

Influence of Pedagogical Supervisors' Practices and Perceptions on the Use of Results-based Management

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Abstract

In the province of Québec, Canada, school principals are obligated by law to ensure pedagogical supervision. This law, the Public Education Act (Government of Québec, 2017), also advocates a contractual Results-Based Management approach (RBM). We examined how the practices and perceptions of these supervisors influence the implementation of this approach. The legal ramifications for these school leaders were also explored, as were the concept of pedagogical supervision and the underlying principles of the goal-setting theory and task performance (Locke & Latham, 1990; 2002; 2006) which constituted the conceptual framework of our research. This study was part of a collaborative research project conducted with 21 school principals and vice-principals of the *Découvreurs* School Board in Québec City. Results show that RBM supports the pedagogical perspective of the supervisors and rallies the school-team to adopt the proposed objectives. However, the goals of one member may not be the same as those of the organization and the setting of goals may limit exploration and achievement if members underestimate the means.

Keywords: *school principals, results-based management, pedagogical supervision, goal setting*

Context

In Canada, several provinces including Ontario, Alberta, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, have adopted teacher evaluation programs (Bouchamma, 2005) that enable the comprehensive appraisal of teacher performance and competence in carrying out both instructional duties and other responsibilities (Nolan & Hoover, 2008). In the province of Québec, however, there exists no program by which to evaluate or supervise teachers. Indeed, the only legal basis provided in this regard is the Québec Public Education Act (articles 96.12 and 110.9) (Government of Québec, 2017), which states that pedagogical supervision is part of the mandatory duties of school principals. This law also advocates using the Results-Based Management approach (RBM), which determines goal setting with regard to graduation and student achievement and where each level is responsible for meeting their objectives. RBM is thus defined as a management approach based on the measurable results of goals that have been pre-established according to the services that are to be provided. This approach operates within a context of transparency, accountability, and flexibility in terms of the means used to attain the desired outcomes. In this model, as illustrated in Figure 1, each staff member is mobilized to focus on student achievement and perseverance.

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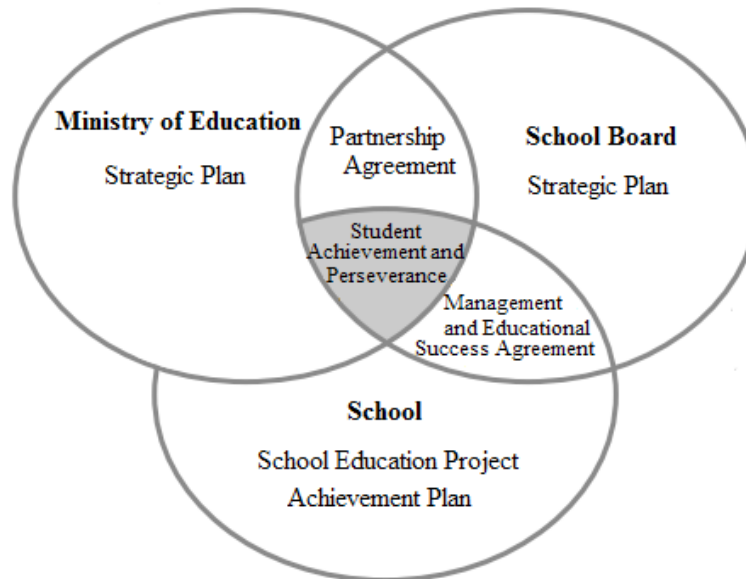


Figure 1. RBM criteria with regard to student achievement and perseverance (MELS, 2009).

The Need for RBM

According to the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* (2009), RBM clarifies and disseminates the government's various orientations, takes into account the local realities and constraints, emphasises results over means, widens the corridor of action for school boards and their schools in terms of these means, defines the expectations with regard to the contribution of each level toward positive outcomes, and finally, allows for greater accountability and empowerment for each level involved. Table 1 presents the RBM criteria advocated to reach the above-mentioned goals.

Table 1

RBM Criteria in the Québec Education System

| STRATEGIC PLAN | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Organizations involved | Laws | Characteristics |
| 1. Ministry of Education strategic plan | Min. of Education | Art. 459.2 Public Education Act | Published every 5 years, this plan presents the strategic mission objectives of the Ministry of Education and determines its main orientations. |
| 2. School board strategic plan | School board (SB), Min. of Education | Law 81; art. 209.1 Public Education Act | This 5-year plan ensures the deployment of the school education project in accordance with the Ministry of Education strategic plan. It describes the needs and characteristics of the schools with emphasis on relevant issues and interventional strategies. |
| 3. School education project | School, school council (SC) | Art. 36 and 74 Public Education Act | The SC adopts and implements the education project proposed by the school and ensures periodic assessments. The education project takes into account the SB's strategic plan, targets orientations specific to the school and identifies goals to promote student achievement. |
| 4. Achievement plan | School | Law 124; Art. 37.1 Public Education Act | Revised annually, the achievement plan takes into account the strategic plan of the SB. Each section of the Programme identifies factors, objectives means, indicators, expected outcomes, evaluation methods, involved leaders and partners, and work schedule. |
| CONTRACTUALIZATION | | | |
| 5. Partnership agreement | SB, Min. of Education | Art. 459.3 Public Education Act | Agreement on the measures to be taken to ensure implementation of the SB's strategic plan. The 5 governing principles of the Ministry of Education are: increase the graduation rate and qualification status before the age of 20, improve the mastering of the French language, enhance perseverance and achievement in certain groups, further foster a nurturing and secure environment within schools, and augment the number of students under age 20 in vocational training. |
| 6. Management and educational success agreement | SB, principal, SC | Art. 209.2 Public Education Act | Annual agreement on the measures to ensure the attainment of the designated goals and measurable objectives of the partnership agreement. |
| 7. Annual management report | SB, population and Min. of Education | Art. 83, 110.3.1 and 209.2 Public Education Act | Annual public report by the SB on the achievement of its strategic plan and results obtained with regard to established goals and measurable objectives (partnership agreement). |

Issue and Review of the Literature

Pedagogical Supervision

Pedagogical supervision by the principal is among the key factors of quality teaching (Glickman, 1985; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Nolan & Hoover, 2008; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2013). Indeed, supervision not only enables principals to provide support for their teachers and ensure their professional growth but also makes it possible to gather data on the teaching being dispensed and to move forward with appropriate feedback and adjustments (Bouchamma, 2005). However, the feeling of isolation expressed by teachers (Bouchamma, 2005), coupled with the lack of time, the administrative burden (Lapointe, Brassard, Garon, Girard & Ramdé, 2011), and the lack of differentiation in their principal's practices are viewed as the main drawbacks of pedagogical supervision. Also evoked in studies is the limited sense of efficacy of school leaders in tasks involving the use of quantitative data in supervisory practices (IsaBelle et al., 2008; Prud'Homme & Leclerc, 2014).

RBM Policies

Because this form of education reform in Québec is relatively recent, existing literature on the subject is rare, with previous studies essentially focusing on the related issues and challenges associated with RBM (Dembélé, Goulet, Lapointe & Deniger, 2013). In the Québec context, the above-mentioned processes are viewed as ways to recuperate power and control over local organizations (Brassard, Lusignan, & Pelletier, 2013). Indeed, government policy dictates that the Ministry of Education may reduce the amount of power schools have, should the actions undertaken to correct poor results prove to be unsuccessful (Maroy, 2013). Along these lines, Brassard, Lusignan and Pelletier (2013) identified a contrast between the logic of strategic, top-down performance management (p. 149) and the theoretical considerations of the local needs and dynamics at play. In this sense, applying RBM creates a certain tension between the obligation to perform and succeed and the socially less-developed context of some settings where the scope of the social and educational challenges of the students is significant and where the capabilities to help these learners progress may differ (Lapointe et al., 2011). In this rapport, however, the design, negotiation, deployment, and evaluation of these numerous tools also mobilize a significant number of organizational, time-dependent, and human resources, which render the bureaucratic model both cumbersome and complex (Brassard et al., 2013). In the end, introducing the RBM approach has resulted in greater, more compounded responsibilities for school principals, many of whom must now devote more time to administrative duties over instruction-related tasks, including pedagogical supervision (Lapointe et al., 2011).

RBM and Principals' Supervision Practices

According to Maroy, Brassard, Mathou, Vaillancourt, and Voisin (2016), RBM contributes to the institutionalization of "managing teaching" in Québec's education system. These authors further argue that RBM enables a more systematic and directive pedagogical supervision through strategies that involve planning, follow-up, coordination, evaluation, and control (see Table 1) to improve efficiency with regard to the desired goals. In this perspective, a principal who exercises RBM in their pedagogical supervision practices has a positive influence on student achievement.

While the data produced by all RBM plans in Québec appear on their own to have an overall moderate effect on student learning (Prud'Homme & Leclerc, 2014), the data are not used to provide feedback to adjust teaching practices, and these large-scale, "tertiary" data are particularly useful for administrators (Striggins, 2002). These authors found in fact that when the principals ensure the supervision of their teachers, the school comes to develop a culture of continuous collection of raw, fundamental data emanating from in-class observations to follow student

progress, adapt and improve teaching practices, and ultimately boost effectiveness to enhance student learning and achievement (Prud'Homme & Leclerc, 2014). In consequence, RBM alone or the principal alone has no direct effect on student outcomes. Indeed, the role of the principal is to direct the practices and to favour the development of skills to sustain student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2008), whereas RBM, on the other hand, supports the development of a culture of relevant data for the school-team and their superiors to help them make evidence-based decisions when revising, updating, and directing future objectives. The acquired data also serve to determine common priorities which will become the foundations for their RBM system.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of the current study was to examine whether principals' perceptions of and practices in pedagogical supervision influenced the application of a RBM approach. The knowledge gained will thus contribute to establishing formal connections between RBM and the supervisory practices of school principals, an avenue of investigation that has not been explored in Québec. Furthermore, this study is in line with that of Maroy et al. (2016) who deemed it relevant to analyze the institutional context of RBM in relation to principals' pedagogical supervision practices and conceptions, as well as various contentious elements at play. From a practical standpoint, this contribution will provide greater coherence between professional practices and frames of reference.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the concept of pedagogical supervision and the theory of goal setting. We found this framework to be well suited to the context of RBM in determining goal setting as it pertained to student achievement. We established that in this context, this supervision was an essential part of the process of achieving the desired outcomes (Brassard et al., 2013). Moreover, the theory of goal setting takes into account both the practices and the perceptions of the actor.

Pedagogical Supervision

Purposes. Pedagogical supervision – also referred to as teacher supervision or instructional supervision – is designed to support teachers and help them become more independent with regard to student achievement data collection and management to make better, more enlightened pedagogical decisions in favour of innovation in both teaching and student learning. Pedagogical supervision helps teachers to develop their professional competencies and ability to reflect on their own practice. Planned and tailored to the needs of the teachers, supervision differs from evaluation which is more directed toward promotion, retention, and personal decision making (Nolan & Hoover, 2008).

Prerequisites. Supervision takes place in the spirit of assistance, discussion, recognition, and professional development. A climate of trust between the teachers and the principal is also essential to facilitate supervision (Zepeda, 2007).

Supervision aims. Based on a process of continuous exchange and guidance, this approach consists in closely monitoring the education services dispensed by the school staff and the school's pedagogical projects, as well as teacher performance in a perspective of professional growth (Bouchamma, Giguère & April, 2017). This important process also makes it possible to gather and analyse data and documentation which will serve to support any necessary decisions regarding, or adjustments to the proposed actions in an effort to implement effective changes for further development and the attainment of established goals. In this sense, pedagogical supervision not only provides daily support, guidance, and enlightenment for the teacher to address teaching-related issues (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2013), but also vital feedback on the work

achieved, in order to meet the goals set (Lapointe et al., 2011) within the RBM approach.

The Theory of Goal Setting

Goal-based management is essentially based on a joint setting of goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). This approach is thus likened to the prime directives of results-based management, in which the goals to be reached are clearly and jointly established by all three parties, in this case, the Ministry of Education, the school districts, and the schools (Figure 1 and Table 1). Similarly, as can be seen in the following figure, pedagogical supervision is the ideal method to collect crucial data that will improve existing practices, as well as student achievement which is defined according to objectives. The development of a data culture thus appears to be essential to effectively gauge progress toward the attainment of the initially set goals.

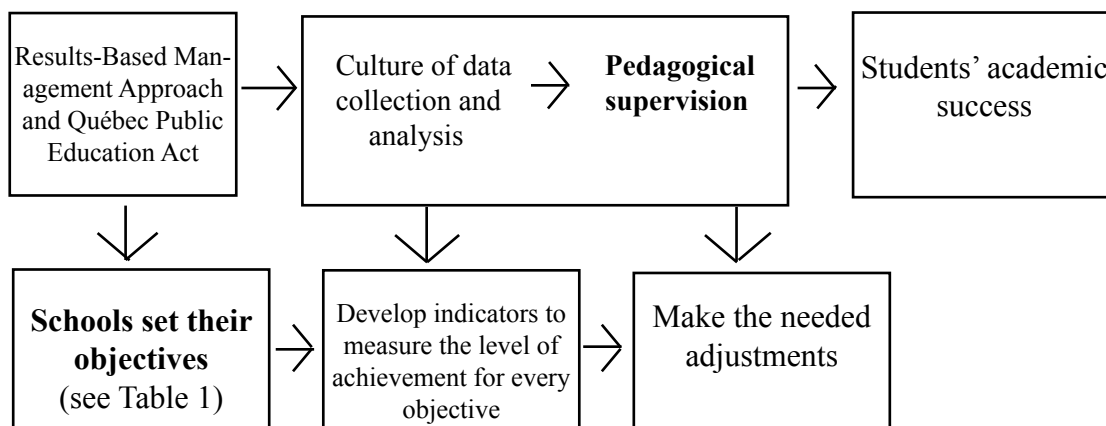


Figure 2. From goal setting to pedagogical supervision toward academic achievement.

To successfully generate a data culture to promote student achievement, the school must define achievement indicators to determine its growth. Locke and Latham (1990) explained setting goals as the process of elaboration, negotiation, and definition of objectives which an individual seeks to attain. The goal-setting model of Locke and Latham (1990; 2002; 2006) situates the eventual impact of goal setting on outcomes while focusing on moderating elements. Locke (1968) led research on this model in the field of industrial organizational psychology and organizational behaviour to explain and predict motivation in the workplace. In 2003, following an extensive consultative study conducted with peer teachers in organizational behaviour, the theory of goal setting topped the list in importance ahead of 72 other management theories (Miner, 2003).

Latham and Locke (1979) and Latham and Steele (1983) identified five leading principles of the goal-setting theory:

1. Goal difficulty: Ambitious, yet attainable goals translate to greater levels of effort and perseverance toward reaching these objectives.
2. Goal specificity: Clear goals direct the attention toward prioritizing activities, focusing efforts, and minimizing actions that are less relevant to the attainment of these objectives.
3. Feedback: Positive and constructive criticism helps to better understand the expectations of the institution and the system, particularly regarding long-term goals; it enables one to evaluate and address any gaps between the goals established and the results obtained.
4. Commitment: Acceptance and commitment is reinforced when individuals actively par-

ticipate in the elaboration and appropriation of goals.

5. High level of self-efficacy: Beliefs, perceptions, and self-esteem with regard to their personal sense of efficacy are what drive how they think, act, use their resources, and stay motivated.

In essence, this theory postulates that teachers' representations of goal setting determine the efficient causes of their behaviour. Here, the teacher is motivated by successfully reaching goals, which in itself is an accomplishment. In this dynamic, setting goals brings the teacher to build new solving strategies and ultimately to experience a sense of pride in having acquired both personal and professional expertise.

Methodology

Design and Data Collection

This collaborative research study was characterised by its training aspect through discussions and reflection within a structured methodological approach (Bray, Lee, Smith & Yorks, 2000) and was defined within an interpretive qualitative framework so as to better grasp the perceptions of the participants with regard to their experiences. Participating in this study were two communities of practice: a formal collective development model based on reflection and the mutual commitment of its members (Schussler, 2003), composed of 21 principals and vice-principals from the *Découvreurs* School Board (Québec) who together examined the process of pedagogical supervision, and consequently the RBM system, during sessions held during the 2014-2016 school year. We accompanied these participants over two years in the context of a collaborative research project. Nine focus group interviews enabled us to identify the advantages and drawbacks of the RBM approach used by the principals to supervise their teachers. A semi-structured interview grid covering the targeted subject enabled us to gather extensive data on the practices and perceptions of the participants.

Participants

Fifteen principals and six vice-principals participated in this collaborative research, including 14 from elementary schools, four from secondary establishments, one from the adult education setting, and two from the vocational training sector. Two practice communities were formed, comprised of 10 men and 11 women having between five and 26 years of teaching experience ($\bar{x} = 13$) and between one and 21 years of experience in school management ($\bar{x} = 9$).

Data Analysis and Reliability

Each session was recorded and transcribed in its entirety. The participants' responses were then categorized under two main themes, namely, pedagogical supervision practices and perceptions, and their positive/negative effect on the implementation of RBM. Each theme was coded according to the five leading principles of the goal-setting theory. The analyzed data were periodically submitted to the participants using the predictive validity technique, whereby the persons being interviewed are one of the most logical sources of corroboration (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thereafter, a second coder coded the data to ensure intercoder reliability. Following adjustments and discussion, the intercoder reliability reached 95%, within the standards established by Miles and Huberman (1994). Finally, the same coder analyzed the collected transcripts twice (intra-coder reliability) within a few days to verify internal consistency over time, which concluded at 90%, within the same standards (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

First, the practices and perceptions of pedagogical supervision and their effect on the application

of RBM are regrouped under the five guiding principles of the goal-setting theory: goal difficulty; goal specificity; feedback: motivating to aim higher; commitment; and self-efficacy. Lastly, we identified an emergent theme that intertwines with the five main principles of the theory.

Goal difficulty

The principals generally sought to set high standards for themselves: “We have a success rate of 85% in mathematics. Can we go for 87 or 88?” (DPI1). If these ambitious objectives were not satisfied, the principals proposed making adjustments: “At least we planted the seed. ... It’s really one step at a time, even if the goal is important” (DPI1). Here, they do not expect immediate results. Similarly, another principal felt that setting ambitious goals with a smaller return was not demotivating, but rather the opposite: “It gets them (the teachers) to face reality They say ‘It’s the right number; we have to find solutions’” (DFP2). Lastly, setting ambitious goals in the management agreement enabled one participant to excel and be more structured in terms of his accountability: “I constantly went over our expectations from the beginning of the year, the goals defined in the action plan...” (DS2). However, when the targeted ambitious goals were not achieved, the principals retained a certain determinism in the form of indifference, rejection, or resignation on the part of the school-team members: “There is often a mentality whereby the teacher’s response is that they did their best. ... When we come in and propose the idea of improvement and doing better, it’s like we are asking them to do much more.” (DS2). As a result, teachers may feel unaffected or powerless.

Goal specificity

According to these respondents, referring to past outcomes to set clear objectives in their action plan and management agreement was a regular practice: “We looked at last year’s results and gave ourselves the goal of increasing our performance in reading by 3%. ... The results help us develop our action plans and our action plans get the team to take action” (DPI1). Similarly, throughout the year, the principals also referred to the students’ previous results which they compared with their management criteria: “We go over those who do well. It gives us input.” (DPI1). Furthermore, as the year unfolds, the principals declared, having reminded the team of these goals:

When I have someone who is hesitant in going forward, I always bring them back to the goal. [The RBM strategies], they enable me to readjust things, to reiterate the objectives, to see which practices are effective; they share them with each other... (DP9)

Finally, reviewing the objectives represented a crucial practice for principals to reach the desired goals: “Display our methods and objectives by department. ... It’s interesting to see them posted” (DFP2). Here, this practice ensures that the actions are in line with the methods and goals.

On the other hand, the principals reported some excessiveness as well as a lack of accessibility to the provisions of the RBM approach under which the goals were set: “I often remember teachers who had participated in developing the pedagogical project, but who had forgotten the content and the goals. Well, I thought, remind them of the content, find ways to bring them back up to speed” (DPI1).

Second, the principals admitted that at times they were not able to or did not want to set specific goals within their proposed supervision, particularly because the person being supervised was still emerging (young): “We become allergic to anything that quantifies success” (DS3). Another principal added: “Say the numbers... It happened to me in the department ... and then it was no longer ‘We’re looking for solutions’ but rather I was targeting them PERSONALLY. They are always on the defensive” (DFP2).

Third, the principals stated that reaching clearly established objectives must be evaluated from collected, analyzed, and interpreted data; however, this would warrant that these evalua-

tions be based on values such as equality and consistency: “What worried me was that a teacher could use a given assessment situation in reading while another teacher in the same grade used another. Are we evaluating the same things? Do we have the same coefficient of difficulty” (DP1). That said, it was mentioned that according to the Public Education Act (Government of Québec, 2017), teachers (as self-sufficient professionals) had the right to choose their own evaluation methods.

Lastly, we regularly observed very general qualitative objectives in the participants’ responses, such as “improve students’ perseverance” (DS1) or “promote the achievement of the greatest number of students” (DP6), where the emphasis was placed more on the “resources to achieve” than on the actual setting of highly specific goals.

Feedback: Motivating to Aim Higher

The following statement demonstrates informal individual feedback in which a principal is attentive to what is said around the office by third parties to formulate positive feedback for a specific teacher: “When I hear that a teacher has done such and such a project, I make an internal note and [I congratulate him or her]” (DS3). Reinforcement by the principal makes it possible to establish pedagogical connections with the teachers and to positively change the culture of the school. This is how we change the culture of the school. The principals also shared their stories of how they developed group feedback. Indeed, collaborative structures such as professional learning communities (PLC) established by the principals to guide their teaching staff were mentioned. One principal declared: “[Teachers] need assistance in managing results. It’s not because they have results that they look at them [analyze them]. So it’s all about taking the time to delve deeper into the result” (DPI1). In this regard, when the PLC becomes self-sufficient and when the teachers see the positive results in what they are doing, it encourages them to continue. Lastly, the principals showed an interest in expressing feedback on a daily basis:

We are so governed by the MESA where we have goals to reach; we cannot allow ourselves to name them at the beginning of the year, then get to the end of the year and just say that we have or have not reached them.” (DP1)

As a matter of fact, continuous data collection, analysis, and feedback not only guide the teachers’ practices but also identify the challenges that must be addressed to do better.

We nevertheless observed that when the results were negative, partial, or over-quantitative, the principals referred to a potential risk of demobilization:

Each year, over many years, ... what we presented to our teachers in terms of report were always the drop-out rates, the graduation rates. ... Our methods and actions were in the background. ... I noted that the data had a negative impact.” (DFP2)

Furthermore, it would appear that in certain settings, the public display of feedback is not part of the culture: “When I sent the results to all of the teachers, subject by subject, the union representative ran in and said: ‘What are you doing? There are only two teachers in that grade!’” (DS1). In this perspective, the principals observed that when some team members felt that they were being compared, they did not react well to RBM rules. Thus, these school leaders basically decided to use an internal rather than external comparison so as to develop feedback: “We cannot compare ourselves with a Level 1 school” (DP9). In this view, the school members need to share practices in order to be able to evaluate the same way and compare themselves amongst themselves.

Commitment

Targeted goals are perceived to be more motivating when the teachers accept and are committed to the process. In this regard, the principals implemented various practices in our study to stimulate their teachers’ commitment and involvement. First, specific attention was given to the

vocabulary: “When I drew up the management agreement; I called it OUR management agreement. ... I refer to OUR MESA, OUR students, OUR school” (DP9). Staff involvement early on is another winning process: “An achievement plan [is] a mobilization method. [It helps to] build on the needs and concerns of the teachers. They feel heard and appreciate the transparency” (DFP2). Here, the teachers’ input is both necessary and valued. Lastly, participative leadership, which encourages the participation of the school-team and the deployment of a collective expertise, was mentioned as an effective motivational method: “When teacher feel that they are part of the solution, ... it enables them to develop as a team as well as develop their autonomy, their sense of efficacy, [everything]...” (DP9).

In contrast, the principals admitted that convincing the school-team and “selling” objectives was at times complicated when came the time to address the issue of accountability. One participant spoke of their teachers’ reactions: “Not another achievement plan committee, it won’t change much, we’ve been working on that for years!” (DFP2). In addition, the criteria appeared to be strict, which negatively affected creativity and motivation: “There is little room to step outside of the box” [DS3].

Self-Efficacy

Having a high personal sense of efficacy as supervisors was perceived as being important to be able to transmit this sentiment to the persons who were being supervised. In addition, discussing supervision with their teachers in the spirit of being more effective appeared to show potential, as it was non-threatening and made it possible to place the teacher in a position of empowerment that ultimately “will motivate them... and will bring them to surpass themselves. It’s an open door” [DP1]. Further to this, positive feedback in the supervision process appeared to enhance the sense of efficacy:

We had our boosted positive elements, ... they were anxious to talk about their projects.

That had an impact on their peers. ... Those who came next were less resistant [to supervision] because they had witnessed all of the benefits obtained by the previous group. At the end of the process, there is clearly going to be an impact ..., significant gains, which means that it works. (DRH1)

The respondents declared that the level of maturity of their team of teachers and their sense of efficacy ultimately make a huge difference in terms of the amount of time invested in pedagogical supervision and the type of supervision to set in place:

[Individual] supervision requires an enormous amount of time. But when you ... have teams who are more self-sufficient, well, then there is less investment required because we are part of the team as opposed to someone there to balance out everything. Their sense of collective know-how will make a world of difference on what we will set in terms of objectives. (DP9)

Under other conditions, some of the principals participating in our study also sensed that they did not possess all of the available professional competencies to ensure the proper pedagogical supervision of a school: “I’ve been out of the classroom for 12 years; even if I consider myself to be a pedagogical leader, I’m not the one who knows the most in this area” (DPI1). Furthermore, the lack of recognition of the principals’ abilities to conduct supervision appeared to undermine the latter’s sense of efficacy: “I realize that the teachers fail to recognize the expertise of principals to conduct this type of supervision. They rely a lot on their colleagues for guidance, discussions with and supervision by their peers” (DP8). This limited sense of efficacy may therefore motivate these school leaders to use peer supervision, which in fact would be productive.

Emerging Theme: Unethical Behaviours to Reach Goals at Any Cost

The school principal is responsible for ensuring supervision that is applied with rigour, trans-

parency, impartiality, and accountability. Their behaviour must respect the strictest of moral standards when setting and evaluating goals. That said, no principles pertaining to ethics are evidenced in the models of Locke and Latham (1990; 2002; 2006).

Certain ethically-based practices were nevertheless observed in the principals' responses. First, possible discrepancies with regard to RBM policies were mentioned by the supervisors, notably the focus by the teachers on certain sanctioned subjects: "As a supervisor, I am supposed to see to the quality of the education services in my school, for all of the subjects: arts, phys ed, social studies... and not only in math, French, and science" (DS1). However, because teacher supervision is "an area where [principals] get involved only when there is time left to do so" (DP3), some principals may, in their supervisory duties, neglect certain subjects that are not among those supported by the government. Principals must also ensure that their teachers cover all of the curricular programs, in addition to non-essential learning activities.

Further to this, some principals stated that goals may engender unethical and competitive behaviours to reach goals at any cost: "We've heard it before, teachers who have been under pressure to lower their requirements to dissimulate inferior results" (DS5). In this case, the principals reiterated the importance of reminding their teachers to "develop or adopt common evaluation processes" (DP1), "in accordance with the essential learning activities laid out in the Training program" (DS2) and to ensure continuity.

In essence, these few performance issues reported by the principals are evidence of the inevitable stress between the importance of results and the respect of ethical guidelines in pedagogical supervision. This emerging theme intertwines with the five main principles of the theory. Table 2 presents a summary of the influence of pedagogical supervisors' practices and perceptions on the application of RBM.

Table 2

*Influence of Pedagogical Supervisors' Practices and Perceptions on the Application of RBM**(Summary)*

| | Positive influence | Negative influence |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ambitious goals | <i>Practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adjustments when the goal is not met <input type="checkbox"/> Patience when the results are not immediate | <i>Perceptions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Determinism, indifference, rejection or resignation when the targeted goals are not achieved |
| Specific goals | <i>Practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making based on evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Referring to past outcomes and to students' results to set clear goals <input type="checkbox"/> Review of the goals | <i>Practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Non-respect of fundamental values (justice, equality, fairness, consistency, thoroughness, and transparency) <input type="checkbox"/> Impossibility to set specific goals (e.g., early-career teacher) <i>Perceptions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excessiveness and lack of accessibility to the provisions of the RBM approach under which the goals were set <input type="checkbox"/> Risk of demobilization when the results are negative |
| Feedback | <i>Practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establishing pedagogical connections with the teachers <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement to push forward <input type="checkbox"/> Identification of eventual challenges to overcome | <i>Practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Public display of feedback that is not a part of the culture <input type="checkbox"/> Risk of the external comparisons <i>Perceptions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Risk of demobilization when the results are negative <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling of being personally targeted |
| Commitment | <i>Practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Specific attention to the vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Staff involvement early on <input type="checkbox"/> Participative leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Transparency <input type="checkbox"/> Consideration of the teachers' needs | <i>Practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Strict RBM criteria (limit creativity and exploration) <input type="checkbox"/> RBM as a complex and demanding process that requires the full participation of all levels |
| Sense of efficacy | <i>Practices/perceptions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Positive feedback that enhances the sense of efficacy <input type="checkbox"/> Influence of maturity level on the type of supervision and the time invested in supervision <input type="checkbox"/> Limited sense of efficacy of the principal: shared leadership. | <i>Perceptions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Limited sense of efficacy of the principal to ensure the pedagogical supervision <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of recognition of the principals' abilities to conduct supervision |

Discussion

Although viewed by some to be an arduous and sometimes additional administrative task, the accountability factor remained a focal point of discussion among the participating principals. Indeed, RBM and its instrumentation appeared to support the pedagogical perspective of these supervisors and rallied the school-team to adopt the proposed objectives and values.

Our findings concur with those of Prud'Homme & Leclerc (2014) and Striggins (2002) in the sense that many of our respondents were wary of setting goals with statistical indicators and therefore often used qualitative measures. As a result, strategic planning (the means) was prioritised over contractualization processes (identifying the desired outcomes and evaluating how they can be attained). This observation led us to question the reason why so few principals quantify their objectives and develop measurable indicators.

We thus hypothesize that both the principals and their supervised teachers are aware of the potential challenges of setting quantified and ambitious goals, establishing achievement indicators, and implementing ways to evaluate success. In this perspective, we feel it important to nuance the hypothesis put forth by IsaBelle et al. (2008) regarding the lack of training of principals in gathering, using, and interpreting quantitative data. We suggest rather that the hesitance of principals to set measurable goals may be explained by their clear and informed understanding of the limits involved in quantifying objectives.

Based on the principals' responses and perceptions, we noted a palpable resistance to the setting of measurable goals by their teachers, who are often on the defensive and uncomfortable with the idea of being compared and "singled out". As a result, school leaders hesitate to intervene in the setting of objectives, as this type of action directly affects the teachers' sphere of professional autonomy (Lapointe et al., 2011). School leaders must therefore clearly identify the boundaries of their rights and responsibilities.

Thus, the principals mentioned a heightened interest in the students' outcomes since RBM was introduced and acknowledged that RBM did indeed provide information on the students' progress. Now that the principals have these results and the teachers have received periodic feedback, does the school-team know which actions should come next to improve student achievement? The answer appears to be yes, as the respondents identified several of these actions during their interviews. For example, different principals stated having set up PLC as a means of group supervision. Indeed, the data discussed and analyzed within the PLC provide necessary insight on the strengths and weaknesses of the school, which equip them to make more informed decisions targeting greater student achievement (Prud'Homme & Leclerc, 2014). In this perspective, the PLC follows the RBM policy system. It is thus logical that the principal serve as pedagogical supervisor for their school-teams to help them gain autonomy in managing student-learning data and relevant, probing results on how to improve student outcomes (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Furthermore, according to the respondents, the notion of accountability (Maroy, 2013) is, in many cases, highly participative; while it is the principal's responsibility to exercise pedagogical supervision, they favour such ideological values as autonomy and collaboration. Our findings thus concur with those of Leithwood et al. (2008) who found that the principal's leadership in mobilizing their school-teams has a greater influence on student achievement when this leadership is shared. We did find, however, that the goals of one member may not converge with those of the organization, that the setting of goals may hamper achievement if the members minimize the means, and that the setting of goals may limit exploration and engender unethical and competitive behaviours. In contrast, pedagogical supervision by the principal, particularly within a collective approach, such as a PLC, aspires to develop shared visions and values, which encourages collaboration over competition (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). In this regard, the collaborative supervision models proposed by the principals make it possible for the school team to develop new objectives by themselves which are adapted to the needs of their school which they support

(Glatthorn, 1987; Glickman, 1985).

The principals also questioned their professional identity when asked to reflect on their sense of professional efficacy. Here, we noted two distinct declarations, as some respondents appeared to have a limited sense of efficacy with regard to their pedagogical expertise (which is in agreement with the findings of DuFour & Eaker (1998) and IsaBelle et al. (2008)), while others hoped that the teachers to be supervised would recognize this expertise. To support a limited sense of efficacy, the participating principals eventually welcomed local initiatives and viewed their supervised teachers as the pedagogical experts. We may thus associate these practices by the principal to acknowledge their teachers' expertise and bring them to welcome the role of experts within the school community through a sharing of leadership (Leithwood et al., 2008). Such practices ultimately transform the lack of acknowledgment of the principal's competency in pedagogical supervision into something positive by improving both the personal and collective sense of efficacy of the members of the school-team.

In this perspective, contrary to what is proposed in the theory of setting goals, a limited sense of efficacy may bring a principal to delegate, to share their leadership, which would predispose to a superior performance. All things considered, this interpretation of the final premise of the theory of setting goals definitely warrants further study. In the same manner, it appears that the goals of one member may not be the same as those of the organization and may even be conflictual. In this case, the achievement level could suffer. Parallel to this, when performing complex tasks, the setting of goals could also hamper achievement if the members fixate solely on the end result and minimize the means to get there. In this sense, by focusing only on the objective, the setting of goals may limit exploration.

Finally, the dilemma between the focus on performance outcomes and the respect for ethical principles in pedagogical supervision remains an emerging theme, albeit slightly less evidenced in the principals' responses. We hypothesise that certain answers may have been tainted by social desirability, particularly in the presence of immediate superiors during the group interviews. One thing remains clear, which is that very few studies have examined the difficulty principals have in condemning, intervening, or controlling non-ethical behaviours during the supervision process, and particularly during the underlying process of setting and evaluating goals. However, this highlighted theme does partially correlate with elements emanating from the limited research on the various roles of principals in professional learning communities (communicator, coach and collaboration facilitator, conflict mediator, agent for change, and supporter of innovation), as the latter are brought to exercise strong ethical leadership in their duties as pedagogical supervisor (Bouchamma & Brie, 2014).

Conclusion

During this collaborative study, through discussions with 21 school leaders in the context of learning and research communities, we sought to explore their perceptions and practices in terms of the positive or negative impact of RBM on their pedagogical supervision. In this regard, the theoretical framework of this study allowed for the use of moderating factors of RBM to identify the pros and cons of this model as used in supervisory practices. Results show that the implementation of the RBM approach is smoother when it is accompanied by the necessary resources to assist the education system and when the strategic planning and contractualization tools create opportunities for discussion and team mobilization in a perspective of collective commitment. In contrast, the application of RBM is negatively affected when (a) the production/implementation of strategic planning and contractualization structures are hierarchical, exhaustive, and directive; and (b) the inherent managerial aspects come to hinder, slow, or complicate the introduction of pedagogical practices focused solely on measurable results; this is ultimately detrimental to mobilization.

Regarding accountability, our participants pointed out potential ethical risks, such as supervision focusing exclusively on basic knowledge and government-sanctioned core subjects. For pedagogical supervision to meet ethical standards, certain conditions must be met: (a) that the work follow an established plan and timeline; (b) that the teachers being supervised use the same evaluation methods; and (c) that the principal's supervisory responsibilities (and associated accountability) be shared with other levels, such as school district heads, the school-team, the Ministry of Education, and universities in the area of initial training and continued professional development. These ethical considerations will enable stakeholders to view pedagogical supervision in a new light, with greater transparency and diligence. Indeed, theoretically speaking, the cross-curricular competency of ethics may also be beneficially applied to the model of Locke and Latham (1990; 2002; 2006) as well as to other teacher supervision methodologies (Bouchamma et al., 2017; Bouchamma & Brie 2014), particularly involving duties related to the setting and assessment of performance objectives.

It must be mentioned that the younger principals in this study had not experienced the pre-reform system. Indeed, of the 21 participants, 19 became principal or vice-principal after 2000, while 12 assumed office following the adoption of the management and educational success agreement model in 2008. It appears however that the principals who possessed the most experience in school management were the most apt to consider the pros and cons of RBM with regard to their practices by maintaining a critical eye and by referring to their professional experience and the external issues and policies they have seen evolve over the years. And while these experienced principals were a great source of inspiration for their teachers, we cannot help but wonder to what extent these seasoned leaders inhibited the early-career teachers. Moreover, the principal's initial training, accumulated experience, and institutional constraints influenced the professional practices they shared.

The research sample consisted of volunteers who showed an interest in the issues related to pedagogical supervision. Whether the practices and perceptions of non-volunteering principals would be any different is food for thought.

Finally, considering the mandatory participation of the entire school-team in the various RBM processes raises other concerns, such as what the principals must do to get their teachers to work together, to cooperate, and to be accountable for the achievement of their students. That said, other questions remain: What are the teachers' practices and perceptions in relation to the supervision they receive in a RBM context? How can principals respect government objectives while addressing the various local concerns of their school-team? How can they negotiate the fine line between autonomy, professionalism, and control? And ultimately, how can they find a balance between the importance of results, associated with RBM, and the respect of ethical guidelines in pedagogical supervision?

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