

The 30th Anniversary of the CEEC: from Ongoing Evaluation to Current Challenges

Interview with Denis Rousseau,
President of the CEEC

Interview by Anne-Marie Paquette,
Editor-in-Chief

The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial (CEEC) is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. For some, it has embodied a culture of ongoing evaluation since its creation in 1993 and plays a key role in the quality of college education, while others see it as adding to the burden on colleges. Denis Rousseau, president of the CEEC for the past three years, is clear about the contrasting perceptions of the organization. He is nevertheless convinced of the relevance and usefulness of an independent commission within the college network. His diversified career path, notably as a literature teacher, union executive member, academic dean and then director general, gives him a keen understanding of the issues and opportunities specific to the CEEC. On the organization's 30th anniversary, he looks back at past achievements, challenges met, and future directions.



Source: iStock/treety

head of the Commission over the past three years?

Having taken up my post in January 2021, during the pandemic, I consider that my experience at the head of the Commission is going rather well. I've known the Commission for a long time, which has facilitated my integration. I was often called upon by the Commission in my capacity as a director at various colleges, and I volunteered as an expert during the evaluation processes carried out by the organization. I also consider myself fortunate to work with an experienced team and permanent staff to support new commissioners. There has been a turnover of commissioners in recent years, mainly due to retirements, but the team is now complete, with four commissioners, including the president, and some 20 staff members.

How did you come to be president of the Commission?

For me, it stems from a desire to be connected not with a few colleges or immediate neighbours, but with the entire college network and other groups. We must remember that the Commission interacts with all 119 colleges, offering a unique opportunity to go beyond the scope of a single institution, to serve the college network as a whole, and to make a different kind of contribution to developing the quality of college education. I shared this perspective with my team of directors when I left the Cégep de Rosemont, and it continues to guide my presidency of the Commission.

Your first three years as president have been marked by celebrations surrounding the Commission's 30th anniversary, an opportunity

to reflect on the organization's contributions to the college network. What do you think is worth celebrating?

Without a doubt, the Commission's contribution to a culture of evaluation and continuous improvement and, more broadly, to the quality of college teaching. There's no doubt in my mind that the Commission has played a part in this over the past 30 years. On this anniversary, the organization wanted to take a retrospective look at what has been achieved since 1993, and to share it in an anniversary publication.¹ We want to commemorate too, because people change. In recent years, all employee categories in the college network have seen major turnover, which means we need to take a step back to better look to the future.

And what do you see in the Commission's rear-view mirror?

Oh, many fine achievements and advances! The expertise of the Commission and, more broadly, of the college network has developed considerably in 30 years. Let's take a moment to think back to 1993. An extremely important change occurred

About the Commission

Created in June 1993 following the adoption of the *Loi sur la Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial*, the CEEC is an external, public and independent evaluation body. Its mission is to demonstrate and contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of college education. The Commission's mandate covers the 119 institutions in the Quebec college network (48 CEGEPs, 20 subsidized private colleges, 47 unsubsidized private institutions and 4 public institutions under the authority of a ministry or university), and includes evaluating their learning and program evaluation policies, the application of these policies and the evaluation of program implementation. For CEGEPs and subsidized private colleges, the mandate also includes evaluating activities related to their educational mission (strategic planning and student success planning).

¹ The document *La Commission a 30 ans!* published in French in September 2023 recounts the milestones of the organization as well as contemporary issues and perspectives.

when the government decided that the Ministry of Education would draw up *devis* and that educational institutions would be responsible for offering and developing programs. This was a complete break with what had been done since the creation of CEGEPs and colleges, and with the tradition of the *Cahiers de l'enseignement collégial*,² the publications of the time describing 45-hour courses in just a few paragraphs. It was quite a pedagogical challenge to initiate such a transformation at the time. The network gradually evolved toward programs and courses that were more structured, more orienting and, above all, more transparent for students. The course outline that a student receives in 2023 has absolutely nothing to do with what they may have received in the past; there really has been immense progress from the student perspective.

And what was the Commission's role?

Against the backdrop of this educational reform, the Quebec government entrusted the Commission, a newly-created independent organization, with the task of evaluating the quality of college education, in collaboration with the institutions. The gradual development of study programs, institutional policies on the evaluation of programs and of learning has led to the current familiarity with acronyms such as IPMAP or IPESA.³ The first time we heard these abbreviations, we were in uncharted territory. Thirty years later, it's all so well known! Today, it would be difficult to remove these key elements in the way departments, programs and academic councils operate, so integral are they to college life.

The year 1993 is certainly a landmark in the history of college education. For the Commission, however, isn't 2013 more of a defining moment?

There was indeed a major paradigm shift at this point. Rather than judging program quality directly, the Commission now focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms developed by the colleges. With this "step back", CEGEPs and subsidized private colleges henceforth assumed full responsibility for designing and perfecting their own mechanisms for ensuring program quality, learning assessment, strategic planning and student success. This was a necessary evolution, given the expertise developed within colleges over 20 years. The culture of evaluation was sufficiently strong in the colleges for us to reorient the way we worked with them.

What has changed in the Commission's relationship with colleges over the years?

The fact that the evaluation now focuses on quality assurance mechanisms rather than on the intrinsic quality of programs means that collaboration with colleges is more harmonious. At one time, the approach could be quite intimidating, and the Commission's approach has been refined. Of course, through its evaluation operations, the Commission takes an external look at what the college is doing, but at the same time the college carries out an internal self-evaluation, examining its strengths and points for improvement.

Frequent consultations and exchanges shape the Commission's relationship with colleges. "What is most useful for the college?" This is a question

that is constantly on our minds at the Commission. This reflection, which was undertaken in 2013, has led the Commission to foster college autonomy, ensuring that the institutions have the mechanisms they need to evaluate their own programs of study. The colleges have demonstrated their ability to do so. The *Bilan synthèse des résultats du premier cycle d'évaluation SAQC* presents what the colleges have done—and done well!—allowing us to measure and appreciate the extent to which expertise has been developed. The results benefit the college network. This change has been very effective!

² The *Cahiers de l'enseignement collégial* from 1971-1972 to 1993-1994 are archived on the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ) website.

³ Institutional Policy on the Management of Academic Programs or Institutional Policy on the Evaluation of Student Achievement.

The willingness to collaborate with the colleges is apparent, but in the field, isn't there still something that generates friction and deprives college staff of the sense they need to participate fully in the Commission's visits?

As you say, there may be "friction" with some institutions, but it would be wrong to assume that there is friction everywhere. Of the 119 colleges, more than half, particularly the subsidized and non-subsidized private colleges, are close collaborators. In fact, collaboration varies widely. At some institutions, staff are not involved in writing the self-evaluation report, while at other colleges, staff are highly collaborative, and teaching staff, support staff and students are also present during the Commission's visits. This diversity of participation belies the idea that there is friction everywhere.

What do you think are the reasons behind the differences in buy-in for the Commission's initiatives?

If I may attempt an explanation, I believe it stems from a misguided perception of quality assurance, which may have been valid at one time, but no longer corresponds to today's reality. For example, when we talk about "accreditation",⁴ it's important to realize that the Commission does not take this approach. We're working on capacity building in the network and the *continuous improvement* of college education, an expression that's commonly used and that has no doubt supplanted quality assurance. When you think about it, continuous improvement is already ubiquitous in the network; it's happening all the time, in every institution. You know,

a teacher who delivers an unsatisfactory teaching performance on Tuesday isn't going to go into their Wednesday group and repeat the same thing. They're going to analyze what went wrong and consider what they can do to improve it. This same logic of continuous improvement prevails at the Commission, and this way of doing things is already very present in the network.

If colleges have become masters of evaluation, as evidenced by the first report on the effectiveness of college quality assurance systems, and are already well on the way to continuous improvement, then what's the point of working with an external body like the Commission to evaluate continuous improvement in the quality of college education?

It's obvious that if you fill a form or produce a report with an external audience in mind, you're in "accountability" mode. However, since the very beginning, the model proposed to colleges has been that of internal self-evaluation. The focus is on the

college's internal activities, adding value that goes far beyond mere external obligation. Unlike rigid accountability, self-evaluation encourages an appreciation of the actions undertaken, thus stimulating avenues for enrichment. The Commission's evaluation reports highlight strengths and suggest improvements of various types. For example, there may be an invitation for pre-university programs to develop closer ties with universities, a suggestion for technical programs to monitor graduation rates more closely, or a recommendation for a particular institution to grade students individually in group work. The benefit to the colleges then lies in whether the advice given is applied a posteriori, helping the college to consider best practices and improve its own mechanisms. I've had the opportunity to work with many people in the network, and each time I've noticed a widespread desire to improve conditions so that tomorrow will be better for students, for teaching staff—for all network stakeholders in fact—and I sincerely believe that the Commission's work contributes to this.

⁴ The accreditation process generally involves an in-depth evaluation of the program, its pedagogical objectives, content and resources, as well as the quality of the teaching provided. The aim is to ensure that the program meets established educational standards and provides quality education for students.

Current concerns for colleges include society's changing training needs, student success, student diversity and technological transformations. How does the Commission's evaluation contribute to meeting these challenges?

The quality criteria that the Commission has developed over the years support the quality of programs of study as well as the development of program-based and competency-based approaches. None of this existed in 1993. The emergence of these approaches has encouraged greater collaboration between teachers and other stakeholders on program committees, contributing to the quality and relevance of the training offered by colleges. The Commission also values the importance of student success, encouraging colleges to monitor, evaluate and adjust the means deployed locally to foster student success. By encouraging institutions to set up monitoring mechanisms, the Commission promotes a better understanding of effective methods. Thus, colleges can identify what works well, what doesn't work so well and, above all, improve their practices. In my opinion, this is part of the solution to the challenges facing the college network today.

Speaking of challenges, what are the most important ones for the Commission over the next few years?

Oh, there are many, both for the Commission and for the college network in general! Earlier, you mentioned changing training needs. One of the great challenges of our time is to anticipate what tomorrow's jobs will be. We are told that over 50% of the jobs of the future do not exist.

Technical programs train people to enter the job market. How can we ensure that our programs of study adapt to the changes to come? The regional meetings that the Commission will be organizing this winter promise to be an opportunity for dialogue with the colleges. They will be an opportunity to take stock of where we stand in 2024 and to anticipate future developments—the foreseeable, but also the unforeseeable. For example, what is the place of distance learning in colleges? What is the place of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education? There's no one who can infallibly predict what's in store for higher education and Quebec over the next five years. The disruptions of recent years are proof of this: the COVID-19 pandemic, the explosion of distance learning and the arrival

of ChatGPT are all major events that were not foreseen.

In this sense, agility is undoubtedly the Commission's greatest challenge. Considering the speed at which things evolve, the ability to adapt quickly and effectively to emerging developments, issues and opportunities in education is fundamental. There's definitely an element of "speed" that wasn't there when the Commission was founded in the 1990s and that implies a flexible approach encouraging innovation, collaboration and rapid decision-making to meet learners' needs. As long as the Commission knows how to adapt to the changing needs of society and colleges, it will be able to fulfill its mandate and remain relevant in the college landscape.



Source: iStock/treey

How, then, does the Commission ensure the continuous improvement of its own evaluation mechanisms as well as remaining relevant and useful to the network?

The Commission maintains regular contact with various local and international networks. Here, we listen to the ideas for improvement that are shared with us through meetings across the college network. Upcoming regional meetings will provide an opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions with our college partners, enabling the Commission to remain aligned on continuous improvement.

Internationally, the Commission maintains active relations, notably with the Réseau francophone des agences pour l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur (Réseau FrAQ-Sup), which we have been coordinating since May 2023. These intensive exchanges focus on best practices between quality assurance agencies in higher education, be they Belgian, French, Swiss or from French-speaking Africa. Regular meetings allow for projects, successes and challenges to be presented, creating strong links, and promoting the exchange of expertise. In 2016, the Commission took a major step

by submitting its application to the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), a global network that accredits agencies worldwide. Following the same model as colleges, the Commission then elaborated a self-evaluation report in line with the guidelines, submitted and evaluated during an experts' visit to Quebec. The accreditation obtained at that time was renewed in 2021, in line with international best practices, despite the singularity of the Quebec system. The Commission therefore maintains a strategic watch to draw inspiration from global practices, but also shares



Source: iStock/treezy

its skills internationally. It has nothing to envy from other quality assurance agencies and, in my opinion, occupies an esteemed position.

What are the prospects for the Commission?

Several avenues for improvement are emerging, based on the quality assurance system evaluation cycles and best practices in higher education quality assurance. The positive results of the 1st quality assurance audit cycle and the equally high, if not higher, expectations for the 2nd cycle—which continues until 2027—raise questions about the nature of the next evaluation cycle. Will we be repeating the same process? Not so sure. There is a level of expertise in the network today that requires us to think differently about evaluation. Do we allow ourselves to be more targeted? Perhaps, yes. This kind of more focused approach seems relevant, particularly in the face of current challenges such as the integration of AI into education. How do you introduce AI when you're offering forty programs? Do we wait for the program to be evaluated, in three or five years' time? Or do we wait for the Ministry to review it, when we know that this can take some time?



President of the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial, **Denis Rousseau** has over 30 years of experience in higher education. Before being appointed director general of the Cégep de Rosemont, he held academic management positions at the Cégep de Trois-Rivières and the Cégep de Beauce-Appalaches. He has also worked for the Ministry of Education, the École nationale d'administration publique (ÉNAP) and the Centre universitaire des Appalaches. He holds a master's degree from ÉNAP and a bachelor's degree in French Literature from Université Laval.

This is certainly food for thought for the Commission and the college network. Agility, highlighted as a challenge for the Commission, takes on its full meaning here. This winter's regional meetings will provide further perspectives, but already the idea is emerging that evaluation mechanisms must evolve toward a more continuous rather than cyclical approach. Rather than requiring a major exercise every six or seven years, could we imagine evaluation on a more ongoing basis?

In Winter 2024, when this article appears, we'll be organizing regional meetings to understand the concerns of our partners and the colleges. What interests the Commission—and what challenges me as its president—is to be close to the reality of the institutions: how do they operate? What works well for them? What, on the contrary, needs to be reviewed? I think I can say that I understand them, because after all, I've worked there all my life! This approach will feed into our 2025-2030 strategic plan, to be submitted to the National Assembly in January 2025, and will stimulate reflection concerning the third cycle of quality assurance system evaluations. And always with the same intention in mind: to meet the needs of colleges in a truly useful way. —

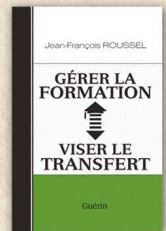


Jacques Beauchesne

Dictionnaire des cooccurrences

Vous êtes en train d'écrire et hésitez devant un mot – mondialisation, par exemple – ne sachant quel adjectif ou quel verbe lui conviendrait. Vous consultez un dictionnaire usuel, c'est souvent peine perdue. C'est alors que cet ouvrage peut se révéler fort utile. Il contient en effet, pour presque chacun des noms que l'on trouve dans un dictionnaire des synonymes, une liste de suggestions dont la longueur vous étonnera souvent. Le vœu le plus cher de l'auteur est d'aider ainsi toutes les personnes qui écrivent à exploiter davantage les immenses richesses de la langue française.

Dictionnaire des cooccurrences ISBN 978-2-7601-5841-1

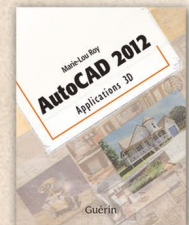


Jean-François Roussel

Gérer la formation - Viser le transfert

Dans ce matériel l'auteur livre le fruit de plus de dix années de recherche, d'enseignement et de pratique liées au transfert des apprentissages. L'apprenant est placé au cœur même du processus de transfert des apprentissages. Ce livre traite à la fois des principales recherches et de la pratique en matière de transfert des apprentissages en milieu de travail.

Gérer la formation – Viser le transfert ISBN 978-2-7601-7235-7



Marie-Lou Roy

AutoCAD 2012

Ces guides présentent bon nombre d'applications permettant à un utilisateur novice d'approfondir ses connaissances du logiciel autoCAD 2012. Ce sont des outils pédagogiques visant à faciliter le transfert des connaissances entre un enseignant et un étudiant. Ils peuvent également être utilisés par toute personne autodidacte et désireuse d'apprendre par elle-même l'utilisation de ce logiciel.

AutoCAD 2012 Débutant ISBN 978-2-7601-7286-9

AutoCAD 2012 Applications avancées ISBN 978-2-7601-7287-6

AutoCAD 2012 Applications 3D ISBN 978-2-7601-7288-3



Guérin, éditeur Itée
LIDEC / Les éditions La Pensée

800, boulevard Industriel, bureau 200
Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu (Québec) J3B 8G4
☎ 514 842-3481 📠 514 842-4923
Courriel : info@guerin-editeur.qc.ca
www.guerin-editeur.qc.ca