

Three dimensions help better define the notion of innovation in education:

1. The curriculum dimension, relating to the program area;

2. The pedagogical dimension, relating to learning areas and the classroom; it encompasses innovation within the learning process;

3. The organizational dimension, which deals with the question of structures, roles, and functions.

This emblematic professional situation emerged from an analysis of survey data. Nearly half of respondents said that they also intervene in this type of professional situation in support of the educational success of students.

TWO SPECIFIC CONTEXTS emerge from this typical professional situation:

- **Conduct research** with academics to develop solutions or actions for needs identified in the school environment.

- **Develop** a range of resources[1] in support of education, pedagogy, and teaching.

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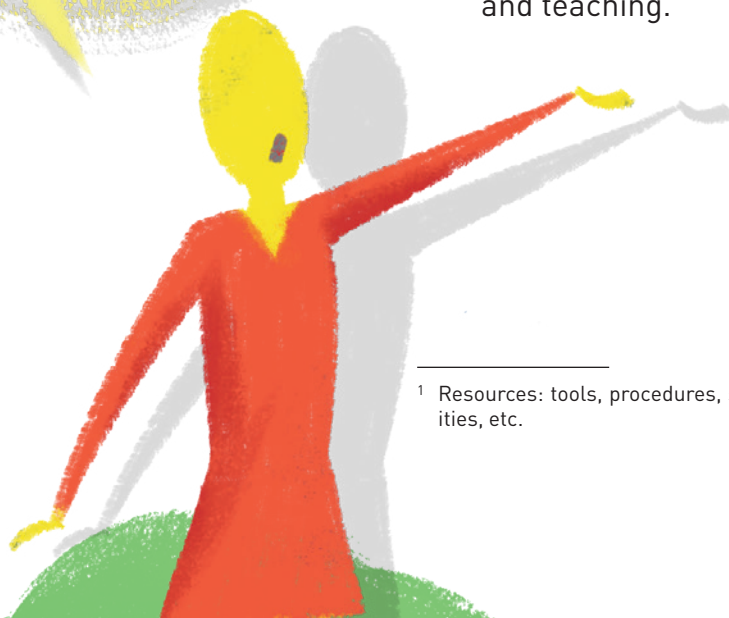
[1] Resources: tools, procedures, strategies, guides, activities, etc.

INNOVATE

in education, pedagogy, and teaching practice through research or development.

Contexts

1

Conduct research with academic partners to develop solutions or actions for needs identified in the school environment.

2

Develop a range of resources[1] in support of education, pedagogy, and teaching.

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[1] Resources: tools, procedures, strategies, guides, activities, etc.

EMBLEMATIC PROFESSIONAL SITUATION

Professional requirements

1. Collaborate with partners, including university researchers;
2. Adopt a socio-constructivist approach;
3. Approach issues from a researcher's perspective;
4. Ensure cohesion between participants, institutions, and researchers;
5. Take into account participants' proximal development zone;
6. Coordinate research or development processes;
7. Translate the specific culture of each environment;
8. Take advantage of data emerging from research.

Typical professional actions

- Co-write grant applications with partners (1-2-3-6);
- Perform ongoing evaluation of developments at meetings (3-4-5-7);
- Create presentation tools (2-5-6-8);
- Lead meetings using a collaborative approach (1-2-3-4-5);
- Guide participants between meetings (5);
- Collect data, and participate in data recording and analysis (2-3-6-7-8);
- Publish results of process at conferences or in academic articles (1-3-7);
- Create a frame of reference and tools, and test and validate them (1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8);
- Coordinate the project (1-3-6-7).

Resources, skills, and attitudes

- Knowledge of the nature of collaborative research: action research, research and development, etc.;
- Knowledge of professional development resources;
- Communication: questioning, listening, self-regulation;
- Openness, creativity, leadership;
- Proficiency with technology;
- Presentation skills;
- Sense of organization;
- Convictions concerning collaboration;
- Attitude of reflexive analysis;
- QEP;
- Models: Collaborative research, action research, research and development, etc.;
- Models of professional development resources;
- Frames of reference;
- Planning, record-keeping, self-regulation and evaluation tools;
- Researchers;
- Colleagues, administrators, and educational services colleagues;
- Tools or data from other research or mandates;
- Legal requirements;
- Technology;
- Educational consulting university microprogram;
- Benchmarks of the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) and grants.

OUTCOMES
TO FOSTER EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Direct relationship
WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- Build and share a collection of common practices;
- Use authentic materials (student work);
- Enhance teachers' self-awareness about practices;
- Adhere to common principles;
- Assimilate the proposed approach, taking context into account;
- Abandon competitive practices;
- Increase frequency of student feedback;
- Increase motivation for adopting improved practices;
- Use suggested tools or products;
- Increase personnel's feeling of professional effectiveness;
- Foster teamwork;
- Adapt tools to student needs;
- Transfer collegial practices;
- Increase reflective practices.

Indirect relationship
WITH STUDENTS

- Increase number of authentic learning contexts;
- Enhance self-perception as a learner;
- Ascribe greater value to learning process than to results;
- Change attitudes towards expectations;
- Increase interaction with the learning process.

Critical distance
ON THE INTERVENTION CONTEXT AND ON OWN PRACTICE

- Act ethically;
- Consider emotional dimensions;
- Gain awareness of effect of participants' reactions on professional development;
- Request participants' agreement as soon as a new action is proposed;
- Make adjustments during course of project: calendar, availability, staff, data, reference frames, tools, etc.;

- Anticipate future actions to maintain and reach the goal;
- Receive supervision in this process in order to better regulate the actions undertaken;
- Agree to act as a mentor.

TRANSVERSAL PROFESSIONAL
REQUIREMENTS

4.2 Transversal dimension: Ethical action

Ethical action includes three elements: the means to pay attention to others, an ability to enter into a dialogical relationship with others, and a desire and capacity to be accountable for one's actions. It presupposes a positive intention which, in this context, takes on four dimensions: intentional, interactional, emotional, and attentive. Ethical action does not mean evaluating the person receiving guidance, but rather recognizing the individual's, or group's, proximal development zone, in order to work toward achieving shared objectives. The ethical dimension can be perceived in two ways: statically or dynamically (Guillemette, 2017; Marchildon and Bégin, 2017; Réto 2018).

The ethical dimension is perceived statically through the following criteria: participants' informed consent, and confidential treatment of the information they provide.

It is perceived dynamically when a sense of fairness is present alongside the ability to create a neutral space in which the statements of others can be heard —particularly statements made in a hierarchical context.

People must always be treated fairly and equitably. For instance, the words of a subordinate cannot be used for assessment or supervision purposes. A dynamic perception further implies that the advantages or benefits outweigh the risks for participants, and that they do not exceed the usual risks run in their workplace. It also assumes that choices, decisions, and discussions will remain transparent and all comments will be respectful, well-intentioned, caring, and tolerant.

In the light of this definition, ECs act in an ethical manner when they do the following:

- Remain aware that, when entering into relationships with others, this relationship is asymmetrical, and there is a need to acknowledge the mobilization of expertise of both the professional receiving guidance and the professional providing guidance, in a manner that can be adapted to the current situation;

- Pay attention to others, and act with positive intentions: the physical and relational conditions of interactions are handled with respect, care and tolerance;

- Are accountable for their actions to the person or persons guided, as well as to the organizations they are acting on behalf of, without breaching confidentiality commitments.

4.3 Transversal dimension: Communication

According to the systemic, pragmatic paradigm, communication exists within relational, interactional processes. It is not a mere transfer of information from sender to recipient (the linear conception), but rather the combined action of various acts that include the message, the recipient, the words spoken, non-verbal elements, affect, context, the relationship (or lack thereof), climate, etc. (Cormier, 2006).

For this reason, within any intervention process, communication is at the heart of action. It presupposes being present to oneself in order to be present for others. Achieving presence of this kind means adopting a listening, questioning attitude in order to understand a situation and analyze it with the person or the group. Communication also involves the ability to provide feedback by formulating hypotheses for further understanding, or drawing connections between the practice implemented in a given situation and the theoretical frameworks that explain it (Guillemette et Monette 2019).

In light of this definition, the communications of ECs exhibit the following characteristics:

- Consider the recipient, the message, the context, and the relationship;

- Adopt active listening to better understand and analyze the situation or the concerns of the person or group;

- Use questioning to better understand and analyze (open and caring questions), and to bring out possible solutions;

- Provide feedback through hypotheses of understanding, theoretical frameworks, practices resulting from research, etc.

4.4 Transversal dimension: Situational intelligence

Situational intelligence refers to the understanding of a given situation as it unfolds. It touches upon the dimension of communication. ECs' ability to mobilize, combine, and adapt resources, or create new ones in response to a given situation, grows out of their ability to listen, question, and give feedback. Their interventions are regulated based their subjective readings of interpreted manifestations, or on their conceptions. ECs examine the broader processes unfolding *in*, *on*, *around and in order to achieve* action. They also adapt their behaviour in response to perceived degrees of acquiescence or resistance (Jonnaert, 2006, 2009; Masciotra, 2003, 2006; Masciotra and Medzo, 2009; Vergnaud, 1996).

In light of this definition, ECs exhibit situational intelligence in the following ways:

- Being able to consider all variables that seem relevant to the situation, define a situation, understand it and, consequently, analyze it;

- Adjust their interactions and interventions in response to their analyses;

- Make use of knowledge (theoretical frameworks), know-how (practices emerging from research), and interpersonal skills to support reflection while meeting the needs of various actors;

- Understand the dynamics of resistance, and forces of leverage, in order to better support thinking or meet all actors' needs.

5. Discussion and conclusion

T his Framework for competent action is a guide whose primary purpose is to serve educational consultants and those who work with them: school board managers, school administrators, teaching staff, and other actors in the school system.

In the light of the broad movements and changes in the world of education, this Framework must remain transitory. The Framework is designed to be adapted. Neither a recipe nor a dogma, it does not dictate a single way of acting or being, but instead identifies typical situations in which ECs intervene to foster student success. The Framework is a tool for recognizing the profession of educational consulting in Quebec schools in the twenty-first century.

Competent action, we must remember, manifests in real situations. It therefore embodies professional requirements. Competent action manifests through the mobilization of a collection of resources and key actions, the results of which are observed in a situation that is, most often, unique. To embrace competent action presupposes adopting a reflective distance, as a necessary step to better read a given situation and make the necessary adjustments. This means that competent action is a form of situational intelligence. It is of course true that all situations generally involve a number of constraints. Competent action means mastering the ability to distinguish between those on which we can and cannot act, along with the ability to mitigate situations that seem difficult to negotiate.

In the light of the data we collected, which made this Framework possible, it appears that time is the primary constraint facing ECs. Time management indeed appears to be among the great problems of our century, and it is no less of a concern for ECs, who are tasked with implementing new methods to better meet the needs of the community to foster student success. This constraint can be observed, notably, in the challenge of providing new support structures within organizations. Resources designed to train, guide, advise, and innovate demand adequate time and space to give people room to experiment and embed new practices with the potential to better respond to the specificities of each environment.

Consequently, ECs are called upon to innovate in methods of advising, training, and guiding education system actors in order to illustrate teaching practices through a range of means, including modeling techniques through in-class presence; using the class as a "live" laboratory, with students and teachers; and webinars and other remote communication techniques. The fact remains that bringing together receptive actors committed to a reflective process remains a challenge, especially when distance separates them. Another requirement of competent action is an ability to use such telecommunication tools and adapt to the constraints they bring.

The second constraint is the need to establish a collaborative dynamic that flattens the hierarchy between actors, while respecting the roles and functions of each. ECs refuse to place themselves in an evaluative role in relation to the practices of teaching personnel. On the contrary, competent action in educational consulting requires careful listening to better ask questions, understand, reflect, and support the development of reflectiveness in school system actors who are considered autonomous. This represents communication skills. This approach to being an EC in such a context could, in fact, be construed as the very opposite of an evaluative approach. Their approach is intended, rather, to be well-intentioned and helpful, in order to better support reflection and encourage real change to practices; this facet represents ECs ethical action. In the dynamic relationship between management practices, teaching practices, and advice and educational innovation, ECs have every advantage in acting from the needs emerging from the environment and in response to these real needs.

Finally, a third constraint arises out of the complexity of the situations they address, particularly in certain areas, such as special education, in which ECs are called on to support teachers who in a single class may have multiple students with diverse learning specificities. In special education, while ECs continue to serve as key resource people, the question of how to best support teachers whose classes contain large numbers of students with diverse needs remains a challenge. There are other constraints we might equally have emphasized. It must be recognized that they are usually present in all real and emblematic professional situations; we have mentioned only the most important ones.

For more than fifty years, ECs' contribution to primary, secondary, general adult education and vocational training has unquestionably evolved. Through their current interventions, ECs are constantly working to adjust to changing educational needs. Increasingly, they have become valued collaborators, particularly within the university community, in search of answers to real situations and with a view to developing various tools to support student success.

The approach implemented through our work, and the results in terms of emblematic situations clearly demonstrate that ECs are true pillars in supporting change and adjusting teaching practices in schools. As such, they undoubtedly have an effect on student success.

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Glossary

ACTION RESEARCH

From a pragmatic standpoint of innovation and change, the action research process is characterized by a direct link between theory and practice. Not unlike a robust problem-solving process, it simultaneously connects and structures action and reflection with a view to improving or adjusting practices in response to a situation in the professional world. It places each practitioner or collective at the centre of their own practices, within a process of establishing meaning, while observing and extrapolating insight through a process of reflection, thus developing new knowledge. In this sense, action research is part of a professional development process.

Dolbec, A., 2004; Dolbec, A., Clément, J., 2004; Guay, M.-H., Prud'homme, L., 2011; Guillemette, S., Savoie-Zajc, L., 2012; Reason, P., Bradbury, H., 2006.

ADMINISTRATORS AND MANAGERS OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Administrators and managers are those who manage educational services and their assistants and coordinators. In certain settings there is overlap with the general school administration.

ADVISE

In a school context, advising means establishing with individuals or groups a relationship of influence based on scientific and professional literature, expertise, professional knowledge and personal interaction skills. From time to time, educational consultants are called on to act as resource people to address a problem situation or implement professional development activities. The aim is to elicit the best possible answer to questions of interest to stakeholders within an organization.

Caouette, 2016; Daele and Sylvestre, 2016.

COACHING

To carry on a collaborative relationship with one or more people in a situation of professional transition or another context to help them assimilate new ideas in educational, pedagogical, or teaching practice.

Guillete and Simon, 2008.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration is a non-hierarchical voluntary association between two or more people to complete an action with a shared goal. The processes carried out are jointly chosen, planned, and executed. All actors assume the responsibilities, challenges, and outcomes for the action carried out.

St-Arnaud, Y., 2008.

COMBINED COMPETENCE

A knowledge of how to act implemented by two people with distinct functions, through an interaction of mobilized resources in a professional intervention situation with a view to achieving objectives or solving problems. Combined competence brings together three dimensions—intersecting professional practices, dynamic interaction, and reflective distance—in a pair of professionals.

Vachon, 2013.

COMMUNICATION

In a systemic, pragmatic paradigm, communication resides in a set of relational and interactional processes. It consists not in a mere transfer of information between a sender and receiver (the linear model), but a combination of different acts including the message, the receiver, the verbal and non-verbal aspects, the attitude, the context, the relationship (or absence thereof), the environment, etc.

Cormier (2006).

COMPETENCE

Competence is a knowledge of ways of acting that arise in one or more complex situations with a view to achieve a result or have an effect. It results in the mobilization and combination of resources, and gives rise to a situation-specific relevant professional practice. Analyzing and explaining ways of acting are also components of competence.

Le Boterf, G., 2010; Tardif, J., Fortier, G., Préfontaine, C., 2006.

COMPETENT ACTION

Competent action manifests through the mobilization, combined application, or adaptation of a collection of resources, skills, and attitudes in a professional situation in order to take actions organized as part of a system. Professionals take action to achieve a goal or to address an issue based on their understanding of a situation. Competent action is also characterized by an ability to adopt a reflective distance from the action taken; it is developed in, and through, action.

Davel, E., Tremblay, D.-G., 2011; Masciotra, D., Morel, D., Mathieu, G., 2011; Le Boterf, G., 2006, 2008, 2013; Masciotra, D., Medzo, F., 2009; Jonnaert, 2006; 2009; 2017; Allal, L., 1999.

CONSTRAINTS

Constraints are the set of restrictions or requirements in a given environment that must be considered when choosing the necessary measures to act with competence. Constraints can be observed in difficulties encountered, challenges posed by a given situation, and the material, financial, or other barriers that a situation engenders, i.e., the defensive routines that take hold among actors in an environment (frequently unconscious behaviours involved in a refusal to change).

Bouvier, A., El Bahri, A., Tournier, P., Brugière, F., Bégyn, F., 2014; Guillemette et Bouvier, 2018; Legendre, R., 2005.

DIDACTICS/TEACHING THEORY

Didactics is the science of knowing how to teach. It examines both the concepts to be acquired by people in order to build knowledge, and the recommended methods of transmission (teachable knowledge). This is organized as a collective body of knowledge, and grows out of a discipline of study (academic knowledge). Didactics categorizes multiple forms of knowledge, determines correlations, and establishes progression and continuity. Its methods are linked to theories of teaching and learning, as well as the transmission and acquisition of knowledge.

Vergaud, G., 1999.

EDUCATION

The harmonious, dynamic development of the autonomy of a human being and their full range of potentials—affective, intellectual, physical, and spiritual. This process presupposes the development and assimilation of a person's values, sense of responsibilities, and ability to develop and transform themselves in a positive, ongoing manner.

Legendre, R., 2005.

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

A proposed change designed to improve student learning by transforming teaching practices or recommended training for such practices. Three dimensions can be described in educational innovation: 1) curriculum: innovation in program-wide content; 2) pedagogy: innovation in course structure and the classroom, including learning processes; and 3) organization, which involves innovation in structures, roles, and personnel functions.

Bédard, D., Béchard, J.-P., 2009; Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2014. http://www.aefe.fr/pedagogie/innovation-et-app/linnovation-pedagogique

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Educational practices can be observed in the combined actions promoted by the body of community actors to foster the optimal development of all students within a school environment.

Guillemette, S., 2014; Legendre, R., 2005.

ENACTION

Professionals are influenced by the context they act in: the person, situation, and action form an inseparable whole. Through cognitive and conative processes of perception, selection, and attribution, they modulate and regulate their interventions in a given situation.

Barth, B.-M., 2002; Masciotra, D., Medzo, F., 2009.

ETHICAL ACTION

Ethical action consists of three elements: a way of paying attention to others, an ability to enter into dialogic relationships with others, and a desire and ability to be accountable for one's actions. It presupposes a positive intention that, in this context, encompasses four dimensions: the intentional, the interactional, the affective, and the attentional.

Guillemette, S., 2017; Réto, G., 2018.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES THAT FOSTER STUDENT SUCCESS

In education, evidence-based practice means that a wide sample of data has been gathered, often using meta-analyses, to discover and experiment with new pedagogical or educational practices to use them to foster student success. Evidence-based practice recognizes three types of evidence–effectiveness, transferability, and long-term effect. It is further divided as follows:

- An emerging practice: effectiveness criterion
- A promising practice: criteria for all evidence types
- A well-documented evidence-based practice: all evidence types have established effectiveness on multiple occasions and in multiple studies

Potvin, P., 2016. http://rire.ctreq.qc.ca/2016/09/donnees-probantes-dt/

EMBLEMATIC PRACTICES

Best or emblematic practices are those whose effectiveness has been proven through research or have been tested through multiple experiments and shown, through evaluation, to achieve desired outcomes. To be considered emblematic, a practice must meet six conditions: 1) be substantiated by in-depth knowledge of a problem; 2) be underpinned by a comprehensive evaluation of the strengths, needs, limitations, and capacities (of people with a need); 3) include a statement of specific, attainable objectives; 4) implement methods that are recognized as appropriate 5) use methods that regulate the quality of the actions selected; and 6) evaluate the degree to which objectives have been attained.

Potvin, P., 2016.

EMBLEMATIC PROFESSIONAL SITUATION

An emblematic professional situation can be defined through constants. that emerge from real professional situations. It is authentic and recurring. Its parameters are similar enough to other situations, even in different contexts.

Guillaumin, C., 2012; Gouvernement du Québec, 2008; Larousse; Antidote.

EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Based on experience and practice, experiential knowledge is defined as knowledge acquired and developed in an iterative fashion through professional practice. It integrates abstract knowledge (declarative knowledge), know-how (procedural knowledge), and knowledge of ways of being, sustained by beliefs and values. Experiential knowledge is most often knowledge that the learner possesses to some extent in relation to an object of knowledge, even before they are exposed to the set of knowledge in a theoretical manner (e.g., in a professional development context).

Artaud, G., 1981; Legendre, R., 2005; Potvin, P., 2016; Tardif, J., Fortier, G., Préfontaine, C., 2006.

GUIDE

Guiding is a process whereby an individual guides one or more other individuals toward a goal such as a change, adaptation, or self-regulation of practice. Reflective practice ties together various strategies in the process. The questioning and bolstering effect build discernment and strengthen the analysis of professional practices. Active listening is essential to optimize the process.

Guertin, D., 2013; Le Boterf, 2010; Barth, B.-M., 2002; LeBlanc, J., Dumoulin, M-J., Garant, C., Larouche, H., 2013; Orianne, J.-F., Draelants, H., 2010; Buysse, A., 2011.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Legal requirements refer to all official documentation produced by the Quebec government or education ministry. It indicates conduct to be adopted, and guides action and reflection of actors within the school system. Requirements may be prescriptive or normative; examples include the Quebec Education Program (QEP); evaluation and learning frameworks, the Policy on Educational Success, the Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education, the Education Act, the Administrative Manual for the Certification of Secondary School Studies, and others.

PEDAGOGY

Pedagogy is defined as the sum of relations between a teacher and one or more students. Interventions are designed to foster the development of didactic and transversal skills; it is underpinned by a conception of what learning is. To achieve their aims, teachers design learning and evaluation situations based on curriculum content, while considering the profile of their students. Teachers also ensure an appropriate learning climate is created, which is known as classroom management. Their interventions contribute to the school's threefold mission (educate, socialize, and qualify), and to the formation of responsible citizens. There are many different kinds of pedagogy—open or lecture style classes, individual or social, directive or participative, etc.

Barth, B.-M., 2002; Chartier, B., 2010. http://rire.ctreq.qc.ca/les-pratiques-innovantes-en-education-version-integrale/

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Pedagogical practice refers to knowledge around teaching practice, which has been validated by research and is augmented by learning, didactic, and evaluation practices.

Legendre, R., 2005; Delors, J., 1996.

PRACTICE

Practice is defined as a normal way of acting characteristic of a person or group. Practice can be observed in the diverse skills and knowledge mobilized and selected in response to a given situation, while taking into account factors specific to the context, given events, etc. Practice in education refers more specifically to professional actions carried out by teachers, administration, or non-teaching education professionals.

Legendre, R., 2005; Potvin, P., 2016; Zapata, A., 2004.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION COLLEAGUES

Colleagues are all other professionals providing complementary educational and pedagogical services.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Professional identity is manifest in the fundamental, representative characteristics of a group or person. It enables the members of a given profession to recognize each other and to be recognized for their unique features by outsiders.

Legendre, R., 2005.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Professional knowledge is contextualized and formalized through activities unfolding over time and in space. It develops through a methodology by means of which the professional builds their understanding of a situation (examining a problem) and explores its complexity (social relevance). This knowledge is formalized by isolating possible constants, which emerge from the interrelation between the problem in question, theoretical knowledge (theoretical relevance) and experiential knowledge (practical relevance). It us anchored in a professional dynamic in order to support the arrival of new practices within the organization. It is part of a professionalization approach.

Costley, C., Lester, S., 2012; Guillemette, S., 2014; Lacroix, A., Bégin, L., Marchildon, A., 2017; Lepley, É., 2009; Potvin, P., 2016; Wittorski, R., 2012.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Professional practice exists in and responds to real-life situations to achieve an objective. It is the purview of a specific person or group within a precise professional discipline; as such, it calls for competent action.

Le Boterf, G., 2013; Legendre, R., 2005; Potvin, P., 2016.

PROFESSIONAL SITUATION

A professional situation is a set of circumstances with which professionals are confronted. The situation is part of context that gives it meaning, and to address it requires the performance of tasks. The situation remains a subjective construction.

Jonnaert, P., 1996, 2002; LeBlanc, J., 2001.

PROFESSIONALIZATION

A dynamic, ongoing process that permits the development of practice, alone or with colleagues, with an aim of professional development connected with work functions. Professionalization makes it possible to meet the high expectations within the education system, and to adapt continuously to independently resolve complex and varied problems by their own means (which is to say, the resources, skills, and attitudes in their possession). Professionalization requires ethical action from the educational consultant, and requires them to deal with the unpredictable nature their singular work context. It strengthens professional identity.

Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2014.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Within a pragmatic approach, in response to a clearly identified need for which few or no tools have been created, research and development is seen as a process for developing teaching materials, pedagogy, strategies, models, or curricula. It includes design, production, and testing (both functional and empirical) with a view to making processes available and transferrable to other similar contexts.

Harvey, S., Loiselle, J., 2009; Van der Maren, J.-M., 2003.

ROLE

Role refers to the social position exercised by a person within a group, organization, or society. It manifests in a set of activities, behaviours, and tasks, which are sometimes fixed and sometimes evolve in response to the values and expectations of the entity to which the actor belongs.

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Scientific knowledge makes universal claims based on measurement criteria constructed through causality parameters. Scientific knowledge remains provisional to the degree that observations of fact can be refuted by new data. Scientific knowledge is also relative, since observations or parameters of causality are valid only from the observational standpoint adopted.

Van der Maren, J.-M., 2003; Wittorski, R., 2007.

SELF-REGULATION OF PRACTICE THROUGH CRITICAL DISTANCE

By creating a reflective distance from a situation, professionals adjust their professional practice. This requires an ability to develop a metacognitive perspective on one's own learning mechanisms, their verbal expression, and their management. Self-regulation enlists cognitive and metacognitive analysis to gain consciousness of cognitive and affective systems. It is an adjustment of practice that makes it possible to adapt and transform systems to apply them to an observable situation of professional practice.

Le Boterf, G., 2008, 2013; Zapata, A., 2004; Lafortune(b), L., 2008; Guillemette, S., 2011.

SITUATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Situational intelligence is the understanding possessed by a professional in a given situation. It leads them to mobilize, come together, and adapt resources, or create new ones, in response to a given situation. It also informs the professional for the self-regulation of their interventions based on their subjective reading of the situation, through an interpretation of manifestations or conceptions. Finally, it enables us to take a critical look at, in, and for action. Professionals adapt their behaviour based on the perceived degree of acquiescence or resistance.

Jonnaert, 2006, 2009; Masciotra, D., Medzo, F., 2009; Vergnaud, G., 1996.

THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE

The body of knowledge, concepts, definitions and propositions related to an object of study that permit us to better explain, render explicit, and understand concepts.

Potvin, P., 2016.

TRAIN

A process or approach of analyzing, planning, designing, dispensing, and evaluating activities designed to develop professional knowledge in one or more people with a view to increasing their effectiveness and efficiency.

Portelance, L., 2010; Gouvernement du Québec, 2008; Vergaud, G., 1999; Barth, B.-M., 2002.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

LIST OF EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS WHO TOOK PART IN INTERVIEWS ON EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING IN MAY, JUNE, AND JULY, 2017.

List updated September 25, 2018.

Last name, Initial	School district
Baida, C.	Commission scolaire Laval
Bellerive, L.	Commission scolaire des Chênes
Bibeau, M.	Commission scolaire Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles
Bienvenue, M.	Commission scolaire des Chênes
Binette, C.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Bourdages, J.	Commission scolaire René-Levesque
Brochu, D.	Commission scolaire des Hautes-Rivières
Bujold, É.	Commission scolaire René-Levesque
Pagé, C.	Commission scolaire Pierre-Neveu
Cloutier, B.	Commission scolaire Laval
Coupal, S.	Commission scolaire Laval
Cyr, P.	Commission scolaire René-Levesque
Dagenais, D.	Commission scolaire Laval
De Champlain, D.	Commission scolaire Laval
Denis, C.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Denis, N.	Commission scolaire Rivière-du-Nord
Desmarais, C.	Commission scolaire du Portage
Desrochers, C.	Commission scolaire du Portage
Desrosiers, D.	Commission scolaire Laval
Dion, G.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Dubois, D.	Commission scolaire des Chênes
Dubois, M.	Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin
Émond, M.	Commission scolaire Laval
Fauvel, J.	Commission scolaire Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles

Gagnon, B.	Commission scolaire des Hautes-Rivières
Gagnon, V.	Commission scolaire Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles
Gaudin, N.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Germain, T.	Commission scolaire Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles
Gosselin, P.	Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
Guimont, N.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Guité, K.	Commission scolaire René-Levesque
Hamlyn, R.	Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
Havreljuk, O.	Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
Hébert, M.	Commission scolaire Rivière-du-Nord
Houle, V.	Commission scolaire des Chênes
Hughes, J.	Commission scolaire René-Levesque
Jalbert, J.	Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
Jourdain, F.	Commission scolaire des Sommets
Labonté, S.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Lacroix, L.	Commission scolaire Laval
Lalonde, S.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Lardeux, S.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Leblanc, L.	Commission scolaire Laval
Lenoir, C.	Commission scolaire du Portage
Lessard, S.	Commission scolaire Rivière-du-Nord
Lessard, Y.	Commission scolaire des Sommets
Litalien, É.	Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
Marcoux, M.-H.	Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
Marsolais, D.	Commission scolaire Laval
Martel-Octeau, N.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Martin, M.	Commission scolaire du Portage
Marcotte, H.	Commission scolaire des Sommets
Mélançon, S.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Mercier, R.	Commission scolaire des Navigateurs
Pagé, C.	Commission scolaire Pierre-Neveu
Pelletier, J.	Commission scolaire Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles
Pérusse, A.	Commission scolaire Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles
Richer, E.	Commission scolaire des Sommets
Rivest, I.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Robert, C.	Commission scolaire des Chênes
Robidoux, J.	Commission scolaire des Chênes
Rouleau, S.	Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys
Roy, A.	Commission scolaire Laval
Roy, L.	Commission scolaire des Sommets
Rustom, C.	Commission scolaire Laval
Saint-Denis, S.	Commission scolaire du Portage
Saint-Laurent, L.	Commission scolaire René-Levesque
Simard, C.	Commission scolaire Pointe-de-l'Île
Tessier, V.	Commission scolaire Pierre-Neveu
Vermett, P.	Commission scolaire Rivière-du-Nord

Appendix 2

GROUP ACTIVITY TEMPLATE

Facilitator 1: Goal and instructions

Summarize the research context:

- *"We're here to develop a Framework for competent action for educational consultants."*;
- Introduce the research team: researcher, research professional(s), and/or research assistant;
- Request exclusive attention for the duration of the interview;
- Have participants sign consent form, remind them of the importance of confidentiality, and stress that at no point will we be able to identify any specific person by their statement: participants are fully free to express themselves in confidence;
- Remind participants that they are free to withdraw from the process, even during the data gathering phase;
- Specify that raw data will be read and listened to exclusively by members of the research team;
- Request that participants speak loudly and clearly;
- Ensure that participants give their first name before speaking;
- Recap all relevant information before turning to a new question.

Facilitator 2: Introduce participants, select a professional situation

Introductions (15 minutes)

- Introduce the task: Each participant mentions a real educational consulting situation that resulted in targeted professionals taking educational or pedagogical actions that fostered student success;
- Leave time for each participant, in order to properly understand the consulting practice;
- Ask each participant to introduce themselves and to present a successful educational consulting situation that produced educational and pedagogical actions that fostered student success;
- Ask each participant to note, on a Post-it note, the practice or consulting situation they would like to examine as a group;
- Ask each participant to explain their choice; reach consensus.

PHASE 1

Story of a successful situation (30 minutes)

- Ask the consultant whose real consulting practice was selected by the group, to describe the actions and interventions;
- Describe the actions and interventions in practice that have resulted in educational or pedagogical actions that foster student success;
- Describe how this practice was successful for the targeted personnel, students, collaborators (if applicable) and yourself;
- Describe a way of acting using competent action: resources, skills, and attitudes deployed; choice of tasks; criteria for completion; and outcomes;
- Describe the outcomes of the measure in fostering success;
- Describe the outcomes for the targeted personnel, the collaborators, and yourself;
- Describe the outcomes for the targeted personnel, collaborators, and yourself;

- Invite participants to ask open-ended questions to the story-teller to **better understand** the situation; avoid analyzing it at this point;
- Ensure that participants have a solid understanding of the situation presented; as needed, reformulate certain statements or questions to better clarify:

    a) Describe the context;

    b) Conditions of implementation;

    c) Intentions of the consultant;

    d) Tasks.

Facilitator 1

- Recap the main elements. "*If I got that right, you're saying that...*";
- After the recap, leave time for the story-teller to clarify key elements;
- Also leave time for participants to ask questions to clarify aspects of the situation.

Facilitator 2

PHASE 2
Analyze the situation to explain why it is a success (20 minutes)

- Ask the question: "*How is this practice successful for the target personnel, students, collaborators, and yourself?*"

    a) Resources, skills, and attitudes;

    b) Professional requirements;

    c) Critical distance (situation, resources, practices);

    d) Expected results: for students, teachers, and other personnel;

    e) Observed results: tools, for students, teachers, and other personnel.

PHASE 3
Critical distance from the situation described (20 minutes)

- Ask the question "*If you were in a similar situation, what would you do the same, or differently, to achieve better results?*"

    a) Describe aspects to retain (with improvements);

    b) Describe difficulties encountered and items to eliminate or adjust.

BREAK: 10 minutes

PHASE 4
Extrapolate, based on a successful situation, ways to expand consulting practices: Whole-group discussion of situations similar to the ones described (30 minutes)

- Invite the participants to describe similar situations experienced to foster student success;
    - a) Describe similar situations experienced by other CPs;
- Following the description, ask "*How is this situation similar: tasks, conditions for implementation, professional requirements, outcomes, etc.?*"

PHASE 5
Professionalization and training (20 minutes)

- Question participants:
    - a) How are these typical educational consulting situations?
      Community of educational consultants
    - b) In light of the requirements educational consultants must meet, describe the professional development needs.
    - c) What should be planned for CPs working in professional reinsertion programs.
    - d) What key word or expression would you use to describe the role of educational consultant.

Facilitator 1

PHASE 6
Present the project as a PowerPoint, and thank participants.