



Fédération
des comités de parents
du Québec

THE TEACHING PROFESSION: THE VIEWPOINT OF THE FCPQ

Position paper submitted to the *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation*
as part of its studies and consultations to prepare
an advice for the *ministre de l'Éducation* on
**the meaning and the importance that Quebec society
intends to confer on the teaching profession**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 WHO ARE WE?	3
1.2 PRESENTATION OF THE POSITION PAPER.....	3
2. PARENTS AS PARTNERS OF TEACHERS	5
2.1 PARENTS: A VITAL REALITY	5
2.2 OBSTACLES TO REMOVE	6
2.3 A RELATION OF TRUSTE TO STRENGTHEN AND BUILD UPON.....	8
3. FCPQ VIEWPOINTS AND POSITIONS ON DIFFERENT FACETS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION	9
3.1 RECOGNITION OF TEACHERS AS PROFESSIONALS	9
3.2 TEACHER TRAINING	11
3.2.1 Initial training	11
3.2.2 Continuing education	14
3.3 ACCESS TO THE PROFESSION	15
3.4 PROFESSIONAL RESPONSABILITY	17
3.4.1 Professional evaluation	18
3.4.2 Handling complaints	18
4. CONCLUSION: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION	21

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHO ARE WE?

The *Fédération des comités de parents du Québec* (FCPQ), established in 1974, is a non-profit organization that brings together volunteer parents committed to the educational community. More specifically, the FCPQ mission is to serve parents:

- By offering them the information and training they need to be involved in schools
- By representing them and by expressing their opinions on the provincial scene
- By defending their rights and interests in the education system
- By participating in the advancement of education with other partners from the educational community

1.2 PRESENTATION OF THE POSITION PAPER

THE ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPATION OF THE FCPQ IN THE CONSULTATION BY THE CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION

The FCPQ enthusiastically welcomes the opportunity it has been given to contribute to the studies and consultations being carried out by the *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation* (CSÉ) on the teaching profession. The FCPQ's intention is to shed light on the unique and vital perspective of the thousands of parents who, year after year, delegate to the teaching staff a major responsibility in the matter of the education of their children. The CSÉ invitation is a valuable opportunity for the FCPQ to highlight the relationship between the teaching profession and some concerns, expectations and views of parents.

The FCPQ is certain that the CSÉ is sensitive to parents' viewpoint on education. It is grateful to the CSÉ for having drawn attention to this viewpoint in the past and is confident that once again, the CSÉ will be able to fervently attest to this viewpoint among other actors involved in education.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POSITION PAPER

The FCPQ has chosen to structure its position paper on the teaching profession around two priorities corresponding to the two central sections of the paper. The first priority has to do with the importance of the place that parents can, should and wish to occupy alongside educational thinkers and implementers, and especially alongside teachers. This priority clearly highlights how important it is for the teaching profession to take into consideration the resources as well as the pressures attendant on the active interest today's parents have in schools. The FCPQ points out that the days when schools and their actors defined the relationship with families are well and truly in the past and that today's parents, more informed and more educated than before, are eager to be closely involved in the work being done by schools, and in particular by the teaching staff.

The second priority on which the FCPQ structures its contribution to the CSÉ studies and consultations involves parents' expectations and concerns regarding the teachers to whom they entrust their children. These expectations and concerns all focus on the quality of the services provided; more precisely, they involve the competencies and the integrity of the persons who work with the children. The ideas included in this priority deal with a set of concerns and expectations that all attest to the legitimate will of parents to see the implementation of certain improvements to different facets of the teaching profession. This section will describe parents' viewpoint as concerned citizens who wish to see Quebec's children receive quality services from all of the teachers to whom the children are entrusted year after year.

In its conclusion, the FCPQ reaffirms that it is the duty of all actors involved in teaching to focus their thoughts and actions on the perspective of a dynamic partnership with the primary persons responsible for the education of children, namely the parents. The FCPQ also points out what should, from the parents' viewpoint, inspire deliberations and open up pathways to development that are designed to allow teaching staff to even better fulfil its mission and its responsibility with regard to children, families, the community and the whole society.

2. PARENTS AS PARTNERS OF TEACHERS

Talking about the evolution and the future of the teaching profession means inviting many actors to

one place of deliberation: teachers themselves, their union representatives, their university educators, educational sciences specialists, government, and so on. Among these stakeholders however, there is **one group, too often left on the sidelines, that has a fundamental right of speech: the parents.** This may seem self-evident but deserves to be repeated: it is the parents who are ultimately and “permanently” responsible for the education of their child and it is they who, in their daily relations with their child, modulate the achievement of the aims, objectives, actions and practices of the teaching staff. **The Civil Code is quite clear on this issue: parents are responsible for the education of their children and they have the power to delegate this responsibility, among others to the school.** In other words, schools and most particularly teaching staff are representatives of the parents and in the final analysis are responsible to the parents.

Of course the parents’ point of view cannot substitute for other viewpoints. Actors from scientific, union, governmental, and other spheres all have their own specific and legitimate viewpoints on the development of and the issues in the teaching profession. Similarly, the FCPQ intends to shed light on the factors that reflect parents’ particular views. It does not claim, neither does it wish, far from it, that its viewpoint cover the multiplicity and the complexity of this vast reality that is the teaching profession. However, the FCPQ insists that **discussions involving the present and the future of the teaching profession should never or in any way lose sight of the women and men with whom and for whom the teaching staff must work primarily to educate children.**

2.1 THE PRESENCE OF PARENTS IN SCHOOLS: A VITAL REALITY

It goes without saying that the changes that have affected the teaching profession over the years did not occur in isolation. They are in synergy with the changes that are transforming society as a whole. Parents, like teachers and Quebec society, have changed: women in the workforce, extensive access to information, increased schooling, smaller families, cultural diversification, the advent of new family models, globalization, and so on, are all characteristics of the contemporary world of parents and families.

This means that while teachers are engaged in a movement toward being recognized as professionals (called “*professionnalisation*” in French), marked chiefly by a university-level education and professional autonomy, parents have developed greater than ever expectations of schools and a

growing desire to be involved with and influence what goes on there. This re-connection between the parents and the schools seems to be supported and encouraged by government, as attested to by the latest modifications to the Education Act, among which, the creation of Governing Boards. The increased presence of parents in schools reflects the growing demand of social actors to be closer to the places where actions are taken and decisions made. More precisely, it constitutes a response to parental dissatisfactions voiced for example at the 1995 Estates General on Education. In fact, more than ever, there is no place for the idea that parents might be confined to a passive role as simple beneficiaries of schools.

The FCPQ reminds all stakeholders that, **if we agree that the child is at the heart of the school's concerns, we must also agree to recognize that *backing* and *accompanying* the child are citizens responsible on a day-to-day basis for his or her education.**

2.2 OBSTACLES TO REMOVE

There is no doubt of the importance of the teaching staff's role in education. However, the same cannot be said of teachers' acknowledgement of the role and the rights of parents.

At the Estates General on Education, it became apparent that parents "often have the impression of being kept on the fringe of the more significant school activities"¹. Speaking of parents' day-to-day relations with the teaching staff, the *Conseil de la famille* also pointed out in 1995 "many parents regret the fact that it is frequently difficult to speak directly to the people to whom they entrust their children. Too often, they have the impression they are being a bother, that they are up against an oppressive and inflexible administrative structure and that they are appealing to people who are, for the most part, unavailable" [translation]². In 2000, the *Conseil de la famille* noted that the relations between home and school had not changed much³. Now, in 2003, the FCPQ repeats that there remains a great deal to do in terms of teaching staff's recognition of parents' role.

¹ MEQ. 1996. *Renewing our Education System: Ten Priority Actions*, s. 2.7.

² Conseil de la famille. 1995. *L'école et les familles: de son ouverture à leur implication*. Collection Études et Recherches, Gouvernement du Québec, p. 17.

³ Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance. 2000. *Pour une plus grande complicité entre les familles et les écoles*. p. 4.

To better act on the often problematic situation of the recognition of parents by teaching staff, it will be helpful to identify certain factors. Three aspects seem of particular importance in explaining the difficulty parents have being recognized by the teaching body.

First, teachers' expertise and professional autonomy, while assuredly a satisfactory response adapted to parents' expectations, are also, paradoxically, a barrier to fruitful relations between school and home. Expertise and professional autonomy are too often subject to a restrictive interpretation of accountability. As the *Conseil de la famille* suggests, "it is as though the recognition of parents and that of teachers were mutually exclusive [translation]⁴. The FCPQ opinion is that **responsibility to parents is an integral part of professional autonomy and must progress at an equal rhythm.**

Second, there is an ideological barrier to a full partnership between parents and teaching staff. The FCPQ regrets that schools have sometimes been referred to as depositories of the education provided by the state, which obscures the fact that first and foremost, the roots of education are in the home. **Since parents are not ready to abandon their parental responsibility in the matter of education, this kind of discourse can only give rise to mistrust and add to the obstacles in the way of the vital collaboration that must prevail between families and schools.**

Third, the partnership between home and school is impeded by very negative ideas and perceptions of parents, for example to the effect that they are "without resources, unable to cope or too permissive" [translation]⁵. While the FCPQ does not contend that all parents are ideal, it does not recognize in these generalizations the majority of the parents it represents. The bias with which parents are regularly criticized⁶, including in the educational community, does not reflect the gains that we have all made collectively through significantly increasing our level of education, through developing an awareness of children's rights and through accessing knowledge on health, psychology, and the like. In short, it is time that we take note of the fact that **never, in the history of the education system in Quebec and the western world, have teaching staff been able to rely on such well-educated, well-informed parents who have such an interest in the success of their child.** This situation is not a threat to anyone, quite the contrary; today's parents are

⁴ Ibid. p. 17.

⁵ Ibid. p. 17.

⁶ Cf., for example the article by Michèle Laferrière on the front page of the newspaper *Le Soleil*, Saturday, September 13, 2003: *Les parents décrocheurs. Pressés, débordés, toujours prêts à déléguer.*

increasingly able to maintain an informed dialogue with teaching staff with the aim of better educating their children.

2.3 A RELATION OF TRUST TO STRENGTHEN AND BUILD UPON

Parents may not be specialists in teaching, but they are experts when it comes to their children. Above all, they are ultimately responsible for their children's education. In other words, the objective of ensuring children's development and success belongs first and foremost to parents. Besides, they are often alone when it is time to shoulder the consequences of any failure by the school. In this context, how can they renounce their right to have a say in the work done by teachers? How can we be surprised by their desire to have at their disposal the tools and support needed to fully exercise their parental responsibility? Above all, how can we as a society deprive children of the essential partnership between parents and teaching staff when we know it is a determining factor in educational success?

The FCPQ wishes to point out that while teachers' commitment is to society as a whole, this commitment is especially and mainly to parents. It can and should be reflected in a true recognition of parents by teaching staff. It can and should be embodied in a **relation of trust**. The FCPQ's view of the teaching profession is affected by the need to build this relation of trust. It is the priority around which the following viewpoints and concerns are structured.

3. FCPQ VIEWPOINTS AND POSITIONS ON DIFFERENT FACETS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

There are many dimensions to the teaching profession, but some directly affect the trust that parents have in educational institutions, and especially in teaching staff. It is in this context that the FCPQ would like to express its opinion on the following aspects of the teaching profession: (3.1) recognition of teachers as professionals, (3.2) initial training and continuing education, (3.3) access to the profession and (3.4) professional responsibility.

3.1 RECOGNITION OF TEACHERS AS PROFESSIONALS

Parents recognize the valuable and powerful role that teachers play in the lives of their children and consequently in their own. That is why the movement toward recognizing teachers as professionals fully meets the expectations and needs of today's parents. **The FCPQ would like this movement to continue and, further, would like the professional character of the teaching practice to be developed and strengthened so as to integrate concepts and values such as professional responsibility, accountability and rules of professional conduct.**

In this perspective, the FCPQ considers that the professionalism with which teachers as a group increasingly identify responds equally to their concerns and to those of the public in general and parents in particular. It is to everyone's benefit that teaching be subject to definite upgrading, that it now be linked to university education and that it lead to decent working conditions.

Social, economic and cultural changes are the backdrop for the emergence and development of the movement toward the recognition of teachers as professionals. These changes are never-ending and make a compelling case for continuing the movement. Everyone must be aware that teachers have to deal with some particularly complex and demanding realities, such as the following:

- The growing autonomy of schools, linked to the general movement toward decentralization of powers;
- The schools' missions, to "provide instruction with renewed conviction", to "socialize in order to learn how to live together better" and to "provide qualifications through a variety of options"⁷;
- The increasing diversity of the school population and the proliferation of moral values, cultural background, life styles, etc.

With realities such as these, teaching staff is confronted with many demanding and complex challenges. This means that today, teachers have to practise their profession well beyond the confines of the classroom; they must engage in student-centered teaching, but also share their

expertise and their responsibilities with others; they must, among other things, “deal with a plurality of points of view, values and behaviours, and encourage understanding and openness toward differences and a new social cohesion” [translation]⁸.

These demands certainly establish a case for a professional approach, notably because they require sound knowledge and competencies that are based on responsible and ethical individual and collective practices designed to secure the trust of the public in general and parents in particular.

⁷ MEQ. 1997. *Québec Schools on Course. Ministerial Educational Policy Statement*. p. 9.

⁸ Direction de la formation et de la titularisation du personnel scolaire. MEQ. 2001. *La formation à l'enseignement. Les orientations. Les compétences professionnelles [Teacher Training. Orientations. Professional Competencies]*. p. 5.

3.2 TEACHER TRAINING

3.2.1 Initial training

Parents obviously welcomed the requirements for increased training of teachers and specialists. For parents, education's central place in contemporary Quebec society unquestionably demands that it be undertaken by persons who have acquired solid and appropriate training. In view of social, cultural and economic changes, the FCPQ is more convinced than ever that teaching requires "the development of a high level of professional competency that cannot be acquired through trial and error but rather, must be systematically learned during the training of a professional" [translation]⁹. The thoroughness and the pertinence of the different components of initial teacher training are in fact critical. Furthermore, certain aspects of the training deserve special attention.

Training that better prepares teachers to communicate with families

The FCPQ would like training to better prepare teachers to integrate dialogue and cooperation with parents in their teaching practice. There are two main reasons that teaching professionals should know how to communicate with parents: to better access the support that parents are ready to offer, and because communication is one of the aspects on which parents will base their trust in teachers' professionalism.

The FCPQ cannot express an opinion on the importance, the pertinence and the quality of the tools that universities offer teachers to help them take parents into account and communicate effectively with them. However, it observes, as did the *Conseil de la famille* in 2000, that parents sometimes have difficulty understanding teachers' expectations of them and that teachers do not always succeed in understanding parents. Communication between teaching staff and parents, with all its challenges and demands, consequently seems to be a neglected component in teacher training. Therefore, we must ensure that this aspect is taken into account, as it is crucial to achieving a partnership between school staff and parents, a partnership that, we repeat, represents a valuable tool for student success.

⁹ Ibid. 9.

With a view to ensuring an active and supportive partnership, teachers also have to have strategies and tools designed to help them improve and add to the information they give parents concerning their aims and objectives, their expectations and their activities. Communication skills are essential to establishing a relationship that allows parents to fully play their role alongside and together with teachers.

In order to make communication between parents and teaching staff more meaningful and promising, the FCPQ would also like teacher training to permit student teachers to have a better awareness of the diversity of today's families, their expectations, their problems and their role. By raising teachers' awareness of the reality of today's families, teacher training should contribute to the disappearance of the unfortunately numerous prejudices the teaching community holds about parents' competencies. This training might also help teaching staff and families themselves to invent new forms of communication and cooperation. For example, parents' interest cannot always lead to a regular commitment in the schools, such as sitting on committees or governing boards. Family and work requirements are such that it is time for teaching staff (but also for all school personnel and principals) to explore more flexible methods of participation and communication, better adapted to parents' lifestyles. The use of information technology tools and the development of more flexible activities might facilitate parents' commitment to and participation in the activities of the schools.

***In the matter of initial teacher training,
the FCPQ would like the teacher training community:***

- a) To promote communication with parents;***
- b) To provide information about the multi-faceted reality of today's families and promote awareness among teachers, especially those who are training***

to practise this profession;

- c) *To allow teaching staff to acquire professional attitudes and put into practice professional strategies regarding communication and partnership with parents.*

Comprehensive training of all persons responsible for professional development

In the opinion of the FCPQ, those responsible for professional development should have both a practical and professional knowledge required in the skill they teach and a university education in teaching. Professional development is particularly affected by instances in which one or the other of these two aspects, both essential to the competent performance of duties, is neglected.

The FCPQ, in the name of the parents it represents, would therefore like to be assured by professional development communities that educational services are provided by teachers who possess professional and practical knowledge of the skill they teach, as well as the university-level learning pertinent to the teaching activities.

3.2.2 Continuing education

The initial training of teachers will never be fully complete. The problem is the absence of an obligation for teachers to ensure their knowledge is brought up to date. [translation]

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Knowledge with respect to discipline, as well as knowledge specific to the fields of pedagogy, didactics, and the like, is constantly changing. This is why parents expect teachers to take part in continuing education activities on a regular basis. The issue is one that should not be a matter of choice by school boards, principals or members of the teaching staff. Continuing education, in teaching as in other professions, is a *sine qua non*.

If all teachers took advantage of continuing education activities, we might for example avoid situations like those cited by the *Conseil pédagogique interdisciplinaire du Québec* in 2002:

- ➔ “lack of awareness or a poor mastery of the pedagogical and didactic approaches recommended as a result of changes to the curriculum, the Basic School Regulation, the programs of study or student assessment;
- ➔ repetition of course plans and content, year after year, and use of outdated learning strategies and teaching practices” [translation].

In the opinion of the FCPQ, the lack of continuing education for many teachers is definitely a worrisome and unacceptable situation. It is completely intolerable, in an important area such as teaching, that members of the teaching staff may leave the practice for years and return to it with no requirement to update their skills.

Only 20% to 30% of teachers regularly participate in “professional continuing education activities that are truly of a pedagogic and didactic nature, and more particularly pertinent and appropriate in terms of their level, field and educational matters”¹⁰ [translation]. This situation seems to the FCPQ completely incompatible with the demands and the conditions of the teaching practice in modern-day Quebec.

The FCPQ would like all teachers to participate in pertinent and appropriate continuing education activities so as to ensure parents of the competence of all members of the teaching staff who work with their child. Furthermore, continuing education activities should be part of a duly formalized mechanism to evaluate a person’s aptitude and competence for teaching.

¹⁰ Conseil pédagogique interdisciplinaire du Québec. 2002. Avis du CPIQ sur la reconnaissance professionnelle des enseignantes et des enseignants. P. 8.

3.3 ACCESS TO THE PROFESSION

The FCPQ agrees with Jean-Pierre Proulx (1999) who noted that despite the competence of public officials working on activities related to entry into the profession, “teachers are more competent than these officials to define, among other things, the criteria for access to the profession they practise on a daily basis... as well as the criteria relating to initial training of its members and their professional development” [translation]¹¹. Furthermore, the FCPQ is convinced that the actors and the organizations that are currently responsible for initial training and access to the profession have little power when it comes to examining and/or sanctioning, on a legal basis, the level of competence and/or the conduct of new teachers.

¹¹ Proulx, Jean-Pierre. 1999. “Syndicalisme et ordre professionnel : deux formes de regroupement compatibles.” in Tardif, M. and G. Gauthier. *Pour ou contre un ordre professionnel des enseignantes et des enseignants au Québec?* Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999, p. 132-133

For parents, despite the laudable efforts of the educational community, the absence of a system or a systematic mechanism for professional integration means, for example, new teachers who are working with their children may:

- Teach a subject which they have not been trained to teach;
- Be subject to evaluation under the sole responsibility of the school principal or vice-principal;
- Advance with supervision, support and evaluation that have no rigorously defined criteria and conditions;
- Begin their teaching careers without the valuable input of experienced teachers.

The conditions in which teachers currently begin their careers are in fact problematic. The COFPE¹² points out these conditions are such that “school boards have devoted few resources to integrate new teachers and in most cases, these resources have been deferred or shelved” [translation]. This situation is particularly fraught with consequences in the current context where mass retirements lead to a renewal of teaching staff. For new members of the teaching body, access to employment is more rapid but does not always give them the time to reinforce the competencies they acquired in initial training. According to Geneviève Nault, leaving beginning teachers to manage on their own produces in some “a feeling of powerlessness, which may lead to health problems or even cause some to leave the teaching profession” [translation]¹³. In this regard, a high rate of dropout is reported among teachers at the beginning of their careers. The difficulties experienced by beginning teachers are undeniable. However, we must not lose sight of the impact such situations have on the hundreds and thousands of children who find themselves each year in the care of these new teachers who receive little or no support or supervision. All in all, the portrait painted by specialists of the conditions for beginning teachers is, to say the least, alarming for parents; in fact, there are many parents who endure the deplorable effects of this situation; it is important to emphasize that it is not just beginning teachers, but also students who have to pay the cost of entry into the profession without support or coaching.

¹² Comité d'orientation de la formation du personnel d'enseignement. MEQ. 2002. *Offrir la profession en héritage*, avis du Comité sur l'insertion dans l'enseignement. Québec. p. 12-13.

It stands to reason that parents should be assured that their children are entrusted to teachers whose competence and conduct meet professional standards, no matter how many years of experience they have.

In consequence, the FCPQ would like the entry of new teachers into the profession to be subject to supervision, support and evaluation that is sufficiently rigorous and transparent to assure all parents that they are receiving services from competent teachers—teachers with whom their children will not pay the cost of possible failures or shortcomings that might result from the inadequate nature of the supervision, support or evaluation of a new member of the teaching staff.

3.4 PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

With the recent reform, teachers today enjoy greater autonomy, for example in the choice of teaching methods and evaluation. This autonomy surely offers teachers the chance to optimize their practices. However, autonomy cannot develop fully unless it is supported by competence. In the current situation, it does not seem possible to ensure all parents that all members of the teaching staff possess the necessary competencies on which to base their professional autonomy. This “assurance” to parents, like the necessary ties of trust between parents and teaching staff, should be improved by setting up rigorous mechanisms capable of ensuring the competence and the ethical conduct of all those who teach. These mechanisms concern professional evaluation by peers and the handling of complaints.

3.4.1 Professional evaluation

The FCPQ agrees that the large majority of teachers have the competence and the ethical standard needed to practise their profession. Nevertheless, no method of rigorous and systematic evaluation currently permits the supervision of teaching staff. Although teaching

¹³ Nault, Geneviève. 2003. “L’insertion professionnelle: quelques exemples d’ailleurs” in *Vie pédagogique*, Sept. Oct. 2003. p. 23.

practice often is entrenched in a collective approach, teaching staff carries out a large part of its duties alone. There are certainly initiatives of mutual cooperation and regulation among many teachers. However, there is no mechanism that supports in a systematic and rigorous way the responsibility of evaluating and helping colleagues to improve their educational interventions. In the opinion of the FCPQ, the absence of rigorous evaluation activities is not in keeping with professional autonomy.

The FCPQ would like provisions to be made so that members of the teaching staff benefit from rigorous evaluation activities by their peers in order to better ensure parents of the quality and the ethical standard of the educational services given to their child.

3.4.2 Handling complaints

Everyone knows that good teachers often play a crucial role in the personal and professional achievements of individuals. Conversely, no one can be insensitive to the physical, psychological, emotional and moral damage that may be caused a child entrusted to a teacher whose competence or conduct is inappropriate. Children and parents find it difficult to speak of situations that involve the competence or the integrity of a teacher. Requests for information and accounts received by the FCPQ suggest that troubling situations and sometimes horror stories, although exceptional, really do exist.

The fact is that parents and children are not well protected against the incompetence or the lack of ethical standards of certain teachers. It must be emphasized that these situations are not less damaging because they do not represent the norm. Parents do not have appropriate or efficient mechanisms for complaints. Under these circumstances, as the FCPQ already pointed out at the consultation with the *Office des professions du Québec* (2002), **“unless it is an extreme case or the evidence is overwhelming, the supervision currently provided for by the Education Act is not at all satisfactory to complainants. The current mechanisms for handling complaints tend instead to hush up certain conducts by**

trivializing them. (...) Given this, parents sometimes get to the stage where they move their child to another school or contemplate home-schooling” [translation]¹⁴. Indeed, the mechanism provided by the Act targets serious misconducts but not questions of competence.

The mechanism for handling complaints as it currently exists, cannot appear transparent to parents since questions are dealt with most often within the school or at the school board and in the absence of parents. No organization has a real power of inquiry or sanction. What’s more, the current mechanism for handling complaints does not encourage parents and children to expose situations that are unacceptable to the profession.

It goes without saying that if teaching staff feels uncomfortable or insecure by unfounded complaints and rumours, parents feel just the same about the inexistence of a credible mechanism for dealing with complaints. The FCPQ believes that both aspects of the problem are probably linked. The virtual impossibility of getting complaints dealt with in the serious manner they deserve is a fertile breeding ground for the propagation of rumours.

The teaching profession should equip itself with a code of professional conduct and a mechanism for handling complaints that better protects children and parents but also teachers who certainly do not wish to count among their ranks persons who tarnish the profession.

We have to admit that it is impossible to quantify the situations that call into question the competence or the ethical standards of members of the teaching staff. However, we are sure that such situations exist and that they result in immeasurable damage.

The fact is that parents and children in Quebec are poorly protected against types of behaviours that show incompetence or a lack of ethical standards. The FCPQ position is that parents and children could and should be better protected than they are now, and it is of the opinion that cases of incompetence and unethical or irresponsible conduct might be avoided by

¹⁴ Fédération des Comités de parents de la province de Québec, Avis fourni à l’Office des professions du Québec sur la « Reconnaissance professionnelle des enseignantes et des enseignants », April 2002, p. 10.

preventive and proactive measures. It is indignant at the idea of the damage that results from the weakness and deficiency of the current complaint system.

The FCPQ, in the name of the parents it represents, stresses the urgency of making the complaint system more efficient and more transparent so as to:

- **Bring to light flagrant cases of incompetence and misconduct;**
- **Limit damages and spare families, the society, as well as the teaching staff itself, from the injurious consequences of the presence in schools of individuals lacking integrity or competence.**

The FCPQ would also like the teaching profession to rapidly adopt a code of professional conduct that clearly outlines the ethical guidelines that must be respected by teachers.

4. CONCLUSION: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Parents have to be exacting of those to whom they entrust their child. Their children's well-being, development and success as students are in most cases at the top of fathers and mothers' priority list. Doubtless this is why education is constantly debated, discussed and analysed in both the private and public spheres. In fact, parents have many expectations with regard to the education system and in particular the teaching staff. These parental expectations are linked on one hand to parents' wish to be true partners of teachers and on the other hand to their desire to be fully reassured of the competence and conduct of all those who work with their child every day and over many years. It is in light of these two closely related expectations that the FCPQ calls on all actors responsible, in one way or another, for the quality of the teaching provided to young people in order that every child in Quebec **receive, every year and everywhere, services from professionals who comply with the same code of professional conduct and with standards relating to competencies and practices.** This is not a particularly extraordinary target: it reflects the collective value that we attach to children and to education and it testifies to the fact that the quality of education benefits the whole society.