

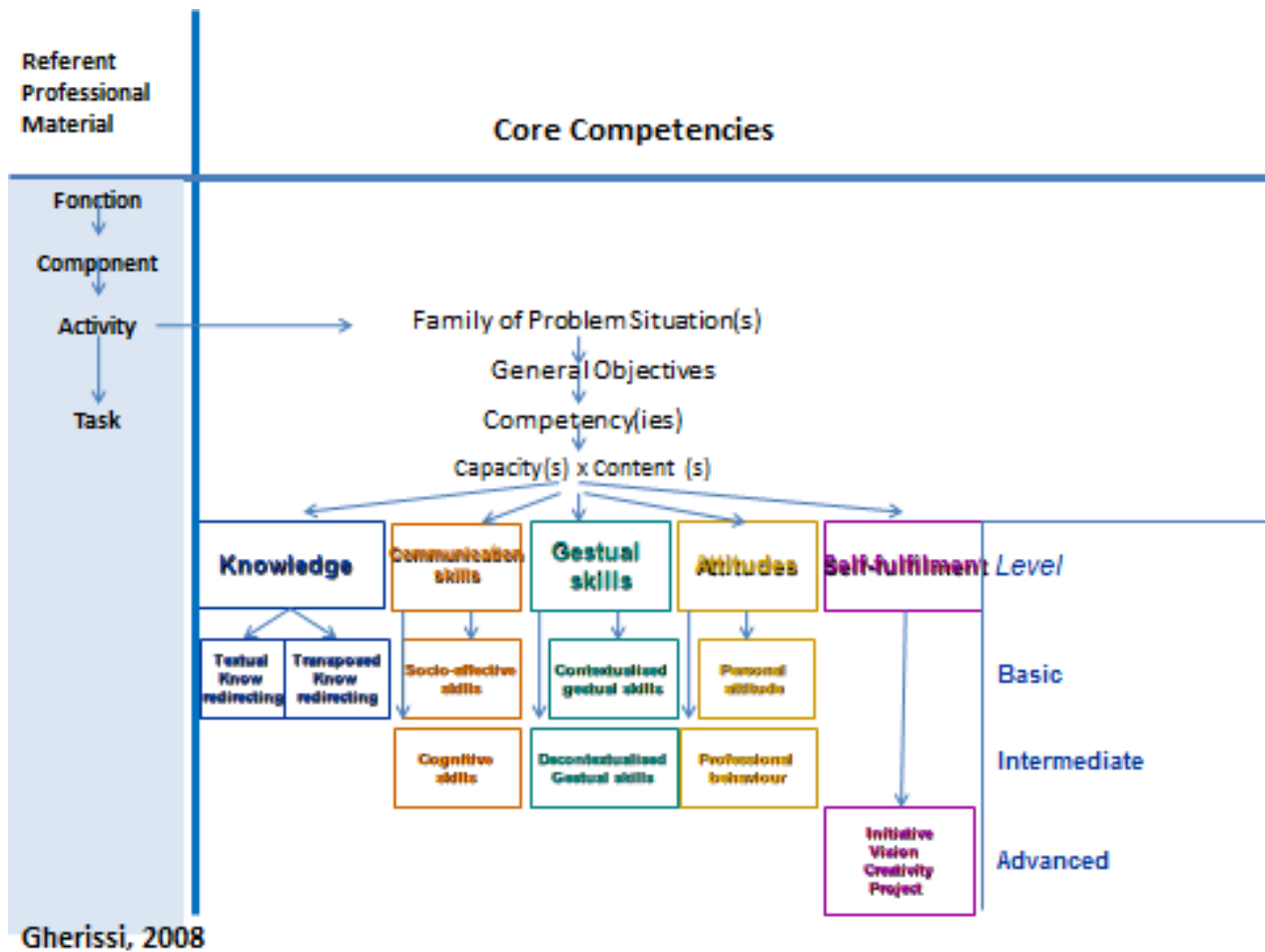
Chapter 11: Managing Healthcare Professionals' Competence and Career-Long Learning

Developing leadership skills in self and others, as a leadership skills development programme for qualified health professionals in Tunisia

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In Tunisia, the three-year education programmes which equate to a BSc are provided within a dominant behavioristic educational approach that prioritises cognitive and clinical skills. This case study illustrates the impact of teaching research methodology on the development of leadership skills among two health professionals (a midwife and a biologist) since they were students.

My teaching experience demonstrated that it is common for essential skills to be weak for students who have not yet developed their professional identity, lack self-confidence and self-esteem, and cannot yet make autonomous choices in role play situations. The conceptual framework adopted addresses competency as an integrative concept. It highlights the diverse skills that need to be developed within three chronological steps in a learning system (basic, intermediate and advanced), starting from basic cognitive skills and ending with the know-becoming skills. The expected outcome is that the student becomes able to identify, develop, activate and articulate specific skills including critical thinking and professional behaviour to deal with a specific situation in the Tunisian context of healthcare.



We focus here on two examples of newly qualified professionals, Afnene and Hamza, who have both developed leadership skills since the course that impacted their healthcare practice and professional career respectively.

Afnene is a young midwife, qualified in 2012, who works at a clinic of sexual and reproductive health within an east northern urban city. She reported the impact of the sessions on her professional behaviour and practice.

I am discovering myself taking initiatives and making decisions, planning my tasks, strategising for a collective work within a collaboration based on mutual respect and professionalism, creating a relaxed and efficient dynamic ...

For Hamza, a young and shy biologist, qualified in 2008, the course was an opportunity for him to discover hidden leadership skills that changed him.

Research methodology is a tool to help us start our professional life. During the courses, I could discover myself ... I could explore my skills in public. I used this space to explain my own theory during a group exercise and discovered my ability to convince with innovative and pragmatic ideas.

The educational model I adopted requires coaching the students beyond the classroom and even beyond the bachelor to sustain the momentum created by the course and the skills initiated. Each student has his/her own potential and hidden skills that can blossom specifically.

Finally, adopting socio-constructivism means adhering and cultivating the values and skills within myself prior to doing the same with students. This highlights the importance of the teacher's personal and professional development, a pre-service and in-service course being elaborated to be taught to future and current teachers.

Questions for practice based on critical and reflective thinking:

- How do you define a competent health professional?
- To demonstrate this competency, what are the specific leadership skills that a future health professional should develop during the pre-service education?
- Do you think education, briefly developed in the case study, facilitates the development of such skills?

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