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Academic and vocational guidance within school boards:

State of affairs and union activity

In the fall of 2015, the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation (FPPE) undertook an initiative to take stock of the situation of academic and vocational guidance within the school boards. We were increasingly hearing from our members about issues experienced in several areas: lack of recognition, lack of interest in guidance, shortage of resources, erosion of the job, etc. Thus, a broader reflection on the place of academic and vocational guidance within the public school system became necessary.

This initiative is undertaken in a context in which the practice of academic and vocational guidance is changing. In 2014, the Ministère de l'Éducation set up a committee to implement a continuum of mandatory guidance content to be offered to all students, starting in elementary cycle 3. The FPPE participates in this committee and deplors the fact that professional staff does not play a central role in it.

The aim of the FPPE for this professional action initiative is to shine a spotlight on the work of academic and vocational guidance professionals in the school system. How do these individuals work to meet the needs of students? What are the challenges and obstacles faced in their work? And above all, how can collective union action improve the situation?

To better grasp the true nature of the job, the FPPE conducted a survey in the fall of 2015 of its members working in guidance: guidance counsellors (CO for the acronym in French) who make up the majority, but also counsellors in academic training (CFS) and academic and vocational information counsellors (CISEP). In light of the results of this survey and from various bodies of research, including that of Simon Viviers (2014), the

FPPE produced a report, and the unions gathered at the Federal Council adopted an action plan that will be rolled out in several forms. First, from an overall, national perspective, we must obtain recognition for the needs of students, youths and adults in terms of academic and vocational guidance, and showcase the value of this field of practice in the public system, in particular to the Ministère, the FCSQ and the CSQ. In parallel, we propose that actions be taken at a local level, according to the various situations, in order to revive work groups and improve organization of the work.

When we talk of recognition, salary remains the critical issue. In addition, the settlement of grievances filed under the 2010 pay equity maintenance, and acceptance by the employer side of changes in the classification plan are also a priority for the FPPE.

¹Simon Viviers, Assistant Professor, Laval University, Faculty of Science and Education

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