

# FACTORS PROMOTING THE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TEACHERS BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

ARTICLE

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## THE PROBLEM

Experienced teachers who have amassed a great deal of professional knowledge and teaching expertise are retiring in large numbers from the cegep system. Consequently, new and often inexperienced teachers are being hired to fill the gap. This means that a high volume of teachers need to be integrated into cegeps.

The “mass exodus of experienced teachers,” as Bateman (1999) has referred to it, has indeed been a much-discussed subject within Quebec’s cegep-level education system. Since the beginning of 1996, the renewal of teaching personnel has been an issue of prime importance; the numbers of new teachers entering the network are well documented (Raymond, 2001). Between 2000 and 2015, close to 6,700 cegep teachers will have retired (Bateman, 1999). This figure represents 80% of the teaching body (Raymond et al, 2005). More specifically, between 2005 and 2009, 2,576 teachers will have been replaced, representing 31.39% of the teaching body (Bateman, 1999). At Vanier College, we have 187 tenured teachers (60.5% of the teaching body) who will be 60 years old or more by 2010, and on the verge of retirement. If anything, this data emphasizes the extent to which the cegep network will be losing rich resources and talent.

The high retirement rates among cegep teachers clearly result in high numbers of new teachers in the system. This being the case, one may wonder the extent to which new teachers are aware of and/or familiar with their new teaching environment. Many new teachers enter the collegial system having been cegep students themselves and so they might already understand collegial goals and expectations. For others, however, this collegial system, unique in North America, poses a formidable challenge. They haven’t heard of the Parent Commission Report (1963 – 1966) nor of the obstacles facing Quebec youth in the 1960s to acquire post-secondary education; they thus are not likely to understand the elaborate structure established to meet the needs of Quebec youth. The idea of combining the technologies and the pre-university streams is new to them; they don’t understand the role of general education to bring students together in the same core curriculum. They are therefore at a disadvantage as they take on their professional teaching duties.

The majority of new teachers enter collegial teaching without formal training in pedagogy. Minimal requirements for hiring in the collegial sector are university training in the discipline. This is despite the fact that calls have been made repeatedly for teacher training, first by the Parent Commission in 1964, and subsequently by the ministère de l’Éducation in 1978 and 1996 (Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, 2000). Most teachers must acquire their necessary professional development in the midst of carrying out their college teaching functions. Bateman’s study (1999) of new teachers confirms this emphasis on academic qualifications while teaching qualifications are to a large extent disregarded. L’Hostie et al. (2004) also confirm the absence of teacher training

amongst teachers, as well as a lack of practice in teaching before they assume their first teaching post.

This information indicates that integration and professional development are currently of particular relevance to the cegep system. That is, integration within a school and the subsequent professional development one receives from the school she/he teaches at can both be determining factors in one's career as a teacher. By the term integration, we mean that the department provides an orientation on the workings of the department, as well as the teacher's role within it, and the functioning of the college as a whole. While integration fosters a smooth, positive start to one's career, professional development can help ensure it stays that way. Professional development promotes the renewal of skills and attainment of new ones, allowing teachers to stay current in their teaching methods and content.

The demands on new teachers to acquire professional skills are becoming increasingly daunting. The challenge of learning these skills is continuously stressed in the literature (Tardif, 1997; Couturier, 2004), especially for beginning teachers (Raymond, 2001). It should be noted that the term "new teacher" does not apply to first year teachers only. Both Bateman (1999) and Lauzon (2006) emphasize that this group includes teachers in years one, two, and three of teaching. In her study of how teachers acquire their professional knowledge, Lauzon designates the first three years of a teacher's life as the beginning stage. At this time, teachers are concentrating on the material to be presented, as well as on how to effectively carry out classroom management.

Raymond and St. Pierre (2003) stress the many roles of the teacher as facilitator, animator and pedagogue. Pratte's description of the very act of teaching illustrates just how complex teaching is (2001). It is a multifaceted, interactive, rational act that is situated within a context and is contingent upon circumstances. Finally, reflection is demanded throughout, as teachers must reconsider their actions, evaluate them, and then have these reflections lead to new actions. It is only by the development of reflection on action at the time the action is being carried out (Schön, 1983) that one can begin to attain a true professional identity (CSE, 2000). Becoming a reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983) is thus yet another challenge facing new teachers (L'Hostie et al., 2004; Pratte, 2001; Lauzon, 2006).

Furthermore, the environment to which new teachers have to adapt is highly complex. The majority of students are at a difficult stage in their lives; desirous of freedom but not yet possessing the skills to deal with it, they pose particular problems for the inexperienced teacher. In addition, many come to college with inadequate preparation. These students are confronted by a range of academic and social problems their teachers might not relate to, such as problems surrounding family and peers: poverty, violence, crime, and illness.

The college environment places even greater demands on teachers as they are expected to be familiar with technology. Course management systems are becoming increasingly obligatory. Many teachers lack an understanding of how technology can be integrated into the curriculum and used in the classroom (Karsenti, 2005).

Added together, these hurdles can culminate in a negative start to a teacher's career. Tierney and Rhoads (1993), for example, argue that the first few years of a teacher's career are critical. Many new teachers feel overwhelmed. Bateman (2001) has stressed that new teachers, left to learn on their own, often have to deal with isolation, which can lead to less effective teaching and dissatisfaction. Pratte (2001) talks about the uncertainty many new teachers feel. Lauzon (2006) confirms the negative experience of some teachers as they begin to teach. Some teachers decide to leave teaching, or, if they stay, are already disillusioned. Sustained, immediate, and consistent assistance must be ensured for all new teachers.

## **THE STUDY**

This three-year project was developed to address the increasingly urgent need for effective integration and professional development to accommodate the significant influx of new teachers in the cegep network. Our research had the general goal of analyzing and assessing the conditions under which academic departments can most effectively integrate new teachers and contribute to their professional development. A series of questions informed the structure and approach of the project. What exactly are the needs of new teachers? What kinds of activities do they require for their integration and professional development? What are the critical factors that will promote this effort, and which will hinder it? We sought to identify these factors in order to propose recommendations to the cegep network for departments to build on what is currently offered and/or develop and implement new action for the professional development of new teachers.

Furthermore, our specific objectives in carrying out this project were:

- To review the extent to which departments are meeting the needs of their new faculty in terms of integration and professional development
- To identify and describe the critical factors that will promote or prevent the necessary developments within departments to assume a more proactive role with new teachers
- To determine what actions and materials are necessary for departments to sustain and support new teachers
- To make recommendations for the successful integration and professional development of new teachers by their departments, to be disseminated throughout the cegep network

## **Participants**

In order to move forward with the project it was imperative to work with departments and try out ideas in an actual, concrete situation. Three departments were selected based on their numbers of new and retiring teachers; they shall be referred to as department A, department B and department C. The departments and their specific participants shall remain anonymous to respect their privacy, as well as to help create a sense of transparency in order to facilitate the transfer of practices throughout the network.

A member of each department served as a facilitator, who interacted directly with the department and served as a link between the researchers and departmental colleagues. The research team was made up of four professionals from The Learning Centre at Vanier College.

## **Methodology**

To accomplish our goal and meet our objectives, it was necessary to begin by drawing a portrait of the current situation, by discovering what departments were already doing to integrate new teachers and provide professional development. Further, it was crucial to take into account the realities new teachers face to help ensure the development of practical ideas that could be applied to the situation. This type of investigation necessitated the use of qualitative research because it is used to study social and cultural phenomena; it allows researchers to draw a portrait of the situation to be examined (Dolbec and Clément, 2000). This “portrait” is then a key tool used to assess a situation, its strengths and weaknesses, and the direction the research must take in order to ensure that useful and applicable results are acquired.

More specifically, we elected to execute our project using grounded theory and action research. Grounded theory is a type of qualitative research that hinges on “the discovery of theory from data systemically obtained from social research” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It was necessary for this project to employ methods that would allow us to let our research findings determine the course of action. That is, we felt it would be detrimental to begin our research with a pre-determined course of action already in place, as this would take the emphasis away from research findings and not allow for flexibility; we deemed it more beneficial and more likely to yield long-lasting results if we planned our course of action based on the results and information garnered from the research.

One of the merits of grounded theory that strongly appealed to us was its reliability. Because theory that emerges from grounded theory is so intrinsically tied to data (and, of course, the subjects from whom that data is collected) it is unlikely to be refuted; it stems from the data source (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Data is obtained and eventually transformed into theory through a process of

note-taking, coding and sorting. Essentially, data is scrutinized for themes and categories; when they are found, they are coded and sorted accordingly.

In conjunction with grounded theory, we also applied action research to our project. Action research and grounded theory share the same approach in that neither begins with a hypothesis that researchers set out to prove; rather, they each allow the situation, its participants and circumstances to dictate how the research will unfold.

Action research consists of a five-step cycle: (1) clarification of the situation; (2) planning of the action; (3) implementation of action; (4) observation during action; (5) reflection and evaluation. These steps often occur simultaneously and so there is some overlap. The cycle may continue until it is agreed that objectives have been met. The following consists of an explanation of what each step consisted of.

### ***Step 1: Clarification of the situation***

This step served as the foundation of our project insofar as it eventually indicated the path we needed to follow. It entailed deciding on a definition of the problem and developing a portrait of the situation new teachers are faced with that was accurate and agreed upon by all groups involved (teachers and coordinators from the three departments, facilitators and researchers). To accomplish this, a needs assessment was undertaken by the researchers to understand the situation, the context, and the perspectives of the various participants. While new teachers have often been defined as having 0 – 3 years of experience (see Bateman, 1999 and Lauzon, 2006), we opted to extend our definition to include teachers in their fourth and fifth years of teaching. The impetus behind this decision was two-fold: first, during the first couple of years of a cegep teacher's career, work is often sparse and inconsistent; second, we wanted to ensure a sufficient number of participants and expanding our definition of new teachers allowed for a greater selection of potential participants.

The needs assessment consisted of an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Prior to the launch of the needs assessment, we sought and received approval from the Vanier College Ethics Committee to conduct research with human subjects. It should be noted that in all documents requesting participation, it was made clear that participation was strictly voluntary and participants all signed consent forms and, when necessary, confidentiality agreements.

The questions were primarily aimed at soliciting information regarding departmental activities and services in place for new teachers and how department members felt about these. We created an online survey using the free program on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). The survey was broken down into two sections: one for new teachers with 0 – 5 years of experience, and the other for teachers with 6+ years of experience. Depending on how participants answered

the first question (“How long have you been teaching at Vanier?”), they were brought to either the new or experienced teachers’ section. As qualitative research dictates, the interviews were in-depth and semi-structured. While we did have general questions to ask, the focus of the interview was to garner as much detail as possible on new teachers’ experiences upon entering the College. Being semi-structured, the interviews allowed participants much leeway to explore different aspects of their integration; as such, it was also crucial that the questions did not lead interviewees and/or suggest pre-determined responses.

Once the data-gathering tools had been created, they needed to be pilot tested before being used on departments A, B and C. This was done with department D, which was otherwise not associated with the project. Members of this department were asked to fill out the online survey and provide feedback regarding whether the questions were clear and whether other questions on the subject should be asked. Six experienced and nine new teachers responded to the questionnaire. In addition, we conducted interviews with three new teachers from department D. The pilot testing led to minor changes, particularly in the phrasing of questions and also allowed us to hone our interview skills. No major adjustments were necessary.

Following the success of the pilot test, we conducted the needs assessment with departments A, B and C. In terms of experienced teachers, there were six survey respondents from department A, seven from department B and eight from department C. The new teachers who responded to the questionnaire amounted to four, seven and twelve from departments A, B and C, respectively. We conducted six interviews each with new teachers from departments A and B, and ten interviews with department C.

### ***Step 2: Planning of the action***

With the data accumulated in step one, we were able to proceed to the analysis that would direct the project’s action. We coded and analyzed the interviews according to grounded theory. As we carefully read the interviews, we took constant notes to help code and classify what the interviewees were saying about their respective experiences. We would then compare our notes from different interviews, looking for similarities and differences between them. Where we found similarities among the experiences new teachers expressed in interviews, we created a category. Then, within that category we examined the degrees to which a particular experience, and the circumstances surrounding it, had been similar or different. For example, if new teachers encountered a similar problem, we looked at whether the level of severity was the same for all of them, and where teachers had experienced different degrees of severity we looked at where they differed and what made one teacher’s experience better or worse than another. We also explored the different ways teachers dealt with similar

situations, and the effectiveness of the solutions employed. This process led to the creation of themes within the categories.

When we reached the point of saturation, we assessed the interviews as a group based on the common elements, themes and categories that had emerged from the individual interviews. The main reason for doing this was to fortify and help ensure the accuracy of our findings. Once the coding was completed, we created lists and charts detailing the categories that had emerged from the common elements, as well as other issues which may not have been shared by many respondents, but which were significant enough to document for the benefit of new teachers who may be faced with them in the future.

While coding was a significant part of transforming the needs assessment into a portrait of the situation facing new teachers, we needed to further analyze the data to see how it could suggest a direction for the project. Looking for ways to improve new teacher integration, we focused on elements of new teachers' experiences that could be improved upon for future teachers.

Categories fell into one of three pre-established rubrics: pedagogical, administrative and social. These rubrics preceded the needs assessment on the basis that all elements of a teacher's career are contained within these three areas.

The categories to emerge under each rubric were:<sup>1</sup>

Pedagogical:

1. *Course preparation*: This category included both planning a course before it begins and class-by-class preparations. Certain first-time teachers experienced a double challenge in that, for one, they lacked experience and had difficulty planning a 15-week course. Secondly, some were unsure of their targeted audience, of the kinds of students they were planning for.
2. *Pedagogical resources*: The three main themes to emerge in this category dealt with getting support from, and using as a resource, fellow department members, departmental documents and college-wide workshops for teachers.
3. *Personal time management*: Many new teachers found themselves overwhelmed by the amount of time and effort they had to put into course and lesson planning as well as marking assignments and exams. This category pertained to adjustments new teachers had to make regarding time management in order to complete their work.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed, comprehensive summary of the categories and themes, it is recommended that readers consult the full project report.



4. *Level of students:* The themes in this category attest to the rather unpleasant surprise many of our interviewees got when they began to notice that their students' abilities did not always match their (the teachers') expectations.
5. *Student motivation:* As much as some teachers had overestimated the level of their students, many were taken off guard by what they perceived to be a lack of motivation on the students' behalf. Although many cegep students are highly motivated, new teachers were left somewhat stunned by the average student's apparent apathy towards her/his education.
6. *Classroom management:* This was the category our interviewees most struggled with. Themes associated with classroom management ranged from dealing with students lying to get out of class to severe discipline problems. Classroom management themes all had in common that they impeded the teacher's pedagogical agenda.
7. *Evaluation and grading:* Many new teachers enter cegep with little to no experience in translating demonstrated student ability and knowledge into a mark. The aforementioned lack of awareness of the level of students and, above all, being uncertain of how to set up a course only aggravated the process of deciding the number and type of assignments to give to students.

#### Administrative:

1. *On-campus resources and services:* This category explored basic information regarding familiarity with the college, addressing such themes as receiving a campus tour and being made aware of services available for both teachers and students.
2. *Acquiring accurate, timely information:* The themes associated with this category were divided into two types of information: college-wide and department-specific. The main challenges new teachers faced were not receiving information or receiving it too late, and having to accumulate information from various sources (which often resulted in a patchwork of conflicting ideas).
3. *Bookstore:* The staff of the Bookstore at Vanier was praised by new teachers for being friendly and helpful. Difficulties associated with the Bookstore arose when it came to understanding policies and procedures. In particular, many new teachers were unaware of the correct process for ordering books.
4. *Differing procedures and policies in place between daytime teaching and Continuing Education teaching:* This involved new teachers who taught in both the daytime and evening/summer streams. Juggling two sets of

5. *Human Resources*: This category dealt with new teachers' various experiences with Human Resources. The most prominent theme under this category, and indeed the single most challenging administrative aspect, was figuring out how C.I. is calculated.
6. *Computer systems*: Although the use of computer systems is not mandatory, it is becoming increasingly common. The various systems that are available to teachers are valuable pedagogical tools and can contribute greatly to students' knowledge and help teachers save time. Before becoming time-savers, however, teachers must first invest time in learning how computer systems work, which proved to be a challenge for some.
7. *Logistics*: This comparatively minor category dealt with the administrative planning of a course. The two main themes encompassed booking computer labs to hold classes in (generally done at the start of the semester – not an easy task for someone lacking course-planning experience) and scheduling final exams.

#### Social:

1. *Isolation*: The main theme to emerge was problems resulting from not having an office near other department members, particularly at times when they most could have benefited from having friendly colleagues close by to answer their questions. The other theme dealt with the isolation of teaching during the summer or at night, when most colleagues are absent.
2. *Perceived lack of collegiality*: The vast majority of our participants found their department to be very friendly and welcoming; in a few instances, however, some did not feel quite as welcome. This category's three main themes were lack of outreach and/or transmission of information, lack of cohesiveness among department members, and a sense of tension between new and senior teachers.
3. *Lack of time to socialize*: This category explored how new teachers sometimes face difficulty in finding time to attend departmental/social activities. While this category was not widespread among new teachers, it was very much noteworthy, particularly considering both how busy new teachers are and the fact that all of our participants agreed that socializing with colleagues is one of the key factors to new teacher survival.

At the end of step 2, we shared the details of the categories and themes with the individual facilitators and encouraged them to further analyze the data. The

facilitators then fleshed out possible avenues for action while reflecting on the challenges and difficulties that emerged from the analysis of the needs assessment. They also had to consider logistics and be realistic in terms of teachers' busy schedules and the types of activities they would want to participate in. Each facilitator produced a plan of activities to bring to their respective departments.

### ***Step 3: Implementation of action***

At this point in the project, the facilitators knew the direction the research was going in and it was time to put ideas into action. The manner in which action was implemented differed depending on whether action took the form of an activity or a document.

For activities, which primarily consisted of workshops, the first step was to organize logistics: when, where and how. As soon as the date, time and location had been arranged, facilitators were able to undertake the second component, which consisted of the all-important task of inviting department members.<sup>2</sup> Once the invitations were underway, they still had to address the "how" of the activity. Publicity for and planning of the event took place simultaneously. Planning encompassed detailing the components of the activity, how it would all unfold, the materials needed to actualize it and the selection of an animator. On the day of the activity, focus was on ensuring that everything ran smoothly.

It was necessary for the facilitators to continually be in contact with potential participants, whether via email, telephone or in person to guarantee attendance; teachers' busy schedules usually meant that the facilitators were faced with minimal confirmations prior to an event. In order to help ensure that action was effective, it was crucial to reach out to the greatest number of potential participants. We were all dedicated to maximizing participation because, as the interviews testified, the workshops we were offering were needed and of significant importance to the success of new teachers.

The process was somewhat less complex for the production of materials as this did not require a web of logistics and time-consuming outreach. Facilitators gathered information and, depending on the type of document, asked departmental colleagues for contributions. Following this research period, facilitators wrote drafts and asked us (the researchers) for feedback. Upon completion of the final draft, the document was ready for dissemination to new and incoming members of the department.

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<sup>2</sup> Facilitators reached out to and encouraged all department members to attend events, both new and experienced. While this was initially done to help bolster attendance rates, it was also important to include experienced teachers in order to facilitate the creation of bonds and the transfer of knowledge.

Departments A, B and C undertook action individually and, in cases where issues transcended departmental lines, jointly. The following table displays the action implemented for each rubric, with the department associated with it listed in parentheses. As can be noted, certain actions applied to more than one rubric. Once again, we invite you to consult the full project report for a more thorough account of implemented action.

<b>Pedagogical</b>	<b>Administrative</b>	<b>Social</b>
Classroom management workshop (A, B, C jointly)	C.I. calculation workshop (A and B jointly)	New teacher luncheon meeting (A)
Mentoring directory (A and C)	Mentoring directory (A and C)	End of semester/holiday party (A)
Mentoring of two new teachers (A)	Mentoring of two new teachers (A)	Informal, post-departmental meeting gatherings (B)
New teacher luncheon meeting (A)	New teacher luncheon meeting (A)	Wine and cheese (C)
New teacher kit (A)	New teacher kit (A)	Orientation session for new teachers (C)
Departmental book fair (A)	Computer system tutorial (B)	
Guidebook for new teachers (B)	Guidebook for new teachers (B)	
Wine and cheese (C)	Mini conference (C)	
Orientation session for new teachers (C)	Revision and updating of departmental model course outlines (C)	
Pedagogical guide (C)	Booklet on ministerial and departmental policies (C)	
Office hours for new teachers (C)		
Monthly workshops (C)		
“Winter teaching concerns” meeting (C)		

As the implementation of action is integral to all facets of action research, other forces are at work while action is happening. The final two steps in the action research cycle happen simultaneously with action and/or immediately after, and delineate the exact importance of action within the context of research.

#### ***Step 4: Observation during action***

Observation during action was crucial since the main point of each action is to verify what works, what does not, and how the project should proceed. Thus, it was necessary to pay close attention to action as it was unfolding.

Observation of action was undertaken by the facilitators. The focus of observation hinged on two main factors. First, facilitators paid attention to the reactions of the participants, noting whether or not they were finding a given event useful and/or worthwhile. Facilitators also looked out for the mention of other activities or materials that could be of value to new teachers. Secondly, they scrutinized the organization of the event, paying attention to whether elements could be improved upon for subsequent activities.

This step required what can be called “active” observation; facilitators had to be vigilant at all times and on the lookout for nuances that might not be readily apparent. This form of observation also entailed taking notes on how an event was unfolding, the types of comments participants made, people’s body language, possible follow-up questions or comments, and, if applicable, ideas for future action. Facilitators used logbooks to record observations.

It was necessary to document action because reflection, the next step in the cycle, was heavily dependent on this. Reflection was facilitated by having concrete material to study and ponder.

#### ***Step 5: Reflection and evaluation***

Reflection is a fundamental aspect of action research; it places a strong emphasis on reflection and evaluation as the researchers (and, in our case, facilitators as well) must continuously reflect on what is happening at different stages of the project in order to refine the plan of action according to the results of the previous activity. As Schön (1983) advises, a key factor to effective reflection is exploring the details of a given action, and “attend[ing] to the peculiarities of the situation at hand.”

Though listed as an individual step, reflection was present throughout and took many forms. Facilitators reflected both in their logbooks and with us, the researchers, at regularly scheduled meetings; the research team also met frequently to reflect on the status of the project, whether adjustments were necessary and if so, what they should consist of.

Reflection essentially took place on an individual and group basis. Individually, researchers pondered the development of the project, while facilitators used their logbooks to document events and any intermittent thoughts, observations, queries, etc. We (researchers and facilitators) reflected together as a group in regularly-scheduled meetings, often using elements of the needs assessment and logbook entries as the springboards for discussions. Everyone was

encouraged to partake in reflection, as this offers a more global understanding of the direction action is taking. A typical session of reflecting on an event, for example, would include brainstorming on why an activity had been successful or not, or had garnered ambivalent responses.

In step one, reflection led predominantly to a modification of data-gathering tools. During step two, reflection allowed us to see beyond the surface of the needs assessment and therefore permitted categories to materialize from the 22 interviews we conducted. Once we reached step three, reflection and evaluation were primarily focused on how to reach out to and engage the maximum number of participants for activities. Finally, in the fourth step, reflection was exercised in determining the elements of observation to document.

Reflection led to evaluation, which led to a refinement of action and instruments, and thus the cycle continued. Using a method that called for regular evaluation necessitated a degree of flexibility, which in turn facilitated troubleshooting when challenges arose. Also, and perhaps most importantly, this step was a valuable tool in terms of ensuring that the project remained focused on its objectives.

## **KEY FINDINGS, ACTION TAKEN AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following consists of a breakdown of the key findings from the needs assessment. By this we mean categories that affected a substantial number of new teachers in all three departments. All of the key findings fall under the pedagogical and administrative rubrics; as indicated in the action table above, the social rubric did not yield significant concerns.

### ***Classroom management***

Findings:

Most of our interviewees, with the notable exception of former high school teachers, expressed having problems with unruly students. Generally, they had expected their students to be more mature and more akin to university students than to high school ones. Instead, they were faced with pupils who spoke out of turn, did not pay attention and were not keen on keeping up with readings and assignments.

Action:

Because of the gravity of the situation among all three departments, the facilitators of departments A, B and C decided to hold a joint classroom management workshop for all members of their departments. The workshop animator discussed why some students misbehave in class and offered suggestions for constructive ways of dealing with disruptive students. Department A and department B's facilitators both included the documents from this workshop in their new teacher information packages in order for the message to reach incoming teachers.

Recommendation:

It would be useful to inform teachers when they are hired that they could potentially encounter classroom management issues. This could be undertaken in a way that does not alarm new teachers, but rather makes them aware. This information could include the coordinates of the manager of Student Services, whom teachers can consult when dealing with problematic students, and to whom teachers can send students with discipline problems.

***Course preparation/Level of students/Evaluation***

Findings:

These three pedagogical categories have been joined together here on the basis that they share similar qualities insofar as they are all founded on a lack of pre-existing knowledge regarding the cegep curriculum. Syllabi, course content and evaluation schemes often had to be amended while courses were already in progress, thereby demanding more time and adding stress to new teachers' already demanding schedules.

Having perhaps not yet interacted with cegep students and being unaware of level-appropriate curricula made it quite challenging for numerous new teachers to plan out a course. In particular, the course outline theme within the course preparation category proved to be an obstacle for some. Similar to preconceived notions regarding classroom management, many of the new teachers we interviewed, primarily those who had taught and/or worked as teaching assistants at the university level, had expected students to be at a more advanced level than they actually were. They faced significant discrepancies between the material they had developed and their students' abilities. In addition to exchanges in the classroom, many teachers became aware that the curriculum surpassed the average student's level through various means of evaluation.

Action:

The facilitators from departments A and C addressed this challenge in the documents they created. In the new teacher kit for department A, the facilitator included samples of student work as a means of helping new teachers gauge the level they should be teaching at. A bank of sample course outlines was also included, allowing new teachers to see how outlines can be structured, as well as methods of evaluation used by departmental colleagues. Meanwhile, department C's pedagogical guide was an effort to familiarize incoming teachers with the department's introductory level courses, thereby allowing them to see the types of material, assignments and mark breakdown possibilities appropriate for the level.

Recommendation:

Prior to developing course outlines, incoming teachers can be made aware of the level and type of curriculum most conducive to learning at the cegep level. This could occur as early as during the job interview; it would not only give potential

teachers guidance for their future courses, but also allow them to get an accurate view of the realities of the job.

### ***C.I. Calculation***

Findings:

Within the administrative rubric, the C.I. calculation theme under the Human Resources category posed the greatest challenge to our interviewees. There are numerous factors that contribute to one's C.I. and we found that it was commonplace for new teachers to often be uninformed as to what those factors are and the repercussions they have on one's seniority and salary. Even in instances where interviewees were familiar with the elements that affect C.I., they did not always know how to carry out the calculation.

Action:

The facilitators for departments A and B jointly offered a C.I. calculation workshop to help demystify the process. After a brief talk from the head of Human Resources, the Vanier College Teacher's Association (VCTA) past president animated the workshop, presenting participants with an online calculation form and guiding them through the process as they inputted their individual information. The session was videotaped for future use.

Recommendation:

Department coordinators could advise newly hired teachers to meet with someone from Human Resources as soon as possible in order for them to know what C.I. is and how to calculate it. This could take the form of an announcement at the first departmental meeting of the semester, or a mass email sent to all new hires.

### ***Continuing Education***

Findings:

The majority of new teachers we interviewed entered Vanier via Continuing Education, to teach either summer or evening courses. There was a range of Continuing Education-related issues new teachers dealt with. The ones most discussed in interviews pertained to the isolation of teaching when most teachers (particularly experienced ones) are not, confusion over the class cancellation policy and photocopying procedures, and not having an office.

Action:

Due to the fact that Continuing Education was not one of our three targeted departments, action was minimal. We did, however, feel the need to give these concerns the attention they deserve. Thus, we met with the academic coordinator of Continuing Education to discuss our findings. In addition to noting our comments, she informed us of positive changes that were underway in the department, dealing primarily with office space, isolation and photocopying.



Recommendation:

Perhaps the best strategy for a smooth integration is to ensure that there is ongoing, healthy communication between Continuing Education and academic departments. This would help guarantee that newly hired teachers receive all pertinent information and feel part of a cohesive team.

### ***Lack of orientation***

Findings:

An orientation should be the first element of new teacher integration. The dissemination of information and sense of belonging that an orientation provides could have an impact on all three rubrics. While a significant number of interviewees received an orientation in one capacity or another, we found that they were not systemically and routinely offered. Consequently, some new teachers were unfamiliar with the campus layout, its services and centres. This generally resulted in additional, time-consuming obstacles.

Action:

All three facilitators implemented action addressing new teachers' orientation needs. In their department-specific guides for new teachers, the facilitators from departments A and B both included pertinent information to help a new teacher get started, such as campus maps, who resource people are on campus and where to find them. In addition, department A's facilitator provided an orientation to the two newly hired teachers he mentored. Department C covered this ground in their mini-conference: the afternoon session was devoted to an orientation for new teachers, offering them a guided tour of the campus and introductions to the staff members of various offices and centres.

Recommendation:

Ideally, every new teacher should receive an orientation to the college. However, this is often complicated by the fact that some teachers are hired at the last minute, arriving after the other newly hired teachers have already received a tour. It is primarily these last-minute hires who fall through the cracks. A useful suggestion might be to offer a thorough orientation after all new teachers have been hired for the semester. This could take place as late as the first or second week of the semester: this would still be early enough to address pertinent information in a timely fashion and not too late so as to cause new teachers to feel like they have been left to fend for themselves.

## **POST-RESEARCH FOLLOW-UP**

Following the needs assessment and action phase of the project, what remained was to determine the impact our research had on how departments A, B and C integrate new teachers. We conducted focus groups with teachers in the three departments who had been hired after we had conducted the needs assessment; each department had its own focus group.

### ***Department A***

Five newly hired teachers from department A participated in our focus group. Three of the teachers had received the facilitator's new teacher kit, for which they were thankful. The other two had been told that there was a booklet they could pick up; however, being very busy and not knowing exactly what it was, they had not yet collected the document. The elements of the kit the three teachers found most useful were:

- Samples of student work, which gave them a glimpse of the level(s) to expect. The samples also gave them an idea of how to grade.
- Model course outlines
- Advice on assignments and marking schemes
- Information on course modules

The new teachers had all received the mentoring directory, and one focus group participant had made use of it. The new teacher said that the mentor was helpful in terms of offering much-needed reassurance in the first few weeks of the semester, with regards to the student-teacher dynamic and ideas for active learning.

In the semester following department A's involvement in the project, the coordinator resumed the new teacher luncheon meeting. All of our focus group participants attended and enjoyed the get-together. Since the mentoring directory had been created by this time, the meeting had the added benefit of including some of the teachers who had volunteered to be mentors, thus allowing new teachers to attach faces to the names in the directory.

A suggestion to come out of this focus group was that it might be useful to have a monthly lunch for new teachers and the mentors listed in the directory. This would allow for informal exchanges and offer new teachers various perspectives. Furthermore, it would provide an opportunity for new teachers to get to know the mentors, which would help them make an informed decision should they choose to select one for individual mentoring.

### ***Department B***

Throughout the project, it was a difficult task enticing department B's busy teachers to events; the focus group was no exception as it had only one participant. This was the participant's first semester and, having been hired at the last minute, he was finding the pace rather hectic. Consequently, this new teacher devoted most of his time to class preparations and had little time to spare for such activities as workshops. He did, however, receive a copy of the computer system tutorial, which he described as having been very useful. The tutorial saved him the time of having to figure out the system on his own, which he may not have bothered doing, given his full schedule. The main benefit of the computer system can be seen as familiarizing new teachers with a practical tool that helps render their schedules a little less hectic.

Overall, in spite of having been hired at the last minute and finding his schedule particularly “chaotic” in the first few weeks of the semester, the participant ended the session on a positive note, stating, “I think I got the best possible treatment under the circumstances.”

### ***Department C***

We met with three newly hired teachers from department C. Although their integration was not wholly free of challenges, they were all pleased with the various orientation activities and outreach recently put into place in the department. The three focus group participants, all of whom were in their first semester at Vanier, took part in several integration activities, which they found helpful, particularly:

- The mini-conference, which offered a tour of the various administrative and resource offices on campus and also allowed the in-coming teachers to review sample course outlines.
- The office hours for new teachers, which gave them a place to go with their questions.
- The department’s new monthly workshops for new teachers, particularly the ones on marking and plagiarism.
- The mentoring directory, which one teacher made use of.

Overall, department C’s new teachers found their department to be very welcoming and supportive. Emails sent to coordinators and colleagues received prompt replies containing answers to questions on such topics as the curriculum, texts and materials. Our participants found that many of their colleagues were willing to go out of their way to assist them, which was greatly appreciated.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Research of this nature can be taken to many different levels. Below are suggestions for possible ways to expand on the work we have done.

### ***Incorporate quantitative research***

Qualitative research served us well over the course of this project, yet there existed an uncertainty, however minimal, regarding the extent to which the results produced were reflective of the larger population of new teachers, and not only our collective group of participants. Therefore, a more extensive study might benefit from incorporating quantitative research.

### ***Broaden the scope***

Research can be conducted on a wider scale than three departments. Countless combinations of departments are possible, as is a college-wide endeavour. An extensive range of departments offers a greater assortment of perspectives and

possibilities for action. A more inclusive group would also ensure a global portrait of the situation facing new teachers.

#### *Narrow the focus*

Research of this nature can also be done on a smaller, more focused scale and still yield valuable results. For example, a single department could undertake research by, for and within itself. In this instance, everything within the project would be custom tailored to suit the needs and culture of that department. Such research would be very useful to the department in question; however, the results might not be easily transferable to other departments and/or colleges.

## **FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

This project found that a balance must be carried out between new teachers not receiving enough information, or not receiving it in a timely manner, and new teachers being bombarded with too much information at once. While one needs a certain amount of information to begin teaching, it can be overwhelming to receive more information than one can process at a time. Lifelong learning happens gradually and people ease into the profession of teaching. One does not immediately start out an expert teacher; there are procedures to be learned, methods to be established and skills to be developed.

Using action research and grounded theory allowed us to distinguish between information that could be acquired gradually and information that new teachers should have as soon as possible. Being able to identify more “urgent” factors meant that we could prioritize action and offer pertinent information to teachers who entered departments A, B and C while the project was already underway.

The integration and professional development of new teachers in the cegep network is a lengthy process. A great deal of information must be absorbed and expertise acquired. Overall, we found that, considering time and resources, departments A, B and C were quite successful at integrating their new teachers. Amid the numerous results of this research project, the most prominent to emerge was that, above all information and knowledge, a supportive, nurturing and dependable department is the most crucial factor to new teacher integration. All three of the departments we worked with took great pride in providing new teachers with a positive working atmosphere and making them feel integral to the department, which was one of the qualities new teachers most preferred. When a teacher enters an accommodating environment, all the information needed to feel secure in her/his career is just a phone call, email or knock on the door away.

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