



The Significance of Professional Communication Skills for Future Tunisian Physical Education Teachers

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study consists of a secondary analysis of the qualitative data of interviews carried out with mentoring teachers (MT) in order to present their conceptions on the quality of appropriation of the professional competence of communication. In particular on the components of the communication competence of students interns during the preparation course for professional life at the end of the initial training.

To carry out this study, we developed a specific interview for this study. The content of the interview guide was the six components of communication skills drawn from the professional skills reference guide for teachers in Quebec.

Interview data was collected based on audio recordings provided using a Dictaphone. The content of each interview has been completely rewritten as verbatim. Interview processing consists first of transcribing the verbatim interviews and then analyzing them using the general inductive analysis procedure.

The data collected from the interview intended for mentoring teachers (MT) revealed that they have the same vision with regard to the importance of the professional communication skills of future physical education teachers and emphasize their weakness during educational interventions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Really, a lot is expected of the teacher ... For some, this mission may seem heavy and hogging. It is possible that these teachers feel more stress, that they encounter more difficulties in the performance of their duties and that they experience less job satisfaction [1].

In addition, a multitude of studies indicate that the majority of young teachers but also candidates for teaching feel ineffective when it comes to carrying out their teaching task when entering a career or starting their internship preparation for professional life [2]. Among the difficulties presented to the trainee or the beginning teacher, that of communication. This is affirmed by several studies which present "communication is one of the most important skills an educator must possess [3].

These observations corroborate with the work of "Provencher G." who affirms that "the teacher of the future will be the one who will know how to master the mechanisms of communication between teacher and pupils and who will accept to get really involved in the educational relationship that real communication requires" [4].

Hence the interest of studying the effect of the initial training of future teachers of physical education on the quality of the appropriation of professional communication skills during the training course for professional life.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This is a descriptive study whose objective consists of a secondary analysis of the qualitative data of interviews carried out with mentoring teachers (MT). Which aims to present their views on the quality of ownership of

professional communication skills especially on the components of professional communication skills of student interns in preparation for working life at the end of initial training.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

This study targets the population of mentor teachers (MT). This population is made up of 5 mentoring teachers (3 men and 2 women) with experience varying between 5 and 20 years as a mentoring teacher.

In fact, the participants in the interviews carried out showed a fairly high level of knowledge of the two training programs (old regime (bac + 4) and new L.M.D diet (bac + 3)) which are the subject of this study. The above-mentioned sample is made up of 5 MT (3 men and 2 women) with experience varying between 5 and 20 years as a mentoring teacher. The average age of the participants is 42 ± 3 years (table 1). The choice of participants was made mainly based on the recommendations of the "Higher Institute of Sport and Physical Education of Tunis" management on the one hand and on the opinion of certain trainers who confirm, moreover, their skills and their dedication to the finalization of the tasks that were allocated to them.

In addition to volunteering, they could opt out at any time. Our participants knew that the data would be kept strictly confidential. Interviews to collect their perceptions on the training of future PSE pedagogical managers were carried out with each of the supervisors individually. The objective was to discover the impact of these perceptions on the quality of the appropriation of communication skills on the part of the trainees during the preparation for professional life internship.

Table 1. Profiles of mentoring teachers (MT)

N°	Names	Gender	Number of years of experience
1	Karima	Female	10 - 15 years
2	Maher	Male	15 - 20 years
3	Marwa	Female	10 - 15 years
4	Sami	Male	5- 10 years
5	Pseudonym	Male	15- 20 years

3.2 The Data Collection Process

Interview data was collected by audio recording using a dictaphone. The content of each interview was completely rewritten by the researchers in verbatim form. Then, after many readings, we coded the texts in meaningful units. According to "Baribeau, C." [5], "coding is a heuristic approach where data is linked to ideas about the data in order to reorganize all the passages under the same heading (p.140)". Data analysis was performed by the content analysis method. An analysis grid was designed based on categories predetermined in the interview guide and on the other hand by the emerging discourse categories of the participants. Once the content of the interview is recorded, it is then subjected to a qualitative analysis inspired by the semantic relation technique of "Spradley, J." [6].

4. RESULTS

We begin this section by describing the components of the communication skills of teachers (Quebec Ministry of Education: Teacher training: Orientations, Professional skills; 2001) [7]. Then, we present the conceptions of the people questioned on the components of this competency during the training of student interns.

4.1 The Components of the Professional Communication Competence of the Teaching Profession

The professional skills framework of the Quebec Ministry of Education (2001) [7] highlights 12 professional skills related to the teaching profession. This reference system includes, for each of the skills, the following elements: a statement of the skill, the meaning of the skill, the components of the skill as well as the level of mastery at the end of the initial training. Among these skills is communication.

The components (Cs) of this competence are:

- C₁:** "Use a variety of appropriate oral language in interventions with students, parents and peers".
- C₂:** "Respect the rules of the written language in productions intended for students, parents and peers".
- C₃:** "To be able to take a stand, support your ideas and argue about them in a

coherent, effective, constructive and respectful manner during discussions".

- C₄:** "Communicate your ideas in a rigorous way using precise vocabulary and correct syntax. Constantly seek to improve your oral and written expression".
- C₅:** "Correct mistakes made by students in their oral and written communications".
- C₆:** "Constantly seek to improve your oral and written expression".

C₁: "Use a variety of appropriate oral language in interventions with students, parents and peers"

The five participants describe the inability of student interns to present appropriate oral language during their interventions in class. However, it should be noted that even the use of technical words related to a well-determined discipline is deviated among the majority of student interns.

".. Taking my own experience as a reference, I would advise my trainees to use an appropriate language (French, dialect ...), simple and easy to understand by his students. But I feel that our interns still have communication difficulties with the students..." (Maher, line 5 - 8: Annex 9)

All participants, without exception, confirm that the student intern does not communicate with the parents of the students since he has no relationship with them during the preparation for professional life.

"...Our student interns are knowledgeable in building relationships only with their students. So they have no relationship with the administration or the parents of the students during the preparation for professional life."
(Karima, line 5 - 7: Annex 12)

Likewise, they consider that all suggestions and instructions aimed at improving the teaching and learning process should absolutely flow from the use of varied language with the pupils.

"...A good knowledge of physical activities and teaching methods is necessary but not sufficient for student trainees to be able to transfer information to the student in a hectic environment such as EPS ... D 'where they must in particular derive from the natural use of the language and the ability to adjust linguistically and physically to various communication situations ..."
(Pseudonym, lines 7 - 11: Annex 11)

C2: "Respect the rules of the written language in productions intended for students, parents and peers"

According to participants, the role of student interns does not require being a language expert. This belief stems from the fact that an EPS teacher does not produce a written publication aimed at students during the EPS sessions, but much of it needs gestural communication.

[...] personally I find that the task of the PE teacher does not require him to speak a literary language just like the general education teacher...

(Sami, lines 15 - 16: Annex 10)

In addition, all our participants affirm that the purely literary language is not the language used by the EPS teacher. Indeed the EPS teacher uses a variety of languages during exercise (French, Arabic, dialect).

".. during the EPS sessions. The EPS teacher uses a variety of languages during their intervention ... and the dialect constitutes the major part of the language used by them ..."

(Marwa, lines 14 - 16: Annex 13)

C3: "To be able to take a stand, support your ideas and argue about them in a coherent, effective, constructive and respectful manner during discussions"

According to Marwa and Sami, the student interns at the "Higher Institute of Sport and Physical Education. Tunis" (ISSEP) always think about improving the motor aspect as well as the cognitive and socio-emotional skills during their programming of the sessions. Indeed, these pedagogical frameworks avoid the construction of discussion with the pupils and think of devoting the maximum time for the part relating to the motor development.

"... the major concern of the student interns during the internship of preparation for professional life is to achieve a time of significant motor engagement in each session and also neglects the relational aspect with their students ... hence the difficulties of our interns in ensuring fruitful discussions with the students..."

(Sami, lines 24 - 27: Annex 10)

While Maher and Pseudonym 'claim that the practices of student interns are influenced by the

evaluation of mentor teachers (EEs) during the career preparation internship.

" The evaluation of student interns during the preparation for professional life internship differs from one mentor to another. Therefore, the practices of student interns are influenced by the form of assessment of the work placement ..."

(Pseudonym, lines 26 - 29: Annex 11)

On the other hand, the characteristics of ST reflect the skills acquired by student interns at the end of the practical pedagogy internship.

"..several factors linked to the mentoring teachers (MT) such as: experience, academic knowledge, absence of continuing training ... are at the origin of the level of professional skills acquired by our trainees at the end of the internship ..."

(Maher, lines 25-28: Annex 9)

C4: "Communicate your ideas in a rigorous way using precise vocabulary and correct syntax Constantly seek to improve your oral and written expression"

Maher relies entirely on the initial level of ISSEP students. Indeed, the latter are referred to by the Minister of Higher Education (MES) on the basis of a number of criteria. One of them is the general average obtained on the baccalaureate exam. This does not exclude any consideration of the specificity of PE teaching by this guidance system.

"As of 2006, access to ISSEP is not based on an entry competition made up of a battery of tests specific to the evaluation of physical skills and followed by an oral interview. This selection test guarantees better conditions for the choice of suitable profiles for the training of future PE teachers."

(Maher, lines 34 - 37: Annex 9)

Karima and Marwa affirm that during this internship, the student interns have difficulties during specific interventions to control the deviant behavior of the students, such linguistic disturbance results in awkwardness towards the students.

".. faced with disruptive student behavior, I feel that student interns are clumsy and do not have communicational tools relating to these problems ... Personally, I invite my interns to find solutions

to all unexpected behaviors or unpredictable students ...”

(Karima, lines 31 - 34: Annex 12)

Sami reveals to us that the volume of hours intended for language subjects during initial training is insufficient to improve the communication skills of our intern students. Moreover, continuing training is inevitable to improve this aspect of communication.

“... The number of hours for language subjects is very insufficient in terms of initial training within ISSEP ..”.

(Sami, lines 34 - 35: Annex 10)

“... 112 hours intended for the training course for professional life is insufficient to acquire the professional skills necessary for teaching PE ... Indeed, our trainees need a specific training module for class management, communication... professional practice.”

(Sami, lines 36 - 39: Annex 10)

The participant "Pseudonym" considers that the initial training of Tunisian PSE teachers is not geared towards acquiring professional skills relating to the teaching profession.

“...The training of the ISSEP is not sufficiently professionalizing since one does not have a repository of competence of the teachers of EPS sufficiently explicit until our days...” (Pseudonym, lines 35 - 37: Annex 11)

In addition, "Maher" says that obtaining a diploma for vocational education must necessarily go through specific training in communication.

“... On the other hand, to our knowledge, at the level of initial training, there are no courses specially designed by teacher trainers for the development of communication. However, we believe that such a course should be designed and must be part of the docimological obligations that lead to obtaining the certificate in vocational education ...”

(Maher, lines 37- 42: Annex 9)

C5: "Correct mistakes made by students in their oral and written communications"

According to participants, this component of the teacher's professional communication skills [7] is almost absent in the practices of our trainees during PSE sessions.

[laughs ...] “personally, I have ten years of experience in supervising interns and I have never met a student intern who develops this kind of correction of linguistic errors made by students during training sessions to prepare for professional life.” (Pseudonym, lines 44 - 47: Annex 11)

C6: "Constantly seek to improve your oral and written expression"

The five participants consider that all the suggestions and instructions offered to student interns to improve their oral and written expressions during the preparation for working life course are far from being taken into account. This is due to the convictions of our trainees and to the evaluation within ISSEP.

“... Indeed, I do not think that the student intern at ISSEP thinks of improving the level of his oral and written expression ... since the profile of the physical education teacher desired among our students interns is far from professional in communication ...”

(Marwa, lines 47 - 50: Annex 13)

The evaluation of student interns during initial training does not focus on these language skills ... and even the coefficients of language-specific subjects are very low ... (Karima, lines 48-50: Annex 12)

5. DISCUSSION

The observation presented by the interviewees on the importance of the appropriation of professional communication skills during initial training. The latter emphasized the importance of the role of communication in the “teaching-learning” process and the importance of the appropriation of this communication skill during initial training given the role of this skill which conditions the effectiveness of exchanges in the phases of educational and didactic interventions. In addition, from the first stages of initial training, it is recommended to support the development of this competence which conditions the success of exchanges in the intervention phases [8].

However, our participants affirmed that trainees experience difficulties with this crucial communication skill in the success of the “teaching-learning” process with students. This is why student interns and novice pedagogical managers have difficulty finding ways to achieve their educational goals [9]. These difficulties in transmitting verbal information linked to

declarative or procedural knowledge are further accentuated and reach a level of "misdirection" in the face of deviant behavior by students. Indeed, the trainee student is not provided with educational or didactic baggage allowing him to react effectively to the various problems related to the field. These findings are consistent with the work of "DuFour, R." [10], who showed that the lack of skills necessary to solve communication problems in the classroom results in inadequate teacher interventions.

Likewise, the aforementioned mentor teachers (MT) underline that student interns have difficulty supporting their ideas and arguing to their students in a coherent, effective, constructive and respectful manner during discussions, and that they generally choose to repeat several times the explanation. Moreover, these results find their support in the work of "PIERON, M. & CLOES, M." [11] who assert that the lack of experience of beginners perhaps allows them not to be able to adapt quickly to situations. They would prefer to adhere to their program and therefore insist on explanations.

By using the results of the interview, the majority of the teachers questioned prove that the initial training within the ISSEP is not explicitly oriented towards the acquisition of a repository of professional skills relating to intervention in the field of PE education. Indeed, the program describing the university training course of the Basic License of Physical Education (LFEP) is characterized by the reduction in the number of hours of the various modules to be taught during the initial training. One of the teaching elements in this course of the preparation for professional life *"[...] 112 hours intended for the preparation for professional life is insufficient to acquire the professional skills of teachers of 'EPS' (Sami, lines 35 - 37: Annex 10)*. However, the importance given to this internship in duration and form is crucial for trainees to learn how to teach in the classroom, and this is the moment, according to "Ria, L." [12], that the process of transforming basic knowledge into knowledge. - to do educational and didactic will be strongly initiated. These findings seem to go in the same direction as those reported by "Desbiens, J.F." [13] who suggest that the the course of the preparation for professional life constitutes the first opportunity to confront real problems and constraints in the learning and teaching process. Indeed, the construction of professional skills is reflected in the duplication of theoretical and

practical knowledge during the course of the preparation for professional life [14].

In addition, our participants affirm that, the absence of a specific module which affects the professional communication skills of the PSE trainee student during initial training, constitutes an obstacle for its acquisition. This fits perfectly with what has been put forward by "Provencher G.": *"[...] There are no communication courses specially designed for vocational teachers. However, we believe that such a course should be established and be part of those which lead to obtaining the certificate in vocational education..."* [4].

On the other hand, the mentoring teachers (MT), criticize the methods of evaluation of the students in the training regime of the ISSEP, which by its current form in the majority of the taught modules seeks to restore a nature of declarative knowledge, which leads to the desired orientation to train a future reflective teacher with a fairly effective power of adaptability [15]. Moreover, vocational training is training defined by "Altet M." [16] as a process that includes a practical purpose (professional skills) useful for teaching practice. By way of example, one of our participants (Pseudonym, lines 26 - 29: Annex 11) states that *"[...] The evaluation of student interns during the work placement is different from one tutor to another. Therefore, the practices of student interns are influenced by the form of evaluation of the work placement ... "*. This is contradictory with "Perrenoud, P." who affirms that *"... The process of professionalization of trades entails a need for legitimation, which results in the establishment of a " specialized and validated " evaluation and which promotes active participation of trainees "* [17].

In the same vein, our interviewees also affirm that there is a strong correlation between the initial profile of students and the level of acquisition of professional skills at the end of the university course, specifically at the level of communication skills. This opinion is based on the abolition of the entry selection test at ISSEP since 2006.

Moreover, we note that the absence of a base of professional skills in PSE teaching as an orientation reference determining the content of training or supervision courses, reflects this localized disorientation in the instructions and the guidelines for the unification of the trainee

supervision operation. This idea orientation coincides with the work of "Maher Mrayah" [18] which stipulates that the training programs within ISSEPs do not explicitly describe the repository of professional skills for pedagogical and didactic intervention in PSE, which leaves the free field for trainers to develop.

In terms of finalization, the repercussions of the initial training on the communication skills of the trainees are reduced. This finding is reflected in obstacles generally linked to the nature of ISSEP's academic training programs, to the initial level of students oriented to ISSEP, to the methods of evaluating students in the current training regime, to the absence of a specific module that affects professional skills linked to the teaching profession and the form and duration granted to the course of the preparation for professional life.

6. CONCLUSION

The data collected from the interview intended for the mentoring teachers (*MT*) showed that they have the same vision with regard to the importance of the professional communication skills of future PE teachers and emphasize the weakness student interns in communication during educational interventions. Indeed, the views of the participants interviewed revolve around the following points:

- a. The reduction in the time devoted to certain training modules such as the preparation for professional life course, following the integration of the LMD system in the field of training future pedagogical managers in STAPS.
- b. The quality of the initial profile of the students oriented to the ISSEP, which increasingly impoverishes the skill of polyvalence.
- c. The methods of evaluating students, in the current training regime.
- d. The skills and expertise of mentor teachers (ES).
- e. The lack of an explicit professional competence benchmark for Tunisian teachers in terms of the programs designed.
- f. The lack of specific training modules geared towards the development of professional skills related to the teaching profession.

All these statements allowed us to deduce that the current training within ISSEP does not allow

the finalized appropriation of professional skills such as "professional communication skills". Such skill seems necessary to establish and maintain an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standard or university standard guideline participant consent and ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the authors. Before data collection, ethical precautions were taken. All participants signed a consent form.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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