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7 collective competencies out of the 13 professional competencies in the reference document for teaching and education careers in France (2013):

- Shared values
- Fundamental principles
- Team cooperation
- Cooperation with parents
- Cooperation with partners
- Contributing to the education community
- Involvement in individual and group professional development

### EXAMPLES OF MOBILISED COLLECTIVES



trade unions

community education organisations

education associations

subject-based teachers' associations

online communities

education platforms

subject-based working groups  
in educational districtsinterdisciplinary working groups  
in educational districtsresearch projects across  
educational districts

# Édu**brief**

Essential information for understanding current education issues

## WORKING TOGETHER TO TEACH BETTER

**C**ollaborative work is regarded as a solution for fostering the professional development of teachers, thereby contributing to students' success. Drawing on several decades of research, international bodies such as the European Commission, the OECD and UNESCO are encouraging this approach as the teaching profession becomes more complex. What is the situation in France? What are the forms, frameworks and developments of collaborative work? More precisely, to what extent does involvement in a group enable teacher-training in the workplace?

### A PROFESSION THAT SEES ITSELF INDIVIDUALLY?

Teaching in France has traditionally been associated with pedagogical freedom, asserted as a guarantee of the profession's intellectual and societal authority. Studies on expectations in the workplace have shown that teachers' priorities are, in descending order, autonomy, usefulness, recognition and earnings. Yet, for many teachers, daily collaborative work does not meet these criteria: it constitutes a constraint, or even a threat, rather than a resource. Even frequent conversations with colleagues can generate a collective standard sometimes perceived as being an infringement on teachers' autonomy, constitutive of the profession. Yet this "individualistic" model is today reaching its limits, faced with the increased difficulty of teaching and envisaging the profession in a context in which knowledge and standards are being relativized. Collaborative work can therefore represent a solution: once it becomes public, a particular subjective problem becomes a collective challenge. Such sharing of responsibility protects people in their work situations.

### DO SPONTANEOUS COLLECTIVES CONTRIBUTE TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Some teachers spontaneously take part in professional collectives. They exchange teaching resources, share practices and develop new tools together. Such collaborative practices, however, meet immediate expectations but do not suffice for bringing about professional development. Generally speaking, low-intensity collaboration (e.g. content, progress, curriculum, evaluation) is more frequent than high-intensity collaboration (e.g. discussions about methods of instruction, mutual observations, examination of ways of working, critical analyses). For example, support provided in the teachers' staffroom is mutual assistance that rarely leads to in-depth analysis of the impact of teaching practices on student learning. On the other hand, comparing and contrasting experiences in a space for career-related debate is what really enables teachers to question their work in order to improve it. Such spaces for collective debate cannot be improvised: they require organisation and leadership.

## Training in a work situation, drawing on research:

### 1 Examples of methods for analysing teachers' work in dialogic spaces:

Analyses of professionals' discourse, using interviews

- elicitation interviews, P. Vermersch
- instruction using a stand-in, Y. Clot
- groups to analyse teaching practices

Analyses of professionals' activities, using records (photos, videos, transcripts, etc.) and debriefing

- individual and mutual "self-confrontation", Y. Clot, J. Theureau
- "allo-confrontation", L. Ria, S. Leblanc.

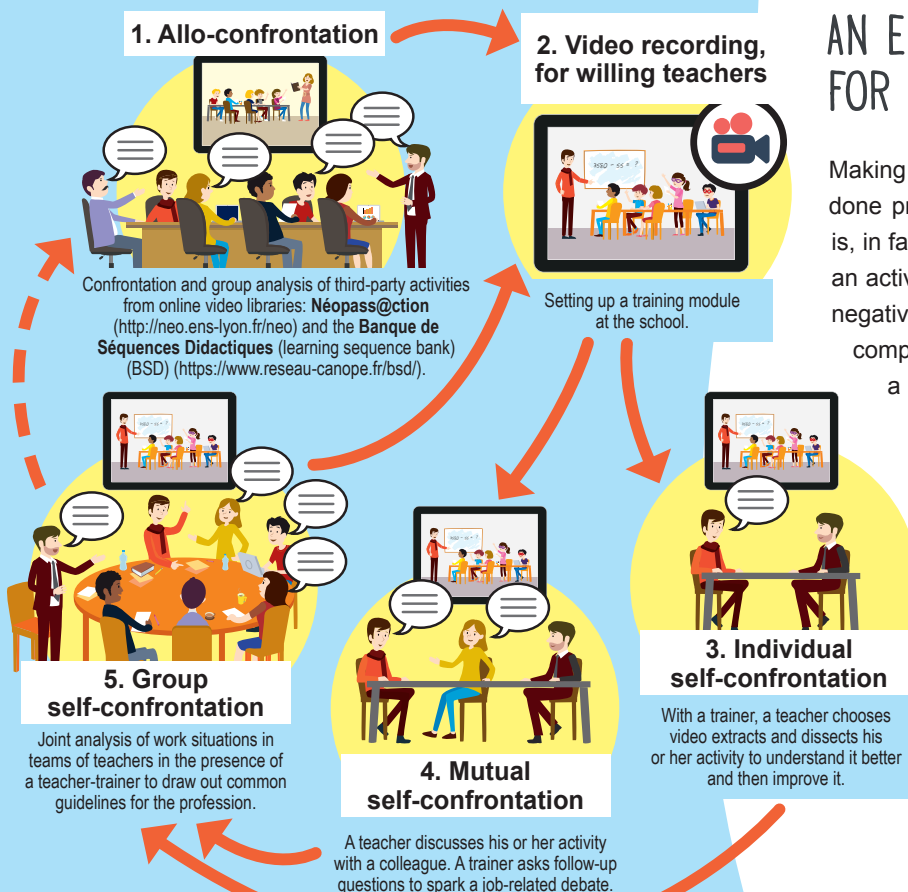
### 2 Examples of models for analysing teachers' work:

- the "multi-agenda" model of professional actions, D. Bucheton
- the five focal points for analysing teaching practices, R. Goigoux
- the double simplex of teaching-learning, L. Ria

### 3 Examples of research on collaborative work organisers and approaches:

- the twelve principles of collective functioning, Y. Reuter
- collaborative enquiry V. Lussi Borer, A. Muller.

## Example of a training course, using video clips and analysis of the activity (Lussi Borer & Ria, 2016).



## THE ORGANISATION OF COLLABORATIVE WORK, ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL TEXTS

Education place great emphasis on collaborative work. Indeed, teaching is to be extended beyond the classroom, through expanded multi-professional educational teams, for new missions and initiatives requiring cooperation (personalised help, the "More teachers than classes" scheme, interdisciplinary projects [EPI], inclusive education, etc.). The objectives related to collaborative work are detailed (planning, researching, helping, evaluating and teamwork), but there is no specifically allocated time for such activities, unlike classroom teaching in front of students. Formal schooling is still characterised by a conception of teaching as a solitary practice, in accordance with a so-called "cellular" rationale (one classroom, one group of students, one hour, one subject area), which makes teachers' individual work in their classrooms invisible to their peers.

Turning collaborative work into a real opportunity for professional development requires making ordinary work more visible, achieved through greater flexibility in scheduling, the possibility of leading co-observation or co-teaching sessions, places and time for studying problematic practices and situations, the use of records from past activities (photos, videos, students' work), and peer-tutoring. These myriad, collective methods of analysis are increasingly being used in the context of research initiatives and teacher-training courses.

## AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRAINING TOGETHER

Making teaching practices less individualistic should be done prudently, however. Watching another teacher work is, in fact, spontaneously evaluative: the person observing an activity judges it more or less consciously, positively or negatively, which hinders a close analysis of the various components of the activity. Yet the different aspects of a teacher's work (relationships with students, pedagogical approaches, etc.) stem as much from historically constructed rules of teaching and professional style as from a teacher's personal manner. The ability to perceive teaching in a distanced, analytical way can be developed to formalise general problems and professional dilemmas collectively, thus allowing for a better understanding and transformation of one's teaching. Collectively analysing a work situation therefore requires the adoption of theoretical tools for analysis as well as an ethical and benevolent framework to give the participants a sense of security and to maintain a professional atmosphere.

## HOW DOES COOPERATION IMPROVE SCHOOL?

Collaborative work not only enables participants to improve themselves and continue their professional development; it also gives educators the opportunity to put their experience to work to improve the school, through time for questioning, analysing, and sharing suggestions. Team commitment, by enhancing the teachers' feeling of personal effectiveness, has a strong influence on students' academic performance. The collective competencies of a team of teachers have a greater impact across a whole school than the sum of their individual competencies. They can generate a virtuous circle linking a high-quality working life with enriching activities for students.

“... Individuals' talents, training and qualifications are taken into account through 'human capital', which is regarded as a major factor in determining professional competence. Accumulated experience and the capacity to provide appropriate responses for the context are often described through the concept of 'decision-making capital'. It is less frequent, on the other hand, to factor in collective capacities through the concept of 'social capital', which is the missing link in education reforms. According to Leana (2011), however, the effectiveness of social capital is greater than that of human capital when it comes to improving a school.” (Rey, 2016)

## WHAT ENABLING CONDITIONS ARE NEEDED?

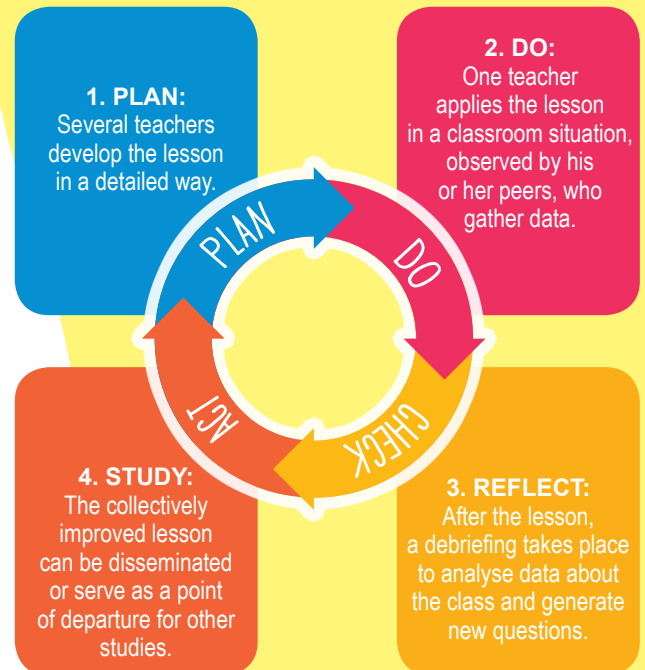
Cooperation cannot be decreed from the top down. Distributed leadership is an essential condition for the smooth functioning of collective work in a school. Dividing up responsibilities among all stakeholders is decisive for establishing the necessary conditions for team commitment to collaborative work and training.

To be conducive to collaborative work and individual and group learning, the working structure should therefore have:

- prominence given to collaborative work
- teacher trainers, administrators and educational advisors who are familiar with current research and able to optimise the learning potential in work and training situations
- excellent interpersonal relationships and attention paid to false consensus and power grabs
- recognition of professionals' ability to organise their actions efficiently; time for dialogue and sufficient latitude to work effectively.

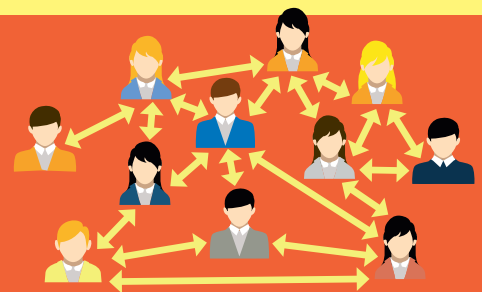
## Lesson studies

In Japan, teaching practices are analysed at a school or a group of schools according to “Plan/ Do/ Check/ Act”, a virtuous circle of improvement:



## Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

PLCs can be found throughout the English-speaking world and Asia. They seek to improve work through collaborative efforts and enquiry.



## Existing collective frameworks:

### Councils and committees in schools:

- In primary schools: teaching staff meetings, school councils
- In secondary schools: teachers' meetings about student progress, curriculum and instruction committees, subject-based committees, school board meetings, disciplinary committees, health and citizenship education committees (comités d'éducation santé citoyenneté – CESC)

### Other frameworks for collaborative work:

- Priority education networks (REP)
- Primary-secondary committees that bring together primary and secondary school staff
- Inclusive education initiatives and multi-professional teams.

# HERE ARE SOME REFERENCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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## INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES:

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- Éduscol, a website for education professionals in France: <https://contrib.eduscol.education.fr>
- "Ensemble pour l'école inclusive", initiative for inclusive education: <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid132935/ensemble-pour-l-ecole-inclusive.html>
- Links between primary and secondary schools: <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid57621/la-liaison-entre-l-ecole-et-le-college.html>
- Priority education networks (REP): <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid187/l-education-prioritaire.html>
- Dialogue structures: <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid225/les-structures-de-concertation.html>
- Interdisciplinary projects (*enseignements pratiques interdisciplinaires*, EPI): <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid100518/les-enseignements-pratiques-interdisciplinaires-epi.html>
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