

# **Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools**

*Report  
of the Task Force on  
Curriculum Reform*





June 16, 1997

The Honourable Pauline Marois  
Minister of Education  
Gouvernement du Québec  
1035, rue De La Chevrotière, 16<sup>e</sup> étage  
Québec (Québec) G1R 5A5

Dear Madam Minister:

We are honoured to table our report, in accordance with the mandate you gave our Task Force on January 30, 1997.

In our mandate, you requested that we table, in June 1997, our recommendations “concerning the changes to be made to the elementary and secondary school curricula in order to satisfy the demands of the 21st century” and specified the points on which proposals for change were expected. We believe this report fully complies with your request.

Two concerns were constantly on our minds throughout the discussions and proceedings which led to the formulation of these recommendations. Our first concern was to provide a better quality education to Québec’s children and youth. Their intellectual and personal development hinges on our attaining this goal: with a better education, they will be better prepared to face the challenges ahead.

Our second concern was to address the calls for adjustments to the curriculum voiced by individuals, groups and organizations over the last ten years and more particularly during the hearings and sessions held as a part of the Estates General on Education. We feel that we have provided a satisfactory response to these demands. In some instances, the proposals we have made even imply substantial revisions to current practices.

It is with great pleasure that we submit a unanimous report.

Sincerely,



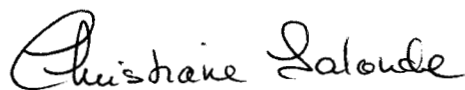
Paul Inchauspé  
Chair



Marcelle Beaulieu



Jeanne-Paule Berger



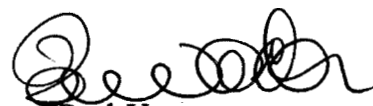
Christiane Lalonde



Jean-Robert Derome



Charley Levy



Paul Vachon

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**W**hen we agreed to sit on this Task Force, we knew, although we could not measure the scope of the challenge ahead of us, that we would be part of a tremendous team effort. Now that we have completed our mandate, we realize just how much our success depended on the support and expertise of our numerous collaborators.

Our work benefited from the advice and opinions of the many individuals and groups we consulted, who did not hesitate to answer our call. We wish to thank them sincerely for finding the time to work with us, and for sharing their knowledge and experience. These individuals and groups are named on the next page.

I would also like to express my appreciation of the exceptional contribution made by certain staff members of the ministère de l'Éducation: Francine Richard, who saw to the smooth running of the Task Force's activities, drafted the minutes of our meetings, and was a great help in putting this report together; André Martin, whose knowledge of the history of education in Québec over the last 30 years was indispensable to us and whose analysis shed new light on many points; Jean Hénaire, who versed us in learning across the curriculum and in citizenship education; Johanne Forest, who, with tireless patience and perseverance, typed the various versions of this report and took care of a great many of our small problems, all with the greatest courtesy; and finally Paul Vachon, who, while he sat on this Task Force, also coordinated the work of these individuals and maintained close ties with the senior levels and other branches of the ministère de l'Éducation.

Without the collaboration of all of these individuals, we could not have tabled these proposals to "reaffirm the mission of our schools."

Paul Inchauspé

## **TASK FORCE ON CURRICULUM REFORM**

### **Groups and Individuals Consulted and Contributors**

#### **Ministère de l'Éducation**

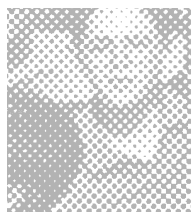
- The officers in charge of program development
- The officers in charge of the evaluation of student learning
- The staff of the Direction de la formation et de la titularisation du personnel scolaire
- The staff of the Direction des relations de travail
- The management team of the Direction générale de la formation professionnelle et technique
- The team in charge of new technologies (Direction des ressources didactiques)
- The staff of the Direction des services aux anglophones
- The officer in charge of the committee on continuing education
- The officer in charge of the working group on the preschool education program
- The officer in charge of the working group on the intercultural education policy
- Luce Brossard, editor of the periodical *Vie pédagogique*
- Arthur Marsolais, of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

#### **Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation**

- The members of the Catholic Committee
- The members of the Protestant Committee

#### **Other Ministries and Organizations**

- Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (André Couture and Fabienne Bilodeau)
- Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (Donald Brisson and Diane Rodier)
- A group of students and professors in the Faculty of Education, Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue
- Conseil pédagogique interdisciplinaire
- A group of social studies education consultants from the Laval-Laurentides-Lanaudière region
- Regroupement de responsables pédagogiques d'écoles privées
- Advisory Board on English Education (Gretta Chambers)
- School principals with the Commission des écoles catholiques de Sherbrooke (Charlotte Sansot, école du Soleil Levant and Mario Duclos, école du Boisjoli)
- School principals in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region
- Service régional d'admission de Montréal (Jean-Pierre Bergeron, executive director)
- Janyne Hodder, principal, Bishop's University



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# Chapter 1

## Curriculum Reform

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The word “curriculum” refers to all those activities designed to provide students with learning in a given education system. By the same token, it refers to the choices that were made in determining the relative importance or place of each of the subjects to be taught. In Québec, these choices are set out in the basic school regulations under the heading “subject-time allocation.” The word “curriculum” also refers to the overall content on the basis of which the programs of study are designed. By extension, it encompasses three of the elements that structure the actual curriculum as it is dispensed in the classroom: the system for establishing programs, the evaluation of student learning and the certification of studies.

The fact that the Western member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have settled on the word “curriculum,” even in their French texts, to describe all of the elements of the school system which are intended to ensure that students receive an education provides a clear indication of their concerns at the present time. The same concerns are found in Québec. Since our mandate is to make recommendations for curriculum reform, we feel it is appropriate to devote the first chapter of this report to an overview of the reforms currently under way in Western countries and of the work accomplished in this area in Québec over the past ten years.

### 1. CURRICULUM REFORM IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

The OECD’s Centre for Educational Research and Innovation has been studying the curriculum reforms undertaken in various member countries for the last ten years, a fact which reflects the interest currently shown in many countries in curriculum reform at the elementary and secondary levels. Thirty to forty years ago, these countries were concerned about increasing school attendance (democratization). Fifteen years ago, the focus was on measuring the performance of their education systems using dropout rates and performance indicators. In recent years, curriculum reform has emerged as another area of concern.

#### 1.1 Underlying Reasons for Curriculum Reform

The reasons for this shift in emphasis are often explicitly stated by those responsible for curriculum reform. There are two reasons why attention has turned to the curriculum, to that which defines the very function of our educational institutions.

- ***Knowledge now plays a dominant role in the material and social organization of our society***

More than ever, daily life now requires that all members of society have the intellectual skills needed to use technology and various media and to deal with organizations.

The economic vitality and prosperity of a country are no longer contingent on whether or not it possesses raw materials. With the advent of international competition, knowledge, along with scientific and technological expertise, has become the key to wealth and power.

The exponential growth in knowledge, the speed at which knowledge is renewed and the explosive rate of technological innovation have led to the emergence of the “knowledge-based society.” To feel at ease in this society, every individual needs to master more knowledge and to be able to assimilate new knowledge on an ongoing basis.

Two of the most acute social problems experienced by societies faced with industrial restructuring, social exclusion and underemployment are connected, and both have to do with knowledge. There is a clear relation between academic failure and social standing: from now on, the position of each individual with respect to knowledge will increasingly determine his or her place in society. This raises the question of which knowledge is the essential knowledge that must be provided to all. What new skills are required by the new work systems and labour market conditions? And how should schools develop these skills?

- ***Schools are expected to act as agents of social cohesion***

The orientations adopted in this respect vary from country to country, but usually reflect one or more of the following concerns.

- Schools must develop and promote the values and attitudes of the various communities represented in the country.
- Schools must react to social breakdown, the signs of which are family collapse, the widening gap between rich and poor as the result of growing poverty, the values crisis, the disappearance of traditional community ties, and violence. In reaction, schools must help students find their place in society by transmitting a common cultural tradition (including knowledge, cultural references and value systems), by sharing common values based on common needs, and by providing for real equality of opportunity.
- Schools must address the question of how to prepare students to exercise citizenship. As new democracies gain a foothold around the world, their fragility is only too evident. Democracy must also be exercised outside the institutions created to ensure its maintenance, by citizens who are aware of the collective stakes and who wish to play an active role in democratic life.
- Schools must address the global challenges presented by current social changes: increased migration, pluralism, sustainable development, the preservation of cultural heritage, the expansion of the media, environmental concerns, the imbalance between rich and poor countries, and so on.

All these issues have given rise to demands for a readjustment of the curriculum.

## 1.2 Characteristics of Current Curriculum Reforms

- ***The political authority plays a key role in these reforms***

Until recently, governments' degree of interest in "what is taught" in schools has varied widely. Although a basic principle of political culture in France, the question was never addressed in Great Britain, where former Prime Minister James Callaghan described the curriculum as a "secret garden." Under the *Educational Reform Act*, passed in 1988, the public authorities in the United Kingdom obtained the right to reform school programs, and did so, so that there are no more "secret gardens" today. In some American states, the basic knowledge every student must master before leaving school is even prescribed by law. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, political authorities formerly had little say in curriculum design, so that schools and school districts enjoyed a wide degree of latitude. In all the countries that have inherited this tradition, however, the situation is changing and governments are adopting national curricula.

The task of defining the essential learning that must be included in a curriculum is no longer the exclusive domain of experts in the field or subject concerned. Even if their interests are divergent, all of the groups with an interest in the results of the educational process—and this extends beyond parents—are involved in curriculum reform in one way or another.

Curriculum reform has become a political act in the very basic sense of the word. Education has so strong an impact on the lives of so many individuals that the selection of "what must be taught" cannot be left to experts alone. The support and input of people from other walks of life who are just as devoted to the public good are now essential ingredients in formulating proposals for reform and encouraging schools to play a more active role in society.

- ***The reforms are often a response to the concerns of the State, which are expressed in three main forms***

- *The definition of a mission.* The curriculum is updated or revised to reflect a firm, explicit statement of the ultimate objectives of education. This approach commits the state, provides guidelines for future actions, and ensures the mobilization of society.
- *The definition of overall curriculum content.* This may take a number of forms, for example, the delimiting of broad fields of study, a statement of the reasons for their choice, and guidelines to be followed in teaching the subjects and disciplines within each field. This may even go as far as defining learning profiles which specify the skills students must have acquired in each broad field of study by the end of their schooling or of a specific stage in their schooling.
- *The definition of the skills and abilities to be developed and the common values to be promoted.* For example, former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett asked that schools develop the following qualities in their students: strength of character, individuality, independence, reflection, loyalty, kindness, diligence, honesty, equity, self-discipline, respect for the law, and an ability to act in keeping with accepted and tried notions of good and evil instead of their own personal preferences.

- ***The reforms take into account the cultural context of the country concerned***

Although mathematics and science tend to follow international standards, the relative importance placed on the arts, health education, moral education and languages, and the approach taken in the social studies, are deeply rooted in cultural traditions.

Some elements of the curriculum can be used to reinforce cultural tradition, but some are deliberately included to transform tradition. The curriculum is an expression not only of cultural memory, but also of a cultural project.

## **2. CURRICULUM REFORM IN QUÉBEC**

### **2.1 The Origins of the Current Curriculum**

The current situation can only be understood by going back to the late 1970s and the document *The Schools of Québec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action*, also known as the “orange paper.”

*The Schools of Québec* was published in 1979 after wide-ranging consultation on a green paper entitled *Primary and Secondary Education in Québec* (1977). It proposed a major reform of the elementary and secondary school curriculum and set out the aims and objectives of public education, the organization of elementary and secondary school education (including the subjects to be taught and the time allotted for each subject) and the rules governing the certification of studies. Major chapters were devoted to the curriculum, measurement and evaluation, and textbooks.

The 1981 basic school regulations, which are still in force and prescribe compulsory and optional subjects, subject-time allocation and the format of the current programs of study, are a direct product of *The Schools of Québec*.

### **2.2 Early Criticism**

Only a few years after their implementation, the new basic school regulations were already drawing criticism. In the spring of 1986, over 6000 participants convened for the Estates General on the Quality of Education, where discussion focused on the curriculum.

One of the major themes, “The School: A Catch-All?,” was largely inspired by a worldwide trend to question existing curricula. “Today, groups that endorse the American report *A Nation at Risk* consider that schools must place clear, unequivocal emphasis on cognitive development; they advocate the elimination of optional subjects and a refocusing of the curriculum on the so-called basic subjects, meaning the language of instruction, mathematics, science and the second language...What are the most important values that schools should be transmitting to our youth?...With relation to skills, the central questions are ‘What types of skills will we ask our schools to teach?’ and ‘What are the responsibilities of our schools as regards access to the various levels of education, evaluation and certification?’...The purpose of these Estates General is to reexamine these questions.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. “L’école de demain: autre chose que le retour du balancier” (Keynote speech for the regional activities at the Estates General on the Quality of Education, 1985). [Where the source for a quote is given in French, either in a footnote or in the body of the text, a free translation has been provided.]

Although these Estates General produced few concrete results, they provided an opportunity to clarify the issues at stake. Debate on the curriculum was to continue throughout the following ten-year period.

### 2.3 The Work and Opinions of the Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation

Over the last 15 years, curriculum content has been a constant concern of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation. Since 1982, the Conseil has published some ten or so opinions on elementary and secondary school subjects: the quality of French language teaching, mathematics and science, second language teaching, education in the arts, intercultural education, ethics, and new information and communications technologies.

Over the same period, the Conseil has made recommendations on individual components of the curriculum and published opinions on fundamental education, the quality of education, the goals, teaching methods and educational practices of elementary schools, the evaluation of learning at the elementary level, curriculum integration at the secondary level, curriculum content specific to the secondary level, and the second cycle of secondary school (its particularities, related issues and possible improvements).

On the basis of its work and recommendations over this period, in July 1994, the Conseil issued a landmark opinion on the curriculum as a whole. In this document, entitled *Rénover le curriculum du primaire et du secondaire*, the Conseil assessed the strengths and weaknesses of elementary and secondary school education in Québec and made the following recommendations:

- That reform should be based on a statement of the ultimate goals of education, with one of these goals—training the mind—as the cornerstone. “Training the mind” means providing students with a general education, which implies both the acquisition of structural knowledge, the organization of information and the integration of different areas of study, and the development of the methodological skills needed to reason, analyze, synthesize, criticize, and solve problems.
- That specific exit profiles should be defined for the major stages in elementary and secondary schooling. Each profile should provide a brief summary of the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be expressly targeted.
- That emphasis should be placed, especially at the secondary level, on avoiding an overly rigid level of uniformity by diversifying teaching methods and introducing “true optional subjects” to give students a range of choices in the second cycle of secondary school.

This landmark opinion also included assessments and recommendations concerning the nature of the programs of study and their content, and various hypotheses regarding subject-time allocation at the elementary and secondary levels.

### 2.4 Recent Government Statements Concerning Curriculum Reform

In 1992, *Joining Forces*, the plan of action on educational success, called for curriculum reform in these terms: “The question, then, is whether the curriculum is too uniform, too rigid, too restrictive. All of the actions undertaken in this ambitious campaign to ensure the educational success of our young people must be accompanied by a review of the curriculum. The

Ministry, [together with] the various partners of the education system... will...determine ways and means of reorganizing the curriculum or making it more flexible...This review of the curriculum is aimed at determining the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are most important for students. The timetable, the programs and the rules for certification of studies will be examined in order to establish with greater clarity those elements that are compulsory, those that are optional and those that are useful for enrichment purposes.”

In August 1992, a curriculum review committee, the Comité sur les ajustements au curriculum, was set up. It included 12 representatives of partner organizations (the main associations of school administrators and school employees, and parents’ associations) and five representatives of the ministère de l’Éducation du Québec (MEQ). The committee tabled its recommendations on June 17, 1993, just as the new Minister of Education announced policy directions and renewal measures for college education in a document entitled *Preparing Québec Colleges for the 21st Century*. Some of these directions and measures would have an impact on the secondary school curriculum: “Because it is very homogeneous, the Québec curriculum generates less disparity than most North American secondary schools. The question, raised repeatedly before the Committee on Education, is what the [Secondary School Diploma] must encompass to warrant admission to a college and guarantee a minimum of success.”

In November 1993, the Minister released orientations and proposals for elementary and secondary level education. Curriculum reform is the central theme of *Moving Ahead—Elementary and Secondary School Education in Québec: Orientations, Proposals and Issues*. The document, which was submitted for public consultation, proposed measures to improve proficiency in the language of instruction, reinforce second language learning, broaden the range of courses offered in the second cycle of secondary school, and modify the rules governing the awarding of the Secondary School Diploma. It also called into question certain aspects of the teaching of English as the language of instruction, the status of certain subjects and the time allotted for them, and access to vocational education for youth-sector students. One chapter dealt with the need for greater emphasis on the goal of providing a quality general education to all students.

*Moving Ahead* also indicated that schools were having difficulties dealing with the sheer numbers of programs and objectives, and that the following questions needed answering: “What are young people expected to know when they leave secondary school? What skills and attitudes are they supposed to have developed?”

In answering these questions, the ministerial document proposed designing a “realistic and functional ‘exit profile’ to specify the knowledge, skills and attitudes students should have acquired at the end of each level.” Design of the exit profiles should be entrusted to a “think-tank [which] would bring together figures from the field of education and from Québec’s main sociocultural and economic sectors.”

The proposal was implemented on March 30, 1994, when the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles was established. Known as the Corbo Task Force after the name of its chair, Claude Corbo, then rector of the Université du Québec à Montréal, it published its report on June 2, 1994. The report, entitled *Preparing Our Youth for the 21st Century*, contained a set of proposals and suggestions for further exploration, centring on outcomes and the school’s roles, the major areas of learning, and learning profiles to be attained by the end of elementary and secondary school.

However, on April 9, 1995, before the proposals had been released for public consultation, the newly elected government convened the Estates General on Education, one of whose goals was “to define objectives for the school in its broadest sense, both now and in the future.”

## 2.5 The Opinions of the Commission for the Estates General on Education

It was only natural that curriculum issues would be a central topic at the public discussions held by the Commission for the Estates General on Education. In a report drafted after the first series of hearings, *The State of Education in Québec*, the Commission members summarized what they had heard, and stressed:

- that absolute priority should be given to improving the language skills and general cultural competence of Québec youth;
- that the syllabus at the secondary level should be revised to focus on essential subjects and to eliminate overlap between programs and redundancy from year to year;
- that greater diversity should be introduced at the second cycle of secondary school by allowing students to select the courses best suited to their interests and by providing earlier access to vocational education;
- that it would be useful and relevant to define clear exit profiles for each level of education, or even each cycle, in order to ensure better balance between the cycles and reduce compartmentalization.

It was therefore not surprising that one of the ten priority actions identified by the Commission members in their final report, released in September 1996, was the renewal of curricula at the elementary and secondary levels.

Since the curricula were drawn up over 15 years ago, the Commission members felt that “clearly, the time has come to overhaul [them] to bring them in line with social changes and demands.” They circumscribed the actions needed as follows:

- “Besides discussions about the room each subject should have in the timetable, restructuring the curricula will entail defining...fundamental learning (understood in the sense of ‘learning to learn, to be, to do and to live together,’ to borrow the terms used in the Delors report).
- “We believe the learning profiles should centre on the following six major learning areas: language; technology, science and mathematics; life in society; the arts; personal development; and general skills. While largely based on the Corbo Report, they include certain adjustments we feel are in order and reflect our particular standpoint.
- “In our opinion, the following principles should be taken into account in revising the elementary and secondary school curricula on the basis of the established learning profiles. Such a revision should: respect the mission of each level of education by providing the necessary continuity between them; encompass the three educational goals and four types of knowledge...; keep in mind that common-core general education should extend to the end of Secondary III and provide for diversification from Secondary IV on; ensure balance

between the various subjects; provide for a balanced distribution of subject matter throughout the school years; consider the possibilities of interdisciplinarity and subject integration; [and] clarify the role of other activities besides courses and of other educational venues.”

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Given the amount of work accomplished so far and the fact that the process was never completed, Minister of Education Pauline Marois has made curriculum reform the second line of action in her plan to reform the education system and has requested that firm proposals be tabled by June 1997.

Some may have thought the time allotted was too short in light of the amount of work to be accomplished. Our goal in presenting this overview has been to show that the Task Force has, in fact, been able to build on what has been accomplished in the last ten years. As stated by the Minister on October 24, 1996, the Task Force could, and indeed was required to, “base its work on the proceedings of the Estates General, the opinions of the Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, and the reports of several working groups.” This is what we have done.

## ***Expectations to Be Met Through the Curriculum Reform***

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**D**esigning or redesigning a curriculum should not be seen as a simple, mechanical exercise in which one subject is replaced by another or one method of certification by another. Each change must be designed to achieve a result that was not previously possible, or that could only be achieved with difficulty. This is why, before discussing our proposals for specific changes to certain elements of the current curriculum, we would like to define our ultimate goals as clearly as possible.

These goals are not merely personal preferences. They have emerged progressively during the long maturing process that led up to the formulation of these proposals for reform. During this process, and especially during the period of the Estates General on Education, a wide range of groups and individuals expressed their expectations with respect to the school system. Obviously, the diversity of the opinions expressed greatly enriched the process, but also led to the establishment of divergent, and sometimes opposing viewpoints. A public confrontation of opinions and a democratic debate were clearly needed before a consensus could emerge. From this point of view, the diagnosis established by the Commission members on the basis of the public hearings, published in *The State of Education in Québec*, together with the findings of the public forums, the regional conferences and the provincial conference that took place subsequently, tends to support the conclusions reached by this Task Force concerning the changes to be made to the curriculum.

We are thus continuing the process begun by the Estates General on Education. We will also attempt to define the issues more clearly in order to rally and mobilize the individuals who will implement the curriculum on a daily basis in schools and classrooms, and to present our reasons for proposing certain changes.

The expectations to be met through the proposed curriculum reform can be divided into six main groups:

- expectations relating to the mission of instruction;
- expectations relating to the mission of socialization;
- expectations relating to the mission of providing qualifications;
- expectations relating to the use of time;
- expectations relating to the use of leeway and autonomy;
- expectations relating to evaluation and certification.

## 1. EXPECTATIONS RELATING TO THE MISSION OF INSTRUCTION

### 1.1 Focusing on the Mission of Instruction

One of the questions that gave rise to the most heated debate during the Estates General process was the definition of the mission of our schools. First, a great deal of resistance was encountered, particularly among those working in schools, to the proposal that the mission of providing instruction should be made the primary mission of schools. The Commission never really settled the matter: “Although schools do not have a monopoly on instruction, any more than they do on socialization or qualifications, it is clear that as institutions devoted to formal education, they are the places where instruction can be most successfully undertaken.” (*Renewing Our Education System: Ten Priority Actions*, Final Report of the Commission for the Estates General on Education [Québec: Ministère de l’Éducation, 1996], p.5).

The debate as to which mission should take precedence over the others, based on an examination of the nature of the school as an institution, appears to us to be sterile. The relative importance of each mission is determined by the current context. Once the functions performed by schools have attained a certain degree of permanence, a given society, at a given moment in its history, will decide to place more importance on one function, and then on another. The reformulation of the mission will reflect the new direction that schools are being asked to take. Such reformulations can sometimes appear to break away from previous models, but radical change is never entirely possible. Rather, reformulation represents a shift in emphasis or direction intended to mobilize various key players. It must never be interpreted as an absolute, but rather in relation to the situation that must be changed and the new challenges which schools must meet. For example, one explicit new ultimate objective of the Japanese school system, currently undergoing reform, is the “realization of each child’s potential.” Should we conclude from this that Japan is setting up the kind of schools proposed in *The Schools of Québec*? Obviously, we cannot grasp the meaning of the change without knowing something about the current characteristics of schools in the competitive world of Japan.

Over the past 20 years, schools in Québec have been marked by ultimate objectives such as those proposed in *The Schools of Québec*, which focused on personal growth, the instilling of values, and individual independence. Students’ overall development is cited as the single most important objective to be pursued by schools.

Practically nothing was mentioned about the cognitive objectives of schooling, even though most of the activities carried out in schools centre on this specific function. The Parent Report targeted the modernization of society through education, and broke away from the older mistrust of intellectual qualifications characteristic of the Duplessis era. *The Schools of Québec*, by focusing the work of schools essentially on values and individual development, was sometimes used as an excuse for neglecting tasks relating to intellectual development and for not taking the means to achieve the standards set. This is the context against which we must now react, especially since schools are now facing a wide range of new challenges in connection with intellectual development, some of them without precedent. This alone would justify an increased emphasis on cognitive functions.

Placing emphasis on intellectual development and the mastery of knowledge is not a new idea in the education field. It has served as the basis for creating niches within education sys-

tems where the brightest students could benefit from this type of approach. The novelty today is the proposal that this type of education should become the system-wide, universal norm. Underlying this proposal is a concern that was not as strong 20 or 30 years ago. Constant references to the “knowledge-based society” which lies ahead and which will require the development of higher-level intellectual skills reflect this shift in expectations. It would no longer be acceptable to define the mission of our schools without specifically assigning priority to cognitive development.

## 1.2 Raising Standards

The raising of standards was a constantly recurring demand at the Estates General on Education. It covered a range of concerns, including:

- the need to make sure that students do master reading and writing skills when they are supposed to master them;
- the need to increase the cultural component of the curriculum;
- the need to increase course content in certain subjects: science at the elementary level, history, and the second language.

Our proposals for change to the curriculum should allow these expectations to be met. There are, however, a number of elusive factors which combine to push standards lower, and curriculum design alone cannot rectify the situation. The implementation of more stringent programs with clearly defined requirements should serve as a bulwark against the lowering of standards that many consider inevitable. If this is to be the case, though, we must resist certain beliefs that act as obstacles to any improvement in students’ results. They are:

- ***The belief that a common-core curriculum can only be implemented if based on the lowest common denominator***

The best way to counter this belief is by using facts and past experience to present the opposite viewpoint. Every child can be educated, using the appropriate means. The important role played by teachers in this regard, and their capacity to encourage students to learn, has been underestimated. Certain teachers have shown that they are able to instill a desire to learn in even the most recalcitrant students. We have set artificial limits on what we think certain children can learn: they are capable of assimilating more complex forms of knowledge than was previously thought possible. Moreover, there are ways of adapting teaching activities to different ability levels within a classroom and they produce valid results.

- ***The belief that the process leading to a result must be of the same nature as the result itself***

This is a constantly recurring mistake in the field of education. Results are never instantaneous, and are not necessarily an integral part of the process. Although developing students’ creativity is a praiseworthy goal, creative writing workshops will not produce the intended results if the basic rules of grammar and composition are neglected. Similarly, being able to think for oneself is an outcome, and not a starting point. Students who are

asked to think for themselves without any preparation will produce only banal results. A true ability to think for oneself can only be attained through intimate, but critical, contact with the thoughts of those who have gone before. In musical terms, the soul can only express itself if instrumental technique is transcended, but the basic technique must have been acquired beforehand.

Teachers must know how to stimulate, challenge, direct and charm their students in order to liberate their potential. They must, to borrow a famous paradox from Rousseau, constrain students to be free, providing for their future freedom by placing limits on the freedom they enjoy in the classroom. This was the message delivered to the Estates General on Education by a group of young university students. They felt that not enough had been required of them, that they had not been forced to master the more elementary learning that would later have made it easier for them to acquire more complex forms of knowledge.

- ***The belief that schools should not go beyond the limits of what society in general considers worthwhile***

Teachers often experience anxiety about the frequent situations in which they seem to be out of phase with society. Once again, resistance is the key. If reading is disregarded by society, schools must emphasize reading; if society seems indifferent to democratic ideals, they must be promoted in schools. The success obtained by schools in underprivileged areas is often achieved by maintaining high expectations with regard to students' work, and by providing intellectually and culturally stimulating environments.

The widespread demands for a raising of standards are sometimes ambiguous, and in fact are limited to a raising of standards for the brightest students. Although these students must not be forgotten, we believe that it is important to respond to a broader-based demand for higher quality throughout the school system that would affect all students. Not only must standards be raised, but more students must be enabled to reach them. Certain defeatist beliefs must be resisted, and methods to help slower or weaker students to reach higher standards must be applied. We will come back to this point later.

### **1.3 Improving Cultural Content**

The landmark opinion issued in 1994 by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Rénover le curriculum du primaire et du secondaire*, underlined the deficiencies of the current curriculum with regard to culture. The first report released by the Estates General on Education, *The State of Education in Québec*, expanded on this point, and identified cultural content as one of the major deficiencies that needed to be corrected. For many people, however, correction would involve merely increasing the time devoted to literature, the arts, and history. This, in our view, is not sufficient. The curriculum as a whole must be adjusted to ensure that the cultural aspect is more firmly embedded in it.

An examination of the OECD surveys of ongoing curriculum reforms in Western countries shows that these reforms tend to orient the curriculum towards one of three ultimate goals.

- A utilitarian goal. Education is seen, not as an activity that has intrinsic value in itself, but as a means to achieve other ends, which in general means economic activity and economic growth.

- A cognitive goal. Education is seen as a way of developing the mind. In this approach, students are first introduced to the various modes of intelligence and knowledge, and more specifically to the concept of rational thought. Once provided with these tools, they will be able to understand and solve the problems they have to face.
- A cultural goal. Education is seen primarily as the appropriation by a new generation of the store of cultural knowledge that constitutes the human heritage and the essence of the cultural rather than natural world in which we live.

In actual fact, however, no curriculum can be directed towards a single ultimate goal, since all three goals are indispensable if students are to be provided with a balanced education. The decision to place emphasis on one goal rather than on the others, though, is the sign of a weakness in the curriculum.

Thus, the cultural goal needs to be reinforced in our curriculum, which until recently has focused mainly on the utilitarian and cognitive goals. The utilitarian goal has even penetrated popular consciousness to such an extent that the saying *qui s'instruit s'enrichit* (he who studies grows rich) is taken literally to mean that education provides an opportunity to earn a living, rather than to broaden the mind. The cognitive goal also has its place although, regrettably, it is smaller than it should be. In actual fact, we have laid greater emphasis on the transmission of knowledge than on students' cognitive development. The Parent Report was the first to define the problem of education by contrasting general education, designed to produce a well-rounded mind, and specialized training. The increased importance attributed to the notion of basic education throughout the Québec school system in the wake of the Nadeau Report (1976) does not need stressing here, nor does the current interest in cognitive psychology. The cultural aspect, however, has received very little attention. Despite a passing mention in parts of the Parent Report, it has practically dropped from view, and to bring it to prominence now is an uphill struggle. If the cultural aspect is to take its rightful place in the curriculum, three types of action must be taken.

- ***The cultural perspective governing the selection of subjects for inclusion in the curriculum must be made more explicit***

“The learning schools must impart to students is not generated spontaneously, but is rather a product of the work done by previous generations in the various fields of human culture: art, literature, science, technology and lifestyles. Students are introduced to culture at school in order to allow them to better adapt to, and join, a cultural system built up over the centuries—the complex world in which they will have to live. Another goal is the assimilation of culture, allowing students to construct their intellectual and personal identity and in turn innovate and, in some cases, create.” (*Preparing Our Youth for the 21st Century*, Report of the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles [Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1994], p.15). The message that students must receive from a curriculum is the following: “In school, you will learn how to become more human. How? By being brought into contact with the most significant human achievements, since the world in which you live is the result of human achievement. By seeing what humanity is capable of, you will learn that you too are an enterprising, inventive, cooperative being continually searching for something better. You too can now make a contribution to improving our world, like those who have gone before you. The instruments you will need to participate

actively in the construction of the world will be developed within you: reason, imagination, a critical faculty, and the open-mindedness that stimulates the intelligence.”The overall curriculum content presented in Chapter 3 is an outline of the essential knowledge to be included in the curriculum and has been designed to emphasize this approach.

- ***The content of certain courses must be rebalanced to allow a more thorough understanding of cultural achievements***

Many deficiencies must be corrected. At the elementary level, almost no science is taught. At all levels of the school system, the science program does not place enough emphasis on technology, the history program does not place enough emphasis on the cultural achievements of the eras studied, and the French as the language of instruction program does not place enough emphasis on literature.

- ***The cultural aspect must be present in every subject taught***

Simply stating that the cultural aspect must be present in all subjects, or relying on the initiatives taken by a minority of cultured teachers, is not sufficient. The curriculum must explicitly identify the elements of culture to be taught to every student, at every level. All the current programs must be revised to integrate cultural elements, since even apparently cultural subjects can be taught without any kind of focus on the cultural aspect. Courses in the arts, for instance, can focus exclusively on the creations of the students once they have been taught the basic techniques. In order to integrate the cultural aspect, the teacher should, in addition, bring the students into contact with the artistic achievements of the past or the present, and provide them with keys to understanding them. Similarly, history can be taught with a focus on political events. In order to emphasize the cultural aspect, the teacher should, in addition, familiarize students with the characteristic achievements, lifestyles and institutions of the era concerned. We will specify, in Appendix 4, the corrections to be made to the various programs to reflect this kind of approach.

## **1.4 Taking Lifelong Learning into Account**

The new realities that influence the teaching methods used in schools are many and varied, and will constitute a major concern for educators in years to come. The most obvious is the challenge imposed by the rate at which knowledge now evolves. This phenomenon is not expected to decrease in the foreseeable future, nor is any end in sight for the explosion of technological advances. Given these new conditions, it is no longer possible to imagine that two decades of study will provide a student with the knowledge needed for gainful employment for decades to come. In light of this, compulsory schooling must meet a new challenge, that of preparing students for the necessary lifelong learning process. What exactly must schools do, however, to ensure that the initial training they provide equips students with the foundation and methods, and the commitment they need to continue learning?

The responsibility of preparing students for lifelong learning cannot be left solely to teachers, who are supposed to ensure that their students “learn how to learn,” to repeat the ritual phrase. This concern, if it is to be properly addressed, must be included in the curriculum itself. This implies that the reform of the curriculum must be based on the following principles.

- ***Special attention must be paid to making sure that students master essential knowledge during their basic schooling***

By basic schooling, we mean the years spent in elementary school and the first cycle of secondary school, which constitute the platform on which all other knowledge is based. The more years students spend in school, the more they are able to continue learning. On the other hand, insufficient mastery of basic knowledge becomes a handicap to ongoing learning, since basic knowledge is needed if new occupational skills are to be mastered. The retraining of unskilled or highly specialized workers as a result of the taylorization of their tasks is doomed to failure if their knowledge of the first language, mathematics, science and social studies is deficient. The experience of Weston Bakeries in this connection is highly revealing: the workers required literacy training before they could be retrained for the automation of the plant where they worked. By basic knowledge, we mean the overall curriculum content defined further in this report, but also basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Schools must ensure that all students without fail acquire these skills, without which an individual is considered to be illiterate, especially since life in present-day society requires ever-increasing proficiency in so-called elementary knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

This approach lies behind several of the recommendations we will be making concerning the curriculum for basic schooling, since elementary knowledge must be mastered by a certain age. If it is not assimilated at the right time, it can be lost forever. This is why it is better to devote more time to elementary knowledge in the early stages, and leave the learning of more complex knowledge for later in the process.

- ***Special attention must be paid to developing students' minds***

Debate about the respective meaning of “teaching” and “instruction” has become a permanent feature of the school system. In many cases, two terms are placed in opposition, and the debate takes the form of a confrontation between two pedagogical approaches. The following is a non-exhaustive list of opposing terms that, in recent years, have given rise to debates of almost religious fervour: instruction/education, learning/understanding, information/knowledge, discipline-based education/basic education, teaching/learning, knowledge/skills and attitudes, learning/knowledge. In other words, we are on uncertain ground and must move with caution, since in this type of “war,” every word becomes a rallying cry.

1. This is particularly true for reading skills, now measured along a continuum of literacy rather than by using the former categories of “literate” and “illiterate.” Literacy means being able to understand and use written information in order to function in society.

The OECD recently conducted an international survey to measure literacy levels in several member countries. The survey examined three types of literacy:

- prose literacy (understanding and using information from texts including editorials, news stories, poems and fiction);
- document literacy (locating and using information contained in various formats, including forms, tables and graphics);
- quantitative literacy (applying arithmetic operations to numbers embedded in printed materials).

Participants were asked to perform tasks at various levels of difficulty. At level 1, they had to locate one piece of information in a simple text. At level 2, they had to locate one or more pieces of information despite the presence of distractors in the text, or make low-level inferences. From level 3 on, they had to make deductions or match information. (See OECD and Statistics Canada, *Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the First International Adult Literacy Survey* [Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1995].)

In order to try to move the debate beyond the stage of sterile confrontation, we would like to point out that these oppositions often stem from different beliefs about or conceptions of the way in which the human mind works. For some authors, the mind is a wax tablet on which messages are imprinted; the mind then orders these random messages by association. This conception lies behind teaching methods based on rote learning, repetition, and exercises. For others, the mind is active, selective, designed to solve problems, and constructive. What is remembered, or “enters” the mind, depends on previous knowledge, the way in which it is structured, and the hypotheses made about it. This conception gives rise to teaching methods based on intellectual activity in which discovery and construction replace the mere reception of knowledge.

Obviously, elementary knowledge can be transmitted using teaching methods based on the first conception described above. Memorizing multiplication tables, learning the rules of arithmetic, conjugating irregular verbs or learning words in a foreign language are still part of classroom learning. More complex knowledge, increasingly present in schools, must be imparted by teaching methods based on the second conception. However, students develop a love of learning, which they will need in order to continue learning, only when demands are made on their minds. This element must therefore be taken into account during the design stage of curriculum development. It must also influence the design of the evaluation process, to determine the most appropriate form of evaluation, for example, multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions calling on the students’ powers of analysis and judgment.

- ***Special attention must be paid to developing students’ interest in culture***

A taste for and interest in knowledge is developed when students come directly into contact with other active minds. The mind cannot be formed in a vacuum: intellectual activity and isolation are incompatible. An active mind seeks dialogue with other active minds. These other active minds can be those of fellow students or the teacher, but they can also, and indeed should, be the active minds that have preceded us, the active minds that have left us their heritage of cultural achievements. The intellectual curiosity of students can only be fostered through an understanding that the evolution of the human mind has been based on the development of representations of the world we live in and the construction of a store of knowledge. At any given point in time, this knowledge reflects the way in which the world is understood and society organized, before being passed on to and transformed by succeeding generations. The history of science and the history of art are both the history of the human search to improve or discard the ideas initially received. Once this has been understood, we are ready to accept the idea that knowledge must be renewed, and to take part in its renewal. This is another reason why the cultural aspect must receive more emphasis in the curriculum.

- ***Special attention must be paid to all of the elements that can contribute to the integration of knowledge***

In the field of education, the integration of subjects has received a lot of attention. The integration of knowledge, though, is a much broader concept. Integrating subjects means, for example, applying grammar rules in a written geography assignment or, in an English school, giving a visual arts class in French. Integrating knowledge means applying what is learned in one subject to learning another subject, but it extends much further, to merging new knowledge with previously acquired knowledge, and restructuring knowledge, in other words, transferring knowledge to a new field. In all cases, it involves making connections.

Those who have a capacity to integrate knowledge have always been admired or envied, but in today's world, this capacity will become increasingly necessary, for three reasons. First, the mastery of basic concepts and the ability to integrate knowledge will become the prerequisites for the successful acquisition of the new knowledge needed to function in a lifelong learning society. Second, new information and communications technologies (NICT) provide unprecedented access to information but using them to advantage requires a strongly structured knowledge base (principles, concepts, themes and links) as protection against "cognitive overload." This knowledge base must have been structured beforehand. Third, the new job realities presuppose the development of broad cognitive skills and abilities that are far removed from the narrow, stereotyped, mechanical application of acquired knowledge.

The integration of knowledge can only be accomplished by the students themselves, and can only be encouraged by teachers. Experienced teachers know how to organize their classes so as to permit the structuring of knowledge: they use examples; they simplify to allow students to see the links; they plan lessons as a concentric, rather than a linear, progression to facilitate the restructuring of knowledge; and they call knowledge into question by presenting facts or situations that fail to fit into the scheme of organization. Cultivated, informed teachers are able to establish links between what they teach and what is taught in other subjects, but it is unfair to expect teachers alone to bear this responsibility, since integration should also be promoted by the curriculum itself. To facilitate integration, and in some cases to introduce it into the curriculum, four types of action are needed, which, when implemented, will transform current teaching practices.

- A certain number of current programs must be grouped together and their content reorganized. One of the main drawbacks of the current curriculum is its "balkanization." This is one area where agreement is general. The Corbo Task Force was mandated to specify learning profiles for each level and cycle of education, so that these profiles could then be used to define guidelines for program reorganization. Reorganization is needed in practically all of the main areas of the curriculum, within the broad fields of learning we will define in Chapter 3. The major changes implied by this reorganization will be discussed in Appendices 4 and 5.

- Demands to include new learning content must be met by integrating it into the curriculum and traditional demands to create new courses must be resisted. Integration must be genuine and visible to ensure that the new elements find their place in the curriculum. We will specify, in Chapters 3 and 4 and Appendix 3, which elements must be integrated, and our proposals for achieving this. We will also introduce the concept of “cross-curricular learning.”
- Pointless duplication must be eliminated, and program content must be trimmed and organized hierarchically. There are too many overlaps, and they are encouraged by balkanization. Over-detailed program descriptions weighted down by innumerable objectives and sub-objectives must be eliminated. Currently, the unwieldiness of many programs results from the need teachers feel to observe every last detail of the program, rather than from the actual program content. Calls for including every essential element in every year of the program must be resisted. Applying this rule means, however, that the chronological steps of the learning sequence must have been worked out, since some content has a specific place in the learning sequence and will require more time. The elements of the program must be organized hierarchically, since program designers always find it hard to eliminate certain aspects. Above all, the generic knowledge that must be mastered in each subject must be identified, since this is the type of knowledge that will allow students to progress beyond what they already know. Generic knowledge is always structured knowledge, since it can be applied to both similar and dissimilar situations.
- The conditions needed to establish a form of horizontal integration of the subjects taught at a given grade, cycle or level must be determined. The use of the word “program” at the elementary and secondary levels is indicative of the current problem. It refers to the subject matter taught in a given field at different levels, as in the elementary school French program and the secondary school French program. The word “program” does not mean, as it does at the college and university levels, a group of courses taken in various subjects during a particular period. Current practices must be changed. We must identify the elements of each program that can be linked to the elements of other programs in a given year or cycle, to allow the emergence of a true interdisciplinary approach.

This type of change will have a far-reaching effect on current program design practices, since it will involve switching from a mechanical approach in which each element is pre-determined, to an organic approach in which the interrelations between various elements become the primary goal. Mechanical programs are less of a problem at the elementary level, where the same teacher teaches several subjects and can establish the required links, than at the secondary level, where each subject is taught by a different teacher.

Until now, we have met the demand to prepare students for lifelong learning by developing generic skills (“learning to learn”). What we propose is far more radical: the overall approach to the curriculum must be rethought to provide a valid response to that demand.

## 1.5 Adapting the Curriculum to Social Changes

The rapid pace of change in the field of science means that science programs are already revised periodically. Certain new phenomena, however, are also transforming our environment. Two of the most important are globalization (of markets, industrial and commercial

activities, migrations) and the abolition of space and time considerations in communications. These phenomena have resulted in demands to adjust the curriculum, since this is the new world in which our young people are already living. These new realities include:

- Social diversity. Schools must address the questions of intercultural understanding, religious pluralism, and citizenship education.
- Internationalization. Schools must provide students with keys to understanding the nature and importance of international ties and better access to foreign languages.
- The omnipresence of the media. Schools must introduce students to the specific language of the media, orient their use of the media, and develop the critical faculties they will need to resist media ploys.
- The rapid development of new information technologies. Students must acquire the technical skills needed to operate equipment and various related tools. Schools must structure knowledge more rigorously, and teach new procedures (searching for, sorting and ordering information, navigating through multiple levels of choice). Use of the new technologies in the classroom should, in addition, allow teaching practices to be renewed in four key areas: support to students in activities to construct their own store of knowledge; an interdisciplinary approach to teaching content; the differentiation of teaching methods; and cooperative teaching based on exchange and creativity.
- Environmental concerns. Schools already focus on the relationship between humans and the environment. Current environmental concerns, however, are broader and are interwoven with social, economic and political concerns. Social expectations will require schools to provide keys to understanding the interdependence between the human race and the physical, chemical, biological, economic, social and cultural elements of the environment.
- The importance of technology. Schools must place greater emphasis on understanding and using technology, since knowledge in this area will become part of the essential knowledge to be mastered by students.

## 1.6 Ensuring That Generic Skills Are Mastered

During the Estates General on Education, many individuals and groups criticized schools for the way in which they are fulfilling their mission of providing instruction. They said schools focus too narrowly on subject matter.

More specifically, the main criticisms were the following:

- The development of *intellectual skills* is not dealt with explicitly or in a sufficiently organized or coordinated manner. Schools fail in their attempts to transmit intellectual curiosity, a willingness to work, attention to detail, the ability to think for oneself, and the love of learning.
- Schools do not concentrate enough on encouraging students to develop working methods based on sound *methodological skills*. More specifically, schools have failed to adapt to the requirements created by new technologies, and do not yet provide all students with a minimum level of computer literacy or with the critical sense they will need to counter the omnipresence of the media.

- The facilities provided in secondary schools to inform students and help them make career choices fail to meet their needs. As mentioned in the Pagé Report, guidance counselling—and we would add *educational and vocational information*—“is a process that extends from the end of elementary school to the end of secondary school, and sometimes beyond...The process is individual, and must be based on the rhythm of each student, at the appropriate times” (*La formation professionnelle chez les jeunes: un défi à relever* [Québec: MEQ, 1995], p. 42).
- Schools seem disoriented, and even sometimes overwhelmed, by the complex *social changes* they have to face, whether in connection with ethnic diversity, changes in value systems, the transformation of family or community roles, the place of our society in larger systems, etc.
- Lastly, schools are slow to state their own *values* and promote them effectively.

All these concerns address elements that can be described as *cross-curricular*, in that they must be dealt with in all school activities, both curricular and extracurricular, and must be promoted by all school staff. They cannot be left to the discretion of individual teachers since, in our view, they constitute essential knowledge and must therefore be provided to all students. This is why we will propose, in Chapter 4 and in Appendix 3, that this *cross-curricular learning* be identified and described in detail, and that very clear anchor points be found for it in the curriculum so that it will be the focal point of every school’s educational project.

## 2. EXPECTATIONS RELATING TO THE MISSION OF SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is currently one of the main concerns of schools. Québec is a world leader as regards the inclusion of children with handicaps or learning difficulties in the regular classroom. The values of community life are promoted and often exemplified in Québec’s schools, and students are prepared for the exercise of various social roles (producers, consumers, parents, etc.). However, the general approach to socialization is designed more to adapt children and young people to society than to reinforce their sense of belonging to a community. For many years, such questions were not addressed by schools since social cohesion rested first and foremost on the underlying alliance of State, Church and Family, the institutions which ensured its continuity and survival. This is no longer the case in a pluralistic society, and schools can no longer rely on this approach to socialization, since they must now also work to reinforce social cohesion. The challenges facing schools in coming years will include defining common values based on common goals, namely, preparing students to exercise their citizenship, integrating students into a common culture based on both past and future experience, and maintaining equality of opportunity.

All these aspects will have repercussions on the curriculum. However, dealing with questions such as belonging to the community, exclusion and inclusion, and social cohesion in a curriculum inevitably results in apparently neutral subjects becoming highly charged. During the Estates General on Education, all participants agreed that social cohesion should be reinforced in schools. Some even echoed the Delors Report and asked that the mission of socialization be expressed as “learning to live together.” When the question of how to achieve this goal was brought up, however, participants could only produce vague wishes, hesitated to define the elements needed to reinforce cohesion, and could not agree on where the emphasis should lie. We believe that these difficult, often neglected questions should be addressed directly, since they determine which subjects are to be taught and how they are to be taught. This is the difficult and perilous exercise that we will attempt here.

## 2.1 The Quest for Meaning

By establishing a moral education course as an alternative for students who do not wish to take a religious and moral education course, we have accepted the idea that moral values can be taught in isolation from sources of religious inspiration. Questions relating to the meaning of life can also be seen from this angle.

The experience of an order that lies beyond and gives meaning to human life is not solely a religious experience. It is also present in the moral strength that allows us to act contrary to our own interests, in the aesthetic experience that opens up a world outside reality, in the intellectual endeavour that turns into a quest for truth, and in the commitment that binds us to a cause. In addition, traditional religions are not the only sources for far-reaching answers to questions concerning the meaning of life since sects, ideologies and philosophy also provide answers. All these questions can therefore be addressed otherwise than in a context of religious education.

We therefore believe that the students who do not choose religious education should be able to examine these questions in the moral education course. We live in a secular society where religions have long-established rights. One way of promoting religious pluralism is to provide information concerning the enduring existence of religion and the range of forms and rituals it encompasses. In addition, students must be introduced to the variety of sacred forms, if only in order to allow them to understand the underlying values and limits, and the reasons for the sacrifices they entail.

## 2.2 Common Values Based on Common Goals

Common values are taught in all school subjects. However, the curriculum does include a time and a place specially designed to encourage reflection on values: religious and moral education, or moral education for those who prefer the secular option. The values discussed and promoted in these courses are essentially the same. The only difference lies in the explanation given for the basis of the values: religious on the one hand, natural or rational on the other. Since common values are currently being taught, the established solution could be retained for students who do not opt for the religious education course, but in our view, it does not adequately deal with the realities of our pluralistic society.

In a context that clearly favours a pluralistic approach to ideas and values, it is important that a commitment to a set of common values be founded on common experiences shared by all. One such common experience exists: a commitment to democracy as a goal, in other words, a commitment to a society based on a social contract designed to strike a balance between individual liberty and social organization. Schools, by preparing young people for their role as citizens, have an indispensable part to play in the promotion and achievement of social cohesion. For this to be achieved, however, citizenship education cannot be reduced to a type of civic education based on an explanation of the role and operation of selected institutions. Although this is necessary, it must be extended to include the demonstration and promotion of the essential values of a democratic society, as set out below.

The values on which the ideal of democracy is based include recognition of others as separate from oneself and worthy of respect. In the words of Charles Taylor, democracy is “the

politics of recognition.”<sup>2</sup> One of these values is solidarity: despite our differences, we are alike, we are equal before the law, we are mutually dependent. Responsibility is another such value: the operation of a democratic society requires people committed to its ongoing construction, rational agents who are able to participate in important political decisions.

Democratic society is fragile. It cannot ensure social cohesion using totalitarian methods. Individual liberties, although their priority is recognized, cannot be exercised to the detriment of social cohesion. The survival of democratic society thus requires the promotion of certain values. These include social justice since injustice and the processes of exclusion and marginalization undermine social cohesion, and the rule of law since respect for others (for their property, life and reputation), equality, and responsibility are, in a democratic society, expressed in terms of law. The emergence of law in a society parallels the emergence of democracy. Lastly, these values include participation in democracy: since democratic society is not homogeneous, given that divergent interests, opinions and convictions exist, its survival is based on negotiation, the exclusion of violence as a means of resolving conflict, and the availability of information to ensure that enlightened decisions are made.

This summary of the democratic ideal as the basis for education in values demonstrates that schools are the ideal place for its implementation. But, to be consistent, the religious and moral education class or, by extension, the moral education class, cannot be the place where instruction in values takes place. We must therefore find another venue for effective citizenship education.

### 2.3 The History of Québec

Schools must help young people growing up in a culture to assimilate their identity, or else their quest for meaning may well lose direction. Setting this objective, however, entails making knowledge of history a requirement, and today in Québec, the question of history has become something of a minefield.

The question of nationalism divides Québec, and indeed any issue with nationalistic overtones is highly sensitive. Nevertheless, if education is to provide a foundation for a shared vision of democratic society, a new vision of democracy, then in our view the foundation should include a memory of past events. We would like to present our point of view in this regard.

First, we believe that the idea of national community is one of the cornerstones of identity. Will this continue to be the case? The relative importance of the concept of national community has varied over time. Some have already announced its demise and the emergence of a post-national identity. Others would be only too glad to see it disappear since, in the past and unfortunately still in the present, certain forms of ethnic, chauvinistic nationalism have generated wars, conflict, segregation and exclusion. Perhaps it will disappear, and perhaps it should, but it is nonetheless likely to remain with us for the foreseeable future. Throughout the world, the nation is still the framework within which citizens exercise their collective liberties as they strive to influence their destiny. People living in exile, refugees, and migrants, who cannot benefit from such a framework, attempt to form nations in which they will have

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2. Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism*, edited by Amy Gutmann (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 25-73.

“the right to have rights,”<sup>3</sup> as Hanna Arendt put it, or to become part of other nations in which to exercise their rights. The current trend towards globalization reinforces the need to find one’s roots, to take pride in one’s differences, and to promote solidarity within one’s community. The need for roots is always expressed through the specific traits of the nation, and national history is one of the subjects in the curriculum in most countries.

How should history be dealt with? The history of a nation centres around certain defining moments, which unify the perspective from which history is presented: American independence, the French Revolution, German unification. Why? Because the history of these countries seeks to answer the question of identity: What does it mean to be American? What does it mean to be French? What does it mean to be German? In Québec, the relative importance assigned to various defining moments changes according to how the following questions are answered: What does it mean to be Canadian? French Canadian? English Canadian? From Québec? Given this difficulty, either Québec history is neglected, or else it becomes over-specific. In both cases, there is a tendency to reduce the place of history teaching within the curriculum.

We believe that it is time to move beyond such difficulties, and to give history a more prominent place in the curriculum. Why?

- Because no student can successfully integrate into society unless he or she has been helped, in school, to assimilate the cultural traditions of the society concerned. From this point of view, the situation of children born in Québec is exactly the same as that of newly arrived immigrants. We are all born into a world that already exists, and our integration into that world depends on our being able to assimilate the cultural traditions of the society into which we are born. The difference between immigrants and people born in Québec is that the former still have a foot in their culture of origin. Their search for a new identity does not mean that they retain no memories or that all differences are abolished. We cannot expect schools to ensure that history classes include references to the cultural traditions of all new citizens, but schools must nevertheless encourage them to retain an interest in their origins. The integration process can only be successful if these students are aware of their origins and differences.
- Because a knowledge of history is necessary if we are to be freed from its constraints. Ignoring the past means running the risk of repeating it. Although we do not choose our own past, we are free to accept or reject it, or to use it as a basis for something completely different. We can only free ourselves of our past, however, by becoming aware of it.
- Because it is impossible to understand other cultures without understanding one’s own culture, just as it is impossible to properly understand one’s own culture without making an effort to understand other cultures. The world has long been a global village, and not to know one’s own history is to condemn oneself to ignorance of that of others.

The reasons given above for increasing the emphasis on the teaching of history also determine how it should be taught. It should be taught in an open, wide-ranging manner. It must be grounded in a knowledge of Québec culture and history, but must open up to other his-

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3. Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), n.p.

tories and other cultures, to the contributions made by other cultures, and to different interpretations of culture and history. Appendices 4 and 5 outline the changes that must be made to the current program in light of the Lacoursière Report (*Learning from the Past*, Report of the Task Force on the Teaching of History [Québec: MEQ, 1996]) to reflect this new approach.

## **2.4 The Question of Language**

We must all be aware of our collective destiny, since our personal destiny will be marked by it. Our individual identity, however, also stems from and is expressed through other ties and shared concerns, such as language. Our mother tongue, seen in this light, plays a paramount role. The mother tongue, or the language of cultural attachment, is not merely a communication tool. It is also a heritage that reveals our inner being, since our ideas, feelings, and dreams are revealed in language. Obviously, we use the same words as everyone else—language, after all, is a social construct and an instrument of communication—but words give us our individuality, as shown by the study of literature. The words of literature are taken from the common store; they are the words of a people, but also the individual voice of the author. The importance of the first language in the curriculum can only be grasped if we consider that it is through study of our first language that we acquire our heritage.

Although concepts such as these can easily be shared in the form of principles, the socio-linguistic situation in Québec makes their implementation in schools a complex matter. The current reality is this: native languages have been spoken in Québec for far longer than either French or English; English has been spoken for over two centuries and has historical rights; French, the language of the majority of Quebecers, has been the only official common language in Québec for the last 20 years. For some of the native peoples (the Cree, the Inuit and the Naskapi) and for the English-speaking community, the teaching of their first language is ensured by the control they exercise in actual fact over their schools. On the other hand, the status of French as the only official common language places the teaching of French, or instruction in that language, in a different situation.

The curriculum must allow different levels of stress to be placed on the teaching of languages by the various groups. French schools must emphasize the study of French, since French is the cornerstone of Québec's identity and its survival in North America depends on its strength in Québec. In addition, French schools must attempt to ensure that the children of immigrants, who may study in French initially under compulsion, adopt French as their language of cultural attachment. On the other hand, it must be accepted that the English-speaking community wishes to increase the emphasis on French, the official language, and that its overall goal is bilingualism.

## **2.5 Social Exclusion and Segregation in Schools**

The fight against social exclusion is a major concern in societies experiencing industrial restructuring and endemic unemployment, both situations that tend to destroy social cohesion. Countries that are confronted with these problems are urged to take action against social exclusion as it is practised in their schools.

Why? For reasons which stem from the position occupied by schools in modern society. Schools were established to allow individuals to exercise a degree of control over their future, but even as the requirements for training increase, we have to face the fact that

schools seem unable to retain their students. The widespread establishment of schools was also socially motivated: as schools became more accessible, underprivileged individuals and groups gained access to social advancement. Now, at a time when social exclusion is increasingly based on the possession or non-possession of knowledge, how can we justify the fact that the very schools which were intended to provide equal opportunities for all have actually become sources of inequality?

The fight against social exclusion in schools must begin with an effort to reduce academic failure. This often involves a basic reorganization of the school system and of its different streams. Convincing students to remain in school or resume their studies means adapting courses to their needs, addressing the question of learning difficulties, providing alternatives adapted to their interests and ways of learning, setting up special schools for dropouts, and increasing mobility between streams. For this reason, we must introduce more flexibility into our curriculum, especially in the second cycle of secondary schools.

A focus on educational success and failure can lead us to look for solutions based on a system of differentiation which results in stratification. This trend has already begun to emerge. Although it has been ideologically justified by some, we believe that it stems mainly from two characteristic traits of our education system: the lowering of standards, sometimes based on false premises, and the lack of differentiation at the secondary level. Working to resist the premature segregation of students means working to solve the problems that create, at least in part, the need for segregation, and also designing the curriculum itself to create favourable conditions for differentiated teaching methods.

Successful democratization of the education system does not involve merely ensuring equality of access; it must also ensure the transmission of a common culture to all students. It has been suggested that this is impossible, given the wide variety of backgrounds from which students come. We believe the opposite, however; where there is a will, there is always a way. We must reaffirm our intent to provide all students with a common culture and a common core of knowledge during their basic schooling. This is the goal underlying a number of our proposals, particularly those aimed at reducing early academic failure.

### **3. EXPECTATIONS RELATING TO THE MISSION OF PROVIDING QUALIFICATIONS**

In the early 1970s, vocational education was a major component of secondary school education. The social demand that students should stay in school longer resulted in a substantial reduction of the number of students enrolling in vocational education programs. This, together with the modernization of many businesses, led to a reform 15 years ago that allowed access to vocational education at a later stage in students' schooling. The overall result has been that few youth-sector students enrol in vocational education, either because they leave school before reaching the point at which they can begin vocational education, or because, once they have reached that point, they have or almost have the schooling they need to go on to college and decide to follow that option, even if their chances of success are minimal. The systemic effect of the reform of vocational education has been as follows: the vocational education sector now caters mainly to adult-sector students; general education courses are not included in vocational education programs; vocational education is no longer considered to be a valid educational option; and some youth-sector students are leaving school without any occupational qualifications, when even low-skilled jobs require some form of training. It will be necessary, in coming years, to make up for a system that has practically eliminated vocational education from youth-sector secondary school education.

Also, schools will have to take more definite and more cohesive measures in order to better integrate guidance and educational and vocational information into their activities so that they can help each student clarify his or her academic and career goals.

Some corrective action has been implemented as a result of the Pagé Report, and this will be taken into account in our proposals to introduce greater diversity in the second cycle of secondary school.

## **4. EXPECTATIONS RELATING TO THE USE OF TIME**

Is it even possible to meet expectations concerning time? Time is one of the most important elements in the learning process, and it is the element that gives rise to the most complaints. Teachers complain that they do not have enough time to give their classes and meet their students, and some feel that they are placed at a disadvantage by having to give their classes at a certain time of day rather than another. Students, on the other hand, complain that they do not have enough time to complete their assignments or to understand and assimilate their subjects, besides lacking the time to enjoy social, cultural and sports activities and meet teachers outside class time. Parents feel that the school timetable is badly coordinated with their career responsibilities. All, however, view the time allotted for a subject as a measure of its importance and its weight in the certification of studies, time being indicated in terms of credits.

All these complaints tend to converge on one factor: lack of time. Even though less time is devoted to education in Québec than in many other countries, the solution to these problems does not lie in increasing overall teaching time, in other words, the total number of hours allotted for subjects at the elementary and secondary levels. This was not part of our mandate. We believe, however, that without increasing overall teaching time, we can significantly improve the way in which that time is used.

### **4.1 Giving True Meaning to the Cycles**

Currently, education at the elementary and secondary levels is divided into cycles: two cycles at the elementary level covering the first six years of schooling and two cycles at the secondary level, the first covering the first three years and the second covering the last two years of schooling. The cycles are mainly used for the purposes of internal school organization and of housing students of different ages in different buildings. The cycle as a unit of time is rarely applied for educational purposes; rather, the grade (corresponding to one year of education) is the basic unit used.

A reorganization based on larger units of time, namely, cycles instead of grades, could result in significant improvements, for three main reasons.

- First, assigning a specific function to each cycle means that learning objectives and content can be determined in a more integrated and coherent way. This reinforces the need to establish bridges between the cycles. Stages, and sometimes breaks in continuity, are a normal part of each student's education, but they are important events that teachers must manage carefully.
- Second, a cycle-based rather than grade-based system would allow for greater differentiation and individualization, opportunities for which are limited in the grade-based system. In many

countries, attempts have been made, especially at the elementary level, to correct this deficiency, which has repercussions on academic failure, by reorganizing curriculum time in multiyear cycles. The resulting structure provides more space and time to differentiate, to individualize and to take each student's learning rate into account. It also avoids the necessity of making students repeat grades, a practice which induces a feeling of failure without addressing the underlying problem. The beneficial effects of such a cycle-based system can be observed in cases where a teacher knows that he or she will be teaching the same students for two years in a row. Very few students repeat the grade, simply because the teacher is able to plan course content over a two-year period. It would be possible to go even further and abolish the notion of grade entirely. At least, this possibility should be made available for those who would like to move towards this more flexible, and no doubt more effective, approach to countering early student failure.

- Third, a cycle-based organization implies a team approach, since a group of teachers would be collectively responsible for the progress of all the students in a given cycle at the school. This type of organization allows teachers to determine the appropriate levels of continuity and rate of progress, and to define preventive, support and remedial measures, as well as the framework for student support and supervision. This type of organization provides teachers with an opportunity to enrich the professional scope of their tasks, since it requires that they innovate, master complex situations, and work together.

A cycle-based approach would not only allow more effective use of teaching time but would also permit greater flexibility with respect to school organization. In small schools, students at different grade levels are grouped together into what are known as multilevel classrooms. But this organizational model is far from standard and its implementation is complicated by all kinds of factors (programs designed for specific grade levels, the rules for workload assignment in teachers' collective agreements, and so on). A cycle-based system would remedy this situation.

We are fully aware that the cycle-based approach, if taken to its logical conclusion, would involve a radical transformation of current practice and should not be imposed. However, this approach should not be prevented by the principles underlying the organization of the curriculum or the manner in which programs are designed and drafted. It should, instead, be encouraged. The Estates General on Education resulted in a strong consensus that the first nine years of study (to the end of Secondary III) should be considered as basic schooling, during which essential knowledge is acquired. The second cycle of secondary school, on the other hand, should offer greater diversity, to better reflect the range of students' abilities, needs and goals.

## 4.2 Making Maximum Use of the Time Available

Calls for more time to teach students more effectively invariably result in demands to increase the time allotted for a given subject, or to add a new course to the timetable. The Estates General on Education found that schools tended to limit student learning to the number of hours slated in the subject-time allocation. We believe that this notion must be resisted:

- By making better use of the time spent in the classroom and at school. Some of the elements currently included in programs could be organized in a more efficient way as school activities. It is wrong to believe that courses are the only medium for learning. Some cross-curricular learning, which will be discussed below, can take place in the classroom, but it may also take place through school activities that fall outside strictly academic bounds.

- By once again recognizing the importance of individual work. The time spent studying outside the classroom is not currently put to good use, despite the fact that for average, poor and slow students there is a clear correlation between the time devoted to individual work and educational success. Individual work must be considered an integral part of learning, not an adjunct. The programs must include suggestions on types of exercises and homework to assign. Schools must pay more attention to the conditions in which students do their individual work.

### **4.3 Challenging the Dominant Model for Organizing School Time**

The way in which school time is organized should allow for greater cooperation between teachers since it must promote better integration of learning and the integration of certain forms of learning into school life in general, according to the methods determined by the school team and the school principal.

However, the way in which time is currently organized in schools, especially at the secondary level, leads to a linear, sequential, piecemeal vision of learning, and a similar view of education and personal development. It generates little consultation and collaboration between teachers and few activities to integrate learning or tutor students. It also has a clearly negative effect on praiseworthy, but constantly postponed, objectives to make each school a living community and to implement school or educational projects.

The organization or reorganization of teaching time has an effect on teaching loads. The model used to determine teaching loads itself corresponds to a mechanical way of organizing time and sequencing learning activities. Teaching time must be organized in new ways that are more flexible, less divisive; the dominant model for determining teaching loads must be challenged; and support must be provided for innovation in this area.

## **5. EXPECTATIONS RELATING TO THE USE OF LEEWAY AND AUTONOMY**

Current expectations relating to leeway and autonomy are unequivocal. All the key players consider that granting schools more autonomy would significantly improve the way they operate and that the proposed devolution of powers to schools is a step in the right direction. Expectations of this nature must also be reflected in the curriculum: some leeway must be built into the subject-time allocation, and the professional autonomy enjoyed by teachers must be preserved.

### **5.1 Providing Leeway**

The current rules governing subject-time allocation provide some leeway in that the teaching time for each subject, except moral and religious education and, by extension, moral education, is suggested rather than prescribed. A degree of flexibility exists to accommodate local needs, but in reality is little used. Truly giving schools more leeway would entail leaving a significant amount of time open by not assigning it to any subject in particular. As we shall see, however, this ideal is difficult to apply without affecting the overall coherence of the essential common knowledge that must be taught until the end of Secondary III.

However, our proposals could improve the current situation. For the second cycle of secondary school, we have proposed a breakdown of optional subjects that will allow schools to effectively offer a wide choice of courses. The cycle-based system should also allow a greater degree of flexibility to meet local needs.

## **5.2 Recovering and Preserving a Degree of Professional Autonomy for Teachers**

The way in which the current curriculum is designed requires teachers to act more as instructors than as true education professionals. That is why we consider the revision of the current process for establishing programs, and of the programs themselves, to be one of the priorities of this reform, and have devoted an entire chapter (Chapter 5) to this question. Once again, a cycle-based system would help to reinforce the professional autonomy of teachers.

## **6. EXPECTATIONS RELATING TO EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION**

There have been no calls for a substantial reform of evaluation and certification methods. Minor corrections have been requested in connection with the frequency and format of report cards, the format of ministry examinations and certain certification rules. The current system of evaluation and certification was established over 20 years ago, and we consider that it should be revised to introduce other corrective measures.

Other evaluation and certification systems exist in other education systems, but we see no reason to change the current system, which is reliable and can be improved by certain adjustments. A change to a new system would result in the expenditure of a considerable amount of energy that could otherwise be devoted to other elements of the curriculum that are more in need of change. Chapter 6 will deal with the improvements that should be made to the evaluation and certification system.

This chapter outlines the concerns that have guided us in our examination of the curriculum and that underlie our proposals for reform. We felt that it was important to set them down on paper in order to highlight the issues of the reform, and also in order to reassure all those who have, over the last ten years and especially during the Estates General on Education, requested that these concerns be reflected in the programs of study and in the curriculum as a whole.

**B**efore discussing the overall content of the elementary and secondary school curricula, we would like to define precisely what our proposals refer to and the limits within which we worked.

## 1. LEARNING PROFILES, EXIT PROFILES AND OVERALL CURRICULUM CONTENT

Traditionally, the overall content to be covered in each subject in the timetable is selected by specialists in the subject concerned. Adopting this approach for the reform of the curriculum would, however, result in deadlock, since each discipline or subject tends to be “set in its ways.”

Among the countries that have initiated curriculum reform in recent years, many have begun by defining an educational mission that is then translated into concrete terms as the learning profiles that students are expected to have by the end of their studies. This approach allows the curriculum to be renewed while avoiding overly analytical approaches that are more subject to the influence of interest groups. In 1993, the then Minister of Education began the reform process by announcing, in *Moving Ahead*, her intention to establish exit profiles in the short term, in an open-ended, participatory way. Several months later the new Minister of Education entrusted the task of establishing exit profiles to a task force which was to submit them for public consultation.

However, the task force quickly discovered that, to fulfil its mandate, it would have to define the world for which today’s children and young people are being educated, specify the ultimate goals of education in relation to that vision, and delimit the major fields of learning to be covered in the curriculum. It retained six fields of learning: methodology, language, mathematics, life in society, science and technology, physical education and the arts. The task force also proposed exit profiles for the elementary and secondary levels for each field of learning (*Preparing Our Youth for the 21st Century*, Report of the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles, chaired by Claude Corbo, June 1994).

The social choices underlying a given curriculum are first expressed in the choice of the broad fields of learning to be included in it. During the Estates General on Education, although many participants found it difficult to express their opinion on the exit profiles proposed in the Corbo Report, all, especially those participants from outside the world of education, were able to comment on the choice of the major fields of learning. The comments made encouraged the Commission members for the Estates General to propose fields of learning that differed from those defined in the Corbo Report, and the differences between the two approaches are highly revealing. Defining the major areas of learning covered by the curriculum is, by its very nature, a political act, since it is fundamentally based on what society considers to be the essential knowledge to be provided to students. The disciplinary logic that has prevailed until now in curriculum design has, in fact, imposed a number of choices, the result of which had never been intended.

At a more technical level, the Corbo Report also proposed a series of learning profiles, and part of our mandate consisted in validating those proposals. The context in which our Task Force performed its work allowed us only to make a partial validation, with help from the program officers at the MEQ and from the Conseil pédagogique interdisciplinaire du Québec. In general, the learning profiles were validated with a few corrections, but the results of our work will not be presented here, for two reasons.

- First, although the task force that produced the Corbo Report took into consideration some of the new directions for determining essential knowledge that we have proposed, it could not foresee the work that would be undertaken later, especially during the Estates General on Education. In addition, it designed its exit profiles on the basis of the current division of cycles at the elementary and secondary levels, whereas we have proposed a new division that will obviously influence the related learning profiles. This work must be reviewed and completed in line with the new orientations of the curriculum reform. However, the MEQ will be able to benefit from the validation and partial consolidation work that has already been accomplished.
- The Corbo Report sets out learning profiles for use by program designers. There is currently a movement under way in several countries to design the programs for various subjects on the basis of the competencies or skills that students must acquire, in which case the terms “exit profiles” or “competency profiles,” or perhaps “standards,” would be more appropriate. We have not indicated whether or not we believe that the programs for each discipline or subject should be designed in this manner, but we believe it to be an interesting option; any confusion between the “learning profiles” of the Corbo Report and “exit profiles” should be avoided.

The intended function of each type of “profile” is different: “learning profiles” are used to determine the overall curriculum content that students are expected to master—the essential learning which will provide the parameters for curriculum development—whereas “exit profiles” are intended to specify the types of skills that should be acquired in each subject.<sup>1</sup>

The direction in which a society wishes to see education move is expressed even more clearly in the statement of intention that governs the selection of the major areas of learning. For the general public, parents, teachers and students, the curriculum is basically a set of subjects (French, English, mathematics, art, and so on). This way of looking at the curriculum, however, does not give them any sense of the subjects as a whole. For this reason, we believe that it is important to pro-

1. As an illustration of a program based on “exit profiles,” the following is the arts program as presented in California (*California Department of Education. Model Curriculum Standards. Grades Nine through Twelve. Visual and Performing Arts, 1991*).

First, the principles on which the objectives are based are stated:

- the arts provide students with a common core of knowledge;
- the arts bind students to their cultural heritage;
- the arts develop and refine students’ sensibility;
- the arts allow students to express their creativity.

An “exit profile” is then given for each principle. For example, in connection with the first principle, “the arts provide students with knowledge”:

- students learn that social, political, economic and technological events have influenced the development of artistic styles;
- students learn that the arts provide forms of non-verbal communication;
- students are given an overview of how the arts have been used to express universal concepts;
- students become aware of the different styles of dance, theatre, music, and the visual arts in Western and non-Western civilizations;
- students learn that the arts focus on and reinforce concepts and ideas in other fields.

vide an overview of curriculum content, in other words, an overview of the major areas of knowledge that must be included in the curriculum along with the general learning objectives that should be emphasized in each area. Our approach is similar to that used in the Corbo Report, but by presenting an overview of the content of the major fields of learning, we leave the option of articulating them as “exit profiles” open for consideration at a later date.

## **2. MAJOR AREAS OF LEARNING, ESSENTIAL LEARNING AND ELEMENTARY OR PRIMARY KNOWLEDGE**

The curriculum reforms currently under way use various terms to define what should be included in the elementary and secondary school curricula. Some terms, though different, have similar meanings, and others, though similar, refer to different things. Without launching a debate on this question, we feel that the following points should be noted:

- The Corbo Report discussed the “major areas of learning” under which essential learning is classified, the Estates General on Education mentioned “essential knowledge,” the Fauroux Report (France) spoke of “fundamental learning,” and in the U.S., the term “core curriculum” is used. We have taken these expressions to mean the same thing.
- As part of the current curriculum reforms, some countries are reducing the essential learning to be taught in school to the basic skills, and some U.S. states even define essential learning by statute. Basic skills (termed “primary learning” in the Fauroux Report) are often defined as the ability to read, write, speak and do arithmetic, elementary knowledge with respect to shapes, forms, and graphics, an understanding of space and time, knowledge and application of the rules of personal hygiene, and knowledge and application of the rules and values governing life in society and good citizenship.

Our broad fields of learning encompass more than this elementary knowledge. However, such elementary knowledge, which constitutes the most enduring education dispensed by schools, must be instilled in all students, and should not be neglected in the pursuit of more complex forms of knowledge. There is no reason why any student should leave school unable to read or write, and indeed, this is why elementary knowledge must remain the focus for every person in the school system. All teachers, regardless of the subject they teach, must see themselves as accountable for requiring and verifying that their students master this elementary knowledge.

## **3. ESSENTIAL LEARNING IN THE BROAD FIELDS OR DISCIPLINES**

The major areas of learning used here are those proposed in the final report of the Estates General on Education:

- languages;
- technology, science and mathematics;
- life in society;
- the arts;
- personal development.

### 3.1 Languages

- ***The first language (or the language of instruction)***

The first language, or the language of instruction, must be studied and perfected at school. This is because effective communication depends on mastery of the first language, and also essentially because the first language (or the language of instruction) is the means by which the inner being is expressed. Language is not learned as an end in itself, but as a means to express our thoughts and eventually gain the ability, if not to create literature, at least to express our inner self coherently.

Language is never learned simply as a practical tool for communication. Proficiency in the first language must therefore extend beyond the superficial stage of naming objects or using stereotyped phrases, to the intimate knowledge one should have of one's mother tongue. Attaining this level of proficiency requires time, patience and a lot of practice. Like everything of true worth, knowledge of a language matures and grows finer with time. Learning a language is a long, difficult endeavour, since the goal is to live the language.

The level of competence set as a target for students will determine the directions to be pursued in first language learning.

- Students must know the syntax and grammar of their language of instruction, its rules (punctuation, structural coherence), its resources (vocabulary, syntax, etc.), and the possibilities it offers (levels of language, stylistic devices).
- Teaching must go beyond theory and involve practical exercises. Reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills must all be developed systematically
- Application of what is learned in language of instruction classes must be required in all subjects. Mastery of language skills must be ensured, especially reading and writing skills, since they are the key to the learning of other skills.
- Study of the language of instruction must include study of its literature. Among the many possibilities, the following three approaches should be emphasized: the study of literature to complement language learning, since the unique quality of each author's writing is reflected in the vocabulary, images, style and rhythms used; the study of literature for its human interest, since it reveals the multitude of human feelings and ideas; and the study of literature for its social interest, since it reveals the hopes and concerns of each era and country.
- Students must be encouraged to criticize what they read. Although the main goal of first language teaching is to allow students to express their inner selves, they must also develop a critical, reflective and personal way of thinking.

To ensure that students receive a common culture, they should be brought into contact, at the appropriate time during their schooling, with a selection of literary works from the body of standard works, and with children's and young people's literature. A list of works should be drawn up for each grade or cycle.

Instruction in reading and writing should not preclude study of the medium of images. Students must be introduced to the medium as both spectators and producers.

- ***The second language and third languages***

French and English must be taught as second languages for students whose language of instruction is, respectively, English and French. This is amply justified on a historical and geographical basis alone.

The reasons underlying English-speaking students' need to learn French (French being the official language in Québec) and French-speaking students' need to learn English (given Québec's situation in Canada and North America generally) call for including the second language in the curriculum from an early stage so that students can attain a sufficient level of proficiency before they leave school.

The large number of languages in existence reflect the cultural diversity of the human race. Globalization and universal communication make it advisable to offer students the possibility of learning a third language, at least at the secondary level. Countries whose first language is not English tend to opt for instruction in a third language to prevent English from becoming the *lingua franca*.

Learning another language leads to a better understanding of the mother tongue as it is compared with other languages, and translation provides insights into the grammatical forms and the expressions of one's own language. Instruction in a second language thus brings other rewards than mere proficiency.

The cultural aspect of language learning is also important. Studying a language brings students into contact with the cultural heritage of the language and of its sphere of influence, as well as the cultural characteristics of daily life in the countries and areas in which it is spoken.

## **3.2 Technology, Science and Mathematics**

- ***Technology***

Technology has become an important element in our lives. It extends beyond tools and machines to the whole panoply of means used to produce that which is needed for survival and comfort. It thus includes not only looms and levers, but also medications and textiles.

Whole sectors of our existence that we were previously powerless to control have become subject to our will, thanks to technological innovations: contraceptive pills in the field of procreation, vaccines in the area of contagious illness, rockets in the area of gravitation. We are surrounded by technology, and students must be introduced to this new world.

This can be achieved in various ways. Students can construct or assemble objects in the workshop, study the importance of technology in economic production in history, discover the results of scientific progress in applied science, and learn to use certain advanced forms of technology, such as computers and communications tools. All four

ways of introducing students to the universe of technology, are necessary, and the last three must be included in the core curriculum.

The social and ethical problems raised by the use of new technologies, especially those that affect or influence life itself, must be discussed.

- **Science**

Scientific activity and its products are among the most significant manifestations of human culture. For this reason, the science program must:

- Introduce students to the work methods that are specific to science: investigation, methodical observation, experimentation, verification, the use of models. Attention must focus on nature, but also on the means by which nature is understood. This introduction to the language of science must be designed to stimulate a sense of discovery.
- Place scientific discoveries in context. Without turning science classes into history classes, historical examples must be used to show the background against which scientific advances were made.
- Provide students with a core of scientific knowledge. Determining the corpus of scientific knowledge to be taught in schools is no easy task. Given the importance of a background in science, international standards are beginning to emerge. We believe that two main criteria must be applied: the scientific knowledge provided must reflect the concern for social integration, by being linked to the present time, and must reflect the concern for lifelong learning, since students will be able to use scientific and technical information to advantage later in life only if they have a solid grounding in basic science.

An understanding of the technological developments of modern-day society requires an understanding of science. The human hand and mind work in conjunction, and in the past the invention of a tool often preceded the scientific explanation. A skill was not developed on the basis of a theory, but arose from physical contact with a given object. The situation has now been reversed, since human skills are now improved by scientific knowledge, and effective technology depends on the application of physical, chemical and biological principles. From now on, technology and science will be linked, and our understanding and enjoyment of the world will require the possession of scientific knowledge.

The ethical problems raised by current scientific and technical developments make the acquisition of scientific knowledge even more important. Issues such as genetic manipulation, new reproductive technologies and environmental protection must be settled democratically, and thus debated and voted on. A minimum level of scientific and technical knowledge will be required in order to understand the issues and the social implications of the expert testimony and to make a decision without being unduly influenced.

- **Mathematics**

Modern science began when quantitative measurement replaced qualitative assessment. Since then, a mathematical approach to reality has become the established norm, and few objects of science escape mathematical processing. The introduction of measurement into

new fields of endeavour required the development of new methods of calculation: algebra, integral calculus and statistics are a few examples of this. Today, society is once again being transformed by the digitalization of words and images. Without mathematics, whole sectors of the world we live in would become unintelligible, and every individual must be aware of and able to use the new methods of calculation.

The widespread use of mathematical tools is not confined to science. In our day-to-day life too, we use mathematics regularly. Calculating, measuring, estimating and problem-solving are all operations that we carry out daily.

The ability to understand a graph or statistics depends on knowing how to locate and interpret many different forms of quantitative information. Numbers and mathematical symbols are used throughout society, and students must master the language of mathematics to be able to deal with a variety of situations. Students must be able to form rough estimates, even, and perhaps especially, when they use calculators to perform the calculation itself. Some mathematical knowledge is basic knowledge, on a level with reading and writing. Teachers must require the correct application of this basic knowledge in all subjects that involve the use of numbers.

Mastery of mathematics depends on a number of specific requirements. Understanding the theory is not enough; students must be able to perform the corresponding operations (to express as a function, to solve an inequality, to solve a problem, and so on). Mathematics, more than other subjects, consists of intellectual skills that are developed as students apply them to increasingly complex problems. Two skills in particular must be applied in a wide range of situations: finding solutions to problems, and performing proof and demonstration.

Guidelines are needed, however, since an over-emphasis on formalism in mathematics teaching would eclipse the real-life examples and situations for which theory provides the models. The cultural dimension of mathematics, too, must be studied, as should certain high points of the intellectual adventure that constitutes the development of mathematics.

### 3.3 Life in Society

The integration of students into present-day society will only be successful if it has been properly prepared. If students are not fully aware of the complexity of their world, if they do not have an overall sense of their era, and if they have not developed their critical faculties, they will, at the very most, be able to conform. Schools must prepare students to take their place in our ever more complex, but all the more so human, society.

The evolution of society (from traditional to industrial, from rural to urban, from totalitarian to democratic, from national to global, from autarkic to exchange-based) has resulted in increasingly complex forms of social organization based on increasingly complex functions. We are entering a period in which the pace of change will once again accelerate thanks to the deregulation of financial markets, industry and trade, an increase in real-time planet-wide communication and mass migration. The danger of becoming alienated, of being unable to master the new complexity of life because we are unable to understand it, has never been greater. The goal of social studies teaching is to free students from their environment by giving them the tools to understand and influence it.

To be effective, teaching in the social studies must:

- Focus on knowledge that will allow students to understand and assimilate the history of their country.
- Focus on knowledge that will allow students to understand the main functions of society in economic, geographical, social and political terms.
- Help students understand the development of society and its institutions, with a particular focus on political institutions (citizenship education).
- Help students understand the social aspirations of the human race. Human beings create civilizations and are moulded by the civilizations they create. Arts, cultures, religions, lifestyles and occupations, national identities and institutions are all manifestations of life in society.
- Help students understand the links between geography, economics, history, lifestyles and demography.
- Ensure that students develop a sense of history by tracing the roots of present-day society to its origins. Students must understand the conditions that led to the emergence and development of human institutions and achievements to understand that they are the products of human will and that other changes will happen in the future as the result of our decisions.
- Introduce students to world history. Although social studies teaching must centre on national history, it must also include the history of countries and areas with which we have past or present ties: the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian civilizations, Amerindian civilization, Europe, the United States and, in modern times, global civilization.

This knowledge must be conveyed in social studies classes, especially history classes, but literature, the arts, science, technology and foreign languages all contain a cultural aspect which must be emphasized in the classes concerned.

Students must know the main chronological events of world and national history and the main spatial reference points thoroughly and therefore by heart. This is a form of elementary knowledge as important as reading, writing and arithmetic. To ensure that culture is being assimilated in a structured and coherent manner, students must be examined periodically on the above knowledge and must be required to apply it correctly in all subjects taught at school.

### **3.4 The Arts**

The world of the arts is a world of sensibility and subjectivity. Introducing students to the arts provides them with a new freedom, since they learn how to recognize and accept their own sensibility and, through contact with the sensibility of others as expressed in painting, music, architecture, dance and drama, are able to define their own artistic personality.

Teaching in the arts has a specific role to play in the development of each student's sensibili-

ty and intelligence, and in his or her cultural and social education. Through contact with the world of artistic creation and a wide range of different works of art, students become more open-minded. Through knowledge of common references, they improve their social ties.

To be effective, teaching in the arts must:

- Introduce students to the world of artistic creation. They must learn about the various artistic languages and forms, and be taught the skills they need to create their own works of art. Artistic creation should be the pivotal element of teaching in the arts.
- Bring students into contact with works of art created in their own artistic and cultural environment. Students must be encouraged to visit the centres of cultural production and to meet artists.
- Bring students into contact with the artistic creations that constitute the human heritage, and with the works of art of their own country. It must also provide students with the knowledge they need to interpret and understand works of art.

This approach to arts education, based on the relationship between artistic creation and the appreciation of works of art from the past or the present, also develops the cultural aspect. The works or productions used in class to place those of students in context must be significant, in other words, they must be works whose artistic worth is recognized and that bear witness to the transformation of society and of our conception of the world. The number of works presented is not important. Rather, they must represent a range of eras, trends, and artists, since students must understand that artistic culture is founded on pluralism and diversity.

Teaching in the arts must focus on all forms of artistic expression, but the visual arts and music should constitute the basic core that is provided to all students.

### **3.5 Personal Development**

All the activities in which students take part in school contribute to their personal development. In this sense, personal development is not the sole preserve of a particular course.

However, in addition to the activities currently provided in the curriculum, the personal development of each student requires that the question of physical fitness be addressed. A focus on physical fitness means ensuring that students' lifestyles include, from an early age, personal hygiene practices, sports activities, knowledge of human physiology and nutrition, and the self-discipline needed to maintain a balance between work and leisure. Like reading, writing, arithmetic and the main chronological and spatial reference points, this is part of the basic knowledge that must be a concern for all teachers.

Personal development also requires that students be introduced to human values, which cannot be done in a haphazard way.

- Students must adopt human values freely, which excludes teaching them using an authori-

tarian approach. Values are acquired through experience rather than through learning. This does not mean that they should not be promoted explicitly, but that teaching them will be ineffective if they are not also inherent in the community life of the school.

- It is not enough to simply state human values. In pluralistic societies, conflicting value systems exist side by side and ethical concerns are overshadowed. Students must be prepared to deal with this situation by developing their moral judgment, in other words, their ability to act individually and collectively on the basis of human values.
- The question of human values is addressed directly in certain subjects (moral education, religious and moral education, personal and social education, etc.), but should not be confined to these subjects. Value-related issues occur in literature, science, technology and social studies. The goal of personal development, based on an awareness of human values, does not necessarily need to be assigned a specific place in the curriculum. Some of its aspects can be taught across the curriculum or through extracurricular activities. However, in light of the mandate we have received, we believe that the specific contribution of moral and religious education and moral education courses should be maintained.

#### **4. ESSENTIAL LEARNING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

The Corbo Report had identified generic skills as one of the major learning areas to be included in the core curriculum. They were called “generic” because they were formal skills mainly concerned with intellectual methods and approaches. The final report of the Estates General on Education also retained generic skills as one of the major learning areas, but added attitudes and values to the list of intellectual skills.

In our view, the term “cross-curricular learning” is more appropriate, since it reflects the fact that the skills concerned are developed across a range of subjects, and that the entire school staff, and indeed the entire school, is responsible for their development. They can also become the focus of the school’s educational project and of extracurricular activities.

In response to the expectations expressed in various quarters, we have identified the cross-curricular learning that should be included in each school’s “program of programs.” It consists of the following skills:

- intellectual skills;
- methodological skills;
- social skills;
- language skills.

These skills are described in more detail in the next chapter and in Appendix 3.

## ***Subjects Retained in the Curriculum and Subject-Time Allocation***

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**C**hapter 2 discussed the expectations that should be taken into account in renewing the curriculum, while Chapter 3 detailed the essential learning that should be transmitted by our schools. It is on the basis of these underlying premises that we propose the following changes.

### **1. PROPOSED CHANGES**

**1.1** Whereas it is necessary to eliminate overlap and redundancy, whereas courses are not always the most appropriate way of promoting learning, whereas new content must be introduced and whereas the family is the institution best qualified to teach certain values and knowledge,

**we recommend** that certain subjects currently taught at the secondary level as compulsory courses no longer be considered independent disciplines, but rather that their content be integrated into other subjects, that they be replaced with activities, or that they be eliminated from the curriculum.

These subjects are:

- personal and social development;
- ecology;
- home economics;
- introduction to technology;
- human biology;
- economics; and
- career choice education.

At the hearings held during the Estates General on Education, teachers and students alike complained about overlaps. They felt that there was needless repetition and that certain subjects should really be taught at home rather than at school.

Content elements of the *personal and social development* program which are recognized as essential should either be integrated, at both the elementary and secondary levels, into the physical education, science and citizenship education programs, or into all subjects across the curriculum.

In the case of *ecology*, we believe that environmental education should be provided across the curriculum, starting in elementary school, and that certain essential cognitive aspects should be integrated, again at both the elementary and secondary levels, into the science, geography and citizenship education programs.

We also believe that most of the content of the *home economics* program, which is at present compulsory in Secondary II, should be replaced by other content. We are not questioning the potential usefulness and relevance of the content covered in this program. We do, however, believe that most of this content could be better dealt with at home. This is not the case for the disciplines on which we have chosen to place greater emphasis in the first cycle of secondary school, such as history, the language of instruction, mathematics, science, citizenship education, and physical education and health education.

The *introduction to technology* course will be one of the three optional subjects offered in Secondary III. However, from now on, the new series of science courses offered in elementary school and the first cycle of secondary school will also include essential knowledge related to technology. Students will learn about the importance of technology in the economy, the applications of science and technology, and NICT throughout their basic schooling.

We propose that the basic content of the *human biology* course, which is at present compulsory in Secondary III, be integrated into the new compulsory science and technology courses in the first cycle of secondary school.

With regard to the Secondary V *economics* course, it comes far too late in students' schooling. Certain economics concepts must be integrated into the various social studies programs starting in elementary school, while other elements will have to be integrated into the new citizenship education courses throughout secondary school. More specifically, we recommend that the basic content of the Secondary V program be integrated into a compulsory program on the contemporary world.

We recommend that *career choice education* no longer be taught as an independent course defined by its own program of study and that career choice information, counselling and assistance be offered by the school as a service geared to:

- guiding students in their search for information and counselling;
- providing students with access to the resources they need in order to progress, especially in the first cycle of secondary school.

We endorse the conclusions of the Pagé Report on vocational education and, so that schools become "guidance-oriented," **we recommend:**

- That students be given, as of the first year of secondary school, the opportunity to develop a personal education plan which they will update and complete throughout their years in secondary school. This will highlight the goal pursued in any type of study and will allow students to gradually identify their own academic goals and the best way to achieve them.

- That students be allowed to take part in occupational exploration activities in Secondary IV and V during periods reserved for optional subjects, as provided for in the curriculum organization we are proposing for the second cycle of secondary school (see section 2.4 of this chapter).
- That educational and vocational information be provided across the curriculum and that teachers of all subjects contribute to the guidance process by occasionally carrying out learning activities designed specifically to broaden students' knowledge of the labour market.
- That a resource centre on educational institutions, careers and occupations be set up, kept up-to-date and made accessible to students at all times.
- That counselling sessions be made available to students on a regular basis starting at the end of the first cycle of secondary school.
- That visits to businesses and workshops be organized and specialists from various trades be invited to the school to speak to students.

**We recommend** that part of the teaching staff who become available following the elimination of the compulsory home economics course and the trimming of the introduction to technology course (which will become a “reduced-supervision” course with groups of 20 students instead of the standard 30) remain in the schools to coordinate educational and vocational information activities, in close collaboration with the other teachers in the school and with guidance counsellors.

## 1.2 We recommend that the following changes be made to the breakdown of subjects and the emphasis they are given in the elementary and secondary school curricula.

### • *Languages*

*Language of instruction.* Over the past 20 years or so, many people have spoken out against the gradual reduction of the time allotted for language of instruction courses, and to French in particular. They have thus identified one of the reasons, and by no means the only one, why schools have been unable to fulfil their role adequately with respect to promoting quality in the area of language learning. We believe that this criticism is justified and that there is a need to rectify the problem and increase the time allotted for language of instruction courses.

Consequently, **we recommend** that, in the first two years of elementary school, more than one-third of the prescribed time be devoted to the language of instruction, either English or French (i.e., nine out of 23.5 hours), and that the suggested time for the language of instruction be maintained at seven hours per week from Grade 3 through to Grade 6.

Also, **we propose** that the number of credits for French as the language of instruction in each year of the first cycle of secondary school be increased from six to eight and that the time allotted for it be increased accordingly from 17 percent to 22 percent of the total time. More importantly, as a result of this change, teachers of French will have fewer class-

es, and ultimately fewer students in total. They will therefore be able to provide a greater number of writing activities and to work with students more closely.

The representatives of the English-speaking community with whom we met pointed out that, at the secondary level, the situation was different for students attending English schools and that they hoped to be able to continue devoting as much time to French as a Second Language as to English Language Arts. For this reason, **we propose** that in English schools, there be six credits for English Language Arts and six credits for French as a Second Language in each year of the first cycle of secondary school.

### ***Second and third languages***

- **English as a second language.** English is the second language for the vast majority of students. Most observers agree that, owing mainly to its place in the overall curriculum, the teaching of English as a second language is deficient. For this reason, we recommend that all students begin to learn English as a second language earlier in elementary school, namely, in Grade 3 rather than in Grade 4; that experimental intensive English programs, already in place in several schools, be encouraged; and that the basic school regulation be changed to allow for English immersion in elementary school, initially in the form of pilot projects approved by the Minister. We also recommend that English as a second language continue to be taught up to Secondary V.
- **French as a second language.** We recommend that the teaching of French as a second language continue to start in Grade 1 and that the basic school regulation for elementary school education be amended so as to explicitly recognize immersion as a way of teaching this language and to allow the development of an appropriate program. In the first cycle of secondary school, we propose recognizing a situation that has existed for many years by allotting six rather than four credits for French as a second language.
- **Third languages.** Given the phenomena of internationalization and globalization, it is indispensable, as the Corbo Report also indicated, that schools place greater emphasis on language learning. In this context, it is desirable that young people be able to start learning a third language as early as Secondary III. More time will be allotted for optional subjects in the second cycle of secondary school, and a wider range of third language courses could be offered during these years. We believe that students should have the opportunity to start learning a third language as of the end of the first cycle of secondary school.

In addition, we propose that students who satisfy the certification requirements for the second language earlier than they normally would be allowed to start learning a third language rather than be forced to continue taking second language courses as is currently the case.

### **• *Technology, science and mathematics***

- **Technology.** Developing an awareness of the world of technology and technological culture through the study of technical objects or processes must start in elementary school and continue throughout to the first cycle of secondary school across the curriculum. It must be given particular emphasis within the natural science programs.

**We recommend** that introduction to technology (including the construction of objects or models) be one of the three optional subjects offered in Secondary III and that school boards be encouraged to continue implementing the technology-oriented path.

- *Science.* There is a need to enhance, from both the cultural and scientific standpoints, the content taught in natural science.

At the elementary level, **we recommend** that certain elements of natural science be taught across the curriculum in the first cycle and that a science program be taught formally beginning in Grade 3. We also recommend that elements of content relating to environmental education and technology be integrated into the renewed natural science program.

In the first cycle of secondary school, **we propose** that Secondary I ecology, Secondary II physical science, and Secondary III biology no longer be taught as independent subjects and that the entire sequence of natural science courses from elementary school through to the end of the first cycle of secondary school be reorganized. This reorganization must take account of the directions we propose for science courses up to the end of the first cycle of secondary school. Specifically, it should introduce students to the work methods specific to science, provide them with a core of scientific knowledge to better prepare them for life in today's world, and place scientific discoveries in context.

- *Mathematics.* Like the language of instruction, mathematics is part of the common core of essential knowledge and must occupy a prominent position throughout elementary school and in the first cycle of secondary school. Also, **we propose** that the weighting of the Secondary III and IV courses be rebalanced by allotting six credits for the Secondary III course and four credits for the basic Secondary IV course. We also propose that the programs of study be adjusted accordingly with a view to consolidating what students learn at each grade level.

#### • *Life in society*

- *History.* If there is one thing that our entire society agrees on, it is the importance of teaching history. **We recommend** remedying the current shortcomings in this area without delay. For the first cycle of elementary school, we propose identifying the cross-curricular learning that could best be integrated with the basic content which constitutes the core of the Grade 1 and 2 curriculum. In the second and third cycles of elementary school, we propose maintaining a sufficient time allocation for the social studies; we also recommend that the social studies course be called History, Geography and Citizenship Education from now on and that its content be reviewed accordingly and harmonized with the social studies curriculum for the secondary level.

At the secondary level, **we recommend** that history be taught each year, and that citizenship education be incorporated into the history courses. As recommended in the Lacoursière Report, we suggest that a new series of history courses deal with general history in Secondary I and II and the history of Québec and Canada in Secondary III and IV. Revision of the programs should take account of the need to harmonize history and geography. **We propose** that, in Secondary V, the history course focus on the con-

temporary world within a program that also features the study of geography and economics.

- *Geography.* We propose that geography be a compulsory subject from Grade 3 through to Grade 6, in Secondary I and II, and in Secondary V, as part of an integrated course on the contemporary world.
- *Economics.* We recommend that economics be integrated into the content of the history programs to be taught from Secondary I to IV, and that it be part of the new compulsory Secondary V course on the contemporary world.
- *Citizenship education.* In keeping with the role of schools as agents of social cohesion, we propose that citizenship education be provided as part of a formal course. Since it focuses on the study of institutions and the way they function, on human rights, on social relations, on intercultural and international understanding, citizenship education should, for the most part, be integrated into the teaching of history.

**We recommend** that citizenship education be provided across the curriculum starting in Grade 1, then more formally as part of the history, geography and citizenship education program, and after that, at the secondary level, within the history and citizenship education program.

#### • ***The arts***

**We recommend** that the arts continue to occupy a prominent place in the curriculum, first as a compulsory subject from kindergarten through to the end of Secondary II, as one of the three optional subjects in Secondary III, and then as an optional subject in the second cycle of secondary school.

At the elementary level, with the aim of more clearly identifying the learning that should be emphasized and of more effectively developing a true arts education culture in our society, we propose that compulsory courses focus primarily on music and the visual arts, as in most countries. This recommendation is not intended to prevent schools with an established tradition of teaching dance or drama from continuing to do so if they so desire, nor is it intended to terminate the activities of schools that offer special programs in the arts. Moreover, all schools should offer extracurricular activities in the visual arts, dance and drama, in particular.

At the secondary level, we recommend that the arts be compulsory in each of the first two years of the first cycle, that they be one of the three optional subjects in the third year and that, barring special constraints, music and visual arts courses be offered to all students. All schools that are able to offer dance and drama as well should do so. In addition, schools should be attentive to students' needs for artistic self-expression and offer students, as an extension of the school's regular teaching activities (e.g., music courses, compulsory French courses or optional courses), opportunities to perform, whether in a band or orchestra or plays, as is already being done in many schools.

- **Personal development**

Earlier in this report, we established that all school activities are geared to the student's personal development. Thus, a variety of subjects contribute to the development of skills and attitudes in this area. Later in this report, we will list those skills and attitudes which we believe should be taught across the curriculum. Others, either because they are complex or because they warrant particular attention, are taught as part of a specific subject in the curriculum.

- *Physical education and health education.* There is no doubt in our minds that physical education and health education should be part of the curriculum starting in Grade 1 through to the end of secondary school. In addition, we insist that schools promote physical and sports activities of all kinds outside the prescribed teaching time. School sports should be seen as providing students with an excellent opportunity to acquire good habits with respect to physical activity and to develop social skills.
- *Moral education.* We recommend that moral education continue to be offered as an alternative to moral and religious education. We also recommend that the new program, while retaining part of the content of the current program, also include certain elements from the current personal and social education program and that it present a cultural overview of world religions.
- *Moral and religious education.* Given that the Minister instructed us, in our mandate, to take account of the regulations of the confessional committees, and given that the prescribed time—particularly in elementary school—is insufficient, we asked the two confessional committees if they would consider decreasing the time allotted for religious education. Given the response of both committees, we can only recommend maintaining the status quo in this respect.

### **1.3 We recommend that cross-curricular learning be introduced into the curriculum.**

- **Definition**

By cross-curricular learning, we mean learning acquired in a particular context which can be applied in other fields of activity. We refer to it as “cross-curricular” because it cuts across all subjects in the curriculum.

Making connections between various school subjects, finding the work method that is most suitable to a particular learning situation, using in one's social life the active listening skills developed in a school activity are all examples of the interactive application of acquired knowledge and skills.

This type of learning is not fostered exclusively through the teaching of school subjects. In fact, it also emerges out of curricular activities, complementary activities, and other activities designed to enrich students' social lives.

Cross-curricular learning, which is described in greater detail in Appendix 3, corresponds to four broad categories of skills.

- *Intellectual skills.* As mentioned earlier, schools should work to better equip students to carry out intellectual work. All subjects, and consequently all teachers, must contribute to developing those skills that stimulate and facilitate thought and reflection.
- *Methodological skills.* One of the main criticisms of schools—heard countless times during the Estates General on Education—is that they do not teach young people how to work, that they neglect methodological skills. All teachers of all subjects must require that students employ a rigorous methodological approach in their work.
- *Social skills.* Schools must promote social cohesion. They must also allow all young people to find their place and play an active role in their communities. In addition to the knowledge dispensed in specific subject areas, certain types of knowledge must be promoted through all school activities. Certain attitudes and behaviours are tied to values and must be experienced rather than taught. Consequently, students must be given opportunities to learn these values through experience.
- *Language skills.* Language learning must be a concern in all subjects. Consequently, all teachers of all subjects must propose language-related learning activities in connection with the objectives of their respective subjects. This is what is commonly referred to as “literacy across the curriculum.” Language skills must therefore be considered as both disciplinary and cross-curricular. Each teacher, within his or her subject area, must promote learning of the language of instruction.

- ***Incorporating cross-curricular learning into the curriculum***

The cross-curricular learning to be promoted by schools may be introduced in two ways.

- Some learning—mainly that linked to socialization—is tied to specific subjects. For example, the knowledge needed to develop a positive attitude towards environmental protection and sustainable development is part of the content taught in science, geography and citizenship education.
- All of the skills identified as cross-curricular learning are in some way connected to all of the subjects in the curriculum. We therefore propose that these skills be set out in a booklet called the “program of programs” which would be different for the elementary and secondary levels. This booklet would be intended for all teachers, as well as other school professionals who have an educational responsibility towards young people, and would clearly set out the values to be promoted in Québec schools.

## **2. SUBJECT-TIME ALLOCATION**

### **2.1 A Common Core**

Our proposed changes for the years of basic schooling have important implications as far as which subjects will be included in the core curriculum and the relative importance they will be assigned.

As is already the case in a number of other provinces and countries, and in keeping with the conclusions of the Estates General on Education, we propose that a common core of knowl-

edge be provided to all students beginning in full-time kindergarten for five-year-olds through to the end of the first cycle of secondary school (Secondary III).

- a) *Kindergarten*. Kindergarten consists of early learning activities that prepare children for formal schooling. We might consider, in the short or medium term, making full-time kindergarten for five-year-olds officially part of the first cycle of elementary school.
- b) *Elementary school*. Elementary school should allow all students to acquire the basic learning that will help them to gradually develop their ability to think for themselves and to assimilate the content they will be covering in secondary school. At the elementary level, besides acquiring essential basic knowledge, students must formally start learning the work methods that will be indispensable at higher levels of study, and familiarize themselves with the various aspects of their culture, the main characteristics of their society and the values that must be promoted within it.

As proposed by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in 1991 (*Une pédagogie pour demain à l'école primaire*, recommendation no. 10), **we recommend** that the elementary level be reorganized into three two-year cycles for the following reasons: to redistribute content into multiyear stages that are more compatible with the psychological profile of elementary school children and the stages of their development; to allow for the establishment of a pattern whereby new learning is introduced in the first year and consolidated in the second; to promote and encourage the creation of small teams of teachers who would follow the same students through both years of a cycle; to facilitate instructional planning in multilevel classes (which are increasingly numerous); and to facilitate earlier end-of-cycle evaluation in order to increase the effectiveness of remedial measures designed to keep students from repeating grade levels.

This progression implies:

- in the first cycle, the mastery of basic learning focusing essentially on the language of instruction and mathematics but including an introduction to the elements (air, water, etc.), to time and space, to the arts, to physical well-being, and to life in society;
  - in the second cycle, the start of more formal learning in certain fields of study and the continuation of basic learning;
  - in the third cycle, the consolidation of basic learning and the start of more formal learning in certain fields of study.
- c) *First cycle of secondary school*. The first cycle, which includes the first three years of secondary school, is a time for more in-depth study. It rounds out students' basic education and exposes them to more formal learning in various areas of study in order to gradually prepare them for the second cycle.

## 2.2 Subject-Time Allocation at the Elementary Level

### • *Prescribed time*

The prescribed average teaching time at the elementary level is 23.5 hours per week. In keeping with the mandate given to us by the Minister, this is the framework within which

we have formulated our proposal. However, we wish to point out that the time devoted to teaching at the elementary level in Québec is considerably less than elsewhere, where the teaching time is generally 25 or 26 hours. In Québec, this situation is aggravated because of the time schools are required to spend on moral and religious education and because of the time they spend on second language teaching. Certain real problems, such as the time devoted to certain subjects or the need to create a daily period for help with individual work, may be truly solved only when the prescribed teaching time is increased to at least 25 hours per week.

We also believe that more flexibility must be introduced into the basic school regulation by removing the obligation to schedule the school week over five full days.

• ***Subject-time allocation at the elementary level***

| <b>FIRST CYCLE<br/>Grades 1 and 2</b>            |               | <b>SECOND CYCLE<br/>Grades 3 and 4</b>           |               | <b>THIRD CYCLE<br/>Grades 5 and 6</b>            |               |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Subject</b>                                   | <b>Time</b>   | <b>Subject</b>                                   | <b>Time</b>   | <b>Subject</b>                                   | <b>Time</b>   |
| Language of instruction                          | 9 h           | Language of instruction                          | 7 h           | Language of instruction                          | 7 h           |
| Mathematics                                      | 7 h           | Mathematics                                      | 5 h           | Mathematics                                      | 5 h           |
|                                                  | 16 h          |                                                  | 12 h          |                                                  | 12 h          |
| Moral and religious education or Moral education | 2 h           | Moral and religious education or Moral education | 2 h           | Moral and religious education or Moral education | 2 h           |
| <b>Other subjects</b>                            |               | <b>Other subjects</b>                            |               | <b>Other subjects</b>                            |               |
| French as a second language                      |               | Second language                                  |               | Second language                                  |               |
| Art                                              |               | Art                                              |               | Art                                              |               |
| Physical education and health education          |               | Physical education and health education          |               | Physical education and health education          |               |
|                                                  |               | History, geography and citizenship education     |               | History, geography and citizenship education     |               |
|                                                  |               | Science and technology                           |               | Science and technology                           |               |
| Leeway                                           |               | Leeway                                           |               | Leeway                                           |               |
|                                                  | 5.5 h         |                                                  | 9.5 h         |                                                  | 9.5 h         |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>23.5 h</b> | <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>23.5 h</b> | <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>23.5 h</b> |

**Leeway**

Except in the case of moral and religious education, whose teaching time is prescribed by the regulations of the Catholic and Protestant committees of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, schools may choose to organize the teaching time and courses differently within each cycle to take account of local constraints or characteristics. However, the language of instruction must be taught at each level. Schools may use their leeway to devote more than the suggested time to a subject, to teach a local program or to carry out a special project.

## Note

The arts, science (science and technology), social studies (history, geography and citizenship education), second language and physical education (physical education and health education) programs will have to be organized so as to clearly identify ESSENTIAL CONTENT on the basis of an average minimum time of one hour per week. Enrichment content equivalent to at least another hour per week will have to be provided in these programs for schools that choose to use their leeway to spend more time on one of these subjects.

With regard to teaching time at the elementary level, a comparison of this proposal and the current situation is possible on the basis of the studies conducted by the MEQ on the actual time spent on various subjects at the elementary level (see the *Annual Report on the Application and Applicability of the Basic School Regulations*, September 1990).

Owing to the discrepancy between the time initially provided for in the basic school regulation and the total prescribed time (which is still 23.5 hours instead of the projected 25 hours) on the one hand, and to the need to devote more time to the so-called basic subjects on the other, the time actually devoted to certain subjects is clearly inferior to that suggested in the basic school regulation. Below are the percentages of teachers who said they devoted less than the suggested time for a given subject. In many cases, they devoted less than half the suggested time:

- The arts: close to 55 percent of teachers;
- Natural science: close to 48 percent of teachers, of whom more than 13 percent said they spent no time at all on this subject;
- English as a second language: more than 66 percent of teachers;
- Social studies: more than 70 percent of teachers.

By contrast, more than two-thirds of teachers devoted more time to French as the language of instruction and to mathematics.

## 2.3 Subject-Time Allocation in the First Cycle of Secondary School

### • *Prescribed time*

The prescribed teaching time at the secondary level is 25 hours per week. This is more or less the same, generally, as in other provinces and countries, although, in some systems, the prescribed teaching time is 26 or 27 hours per week. In Québec, however, given the amount of time prescribed by law for religious education—a responsibility which generally lies with the family or the church elsewhere in the world—and the greater amount of time that must be devoted to French as the language of instruction and French as a second language because of the North-American context, the education system must cope with a shortage of time that obliges schools to make certain choices and that makes it impossible for them to meet certain expectations.

Also, we believe that more flexibility must be introduced into the basic school regulation by removing the obligation to schedule the school week over five full days.

• *Subject-time allocation in the first cycle of secondary school*

| SECONDARY I                                      |         | SECONDARY II                                     |         | SECONDARY III                                    |         |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Subjects                                         | Credits | Subjects                                         | Credits | Subjects                                         | Credits |
| French (language of instruction)                 | 8       | French (language of instruction)                 | 8       | French (language of instruction)                 | 8       |
| English as a second language                     | 4       | English as a second language                     | 4       | English as a second language                     | 4       |
| English (language of instruction)                | 6       | English (language of instruction)                | 6       | English (language of instruction)                | 6       |
| French as a second language                      | 6       | French as a second language                      | 6       | French as a second language                      | 6       |
| Mathematics                                      | 6       | Mathematics                                      | 6       | Mathematics                                      | 6       |
| History and citizenship education                | 3       | History and citizenship education                | 3       | History and citizenship education                | 4       |
| Geography                                        | 3       | Geography                                        | 3       |                                                  |         |
| Science and technology                           | 4       | Science and technology                           | 4       | Science and technology                           | 4       |
| Physical education and health education          | 2       | Physical education and health education          | 2       | Physical education and health education          | 2       |
| Moral and religious education or Moral education | 2       | Moral and religious education or Moral education | 2       | Moral and religious education or Moral education | 2       |
| Art                                              | 4       | Art                                              | 4       |                                                  |         |
|                                                  |         |                                                  |         | OPTIONAL                                         | 3       |
|                                                  |         |                                                  |         | Art or Technology or Modern languages            |         |
|                                                  |         |                                                  |         | OPTIONAL                                         |         |
|                                                  |         |                                                  |         | Art or Technology or Modern languages or leeway  | 3       |
| Total                                            | 36      | Total                                            | 36      | Total                                            | 36      |

### Notes

1. Leeway. A credit is equivalent to approximately 25 hours. It is on this basis that the programs of study will have to be developed or revised. Schools may increase or decrease the teaching time allotted for each subject provided it is sufficient to cover compulsory content. In Secondary III, the leeway may be used to devote more than the suggested time to a subject, to teach a local program or to carry out special activities.

2. The time devoted to moral and religious education is prescribed by the regulations of the Catholic and Protestant committees of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation.
3. We are concerned about the number of students with whom teachers deal. We believe that emphasis on interdisciplinary versatility should intensify. By teaching more than one subject to the same group of students, teachers would not see as many students. For example, in Secondary I and II, the same teacher should teach geography and history to the same group of students.
4. We propose that the arts be one of the three fields in which optional subjects are offered in Secondary III so that an arts course should normally be taken by the majority of students. The same situation would apply, in Secondary III, to introduction to technology and the study of a third language.
5. First-cycle students who have satisfied the certification requirements with respect to the second language (that is, at the end of Grade 6 or after Secondary I or II) may take either a more advanced second-language course, the language of instruction course corresponding to their grade level, or a third language. In all cases, they earn extra credits.

## 2.4 Subject-Time Allocation in the Second Cycle of Secondary School

In the case of secondary-level studies, and more specifically the second cycle, there was unanimous agreement on one point: the need to provide more diversity while maintaining the basic subjects. The main criticism levelled at the second cycle can be summed up in one sentence: schools offer little choice.

This is a fact. In response to a wide range of student interests, learning styles, aspirations and levels of motivation, the second cycle as it now stands offers only two choices: general education leading to higher education or to vocational education in which students can generally enrol only once they have completed their general education.

A small number of students have less aptitude for regular studies in general education or vocational education. Schools, in accordance with their mission of promoting educational success, must also offer these students the best chance of succeeding in their future lives, through life skills and work skills education programs. These programs are intended to ensure that none of these students leave school without adequate preparation and qualifications.<sup>1</sup>

But it is important to act now and work greater flexibility into the system in order to make a broader range of educational choices available to all students, consistent with their needs and interests. This should be done in both general education and vocational education.

1. As soon as they reach age 16, the students are enrolled in life skills and work skills education programs. These programs are geared to familiarizing students with the labour market and preparing them for non-specialized trades, in keeping with their abilities. The students' competence in carrying out certain tasks is recognized by an Attestation of Skills.

As an alternative to life skills and work skills education, some school boards offer a workplace training program which provides participants with a general education adapted to their needs and the qualifications they will need to find employment in the area of waste recycling.

- ***Diversification in vocational education***

Intensive vocational education programs have been in place for many years now. To be admitted to these programs, students must have obtained a Secondary School Diploma or must be at least 16 years of age and have the specific prerequisites for their chosen program. In practice, these conditions currently allow for admission to vocational education only at the end of secondary school. However, it is important that vocational education be open to all students—girls and boys—as soon as they have completed their basic schooling.

In 1995-96, the MEQ started implementing an experimental program aimed at diversifying paths in vocational education. One of the objectives of this experimental program is to give young people access, before the end of their secondary studies, to a broader range of vocational education choices, in addition to the intensive programs. In our view, two sections of this experimental program, namely, sections 2 (preparation for semi-skilled trades) and 5 (access to programs leading to an SSVD after Secondary III), effectively meet the need for diversification which was discussed earlier.

We therefore propose that the implementation of these two sections of the experimental program be intensified and that they be made available to all students so that they can choose the alternative best suited to their needs without having to complete studies they often feel are too long.

- *Preparation for semi-skilled trades (section 2)*

Students who do not wish to continue their general education in the second cycle of secondary school or to enrol in a vocational education leading to a Secondary School Vocational Diploma (SSVD) may, if they have completed Secondary II, be admitted to a program which will prepare them for a semi-skilled trade. The duration of the program varies according to the requirements of the specific trade, but does not exceed 900 hours. Students spend an equal amount of time on each of two components:

a) General education in the language of instruction, the second language and mathematics. Credits may be earned for Secondary III or IV courses, depending on the program chosen. Students who later decide to continue their studies will therefore have the credits they need to either return to the general education stream or enrol in an intensive vocational education program.

b) Preparation for a semi-skilled trade through practical training in the workplace.

- *Access to programs leading to an SSVD after Secondary III (section 5)*

Section 5 is intended for young people who have completed Secondary III and who have chosen an occupation. It allows them to embark earlier on a vocational education program leading to an SSVD—in fact, as of Secondary IV.

In the case of vocational education programs which normally have Secondary IV prerequisites, students earn credits in basic general education subjects (language of instruction, second language and mathematics) and the remaining credits in vocational education subjects.

In the case of vocational education programs which normally require completion of the Secondary V language of instruction course, students earn the prerequisite credits in the language of instruction and the remaining credits in vocational education subjects.

- ***Diversification in general education***

In the case of general education, the two years of the second cycle must offer a true range of choices. Under the current subject-time allocation, students may take only one optional subject (four credits) in Secondary IV. More variety must also be introduced in Secondary V, where choices are overly influenced by the college admission requirements. We would like to see the college admission requirements further streamlined to eliminate prerequisites which are not absolutely necessary in order to succeed in a college program.

In short, the second cycle must offer greater diversity in order to:

- give students academic choices that are suited to their needs and interests;
- allow schools to define their educational project to take into account students' learning needs, styles and rates.

The subject-time allocation for the second cycle of secondary school will be such that students will perfect their knowledge in the basic subjects and have a wider range of choices as far as optional subjects are concerned.

- *A common core of basic subjects*

Needless to say, for the vast majority of students, teaching in the basic subjects must continue through to the end of secondary school, and even beyond if they are going on to college.

The second cycle of secondary school will mainly consist of a common core of basic subjects, including languages and mathematics but also history and citizenship education, understanding of the contemporary world, and science.

- *Choices in various fields of study*

The proposed subject-time allocation is essentially aimed at streamlining the second cycle and expanding the choices available to students so that these two years will truly help them make decisions about their future.

- a) The number of credits for optional subjects and leeway time will increase from 16 to 24 credits for the second cycle as a whole.
- b) In Secondary V, to allow students to explore fields of study that match their tastes and aspirations while preventing them from choosing courses that are too disparate, they will choose their optional subjects in a maximum of two of the six following fields:
  - languages;
  - life in society;
  - science, mathematics and technology;

- the arts;
- physical education;
- vocational education.

Second-cycle students who wish to do so may take part or all of their credits for optional subjects in the vocational education sector. This will make it easier for more school boards to implement the occupational exploration component (section 3) of the experimental program aimed at diversifying vocational education paths. Section 3 is intended primarily for young people who have completed Secondary III and who have not yet decided on a specific vocational education program. It provides contact with various occupations to help students identify their tastes and interests and verify them in the workplace.

• ***Subject-time allocation in the second cycle of secondary school***

| SUBJECTS                                | Secondary IV Credits | Secondary V Credits |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Common Core</b>                      |                      |                     |
| Language of instruction                 | 6                    | 6                   |
| Second language                         | 4                    | 4                   |
| Mathematics                             | 4 (or 6)*            | 4 (or 6)*           |
| History and citizenship education       | 4                    | —                   |
| Understanding of the contemporary world | —                    | 4                   |
| Science and technology                  | 4 (or 6)*            | —                   |
| Physical education and health education | 2                    | 2                   |
| Moral and religious education or        | 2                    | 2                   |
| Moral education                         |                      |                     |
| <b>Optional</b>                         |                      |                     |
| Optional 1                              | 4                    | 4                   |
| Optional 2                              | 4                    | 4                   |
| Optional 3                              | —                    | 4                   |
| Leeway                                  | 2                    | 2                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            | <b>36</b>            | <b>36</b>           |

\*Four credits for the basic program; six credits for other courses.

**Notes**

1. The time devoted to moral and religious education is prescribed by the regulations of the Catholic and Protestant committees of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation.
2. Optional subjects (including leeway time) in Secondary IV and V may account for up to 24 credits, depending on which courses are taken. Under the current basic school regulation, 16 credits are allotted for optional subjects.

3. To avoid too great a disparity in their choice of optional subjects, Secondary V students may choose their optional subjects from no more than two fields of study among the following:

- languages;
- life in society;
- science, mathematics and technology;
- the arts;
- physical education;
- vocational education.

We also suggest that each school be allowed, if it considers it appropriate to do so based on its enrolment and its students' needs, to establish disciplinary profiles in order to give students a clear indication of the choices offered in the second cycle (e.g., a science-mathematics profile, an arts and literature profile, a languages and social studies profile).

4. Two streams (levels of difficulty) are offered in mathematics and science in the second cycle of secondary school. We propose that the possibility of creating a middle stream in both subjects be seriously considered, to avoid a situation in which too many students would enrol in the enriched stream when their chances of succeeding are low.

**We recommend** that streamed programs in the language of instruction and the second language also be introduced in the second cycle of secondary school, and that these be recognized for certification purposes.

5. Students who have satisfied the certification requirements with respect to the second language at the end of Secondary III or IV may take either a more advanced second language program, the language of instruction program corresponding to their grade level, or a third language. In all cases, they earn extra credits.



Implementing the revised curriculum implies a number of adjustments to and, in some cases, a reorganization of existing programs. We have provided further information on the work required by our reform proposals in Appendices 4 and 5. Some of the adjustments are minor, but others are more substantial, since they transform the general economy of the programs.

This urgent work, to be carried out in the short term, means that it is more important than ever to review the program establishment process. The MEQ, in its document entitled *Moving Ahead*, has already questioned current practices in this area. In addition, many contributors to the Estates General on Education also expressed negative opinions of the various aspects of the process, for example, responsibility, development and format. However, in the course of our work, we came to the conclusion that some of the expectations, in particular those that had to do with the integration of subjects, the diversification of educational paths, and the restoration of leeway to education professionals in order to promote both independent action and cooperation, could not be taken into account in the curriculum unless other amendments were made to the program establishment system currently in use.

The present situation must therefore be improved and, in some areas, radically changed. But to highlight the general thrust of these improvements, we will begin by describing the present situation, and then go on to identify the main elements to be corrected.

## 1. THE PRESENT SITUATION

### 1.1 Who Establishes the Programs?

At the preschool, elementary and secondary levels, the Minister of Education establishes programs in the compulsory and optional subjects on the list he or she draws up (section 461 of the *Education Act*).

The school boards may develop and offer local programs in optional subjects not on the Minister's list, and the Minister may, for those subjects, authorize a higher number of credits than is stipulated in the basic school regulation.

The programs established by the Minister include compulsory objectives and content, and may also include objectives and content enriched or adapted to the students' needs.

Programs, curriculum guides and textbooks for Catholic religious and moral instruction or Protestant moral and religious education are approved by the confessional committees (section 22 of the *Act respecting the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation*).

The confessional committees may also express an opinion on the moral and religious aspect of programs and textbooks adopted or approved by the Minister for courses other than Catholic religious and moral instruction or Protestant moral and religious education. The Minister is required to provide the committees with all such documents at least 60 days before adoption or approval (section 23).

## 1.2 Who Develops the Programs?

The program development process is based on the principles set out in *The Schools of Québec*. It requires that the education community be consulted and participate in all of the main phases.

An advisory committee is formed for each program to guide the MEQ program officer responsible for its development. The committee is composed of people from representative associations or communities who are able to provide expertise. It helps decide the general program orientations. The authors also submit the draft program to the education community at association meetings and educational conferences. Once the program has been approved by the Minister, information and awareness-raising activities are held.

All programs are assessed before being revised. From 1984 to 1995, programs were subjected to a fairly complex assessment process which included an inventory of the phases and conditions of program implementation, and surveys of different categories of people (administrators, school principals, education consultants, teachers and student representatives) to ensure that objectives had been met.

More than 25 programs were assessed in this way. In some cases, the data collected were used to revise the program. Usually, however, the assessment conclusions did not result in a prompt and complete program revision, even where the need was clear. This was not simply because of resource reductions within the MEQ. The complexity of the process and the difficulty of changing individual programs were also factors, since a more organic approach would have been needed to make the required changes.

## 1.3 How Are the Programs Presented?

The program presentation format has changed over time. However, its evolution can be divided into four main phases, which must be understood in order to judge the value and limits of the various formulas used.

- a) *Before the ministère de l'Éducation existed*, the programs established by the Department of Education presented the basic elementary and secondary school content in a traditional form, as a list showing the subjects taught, the time to be devoted to each, and the notions to be learned.
- b) Between 1968 and 1971, programs were presented in a new format, as program outlines (*programmes-cadres*). The orientations were sketched in a very general way, and content was practically not defined. The program outlines were short—for example, the elementary and secondary school French program outline contained only eight pages—and teachers had a great deal of latitude in deciding not only the teaching methods to be used, but the course content as well.

The MEQ's program outlines were supplemented by institutional programs prepared by individual school boards. To help the school boards with this task, the MEQ offered the services of educational development officers. Explicitly, however, much of the initiative and responsibility for program development lay with the teachers and administrators of individual school boards. The program outlines were severely criticized and became the scapegoat for the failure of the education reform.

- c) In the late 1970s, *Primary and Secondary Education in Québec*, a green paper published by Minister Jacques-Yvan Morin, concluded that this method of establishing programs, while well-intentioned, led to an absence of detailed content and clear objectives: "a great number of teachers and parents are complaining because the programmes available do not satisfactorily determine...specific final objectives and properly graded contents."

In 1979, the government published a reform document entitled *The Schools of Québec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action*. In one of its chapters, the document announced a change in the method of establishing and presenting programs. In future, the MEQ would prepare more detailed programs including basic compulsory content and suggested content. Teachers, education consultants and professional associations would be asked to take part in the program development process.

From 1980 to 1993, programs were established according to a program development framework. Under the framework, all programs had to include the following elements:

- an introduction (justification, different relationships, target clientele);
- general orientations (guiding principles, various foundations);
- a description of content (global objective, general objectives, terminal objectives, intermediate objectives, related content);
- a description of the chosen evaluation approach;
- a list of special factors such as prerequisites and the time normally required;
- bibliographic references.

All programs were developed in conformity with this predetermined structure. In reality, however, some elements of the framework caused structural deficiencies, leading to the following problems.

- Program content was supposed to occupy 75 percent of the time suggested in the basic school regulation in order to leave leeway for adaptation, enrichment and consolidation. In fact, however, the serial objective logic caused this directive to be ignored. Instead, priority was given to explaining the steps required.
- The terminal objectives were supposed to express the expected outcomes of the learning process. Consequently, they should have been the only ones that were compulsory. In fact, however, the intermediate objectives of some programs were also compulsory, and they were the ones that attracted attention in the field, because the evaluation approach chosen seemed to concentrate on them.

- The highly detailed program presentation format and the existence of series of different types of objectives focused attention on systematic evaluation and led to the emergence of experts in taxonomy and measurement and evaluation. MEQ documentation on program presentation did not usually contain a summary overview of “what is taught” and “what must be taught,” to a point that it is impossible for anyone now to determine the basic knowledge taught by schools then without consulting the programs one by one and reading thousands of pages in the process.
  - Textbooks were supposed to be consistent with the programs. However, because the programs were so detailed, the textbooks, to be approved, had in fact to reproduce the proposed procedures, thus reinforcing the prescriptive aspect of program implementation as established in the programs. This complicated the task of the English schools, which were unable to obtain enough locally produced textbooks in English and thus found themselves in the somewhat precarious situation of having to use textbooks written from a different program establishment standpoint, while the ministerial evaluation process was based on the program as actually established.
  - The situation was exacerbated for teachers when textbooks started coming with workbooks, and when textbooks and workbooks were designed in such a way that the use of one required the use of another.
- d) In the fall of 1993, the document entitled *Moving Ahead* suggested a review of some of the rules governing teaching activities in schools. One of these rules was concerned with the programs themselves: “Our schools are bogged down. Too many ideas, programs... have been imposed over the years.” The document also said that “educators... must have more control over the basic aspects of the teaching/learning experience, such as content [and] teaching methods.” At the same time, it announced that in future “the Ministry would produce less comprehensive programs that would focus on skills to be developed and content to be taught.”

In November 1993, at the annual conference of the Québec association of French teachers, the Minister announced further details of the MEQ’s new approach:

- reassertion of government responsibility for setting the main program objectives;
- confirmation that teachers are responsible for everyday classroom practice and that it is not the MEQ’s role to teach;
- rejection of the idea of a general program review, in favour of a process designed to clarify the requirements of each cycle in order to identify essential learning;
- emphasis on trimming and rebalancing programs;
- elimination of prescribed teaching approaches;
- a shift away from complex objective typologies.

The revised elementary school and secondary school programs for French as the language of instruction (published in 1993 and 1995 respectively), and the recent secondary school mathematics programs are presented in accordance with the new program structure.

## 2. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

Program establishment is one of the most sensitive elements of the curriculum. It has a significant structural impact on the curriculum as applied in the classroom. Everyone agrees that the present system must be corrected. However, it is important for the corrections to apply to the elements that produce the unintended effects. Our historical overview of program establishment revealed three such elements.

- The program presentation method. The program format has a decisive impact on classroom implementation, and thus on the nature and quality of the instruction given. While the program outlines left room for creativity, they could also, in some cases, lead to carelessness and lower standards. And while the hyperspecialized program format ensured that standards were maintained, it also prevented programs from being adapted, left no room for educational innovation, and placed teachers in the role of technicians responsible for simply applying predetermined procedures and overseeing standards.
- The importance of the direction, coordination and control functions. When these functions are not performed properly, the system generates problems, and an accumulation of such problems can, in some cases, lead to blockages and obstacles which are difficult to remove and control. Two such blockages are particularly visible in the present system. The predominant role played by program implementation experts at the development stage sometimes brings program designers, education consultants, teachers' associations and occasionally even publishers too close together, a situation which does not favour the openness and transparency required at this crucial point in the process. In most cases, this makes it impossible for the MEQ to intervene effectively in the development process. Moreover, when evaluation is taken into account at the program development stage, the link between the formulation of objectives and the formulation of the examination questions to be evaluated is reinforced. The objectives are so specific that it is tempting for teachers to believe that they have to evaluate them using methods designed to obtain accurate results. As a result, priority is given in the evaluation process to closed, multiple-choice questions, which in turn require extremely detailed intermediate objectives. This spiral structure can even produce situations in which content is taught only if it can be evaluated in this way.
- The need to leave room for the most important players. The groups and individuals currently involved in the program establishment process are, basically, the professional associations and education consultants. The teachers play a very small role in the process, and are considered to be appliers, not developers. Once the program has been established, information sessions are held to ensure that it will be applied effectively by the teachers. There is a tendency to believe that the program, once established, will produce a change in the classroom. However, this is not necessarily the case. A professional will rarely apply a change effectively if he or she was not a party to it.

The MEQ is present in the development process, but over time has sought more appropriate intervention methods. In the 1970s, with the program outlines, it limited its role to giving general guidelines and providing support for the school boards. In the early 1980s, it became the leader of the program development and implementation process. Through its bureaucratic apparatus, it tried to play the role of educator, with the support of experts. Throughout these two decades, the Minister's role was greatly reduced. Political interventions were made under pressure from public opinion and media criticism, and rarely took account of the opinions issued by the Conseil

supérieur de l'éducation. Since 1993, the political authority has begun to intervene more directly, to establish what elementary and secondary schools should give to all children. For example, it has intervened in the French program through the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles, with the Estates General on Education, and by creating our Task Force on Curriculum Reform.

These historical lessons should be used as a basis for deciding what needs to be done to reform the current program establishment system. Corrections are required in three areas:

- program presentation formats;
- the supervisory, coordination and control mechanisms applicable to program establishment operations;
- the role of teachers in program development and implementation.

## **2.1 Program Presentation Formats**

If we look at what has been done in the last 30 years, it is clear that the presentation format has a key impact on program implementation. It conditions how instruction is given in the classroom. Consequently, the current official program format must be changed. Elements of implementation, in the form of highly specific objectives and sub-objectives, have no place in such a document.

### **• *The official program in different subjects***

The program is the official text, adopted by the Minister, which serves as the provincial reference. The very function of the text and the changes we wish to make to the current classroom application of the curriculum determine the elements to be contained in the official program statements.

The official program for each subject and for each annual or multiyear phase defines the framework within which teachers will be called upon to make certain educational choices. For these choices to be possible, the official program must have the following characteristics.

- It must provide information that enables teachers to clarify the situation and function of the subject in the curriculum as a whole: its place and role in achieving the objectives of the cycle, its place and role with respect to preceding and subsequent subject matter (disciplinary consistency), its place and role in the field of knowledge at that specific cycle or level (consistency and integration with other subjects in the same field), and possible links with other subjects taught at the same level (interdisciplinary consistency).
- The program must clearly show the objectives of the course and explicitly state the elements of knowledge to be acquired and the level of competence to be attained. The elements of knowledge include the notions, concepts and skills inherent in the discipline, while the level of competence refers to either the level of knowledge acquisition (e.g., familiarization or mastery) or the level of skill to be measured at the end of the year.

The official program design should take account of certain concerns regarding curriculum renewal.

- The program should be designed to enable students to acquire cross-curricular learning: intellectual skills, methodological skills, social skills and language skills.
- The program should be designed with the cultural aspect in mind.
- The program should be designed so as to ensure that NICT can be used in the classroom.
- The program should be drafted in a style that is free of technical jargon and terminology taken from educational schools of thought.

The basic schooling programs, i.e., those for the elementary level and the first cycle of secondary school, should be designed to take account of varying aptitude levels among students. In the classroom, the presence of different aptitude levels should lead not to lower standards but to the use of approaches better suited to the students' rate of learning. One way of dealing with student diversity is to vary methods and approaches, and the program format should therefore give teachers sufficient freedom to adjust rates and requirements without depriving the slower students of access to core content. It should also allow school teams to appraise annual progress and sequential organization.

The official program should not cover course implementation, but it may, in some cases, give suggestions or information that will help with implementation. For example:

- an explanation of the program content, i.e., the reasons for which a given concept was introduced into or withdrawn from the program;
- information concerning progression, when it is not linear;
- information concerning the types of activities that will enable the students to acquire skills;
- information on the nature and scope of the individual work to be done by students outside the classroom;
- information on multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches for a grade or cycle (topics, themes, organization of exhibitions).

Official programs will be presented in two separate documents:

- a vertical-type document describing all the courses in the program, year after year, to show the progression in their content;
- a horizontal-type reference document establishing the scope of teachers' collective action. The document will describe the subjects taught at each level or cycle, the links between them and any similarities or differences in the methods used in teaching the different subjects. At the present time, only vertical-type documents exist. Special attention should be given to the production of horizontal-type documents.

- ***The format of programs drafted for parents, the general public and the students themselves***

The official program is designed basically for teachers. It provides them with provincial teaching standards. However, it is vital that parents, the general public and the students themselves also know “what is taught” in schools. In schools, the teacher-student relationship is not direct, but is governed by the program. The programs, which together form the curriculum for the compulsory school years, are of public interest. They express the educational project, or the common foundation of knowledge that we as a society wish to transmit to our children. The information, to be truly accessible, must also be available in a format other than the official program.

This other document should not be as technical as the official program which sets out the instructional framework, since it is designed for a different audience. It should, however, provide specific information to allow parents, the general public and students to understand what will be taught in a given year or cycle, and the requirements to be satisfied at the end of that year or cycle. Consequently, the document should:

- set out the objectives by level and by cycle;
- set out the objectives by subject for each level or cycle;
- provide systematic information on the content of each subject;
- state what the student will need to have learned at the end of the year or cycle to be promoted to a higher level.

## **2.2 The Supervisory, Coordination and Control Mechanisms**

Part of our mandate was to examine the relevance of creating a Commission nationale des programmes, or provincial curriculum board. Before answering this question, we must look at how the supervisory, coordination and control functions are fulfilled in the present system, to see if existing mechanisms are sufficient to satisfy the demands of program development and establishment.

- ***The supervisory function***

Supervision, or general monitoring by an authority removed from program development operations, is not widely used in the present system.

Only the confessional committees of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation exercise a remote supervisory function in connection with the development of confessional religious and moral education programs. This function, which extends to the approval of programs, curriculum guides and textbooks, is entrusted to them by the *Act respecting the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation*. The Conseil itself, as part of its general mandate, can give the Minister its opinion on programs, or the Minister may ask for its opinion. However, it intervenes on a case-by-case basis only, and is not responsible for overseeing the program establishment process in the same way that the confessional committees are responsible for moral and religious education programs.

It is becoming increasingly clear to everyone involved that the present system must be changed in this respect. The orientations governing program development should not be determined in advance only by the people who will eventually implement them. Clearly, those responsible for this task should know the subjects involved, but they should also be removed from implementation to some extent. When it created the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles and our own Task Force, the MEQ was aiming explicitly for this goal. There are arguments for making this role a permanent one. The establishment of programs for compulsory schooling requires the involvement of individuals who, though they may not be curriculum specialists, are known for their integrity, their insight, and their commitment to the public good. Moreover, the people responsible for program development should be able to base their work on orientations defined by an authority whose legitimacy is recognized. The existence of such an authority should also reduce the number of applications for arbitration by the Minister during the process, and make it more difficult to organize disciplinary lobbies.

- ***The coordination function***

The overall coordination function is, to all intents and purposes, absent from the present system because the logic underlying curriculum organization does not require it. The logic is that of a mechanical set. Once the importance of each subject in the curriculum has been decided, the program for each subject is designed independently. Vertical consistency over different levels is sought, while horizontal consistency within a given level is neglected. As we have seen, the effect of this mechanical conception has been a shift towards the “balkanization” of programs.

In such a system, it is possible to limit the coordination function to the administrative processes governing program establishment so that development of a program is dictated by the logic of its content.

However, the program review process should be based on an entirely different logic. Here, the logic should be that of an organic set, where emphasis is given to the links between the elements. In such a system, the coordination functions must be clearly assumed and, as it will be necessary to move from one system to another, they must also be firmly assumed. In fact, properly coordinated integration will be required in the short term to allow extensive integration of the different subjects in a same field of knowledge, and the development of “vertical” programs by cycle and across the cycles of basic schooling, with constant attention at every level (grade or cycle) to the horizontal links between the subjects in a given field of knowledge, and between the subjects at a given level.

In addition, it is necessary to change a system in which demands for new elements of knowledge create demands for new courses. To counter this trend, we propose integrating certain elements of cross-curricular learning into the overall curriculum and the more relevant of the related content elements into existing programs. However, an operation of this nature cannot be left to the initiative of program designers. It must be coordinated. The learning to be acquired must be established in advance, the subjects in which it should be included must be identified, and its actual inclusion must be verified.

- ***The control function***

The control function exists in the present system, but it is exercised within the system's compartmentalized logic. Each MEQ program officer controls operations relating to the programs for which he or she is responsible. Beyond this point in the system, control is administrative only.

However, the scope and complexity of the work involved in establishing programs, and the innovative aspect of the proposed new approaches will require a more organic form of control to ensure that the programs established are consistent with the orientations and frameworks.

The controlling authority must be fairly close to the people responsible for coordinating program establishment operations. It is important for interaction to take place throughout the program development process, and for any corrections to be made before development is complete.

- ***A provincial curriculum board?***

To ensure that program establishment work is carried out, the existing supervisory, coordination and control functions will have to be exercised in a completely new environment. It is our job to make proposals to ensure that this happens. Québec, however, is not alone in this situation. Many other countries, in reviewing their curricula, have also revised their program establishment procedures. We have examined two recent innovations, based on two different models.

- The Conseil national des programmes in France. This is a recently created organization (1990) that gives opinions and sends proposals to the ministère de l'Éducation nationale on general instructional design, overall objectives, the appropriateness of programs and disciplinary fields for these objectives, and their suitability for knowledge development at the elementary and secondary levels. The Conseil does not develop programs itself, but gives its opinion on the composition of the groups responsible for doing so and on the conclusions reached by those groups. It is an independent body, and its reports are made public. Because of its membership, it is extremely influential.
- The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in England. This recently created organization (1993) was the result of a merger between two bodies created by the 1988 *Educational Reform Act*: the National Curriculum Council, which was responsible for all aspects of the curriculum, and the School Examination and Assessment Council, which was concerned with assessment. England has a tradition of separating political and expert responsibility in the field of education. The new body has a very broad mandate, as well as decision-making and production powers.

After considering these two models, we concluded that any changes to our program establishment method should be based on the French model rather than the English one, for two reasons.

- First, the French model was created to correct a situation similar to ours. In both cases, the ministry played a major role in the general educational framework (program establishment and evaluation). In France, the Conseil national des programmes was intended to be a counterweight to ministerial responsibility (exercised by the general inspectors) in the program establishment process. The English model, on the other hand, was designed to correct a quite different situation. Until then, schools and districts had enjoyed considerable freedom in establishing programs. The 1988 *Educational Reform Act* corrected the situation by centralizing all curriculum- and assessment-related powers. However, rather than exercising the newly centralized powers itself, in 1993, the government entrusted them to a body with authority over both curriculum and assessment.
- Second, the English model is a combination of centralization (the schools and districts have less power to establish programs) and decentralization (the powers are exercised by a body that is independent of the ministry). It therefore represents a desirable option. However, in our own case, such a model would cause considerable upheaval, at a time when other elements of the education system are also being called into question. In attempting to implement such a structure now, we would be wasting valuable time, and the work required on content and program renewal cannot wait. Moreover, the English model was the outcome of an ongoing process of change, the first step of which was the creation of the National Curriculum Council.

We therefore believe it is necessary, in the short term, to create a provincial curriculum board for the period during which major reform and program development work will be carried out. During that period, the new authority would be responsible for establishing the orientations and general frameworks used to guide program development. The responsibility for program drafting would lie entirely with the MEQ's program services. However, at the end of the process, the new structure would give its opinion on the proposed programs before they were approved by the Minister.

Such an authority is essential to ensure that program review operations are supervised, coordinated and controlled promptly and consistently.

We also believe that the provincial curriculum board should be a permanent structure. If such a body existed, it would be possible:

- to examine the curriculum and programs on an ongoing basis;
- to take a more objective look at the programs and the curriculum, since the new body would be protected from interest group pressures, political flux and public opinion;
- to base recommendations on sound analyses rather than power struggles with interest groups;
- to provide continuity in program development and to adjust programs to new needs and new knowledge;
- to promote an overall vision of the curriculum and of program content;
- to make in-depth, long-term changes rather than simply react to pressure and circumstances;

- to maintain a group of expert generalists who would be available at all times, instead of having to form such a group each time an emergency arises;
- to provide a venue where qualified people from different areas would be able to interact;
- to increase the credibility of recommendations, since the body would be above suspicion of political opportunism.

## 2.3 The Role of Teachers

The true curriculum is the one that is applied in the classroom, and a good official curriculum must take this reality into account. The quality of classroom teaching depends on the professionalism of teachers, which in turn implies that they are given leeway to use their professional skills. For this reason, the professional expertise of teachers must be used in the program establishment process, it must be given full scope in program implementation, and it must also be fuelled by an environment that facilitates innovation.

### • *Teacher participation in program development*

Currently, teachers' associations and representatives of educational movements are involved in program establishment but working teachers are practically excluded. In the logic of the existing system, they tend to be considered as appliers, not experts. This is an attitude that must be changed. Teachers are education professionals and the hands-on experience they acquire in the field must be used to advantage. In the development process, as broad a role as possible should be reserved for the teachers who will be teaching the programs. Their expertise is needed in the very least to confirm the feasibility of the proposed programs if not to determine what must be taught.

As a minimum, in the year preceding implementation of a new program, an effective discussion structure should be created to obtain comments from as many practitioners as possible on the relevance and feasibility of the proposed program. This ongoing consultation process can be used to measure the divergence between specialists and practitioners in the field. The proposed content will thus be the subject of dialogue rather than something that is imposed. At the end of the process, corrections can be made. Sometimes, the choice will be made to go against artificial consensus, but at least all points of view will have been expressed. In all cases, feedback on the outcome of the process and its impact on the proposed program should be given.

Teachers can play an even greater role in program development if they are involved throughout the process, and not just at the end. We believe this type of program development process should be tested in one of our programs.

### • *Teacher participation in program implementation*

In schools, the school teams, whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary, make educational choices to suit their own students, using the official program as their working instrument. For this reason, the program should not propose a model for implementation, but should simply give information that will clarify implementation-related issues.

We are not suggesting that the MEQ should prepare curriculum guides to accompany the programs. The initiatives of professional subject associations and school teams should be sufficient to generate any tools that may be required.

For the same reasons, we believe that the MEQ should adjust some of its practices with respect to textbook approval. As a matter of fact, the possibilities created by the new information technologies will call into question the current role of textbooks in the classroom.

We believe that the Minister of Education should continue to approve textbooks or any other teaching materials which are used in place of textbooks. However, changes are needed on two points. First, as recommended in the Lacoursière Report, the criteria for the approval of textbooks should be made more liberal “so as to give authors [and publishers] greater responsibility and creative leeway, within the broad orientations” and content of the programs. To maintain a strategic distance between the authority in charge of evaluating textbooks and the decision-making authority, the Minister should entrust the responsibility of evaluating basic teaching materials and making recommendations regarding their approval to an organization outside the MEQ.

As for teaching materials in English, it will be necessary to adjust production mechanisms to the size of the market.

- ***An educational innovation organization at the service of teachers?***

We were not asked to consider the relevance of creating such an organization. However, at the end of our analysis of the program establishment system, the question was raised quite naturally, for the following two reasons:

- The changes we propose will reduce the role played by the MEQ in determining programs. This is already the case in many other countries, especially in the English-speaking world. A study commissioned by us has shown that, in systems that give schools more responsibility for explaining and adapting program content—which is not the case in the system we propose—teaching resources are developed by public or private organizations.
- Consideration of the professional responsibility of teachers requires structured information on teaching resources and methods. The creation of such a system would require research into teachers’ needs, together with a critical analysis of educational production and methods. Moreover, the exercise of professional responsibility must be stimulated by support for innovation. Here again, research is required. During the Estates General on Education, it became clear that there was a vacuum in this area which was not being filled by current educational research in our universities.

We are not in a position to say whether or not an organization should be created to take responsibility for problems related to the production of teaching materials. To answer this question, we would have to analyze past achievements in the field, examine the reasons that led to the dismantlement of the MEQ’s Direction générale des moyens d’enseignement and the Centre APO-Québec, study the market for teaching materials produced in the private sector, and judge the value of teaching materials produced by private companies—which

we are not able to do. We would, however, like to add that historical considerations alone are not sufficient to enable us to decide what should be done in the future. The current program establishment system, by stipulating an implementation model and granting approval to textbooks on the basis of their compliance with the model, restricts the variety of teaching resources available. In contrast, the new system proposed here would encourage greater variety. In more general terms, the educational discourse in Québec has focused on the teacher-student relationship, and rarely on what must be taught. Renewed interest in the curriculum—and this is a radical change—will, in the coming years, open up a field in which this and other curriculum issues will become increasingly important. We must therefore begin to pay attention to this new field, and it is by no means certain that individual initiatives will be sufficient to achieve progress.

On the other hand, we are certain that support for information on teaching methods and materials, like support for innovation, cannot be left to free enterprise. Should such support be organized by the MEQ itself or by a private body? Several different models exist. The current trend is to create bodies whose independence is stipulated by law, on which the various groups and individuals involved are represented, and which are financed by both public and private funds. Such bodies already exist in other countries.

It was not our mandate to consider the possibility of creating an organization to be responsible for supporting educational innovation by teachers. However, the need for such a body became clear to us through the logic of our proposals to transform the program establishment system. We therefore believe the question should be considered very seriously.

**E**valuation and its essential counterpart, the examination, have long been associated with education. In China, as far back as the Zhou Dynasty, examinations were mentioned in the chronicles of the time. By the end of the seventh century, an assessment system using examinations and tests was already well established throughout the Chinese empire.

Today, school life for students throughout the world is punctuated by examinations and tests of all kinds. Examinations—or the external methods used by schools to assess student learning with a view to awarding official recognition—come in forms as diverse as the Baccalaureat examination in France, the syndicate examinations in the United Kingdom, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in the United States and the uniform examinations in Québec.

However, it is only in the last 20 years or so that evaluation has been regarded as part of the teaching and learning process, and that formative evaluation (which takes place during learning) has been distinguished from summative evaluation (which takes place for certification purposes at the end of the learning period).

Since evaluation is a major component of the curriculum, the Minister of Education asked us to consider different aspects, including certification of studies and the format of report cards.

## **1. THE PLACE OF EVALUATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The place of evaluation in the education system differs from country to country, for cultural, political and pedagogical reasons. For example, it is practically non-existent in Denmark and Sweden, where students cannot fail or repeat grades before the age of 15 or 16, because marks are not given. Failure would be perceived as “an unbalance between the student’s skills and natural aptitudes, and the benefit he or she gains from the instruction given” (Vaniscotte). The only compulsory examination in Denmark takes place at the end of secondary school, and even then it does not determine future education possibilities. An apparent state of equality is maintained for all children.

In the Germanic countries, including Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, the problem of failure and repeating is greatly reduced by early student guidance, so that comparison with other countries on this point is impossible. Children who fail are considered first and foremost to have been badly guided. In some of these countries, a large percentage of children are directed into the short vocational stream at the start of their secondary school studies, and are in no way considered to have failed in any part of their schooling.

Countries such as France and Great Britain, and most of the American states and Canadian provinces fall into a middle-of-the-range category, with internal diversification and optional subjects. Evaluation is generally extensive and takes place at the end of every cycle or year. Repeating is often viewed as a way of bringing students up to standard, and academic failure is possible.

Before 1980, evaluation was not a major component of the curriculum in Québec. Generally speaking, it was not considered to be an integral part of teaching, and received little, if any, attention in teacher training programs. In 1981, however, a *ministerial educational evaluation policy* proposed that evaluation should become a core element of educational activity. For many school boards, evaluation became one of the main themes in professional development activities for teachers, and new specialists—experts in measurement and evaluation and related fields—began to appear in schools and school board administrative centres. Despite certain problems, tremendous progress was made.

A new distinction was drawn between *formative evaluation*, defined as a process to support students during learning, and *summative evaluation*, carried out at the end of a learning period. This distinction was not properly understood by many people, creating a certain amount of confusion, especially with respect to the so-called *descriptive* report card. In addition, far too much emphasis was placed on measurement instruments, at the expense of the teacher's personal judgment.

Teachers' groups, including the Association pour le développement de la mesure et de l'évaluation en éducation (ADMEE), were very active, as was the MEQ itself, in promoting evaluation activities in schools, to the point that evaluation began to play too great a role in some cases. Teachers began to complain that they were too busy with evaluation and that they no longer had time to teach.

Many evaluation-related fields are in need of attention. However, they do not fall within the mandate given to us by the Minister of Education, and in any case we cannot, in the time available to us, make an exhaustive survey of the problem as a whole. We will therefore limit our analysis to the following points:

- corrective action required in the field of evaluation;
- certification of studies at the secondary level;
- the creation of a provincial mechanism for the evaluation of student learning;
- updating of the ministerial policy on the evaluation of student learning.

## **2. PROPOSED CORRECTIVE ACTION IN THE FIELD OF EVALUATION**

The main functions of evaluation are generally agreed to be as follows:

- to support progress in student learning;
- after a significant period, to establish a summary of progress and the extent to which learning has been mastered;
- to regulate the system, to provide an opportunity to correct observed weaknesses, and to influence the development of learning, in schools throughout a given area or throughout Québec as a whole;

- to report to the population and provide information on the state of education.

If we are to redefine the role of schools to focus on the basics, instil greater rigour, improve cultural content and take action to ensure that they become the centre of the intellectual, methodological and social skill development process, we must correct certain practices, and give a new direction to the process of evaluation.

We believe that corrective action is needed in respect of the summary of progress at the end of each cycle, the nature and form of the evaluation instruments used, and the format of the report card, especially at the elementary level.

## 2.1 Summary of Progress

The final report of the Commission for the Estates General on Education suggested that the main role of evaluation should be to support student progress, and that it be “used sparingly and not as the goal of the educational process” (page 6).

At the secondary level, it is generally agreed that one of the major causes of repeating, and thus of failure, non-graduation and dropping out, is the accumulation of academic delays. Schools must intervene at the right time. **We therefore recommend** that emphasis be placed on the *summary of progress* at the end of each cycle of elementary and secondary school, so as to identify any areas in which the expected outcomes have not been achieved and apply the necessary remedial and support measures in all cases, not just for students with severe disabilities. The introduction of two-year rather than three-year cycles at the elementary level, and thus the shortening of the stages, as recommended in this report, should make remedial work easier. The evaluation policies of individual schools should include the methods selected to prepare summaries of progress and the support measures to be implemented for students who have fallen behind.

The responsibility for the summaries should lie first and foremost with the *schools*, supported by the school boards and the MEQ, in accordance with the provisions of the law.

In view of their responsibility for planning, control, evaluation and support to schools, the *school boards* should impose uniform examinations in the subjects stipulated in the law, and draw up five-year plans for measures aimed at supporting evaluation.

Finally, the *MEQ* should offer general support in the evaluation process, for example, by offering optional complementary examinations in certain subjects at the end of each elementary school cycle and by imposing uniform examinations as part of the certification process at the end of the first cycle of secondary school and at the end of secondary school.

The practice of formative evaluation (evaluation during the learning process) should be formally encouraged, and teacher training programs as well as in-service training for practising teachers should be designed to help teachers with this basic educational function. It is interesting to note that the English term “assessment” is derived from the French *asseoir* (to sit), and thus covers the notion of sitting down with the student to help with the learning process.

## 2.2 Changes in the Nature and Form of the Measurement Instruments Used

In recent decades, so-called objective or standardized evaluation, generally using multiple-choice questions, has come to the fore in Québec as it has throughout the world, particularly in Western countries.

Objective tests, which first appeared during World War I, grew in popularity with the invention of the mechanized answer sheet correction process. From then on, every field of learning except vocational education and the performing arts was flooded with multiple-choice questions. The benefits of “objective” examinations are well known: they are inexpensive to administer; they can be administered to large numbers of students in similar conditions; they are reliable; and their results are comparable. In reality, however, the “objective” element is the marking process, since the questions themselves are not necessarily objective.

It was with the help of objective examinations that countries and provinces were able to develop generalized evaluation systems, introduce mechanisms at the national (the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States), interprovincial (the School Achievement Indicators Program developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada) and international (the International Assessment of Educational Progress) levels, and provide valuable information on the state of the education system.

However, during the 1980s, objective examinations began to be criticized, especially as a result of the work of Sizer and Fredericksen in the United States. Under the “WYTIWYG” law (what you test is what you get), people began to argue in favour of what was referred to as “authentic evaluation.” Multiple-choice examinations were said to put too much emphasis on the most easily measured elements of learning, such as knowledge and understanding, at the expense of more complex intellectual mechanisms such as problem-solving, analysis, synthesis and oral or written expression. Objective examinations were also criticized because they did not require students to write, thus depriving schools of good opportunities to promote learning and use of the written language, and because they did not encourage reflection, since students were not given the chance to explain their answers or expand on their thinking.

Such criticism was echoed in Québec, and helped reorient the dominant trend of objective examinations. In 1986, the MEQ became a pioneer in this field, introducing a centrally marked written French examination (composition) in Secondary V. Since that time, it has also introduced free-response questions into most of its uniform examinations at the end of secondary school, in other words, questions requiring short written responses. Even so, such efforts have remained relatively limited.

Recent developments in the field of evaluation, both in the United States (in performance assessment) and in Québec, have in fact shown that this process should be taken much further. The major changes we recommend in the form and content of programs, which are currently formulated on the basis of a complex hierarchy of objectives, also suggest a need for evaluation methods better suited to more rigorous educational standards and designed to encourage the development of a critical mind and generic knowledge. In other words, we should be *measuring what we value, rather than valuing what we measure*.

Thus, **we recommend** that examinations developed by schools and the MEQ for individual evaluation of student learning should no longer be “objective” (multiple-choice), but should instead consist of *open-ended questions*—in other words, questions requiring answers that include argumentation, free responses, responses illustrated by data, oral responses, practical activities, and portfolios, especially in the artistic disciplines. This type of measurement instrument is better suited to the goals of integrating subjects and developing a capacity for synthesis which are targeted in our proposed reform.

## 2.3 The Special Case of the Language of Instruction

The language of instruction, French or English, is vital both as a subject and for cross-curricular learning, since it is a factor in the success of all other learning. Schools play a leading role in the process of learning to *read* and *write*. They have often been blamed for their poor performance in this area, and one of the criticisms most commonly levelled at them concerns the evaluation of learning in particular.

Schools are criticized mainly for allowing students to move up from elementary to secondary school and to progress through secondary school even though they have serious difficulties in reading and writing, and for allowing only the teachers responsible for the language of instruction to correct linguistic errors and promote language learning. It seems clear that the problem of learning language, and especially learning to write, will not be solved as long as it remains the exclusive responsibility of French and English teachers, and as long as the quality of language is not a concern in other subjects. The quality of the written language depends on the clarity of the message, the consistency of the text (even if short), the use of appropriate vocabulary and correct syntax, good spelling and compliance with the rules of grammar.

**We therefore recommend** that, from the first cycle of elementary school through to the end of secondary school, the quality of the written language should be a constant concern for all teachers and in all subjects, according to an approach known as “literacy across the curriculum.” To enable such a measure to be applied, we propose that teachers, when marking work in subjects other than French or English, should be asked to give a general opinion of the quality of the student’s writing. This does not necessarily mean underlining and counting mistakes, or going into detail, but it does involve making a comprehensive assessment of the consistency of the student’s writing with the level he or she has reached in the education system.

**We recommend** that, for all written work in all subjects, depending on the nature of the assignment, up to 5 percent of the marks should be given for the quality of the writing. To this end, we suggest that the MEQ develop appropriate and easy-to-use appraisal scales for each cycle of elementary and secondary school, to be used by all teachers for all subjects other than the language of instruction. We also suggest that teachers responsible for teaching the language of instruction should act as resources for their colleagues.

## 2.4 The Report Card

The basic school regulations for the elementary and secondary levels stipulate that parents should receive at least five reports every year on their child's performance and behaviour, four of which must be in the form of report cards. Parents of children in difficulty must receive a report every month.

The annual number of report cards is not a problem, and **we** therefore **recommend** that it be maintained at its present level (four).

However, the fifth report (which is not an official report card, and which may in reality take a number of different forms, including that of a letter from the school principal to the parents) seems to be problematical, as does the number of reports for parents of children in difficulty (one per month) and the fact that the forms used are not always the most appropriate vehicles for the information transmitted. For this reason, **we recommend** that each school's governing board, if it feels such an action is warranted, should establish the format of all reports other than regular report cards, after consulting the parents.

The most common complaints concern the form and content of the report card itself, especially at the elementary level, and in particular the so-called descriptive report card. In an opinion entitled *Évaluer les apprentissages au primaire: un équilibre à trouver* (1992), the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, while asking for the report card to be harmonized with evaluation practices, recommended that the forms should be clarified and simplified: "It is important to remember that the report card should contain only a limited number of descriptors, based on the core learning in each subject." It also asked the Minister of Education "to remind the school community of certain basic requirements for report cards, including *clarity and simplicity*."

In a recent opinion to the Minister on the elementary and secondary school curriculum, the Fédération des comités de parents asked for more uniformity in report cards, to ensure *better legibility and presentation*. "Evaluation should not only be consistent with program objectives, but it should also enable parents to monitor their children's progress, understand their failings and know where and how to help."

It should be remembered that the descriptive report card, which does not exist in all schools because, under the present basic school regulations, the decision of whether or not to use it is made by the school boards, and whose content, form and size varies considerably from one school to another, only became widespread in the early 1980s, as a complement to the new programs and, in the minds of many people, as a way of helping to implement programs that were based on a complex hierarchy of objectives. Parents often found the reports difficult to understand and teachers found them difficult to administer.

The Task Force, while attempting to encourage a certain standardization, make report cards easier to understand for parents, and promote a certain "marking culture"—the emergence of a minimum implicit social consensus on the meaning of marks—is nevertheless aware that, in some communities, the status quo should be maintained, since both parents and schools have agreed on a form of report card that they wish to keep. This is not an attempt to fix something that is not broken. However, in view of the high level of dissatisfaction in this area, we believe corrective measures are required.

For this reason, **we recommend** that, at the elementary level, the MEQ should propose two or three model report cards that are simple, clear and easy for parents to read. Schools wishing to adopt another form will have to obtain approval from their governing board after consulting the parents.

There does not seem to be a problem at the secondary level, and there is no need for the MEQ to standardize the procedure. In fact, because of the uniform examinations and the consequent need for schools to provide percentage marks, the content of the report card has remained fairly standard over the years.

### 3. THE CERTIFICATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDIES

The certification of studies is the method by which the government recognizes successful schooling and issues an official qualification—attestation, certificate or diploma—to the students who meet certain predetermined requirements. Varying levels of social recognition are attached to the qualifications. The certification of studies generally has the following goals:

- to ensure that the official qualification is issued on the same conditions and by the same standards everywhere;
- to ensure that schools and teachers comply with the courses prescribed by the government and the compulsory objectives defined in the programs;
- to obtain quantitative and qualitative information on the individual and collective performance of candidates.

The conditions in which studies are certified differ considerably from one authority to another, depending on how centralized the education system is, the value attached to the regulatory function of evaluation, and the type of information (quantitative, qualitative or none at all) required on student graduation. In any case, the following strong trends have emerged in recent years.

- Increasing numbers of countries have centralized and standardized the process used to establish the *conditions for awarding diplomas*, especially the secondary school (or high school) diploma. This is the case, for example, in Ontario's ongoing reform, and in several American states under the national Goals 2000 program.
- Growing numbers of countries now have *uniform examinations*, especially at the end of secondary school. In Canada, only Québec and Newfoundland had uniform examinations in 1977. Since then, other provinces have gradually followed suit, and nine now have them for certification purposes at the end of secondary school.<sup>1</sup> Even Ontario has recently handed over responsibility for administering a secondary school evaluation program to an Education Quality and Accountability Office.

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1. Lenora Perry-Fagan and Dana Spurrell, *Evaluating Achievement of Senior High School Students in Canada: A Study of Policies and Practices of Ministries and School Boards in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1995).

Although official certification is awarded mainly at the end of secondary school—after 11, 12 or occasionally 13 years of schooling—in some education systems, other recognition is also available at intermediate stages. Part of our mandate consisted of examining the relevance of awarding some form of official recognition at the end of the first cycle of secondary school (Secondary III).

Our recommendations on the conditions for the certification of studies at the secondary level are set out in the following paragraphs.

### 3.1 The First Cycle of Secondary School

As is increasingly the case in other countries, in Québec, **core basic education** will extend to the end of the first cycle of secondary school.

- ***Relevance of awarding official recognition***

As a part of our mandate, we examined the desirability and relevance of awarding some form of official recognition, certificate or diploma at the end of Secondary III.

There are a number of arguments in favour of awarding such recognition. It would mark the end of an important stage in students' schooling and would certify the acquisition of the core education provided to all students. Also, students leaving school without a Secondary School Diploma or Secondary School Vocational Diploma would have something to show for the substantial portion of schooling they have successfully completed. Furthermore, some people argue that, in time, such a standing could gain some form of social recognition and that employers could eventually recognize it as the minimum employability threshold.

We felt that these arguments provided sufficient reason to reexamine the issue. In the end, we decided against awarding a Secondary III certificate or diploma because the drawbacks of doing so outweighed the advantages outlined above.

While such a certificate or diploma could, at the most, win some form of social recognition, there is no way of knowing what form this recognition would take, nor the rights and opportunities that students might gain from it. In our view, the very idea of seeking some form of recognition upon completion of Secondary III is reason enough in itself to reject it. Indeed, some might interpret this recognition to mean that Secondary III has become the standard, while in reality there is a continued trend to push the standard up higher, to the end of Secondary V and even to the end of college.

In our estimation, if we did set requirements for some kind of Secondary III diploma or certificate, they would be too low for those students who are following the normal route to the end of secondary school in either general education or vocational education (the majority), and too high for those students who, either temporarily or permanently, are taking an alternative route, such as preparing for a semi-skilled trade. As a result, paradoxically, the very students for whom this Secondary III diploma or certificate would be intended would have the most difficulty obtaining it.

Finally, we believe that the education system must make every effort to discourage students from leaving school without a minimum qualification. Even if it is of the highest quality, the core education obtained in the first nine years of schooling is not sufficient to be acknowledged as a minimum qualification leading to official recognition. Instead, emphasis must be placed on diversifying options and allowing students, upon completion of the first cycle of secondary school, to continue in the general education or vocational education stream, in programs that suit their ambitions and abilities.

As recommended by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in an opinion entitled *Le deuxième cycle du secondaire: particularités, enjeux, voies d'amélioration* (1986), we believe that, rather than be marked by some form of official recognition, the end of the first cycle of secondary school should be a period of intensive evaluation to help students make the choices becoming available to them as they approach Secondary IV.

- ***A period of intensive evaluation at the end of the first cycle***

In light of this, **we recommend** that a period of evaluation be introduced at the end of Secondary III to take stock of student achievement, primarily in the form of external examinations administered under the jurisdiction of:

- the *school board*, in the case of language of instruction, second language and mathematics, in accordance with the proposals contained in the draft bill to amend the *Education Act*;
- the *MEQ*, for a certain number of subjects determined by the Minister.

**We also recommend** that an official summary report card based on a standard model proposed by the MEQ be issued by school boards for each student upon completion of the first cycle of secondary school.

## **3.2 The End of Secondary School**

The Task Force has considered a number of alternatives to the current certification system, which consists of awarding credits and requiring a pass mark in specific courses. In particular, we considered the possibility of requiring a minimum annual average for all courses taken, combined with a pass mark in each individual course. However, we decided that there would be more harm than benefit in changing promotion practices, and we have therefore proposed a series of in-depth changes to the current system rather than an altogether new system.

**We recommend** that the *Secondary School Diploma* be issued to students on the following conditions:

- ***that they have accumulated at least 60 credits in Secondary IV and V, out of a total possible minimum of 72,***

including credits for the following:

- Secondary V language of instruction;
- Secondary V second language;

- Secondary V mathematics (or an equivalent Secondary IV course);
- Secondary IV history and citizenship education, and Secondary V understanding of the contemporary world;
- Secondary IV physical science.

This would bring the requirements for the Secondary School Diploma in to line with the general requirements for admission to college.

### 3.3 Corrections to Certain Certification Practices

Certain certification practices, which have been in existence for nearly 30 years, must now be modified without delay since they have negative effects on educational activity. We therefore recommend that they be changed at once.

#### • *The form of ministry examinations*

**We recommend** that the MEQ maintain uniform examinations, with the results counting for 50 percent of the final marks, in the following disciplines:

- *In the first cycle:* The list of subjects is established by the Minister, taking into account the draft bill to amend the *Education Act*, which proposes that the school boards administer uniform examinations at the end of Secondary III in the language of instruction, the second language and mathematics.
- *In the second cycle:* Secondary V written language of instruction, Secondary IV and V mathematics, Secondary IV physical science, Secondary IV history and citizenship education, Secondary V understanding of the contemporary world, Secondary V chemistry and physics, Secondary V second language.

In accordance with the orientations described earlier, **we recommend** that the ministry examinations gradually move away from multiple-choice (objective) questions to an approach based on open-ended questions involving argumentation, practical activities, portfolios and so on.

We believe that this measure, in addition to correcting some of the undesirable effects of current evaluation procedures, will substantially reduce the biases which have made the English-speaking community critical of the ministry examinations.

#### • *The marking of examinations*

Given the comments we made above on the form of examinations and on the irrelevance of centralized marking, **we recommend** that the ministry examinations be marked locally, by the teachers, using standardized evaluation checklists, according to terms and conditions to be established locally with the involvement of a group of teachers at the school, school board or regional level, depending on the situation. We believe the time has come to *recognize the importance of teachers' judgment in the evaluation process*. In an opinion published in 1992, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation pointed out that, in Québec, the teacher's judgment had been replaced by a form of evaluation "focused too narrowly on measurement."

Such an orientation will require changes to a restrictive provision in the teachers' collective agreement, which stipulates that teachers cannot be asked to mark work by students other than their own. It may also entail new organizational conditions for examination sessions to take account of changes affecting the supervision and marking of examinations.

- ***The processing of results***

Since ministry examinations will be marked locally, **we recommend** that the MEQ continue to count the school mark as part of the final mark, but that it abandon the practice of *moderating*<sup>2</sup> school marks because this involves use of the mark obtained on the uniform examination, which is currently corrected centrally by means of a standardized process. We believe this measure will make teachers and school principals more accountable by requiring them to analyze and compare their results and assess their own performance.

**We recommend** that the MEQ continue to apply the provision in the *Education Act* (section 470) that enables it to raise the marks obtained on a ministry examination in exceptional cases, where an examination was incorrectly graded, using a technique known as *conversion*,<sup>3</sup> but that this technique be used only in extreme cases.

**We recommend** that the results of uniform examinations, in view of their new form and the new marking methods, should no longer be used to establish performance indicators for schools and school boards because they will no longer be comparable for the purposes of such an exercise. As recommended later in this document, we believe the MEQ should introduce a provincial mechanism for the evaluation of student learning in order to fill this gap.

- ***French as the language of instruction***

French as the language of instruction is particularly important in Québec. In view of the North American context and the fragility of our linguistic heritage, special protection is required for the French language in our schools. We believe it is intolerable for young people to leave school with a diploma but without the ability to write and speak their own language properly. A number of the recommendations made in this document have been designed to improve this situation, and others will be made in the area of evaluation.

A criticism often heard, especially with regard to Secondary IV and V, is that any difficulties the students may have with their writing skills are concealed by the weight given in the final mark to their results in the reading and oral elements, which are often better. A number of groups and organizations have also asked the MEQ to restore the uniform reading examination that was withdrawn some years ago.

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2. Moderation: An operation by which the MEQ makes school marks as comparable and objective as possible. It consists of increasing or reducing the school mark for each student after comparing it with the results obtained by the student's class on the school examination and on the uniform examination. Moderation is possible only when a centrally marked uniform examination exists.

3. Conversion: Due to inconsistencies in an examination, the failure rate may be abnormally high. In such cases the MEQ can correct the situation, for example by eliminating a poorly formulated question or, if this is insufficient, by converting the results. This consists of slightly lowering the pass mark and consequently reducing the failure rate. Section 470 of the *Education Act* states that "the Minister may, to avoid penalizing the students unduly, revise the results obtained by them in the examinations he imposes, to compensate for any error or ambiguity in the examinations brought to his attention after they are taken."

This is how students performed in written French (1995 data):

- in Secondary III:

- 62.5 percent obtained a pass mark;
  - 68.8 percent satisfied the requirements for spelling;
  - 47.5 percent satisfied the requirements for syntax.

- in Secondary V:

- 77.8 percent obtained a pass mark;
  - 44.5 percent satisfied the requirements for spelling;
  - 42.0 percent satisfied the requirements for syntax.

The syntax and spelling requirements account for only 40 percent of the overall mark. We can therefore conclude that students are being sent the wrong message when they obtain a pass mark in French even though they know their grammar and spelling skills are deficient.

The weighting given to the various segments has been criticized, and the preponderance of oral expression is still considered to be too great. The *current weighting* is as follows:

- writing: 50 percent
  - reading: 25 percent
  - oral expression: 25 percent

Some of the conditions for evaluating French as the language of instruction as part of the certification of secondary school studies should therefore be tightened.

- Evaluation of reading

- We recommend** that the MEQ restore the uniform reading examination in Secondary V, to emphasize the importance of reading in the process of learning the language of instruction and to help schools evaluate a skill in which specific technical difficulties are encountered.

- The weighting of each component

- We recommend** that the current weighting of each component in the second cycle of secondary school be replaced at the earliest opportunity by the following weighting, proposed in the 1995 program:

- writing: 50 percent;
    - reading: 40 percent;
    - oral expression: 10 percent.

**We also recommend** that the possibility of applying these same weightings to the first cycle be considered.

- Compulsory pass mark in writing and reading

**We recommend** that a separate pass mark be required in the writing, reading comprehension and oral expression components of the Secondary III and Secondary V French programs, in addition to an overall mark of 60 percent.

The groups from the English-speaking community with which we met told us that it would not be advisable to propose similar changes with respect to English as the language of instruction, given that current teaching and evaluation methods are based on the whole language approach. They nonetheless believe that it would be useful to look for more appropriate ways of assessing the competence of students in their own language.

## **4. CREATION OF A PROVINCIAL MECHANISM FOR THE EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING**

In view of the major changes to be made to the marking conditions and examination format used in the certification of secondary school studies, the examination results can no longer be taken as a basis for institutional performance indicators. The MEQ must therefore find a way of continuing to inform the general public, local education authorities and educators about the comparative performance of different institutions, and it must create a provincial learning evaluation apparatus outside the regular certification process, to serve as a kind of sector-based evaluation mechanism for the education system.

### **4.1 Québec: A Tradition**

Québec's elementary and secondary school system has a strong tradition of external evaluation. The uniform examinations at the end of secondary school, also known as the "ministry examinations," have been in existence since the early 1930s and have never really been questioned, even when most other Canadian provinces, for a variety of reasons, decided to drop them. In 1986, Québec began to publish annual comparisons of the results obtained by school boards and private schools in the uniform examinations, ahead of most other provinces and countries, and has been doing the same for its public schools since 1993.

Québec has also taken part in a number of international and interprovincial surveys of educational performance, including the International Assessment of Educational Progress math and science surveys, for which Québec coordinated survey administration and results processing in Canada, the School Achievement Indicators Program of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, in which Québec was one of the leaders, along with Ontario and Alberta, the third international mathematics and science survey by the Institute for Educational Assessment, and various studies on writing and reading with France, Belgium and Switzerland in particular.

We believe it is important, for the sake of transparency and in the public interest, that Québec should continue to play an active role in activities of this nature. In addition to the information it obtains on the performance of its students in different disciplines, which helps it to orient the system, it also obtains invaluable technical and professional benefits that can subsequently be applied in its own evaluation programs.

## 4.2 For the Creation of a Provincial Mechanism

Earlier, we recommended that the MEQ should make substantial changes to the form and content of its uniform examinations at the end of secondary school, and that the examinations should in future be marked locally. In doing this, it would sacrifice some of its ability to compare the results—in particular because of the large number of markers involved—in favour of a more complex evaluation process. This appears to us to be a major and unavoidable change of direction.

To replace the information lost, **we recommend** that the savings made by the MEQ through delegation of the task of marking the uniform examinations, and especially the Secondary V written French examination, should be invested in a *provincial assessment* administered annually to representative samples of elementary and secondary school students. The government should provide users with information that is as objective as possible on the results obtained by the various institutions, and should be able to measure progress over time.

The new mechanism, inspired by the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the recent English National Assessment, as well as by the evaluations carried out in France by the Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective and Ontario's recently created Education Quality and Accountability Office, should be responsible for developing an operations plan for evaluation, leading to the publication of an annual report on the education system similar to the Annual Report Card in the United States.

The objectives of such a mechanism would be as follows:

- to improve knowledge of the state of education in Québec;
- to illustrate the relationship between the resources invested and the results achieved;
- to provide information for decision-makers;
- to measure progress over time;
- to give local authorities sufficient information to enable them to improve educational performance.

We suggest that the MEQ study the possibility of placing such a mechanism under the administrative authority of an outside body, or at least a ministerial unit with no responsibility for programs and examinations.

## 5. UPDATING OF THE MINISTERIAL POLICY ON EVALUATION

The MEQ's policy on the evaluation of student learning was published in 1981 and has not been updated since. Yet the social demands on schools have changed considerably in the last 16 years, and their basic mission is currently being redefined. In the last ten years, progress has been made in the field of education in general and evaluation has undergone major changes throughout the world. Moreover, in a field in constant evolution, new solutions to complex problems can now be explored by means of international government-to-government exchanges through the medium of telecommunications.

Evaluation as a field is by no means neutral. It involves different perceptions of education and sets of very different values. Depending on the approaches used, emphasis may be given to exclusion or inclusion, success or failure, participation or selection. It is a relative newcomer in the history of education, and its many different theories and methods favour the proliferation of different schools and different trends that are not always conducive to equity and equality of opportunity.

For this reason, we believe the MEQ must define a certain number of orientations in the area of evaluation, and **we recommend** that it update its policy on the evaluation of student learning. Such a step received enthusiastic support from many of the educators consulted during our mandate. “The MEQ should show its colours with respect to evaluation” was a frequent comment. We feel the MEQ should listen to the education community in general and to teachers, school administrators and university faculty in particular.

We suggest that the new policy cover the following areas:

- a definition of evaluation;
- the guidelines on which the policy is based;
- the role of formative evaluation and summative evaluation;
- the need for a summary of progress at the end of each cycle;
- examination formats;
- the report card;
- the role of students (through self-evaluation and peer evaluation), teachers, schools, school boards and the MEQ in the evaluation process;
- the provincial mechanism for the evaluation of student learning.

# ***Consequences of Implementing the Proposed Curriculum Reform***

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from the work of the OECD on curriculum reform in recent years in various countries is that success cannot be guaranteed if implementation takes place too quickly and without proper preparation.

Some of the changes we are proposing are major, and they will be phased in over the years if the requisite conditions are met. We would like to stress that it is the teachers, in their classrooms, who will implement this reform, and that, to do so, they will require sufficient time and adequate support.

In this chapter, after a brief description of the main changes required in the programs of study, we will present a tentative calendar, a description of some of the foreseeable impact on teaching staff and school organization, and a proposal for reallocation of resources.

## **1. UPDATING AND REVISION OF THE PROGRAMS OF STUDY**

In some cases, the proposals we are making entail major modifications to existing programs of study. These modifications are outlined in Appendices 4 and 5. Appendix 4 briefly describes the perspectives to be taken into account in revising certain programs of study in light of the advocated improvement of cultural content and the deficiencies noted. Appendix 5 provides an overview of the changes to be made to the programs because of their new place in the subject-time allocation.

The proposed changes are clearly not exhaustive; our suggestions are intended primarily as general indications on the organization of curriculum content. They should serve as a starting point for the work of the provincial curriculum board whose creation we suggested in Chapter 5, as well as that of the groups responsible for developing or revising the programs of study. It should be noted, moreover, that work is in progress on a number of programs of study, and in many cases, it is already well advanced and will be very useful in providing follow-up to our recommendations.

## **2. TENTATIVE CALENDAR**

### **2.1 Report**

June 1997: Publication of the report.

August or September 1997: Statement by the Minister announcing her decisions on the curriculum reform (follow-up to the report).

## 2.2 Basic School Regulations

Introduction of a series of amendments in the fall of 1997. Approval before March 1998, and gradual application as of July 1, 1998 (the application schedule will be included in the government's decision).

Principal provisions to be amended to implement the recommendations of the report:

| ELEMENTARY |                                                           | SECONDARY |                                                               |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| s. 42      | Cycles                                                    | s. 31     | Five full days                                                |
| s. 43      | Prescribed time                                           | s. 33     | Five full days                                                |
| s. 44      | Subject-time allocation                                   | s. 35     | Subject-time allocation                                       |
| s. 45      | Personal and social education and manual activity courses |           |                                                               |
| s. 46      | Teaching of a second language                             | s. 43-44  | School report                                                 |
|            |                                                           | s. 68     | Quality of language                                           |
| s. 51-52   | School report                                             |           |                                                               |
|            |                                                           | s. 69     | Requirements for the awarding of the Secondary School Diploma |
| s. 54      | Quality of language                                       |           |                                                               |

## 2.3 Education Act

To follow up on some of the recommendations of the report, a provision of the *Education Act*, section 470 (last paragraph), concerning the moderation of marks on school internal examinations, will have to be amended. This minor change should be included among the amendments to be introduced at the National Assembly in the fall of 1997, after the parliamentary commission on the draft bill. If the Minister adopts our recommendation to create a provincial curriculum board, a legislative amendment to this effect may also be necessary.

## 2.4 Calendar for the Elementary Level

Deadline for redesign and application of the programs of study (planning and development framework established by the provincial curriculum board): April 1998.

Final overall deadline for application, in Grades 1 to 6, of the new subject-time allocation and redesigned programs of study: September 2002.

|              | End of Production | Initial Year | Compulsory Application |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| First cycle  | April 1999        | 1999-2000    | September 2000         |
| Second cycle | April 2000        | 2000-2001    | September 2001         |
| Third cycle  | April 2001        | 2001-2002    | September 2002         |

## 2.5 Calendar for the Secondary Level

### *Programs of study*

Deadline for redesign and application of the programs of study (planning and development framework established by the provincial curriculum board): December 1998.

The dates given below are the dates of generalized application for all redesigned programs in the cycle. Each school will have to decide on its own implementation schedule, in conformity with its obligations related to the new system for the certification of studies.

|              | End of Production | Initial Year | Compulsory Application |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| First cycle  | April 2000        | 2000-2001    | 2003-2004              |
| Second cycle | April 2001        | 2001-2002    | 2005-2006              |

### *Subject-time allocation*

|                     | Year of Compulsory Application |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>First cycle</b>  |                                |
| Secondary I         | 2001-2002                      |
| Secondary II        | 2002-2003                      |
| Secondary III       | 2003-2004                      |
| <b>Second cycle</b> |                                |
| Secondary IV        | 2004-2005                      |
| Secondary V         | 2005-2006                      |

Note: The first revised Secondary School Diplomas would be issued in June 2006.

## 3. IMPACT ON TEACHING STAFF

Changes of the scope we are proposing will not occur without causing a certain amount of upheaval in the teaching profession: some teachers will have to change subjects, some will have to upgrade their knowledge in the discipline or disciplines they teach, and it is our belief that all of them will have to approach the classroom in a somewhat different way because in future some of the educational content will become the responsibility of all teachers.

However, the implementation of the various components of the reform we propose will have to extend over a period of six or seven years, at the same time that a major renewal of the teaching staff is taking place. It is estimated that over 25 000 elementary and secondary school teachers will have to be recruited over the next five years. This situation will minimize the impact of the reform on teachers' employment security and stability.

### **3.1 Impact on Positions**

Since our recommendations assume the status quo with respect to the total teaching time prescribed in elementary and secondary school, the total number of teachers will not change in comparison with the current situation. We recommend the retention of the 450 or so (full-time equivalent) "reduced-supervision" positions involving work with groups of 20 students which might have become surplus because of the removal of home economics from the subject-time allocation and the proposed reduction in introduction to technology. But we will come back to the question of teaching resources at the end of this section.

First we will look at the fields in which application of the new subject-time allocation will be likely to affect the teaching staff.

- ***Elementary school***

- There will be an additional year of English as a second language; staff is expected to increase.
- In the arts, even if a number of schools follow our recommendation to concentrate the compulsory teaching of the arts on music and the visual arts, there should be no significant effect on qualified teachers, since people who qualify in drama and theatre are also qualified in one of the other two disciplines (music and the visual arts).
- The other changes to the subject-time allocation will affect the way homeroom teachers use their time and will have no effect on the number of staff.

- ***Secondary school***

The proposed changes will have the greatest effect on the teaching staff in certain fields in secondary school.

- There will be elimination of some subjects, and therefore a direct impact on the staff in fields or fractions of fields associated with home economics in Secondary II, personal and social education, and career choice education.
- In the fields involved, the number of teachers aged 50 and over is very high; 25 percent of the teachers have 30 or more years of experience. During the period from 1989 to 1993, 25 percent of them were teaching in different fields from those they are teaching in today. We can estimate that one out of two teachers in the fields targeted is already likely to be employed in another field. With respect to career choice education in particular, we have recommended that equivalent teaching resources be maintained in the schools despite the elimination of the course and the program.

- The teaching staff in introduction to technology (Secondary III) is expected to decrease (by 15 to 30 percent).
- There will be an increase in the teaching staff in the fields associated with the following subjects: French as the language of instruction (a 20 percent increase in the time allotted in the first cycle) and social studies (the total number of compulsory credits rising from 20 to 24). The proposed changes to geography and the elimination of home economics should not have any negative impact on the teaching staff, given the significant increase in history and the introduction of a new course on the contemporary world in Secondary V, and given the disciplinary versatility of the teachers in the social studies field. The staff that will be needed to offer a third language is impossible to predict.

- **Summary**

We should count on maintaining the total current teaching staff. In light of the large number of departures during the next few years and the versatility of a very large number of teachers, who could be reassigned to another subject in the same field because of the broad range of their training or their abilities, we estimate, based on forecasts made by MEQ experts in light of our proposals, that at most 200 teachers would be placed on availability during the next few years because of the application of the recommendations of our report on subject-time allocation. Particularly since the proposed changes will be staggered over several years, it is not unrealistic to think that no teachers will be placed on availability.

### 3.2 Impact on Initial Teacher Training

The work undertaken since the early 1990s by the MEQ and the universities to reform initial teacher training has led to the development and implementation of new initial training programs for preschool, elementary school and secondary school teachers.

Next September, the universities will also be offering redesigned programs in special education. They are currently reviewing the teacher training programs for the arts, physical education and second languages. Ministerial guidelines were issued for these programs in December 1996.

We believe that the general economy of the reform we are proposing and a number of the recommendations we are formulating support the principles which are the very foundation of the revision of teacher training programs (integration of programs, importance of general culture, mastery of the language of instruction, etc.). It seems clear, however, that implementing this reform will require the revision of or significant adjustments to teacher training programs.

- ***The principal components of the curriculum reform which will influence teacher training are:***

- the abolition of certain compulsory courses;
- changes to the content of certain programs;

- the change in the time allotted for certain courses;
- identification of cross-curricular learning (in the “program of programs”) to be promoted by all teachers;
- the reinforcement of the cultural aspect in all programs of study;
- the emphasis on more extensive integration of knowledge;
- the new guidelines for the evaluation of student learning and the certification of secondary school studies.

• ***Practical effects of the curriculum reform on the initial training of teachers***

The anticipated effects of the proposed curriculum reform on the initial training of teachers include:

- Reevaluation of some of the training of student teachers enrolled in recently revised programs, who, if the recommended changes are made to the curriculum, will be preparing to teach subjects that will no longer be on the subject-time allocation in secondary school as separate compulsory courses, such as ecology, home economics, and personal and social education.
- Reevaluation of some of the guidelines adopted by the MEQ in December 1996 regarding the initial training of teachers of the arts, physical education and second language, which the universities are currently using to develop new training programs for these teachers. The principle of versatility adopted with respect to the preparation of physical education teachers could be respected. However, the models being developed in the universities mainly involve subjects whose elimination is recommended or whose place in the curriculum will change substantially (such as physical education/personal education and physical education/biology).
- Identification of cross-curricular learning should lead to greater recognition of its importance in terms of the admission of students to teacher training programs (NICT, general culture, etc.) and the design of teacher training programs.
- The need to give student teachers a better general education as a part of their university studies. This need must also be taken into consideration in the design of teacher training programs. Adjustments could include activities which would allow future elementary school teachers to consolidate their knowledge of subject matter and provisions which would allow future secondary school teachers to use complementary training credits, whose main purpose is to ensure mobility, for general education purposes.

### 3.3 Impact on Professional Development

The final report of the Commission for the Estates General on Education stated that: “the school networks must take a more serious approach to continuing education for their staff...Career-long professional development has become something of an inherent requirement in the teaching profession, and is necessary if the profession is to be developed...The Commission suggests that every school body should:

- encourage its staff to specify their needs;
- provide access to a variety of training venues and methods and allow the necessary time;
- value professional development by peers and the use of practical expertise;
- engage in joint projects with different partners, including universities;
- and pursue clear goals of reapplying what is learned to actual practice” (p. 40-41).

We believe that the main professional development needs, as they relate to our recommendations, are:

- for all teachers, professional development on cross-curricular learning;
- upgrading in the subject taught, following changes to the programs of study;
- retraining for teachers of subjects whose place in the subject-time allocation will change significantly.

Beyond the teacher training and professional development needs created by our proposed changes to the curriculum, the huge challenge facing elementary and secondary schools will be that of developing a professional development culture. Such a culture is wanting at the present moment. There are many reasons for this state of affairs, including the limited role assigned to teachers as appliers of the curriculum and the current model for organizing school time, which makes it difficult to schedule weekly teachers’ meetings. Professional development is the responsibility of every teacher, but school administrations must promote it, support it and make it possible in their schools by emphasizing its importance.

## 4. IMPACT ON WORK ORGANIZATION IN SCHOOLS

In Chapter 2, we mentioned the need to find ways to use school time more effectively and suggested that the dominant time organization model needed to be seriously questioned. It seems to us that the alternatives must be based on cooperation among teachers in the school and a commitment to making certain kinds of learning part of school life. In short, they must include more flexible and less compartmentalized ways of determining teachers’ tasks, to permit a less mechanical organization of learning time and sequences.

Diversification of tasks and enrichment of the general functions of the teacher so as to permit diversified, innovative models for task allocation would be desirable. Such changes would have to be based on needs identified by the school and agreed upon using a consensual approach.

Particularly in the context created by the provisions of the draft bill amending the *Education Act*, some of our recommendations will pose unprecedented challenges to school staff, and to teachers in particular. We believe that these challenges will be difficult to meet if the task allocation parameters remain as rigid as they are at present and if relations between teachers and school administrators are not significantly modified.

## 5. REALLOCATION OF CERTAIN RESOURCES

We have already established that the application of the proposed curriculum will be done with “constant resources,” and that a limited number of teachers will have to teach in another field because of changes to the subject-time allocation.

We also wish to call attention to another situation: the elimination of home economics in Secondary II and the reduction, by at least one-third, of student enrolment in introduction to technology in Secondary III, since these will be “reduced-supervision” courses given to groups of 20 students (rather than the standard 30). This will result in a reduction equivalent to 450 teaching positions.

**We recommend** that the resources recovered as a result of these changes continue to be allocated for teaching staff and used for:

- supervision of students during educational and vocational information activities organized by the school;
- professional development for teachers, particularly in the area of cross-curricular learning, the “program of programs,” and teacher participation in the overall educational project of the school.

## 6. IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

School is the place where students develop their personality and form their identity. What they study, whom they meet, everything that goes on in a school contributes to this process. But the atmosphere that exists in the school is also a key factor. In fact, it often conditions students’ academic performance. It is in school that students learn to interact with others and respect their differences. Life in school is therefore an introduction to life in society. This mini-society will allow each individual to fully express his or her own potential only if it has the following features.

- Each school must be a vibrant community. This vibrant community must exist first and foremost in the classroom, where students want to be respected, stimulated and supported. Students are keenly aware of arbitrary decisions, injustices, and inequalities. They are quite willing to comply with demands and authority, provided they are based on competence. Their relationship with their teachers has a significant, almost disproportionate influence on their performance, because if it does not exist, they cannot learn. If there is a problem in this relationship, they cannot be taught as well or even at all. A school must also be a vibrant community in its cultural, sports, social and extracurricular activities. These activities allow students to cultivate friendships with classmates which, during their teenage years, will in many cases be their only motivation to stay in school.

- Each school must be a small-scale democratic society. In school, the rights and freedoms of each individual must take into account others' rights and freedoms: individual differences must be respected and common rules established. Such a school promotes solidarity and rejects intolerance, violence, arbitrary decisions, intimidation and authoritarianism. In order to promote students' intellectual development, this small-scale society must be civilized. In other words, it must guarantee respect and safety for all its members.
- Each school must be a network within which teachers and school administrators communicate openly. There is general agreement that quality leadership by the school principal is one of the key factors in school effectiveness. School principals can make qualitative improvements in their schools, but only insofar as they work in tandem with teachers and teachers themselves work together as a team. "When teachers define their role only in terms of the subject they teach, when they do not collectively reflect on the problems they experience in the classroom or in the school, their students' results will not be as good as when teachers actively communicate among themselves, with their students and with their administrators" (Alain Touraine, *Pouvons-nous vivre ensemble? Égaux et différents* [Paris: Éditions Fayard, 1997], p. 338).

The devolution of powers to schools, as announced in the draft bill to amend the *Education Act*, is intended to reinforce the role of schools by making them the front line for decision-making and organization, but not just for administrative decision-making. New powers are granted to schools so that school teams can have greater, more definitive leverage to collectively take charge of students' education and create an environment conducive to learning. To produce their intended results, our proposals for curriculum reform also call for establishing a real network for communication and collaboration and for creating a vibrant, civilized environment within the school.

To reinforce the role of our schools, we must first reaffirm their mission.

# ***Mandate of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (Elementary and Secondary School)***

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## **I. BACKGROUND**

In the education system, the **curriculum** is composed of a set of elements which determine the content that is taught to students, and more particularly the subjects included in the student timetable, the time allotted for each subject, the programs of study, evaluation (including the requirements for admission and successful completion), the certification of studies and the relationships of branches (and “bridges”).

To prepare tomorrow’s citizens for the challenges of the next century, most industrialized countries have carried out an in-depth review of their elementary and secondary school curricula, or are on the point of doing so. This is particularly clear in an OECD report published in 1994, entitled *The Curriculum Redefined: Schooling for the 21st Century*.

In Québec, the final report of the Commission of the Estates General on Education recommended that the elementary and secondary curricula should be restructured, with special emphasis on the need to **improve the cultural aspect** and to **refocus on essential learning**.

## **II. CREATION OF A TASK FORCE**

WHEREAS the main elements of the curriculum have not been changed substantially for more than 15 years;

WHEREAS it is necessary to review curriculum content in order to:

- refocus on essential learning;
- improve the cultural aspect;
- introduce more rigour;
- and adapt it to social and economic changes;

WHEREAS no student should leave the education system without proper preparation for life in society and for the labour market;

WHEREAS schools must be better equipped to solve the problems of repeating and dropping out and the high failure rate among boys;

WHEREAS the school population is becoming increasingly diversified, in particular due to the contribution of the cultural communities;

WHEREAS the renewed elementary and secondary curriculum should give more leeway to schools and more professional autonomy to teachers, and should foster greater interdisciplinarity or integration of subjects;

WHEREAS the new curriculum content must be applied at the beginning of elementary school as of September 1998;

*A task force is hereby formed, with the mandate of proposing recommendations to the Minister concerning the changes to be made to the elementary and secondary school curricula in order to satisfy the demands of the 21st century.*

### III. MANDATE OF THE TASK FORCE

The task force must:

A. Propose the changes to be made to the elementary and secondary school curricula, with emphasis on the following elements.

- **Overall content**

- Define the **educational mission** of schools and the **major fields of learning** at the elementary and secondary levels, and propose a balance between these broad fields in light of the orientations recommended by the Commission for the Estates General on Education.
- Define the **learning profiles** for each cycle of elementary and secondary school, in particular by validating those proposed in the Corbo Report.

- **Subjects taught**

- Identify the **core subjects** for all students in each cycle of elementary and secondary school, giving reasons for any proposed additions or withdrawals, as well as the **optional subjects** at the elementary and secondary levels.
- Establish the content to be addressed **across the curriculum**, and the content best suited to extracurricular activities (generally outside the school).
- Suggest the place to be occupied by the **language of instruction** and the **second language, history and civic education**, and propose methods to promote the learning of a **third language**.
- The task force must consider the provisions of the regulations of the Catholic and Protestant Committees concerning the place of **moral and religious education** in the timetable.

- ***Teaching time***

- Suggest the percentage of **time** to be set aside for the different subjects at each cycle of elementary and secondary school, within the framework of the overall time currently prescribed in the basic school regulations.

- ***Diversification of educational paths***

- Pay particular attention to the **academic progress** of students from Secondary III onward, in light of the following three possibilities:
  - the pursuit of higher education;
  - a professional qualification;
  - life skills and work skills education (for students who need access to individualized paths for learning prior to Secondary III).

- ***Programs***

- Which programs should be revised in priority?
- Should their overall presentation be revised?

- ***The policy concerning evaluation of student learning and certification of studies***

- What rules should govern success and certification?
- Should a diploma (or any other form of official recognition) be awarded after Secondary III? Should some form of official recognition be given to students who do not satisfy the requirements of Secondary III?
- Should certain rules or practices concerning the certification of secondary studies be reviewed?
- Should the Secondary School Diploma be considered simply as certification for a given level of education, or should it also guarantee direct access to college?
- Should the report card be revised?

**B. Make recommendations on the mandate and operation of a **provincial curriculum board**.**

In its work, the task force should take account of the effects of its proposals on the teaching staff.

#### IV. COMPOSITION OF THE TASK FORCE

- **Mr. Paul Inchauspé**, chair, former principal of the CEGEP Ahuntsic. He was a member of the Commission for the Estates General on Education and the Corbo Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Profiles. He is also a past member of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation.
- **Ms. Marcelle Beaulieu**, teacher with the Commission scolaire Des Mille-Îles (École Marc-Aurèle-Fortin).
- **Ms. Jeanne-Paule Berger**, director general of the Commission scolaire de la Neigette in Rimouski. She has a Master's degree in ethics and is an active participant in many regional social development activities.
- **Ms. Christiane Lalonde**, secondary school teacher with the Commission scolaire Vallée-de-la-Lièvre (École Hormisdas-Gamelin, Buckingham).
- **Mr. Jean-Robert Derome**, head of the Physics Department, Faculty of Arts and Science, Université de Montréal.
- **Mr. Charley Levy**, assistant director general of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal.
- **Mr. Paul Vachon**, executive consultant, ministère de l'Éducation, where he has held a number of positions related to educational services over the last few years.

#### V. SCHEDULE

Preliminary report: March 31, 1997

Final report: June 2, 1997

## The “Program of Programs”

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**T**he curriculum reform outlined in this document proposes that all compulsory content should be transmitted in two ways: through restructured programs of study and through teaching across the curriculum.

We propose that the cross-curricular content to be taught in Québec’s schools should be outlined in a document that we have called the *program of programs*, aimed at teachers and other categories of school staff with student-related responsibilities. All educators, to differing degrees according to their role at school and the discipline or disciplines they teach, will be professionally responsible for helping students to develop the skills or attitudes contained in this “program.”

The content of the proposed document is outlined below. A separate document could be produced for the elementary and secondary levels, making the necessary distinctions to take account of different student age groups. Appendix 3 of this report outlines some of the content that we propose should be taught across the curriculum, together with their main links to the programs of study.

### CONTENT OUTLINE FOR THE “PROGRAM OF PROGRAMS”

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

##### A) What Is the “Program of Programs”?

Definition, goals, people addressed, links with programs.

##### B) Basic Positive Attitudes to Knowledge in General

Nurturing of students’ intellectual curiosity, willingness to work, attention to detail, ability to think for themselves, love of learning. Implications for teachers in their relationships with students in disciplinary and non-disciplinary situations.

##### C) Values in Schools

What values? How should they be taught? How should they be put into practice?

## **2. IDENTIFICATION OF CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING AT THE ELEMENTARY (OR SECONDARY) LEVEL**

### **A) Intellectual Skills**

An understanding of phenomena and situations, and the development of a critical mind.

Analysis and synthesis skills.

Problem solving skills.

The capacity to undertake a project and follow it through to completion.

Development and use of the memory.

Creativity and exercise of the aesthetic sense.

Communication skills.

Assessment and self-assessment skills.

### **B) Methodological Skills**

The capacity to understand rules and apply them, and to formulate one's own rules.

The capacity to identify and use appropriate sources of information.

The capacity to use appropriate methods to process information (with emphasis on new information and communications technologies).

The capacity to organize work to meet deadlines.

The capacity to work as part of a team.

### **C) Social Skills**

Everyday application of the rules of life in society.

Intercultural education and respect for differences.

An aesthetic and moral sense.

Application of rules for the preservation of good health.

Environmental education.

An open attitude to international understanding.

Media education.

### **D) Language-Related Skills**

A general statement.

An explanation of the "literacy across the curriculum" approach.

The contribution of all disciplines and activities, and of all teachers.

Some examples.

## ***Guidelines to Help Define the Content Corresponding to Cross-Curricular Learning***

**T**his section describes a number of elements to help define some of the skills we suggest should be taught across the curriculum. In each case, we make a short statement to show why and from what perspective we feel they should be included. We also suggest some elements of content to be introduced into the programs in cases where we feel learning across the curriculum should be based on specific knowledge to be made available to all students.

It goes without saying that this document contains preliminary orientations only. Further work, enhancement and clarification are required, in particular to differentiate objectives at the elementary and secondary levels.

### **CONSUMER EDUCATION**

#### **PERSPECTIVE**

In the latter half of this century, consumption has, in many respects, become a way of life. With globalization, societies end up adopting general practices designed basically to achieve the same goal, i.e., to encourage consumption in economically profitable sectors, mainly goods and services. The clear trend towards shaping behaviour through production and mass consumption has been the subject of numerous debates in which the education community has taken part because of its responsibility to educate free, critical and responsible human beings.

It is not the job of schools to put the consumer society on trial. However, they do have the responsibility of making young people aware of practices likely to undermine their independence, harm their health or the environment, destroy their critical abilities and prevent them from discharging their responsibilities as full members of society. The educational challenges facing schools in this respect are considerable, and the issues involved are significant. They involve preparing the younger generation to act independently and wisely when preparing for the economic, social and cultural life of tomorrow.

#### **PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED**

**Elementary school.** History, Geography and Citizenship Education.

**Secondary school.** History and Citizenship Education, Understanding of the Contemporary World.

## CONTENT ELEMENTS

Contemporary economies. Characteristics of the consumer society. Marketing logic and media strategies. Alternatives to the consumer society at home and abroad. Effects of goods and services on health. Production, consumption and environmental protection. Budget management.

## CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Learning to choose wisely. Learning to become informed consumers. Respecting health and the environment. Developing a critical approach to advertising. Determining the quality/price ratio in sports equipment, choosing leisure activities and cultural products.

## HEALTH EDUCATION

### PERSPECTIVE

Good physical and mental health is a decisive factor in the human condition. While this broad statement is applicable to everyone, its scope is determined by the specific context in which we as individuals live.

In our post-industrial societies, the organization of work, our lifestyles and our values have a direct impact on our health. Although some people claim that this impact is purely positive, numerous studies have shown that nothing should be taken for granted. It would be wrong and unrealistic to claim that human health is improving in a constant and linear fashion.

Young people are not immune to poor health. Although not restricted to a given age group, the health problems that affect them occur during a period of growth and dependency in which they are particularly vulnerable. In light of this, the role of schools should be one of understanding and prevention. It is from this standpoint that they can best contribute, by helping students to develop as human beings and making them aware of their present and future personal and social responsibilities in the field of health.

### PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

**Elementary school.** Physical Education; Science and Technology.

**Secondary school.** Physical Education; Science and Technology; Physical Science.

## CONTENT ELEMENTS

Personal hygiene and public health. Diet. Psychotropic drugs. Use of medication. Emergency care in accidents. Sexually transmitted diseases. Prevention of unwanted pregnancies.

## CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Acquiring healthy dietary and consumer habits and a healthy overall lifestyle. Developing an approach based on prevention and safety. Learning to adopt healthy, stable rules in life. Respecting the environment. Preventing distress and managing stress. In cooperation with the relevant school and school board services.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

### PERSPECTIVE

Throughout history, the development of knowledge has led to an increase in production capacities and an improvement in living conditions. Since industrialization first began, human beings have applied their productive capacities without always considering the effects. Observation has shown that, in many situations, humans have come into conflict with their environment. In many cases, the balance is destroyed at the expense of environmental quality. It has therefore become necessary to take a critical look at the development logic applied in the past, and its effects on an environment of which human individuals form an integral part.

Environmental education is designed to bring individuals into harmony with themselves and with nature, as members of a community and of the human race. It is also designed to provide knowledge and encourage behaviour that will lead to fair and sustainable development, respectful and considerate of the function of the ecosystems in which we live, and of the importance of maintaining their balance. On the macrocosmic level, its goal is to emphasize our shared dependency on the biosphere and our responsibility for the future of the planet Earth.

### PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

**Elementary school.** Science and Technology; History, Geography and Citizenship Education.

**Secondary school.** Science and Technology; History and Citizenship Education; Geography; Physical Science; Understanding of the Contemporary World.

### CONTENT ELEMENTS

Stages in the formation of the Earth. Organization and diversity of the living world. Biological, physical and chemical components. The population of space. The food chain. Pollution. Economic and industrial development, and conservation policies. Energy expenditure and savings. Heritage protection measures. Sustainable development, ecosystems and the biosphere.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Acquiring healthy habits. Developing responsible consumer practices. Respecting the school and community environment. Developing a critical sense with respect to the media. Formulating problems and possible solutions.

## CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

### PERSPECTIVE

In a pluralist society such as ours, the search for and promotion of shared values is part and parcel of the process of constructing and developing a democratic space in which the population as a whole is entitled to live. It is from this standpoint that the task of preparing young people to play their role as free and responsible citizens can be regarded as a social and political commitment to be made by our institutions, and especially by our schools.

Citizenship education can be viewed as one of the fundamental elements in the overall mission of a democratic school. Its goal is to make individuals aware of their rights and responsibilities towards others and towards society in general. Schools, in their role as educators of independent citizens, should also prepare their students to be active members of society, by helping them develop critical minds and respect for others. Citizenship education is designed to enable students to master the skills they need to defend and promote democratic values and human rights, both at school and in society, and to demonstrate social solidarity and an understanding of other countries and other cultures. It is based on knowledge of past and present society, and on a certain view of the society of the future. It also covers the rules of life in society, the relationships between human individuals and between humanity and the environment, and the influence of the media on the process of constructing representations of life in society. It touches upon the history of ideas and relationships between states, peoples and nations. It is part of a dynamic of social inclusion, and its content and activities are a source of dialogue and sharing for all, without exception.

### **PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED**

**Elementary school.** History, Geography and Citizenship Education.

**Secondary school.** History and Citizenship Education; Geography; Understanding of the Contemporary World.

### **CONTENT ELEMENTS**

Birth and evolution of different types of democracy. Operation of democratic institutions (political, judicial and administrative). Human rights instruments and protective mechanisms. Collective lifestyles and values: local, regional, national and international issues.

### **CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING**

Proficiency in the shared public language. Peaceful conflict resolution. Inter-peer cooperation. Understanding of the rules governing life in society. Civic responsibility. An open attitude to cultural pluralism.

## **MEDIA EDUCATION**

### **PERSPECTIVE**

The media are a set of technical devices which serve to transmit mass information. They can be used to disseminate standard messages simultaneously to large numbers of consumers in different locations. Most are based on a logic of mass communication and have a considerable impact on our representations of reality, so much so they are described by some people as opinion makers. We consult many of these media on a daily basis, to enrich our knowledge and discover new horizons.

Everyone agrees that the media contribute significantly to the development of children's personalities and values. They have become reference points outside the family and the school. They are attractive and use images, sounds and words well suited to a young audience, creating a form of parallel culture. However, it is a culture that develops and infiltrates without the educational supervision that would give the young recipients sufficient time and space

to think about the values being conveyed. Schools, in their desire to create an educational environment in which they can train free, critical and responsible citizens, cannot ignore the influence of the media on the children and adolescents who will be members of tomorrow's democracy.

### **PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED**

**Elementary school.** Language of instruction; History, Geography and Citizenship Education.

**Secondary school.** Language of instruction; History and Citizenship Education; Understanding of the Contemporary World.

### **CONTENT ELEMENTS**

Media technologies, categories and language. Techniques. Methods of deciphering and analyzing content. Knowledge of media sources. Regulations and controls.

### **CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING**

Developing a critical mind. Learning to communicate and transmit messages. Introduction to media production.

## **EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL INFORMATION**

### **PERSPECTIVE**

Throughout the world, education systems are being reformed with a view, among other things, to giving young people the best possible preparation for the labour market. This is a complex and demanding goal, on a scale with the new configurations generated by economic globalization.

Academic choices partly condition the choice of a trade or occupation. At the same time, new production activities are being generated by the new demands of economic and social development, although it is difficult at the present time to forecast their full scope and number.

It is within this new context, marked by a diversification of production methods, the creation of new specializations and increasing professional mobility, that schools are being asked to guide students in their academic and vocational choices. Their goal is to help students gradually anticipate the future and select the path that best corresponds to their capacities and interests in a world that is undergoing far-reaching change.

## PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

The subject is addressed in activities organized by the school.

## CONTENT ELEMENTS

History of trades and professions. The economic situation and the labour market. The employment situation by trade and by occupation. Economic situation and employability forecasts by sector. New labour configurations. Market saturation and openings. Causes of job losses. Unstable employment. The public, private and community sectors.

## CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Developing a desire to succeed academically. Developing the ability to make links between academic learning and employment. Acquiring a good knowledge of the labour market. Participating in recurrent and periodic activities organized by the relevant school and school board services. Supervision will be the responsibility of the guidance counselling and educational and vocational information services.

## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

### PERSPECTIVE

Cultural diversity is one of the characteristic features of contemporary society. It will probably be accentuated in the future, as travel becomes easier and more frequent. One of its consequences is the continual transformation of the social fabric in host societies. While it forms a dynamic that provides mutual enrichment, it also means that the population as a whole must find ways of adapting, with proper regard for shared values and the specific features of the various cultural communities.

Schools are one of the most important elements in the process of welcoming and assimilating cultural diversity, and provide a laboratory for intercultural exchange and communication. Schools bring together different identities that are otherwise scattered anonymously through society. The cultural pluralism that has become such a feature of modern schools will undoubtedly increase in the future. Consequently, new approaches tailored to the situation are needed to ensure that schools become a focal point in the process of learning to live together with proper regard for the values of a democratic society.

## PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

**Elementary school.** French as the host language; History, Geography and Citizenship Education.

**Secondary school.** Language of instruction and second language; French as the host language; History and Citizenship Education; Geography; Understanding of the Contemporary World. Activities organized by the student services.

## CONTENT ELEMENTS

Knowledge of population movements and shifts. Causes of immigration and emigration. Native peoples. Human rights instruments. Literary, technological and artistic production by cultural communities in Québec and abroad.

## **CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING**

Awareness of the importance of dialogue and tolerance. Knowledge of the media. International understanding.

## **INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING**

### **PERSPECTIVE**

Human beings have long been trying to express their creativity in a universal language. Individual originality is applied to a search for meaning that is the lot of the human condition. However, obstacles have often been encountered, forcing the world to the brink of irreversible disaster. The awareness of this danger and the need to construct a shared identity clearly illustrate the necessity of adopting an open and understanding approach to the world.

The main goals of education in international understanding are to make individuals aware that they belong to a group known as humanity, and to create accepted interdependencies between individuals, peoples and nations. It is part of a dynamic generated by the globalization of social, political, economic and cultural relations, and aims to illustrate the issues and analyze their effects. Consequently, it can make a significant contribution to the emergence of a global awareness and can play a role in the international community's efforts to build peace.

### **PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED**

**Elementary school.** History, Geography and Citizenship Education.

**Secondary school.** History and Citizenship Education; Geography; Understanding of the Contemporary World.

### **CONTENT ELEMENTS**

Territorial conflict and peace negotiations. Birth and evolution of international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Notions of international law, human rights, humanitarianism and world trade. Population movements. North-South and East-West relations. Interdependency. Characteristics of the globalization of economies and communications. The position of Québec and Canada in the world. Main challenges.

## **CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING**

Respect for difference. Discovery of cultural diversity. Knowledge of the media. Community commitment.

## **METHODOLOGICAL SKILLS**

The term “methodological skills” means the ability to work attentively, carefully, methodically and effectively.

Such skills facilitate the development of rigour and discipline as well as the ability to identify relevant sources of information for a given activity. They enable students to organize their school work methodically by using different techniques and technologies in support of their thinking. In addition, they foster the ability to communicate the results of work clearly. They are a factor in student motivation and success in school.

Methodological skills can be developed in all disciplines, depending on their goals. The best approach to the acquisition and transfer of such skills in all areas of life at school is a gradual one that takes account of the age-related capacities of the students.

## **CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS**

### **Elementary School**

The ability to present and organize work carefully, rigorously and coherently, and to meet deadlines. The capacity to take notes. The ability to share and distribute tasks when working in a team. Knowledge of and compliance with the rules of speaking in a group.

### **Secondary School**

The ability to select appropriate methods, techniques and tools for the work. The capacity to take detailed notes. The ability to draw up a detailed work plan. The ability to plan work over time to meet deadlines. Knowledge of and compliance with established procedures when working in a team.

## **CAPACITY TO USE AND PROCESS INFORMATION**

### **Elementary School**

The ability to identify and consult different sources of information. The ability to collect and classify information and reorganize it according to the work to be done. The capacity to use technology to collect and process information, including calculators, the media and computers.

### **Secondary School**

The ability to access different types of information (texts, figures, databases, pictures and sounds) using computer-based systems. The capacity to select complex information according to a predetermined plan. The ability to compare and validate test information accurately. The ability to use multimedia comfortably.

## **CAPACITY TO COMMUNICATE RESULTS**

### **Elementary School**

The ability to explain the stages of a research project and to communicate the results. The ability to construct simple argumentation. The ability to use technology to illustrate assignments, including an LCD projection panel, a video, multimedia and computers.

### **Secondary School**

The ability to apply work presentation methods according to the demands of the discipline concerned. The ability to prepare a short introduction. The capacity to use communications strategies adapted to the audience. The ability to use new information and communications technologies in presentations.

## **NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES**

In view of the plan recently proposed by the Minister for new information and communications technologies (NICT), and the recent opinion of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation on the subject, we feel it is necessary to emphasize the methodological skills component.

### **Perspective**

Over the last century, the field of information and communications has developed to a remarkable degree. Its expansion is due mainly to the growth in new technology, which now provides access to unprecedented amounts of knowledge. In the space of 30 years, the world has produced more information than in the preceding five thousand years. We must therefore learn to manage this vast inventory and to select elements according to our requirements.

NICT have infiltrated our lives extensively, forcing us to adopt a clear-minded attitude to their possibilities and to the mentalities and values that they may influence and even change. We must understand and learn their language and tools, because they evoke representations that have an impact on how we think and communicate with others.

The technological culture now seems to be a fact of life, and schools must play an active role in disseminating it as part of their overall mission of training free, responsible and competent individuals. The amount of knowledge accessible through NICT must be assimilated and placed in perspective. NICT should be used to help students progress, and students must learn to use them effectively and efficiently. They should also be used to help students perform complex tasks, process information and communicate using media that facilitate the development of working methods, a creative spirit and an ethical and critical approach.

### **Content Elements**

History and development of NICT. Notions of system. Language. Knowledge and use of media (software, educational software), techniques, multimedia, electronic mail and World Wide Web sites.

### **Cross-Curricular Learning**

Learning to use new technologies in different learning and communications situations. Developing effective working methods.

## ***The Programs of Study: Proposed Changes to Improve Cultural Content and Correct Deficiencies***

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In some cases, the proposals we are making entail major modifications to existing programs of study or the development of new content. This appendix briefly describes the perspectives to be taken into account in revising certain programs of study in light of the advocated improvement of cultural content and the deficiencies noted.

Our observations about the deficiencies noted in the programs and our suggestions for enriching their cultural content do not cover all subjects. In the case of some subjects, only one of the aspects has been considered, while for others, the comments deal with both deficiencies and cultural content. For a more detailed discussion of the changes we advocate, field by field, please refer to Chapter 3.

We have focused our attention primarily on the following points.

### ***Languages***

#### ***French as the Language of Instruction***

- **Deficiencies**

The new programs of study that have been implemented in the past two years are more demanding than earlier programs, since their content has been enriched. The elementary school program places more emphasis on reading and writing (syntax, vocabulary); grammatical terminology is presented; indications are provided concerning the order of complexity of the texts to be studied. The secondary school program calls for increasing mastery of the written language through more sustained attention to reading and writing; it advocates a more systematic concentration on the use of language in the texts studied and on the structure of the texts, and gives increased importance to reading works of literature.

This last point can be stressed, as we suggest below, but the rest of the program does not require much in the way of new readjustments. The readjustments already evident in the new program represent a major change, compared with the previous program, and meet the expectations expressed repeatedly during the Estates General on Education. They should help teachers correct the deficiencies revealed in recent international studies showing a poor performance by Québec students in comparison with students in other French-speaking countries, in particular the significant deficiencies in grammar and spelling.

- **Improvement of cultural content**

The most recent revision of the secondary school program is explicitly aimed at introducing students to the cultural richness of the literary heritage of Québec and the rest of the French-speaking world. For this reason, a larger place is given to literary works. During their five years of study, students must read a minimum of 20 works of literature. Moreover, these works are studied for their own sake, not merely as examples of writing. Compared with the previous situation, there is now an emphasis on the cultural perspective. But we feel that the situation can be improved in the following ways.

- A body of literary works has been established (see Michelle Provost, *De la lecture à la culture, Sélection commentée d'ouvrages de fiction pour le secondaire* [Montréal: SDM, 1995]). It consists of nearly 300 works of narrative literature; about 60 percent of them are texts from Québec literature and about 20 percent are major French-language classics from outside Québec. This body of literature should be reduced to 100 works, and 50 percent should be French-language texts from outside Québec. Some of the works could also be translations of major literary works whose reputation has endured the test of time. The study of the cultural expressions of the language of instruction should not be limited to our own geographical area: the culture to which we belong is much vaster than that. The body of literature studied should include poetry and drama to encourage students to become familiar with famous plays and great classics of poetry in the French language.
- The body of work to be studied in each grade or cycle should include works whose study familiarizes the students with a variety of genres and provides them with a historical framework. This framework should facilitate integration of some of the content of history and art history courses.

It would also be an excellent idea to establish a similar body of literature for elementary school, consisting of works for children and including poems, rhymes and songs.

### *English as the Language of Instruction*

- **Deficiencies**

In consultation with a number of representatives from various sectors of the English-speaking community, including the business sector, coordinators at the MEQ are in the process of redefining the minimum competence level expected at the end of secondary school in the case of students for whom English is the language of instruction.

- **Improvement of cultural content**

We believe that the above policies on French as the language of instruction with respect to literary content should also apply to English. It should be noted, however, that the teaching of English in Québec has traditionally emphasized the study of literature.

### *Modern Languages*

Foreign language programs (Spanish, Italian, German, etc.) to be developed will contain components related to the civilization in question: the country where the language is spoken, the principal writers and works of literature, documentary publications, etc.

## ***Mathematics, Science and Technology***

### *Mathematics*

- **Improvement of cultural content**

Mathematics is hardly ever presented from a historical standpoint. Instead, the subject is taught as though geometry, calculus, algebra and trigonometry sprang like Athena, full-grown and fully armed, from the brains of mathematicians, without any development or trial and error. Only a few textbooks occasionally mention the historical background and context of certain developments in mathematics. This historical framework should be presented more systematically, and programs of study should explicitly provide material that encourages an awareness of the historical perspective.

### *Science*

- **Deficiencies**

We must call attention to the deplorable state of science teaching in elementary school. The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation began calling the Minister's attention to this question in 1990. Since then, nothing has been done to correct the situation. The program, which was established in the early 1980s, is a mini-program on ecology in which the relation between living things and the environment is studied. It introduces practically no physics concepts, and the students' scientific curiosity is not stimulated because the aim is merely to provide familiarity with the experimental method. We have to say, however, that the deficiencies in the teaching of science in elementary school are not simply the fault of the program. They are also, and perhaps primarily, a question of teacher training. Far too many teachers lack any basic scientific education, and the science consultants generally have no formal training in the sciences. So we should not be surprised that 13 percent of elementary school teachers say they spend no time teaching science.

### *Technology*

- **Deficiencies**

The approach to technology as an application or constituent part of science is very poorly developed in the science programs. The students have molecular orbits described to them, but no one tells them anything about familiar applications of chemistry such as cooking techniques or photographic development. The Corbo Report indicates the techniques students should learn about and understand, starting in elementary school. However, further work is needed to determine, for both elementary and secondary school, which techniques should be studied in detail, and their relation to the scientific knowledge they provide or imply.

- **Improvement of cultural content**

Room is slowly being made in the science program for the STS approach, which consists of teaching based on the interaction between science, technology and society. Given the resistance to this approach, however, we feel justified in emphasizing its importance.

Until now, it was felt by many that a scientific education was indispensable only for students who intended to go on to university. This tendency was reinforced in the 1960s and 1970s by the introduction of courses stressing scientific concepts and methods and presenting relatively complex theoretical concepts, courses obviously intended to increase the number of students going into engineering or science. In stressing theoretical concepts, these courses neglected the social context. The cultural perspective in science teaching which the STS approach encourages must be constantly present throughout elementary school and the first cycle of secondary school.

## ***Life in Society***

### *History*

#### **• Deficiencies**

A certain number of deficiencies have already been indicated in the Lacoursière Report. We are adopting the following proposals concerning programs of study. There must be greater emphasis in the history programs on the following three components:

- the role of native peoples in the history of Québec;
- the role of the English-speaking community in the development of Québec society;
- the contribution of the different waves of immigration to the development of our society.

Moreover, the scope of the history programs should be broadened so that their principal elements can be placed in a wider context: the arrival of the French in New France must be placed in the context of a larger movement, the conquest of new worlds by the English, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese; the study of World War I must not be limited to Canadian participation or the attitude of French-speaking Canadians towards conscription.

Interpretations of Québec history may vary, depending on the students' perspective and their own cultural identity. English-speakers in Québec are not asking for their own historical content, but an analysis of Québec and Canadian history textbooks in French and English has shown differences in emphasis, as we might expect. Students from each of the communities, French-speaking and English-speaking, must, in the case of certain historical facts common to the two communities, be introduced to the different ways in which these facts are interpreted by their communities.

#### **• Improvement of cultural content**

In history, introducing a historical perspective means not being limited to events that influence social and political organization. It means being interested in people's life in society. In teaching history, two concerns must be conveyed.

- The first is a concern with what the society creates materially and spiritually: technical inventions, institutions, art, economic change. In the current programs, such concern is demonstrated in the study of ancient societies and civilizations but plays a lesser role when the events under study are closer in time.

- The second is a concern not just with exceptional or powerful men and women but also with the major cultural, political, and economic ideologies or trends.

### *Geography*

- **Deficiencies**

No particular deficiencies were indicated in this program. However, we believe that:

- as the Corbo Report states, knowledge of the world (continents, countries, cities) should be an integral part of the geography program, starting in elementary school;
- aspects of human geography must be stressed, in particular the economic aspect;
- the study of geography should not be limited to Canada. Familiarity with the major geographical units, their limitations and potential, and the major issues they raise must be part of the basic knowledge conveyed.

### *The Arts*

- **Improvement of cultural content**

Art is usually considered a cultural activity because what artists produce is a manifestation of humankind's creative activity. Current art programs are mainly intended to give students a chance to experience this creative activity themselves. If we intend to incorporate a stronger cultural perspective into the teaching of the arts, however, this practical emphasis is not sufficient. The programs must include more art history and give the students some familiarity with major works of art of the past and present.

## ***The Programs of Study: Overview of Changes***

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In this section, we indicate a certain number of changes required in the programs of study because of their age, the need to add new information and discoveries to them, or their changing place in the subject-time allocation. We also indicate programs that must be developed to accompany new courses that are being added.

The following provides a brief recap of a number of points discussed in Chapter 4 on the organization of curriculum content.

### ***Languages***

#### ***French as the Language of Instruction***

The *elementary school* program in French as the language of instruction was revised three years ago and has been in force since September 1995. Revision of the program is aimed at incorporating certain concepts related to media education.

The *secondary school* program was revised and implemented in 1995. Enrichment content for the second cycle must be developed because of the establishment of two streams, a basic program and an enriched program. Concepts related to media education must also be added.

#### ***English as the Language of Instruction***

The *elementary* and *secondary school* programs in English as the language of instruction must be revised to incorporate content related to media education.

The *secondary school* program must also take into account the establishment of two streams, a basic program and an enriched program.

#### ***French as a Second Language***

The *elementary school* program in French as a second language must be revised, since the current program dates back to 1981. The revision must deal with the community's expressed need for an immersion program that includes the teaching of one or more subjects in French.

The *secondary school* program must also be revised, since it dates back to 1982. Enrichment content must be provided for the second cycle in light of the establishment of two streams. The revision must also deal with the community's expressed need for an immersion program that includes the teaching of one or more subjects in French.

### *English as a Second Language*

The *elementary school* program in English as a second language was revised very recently, and the new version was approved by the Minister this year. The readjustments to be made to the program must take into account the fact that the teaching of English as a second language is to begin a year earlier, in Grade 3, instead of in Grade 4, as is currently the case.

The *secondary school* program must be revised: the first-cycle program dates back to 1983 and the second-cycle program to 1985. Because of the establishment of two streams, the revision must provide for enrichment content.

### *Modern Languages*

New programs must be developed in connection with the new optional subjects to be offered in the first and second cycles of secondary school: Spanish, German, Italian, etc.

## **Mathematics, Science and Technology**

### *Mathematics*

The *elementary school* mathematics program must be revised, since the current one dates back to 1980. The revision will have to provide for a new learning sequence covering three cycles, place more emphasis on problem-solving, and ensure that the elementary school program meshes with the secondary school mathematics program.

The *secondary school* programs have been gradually revised and put into effect since 1991. The remaining revision will be relatively slight and will consist in reorganizing the learning sequence. The addition of two credits in Secondary III (an increase from four to six) and the dropping of two credits in Secondary IV (a decrease from six to four) will require reorganizing the content of the basic program. A middle-stream program could be developed at some point in the future. Concepts related to education in new information and communications technologies will also have to be incorporated into the program.

### *Science and Technology*

The *elementary school* science program, which is currently called Natural Science, must be revised, since the current program dates back to 1980. The revision must include the establishment of a new series of courses for the second and third cycles and incorporate new content on technology, health and the environment. Some content must be earmarked as cross-curricular learning for the first cycle.

The revision must clearly identify the essential content, based on a minimum average time of one hour per week. Enrichment content amounting to at least another hour must be provided for schools that wish to use the leeway allowed them to devote more time to science.

The science courses offered in the first cycle of *secondary school* currently include the Ecology (Secondary I), Physical Science (Secondary II) and Human Biology (Secondary III) programs, which date back to 1982, 1987 and 1982 respectively. The revision will have to incorporate, in a new series, the essential components of the current programs and the con-

tent on earth sciences currently included in the General Geography program. In addition, concepts related to health education and the environment will have to be included in the program.

The Secondary IV Physical Science program (basic program) was revised in 1990. The remaining revision will be minor; content will have to be reorganized to take into account the new series of courses developed for the first cycle and the decrease in the number of credits from six to four. This reorganization must also allow for the integration of content relating to the environment. A middle-stream program could also be developed if warranted.

### ***Life in Society***

The *elementary school* social studies program, which is currently called Social Studies (History, Geography, Economic Activities and Culture), dates back to 1981. It must be revised to include new content related to citizenship education. We suggest that it be called History, Geography and Citizenship Education in future. Since this program is to begin in the second cycle, the content currently taught in the first cycle must be reorganized as cross-curricular learning related to time and space. More importance will have to be given to the teaching of history in the third cycle, in order to introduce content on prehistory and antiquity, which will be seen again early in secondary school. New environmental and intercultural education components must also be included, along with concepts related to international understanding.

The revision must clearly identify essential content, based on an average of one hour per week. Enrichment content amounting to at least another hour must be provided for schools that wish to use the leeway allowed them to devote more time to social studies.

In *secondary school*, the General History and History of Québec and Canada programs go back to 1982. They must be revised from two standpoints: first, to incorporate the recommendations of the Lacoursière Report, and second, to include new content related to citizenship education.

In the *first cycle of secondary school*, a new series of courses will have to be established. General History will be taught in Secondary I and II (Prehistory, Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the modern era and the contemporary period). The first part of the History of Québec and Canada will be taught in Secondary III (from Amerindian prehistory to the Act of Union), and the second part in Secondary IV (from the Act of Union to the present time). We propose that this new sequence (Secondary I to IV) be called History and Citizenship Education.

In the *second cycle of secondary school*, in addition to the second course on the history of Québec and Canada in Secondary IV, a new Understanding of the Contemporary World program must be developed. The new program must include the basic content of the current 20th-century history, economics and modern geography programs. New optional courses in the social studies must be developed for the second cycle.

As the History and Citizenship Education program and the new Understanding of the Contemporary World program are developed, they must incorporate concepts related to intercultural education and international understanding.

The General Geography program was revised in 1982, and the Geography of Québec and Canada program in 1995. Further revision should consist of integrating the basic content of the two programs and developing a new sequence for the content to be taught in Secondary I and II. Content related to environmental education, intercultural education and concepts of international understanding must also be incorporated into the program.

### ***The Arts***

In *elementary school*, the arts programs (music, visual arts, dance and drama), which date back to 1981, must be revised. The revision must clearly identify essential content, based on a minimum average time of one hour per week. Enrichment content amounting to at least another hour must be provided for schools that wish to use the leeway allowed them to devote more time to the arts.

In *secondary school*, except for the music program, which was revised in 1996, the arts programs must be revised, as they date back to 1981 and 1982.

### ***Personal Development***

#### ***Moral Education***

The *elementary school* moral education program was revised in 1990. The remaining work to be done involves eliminating a portion of the current program to make room for parts of the content of the Personal and Social Education program which relate to health education, sex education, consumer education and life in society.

The *secondary school* program, which at present is called Moral Education, was revised in 1985 (second cycle) and 1990 (first cycle). Revision must trim the current program so that content on various religions and their traditions can be added. Provision must also be made in Secondary III for the introduction of ethical concepts that will be taught more formally in the second cycle. The program must be reorganized to include concepts of intercultural education as well as content related to health education, sex education, consumer education and life in society from the current Personal and Social Education program.

#### ***Physical Education and Health Education***

The *elementary school* physical education program, which dates back to 1981, must be revised. The revision must incorporate health education into the current program. It must clearly identify essential content, based on a minimum average time of one hour per week. Enrichment content amounting to at least another hour must be provided for schools that wish to use the leeway allowed them to devote more time to physical education and health.

The *secondary school* physical education program must also be revised, since the current one dates back to 1981. The revision must incorporate the health-related content currently taught in the Personal and Social Education program.

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