

# TOWARD SOMATIC COHERENCE: FIVE TEACHERS ENGAGED IN EMBODIED WAYS IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PATH

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**ABSTRACT.** According to Johnson (2007), learning and teaching arise from a human being's bodily experience in relationship with others and the environment (embodiment). Many teachers perceive and mobilize their bodies in rather unconscious ways. Becoming conscious of their perceptions can help them teach. It can also influence their internal/external coherence (Korthagen, 2004), link between sensations, intentions, and actions. Five elementary teachers participated in a study meant to look at their bodily learning processes, based on a phenomenological methodology (van Manen, 2014) and using somatic approaches (Eddy, 2016). Data analysis shows that they underwent body consciousness learning processes with various effects on their teaching, many posited at a relational level (with students) and all accompanied by a changing perception of self.

**VERS UNE COHÉRENCE SOMATIQUE : CINQ ENSEIGNANTES S'ENGAGENT DANS  
LEUR DÉVELOPPEMENT PROFESSIONNEL EN MOBILISANT LA CORPORÉITÉ**

**RÉSUMÉ.** Selon Johnson (2007), apprendre et enseigner s'appuient sur l'expérience corporelle d'un être humain en relation avec les autres et avec son environnement (corporéité). Prendre conscience de son corps peut faciliter l'enseignement. Cela peut aussi influencer la cohérence interne-externe des enseignants (Korthagen, 2004); les liens entre sensations, intentions et actions. Cinq enseignantes de niveau primaire ont participé à une étude phénoménologique (van Manen, 2014) sur leur processus d'apprentissage corporel, mobilisant des outils d'éducation somatique (Eddy, 2016). L'analyse des données met en lumière des processus d'apprentissage de la conscience corporelle avec divers effets sur la qualité de l'enseignement, dont plusieurs situés à un niveau relationnel (avec les élèves) et tous accompagnés par un changement de la perception de soi.

**DO TEACHERS PERCEIVE THEIR BODY?**

**T**eachers usually perceive their body in limited ways while teaching (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Hunter, 2011). When they do perceive it, they often spontaneously associate it with difficult experiences (Emond & Fortin, 2016). When their body react strongly, they remember their perceptions afterwards,

even though memories are often muted by a back-and-forth experience of desensitization (Kepner, 1993), a momentary disconnection with their senses. Although teachers feel and perceive themselves while teaching, their feelings and perceptions often remain unconscious or unavailable to them in the lived moment (Emond, 2015). Please note that the word *body* is singular throughout the text (even when the subject is plural) because I want to put emphasis on the singular act of body perception.

Human beings can learn how to better access their own lived body (set of inter-related physical, emotional, and cognitive sensations) while performing an action in the living moment. Perceiving their lived body can be useful for professionals as teachers. To help them understand what is going on in their own body, perceptions can be recalled afterwards using recovery techniques to return as close as possible to the original lived teaching moment. Reflecting on this recovery can influence later teaching experiences. Even though curricula that engage bodily learning processes are rarely included in teacher education programs (Ergas 2017; Green & Hopwood, 2015), some researchers and teachers work with the lived body of elementary school teachers, physical education teachers (Giles, 2010; Hunter, 2011) and health professionals (Lachance et al., 2018; Winther, 2015).

This work began some twenty years ago (especially Noddings, 1984, among other pioneers), followed more recently by a new wave of researchers questioning the supremacy of mind (over body) in education, learning, and professional development. Other fields of study, such as holistic education (Miller & Nigh, 2017), feminism (Butler, 1993; Gilligan, 1982) and many Indigenous traditions and research (Klein, 2008), have also been endorsing a whole (wholistic) experiential approach to education and human self-reflection, engaging various ways of knowing and levels of consciousness, and considering an integrated bodymind.

It is more widely understood today that the body as a whole, conceptualized as soma, the lived body (Hanna, 1986), if felt in conscious ways while teaching, can probably enhance and even accelerate learning for many individuals, teachers themselves, and their students as well (Eddy, 2016; Green & Hopwood, 2015; Miller & Nigh, 2017). The felt lived body represents the inside part of an equation that links internal and external aspects of teaching. When teachers are aware of what goes on inside their body while teaching and can use their insights appropriately, they gain internal/external teaching coherence, as stated by Korthagen (2004), a leader in holistic reflection and teacher training. Korthagen refers to a concept called core reflection, which suggests reflection happens when internal and external aspects of teaching are bridged. Building on Korthagen's internal/external teaching coherence concept, somatic coherence includes body sensations when connecting with the 'inside' side of teaching experience. Working with the 'inside', many teachers gain teaching quality and effectiveness while strengthening their well-being and health.

## TEACHERS' EMBODIMENT

But how can being somatically in touch with their own body (viz., embodiment) help teachers develop their teaching coherence? My doctoral thesis (2018)<sup>1</sup> digs into this question, while pursuing two main objectives:

1. Understand the embodiment consciousness learning process of teachers.
2. Gather teachers' perceptions and reflections on this learning process with regard to their internal/external coherence.

My conceptual framework was constructed around the notion of dynamic embodiment (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015), a human being's bodily experience of self, others, and the environment, as previously defined as well by Johnson (2007), a body philosopher. Embodiment is embedded in the continuous movement of external sense perception, proprioception (the internal or sixth sense), graviception (the relationship with gravity), and kinesthetic self-perception (kinesthesia: the sense of movement). It is linked to a phenomenology of practice of daily professional life at each lived moment (van Manen, 2014), also called our lived experience. Phenomenology studies human beings' lived experience from one moment to the next, approaching experience as much as possible to how it is lived in the present moment.

Dewey (1938) theorized the concept of experience, which for him, was central to learning. Experience creates a foundation for learning throughout the lifetime. Our experience is also the source of our learnings. Dewey believed that it is only through experience that human beings can interact with their environment, within which socially constructed institutions are embedded. This interaction is only possible because we have a body that enables us to feel the world around us and the world within us, namely, coming from our sensations. In this regard, in education and pedagogy, we can consider Dewey as one of the fathers of embodiment.

### *Exploring Teachers' Feelings and Perceptions*

Learning embodiment consciousness is a combination of both learning to feel and learning to act. Furthermore, this type of learning engages in reflection in an experiential reality that is both relational and environmental (Figure 1). Five dimensions of embodiment are represented in Figure 1: Feeling, Acting, Reflecting, Relations, and Environment.

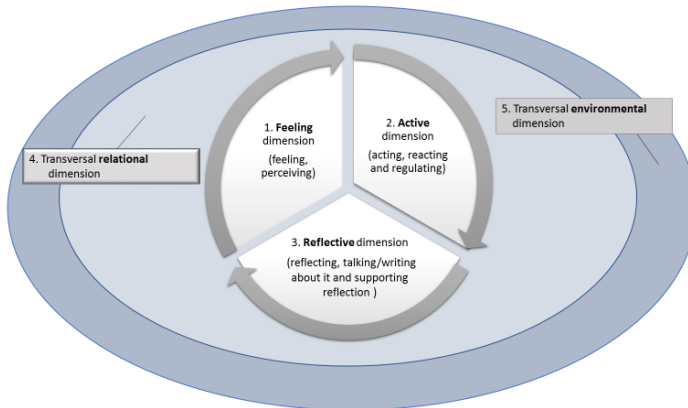


FIGURE 1. *Dimensions of Embodiment (translated from the French, Emond's auto-constructed model, 2018)*

Feeling engages body perception, using all the senses. Perceiving sensations engages the individuals in a movement of becoming conscious that often leads to feeling differently from before. Perception relates to the consciousness of interrelated sensations coming from inside or outside the body: physical, such as the feelings of muscles or bones, pressure in the stomach, touch on the skin; emotional, such as sadness, anger, joy; and cognitive, taking the forms of words, phrases, ideas, images, etc. The active dimension, as a dynamic relational process, represents teaching practice in action, a self-regulated mediation process between a teacher and student/s to foster student learning. Engaging in reflection – by talking or writing about it – occurs in a flexible temporality that travels from the pre-reflective grasp preceding action to reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Such reflection positions teachers in relation to their feelings and actions. The relational dimension of embodiment includes qualities such as empathy and intersubjectivity, all embedded in spatiotemporal and socio-institutional environmental settings.

### *Guiding Teachers Toward Internal/External Coherence*

Korthagen and his colleagues developed two teacher education models: the onion model (2004, p. 80) and the ALACT model (2005, p. 49) [Action, Looking back on the action, Awareness of essential aspects, Creating alternative methods of action and Trial; hereafter referred to as ALACT]. I used both models to explore the relationship between what is going on inside teachers as human beings in a professional practice (the internal side) and their actions in their environment, understood here both as spatiotemporal environment and socio-institutional environment – the school (the external side).

In the onion model, Korthagen presents six levels of reflection by which teachers can look at their own actions and monitor their professional development, so as

to change their practices to gain continuous quality and efficiency. Korthagen organizes his onion model into three internal levels (mission, identity, and beliefs) and three external levels (competencies, behaviours, and environment). All six levels together lead teachers to closely examine the combined components of their internal/external coherence as described by Korthagen as the relationship between the teachers' sensations and intentions (internal perception) and their actions. From the inside (mission) to the outside level (environment), Korthagen asks six specific questions to teachers: 1) What inspires me? or What greater entity do I feel connected with? 2) Who I am (in my work)? 3) What do I believe? 4) What I am competent at? 5) What do I do? and 6) What do I encounter? (What I am dealing with?).

The ALACT model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) is combined with the onion model to better guide the student-teachers' and teachers' reflections. With the help of mentors and peers, teachers are invited to follow the five different steps of the ALACT model through a circle. The first step (Action) and the fifth step (Trial) come together to close the circle.

I have added a somatic component to Korthagen's models by slightly modifying some of the six questions Korthagen asked to teachers (reference to the six questions presented in the onion model<sup>2</sup>). I therefore talk of somatic internal/external coherence. Korthagen and Vasalos drew answers from teachers who integrated their emotional responses into a cognitive mode of understanding. Even though the teachers they interviewed shared some somatic components of their feelings, Korthagen and Vasalos did not posit that they would explicitly localize these physical sensations. I questioned the teachers more directly and explicitly, this so as to empower them in their lived body perception, thus fostering an embodied professional development path.

## LEARNING AND TEACHING SOMATIC COHERENCE

Based on Korthagen's frameworks for teachers' supervision, I explored how to use a non-directive professional development mentoring approach (Paul, 2009) to help teachers gain a more balanced and attuned perception of their body, all the while renewing their vision and enhancing their reflections on their teaching. Five teachers took part in the study<sup>3</sup>, held between October 2016 and June 2017. They were volunteers among 17 in-service teachers enrolled in a professional master's course of teaching analysis offered at the University of Sherbrooke (Quebec, Canada). The participants were interviewed prior to engaging in four somatic workshops offered to the group; at the end of the process, they took part in an interview with two peers, based on a filmed teaching sequence. They also wrote in a personal logbook and participated in an online forum.

The workshop pedagogy was both experiential and reflective. It was experiential in that I used somatic exercises to help the teachers learn to feel their lived body differently and more profoundly, for themselves and with others. It was reflective

in that I guided the teachers through the bodily material gathered to discover meaning, on one hand, and to observe their teaching, on the other. I also used grids to support the teachers' learning in the workshop activities.

I used pedagogical tools from the somatic education field (Cooper Albright, 2019; Eddy, 2016), the study of human beings' body consciousness in movement in their environment, as well as from the field of pedagogical research: explicitation interviews (Vermersch, 2014), meant to elicit an explicitation of an activity through evocation rather than rationalization, and self-confrontation interviews (Roche & Gal-Petitfaux, 2012), both of these interview methods dig into the experience or pre-reflexive consciousness. All of this was embedded in a phenomenological educational perspective (van Manen, 2014), studying the lived experience of teachers from their own points of view. The participants experienced their relationships through breathing, posture, gravity, tonus, qualities of movement and body systems, and voice (tone) and words, in a pedagogical sequence that balanced vitality and relaxation, while being anchored in the foundational principles of somatic education (Eddy, 2016). I presented experiential and reflective materials in repeated cycles with the objective of going into greater depth with each cycle completed. These experiences were directly followed by on-site exercises to foster reflection.

My stance as a researcher and a teacher mentor was also embedded in a bodily consciousness process. The subject of my research is a personal endeavour arising from more than 20 years of practices and observations in the educational field. Prior to collecting the study data, I conducted a pre-phenomenological analysis (van Manen, 2014) to identify my preconceptions on the subject. This research preparation shed light on analysis categories I later identified as salient in teachers' experiences. Our researcher-teacher intersubjectivities — including participants' and my own subjectivities — were intrinsically linked in many ways, as will become apparent in the course of the data analysis.

## FIVE TEACHERS AND THEIR LEARNING PROCESSES

The five elementary school teachers and counsellors (Marguerite, Migona, Isabelle, Camille, and Caroline, all names which are pseudonyms) worked in different settings and situations (see Table 1), although all in the greater Montreal area.

TABLE 1. *Five teachers/participants*

Teacher	Age	Experience	Teaching setting	Main learnings	Main challenges
Marguerite	43	20	K-class; alternative school, suburb	Take time for herself/reflection Make her own professional choices	Major school restructuring
Migona	41	18	Pedagogical support in mathematics, elementary schools, rural area	Experiential writing on her practice Better consciousness of the links between her experience and how she feels	Doubts about being at the "right" job/ boredom Managing transition from teaching to teacher counselling
Isabelle	27	4	Grade 2, "healthy" suburb	What "she actually does" To trust others and to be vulnerable with others	Anxiety management Frequent and numerous health challenges
Camille	30	3	Grade 3-4, suburb	Listen to herself and gain confidence in her teaching through it	Confidence in what she feels
Caroline	28	2	Grade 2, rural area; withdrawal for pregnancy since January 2017	Listen to herself Listen to her students with an anchor on herself	High level of performance First pregnancy and sudden withdrawal from her class

For each of them, I wrote a phenomenological text of about 12 pages showing each person's learning process and her relationship to teaching, following van Manen's guidelines (2014, pp. 319-322). The text was based on interviews, a personal logbook and exchanges on an online forum. Each text included parts that focus on group learning as a collective and parts that focus on peer learning. The evolution of each of the four types of consciousness is reproduced in Table 2. Each type of consciousness was described at the beginning of the study (Fall 2016) and at the end of the study (Summer 2017) for the group of five participants.

TABLE 2. *Evolution of Embodiment Consciousness (adapted from/translated from the French by Emond, 2018, p. 250-251)*

Evolution of Embodiment Consciousness					
Research process	Self-Consciousness	Consciousness of Others	Space-time Consciousness	Consciousness of Socio-Institutional Environment	Consciousness of Practice
Beginning of study	From vague self-impression	From a stance for others	From internal/external negotiations	From tension	-
End of study	... to self-proximity	... to mutual enrichment (being with others)	... to a definition of self in space and time (including limits)	... to emancipation from others' pressures and standards	Step back and gain more clarity about practice, linking internal and external coherence

Here are some results drawn from the phenomenological analysis:<sup>4</sup>

1. Self-proximity. First of all, as the year unfolded, all five teachers went from a vague impression of self (who I am?) to self-proximity (here I am), allowing their needs to become clearer and easier to express. At the end of the year, they all felt an improved proximity with the self. For instance, they learned how to slow down, how to autoregulate and manage their stress, and some of them even succeeded in engaging an internal/external dialogue (how I am feeling versus what do I do?).<sup>5</sup> Here is an example of what Caroline wrote: "I have been going through a step-by-step learning this year, always gaining in concreteness. I am more aware of how I feel, and I try to attend to my feelings more often every day. My biggest learning is to remain open to listen to myself more often" (Logbook, May 1, 2017).
2. Being with others. Before the teachers developed self-proximity, the consciousness of others dominated. At the beginning of the study, all five teachers were more attuned to the needs and demands of their students than to their own. Over the course of the year, they developed a stance with their students, rather than only for their students. This stance enabled them to respect their students' needs as well as their own, which created mutual enrichment. The data analysis revealed this mutual enrichment, such as when the students showed appreciation to their teachers or paid respect to them, while at the same time the teachers modified their perceptions of their students. They also gained by better observing, listening to, and feeling others; they relationally regulated themselves, including by taking time to return to others to check whether they fully understood their reactions. Camille, for ex-



ample, came to better understand and thus intervene with a student she considered difficult (see: Figure 2 (Camille): Seeing a student differently).

3. More clarity in space and time. Space-time consciousness was also refined during the year, especially the time relationship, which was often felt as chaotic (out of control) at the beginning. Their relationship to time gained in clarity. The teachers were better able to set limits and priorities within a fixed time framework. Some teachers were also better able to define their relationship to space and its use in the classroom. As they learned to recognize how a friendly environment (defined in time and space) offers security, they were also able to take more risks to step outside their routine and, eventually, outside their classroom or even outside their school. Isabelle stands as a good example of a growing space-time consciousness integration over the study period. Struggling with both time and space management at the beginning of the year, she showed a better grasp of her schedule (and her students' schedules) and of how she used space in the classroom over the year. At the beginning of the year, she was often bothered by how students came (too) close to her and needed intimacy, but she was unable to create the right distance with them. By the end of the year, she was better able to adapt to her students' needs and also maintain her own boundaries in space and time, if needed.
4. Autonomy and liberty. Finally, the teachers also deepened their consciousness of their socio-institutional environment, through a process of standing up for their own values, even though that sometimes meant they had to go against their colleagues, school principal or even friends (called: emancipation). They gained autonomy, liberty, and access to their growth competence, so as to know how to act for their own growth (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). This learning was more obvious for experienced teachers (Marguerite and Migona have more than 20 years of experience) over the course of their professional development process. It was less easy to identify for the novice teachers (Isabelle, Camille, and Caroline have less than 5 years of experience) and their relationship to their socio-institutional environment while their professional identity is under construction. Nevertheless, Isabelle, for example, a novice teacher, started to question decisions made both by her school principal and some colleagues. She was also able to make links between her point of view and the values previously identified in her logbook. Both Marguerite and Migona, the experienced teachers, offered examples of growth competence development. Furthermore, after a few months (January 2017), Marguerite and Migona began to engage in a meta-discourse on their profession that was rich for both teachers when shared in dialogue with each other.

The last column of Table 2 presents some links with the consciousness of teaching practice as well. Teachers learned to step back and gain more clarity about their teaching practice. With regard to internal/external coherence (onion model, Korthagen, 2004), through the learning process teachers were engaged in, identity and beliefs were revealed by the lived body, as their sensations were identified and understood with the help of their peers. Meanwhile, their reflection on their mission was engaged, allowing competencies, behaviour, and environment to be viewed differently. By stepping back from teaching practice and negotiating values, teachers gained access to core reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Beliefs (internal level) dialogued with competencies (external level), all fully anchored in their body. This process allowed them to see their practice (behaviour and environment) differently, from the perspective of internal/external coherence, a move toward integrity (Palmer, 1998). Integrity means an external response that is linked to internal values and identity.

Each teacher's learning proceeded differently, although two processes could be distinguished from one another (classified as two groups). The first group proceeded from attention to others and some forms of dispersion to a movement of experience densifications toward the self (for Marguerite, Isabelle, and Caroline). They became calmer and better able to focus on specific tasks while serving others. The second group, in contrast, went from centering on a reduced version of self to the perceptions of others (opening up to students and peers), which helped them gain a broader perception of self (for Migona and Camille).

The following sections feature Camille's and Marguerite's case studies. Camille's process is presented in the following pages as an example of a novice teacher of the second group (G2, Figure 2). She began the study with a reserved stance and gained opening and stimulation in the process. The title of her text explains how she gained confidence in herself with the help of others: *Self-Confirming her Practice by Opening up to Others* (Figure 2). Marguerite's case follows, as a contrasting example, an experienced teacher of the first group (G1, Figure 3) who went from a chaotic environment and a strong assumed professional stance to an increase in structure and stability by organizing her experiences to make it through a challenging year. She participated in the study in an assertive and open way. The title of her text is: *Assuming her Leadership Role by Gaining Stability*. Camille's example (first one below) provides a summary of her process (see Figure 2), but because Marguerite's case (second one following) is multidimensional (classroom, parents' training and mentoring, leader role within the school and with peer-colleagues), it is difficult to grasp the complexity of her whole process by merely looking at Figure 3, which presents only a few examples of her various learnings. I only present the main learnings of both Camille and Marguerite; these learnings do not provide a complete picture of all of the nuances of experiences included in their phenomenological texts.

Text narratives were constructed following van Manen's guidelines in four writing steps (2014). Each participant's story contains two main ideas, included in the text title, and 10 to 12 subtitles representing one step of the learning process summarized in a paragraph. Quotes from the participants were embedded into the text to emphasize specific postures. I finally wrote a main phenomenological text to link the different parts of the story.

### *Camille, as a First Example*

*Self-Confirming her Practice by Opening up to Others.* Camille (30 years old), a novice teacher of a multi-level Grades 3 and 4 (8- to 10-year-old students), appeared shy and skeptical at the beginning of the study. She considered herself alien to body work and not able to feel herself. Her logbook entries were short and straight to the point. They focused on specific sensations she was progressively able to name, like her heartbeat, being red, feeling relieved, etc. As her learning progressed, she began to identify her emotions related to teaching ("I feel good; I feel annoyed" (Logbook, January 13 and January 24, 2017)) and, gradually, to identify her thoughts ("I remember talking to myself silently to check this reaction. I am aware that a negative look can have a big impact on a student. When I stopped myself, I intervened in a positive manner" (Online forum, February 7, 2017). Finally, she identified her physical sensations ("I can feel the lines in my face becoming tense" (Logbook, January 24, 2017)).

While identifying her own sensations, Camille was also slowly better able to understand her students' sensations and what was going on between students ("I felt my students going through a stress wave" (Logbook, February 9, 2017)). Then, learning how to perceive her students' signals-sensations<sup>6</sup> brought her back to her own sensations. Slowly, she added her own feelings and sensations to her logbook writing: "The students shown solidarity with one another today. It touched me a lot" (Logbook, February 24, 2017). She shares: "I have noticed with some students, if I take some time to be receptive to their signals-sensations, it can have a positive effect on the way the day turns out" (Online forum, February 26, 2017). Then, five weeks later:

I have noticed that I am more aware of this student's signal-sensations. I find it more difficult to do while teaching, so I tried first thing in the morning. I got into the habit of taking some time to ask him how he feels. This focused moment seems to calm him. It also helps me adapt my interventions during the day.

The self-confrontation interviews with her peers played a vital role in Camille's learning, especially in terms of relating her somatic teaching with her internal/external teaching coherence. Her peers — Migona and Isabelle — offered direct observations (based on actions) and words ("openness, efficiency, 'fluid' control of the class") that fit into her own vision of teaching. They related them to their observation of what she was going through somatically while teaching. Migona, an experienced teacher Camille trusted, shared this comment: "Probably, when

we are comfortable doing something, it is because we are being coherent with ourselves. Just now, you seemed to be comfortable with what happened” (Self-confrontation interview, April 8, 2017). Camille had, indeed, felt her teacher competencies and actions differently from before. She was able to observe how her tolerance zone with students was efficiently and smoothly maintained, thanks to an innate sensorial compass she was not aware of prior to the exercise with her peers: “What came out of the discussion also helped me confirm that my educational values are clearly transmitted through my teaching. This exercise pushed me to observe more and to put words on those observations” (Online forum, April 8, 2017).

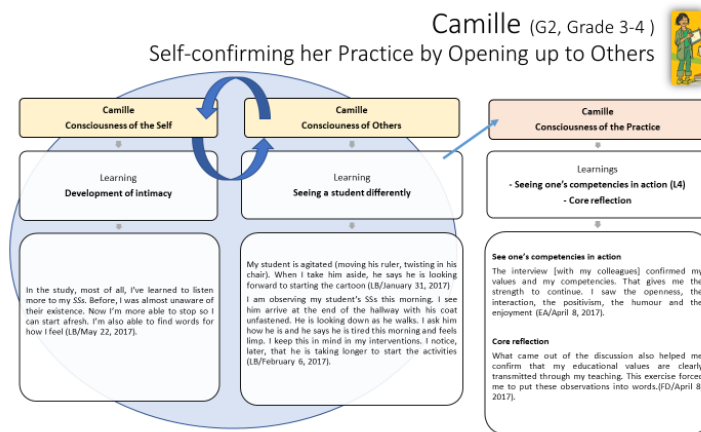


FIGURE 2. *Camille* <sup>8</sup>

As shown in Figure 2, which summarizes Camille's main areas of learning, it was consciousness of others and then of herself (consciousness of the self) that allowed Camille to consider her practice afresh and gain confidence in herself. The presence of her peers, Migona in particular, was paramount to Camille's learnings. At the end of the study, even though Camille said she was still having trouble linking her somatic learnings with her teaching coherence, she also showed greater openness and more sensitivities in her writing.

Most of all, I have learned to listen more to my signal-sensations. In fact, before the study, I was almost unaware of their existence. Now I am more able to stop so I can start afresh. I am also able to find words for how I feel. Thanks to the study, I am more aware of my students' signal-sensations and can take better preventive action. (Logbook, May 22, 2017)

Camille clearly had to take a step back from her practice to gain clarity on what she was actually doing (See: Table 2). As she put it, listening to her signal-sensations really helped her gain some proximity with her effective practice.

*Marguerite, a Contrasting Example*

*Assuming her Leadership Role by Gaining Stability*<sup>7</sup>. Marguerite (43 years old), an experienced teacher and an adult educator, taught a kindergarten class (4- to 5-year-old students) in an alternative school where collaboration with parents was directly embedded into the curriculum. Her relationship with her young students' families was an important part of her work and she also provided mentoring and training to the school's parents. In contrast with Camille, she engaged herself directly, quickly, and with great enthusiasm and confidence in the research process. Because of the constitution of her kindergarten group, when she began the study, Marguerite already knew she was going to have a challenging year. According to her, many students were difficult and required special attention. Consequently, she was constantly drawn to finding solutions to problems she was not directly able to provide.

One of her students, H, was draining a lot of Marguerite's attention and energy. H pushed Marguerite to the limits of her perceived competency and triggered her vulnerability. She repeatedly referred to H in her logbook:

I feel guilty that H does not fit into my class. I think a special class would be good [for him]. I have really done a lot and it does not work. I am discouraged. (Logbook, January 28, 2017)

Between him and me: nothing. Rigid, heavy, jerky. He wants nothing, he does not receive. I do not know if I am able to help him? (Grid/workshop 3, February 4, 2017)

I get the feeling I do not have tools to help him [H]. The way I perceive myself as professionally competent is deteriorating. (Logbook, March 16, 2017)

Marguerite reacted to her overall situation by sharing her sensory overflow in her logbook, in the online forum, and to whomever was available in person as well (researcher, colleagues, family). Nevertheless, this sensory overflow did not limit her actions; she kept going. It was actually this sensory overflow – more specifically when phrased and perceived in a positive way – that pushed her forward and enabled her to gain some stability, even in the midst of the chaos. Here is an example of how she proceeded by adding positive comments and opening questions to her difficult moments with H: “I feel proud. Maybe I will succeed [with him]?” (Logbook, January 10, 2017); “I managed to [physically] touch H, after 8 months of class. I see this moment as a little professional achievement” (Logbook, April 11, 2017) (see also Figure 3, c2).

The more Marguerite went outside her comfort zone, the more she was able to see her professional strengths and she could testify positively in her logbook and in the online forum with her peers. As the year went by, because she felt overwhelmed by her situation, she started to be able to negotiate the limits of her professional engagement and, to some extent, her personal engagement with her family. It included some personal choices to increase her well-being

and maintain her health, which she considered to be at risk (Figure 3, c1). These negotiations and choices to set limits were new to her.

Slowly, she entered into a meta-analysis of her situation and her profession (“as teachers or adult educators, we..., it is difficult to ...”), in dialogue with Migona, the other experienced teacher (via the online forum). This allowed her to position herself in alignment with her values, but against her colleagues, in a conflict involving her school principal (Figure 3, c4). She was better able to navigate professional dilemmas, such as the decision to send H to a special school, ultimately, this even though she was a strong advocate for the integration of all students in an alternative-model classroom like hers (Figure 3, c2). These events shed light on how she had become a leader in her school.

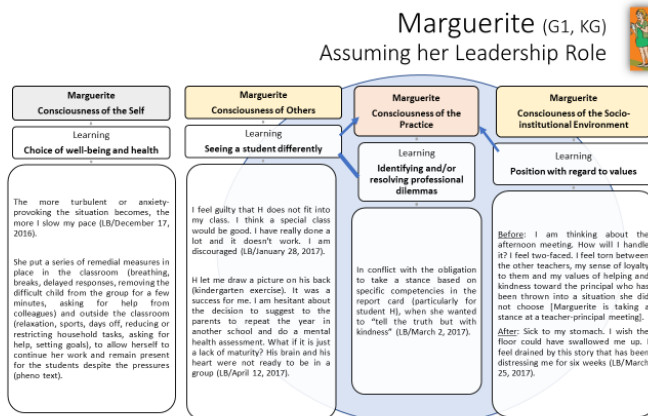


FIGURE 3. *Marguerite*

Marguerite ended the year in a reinforced professional stance. The conflict in values and the institutional positioning took her through a much-needed professional transformation, including recognizing some strengths developed over the years:

I can say now that I like myself as a teacher, with my strengths and my challenges [...] This study has enabled me to look inside myself and around me: What is my colour? Do I like this colour? Does this colour have a positive impact on the world around me? [...] I have come a long way in teaching. I am ready to face new challenges (namely in educational management and adult education). (Logbook, May 30, 2017)

In addition to stepping back from her professional practice and gaining more clarity, Marguerite also entered into professional identity negotiation. More than simple professional construction, gaining access to her lived body in a more direct way helped her develop professionally from a meta-perspective, engaging her responsibility in her global environment. She felt more responsible for herself,

but also more responsible for her students and for the school as a whole, in a more realistic way than before.

### *Camille and Marguerite*

Marguerite's story involved a broader range of consciousness types than Camille's (self, other, practice, socio-institutional environment). Space-time consciousness is also available in our list of consciousness types (Table 2), but it was neither developed in Marguerite or Camille's stories, but in Isabelle and Caroline (not shown in this article). For Marguerite, the consciousness of self was a support and a stepping-stone, enabling her to feel more secure in her practice. It gave her permission to become more involved in the other types of consciousness. For Camille, it was a back-and-forth between a better grasp of herself and a better understanding of others (their signal-sensations) that created a path that allowed her to see her practice differently.

Camille and Marguerite's stories, as contrasting examples, show how important it is to offer various pedagogical entry doors when supporting the professional development of teachers. Some of these tools trigger teachers from the outside (Marguerite), while others enable teachers to pay more respect to the richness of what is going on inside them (Camille). In this regard, I have used a pedagogy of the inside-out (Ergas, 2017) that has proven its relevance with groups of peers.

### GROWING PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY AS A TEACHER

Experiential work appears to be an essential condition for teachers to learn to better perceive their lived body. Afterwards, most teachers stop questioning the reasons and rationality behind the work as they are absorbed in the experience of it. It is up to supervisory teachers (mentors) and researchers to offer them ways to link experience (action) and reflection in a fertile and supportive way. This experience/reflection combination makes it possible to engage in supported change and, eventually, transformation, when action is performed differently. Although the study participants said that they had a lot more to learn, they also said that the study helped them grow as teachers and as people, within a dynamic relationship between the individual and the group, in their personal and professional lives (Emond & Rondeau, 2019; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005):

I have learned to get to know myself better, and to know myself professionally in a different way. I am more aware of the relationships between what I experience and how I feel. (Migona, Logbook, May 10, 2017)

The study allowed me to confirm my basic values, understand their importance in my personal and professional life and, most of all, appreciate them. (Marguerite, Logbook, June 3, 2017)

These comments show how we tackled the link between the internal side (mission, values, and, most of all, identity) and the external side (competences and actions in specific environments) of teaching internal/external coherence. The

teachers learned to see their practices differently by grasping their lived experience in a more holistic way than before (bodymind). They not only gained some insight about themselves and their practices, but also gathered important positive information that empowered them, with no comparisons among them or fixed achievements. The outcome achieved is that they all positively developed their teaching competencies.

Some mentoring activities, provided by peers or by myself, were key to the learnings (Emond & Rondeau, 2019). In this study, the participating teachers needed their peers, and they needed time: time to reflect, to write, to be listened to, to listen, and to feel their practices make a difference. When the peers – and to some extent, myself as a peer-researcher – confirmed the qualities and challenges of their practice, they all agreed that it was worth making an effort to improve, together. Their work became important for them as individuals, and also as part of an educational effort all educators share.

One main transversal trend came out of the research as well, concerning stress management, autoregulation, and how teachers find ways to vent and share their concerns and sensations/emotions about their practice. The logbook and the online forum offered spaces for these concerns. It was an important space, for some teachers almost a vital one. All the teachers were sick, sometimes tired, and eventually exhausted or on sick leave (e.g., Isabelle) during the study year. The way they were taking care of themselves and balancing work-life was an important discussion among them. With no regard for their different personal life challenges, they all acknowledged it was difficult to maintain their well-being and health while responding to the various challenges of their profession. In the end, they all agreed they would definitely pay more attention to their health. Somatic introspection (paying attention to signal-sensations) was an important tool – for some, even an essential one – to enable them to regulate themselves before becoming exhausted.

#### **SOMATIC INTROSPECTION TRIGGERS INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE EMANCIPATION: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Teachers know a lot about teaching, but they may not explicitly recognize some of this knowledge by themselves. Engaging in somatic introspection empowers them in many ways, as it brings their know-how to light in an active, embodied manner. Triggering a transformational process to achieve greater autonomy and freedom, supported by peers reflecting on teaching coherence and group dynamics, has a clear global emancipation effect, both individually and collectively. It enhances well-being and health, gives permission to express challenges and limits, reinforces the importance of stress management and autoregulation (with relational regulation standing as a crucial competency for healthy teaching), offers better access to self and identity, grows resilience potential and helps teachers, along with myself as a researcher, stand up for their own values, gaining strength



in the face of adversity, uncertain situations, ethical or puzzling situations. In a period of rapid and surprising changes, the lived body offers many valuable tools.

As teachers seek to deepen this somatic awareness, not only for themselves, but also to be able to foster and support this skill in their students, individually and collectively, they gain access to what Palmer (1998) describes as good teaching: “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10). This teacher identity is a central component of his/her internal/external coherence, on which the intention for integrity takes roots. Somatic awareness supports integrity by giving access to the self.

The study highlights, as well, that teachers are often exhausted and find it difficult to cope with what arises in their professional environment and lives, let alone their personal lives. In this regard, the results of the study show that teachers were transitioning from a relationship of tension to a movement of emancipation from other people’s pressures and standards. Toward the end of the study, they positioned themselves differently in the same environment. But even though teachers generally do their best to balance their lives and maintain their well-being, at some point, it is no longer possible for them to cope with the environmental pressures. There is an inevitable decline in teaching quality, accompanied with embodiment problems, such as a lack of focus, anxiety, exhaustion, despair, and sickness. As a society, what do we lose when our teachers have to generate so much energy to maintain balance in a challenging environment?

While teachers can do a lot by themselves to strengthen their stance, they are limited in growth if they do not receive sufficient support from their environment: from peers, from educational leaders, from communities, and from educational and social structures. In an embodied world where everyone and everything is interconnected, intersubjectivity is a strong component of our professional lives. Schools and institutional systems have responsibilities toward teachers. Their roles have to be taken into consideration in this exhaustion scenario. This study therefore triggered questions around social responsibility and solidarity. How much protection and support do we owe teachers?

It is important to pursue emancipatory research in this growing field around teachers’ embodiment, but also to engage in other studies leading to a broader understanding of how embodiment consciousness can help many different professionals and benefit social structures as well when teachers act as leaders to change them. In this regard, for my part, I will continue to build bridges with researchers following similar objectives to my own mainly in the field of holistic education (Ergas, 2017; Miller et al., 2019), but also in professional development and adult education (Lachance et al., 2018; Winther, 2015). I have been particularly engaged in recent years with peer groups of mixed professionals learning together how to be better embodied in their practice (Ragoonaden et al., 2019). How to provide mentoring services to teachers or establish peer-mentored/

peer-supported relationships are important areas of investigation that could also show us more about how we can adjust our practices and mutually support each other, teachers, and researchers alike. Educational and social settings will have to adapt to include more of this work in the coming years.

## NOTES

1. My thesis in education (2018) is a direct follow-up on a master's in dance (2015) that studied the lived body of 26 elementary-school student-teachers, during their last practicum year, directly in elementary schools.
2. The onion model is originally presented with only six levels. Questions have been added in a newer version of the model.
3. Two experienced teachers (more than 15 years of experience) and three novice teachers (less than 5 years of experience). Both experienced teachers are engaged in formative and mentoring activities with parents and/or other teachers.
4. These phenomenological texts address a first analysis level. In addition to this, a second analysis level was conducted with the help of Korthagen's (2005, 2004). In my thesis, this second analysis level is presented with figures and charts. This article does not present this analysis, except in Table 2 (the last column on the consciousness of practice is added from the second level of analysis) and Figure 2.
5. Many more learnings are identified for each teacher. A complete list of these learnings can be found on page 279 of the doctoral thesis (Emond, 2018, Table 5.1, French version).
6. I used the French term *signaux-sensations* (signals-sensations (ss)) to designate perceptions in the form of inter-related physical, emotional, and cognitive conscious inputs (Emond, 2015). This word has been useful to help teachers embody the concept of the "lived body".
7. The original title as "Assuming her Leadership Role." The second part, "...by Gaining Stability," was added in a second version of the work. Figure 3 presents the first version's title.
8. Small images Figures 2 and 3 / © free/ Rémy Guenin.

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