

State of the Intercultural Competence of New Principals in French-Canadian Schools at a Time of Demographic Change

Andréanne Gélinas Proulx, Ph. D.

Claire IsaBelle, Ph. D.

Hélène Meunier

Context of the Research Project

Nearly 20 % of Canadian population were born outside of the country in 2010 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). Consequently, an important number of immigrant children, parents, and staff members are welcome into francophone schools, increasing the ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of the organisations.

In respond to this diversity, the French-Canadian schools should promote inclusion, equity, and social justice. Furthermore, school principals should possess demonstrated intercultural competence, but some of their competency indicators are not developed according to our literature review (Archambault & Garon, 2013; Berger & Heller, 2001; Bouchamma & Tardif, 2011; Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Cooper Wilson, 2009; El Ganzoury, 2012; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Ryan, 2003a).

Also, in the past decade, there has been a significant turnover of principals due to numerous retirements among other things; thus, many new principals who have five years and less of experience at this position are working in school in Canada and elsewhere in the world (Fortin, 2006; Government of Canada, 2013; Levine, 2005).

Purpose and Research Questions

Thus, it is important to know if the new school principals who have five years or less of experience (SP5-) in a francophone school context in Canada have developed the indicators of intercultural competence or if they require assistance in developing this required competence. Ultimately, this knowledge could give indications to improve the training and professional development in educational administration.

Specifically our research questions are:

- 1) In which proportion different members of the school community believe that SP5- have developed the intercultural competence indicators and which ones have been identified?
- 2) In which proportion different members of the school community believe that SP5- need assistance in developing the required intercultural competence and which indicators of this competence have been identified?

Conceptual Framework

In order to conduct this research project and to answer our research question, we rely on the hypothetical model of components and indicators of intercultural competence for school principals and future school principals of French schools in Canada in a linguistic minority context (Gélinas Proulx, 2014). Mainly, this competence is developed progressively after several and varied intercultural experiences, which should be more and more complex. The competence includes three components and is divided into 12 indicators.

Methodology

This research project on intercultural competence of SP5- is embedded in a larger project that studied the competencies and educational context to develop competencies of SP5-. For this larger project, we undertook a qualitative and interpretative study (Savoie-Zajc, 2011). For our research project, 101 members of francophone school communities (superintendents, association's presidents, professors, and school principals) from the ten Canadian provinces have been interviewed between fall 2008 and the summer 2009. We choose a qualitative and moderated inductive method for data analysis (Savoie-Zajc, 2011). We used NVivo10 software to manage the large amount of data and to conduct the analysis. Also, we used the data transformation approach, which means that we quantified qualitative data (Creswell, 2009).

Results

Intercultural competence indicators developed by SP5-

Our data analysis shows that few participants believed SP5- developed intercultural competence indicators in order to insure the inclusion of ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. In fact, only 28 % of professors (n = 5), 7 % (n = 2) of SP5-, and 7 % (n = 2) of school principals who have more than six years of experience believed that SP5- developed some indicators of this competence. Also, no superintendent or association's president mentioned that SP5- had developed indicators of the intercultural competence. Overall, only 9 % (n = 9) of participants shared the perception that SP5- had developed the intercultural competence indicators.

More specifically, we can identify the intercultural competence indicators (Gélinas Proulx, 2014) that the participants had discussed. Among the attitude component, they identified: openness to diversity (n = 1), respect of others (n = 1), and self-efficacy in a diverse context (n = 1). For the knowledge component, they mentioned: the knowledge about different cultures (n = 2). Concerning the skills component, we found in their response: analyzing/self-analyzing (n = 1), self-adaptation (empathy) (n = 1), responding to immigrants needs (n = 2), and fighting discrimination (n = 1). However, six indicators have not been identified. Also, the answers of three participants were vague and we were not able to identify one or many indicators of intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence indicators that need to be developed by SP5-

Our data analysis shows that few participants consider SP5- need help in the tasks requiring intercultural competence. Indeed, only 9 % (n = 9) of study participants believed that SP5- need help to include ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. More precisely, 28 % of professors (n = 5), 7 % of SP5- (n = 2), and 7 % (n = 2) of school principals who have more than six years of experience have this perception. Again, no superintendent or association's president suggested that SP5- needed help to develop his or her intercultural competence.

For those who said that SP5- needed help, we were able to identify which intercultural competence indicators had been targeted. Among the attitude component, we found: self-respect, and respecting one's culture (n = 1), openness to diversity (n = 1), and cultural curiosity (n = 1). For the knowledge component, they talked about: the knowledge about different cultures (n = 3), the knowledge required to support teachers (n = 1), and the knowledge on the theories in the intercultural fields and in social justice (n = 1). The study participants mentioned for the skills component: self-adaptation (n = 1), responding

to immigrants needs, which include managing conflict of values (n = 4), opening one's community to diversity (n = 2). Moreover, the answers of three participants were again vague, and we were not able to identify one or many indicators.

Discussion

It seems that most of the SP5- in Francophone schools in Canada did not develop the indicators of intercultural competence, which goes along with the results of other researchers presented previously. However, according to some participants, SP5- are better equipped to face ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity than their colleagues who have more than six years of experience as school principals. Thus, all school principals or future school principals should receive help in developing their intercultural competence. Cultural immersion in another country could be one way to develop the three components of this competence in school principals (Gélinas Proulx, 2014).

Furthermore, it seems that SP5- from the West provinces of Canada and in the Center (Québec and Ontario) have more often been identified as having either developed or failed to develop the IC. This can be explained by the fact that those provinces received more Francophone immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2010 and 2014). However, Ouellet (2000) argues that intercultural pedagogy and the training required to put it in place does not concern only the schools that are located in a context where diversity is more prominent. Thus, every school and school principal in Canada should be concern by this competence. In this vein, SP5- in Eastern Canada should develop this competence as well as those in other Canadian regions.

Regarding the silence of the majority of our study participants about the intercultural competence that have been developed or not by SP5-, it seems there is a need to increase the awareness about this important competence required to manage a French school in Canada at this time of demographic change.

References

- Archambault, J. & Garon, R. (2013). How Principals Exercise Transformative Leadership in Urban Schools in Disadvantaged Areas in Montréal, Canada. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 41(2), 49-66.
- Berger, M.-J. & Heller, M. (2001). Promoting ethnocultural equity education in franco-ontarian schools. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 14(2), 130-141.
- Bouchamma, Y. & Tardif, C. (2011). Les pratiques des directions d'écoles en contexte de diversité ethnoculturelle. In F. Kanouté et G. Lafortune (Eds.), *Familles québécoises d'origine immigrante : les dynamiques de l'établissement* (p. 87-96). Montréal, Canada: Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- Bustamante, R. M., Nelson, J. A., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2009). Assessing schoolwide cultural competence: Implications for school leadership preparation. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(5), 793-827.
- Cooper Wilson, C. (2009). Performing cultural work in demographically changing schools: Implications for expanding transformative leadership frameworks. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45 (5), 694-724.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- El Ganzoury, H. A. (2012). *Assessing Intercultural Competence for Educational Leaders: An Empirical Investigation*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota). Retrieved from:
http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/127965/1/ElGanzoury_umn_0130E_12671.pdf
- Fortin, R. (2006). *L'insertion professionnelle des nouvelles directions d'établissement d'enseignement*. Rapport pour la Fédération québécoise des directeurs d'établissement réalisée. Retrieved from
<http://www.fqde.qc.ca/documents/AbregeVersPaysage.pdf>
- Gélinas Proulx, A. (2014). Modèles hypothétiques de la compétence et d'une formation interculturelles pour des directions et futures directions d'école de langue française au Canada (Doctoral dissertation, Université d'Ottawa, Ontario, Canada). Retrieved from RUOR <http://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/fr/handle/10393/30655>
- Government of Canada. (2013). *Explorer des carrières - rapport sur le marché du travail : directeurs/directrices d'école et administrateurs/administratrices de programmes d'enseignement aux niveaux primaire et secondaire (cnp 0313)*. Retrieved from <http://www.travailleraucanada.gc.ca/accueil-fra.do>
- Levine, A. (2005). *Educating School Leaders*. Retrieved from
<http://www.edschools.org/pdf/Final313.pdf>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2012). *Effectifs de personnes nées à l'étranger dans les pays de l'OCDE et la Fédération de Russie*. Retrieved from
<http://www.oecd.org/fr/els/politiquesetdonneesdesmigrationsinternationales/statcles.htm>
- Ouellet, F. (2000). La formation interculturelle concerne-t-elle les écoles des milieux culturellement peu diversifiés? *Cahiers de la recherche en éducation*, 7(3), 375-406.
- Savoie-Zajc, L. (2011). La recherche qualitative/interprétative en éducation. In T. Karsenti & L. Savoie-Zajc (Eds.), *La recherche en éducation : étapes et approches* (3rd eds., p. 123-147). Saint-Laurent, Canada: ERPI.
- Statistics Canada. (2010). *Portrait statistique de la population immigrante de langue française à l'extérieur du Québec (1991 à 2006)* (n° 89-641-X 2010001 au catalogue). Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-641-x/89-641-x2010001-fra.pdf>
- Statistics Canada. (2014). *Certaines caractéristiques démographiques, culturelles, de la scolarité, de la population active et du revenu (730), première langue officielle parlée (4), groupes d'âge (8D) et sexe (3) pour la population du Canada, provinces, territoires, régions métropolitaines de recensement et agglomérations de recensement, Enquête nationale auprès des ménages de 2011* (n° 99-010-X2011043 au catalogue). Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-fra.cfm?TABID=1&LANG=F&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=107986&PRID=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHO WALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNA MEF=>