

Modern Educational Management: From Effective Leadership to Competency Building-The Child as Leader's Perspective in the Canadian Experience" Socio-constructivism Approach"

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Abstract:

This study examines a contemporary shift in Educational Management, moving the classroom from traditional instruction to an interactive environment centered on the "Child as Leader" perspective. The research aims to analyze how effective educational management contributes to competency building in learners, using the Canadian Experience as a premier model. Through a descriptive and analytical approach, the study explores the mechanisms of transforming the learner into a strategic partner in the educational process by delegating decision-making and activity-management responsibilities. The findings indicate that this model significantly enhances core competencies such as self-efficacy, communication, and initiative. The study concludes that fostering a culture of participatory leadership within the classroom not only elevates educational quality but also provides the methodological framework for developing leadership-ready personalities capable of navigating future challenges within the knowledge society.

Keywords: Educational Management, Competency Building, Child as Leader, Canadian Experience, Participatory Leadership, Self-Efficacy.

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■ **Introduction:**

“If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.”

- Estrada, Ignacio-

Both teaching and learning processes have changed drastically over the past couple decades. The shift from the old paradigm (providing instruction) to the new one (producing learning) has had a significant impact on both the teacher's and student's roles: the teacher, who was once the only source of knowledge, has become a guide and the student, who was once a passive receiver of knowledge, is now an actively involved and responsible participant in the learning process. The new pedagogical approach, based on active learning techniques, focuses on different students' needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles (student-centered approach).

Unfortunately, in Algeria, teachers still base the majority of their teaching practices on the receptive approach rather than the productive one. However, in this essay I am not going to compare the educational system in both countries. My main goal is to shed light on teaching competences abroad, precisely in Quebec, to help Algerian teachers who want to improve their teaching skills.

Nowadays, teachers need to understand that the system of education has to be improved. They have to further their studies online, collaborate with their colleagues and understand in depth all the cross-curricular, disciplinary and professional competencies used by the First World now. More importantly, they have to learn how to evaluate student performance. I hope these studies will give teachers an in-depth understanding of the Quebec educational system and allow them to grow as professional teachers. The teachers' main goal is to provide their students with motivating tools in order to lead them to successful lives. They should aim to instill a love of learning in their students and give them the ability to collaborate, analyze, interpret different issues and develop critical thinking since these are all crucial qualities that every student needs – not only in school but also throughout their lives.

Each classroom should be seen as a community of learners – a place where each student becomes aware of his or her strengths and discovers ways to work on his or her weakness. It is a place where the teacher is a facilitator, and the student, a constructor of his own learning and understanding. But this does not mean that the teacher's role is less important. For if the lesson is not well-planned, the topic not well-chosen and the students not properly valorized, learning will not occur in a motivationally charged atmosphere. Indeed, motivation is mainly present when a

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student feels secure enough to take risks, when he or she is respected by the instructor and when he or she succeeds in making links between what is being learned and what is already known about the world surrounding him or her.

As every student has a unique pace of learning, visible differences between students' needs should to be taken into consideration whenever a teacher plans a lesson. Furthermore, the learner should come first in every phase of teaching. Indeed, an amazing rate of success can be achieved if students have been made to feel they are the priority; therefore, the teacher should implement “differentiation”, which provides opportunities for the best and the weakest students to learn at their own rhythms. Differentiation is the key to success with all types of learners one may encounter as a teacher (gifted, ordinary, underachieving, and special-need students). This is because differentiation is based on learner characteristics, i.e. readiness, interests and preferences. This allows educators and students to build new learning through connections with existing knowledge and preferred ways of working. “The process of differentiating instruction for students depends on the ongoing use of assessment to gather information about where students are in their learning and about their readiness, interests and learning preferences. Teachers use this information to vary the learning environment, instruction, and assessment and evaluation” (OTF,(2009), p. 01).

Self-evaluation has also proven to be an excellent motivator with concern to discovering the strengths and weaknesses of learners. I agree with (Lise, St-Pierre (2004), p. 35) who states that if a teacher wants to know “what [his] students have learnt and what they have not, the usefulness of a process or procedure, personal characteristics, strong points as well as weak points, behavior, reactions, abilities, etc., he needs to teach them how to self-assess things in their life” (Rolheiser, Carol. & Ross, John. Alan (2001), p.03). Confirm that if instructors value “participation, equality, inclusiveness and social justice” (Hargreaves, Andy & Fullan, Michael (1998), in: Rolheiser , C & Ross, J, (2001), p. 04) then their classroom needs to be a place where students share leadership and responsibility for learning.

Since students generally perform well when they believe in something, self-efficacy (the individual’s judgement of his or her ability to perform a specific action) is of extreme importance when it comes to motivating students intrinsically. Furthermore, intellectual curiosity, self-confidence and the need for achievement are also important dimensions in one’s concept of self. The Quebec teaching concept has proven that all types of projects (including interdisciplinary ones) can provide a positive environment that makes students more engaged and responsive to learning activities.

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▪ **COMPETENCY ONE:**

1- To act as a professional who is inheritor, critic and interpreter of knowledge or culture when teaching students:

As a result of the increasing level of multiculturalism in Quebec, teachers are no longer limited to one culture in their classroom. This means that they need to expand their own cultural knowledge and their students' as well. A solid relationship has to be created between the instructor and those learners who come from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, schools today are playing a major role in developing this cultural awareness (MELS, (2001), p.02). To succeed in their mission, teachers should build a critical approach to the different topics they teach. Furthermore, the best way to teach in a multi-cultural society is to incorporate real-life situations into instruction: "If prior experience can be connected to new material in a meaningful way, that material can be more clearly understood and more easily learned" (Theall, Michael (2004), p.01).

2- SELF-ANALYSIS:

According to Quebec's Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports (Theall, Michael (2004), p.02), a teacher should be an inheritor of knowledge who is able to transmit that cultural heritage to all his students who, in the context of Quebec, come from the five different parts of the world. To help the learner come to a clear understanding of the world he is living in, the teacher needs to create strong links between a student's own culture and the secondary culture of the educational program. To transmit cultural heritage correctly, the teacher needs to consider the variety of backgrounds his or her students have, especially when planning a course since learning activities may need to be adapted to different cultures. The teacher should also be aware of the influence of his or her own cultural background, as students will be interested to know more about it. Furthermore, the teacher should maintain a critical approach to the subject being taught; this can be achieved through extensive reading and expanding one's cultural knowledge, which obviously lead to professional growth as well.

Every teacher should be able to provide significant learning, as well as adopt a critical approach to the subject matter and course content (Theall, Michael (2004), p.02). This is especially true in the highly multicultural province of Quebec: not only do teachers need to have a deep understanding of their own culture, but they also need to develop a secondary culture that helps them understand their students' different backgrounds. Thus, the teacher is, in reality, a life-long learner who is always sharing and learning about different cultures. The most important thing is to be very

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careful when discussing cultures: some teachers believe themselves to be knowledgeable when it comes to the customs, languages, celebrations and habits of a particular group, leading them to unfortunately belittle their students with mistaken points of view.

Professionalism is of extreme importance in every teaching practice. Teachers who adopt a somewhat casual demeanor and some friendship can motivate students to come to study. However, there are always certain limits in the teacher-student relationship. The professional objective is to be a remarkable teacher who respects different cultural backgrounds. This motivates teachers to read a lot about cultures, work hard and strive for perfection, even though they know it is not always possible to be 100% perfect.

Being able to choose what's best for students is also an important quality for a teacher to nurture. It is their practice to sometimes provide students with the freedom to choose, as this can increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, experience has taught them that when a topic or an activity is not of an interest to their learners, it is very hard to get their attention and maintain it. However, while it is true that teachers should be open to their students' ideas and preferences, they are also responsible teachers who know the curriculum. In addition, they are determined to realize their objectives. These qualities and their passion for the teaching profession encourage them to prepare a very motivating lesson about cultural differences in Quebec.

To make textbook content more interesting, they usually put their personal touch on it by adding interesting activities, replacing some units by complex and significant learning and evaluation situations (LES) and encouraging further reading. More importantly, they include long or short-term projects, which have proven to be excellent motivators. To help their learners establish links between different elements of knowledge, they provide theoretical material from real-life situations; this makes learning relevant through content that is easier to understand (Theall, Michael (2004), p.03)

Teachers are, first and foremost, examples for students to follow. Therefore, if a teacher demonstrates excellent critical judgement, his or her students will strive to develop theirs. If they notice that their teachers work together and encourage interdisciplinary projects, they will hopefully inherit team spirit. If they discover that their teacher is passionate about culture, they will try to understand and respect the cultures surrounding them. Thus, in order to create a motivating atmosphere, they need to keep working hard on growing as a professional teacher. Immigrant teachers need to learn more about the different cultures they have in Quebec to be able to

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handle in-depth discussions with their students. I am convinced that learning is a life-long process: we can never say we have reached perfection since the more we learn, the more we discover things we do not know.

Teachers should be aware that the moment they begin teaching their students, their students are also teaching them: they teach them new strategies to manage their classes; they teach them what is interesting for them; they teach them how to share their similarities and celebrate their differences (Peck, Morgan Scott, (n.p)).

More Teachers there also need to continue working on the best way to create significant links between what their students already know, what they are learning in the classroom and what they are living in the real world, all the while taking into consideration their different levels in order to make learning interesting for every individual. This allows them to create a motivating learning environment where learners' emotional, physical and social needs are all given importance in a safe and comfortable classroom.

To conclude, it is my belief that a teacher's influence can be eternal since he or she is an example, and every teacher needs to have objectives and values, as well as a passion for providing students with the necessary tools to motivate them to love language, love to learn and most importantly to lead successful and fulfilling lives.

▪ **COMPETENCY TWO:**

1- To communicate clearly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing, using correct grammar, in various contexts related to teaching.

Clear communication has always been the cornerstone of both language teaching and learning. Teachers need not only to communicate skillfully but also to teach students effective communication to reach language proficiency. For this reason, teachers need to be more attentive to grammatical rules and stylistics when communicating with students, parents and colleagues, since it has been clearly indicated in the "MELS" document that "quality is the responsibility of every teacher, regardless of the subject matter taught" (QEP (2001), p.65).

Furthermore, teachers also need to bring newness into their teaching practices because, as" (Richards, Jack Croft (2006)) says in his article, if there is no new information in a communication, there is no communication. Furthermore, being professional is fundamental: teachers should not only dress appropriately but also control their in-school behavior as they are models to follow.

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2- SELF-ANALYSIS:

In education, communication skills are crucial. Teachers should not only master rules of both oral and written language but they should also be understood by their learners and the administration staff. English language teachers must at least have enough French to communicate with francophone parents, as well as colleagues teaching other subjects. French is also important when engaged in an interdisciplinary project with colleagues who do not understand English.

Appearance and non-verbal communication are also of an extreme importance. Teachers should not only dress appropriately but also act in a professional manner. Perhaps some teachers do not give much importance to the way they behave in the classroom; however, our students notice and remember everything we do, right down to our facial expressions. That is why teachers need to be very fair. For example, if a teacher penalizes students differently for the same mistake (even when a month or two has passed), they will surely conclude the teacher is not fair.

Teachers have always to work hard to improve their language competencies. They have to prove themselves experts in transferring knowledge because the positive relationships they have with their students will encourage them to love learning. There is no doubt that teachers, have to constantly learn to improve both their oral and written competencies, as well as their students'. They also need to develop passion for languages. Indeed, I am among those who believe that learning is a life-long process.

Teachers should work hard and read extensively to learn new vocabulary, expand their knowledge and improve their skills. More importantly, they have to be an example for their students to follow. As such, it is good for teachers to discuss the books they read with their students, and encourage them to read different titles so that they can exchange ideas and have increasingly rich interactions in their class.

To conclude, all teachers need to update their language repertoire on a daily basis since none of us can ever be perfect. Correct language usage and excellent communication skills are key strategies in creating motivating teaching and progressive learning. Again, this needs to be combined with taking students' differences into account since differentiation has proven to be one of the keys to success.

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▪ **COMPETENCY THREE:**

1- To develop teaching/learning situations that are appropriate to the students concerned and the subject content with a view to developing the competencies targeted in the programs of study:

A good teacher is a professional who assumes a wide range of roles to support student success. One of the main roles is to be an instructional specialist who implements effective teaching strategies. These strategies may include ideas for differentiating instruction, planning lessons, outlining tasks and developing assessments (Harrison, Cindy, & Killion, Joelle (2007), p. 80).

To make learning student-centered is important as it increases student participation, self-confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, students' personalities, their preferred learning approach and their preferred topics of discussion should all be taken into consideration if the teacher wants to develop meaningful learning situations and to produce thoughtful learners. We all agree that the textbooks we are using are not motivating enough; that is why teachers should develop authentic, worthwhile tasks and to provide challenging but reasonable activities (Bauer, William (2012) , p25).

2- SELF-ANALYSIS:

With concern to the teaching and learning approach to use, I think that a teacher “selects diverse instructional approaches that are suited to the development of the competencies targeted in the programs of study” (MELS (2001), p. 75).

That's correct, that generally most teachers adopt a socio-constructivist approach, yet they also incorporate elements of behaviorism, cognitivism, humanism, connectivism, and so on.

The activity chosen and the teacher's objective are the two main things that can be used in choosing the approach to adopt Anita, Woolfolk Hoy (2000) advises teachers to focus on "TARGETT" (Task motivation, Autonomy, Rewards, Grouping, Evaluation & feedback, Time for learning and Teacher expectations) if they want to create a positive learning climate. Teachers should also know their students and expect developmental and individual differences. Furthermore, teachers should use novelty and familiarity in well-structured tasks that are connected to real world problems in order to arouse curiosity and make students feel the value of learning.

According to William. Bauer (2012) a student's confidence can be built if the teacher matches tasks to the student's ability level, if the teacher moves in small steps, and most importantly, if the teacher provides clear, specific and attainable

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goals. It is also necessary to model good problem-solving skills and to communicate that one's level of academic ability can be improved.

I believe that being prepared and having the necessary tools are compulsory elements in both complex and simple tasks. It is also important to always have a 'Plan B' in case there are obstacles to piloting the lesson as planned (**for instance, an internet connection failure**). It is true that "**Socio-constructivism**" is the main approach to use in Quebec as it invites students to practice, but they still use the other approaches as well.

Creating motivating activities has always been a real challenge for teachers as it is both time and energy consuming. Disciplinary and cross-curricular competencies, as well as learning styles need to be considered when preparing these activities. Teachers should usually check the material shared by professionals in their field (books, online resources, etc.). This gives them more techniques for developing their activities. They can also take some of the "**LES**" (**Learning and Evaluation Situation**) that already exist and modify some parts so they suit their students' personalities and levels. Furthermore, in order to further their skills in creating interesting material, teachers need to publish some of their work on different sites. As a matter of fact, planning and designing interesting activities and well-structured "**LES**" will help teachers to improve throughout their whole teaching career as they always keep learning.

To conclude, usually self-evaluation grids are used to verify if students have understood the tasks the teacher sets for them, especially when these tasks are complex and challenging. When tasks are simpler, it is possible to ask questions at the end of the lesson and analyze the students' answers (mainly those of students who are weaker or have learning difficulties).

▪ **COMPETENCY SIX:**

1- To plan, organize and supervise a class in such a way as to promote students' learning and social development.

Nowadays, both students and teachers are responsible for student psychosocial and cognitive development. The shift in the student's role from a passive to an active learner has increased participation and interaction in our classes. Practice has replaced educational theories, and knowledgeable communication has become the main key to success. To meet the needs of this new pedagogical approach, teachers have to double their efforts and put in extra time. They need to provide successful lesson plans, supervise, and organize their classroom to make of it an attractive place

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for students.

2- SELF-ANALYSIS:

First, we all agree that “planning a lesson for effective teaching can be a challenging and difficult exercise with many different angles and perspectives” (Jones, Deborah (2010)).

A lesson plan is important for both novice and experienced teachers as it “provides the road map through the teaching period, and helps the teacher to stay on course both in achieving the learning outcomes and in managing the allotted time” (Jones, Deborah (2010)). As an experienced teacher, however, I do not see the importance of a detailed lesson plan as those years have given me some confidence. Instead, I work hard at the beginning of the year to make a good long-term plan (that even contains such details as the links to use). Then I make some changes, over the course of the year, as I discover my students' different needs. This strategy contrasts with what I used to do as a beginner teacher. At that time, I always developed a detailed written plan that highlighted the steps to follow and the notions to cover from the beginning to the end of the lesson in order to ensure an effective teaching experience.

Second, managing classroom space and materials are necessary steps to promoting efficient learning and to minimizing behavior problems. Students need to see their teacher, hear instructions and have efficient access to learning materials. Classroom organization should facilitate the teacher's task in monitoring students and providing easy access to frequently used material. It should also allow the teacher to easily provide feedback. Thus, it is essential for the teacher to see all learners at all times and to move easily among students in order to monitor their work and behavior (PARA, (n. d)). Flexibility is another important quality in the classroom since learning types can differ from one activity to another, i.e. during individual work, pair work or even group work. It is also helpful to establish seating arrangements at the beginning of the year (mainly in elementary and secondary schools) to avoid changing places every day, and most importantly, to separate friends who always have stories to tell: “Executing a specific plan for classroom management creates less stress for the teacher and underscores a firm, fair and friendly classroom” (Dawson, Karen (2010)).

Appropriate classroom supervision is paramount in creating a safe and successful learning environment. Mutual respect between teachers and students and particularly among students themselves is necessary as it increases student responsibility. Furthermore, teachers need to remember to communicate with parents when children have special learning needs or to discuss academic or

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disciplinary needs before any situation become critical. It is also helpful to implement reasonable rules and to speak to a student as privately as possible about inappropriate behavior (Dawson, Karen (2010)).

Classroom management is really difficult to master, especially for novice teachers. I think that the subject being taught, the nature of the group, the number of students and the characteristics of the teacher are all important factors in thinking of strategies for maintaining a positive classroom environment. I personally think that teachers should assign students places at the beginning of the year. Furthermore, when a group activity is planned, the teacher needs to draw up the list of students for each group (including a mix of gifted or excellent students, ordinary students and weaker or in-need students) before the lesson starts in order to minimize classroom management problems.

My practical teaching experience has convinced me that communication is the key to solving class management problems. I think that talking with students in an effort to find solutions before a difficult situation gets worse is absolutely necessary; furthermore, parental involvement can also be helpful when it comes to the most difficult cases. Therefore, I feel it is necessary for teachers to communicate more with their students and their parents, to adopt a strategy of differentiation in order to motivate all their students (gifted - excellent - ordinary - weak and special need students) and to work hard on bringing interesting topics to class. This is because, generally speaking, behavioral problems will increase in classes where the majority of students are not interested in the subject, or when there is a real mixture of excellent and weak students, or even when students discover that the teacher is not “an expert” in what he or she is trying to transmit.

In conclusion, I would like to point out another classroom management problem: we, teachers, work hard at establishing rules that must be respected; however, the majority (if not all) of our classroom rules tend to be linked to bad behavior and we forget that improved or good behavior need encouragement. If we hope to earn our students' respect and trust, we need to respect them and we have to be fair.

▪ **COMPETENCY ELEVEN:**

1- To engage in professional development individually and with others:

Teachers are, in reality, life-long learners, meaning that they never stop learning. They need to continually develop their teaching skills in order to adapt their teaching methods to their students who generally have different characters and learning styles. Collaboration and the desire to share information with others are

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essential qualities when it comes to successfully preparing interesting material or finding solutions to the even the most complicated problems facing a teacher.

2- SELF-ANALYSIS

As a teacher, the fact that I am still learning is an opportunity for me to grow professionally. The different courses I have taken, the many projects and assignments I have developed and the countless forums I have participated in have all been of great help to me. Together with their colleagues, teachers can agree on some points and disagree on others. They have also to share interesting links and articles or books, creating an excellent sense of collaboration and team spirit: “developing a collective professional development culture” (MELS (2001), p.113). It is also helpful to discuss the relevance of their pedagogical and didactic choices or to get ideas on how to improve the resources they use. With the huge technology development, it is also possible to exchange with virtual colleagues, as well as learning from retired teachers' experience and from the different articles and books written by specialists in the field of education. This is also helpful to engage in professional development.

Teachers have to stay up-to-date with the latest research. For this reason, it is necessary to read recent research papers in the field of education, and to watch different videos shared by professionals on different sites. It is also necessary to participate in the various training sessions provided by schools and to attend the different conferences and conventions related to their subject. Another important point is that it is highly recommended to keep a logbook up-to-date with remarks and comments for improving specific situations in the classroom. It is also recommended to note necessary changes to be made to lesson plans, to make them more interesting and motivating in the future. Teachers have to analyze professional competencies in-depth in order to discover their strength and weaknesses and to know how to adjust their teaching practices in order to meet their students' needs.

Furthermore, I think that it is helpful to open an account on LinkedIn to share the teacher's professional profile, to help professionals and to be helped, as well. Experienced teachers are encouraged to help novice teachers since I am convinced that “the organization of professional knowledge, ongoing professional development, individual effectiveness and efficiency, the sharing of expertise between group members and the codification of practical knowledge” are necessary in order to undertake the process of professionalism (MELS, (2001), p.13).

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▪ **Conclusion:**

To conclude, as a teacher, I believe that it is important to keep up with the evolution of the new pedagogical approaches since the nature of students, the material used in the class and learning objectives change from one decade to another. It is also necessary to discuss pedagogy and the best teaching and learning practices with experienced and novice teachers alike: the former know what worked in the past and the present, and the latter know what works now and in the near future. So, teaching professionals should continuously “discuss the relevance of his or her pedagogical choices with his or her colleagues” in order to be better teachers (MELS, (2001), p.114).

For further research and studies, here are the 12 professional teaching competences that guide teachers in Quebec: Competency 1: To act as a professional inheritor, critic and interpreter of knowledge or culture when teaching students. Competency 2: To communicate clearly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing, using correct grammar, in various contexts related to teaching. Competency 3: To develop teaching/learning situations that are appropriate to the students concerned and the subject content with a view to developing the competencies targeted in the programs of study. Competency 4: To pilot teaching/learning situations that are appropriate to the students concerned and to the subject content with a view to developing the competencies targeted in the programs of study. Competency 5: To evaluate student progress in learning the subject content and mastering the related competencies. Competency 6: To plan, organize and supervise a class in such a way as to promote students’ learning and social development” (Dawson, Karen (2010)). Competency 7: To adapt his or her teaching to the needs and characteristics of students with learning disabilities, social maladjustments or handicaps. Competency 8: To integrate information and communications technologies (ICT) in the preparation and delivery of teaching/learning activities and for instructional management and professional development purposes. Competency 9: To cooperate with school staff, parents, partners in the community and students in pursuing the educational objectives of the school. Competency 10: To cooperate with members of the teaching team in carrying out tasks involving the development and evaluation of the competencies targeted in the programs of study, taking into account the students concerned. Competency 11: To engage in professional development individually and with others. Competency 12: To demonstrate ethical and responsible professional behavior in the performance of his or her duties.

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