

ACADEMIC SUCCESS VERSUS EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS: A FEW MARKERS



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A review of official documents from key organizations in the Québec collegial network, in particular, the ministère de l'Éducation du Loisir et du Sport (MELS), the government of Québec and the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (CSE), provided a number of outstanding works on success at collegial level.

It also allowed us to examine how these organizations define *academic success* and *educational success*. In less than two decades, the perspective now embraces a much broader and more precise vision, a vision that is undoubtedly more complex.

1988

In its 1987-1988 annual report on "Collegial success, failure, and dropouts", the Conseil des collèges² stated that academic success embraced two concepts: "The first is success in a course, the second success in collegial studies" (Québec, 1988, p. 2). According to the Conseil, success in collegial studies is measured by receiving a D.E.C. (Diploma of college studies), even though this is far from being a perfect measurement tool. For one thing, it does not take into account students who may not have a D.E.C. as a goal; it disregards those who change goals along the way and leave college; and finally it does not provide information on the "success level" of collegial studies.

1992

In *L'enseignement supérieur: pour une entrée réussie dans le XXI^e siècle*, the CSE proposed

the following objectives concerning student diplomas by the year 2000: That 85% of Québec students obtain a D.E.S. (Diploma of Secondary studies) before the age of 20; that 70% enrol in collegial studies before the age of 20; and that 60% receive a D.E.C (Diploma of college studies) before the age of 25. These objectives served as reference for subsequent years.

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1993

In *Le défi d'une réussite de qualité*, the CSE urges Québec to proceed to the next stage of democratization in education and start focusing on access to quality and success of studies rather than their accessibility. It stresses the importance of providing quality education for the greatest number of students and reaffirms the objectives it expressed a year earlier. In this report the Conseil specifies its support for educational success leading to diplomas, while maintaining intact its commitment to quality training (Québec, 1993, p. 12).

The vision and objectives of the MESS (ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Science) concerning the teaching renewal in cégeps can be found in *Des collèges pour le Québec du XXI^e siècle*. Among strategic objectives, a new formula based on the intersection of accessibility and success: Access to successful studies. With respect to collegial education, graduation objectives correspond to those identified by the CSE the previous year, even though the ministère expects that the desired increases will require more time than the Conseil anticipated.

1995

In *Des conditions de réussite au collégial*, the CSE opts for a less limiting and "broader perspective of success; a perspective of educational success that goes beyond academic boundaries. A perspective that really takes into account the changing character of the scholastic norm without sacrificing school requirements or its essential or fundamental mission" (Québec, 1995, p. 33). It introduces four particular aspects of a global vision of success for players in the field of education to reflect upon. "Thus, the conversion

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² The MEQ abolished the Conseil des collèges in 1993 and replaced it with the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial. Changes brought to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation reflect this fact.



of academic capital into socio-professional capital, the diversity of paths, the problem of selecting a vocation and the system's material and financial limitations are reference points, which, although not exhaustive, are nonetheless essential for updating the definition of success. In other words, we need many reference points to measure success in the current context" (p. 96).

1996

The final report of the Commission des États généraux de l'éducation *Rénover notre système d'éducation: dix chantiers prioritaires* contains a project of educational reform that reintroduces the terms put forth by the *Défi d'une réussite de qualité (1993): passer de l'accès au succès*.

1997

In *Prendre le virage du succès: plan d'action ministériel pour la réforme de l'éducation*, the MEQ describes the measures that are necessary to implement reform. Its objectives for graduation rates for the year 2010 are: 85% of same generation students to receive their D.E.S.; 60% to receive their D.E.C.; and 30%, a bachelor's degree. The MEQ objectives thus reiterate those set by the CSE five years ago.

1999

In *Parfaire le savoir et la formation*, one of four work projects carried out by Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse, academic establishments are urged to develop a plan for success, working together with young people and various partners in their environment. The plan should "identify the main problems hindering success that will be dealt with first [...]; measurable objectives relative to success [...]; the establishment of means to be taken and resources dedicated, including collective contributions". The plan should be made public and its results evaluated. Additionally, the evaluation results should subsequently be made available to the public (p. 39-40).

2000

In *Plan stratégique 2000-2003*, the MEQ documents the objectives and indicators linked to success. They include the substantial increase in graduation rates at all teaching levels; the increase in the level of learning success; the implementation of a revised policy of school adaptation centered on prevention and integration of handicapped students or those with learning difficulties and difficulties in adaptation; and, the guarantee of accessibility to studies with an efficient program of loans and bursaries adapted to the clientele's evolving needs (Québec, 2000, p. 17).

2002

A law modifying the *Loi sur les collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel* obliges each college to establish a strategic plan that includes a plan for success. "This

requires careful structuring to reach the goal of improved student success" (Québec, article 16.1).

In *Au collégial: l'orientation au coeur de la réussite*, the CSE "distinguishes between educational success and academic success, with educational success being a broader concept than academic success" (Québec, 2002, p. 7). Academic success, says the Conseil, "is measured through academic results and the awarding of diplomas, [and academic success] is not opposed to educational success, which is measured primarily with qualitative indicators" (*idem*, p. 8). Lastly, following consultations with young people in 1995, the Conseil believes that a concept of success should include "the concept of project, self realization, personal and professional development. [...] Without being the only factor that distinguishes academic success from educational success, vocational maturity remains an essential condition for educational success" (*idem*).

Academic success, says the Conseil, "is measured through academic results and the awarding of diplomas, [and academic success] is not opposed to educational success, which is measured primarily with qualitative indicators".

BRIEFLY, ACADEMIC SUCCESS VERSUS EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS...

Academic success has a more limited scope than educational success. Academic success allows a student who meets the requirements of a given program of studies, to acquire and then develop competencies that will be used to pursue higher education or to integrate the labour market. Academic success



is measured by results and diplomas awarded at the end of the course or program. It includes the acquisition of specific competencies through success in courses, or a program, and a level of satisfaction with the training provided. According to the CSE, academic success "is the main factor in determining our personal, social, and professional future. For each completed stage, it attests to the desired competencies and skills that the student has acquired." (2002, p. 45). Educational success on the other hand, embraces a broader vision that transcends mere academic borders and includes personal as well as professional success. Educational success is measured by qualitative tools, of which very little is written in the documentation we reviewed. ●

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