Pedagogical Support and Skills Development for Novice Teachers of Public Secondary School of Garoua Town (Cameroon)

Charles Tchouata Foudjio  
Lecturer, Faculty of Education of University of Garoua (Cameroon)  
tchouataf@yahoo.fr

Nestor Moutmassou  
Teacher of secondary school, Master's Degree of Education of University of Ngaoundéré (Cameroon)  
lemoutmas2011@yahoo.fr

Abstract: Teacher at the beginning of their professional careers are usually confronted with new demands that are different from those of the training. They are in general obliged to develop throughout their careers in order to adapt to contextual changes such as school reforms and social change. This professional development is essential for the development of a professional identity and better integration of young teachers. The objective of this study is to show that the development of the skills of novice teachers of public secondary school of Garoua town is determined by the quality of pedagogical support. Thus, the hypothesis that serves as guideline for this work stipulates that pedagogical support improves the development of novice teachers' skills. This hypothesis was verified on the basis of data collected through a questionnaire administered to 148 novice teachers of public secondary school of Garoua town. The results obtained are in favour of a validation of the initial hypothesis. There is therefore a significant and positive correlation between pedagogical support and the development of the skills of novice teachers of public secondary school of Garoua town. In order to better understand the skills deficit observed among novice teachers, semi-directive interviews were conducted with 13 teachers and pedagogical inspectors.

Keywords: Pedagogical support, skills, training, novice teachers.

1. Introduction

The development of the skills of teachers in general and those of novice teachers in particular remains an important concern in the 21st century. After an initial training, the teachers integrate the professional environment to implement their skills. As Bernal Gonzalez et al (2018) and Degraef et al (2012) point out, the development of the skills required in the workplace remains incomplete after initial training. For this purpose, the public authorities are responsible for setting up support to perfect the training initially acquired in schools and training centres. Several studies on the development of the skills of novice teachers have been carried out around the world, particularly in France (Jorro, and Panamartin, 2012) and Germany (Keller-Schneider, 2016).

In Cameroon, several authors such as Kutche and Essome (2019), Assoah and Babikoussana (2018) have examined the issue of teacher skills development. On the other hand, to our knowledge, studies on the development of the skills of novice teachers are not abundant. In this context, it is quite difficult to specifically grasp the factors that negatively influence the
development of the skills of novice teachers in order to take measures to deal with them.

This study conducted among teachers of Garoua town in the North Cameroon region makes it possible, through qualitative and quantitative analyses, to understand the factors that influence the development of the skills of novice teachers. The objective of this work is to show that the quality of pedagogical support improves the development of the skills of novice teachers in public secondary schools of Garoua town. Thus, we rely on a theoretical framework for analyzing the development of the skills of novice teachers, a methodological approach, to conclude with the salient results of the study and a discussion.

2. Theoretical framework and problematic of the study

According to Baillauquès and Breuse (1993), teachers newly graduated from the training school have difficulty familiarizing them with the professional environment and implementing in a satisfactory manner certain skills relating to the professional activities for which they have been trained. They point out that the list is long: there is the management of discipline, attempts to motivate students, assessment of students, organization and planning of class work, identification of student levels, use of teaching methods and manuals, education, awareness of school policy, relationships with colleagues, directors or leaders, the heterogeneity of classes, the number of students in classes, to name a few.

In the same logic Hélou and Lantheaume (2008), reveal that the profession of teacher is an “métier impossible” (impossible profession) for a good number of teachers who still do not manage to live up to the requirements of the profession. Studies by the OECD (2012) reveal that in many countries, novice teachers express a lower feeling of effectiveness in relation to professional activities than their more experienced colleagues. As Voz (2020) notes, these novice teachers very often experience problems with professional integration. It is for this reason that several countries such as Canada, the United States, Japan, Scotland and New Zealand have adopted support programs for new teachers (Morin, 2010).

In Cameroon, these programs specifically designed for novice teachers do not exist. The supervision of novice teachers is done through continuous training that involves all teachers in general. In this logic, many provisions are made to support teachers; for example, the granting of bonuses for performance, evaluation, research and documentation; online training via information and communication technologies (ICT); continuing education seminars instituted by Circular No. 32/09/MINESEC/IG of September 7, 2009 which specifies, among other things, that the school board organizes pedagogical days, pedagogical crossroads and internal inspections. These continuous trainings are also organized at the inspection level with reference to Decree No. 2012/267 of June 11, 2012 on the organization of the Ministry of Secondary Education in Cameroon.

Despite the efforts made by the government and the decentralized territorial communities (CTDs) to guarantee quality training for young teachers, the insufficient development of the skills of novice teachers observed in secondary schools in Cameroon in general and of Garoua town remains a major problem that could compromise the expected performance of this category of professionals. The results of an exploratory survey of four secondary schools of Garoua town show that 33.3% of novice teachers do not have mastery of classroom discipline, 45% do not master the use of methods and techniques, 28% are unable to develop assessment topics using the competency-based method (APC). Th

The lack of professional skills observed among novice teachers has many consequences on the professional career of teachers and the quality of teaching that learners will receive.

The social learning theory of Bandura (1976) and that of Vigotsky (1985) are used to understand this phenomenon. According to Albert Bandura, observation followed by imitation gives rise to a rapid learning process: if the novice teacher observes a competent person well in the exercise of his functions and reproduces his behavior, he can avoid a series of trials and mistakes to achieve the right behaviors or skills. However, it is advisable to observe an inspector or an educational
facilitator to whom you feel close before claiming to reproduce his behavior. For Bandura, the novice teacher can develop his skills by being in contact with other more experienced teachers by copying or simply imitating their teaching methods.

In the same perspective, the socioconstructivist approach developed by Vygotsky (1985) also emphasizes social interactions, exchanges, and the work of verbalization, construction and collaboration. Learning is seen as the result of social-cognitive activities related to didactic exchanges between teacher-student and teacher-teacher. This author insists on the role of mediation in learning, which he explains by the zone of proximal development (ZPD). For Vygotsky, the novice teacher will develop their skills by interacting with more experienced teachers or with other resource people.

In view of this analysis, to achieve our objective, the general hypothesis of this study is entitled: pedagogical support improves the development of the skills of novice teachers in public secondary schools of Garoua town. This hypothesis is operational through three specific hypotheses:

- The quality of continuous training improves the development of the skills of novice teachers in public secondary schools of Garoua town.
- Pedagogical supervision promotes the development of the skills of novice teachers in public secondary schools of Garoua town.
- The organization of working sessions within establishments increases the development of the skills of novice teachers in public secondary establishments of Garoua town.

3. Methodology

This mixed study combines both qualitative and quantitative data. The collection of quantitative data was done from an individual questionnaire addressed to novice teachers of public secondary schools in the subdivision of Garoua 2nd. The qualitative aspect made it possible to carry out a cross-analysis of the quantitative data. To this end, an interview guide administered to certain pedagogical guides. Thus, our study population is made up of novice teachers from Garoua town as well as educational guides.

The sample of novice teachers allowing the quantitative analysis to be carried out was obtained from the probability sampling technique, namely simple random sampling. It is made up of 148 novice teachers in 7 public secondary schools, namely 97 men and 51 women. With regard to the qualitative analysis sample, we have chosen a non-probabilistic technique which is that of reasoned choice. This allowed us to send an interview guide to 13 pedagogical guides: 10 distributed in the 7 establishments of our study site and 03 regional pedagogical inspectors.

The questionnaire made up of Likert attitude scales has three components, namely: the quality of continuing education, pedagogical supervision and the organization of work sessions within the establishment. It was administered in offices, teachers' rooms and classrooms at off-peak times. Before administering this questionnaire to respondents, a reminder of the rules of anonymity and the confidentiality of the data collected was explained to them. An interview guide was also administered to 13 teaching assistants.

The data obtained through the questionnaire were processed using SPSS version 20.0 software, thus making it possible to perform simple regression analyzes with the calculation of standardized Beta and the F of snédécor. The data from the interview guide were processed by an analysis of the verbatim statements in order to complete the results obtained from the data collected from the questionnaire. From a codification, the opinions of all the coaches were grouped and exploited in order to better explain the phenomenon of developing the skills of novice teachers. For reasons of confidentiality, the names of persons with whom we conducted interviews have been changed during the presentation of the data.
4. Results

4.1. General characteristics of participants

It emerges from this survey which known the participation of 148 novice teachers via the questionnaire, that 65.5% are men and 34.5% women. As for the number of years of service of the teachers questioned, 31.7% of the teachers questioned have between 01 and 02 years of service; 51.4% of teachers surveyed have between 03 and 04 years of service and finally 16.9% of teachers have 05 years of service. The different levels of education are represented: technical education with a percentage of 52%; French-speaking general education with a percentage of 21.6% and bilingual education with a percentage of 26.4%. Almost all of the respondents are officials: 98.6% person surveyed. This category of personnel has previously received initial training and despite this training, they still experience difficulties in the efficient implementation of the skills expected of them. Among these respondents, 1.4% are contract workers who were recruited without initial training but who, like all the other teachers, benefit from continuous training.

Also our respondents are separated between the different grades, it appears that 29.7% are teachers of technical education secondary schools and teachers of technical education colleges; 68% are teachers of general education secondary schools and teachers of general education colleges; 1.7% are technical education teachers and only 0.7% contract teachers. Another very important characteristic of the respondents is that almost all of them live in Garoua town, which means that they can easily go to their places of service and also to meetings organized by educational guides.

4.2 Results of the tests of the various research hypotheses

4.2.1 The quality of continuous training and the development of skills for novice teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R-square</th>
<th>Adjusted R-square</th>
<th>Standard error of the estimate</th>
<th>Variation of R-square</th>
<th>Variation of F</th>
<th>df 1</th>
<th>df 2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.452*</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>.2423</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>6.983</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears from the previous table that the correlation coefficient (R) is of the order of 0.452 demonstrating a positive and significant correlation because it moves away from the number 0 and gets closer the number 1. The coefficient of determination R2 is of the order of 0.133=13.3%, this shows that the quality of continuous training explains the development of the skills of novice teachers at 13.3% and the rest is predicted by the factors outside the model, so the relationship between the two variables is significant. The variation of calculated F which is of the order of 6.983; it is greater than the degree of freedom 1.146. We also observe that Fcal>Fred and that the significance (P) of the variation of F is of the order of 0.036 less than alpha (0.05). So the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

These results corroborate the comments of our respondents. Regarding the quality of continuing education, Fadimatou says that "I find the style of supervision during continuing education not at all appealing; we sometimes have to deal with more than 100 teachers in a small space for a single supervisor". In the same perspective, Jean Paul considers that "the quality of the interventions of the inspectors during the continuous training does not satisfy me as an educational facilitator, imagine what a novice teacher would think". As Hamidou confirms, "novice teachers sometimes have huge expectations that can come from pedagogical days, but once the exchanges are made they are sometimes disappointed". We can easily understand that the indicators of continuous training such as the style of supervision during continuous training,
the exchanges between teachers and inspectors during training seminars and the quality of the interventions of inspectors would increase the development of novice teachers’ skills.

4.2.2 Pedagogical supervision and skills development for novice teachers

Table 2: model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R-square</th>
<th>Adjusted R-square</th>
<th>Standard error of the estimate</th>
<th>Change in statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.8233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Predicted values: (constant), Pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlation coefficient (R) in the table above is of the order of 0.212, shows a positive and significant correlation link because it moves away from the number 0 and gets closer the number 1. The coefficient of determination \(R^2\) is order of 0.197=19.7% and shows that pedagogical supervision promotes the development of novice teachers' skills at 18.9% and the rest is predicted by factors outside the model. There is a significant relationship between these two variables. The variation of F is order of 3.385; it is greater than the degree of freedom 1.146. We also observe that \(F_{cal}>F_{red}\) and that the significance (P) of the variation of F is order of 0.020 less than alpha (0.05). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is confirmed.

The comments collected from our respondents further explain the previous observations. To express her dissatisfaction, Florence declares: "we have enormous expectations regard to teaching councils and pedagogical crossroads, but once the discussions are over, we are sometimes disappointed because novice teachers always complain about their pedagogical difficulties". For some pedagogical facilitators, the verification of the adequacy between the programs and the contents of the lessons is not always done by the inspection service. To this end Paul underlines that "for 03 years that I have been a pedagogical facilitator, my inspector never tried to find out if what we teach in the classrooms matches the curricula". Similarly, monitoring of teaching methods and techniques in classrooms by supervisors (inspectors and pedagogical facilitators) is either insufficient or absent. This is why Mohamadou affirms that "as a pedagogical inspector, how do you expect us to follow each teacher in order to check the methods and techniques that they deploy every day in class when we are only 02 inspectors? for about 300 teachers". Thus, we can say that the behavior displayed by some supervisors, namely the poor verification of the adequacy between the content and the teaching programs in the classroom, the insufficient monitoring of teaching methods and techniques and finally the lack correction of pedagogical deficiencies would negatively influence the development of the skills of novice teachers.

4.2.3 The organization of work sessions within the establishment and the development of the skills of novice teachers

Table 3: model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R-square</th>
<th>Adjusted R-square</th>
<th>Standard error of the estimate</th>
<th>Change in statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.442</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.70895</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Predicted values: (constant), The organization of work sessions within the establishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On reading the table above, it emerges that the correlation coefficient (R) is order of 0.442, reflecting a positive and significant correlation link because it moves away from the number 0.
and gets closer the number 1. The coefficient of determination $R^2$ is order of 0.195=19.5% and shows that the organization of work sessions inside the establishment (pedagogical crossroads, internal inspections, teaching councils) increases the development of the skills of novice teachers to 19.5% and the rest is predicted by the determinants outside the model. The variation of F is order of 53.360%; it is greater than the degree of freedom 1.146. We also observe that $F_{cal}>F_{red}$ and that the significance (P) of the variation of F is order of 0.000 less than alpha (0.05). So, the alternative hypothesis is confirmed.

The statements of several respondents confirm the previous observations. Jacques believes that "the administration of the establishment does not give us enough means to organize the various meetings with novice teachers in order to support them". Similarly, the teaching councils which must be held each quarter are not respected, as Aminatou points out, “the reports from the teaching councils that we receive show us that these are held in a fictitious manner in certain establishments. As a result, the annual quota of teaching councils to be organized is therefore not respected". According to some interviewees on the subject of internal inspections, they are very often included in the plan for carrying out activities at the beginning of the year but are not always carried out. To this end, Laurent affirms that "we have never organized internal inspections in our establishment for 04 years that I have been there as an educational facilitator because the teachers are reluctant and still does not adhere to such activities". These different statements by teachers show us how the rate of organization of work inside the establishment is low and would influence the development of the skills of novice teachers.

5. Discussion

The aim of this work was to show the influence of pedagogical support on the development of the skills of novice teachers. The results of this study reveal a significant relationship between skills development and pedagogical support, namely the quality of continuing education, pedagogical supervision and the organization of work sessions within institutions.

However, the quantitative data we collected revealed that the proportion of novice teachers who are satisfied with the coaching style is 20% compared to 64.9% of teachers who are not. This situation clearly shows that the style of supervision deployed by inspectors during continuous training would not be appropriate. This study joins that of Sou (quoted in Djibo, 2010) whose investigations carried out with teachers show that 38% preferred not to go to pedagogical days because they found that the debates were superficial and that the participants did not criticize objectives. In addition, the inspectors who are pedagogical guides have not received initial training in inspection and therefore their skills are below the expectations of teachers. It is in this logic that the words of Assoah and Babikoussana (2018) are in line, who thinks that in Cameroon, continuing education refers to an image well known to all, that of the blind who lead other blind people. The exchanges between teachers and pedagogical inspectors during the various seminars and pedagogical days are unsatisfactory because the facilitators do not always master the methods and techniques necessary for the acquisition of teacher skills. These results are in line with those of Assoah and Babikoussana (2018), who show that in a study carried out in Cameroon, 68% of respondents think that the facilitators are incompetent or followers of the form, which above all does not motivate teachers to take the pedagogical days seriously: these respondents criticize the quality of the pedagogical days and consider the logistics and documentation insufficient. The majority of these same respondents also remark that they cannot even use the knowledge acquired from previous training sessions because the acts are non-existent and unavailable.

Pedagogical supervision shows that the verification of teaching methods and techniques, the adequacy between programs and teaching content are skills development tools. As Nolan and Hoover (2011, p.7) note, the purpose of supervision is to promote the individual professional development of teachers beyond their current level of performance. The results from our survey show us what degree supervision impacts the development of the skills of novice teachers. It appears that 33.2% of respondents said that supervisors rarely check compliance with teaching
methods and techniques and only 18.9% said that supervisors very often check teaching methods and techniques. However, any educational project should ensure a certain consistency between the general educational aims, the teaching content, their implementation and their evaluation (Annie Feyfant, 2013). With regard to the verification between the programs and the content of the lessons, only 4.7% of respondents affirm this verification by the inspectors and 37.8% say that the inspectors have never checked the adequacy between the programs and the contents. This situation contradicts the ideas of Brunelle et al (1988), who believe that supervisors should help teachers to apply the program as it should.

A good organization of work inside the establishments also allows the development of the skills of novice teachers. Regarding this link, this study shows that 33.1% of respondents say that internal inspections are never organized, 60.1% say that teaching councils have never been held. These clearly show that the work inside the establishments is poorly organized. These results go in the same direction as those of Derouet and Dutercq (1977), who show that the mobilization of a strong pedagogical team constitutes one of the strategies for the development of teachers’ skills. On the other hand, the fact that the work is diversified in the establishments is an advantage for the development of the skills of novice teachers. In the Garoua town, the work carried out within the establishments is not diversified enough and even those which are organized are not fully carried out. As shown by the work of Murray (2014), even if the teachers participate weakly in the activities, the diversification of the activities contributes to the development of their skills. Tardif and Lessard (1999) go further by recommending that teachers work together. However, the fact that the teaching councils; internal inspections and pedagogical crossroads are weakly organized shows that teachers do not work together. Thus our survey reveals a low percentage of work organization within establishments.

6. Conclusion

Our work is mainly based on the theories of Bandura (1976) and that of Vigotsky (1985). It shows how certain indicators can explain the development of the skills of novice teachers in the Garoua town. Indeed, the results of this study clearly show us that the quality of continuous training, pedagogical supervision and the organization of work sessions within schools contribute significantly to developing the skills of novice teachers. We do not lose sight of the fact that the previous indicators are essentially pedagogical and that other indicators such as motivation can also explain the development of the skills of novice teachers (Keller-Schneider, 2016). In Cameroon, since 1993 with the reduction in the salaries of civil servants, teachers of public sector have felt this drastic reduction hard and found themselves demotivated at the same time (Daouda, 1997). This demotivation particularly affects novice teachers whose partial or total pay is often often express their dissatisfaction through teachers' unions.

However, the ability of novice teachers to get involved in their own skills development should be questioned. Indeed, their lack of will sometimes pushes them not to get closer to the guides who can be more experienced teachers or inspectors in order to discuss in case of professional needs. On the other hand, the various means granted by the State as well as by school’s establishment; the ratio of inspectors to teachers, which is also low; the scarcity of work organized at the establishment such as teaching councils and pedagogical crossroads as well as the working conditions in general during continuing training do not allow effective and efficient learning of novice teachers, which hinders the development of their skills. It therefore seems essential that the training reserved for teachers be diversified and that they directly meet the needs of teachers at the start of their career.

It would be interesting to carry out similar research on private establishments which often employ teachers who have not received any initial training. It would also be interesting to question the willingness of novice teachers to make efforts to develop their own skills in order to be self-determined in their teaching profession. Studies on the working conditions of new teachers would shed light on the ergonomic constraints to be taken into consideration to ensure their best professional integration and support.
Références


