



More Professional Autonomy

An individual and collective
space to strengthen



The lack of recognition of the teaching profession at the CEGEP level and the need to regain ground in light of our institutions' bureaucratization have pushed the Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep (FEC-CSQ) to make the enhancement of our professional autonomy the theme of its 21st Congress, in June 2016. This document presents considerations and courses of action identified to this end.

Recognizing academic freedom

CEGEP teachers, as members of higher education institutions, must be able to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and ideas, and thus have the necessary academic freedom to perform their duties.

Academic freedom, as defined by our union alliance during the negotiating period, enables teachers:

- to determine the knowledge to be taught;
- to determine pedagogical approaches;
- to exercise critical judgment towards society, institution, dogmas and opinions.

Academic freedom must be exercised with professionalism and with the required intellectual rigour towards subject contents, standards and teaching methods.

Academic freedom must also be exercised in a perspective of complementarity with other places of discussion among teachers, namely departments and program committees.

“Tired of resorting to individual cunning ways to get by, stakeholders may consider uniting to put pressure on work organization as well as develop explicit areas of autonomy and individual and common responsibility.”

(Perrenoud, 2000, p. 12)

Reasserting our influence in individual and collective spaces of professional autonomy

CEGEPS are institutions with several spheres of influence, namely governed by the *Colleges Act*, which determines the role of the board of governors, namely the development of the strategic and success plan, as well as their composition. Two positions out of 17 are reserved for teachers and most members come from outside the college, while we are arguing for a majority of members from inside the college. The functions of the academic council are also contained in the Act (opinion on programs, institutional policies, etc.), but their composition varies according to colleges' internal regulations. We consider that teachers should hold a majority on the academic council.

Even though the law, local agreements and institutional policies regulate our profession, our spheres of autonomy are defined by the collective agreement.

1) Individual autonomy related to course preparation, delivery and assessment (Clause 8-3.00)

Course preparation, delivery and assessment form the basis of our individual professional autonomy, along with a whole range of activities,

like department meetings and attendance at pedagogical days. In addition, teachers willing to do so add another section of activities to their workload (professional development, internships, research, etc.)

2) Collective autonomy guiding department and program activities (Clauses 4-1.01 to 4-1.04)

The department is at the heart of our collective professional autonomy, because our expertise is based on disciplinary competencies. The departmental assembly distributes teaching loads, adopts course outlines, defines pedagogical methods and evaluation modes, makes recommendations respecting the conditions for admission, and designates its representatives to program, selection, and ministerial committees.

“In exercising its functions, the departmental assembly has great AUTONOMY, including the freedom to choose the means that it deems appropriate, and that is exercised in the mutual acknowledgement of responsibilities assigned to the department and the College” (clause 4-1.07).

3) Powers granted to the Union (Clauses 2-2.09 to 4-3.00)

Only the Union, through general meetings, “shall be entitled to appoint professors to a committee set up by the College”. The collective agreement also states that the College must meet with the Union before making decisions respecting the closing, opening or transfer of programs, agreements modifying educational structures, the preparation of the school calendar, as well as modifications to working conditions caused by changes in the pedagogical system or new teaching methods.

WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY?

Swiss sociologist Philippe Perrenoud defines professional autonomy as follows:

“The capacity of subjects (whether individual or collective) to freely determine the rules of action to which they want to submit themselves, and to lay down, within their own sphere of work, the detailed rules concerning their activities without having standards imposed by an external entity (i.e. the formal organization).”

Perrenoud, 2000, p. 1

Reducing bureaucracy

The employment contract of CEGEP teachers provides for spaces of autonomy and influence on a broad sphere of college activities in the field of pedagogy and administration. These spaces are however limited by colleges' management rights, new management practices and the requirement for colleges to adopt a set of institutional policies.

Obligations set out for colleges have actually increased over the years. In addition to institutional learning evaluation policies, institutional program assessment policies appeared in 1993, along with the CÉEC (Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial). Then came strategic and success plans in 2002, followed by the "quality assurance" shift in 2013.

These changes have caused a decrease in teachers' spheres of influence. First, their place on boards of governors has decreased from four to two, namely for the benefit of corporate representatives. Furthermore, the accountability imposed upon colleges has increased the bureaucracy and the administrative burden for all teachers. Including the development of department learning assessment policies, production of framework plans, participation in program committees, compliance with ministerial outlines and their

respective competencies. These are as many obligations and pressures that have been building up over the years, thus reducing our professional autonomy.

Strengthening collegiality and participatory management

Organizational models are not neutral or natural. In a self-management model, autonomy will be quite strong, while in a highly hierarchical model, it will be quite weak.

If such spheres of influence as boards of governors, academic councils, program committees and departments foster more extensive participation, the exercise of autonomy will be reinforced.

However, the implementation of such a model often goes hand in hand with more frequent meetings and more committees. In the light of the increased involvement yielded by such changes, it is necessary to foster structured, democratic practices reinforcing the relationship between deliberations and decision making. Increased workloads and the difficulties related to work-family reconciliation must also be taken into consideration in the implementation of a more participatory management model.

NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Researcher Christian Maroy identifies the features of the new public management as follows:

- increased autonomy for institutions;
- result standards to achieve;
- increased control of teachers' work;
- external assessment of results;
- intensification and increased complexity of the work;
- customer-centric approach.

+ 19%

Increase in the number
of managerial staff
between 2006 and 2012

+ HIERARCHY

Hierarchical bureaucratic model

- Managerial authority is put forward
- Increase in administrative resources instead of “field” staff
- Major practice standardization and multiplication of regulations
- Professional development and collegiality are of little importance
- Individual initiatives are discouraged
- Teachers are considered as executors
- Questioning of working conditions
- Each student’s specific learning itinerary is the priority (mercantile vision of education)

+ AUTONOMY

Participatory professional model

- Management fosters a culture of collaboration
- Administration supports teachers
- Emphasis is placed on needs rather than regulations
- Professional development and collegiality are important
- The various approaches are valued
- Teachers are considered as professionals
- Employees’ workload and satisfaction are taken into consideration
- Students are prepared to play their role as active citizens (humanistic vision of education)

Our demands:

- Recognition of academic freedom
- Reassertion of our influence in individual and collective spaces of professional autonomy
- Downsizing of bureaucracy
- Reinforcement of collegiality and participative management

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE FEC-CSQ’S 21ST CONGRESS, IN JUNE 2016

That the FEC-CSQ defend the importance of an increased recognition of CEGEP teachers’ academic freedom and reassert the specificity of collegiate work within CEGEPS.

That the FEC-CSQ promote a more participatory governance model within CEGEPS and condemn the increase of control measures, excessive practice standardization and results-based management.

That the FEC-CSQ condemn the CÉEC’s “quality assurance” shift and, consequently, reiterate its call for the abolition of the CÉEC.

That the FEC-CSQ propose an amendment to the *Colleges Act* for a majority representation of internal members (staff, management and students) on the boards of governors and a majority representation of teachers on the academic councils.

To read more

AVIGNON, Pierre. *L'autonomie professionnelle des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep : un espace individuel et collectif à renforcer*, Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep (FEC-CSQ) issue paper for the 21st Congress, June 2016.

GAGNON, Mélanie. *La collégialité et la gestion. S'organiser... se faire organiser*, Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université (FQPPU), 2015, 34 p.

LADOUCEUR, Pauline. *Autonomie professionnelle: recension des écrits*, Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE-CSQ), 2010, 61 p.

LESSARD, Claude. « Autonomie professionnelle et régulation de l'éducation : une évolution problématique », *Options CSQ*, n° 2, 2009, p. 214-228.

PERRENOUD, Philippe. « L'autonomie au travail : déviance déloyale, initiative vertueuse ou nouvelle norme? », *Enseigner: un métier sous contrôle? Entre autonomie professionnelle et normalisation du travail*, Philippe Meirieu (dir.), *Cahiers pédagogiques*, n° 384, 2000, p.14-19.



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