



PATRICK LEDUC
Educational Advisor
Cégep régional de Lanaudière
à Terrebonne

As suggested by the authors of the article entitled, “Has the time come for the *Commission d’évaluation de l’enseignement collégial (CEEC)* to do a self-evaluation?”, published under the heading Free Opinion in the Fall 2009 issue of *Pédagogie collégiale*, I in turn would like to contribute to the desired productive debate by continuing the critical reflection.



In that article, on one side the opinion is expressed that the quality of programs and of college establishments would face a fairer evaluation if, as is the case in universities, this sanction came from students, employers and the scientific community. In other words, let the marketplace judge the quality of our practices by the quality of our output, namely our graduates. In the event of shortcomings, the institutions will react accordingly.

However, what is possible in universities is difficult to apply in colleges. Pre-university programs are not the same as job training so employer evaluation is not in fact possible for all college graduates. Moreover, with a determined and legitimate desire for training equivalence, the graduates from the technical sector are for the most part identified with a single program. How, in this situation, can they attest to the quality of their teaching establishments in their various professional environments?

Or, there is some debate on whether to group colleges into an entity similar to the *Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec (CREPUQ)* in order for them to evaluate each other and to form their own judgments.

Allow me to colour my reflection on this proposition with analogies inspired by certain economic principles, especially the principle of self-regulation which is so dear to defenders of capitalism, pure and simple.

The opinions set forth in the opinion piece published in the fall of 2009 and mentioned above go in a completely opposite direction from current reactions in sectors that have relied too heavily on the capacity of systems to self-regulate. If an external oversight organization like the *CEEC* is the object of evaluation, like the *Autorité des marchés financiers (AMF)*, it can only add to its power. The accountability of boards of directors is enhanced, regulations against collusion are applied,

* The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.

external audit arrangements are tightened, the role of the Auditor General is valued and a governance law is established requiring a more formal rendering of accounts. All these measures testify to an awareness: that it is neither effective nor legitimate for an establishment, an enterprise, a ministry or a municipality to have no mechanism or body of external oversight at all. The financial sector recently demonstrated in fact, through different cases widely covered by the media, that systems using self-governing principles to regulate their own functioning do not always strive for quality and effectiveness: in the absence of oversight, the system can also malfunction...

Moreover, the autonomy of universities, the envy of the authors, is also a mess. There is at present the development of a plethora of university programs from A to Z in just a few months in order to offer products similar to those of competing institutions, thereby multiplying the number of campuses in all directions (at times very clumsily). This situation seems to find its coherence more in terms of commercial interests than as a rational response to the educational needs of the population. In this regard, the example of universities is not one to follow! Under the governance of the *ministère de l’Éducation du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)*, the college network is developing with rigour and consistency, with a concern for complementarity, and with a desire to avoid placing establishments and programs in competition with each other, while maximizing the use of resources for the greatest good of the community it serves. That is the example to be envied, and the one that should inspire universities!

The operations performed by the “CEEC” certainly mobilize significant resources. [...] Their greatest virtue is without question the focus on quality that they leave in their wake: there is no way to bypass rigour on the road to quality.

Still in the same article, it is argued that the operational costs relating to the accountability required by the *CEEC* add up to \$100,000 for a medium-sized CEGEP. This was deemed to be a considerable amount.

However, a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis always includes an evaluation of those costs and benefits. The activities of educational institutions do not follow a short-sighted logic of accounting performance.





These are organizations that serve the betterment of society and its citizens. The evaluation operations required by the CEEC are often performed internally, under the seal of educational success. To this amount of \$100,000, which we are led to believe is unreasonable, we could compare the cost to society of a school failure, a drop-out, or an unemployed person. The quality of programs and of improved delivery of education for entire student cohorts for a cost of \$100,000 is a big benefit for a very small amount!

All these measures testify to an awareness: that it is neither effective nor legitimate for an establishment, an enterprise, a ministry or a municipality to have no mechanism or body of external oversight at all.

The operations performed by the CEEC mobilize significant resources, certainly. However, they do not divert establishments from their educational mission. They promote dialogue. They can be a meeting point between questions they raise and answers provided by research. Their greatest virtue is without question the focus on quality that they leave in their wake: there is no way to bypass rigour on the road to quality.



Writings on management list five managerial functions: planning, organizing, directing, controlling and evaluating. Among these five functions, at all teaching levels, the functions of controlling and evaluation are the most neglected. Could the absence of one explain the growing presence of the other? ●

Patrick LEDUC has been an Educational Advisor in the regular sector of *Cégep régional de Lanaudière in Terrebonne* for two years now. Holder of a master's degree in Environmental Sciences specializing in Education, a bachelor's degree in Geography and a teaching certificate, he is pursuing his studies in order to obtain a *Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées (DESS)* in Educational Administration. His mandates in his present position include, among others, developing two new programs, organizing pedagogical days, moderating the committee for language valorization and evaluating teaching practices.

patrick.leduc@collanaud.qc.ca