

REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE TRAINING OF COOPERATING TEACHERS AND UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

(Abridged version)

by the Task Force¹ on the Training of Cooperating Teachers
and University Supervisors

Introduction

The development of a reference framework² for the training of student teacher trainers reflects a desire to recognize the importance of the work done by cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Because of the requirements of their respective roles and the rigour of their duties, student teacher trainers play a decisive role in the quality of future teachers (Gervais and Desrosiers, 2005a) and, consequently, the quality of students' learning. While pursuing shared objectives, each group of trainers, through its specific role, makes a complementary and significant contribution to the training of student teachers.

All the proposals included in the reference framework are in keeping with many existing university programs and complement other training programs as well. We believe, in fact, that the implementation of this reference framework, which includes orientations and competencies, can be based on the experiential and theoretical knowledge that the cooperating teachers and university supervisors have already constructed. Moreover, the proposals presented here take into account the changes that are occurring in the education system and the new orientations regarding teacher training. In keeping with this imperative, their implementation will make it possible to harmonize the different university programs and better meet the needs of all student teachers, no

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² According to a survey of the literature, there is no formally constructed reference framework for the training of cooperating teachers or supervisors. Also, the reference framework presented here was not designed and developed on the basis of a specific review of texts or theories.

matter what the geographical distance may be between the university they attend and their practicum setting.³

Central to the reference framework is the concept of professional ethics, i.e. the set of attitudes and behaviours that serve as anchor points and tools for training and as aspects to be constantly improved. Because professional ethics involves, among other things, the ability to relate to others (Gohier, 1997) and its manifestations influence the construction of the professional identity of student teachers, it is considered a requirement at every stage of the training of cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

The objectives

We should begin by stating the two main objectives of the task force. The first concerns the harmonization of instructor training with the orientations of teacher training, namely, professionalization and the cultural approach to teaching (Québec, 2001). The second concerns the interuniversity harmonization of cooperating teacher training to ensure that all student teachers receive the supervision they need, whatever university they attend.

It should also be mentioned that hundreds of people involved in the training of student teachers throughout the different regions of Québec were consulted and invited to share and collectively reflect on their points of view. The groups were made up of cooperating teachers, university supervisors, instructors of cooperating teachers, school administrators, members of regional tables, as well as those responsible for organizing practicums. Their suggestions were all taken into account by the task force.

Structure of the reference framework

The reference framework consists of two parts: one on the training of cooperating teachers and the other on the training of university supervisors. Each part is subdivided into three sections: 1)

³ The task force continues the work that began with the study on training programs for the mentoring of student teachers by Lacroix-Roy, Lessard and Garant (2003), and the brief on practice teaching by the Comité-conseil sur la formation du personnel enseignant (Québec, 2006).

training orientations, which represent the aims of the training or its medium- and long-term goals; 2) expected competencies, which refer to the appropriate mobilization and use of resources, such as knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes, and the capacity to combine them appropriately in various contexts of student teacher training; 3) suggested training themes, which are established in accordance with the expected competencies. Training strategies, which consist of a set of methods and means for training cooperating teachers and supervisors, apply to both groups.

Each part of the reference framework has been developed to support the same aim, which is to provide quality training to student teachers and, ultimately, to their students. It is based on the fact that cooperating teachers and university supervisors may play different roles yet pursue common objectives. Finally, the expected competencies are both consistent and complementary, and reflect the area of intervention of each group of trainer.

Part I: Reference framework for cooperating teacher training

This section includes the orientations, expected competencies and suggested training themes of cooperative teacher training.

Training orientations

The training orientations for cooperating teachers are threefold. They are presented below in no particular order of priority or importance.

➤ Professionalization of cooperating teachers as field instructors

Professionalizing cooperating teachers means seeking recognition for their role as field instructors, a role which is complex. In fact, as teachers and trainers of teachers, cooperating teachers play a dual role. On the one hand, in their work with students, they are expected to continue developing the professional competencies expected of teachers; on the other, in their interventions with adult student teachers, they are required to provide the latter with the support they require to develop those same professional competencies. The construction of this professionalism requires professional codevelopment, which is promoted through collective reflection and discussions that should be part of training activities.

➤ **The professional development of student teachers**

In keeping with training directed towards professionalization (Québec, 2001) and in order to specify how this will be achieved, the development of student teachers as professional teachers involves the development of twelve professional competencies that are defined based on actions in a real-life setting. Cooperating teachers must have a good understanding of each of these competencies and must take the meaning of these competencies into account while performing their role, since they are the ones best placed to observe the steady development of these competencies in student teachers. Aware of the importance of reflective practice in training, cooperative teachers ask student teachers to reflect on their actions and on the reasons behind the choices they make. By encouraging student teachers to question their certainties, express their doubts and justify their statements, cooperating teachers help student teachers construct and formulate pedagogical reasoning.

➤ **Concerted action between school-based⁴ and university-based trainers**

The complementary contribution that each trainer makes is essential to the training of student teachers. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors who work as a team tend to be more mutually supportive and to compare and contrast their respective knowledge. By working together, they ensure that student teachers are not given conflicting messages. Thus, cooperating teachers are urged to develop tools that will allow them to establish and maintain with university supervisors relationships that foster the training of student teachers. Collaboration is also advocated with other school partners who are involved in the supervision of student teachers and integration into the school team. This type of collaboration must be initiated by the cooperating teacher.

Expected competencies of cooperating teachers

The expected competencies of cooperating teachers are divided into five categories. In each of these categories, student teachers are front and centre, since their learning progress affects the way these competencies are used. Once again, they are presented in no particular order of priority or importance, although each one is essential to the development of the others.

⁴ In this text, we use the term “school” to refer to the place where the practicum takes place. Thus, the school-based trainer is the cooperating teacher.

➤ **Competency related to the development of student teachers' professional identity**

- Support the development of the student teacher's professional identity, in accordance with his or her learning path and the formal objectives of teacher training.

This competency requires adherence to society's values as well as respect for the language of instruction. In this sense, cooperating teachers support student teachers in their efforts to improve their mastery of oral and written language. In addition, they guide student teachers in their progress towards professional autonomy while facilitating their integration into the classroom, the school and the profession, particularly by inviting them to cooperate with work teams to which they as teachers belong. Aware of the need to maintain a dynamic relationship with knowledge, cooperative teachers are open to ideas and knowledge; they behave and express themselves consciously as conveyors of knowledge, particularly knowledge that can meet the specific needs of student teachers. While satisfying the expectations of the universities, cooperating teachers adopt a differentiated approach in their interventions with future teachers.

➤ **Competencies related to the development of student teachers' professional competencies**

- Guide the student teacher in the development of professional competencies through rigorous observation, constructive feedback and ongoing, well-founded evaluation.

The observations of cooperating teachers focus on manifestations of the different professional competencies. During feedback meetings, cooperating teachers make comments and ask questions in order to guide student teachers in the development of these competencies. Asking student teachers to verbalize the reasons for their actions, to identify aspects of their teaching that require improvement and to suggest solutions to problem situations are generally effective means of helping them make progress. Thus, student teacher evaluation focuses on the development of professional competencies. Cooperating teachers are asked to continuously take into account the progressive development of these competencies.

- Guide the student teacher in adopting teaching practices that are likely to promote ministerial orientations regarding education.

This competency requires that cooperating teachers remain open to changes in education and

receptive to research findings on learning and teaching. Cooperating teachers encourage student teachers to discuss the teaching aims and methods they propose to use. They offer to assist student teachers in applying these aims and innovative proposals.

➤ **Competency related to the reflective practice of student teachers**

- Help the student teacher take a critical look at his or her practice.

In order to help student teachers with this competency, cooperating teachers must themselves be able to reflect on their teaching and their role as trainers of student teachers. In keeping with this attitude, they encourage student teachers to question their beliefs, personal theories, teaching practices and impact on student progress. They take an interest in the knowledge the student teachers have acquired in university and encourage them to make connections between this formal knowledge, their practice and their experiential knowledge. By encouraging them to look critically at their professional practice, cooperating teachers help student teachers become more self-aware, identify their teaching styles and construct their identities as teachers.

➤ **Competency related to interpersonal and interprofessional relationships with student teachers**

- Interact with the student teacher respectfully and in a way that establishes a climate of learning and a professional relationship of trust

In their interactions with student teachers, cooperating teachers establish relationships that allow them to fully exercise their role as trainers. This role differs from relationships of friendship and trust, as well as those of power and authority. Aware that they are mentors and sources of inspiration for student teachers, without, however, considering themselves models of excellence, cooperating teachers provide training that is adapted to the needs of their charges. In the context of a teaching practicum, this competency also implies that cooperating teachers recognize the value and assess the relevance of the student teacher's ideas, and that they be open to his or her opinions, provided these are backed up by well-founded arguments. Mutual enrichment is possible if communication takes place in an atmosphere that fosters the sharing of knowledge (Portelance and Durand, 2006).

➤ **Competency related to collaboration to ensure consistent training of student**

teachers

- Work in collaboration with the different university partners, in particular the university supervisor.

Cooperating teachers are urged to become familiar with the content and objectives of university courses taken by the student teachers and to show their willingness to understand these as well as possible so that they can help student teachers make connections between their theoretical and practical knowledge. Cooperation with the university supervisor is essential throughout the practicum. Without it, each may exercise his or her respective role in isolated, disjointed ways. Student teachers are the first ones to recognize and be affected by this problem, since they are the ones who will have to make extra efforts to reconcile inconsistent expectations. This competency requires a willingness to work with student teachers towards the attainment of official training objectives.

Suggested training themes

The list of suggested training themes below is not exhaustive. It does, however, contain the learning focuses that must be covered at some point during cooperating teacher training, whether as initial training or as enrichment. The order of categories does not mean one is more important than another.

- Role of the cooperating teacher: Distinct and complementary roles of teacher and cooperating teacher / Specific and complementary roles of the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, the school administrators, the practicum director and the school board, where applicable / Cooperative context (cooperation with the university supervisor, exchanges within the student teaching triad, mutual training of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor) / Student teachers' expectations regarding cooperating teachers / Support for professional integration / Quality of the cooperating teacher's oral expression / Professional ethics
- Support, guidance and supervision of student teachers: Support process (design, styles, approaches) / Support tools / Communication, listening and questioning skills / Reception of student teachers / Practice teaching by the student teacher / Support for student teachers who are recent immigrants
- Key functions of cooperating teachers: Observation / Feedback / Evaluation and professional judgment

- Professional competencies of student teachers: Meaning, scope, manifestations and levels of competency development / Ministerial orientations and foundations of teacher training / Practicum objectives and requirements adapted to the level of training / Content of university training
- Reflective practice: Reflective process / Analysis of practices / Integration of experiential and theoretical knowledge / Professional portfolio (content and contribution) / Verbalization of one's pedagogical actions / Explanations of one's teaching aims
- Strategies for training student teachers: Strategies for emulating involvement in training / Intervention strategies adapted to student teachers / Strategies for building professional confidence / Strategies for managing difficult training situations
- Support for teaching preparation in light of didactic and psychopedagogical knowledge and the classroom context: Planning of teaching/learning situations / Cultural approach to teaching / Attitudes toward university training

Part II: Reference framework for university supervisor training

This section includes the orientations, expected competencies and suggested training themes of university supervisor training.

Training orientations

The training orientations for university supervisors are threefold. They are presented below in no particular order of priority or importance.

➤ Professionalization of supervisors as university trainers

One of the aims of supervisor training is to develop the professionalism of those involved in training student teachers in university. Most practicum supervisors have experiential knowledge of the school system, since they practise, or have practised, the teaching profession. Because they maintain close ties to the university community, they are also familiar with the content of university teaching programs. The professionalism of university supervisors is marked by two characteristics: the first is the importance accorded to their role as conveyors of formal, university-acquired knowledge and the need to be equipped with tools that will allow them to foster in future teachers a reflective practice founded on formally recognized knowledge. The second is a reflective approach to their role and adherence to the foundations of teacher training.

➤ The professional development of student teachers

Supervisor training is aimed at consolidating the commitment to professionally recognize university supervisors as key players in the training of student teachers. Using the resources at their disposal, in compliance with university requirements and in keeping with the actions of other supervisors and university teachers, supervisors are concerned with the professional development of every student teacher they supervise as well as the group of student teachers they meet during seminars. They make observations in the classroom and create a climate of reflection and discussion in order to ensure that their feedback is constructive, adapted to the context of the practicum and open to innovative pedagogical practices. In addition, they adopt an evaluation approach designed to help the students successfully complete the steps in their training process. To this end, they ensure that they understand the meaning of each professional competency expected of teachers and are familiar with their manifestations.

➤ **Concerted action between school-based and university-based instructors**

Cooperation requires a willingness on the part of supervisors to understand the characteristics of schools that take in student teachers (e.g. the school population, programs offered, specific projects). As an aim of supervisor training, ongoing concerted action among trainers is crucial because it impacts the professional development of student teachers. Student teachers face many difficulties as they alternate between training sites and try to establish meaningful connections between what is taught in university and what is taught by teachers in the schools. This concerted action is based on discussions and exchanges of points of view between cooperating teachers and supervisors who are considered co-trainers of student teachers (Boutin and Camaraille, 2001). The idea of co-training also extends to the reciprocal contributions made between trainers and between supervisors.

Expected competencies of university supervisors

The expected competencies of university supervisors are divided into five categories. In each of these categories, student teachers are front and centre, since learning progress affects the way these competencies are used. They are listed below in no particular order of priority or importance, although each is related to the development of the others.

➤ **Competency related to differentiated training of student teachers**

- Taking into account university requirements, adapt one's approach to the practicum setting and the student teacher.

The ability to adapt to the practicum setting and the student teachers depends on the ability to take into consideration the characteristics of the school; the group(s) of students assigned to the student teacher; the personality, teaching methods and expectations of the cooperating teacher; as well as the other material and human aspects of the learning situation in which the student teacher is placed. Since they come into contact with many student teachers and many cooperating teachers, supervisors are able to vary their interventions as they encourage student teachers to construct their identities as teachers. Practicum seminars are useful for building a strong group identity, to the extent that professional codevelopment is encouraged by the supervisor.

➤ **Competency related to the development of student teachers' professional competencies**

- Guide the student teacher in the development of professional competencies through rigorous observation, constructive feedback and ongoing, well-founded evaluation.

Like teachers, supervisors guide student teachers in their lesson planning, support them in developing well-founded professional judgment and orient them towards improving their teaching practices. Their interventions include, for example, asking student teachers questions to ensure that they maintain a critical attitude towards their actions and that they fully understand the meaning of their didactic and psychopedagogical choices. This contribution requires that supervisors extend the scope of their observations and interventions to all aspects of the teaching profession. Sound knowledge of the students' training orientations and the methods used to apply them is indispensable.

Since they have a keen understanding of the university's expectations regarding student teachers, their evaluations complement those of cooperating teachers and build on their points of view. They naturally maintain a distance from the dynamics of the classroom and can therefore give an impartial point of view on student teachers' learning. They also keep written work produced by the student teachers as a tool to monitor the latter's progress and help them regulate their learning strategies. As representatives of universities, supervisors have institutional responsibility for the evaluation of student teachers and for justifying decisions made jointly with cooperating teachers

concerning the development of the professional competencies of future teachers.

➤ **Competencies related to the development of an integrated approach to student teacher training**

- Make, and help the student teachers make, connections between formal knowledge and experiential knowledge.

This competency means that supervisors adapt their interventions to the level of training of the student teachers and help the latter decompartmentalize their theoretical knowledge and practices, as they organize and reorganize these resources to ensure they are being developed on an ongoing basis. The seminars are usually occasions for student teachers to share their experiences. At the instigation of the supervisor, this sharing provides a pretext to collectively reconstruct theoretical knowledge in order to make it more meaningful and more useful in the context of teaching. At the same time, supervisors use the experiential knowledge expressed by the student teachers to shed light on the theoretical knowledge acquired at university. They encourage student teachers to make such connections between formal knowledge and experiential knowledge and verbalize them.

- Help the student teacher develop a sense of responsibility with regard to his or her professional practice.

Supervisors help student teachers develop professional autonomy and the ability to analyze their teaching practice with respect to professionalization and the cultural approach to teaching. This competency requires a good understanding of the meaning and scope of professional competencies as well as an awareness of their own aims as instructors. Supervisors adopt an attitude of openness towards changes in education and encourage student teachers to innovate, take initiative, but also explain the whys and wherefores of their practice. They show them that they have confidence in the student teachers' potential and in their ability to learn and excel. In addition, they support student teachers in analyzing their professional actions and in finding ways to improve these actions, and adopt themselves a reflective attitude towards the exercise of their role.

➤ **Competencies related to a climate of learning and the development of a community**

of learning

- Maintain with the student teacher a personal and professional relationship marked by respect.

Supervisors maintain professional relationships in an atmosphere of trust, in order to create a climate conducive to learning. Knowing that they are frequently seen by students as evaluators and even a threat to the success of their practicum, they are encouraged to adopt an approach characterized by empathy, openness to the student teachers' ideas and well-founded professional judgment expressed with tact and insight, so as to support student teachers in their desire to improve themselves. They are careful to create a climate of supervision that fosters the expression of points of view, emphasize the successes of student teachers and approach their problems as learning opportunities. In short, they focus on the training needs of the student teachers.

- Create conditions for professional exchanges among student teachers with a view to the co-constructing professional knowledge.

To develop a community of learning, supervisors must be able to stimulate exchanges among student teachers and co-construct professional knowledge. When they foster these exchanges, supervisors help develop their ability to collectively analyze teaching situations. They lead student teachers to reflect collectively about individual problem situations. By discussing and contrasting points of view, based on theoretical and experiential knowledge, supervisors and student teachers co-construct professional knowledge. In this way, supervisors stimulate in the students a dynamic, positive relationship with knowledge, be it didactic, psychopedagogical or subject-related.

➤ Competencies related to collaboration

Practise collaborative leadership within the student teaching triad.

Supervisory visits are opportunities for all three members of the student teaching triad to meet. Supervisors express their views of the student teachers' progress in an atmosphere that both promotes constructive discussion and allows supervisors to exercise a certain leadership as representatives of their universities. They ensure that interactions take place respectfully in a climate of trust. Supervisors' remarks and attitudes are aimed mainly at ensuring that student teachers are seriously committed to developing their competencies and that cooperating teachers

are committed to supporting the attainment of this objective.

- Work together with the cooperating teacher to provide consistent training to the student teacher.

Because student teachers alternate between a university and school setting, supervisors and cooperating teachers must ensure that learning focuses, expectations and comments are consistent in order to ease the students' transition between the two settings. This competency requires that supervisors listen attentively to cooperating teachers, show a real interest in their points of view as field instructors, and discuss these viewpoints in order to arrive at a consistent analysis of the student teachers' progress.

- Develop a co-training relationship with the cooperating teacher.

The co-training relationship with the cooperating teacher is an important aspect of the interprofessional relationships that must be developed between these two student teacher trainers. Supervisors perform a function as conveyors of knowledge. They have better knowledge of the content of university programs than cooperating teachers do. Conversely, cooperating teachers possess a richer stock of experiential knowledge about the schools, the students and teaching. In their communications, supervisors not only strive to establish a climate of discussion conducive to the improvement of their knowledge of the practicum setting, but also to help their partners become more familiar with, and better understand, the theoretical concepts that student teachers have been taught in university. Only a climate of collegiality, openness to the contributions of others and recognition of the value of the expertise of others will make it possible to create and maintain a co-training relationship between the two.

Training themes

Although the lists below are not exhaustive, they do contain the learning focuses that must be covered at some point during university supervisor training. The order in which the categories are presented does not mean that one category is more important than another.

- Role of the supervisor: Support for professional integration and involvement in the training program / Specific and complementary roles of the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, school administrators, the practicum director and the school board, where

applicable / Cooperative context (concerted action with the cooperating teacher as co-trainer of the student teacher; exchanges and leadership within the student teaching triad; mutual training of the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher) / Student teachers' expectations regarding university supervisors / Quality of the university supervisor's oral expression / Profiles of cooperating teachers / Professional ethics

- Support, guidance and supervision for student teachers: Support process (design, styles, approaches) / Support tools / Communication, listening and questioning skills / Profiles of student teachers / Description of various practicum settings / Support for student teachers who are recent immigrants
- Key functions of university supervisors: Observation and analysis of practices / Feedback / Evaluation and professional judgment / Instructional guidance
- Professional competencies of student teachers: Meaning, scope, manifestations and levels of competency development / Ministerial orientations and foundations of teacher training / Practicum objectives and requirements adapted to the level of training of student teachers / Content of university programs / General orientations of the Québec Education Program
- Reflective practice: Reflective process / Analysis of practices / Integration of experiential and theoretical knowledge / Professional portfolio (content and contribution) / Verbalization of pedagogical actions / Explanation of teaching aims
- Strategies for training student teachers: Strategies for emulating involvement in training / Intervention strategies adapted to the student teacher and the practicum setting / Strategies for building professional confidence / Strategies for managing difficult training situations
- Support for teaching preparation in light of didactic and psychopedagogical knowledge and taking into account the classroom setting: Planning of teaching/learning situations / The cultural approach to teaching / Attitudes toward university training

Training strategies

Those who train cooperating teachers or supervisors are no doubt already familiar with, and have already tested, many of the training strategies presented below. For this reason, the strategies proposed are not accompanied by explanations. It should be noted that the suggestions are varied and include several different training methods and means, not all of which are of equal value. The list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive; however, all of the elements are suitable for training both cooperating teachers and university supervisors and can be adapted to initial training or enrichment activities. The training strategies used will have greater impact on the training of cooperating teachers or supervisors if they help create a community of learning among the

participants. Finally we should mention that one strategy can be used to cover several training themes and contribute to the development of various competencies.

- Exchanges, discussions
- Role-playing
- Case studies or problem-solving, analysis of practices
- Readings, suggested reference materials, documentation
- Sharing of experiences and life stories, personal accounts
- Simulations, hypothetical situations
- Group work, small–group work followed by plenary sessions
- Summaries
- Presentations by the facilitator, explanations of theoretical concepts, reframing by the facilitator, lectures, theorizing on the basis of actual cases
- Examples, counter-examples
- Videos and slide shows
- Video projects
- Guided reflection and self-questioning, reflection
- Informal peer training
- Discussion forum
- Personal account given by a graduating student teacher
- Sharing of tools for leading seminars (for university supervisors)

Conclusion

We believe that the implementation of this reference framework by those responsible for the training of cooperating teachers and university supervisors will be facilitated if certain organizational procedures are implemented. For this purpose, the task force looked at:

- training profiles (initial training and various enrichment activities)
- possible training formats (e.g. graduate studies, professional development activities, others)
- the duration, length and sequence of training activities
- group composition
- incentives and facilitating conditions
- official recognition of training

After collective reflection and discussion, the group brought forward a few suggestions, which appear in the full version of the reference framework.⁵

⁵ The research report entitled *La formation des enseignants associés et des superviseurs universitaires. Rapport de recherche. Cadre de référence* contains the full version of the reference framework.

Finally, we would also like to highlight the importance of developing the professional competencies of all practising teachers. It is essential that, in the different practicum environments, student teachers spend time with professionals who are able to demonstrate the competencies expected of teachers. The quality of student teacher training depends on this. For this reason, it would be desirable for both schools and universities to offer teachers training activities so that teachers can continue to develop their professional competencies.