

A NEW ARTICLE RUBRIC IN THE JOURNAL!

Message from the Editorial Committee of *Pédagogie collégiale*

The journal *Pédagogie collégiale* regularly publishes articles in which professors of higher education share an account of a professional practice under the rubric *Shared Practice*. In these articles authors highlight the context, actions taken and observed results. While reviewing the articles submitted for proposal, the editorial committee noticed that many educators go so far as to document the impacts of the project or experience. These submissions are sometimes referred for publication under the rubric *Research in Education*, in spite of the fact that they lack a formal methodological framework.

Given the willingness of some educators to validate their practices, the Editorial Committee enthusiastically proposes to introduce a new section that bridges the gap between shared practice and the review of scientific findings. To this end the Editorial Committee announces the inception of *Documented Practices*, a rubric that presents the results of an investigation conducted during the course of an educational innovation project. Specifically, this new section will include articles that present an evaluation supported by a methodology or documented evidence concerning a pedagogic practice. In the spirit of the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)*, the teacher will assume the role of practitioner-researcher throughout this process. In doing so the teacher will evaluate the effectiveness of their own interventions or the relevance of their actions with regard to their students' learning practices.



HOW DOES MY TEACHING INFLUENCE MY STUDENTS' LEARNING PRACTICES?

SO TL IN BRIEF

The *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (hereafter SoTL) favours not only the teachers' ability to ask questions about their practice, but also the sharing of the results stemming from these reflections. Denis Bédard, a professor at the Université de Sherbrooke and director of the Centre d'études et de recherche en enseignement supérieur (CERES), explains:

"What the SoTL proposes to do is to go beyond the personal questions that a professor asks about his teaching, to open the door to research questions and thus a position of practitioner-researcher. It is therefore a question of using research tools to localize research questions stemming from their observations by having access to existing data banks and scientific works to verify whether others have the same questions, and if there are answers to these questions. This is the classic research approach that is superimposed on personal reflection, in the interest of rigour. This is the first component of SoTL. The second component is the communication to peers of the results of the first component." (Bédard, 2011, s. p.).

DOCUMENTING A PRACTICE: WHERE TO BEGIN?

For teachers, assuming the position of practitioner-researcher and following a SoTL approach includes asking one of the following questions (Biémar et al., 2015; Brew, 2011):

- What is the students' learning experience in higher education?
- How do the students learn?
- How can this be taken into consideration in learning my subject?
- How does my teaching influence this learning?
- What are the teaching practices that effectively support my students' learning?

This approach involves consulting the literature, selecting the elements relevant to the practice, methodology choices and systematic observations, an analysis of results and, of course, sharing this information with one's community of practice (Bélisle, Lison, and Bédard, 2016; Biémar et al., 2015). Like scientific research, the practice documented from a SoTL perspective requires methodological rigour and it can form



both part of a quantitative compilation (statistical analyses of school results, administrative data or questionnaire data) and a qualitative collection (content analysis of students' work, classroom observation, focus groups, video recordings, etc.). A combination of approaches can also be very useful in painting a more accurate portrait of a learning situation.

BENEFITS OF SOTL

Given its contextualized and specific nature, SoTL firmly anchors itself in a discipline by becoming interested in its characteristics and by seeking the best ways to discover and share them. It is essentially based on the practice of a teacher, in direct relationship with their students and knowledge. On the other hand:

“SoTL cannot be assimilated with didactic research, but these two approaches have in common the goal of improving teaching services, helping to foster dialogue between researchers and, ultimately, enabling students to learn better.” (Thériault, 2011, p. 41).

In addition, SoTL fosters the generation and adoption of innovative practices and encourages the use of pedagogical research (Bélanger, 2010). Its benefits do not only affect those who practise it, but also those who are interested in it: the sharing of information also allows teachers who read SoTL publications to lend a critical eye to their own practices and thus improve the teaching and learning activities they offer their students. All of this ultimately contributes to advancing and enhancing the teaching profession (Bélanger, 2010; Rege Colet et al., 2011; The Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, 2018).

AN INVITATION TO DOCUMENT YOUR PRACTICES AND SHARE YOUR RESULTS

With the creation of the *Documented Practices* column, the editorial committee of the journal *Pédagogie collégiale* sincerely hopes to trigger a movement among the network's educators. We would like to support the delivery of innovative educational projects and encourage continued research for conclusive data to help develop the quality of teaching and learning in higher education.¹

We hope that the colleges will contribute to the dynamism of this movement and will support teachers who plan to adopt the role of practitioner-researcher by, for example, making allowance for a class schedule, by offering logistical support for data collection, or by providing support mechanisms for that type of research.

Over the following pages you can read the first article included in the new “Documented Practice” column. ◀

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¹ The editorial committee invites professors to consult their institution's research ethics board (REB) in order to verify whether an ethical evaluation of the project is required before beginning documentation work.

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