

Guiding students toward educational success
AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL



Brief by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
to the Minister of Education

April 2002

A B R I D G E D V E R S I O N

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PROVIDING GUIDANCE

for college students to promote educational success

There are clear links between guidance and educational success, if only in the sense that guidance gives meaning to academic activities. In many cases, students are only attracted to activities that will contribute to their educational, and not just their academic success—in other words, activities that promote their personal development, which will help them achieve successful social and professional integration.

The emphasis placed on educational success in recent years has required a major expenditure of energy by all players in the education system, but despite their best efforts, the expected results have been only partially attained. A lack of guidance, one of the essential prerequisites for educational success, could be a major factor in this result. The years spent at college correspond to a time in students' lives when they must make many different choices, in many different areas, and the social changes of recent decades have made their life paths even more complex. In a society that stresses the importance of qualifications and places great value on pursuing a higher education, students probably experience their greatest need for guidance when they begin their college education. However, at this point many students see guidance as a complex, difficult process.

The need to provide better academic and career counselling has been expressed on several occasions by students, parents, resource persons in the education system, and the Minister of Education. The pressure placed on colleges to improve graduation rates has increased and with it, a tendency to lose sight of the goal of educational success and to focus instead on academic objectives linked to graduation within the prescribed time. Even these objectives, however, may not be reached if students do not have an appropriate vision of their career options. This is why the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, after taking into consideration the changes introduced into elementary and secondary education by the current reform, has completed this study on guidance at the college level. This brief sets out its findings and conclusions for use by the Minister of Education and all players in the educational community, especially at the college level.

PROMOTING SUCCESS

by empowering students to make choices

Academic and career guidance, linked to the concept of personal development, must help empower students to make choices. The Conseil considers that, to promote educational success, this approach should be adopted and applied as part of the educational process. It recommends three axes of development for the guidance counselling provided to students in the college system. The **first axis** is based on an understanding of guidance as a developmental process in which the education system plays a significant role. The **second axis** results from observations concerning young people today and the social changes of recent decades. The **third axis** consists in a way of considering the type of assistance students would like to receive, and raises three specific challenges.

PROPOSED AXES OF DEVELOPMENT

- **First axis** – Academic and career guidance must be seen as an educational process centered on the development of each student's personal and occupational identity, and as a process broadly shaped by the characteristics of the education system.
- **Second axis** – The occupational indecision experienced by college students should be considered as a normal part of their developmental process.
- **Third axis** – Guidance counselling must be seen as a key element in strategies targeting educational success, and as part of an integrated approach in which systemic and institutional responsibilities are taken into consideration.

The third axis poses three specific challenges:

- less rigid reliance on academic results, to avoid limiting the options available to students
- better use of the possibilities offered by the curriculum to develop occupational options
- systemic, institutional responsibility for student guidance counselling services

In short, to provide a better response to the needs of students, the Conseil proposes a new type of action that will require all players to focus on educational success, by considering occupational maturity as an essential component of success, dealing with occupational indecision as a regular part of the developmental process, and integrating guidance into the educational process through concerted action.

CONSIDERING GUIDANCE

as an educational and developmental process

GUIDANCE AS PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The Conseil's theoretical premise is that **guidance is a developmental process** essential to the educational success of individuals, and also an identity-building process. Although subject to a wide range of family, social and academic influences, individuals can and must be allowed room to make their own decisions. From this point of view, guidance is **part of the educational process** that emphasizes, first, the power of students to make their own choices and, second, the responsibility of the education system for enabling students to make those choices. Considering guidance as a developmental process also underlines its links with the question of personal identity. A poorly defined personal identity hampers the development of a student's occupational identity. In addition, it seems realistic to suppose that the education system can help build up the identity of each student, given that identity is malleable, and is moulded by a long series of academic and other experiences. The presentation of the Conseil's theoretical premises also outlines the main stages in occupational development, and defines basic concepts. One concept, occupational indecision, refers to the doubt and indecision that are inherent to the guidance process and may have a beneficial effect.

A PROCESS REFLECTING THE INDIVIDUAL/COMMUNITY DYNAMIC

In addition to the psychological dimension of guidance, the Conseil pays particular attention to its sociological aspects. By stressing the **individual/community dynamic** that is an integral part of the guidance process, the Conseil underlines the fact that the choices made in a guidance context cannot be reduced to their logical or rational aspects, since all academic and occupational choices result from a confrontation between the individual and the components of his or her environment. In other words, they are partly social choices. In a given society, for example, individual choices are influenced by the value placed on study, or on specific areas of study. The state of the job market is also another determining influence, both for objective reasons and for the message it conveys. In short, **guidance is also defined by the social, economic and political realities of society.**

The same holds true for the roles played by specific actors within society, meaning that individual choices are also coloured by the place of the individual within society. Communities or groups—family, social, economic or cultural groups, etc.—tend to impose implicit or explicit standards

that affect the perceptions of their members, including their perceptions of themselves, of school and of various professions, as well as their perceptions of their own professional future. The same phenomenon will not necessarily have the same resonance for all individuals, and occupational segregation on the basis of social background or gender has been widely documented.

■ A PROCESS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In this brief, the Conseil focuses in particular on the influence of the education system, with the objective of properly understanding and controlling that influence. If the system is to allow students to exercise as much power as possible regarding their own choices, then the guidance-related role of the system must be made explicit. It is important to properly understand the influence of the system over the paths chosen by students, beyond the effects of actual guidance measures. In this way it will be possible to reduce unnecessary constraints, understand the real latitude available to students in making academic and career decisions, and provide more effective support.

The education system guides students, directly or indirectly, through the structuring effect of its various components. It can restrict or, conversely, broaden their range of career choices, in particular by making changes to curriculum structures, funding methods or training options. Its influence is also exercised by the degree to which it deals with social inequalities among students.

The structuring effect of the education system can be felt, more specifically, in the way in which academic results are used. The Conseil recommends two approaches to this question. The first concerns the interdependent relationship between guidance and educational success, a relationship in which guidance is both a cause and a result of success. The second refers to the construction of personal identity. The Conseil emphasizes that a student's position, as defined in particular by his or her academic results, influences the student's self-image, and thereby, his or her personal and occupational identity.

When guidance is considered from this viewpoint, it is clear that the effects of the education system must be properly understood before the type of support students require can be identified. This is why **the first axis of development put forward by the Conseil presents guidance as an educational process centering on the development of each student's personal and occupational identity, a process that is largely defined by the characteristics of the education system.**

GETTING TO KNOW the students we are trying to help

■ IDENTIFYING REASONS FOR MISTRUST OF THE GUIDANCE PROCESS

How much do we really know about the realities facing young people today? We must learn to see them in a new light. Several clues point to a general mistrust of guidance among college students. Although obviously not applicable to all students, data from various surveys and consultations suggest that occupational indecision is a common occurrence. The same research also shows that some students find it difficult to gain access to guidance services and that their behaviour patterns are not always conducive to the success of the guidance process. The surveys reveal embarrassingly low graduation rates, large numbers of students switching programs or returning to complete secondary-level vocational education, and puzzling statistics on the number of students going on from college to university. For instance, in recent years, the number of students who actually go on to university after graduating from pre-university programs has been dropping, whereas it has been climbing among students graduating from the technical sector. How can this be explained? And how should we react to these new patterns?

The gap between expected and actual educational paths raises a number of questions, and leads some people to think that the student's choices should be rectified to bring them more into line with the traditional requirements of the education system. However, this approach cannot be justified if the changes that have affected the society in which these students have grown up are taken into account. **A society that has seen profound changes to its values, lifestyles, family organization, economy and labour market cannot expect its young people to remain unaffected by the new realities they have to face. It cannot expect its students to follow educational paths that fail to reflect their diversity and the values promoted by society itself.**

■ TAKING THE SOCIAL CHANGES OF RECENT DECADES INTO ACCOUNT

To help understand the new educational paths followed by young people, the Conseil discusses factors such as increased life expectancy, the confusing transition between adolescence and adulthood, the increasing range of possible choices, changes in job types and the meaning of work, and the various ways of entering the workforce. It also notes that instantaneous results are increasingly expected in all spheres of activity, and that training venues and frameworks are becoming more and more diversified. Intercultural and

intergenerational contacts are growing, and the values of the marketplace and consumerism are becoming widespread. **Society no longer offers the same possibilities or imposes the same constraints as before. It appears more open and flexible, but also lacks stability and fixed points of reference.**

Similarities exist, of course, between the young people of today and those of previous generations, but there are also major differences. **The definition of normality in previous generations no longer matches today's reality.** Unlike their predecessors, young people now grow up in a world of low job security and fragile interpersonal relationships, where access to higher education has become more widespread and ethnic and cultural diversity has increased greatly. If they follow the standard trajectory, they are much younger when they begin their higher education. They also regularly study alongside adult students with a completely different outlook. **In short, the objective conditions for personal development have changed and become more complex in many different ways, and young people have a correspondingly new outlook on education and work, and follow new occupational pathways. The changes that can be observed in the conduct of young people today are influenced by changes in adult behaviour patterns.**

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■ CONSIDERING THE COLLEGE LEVEL AS A CRITICAL THRESHOLD

College is perhaps the time when young people have to make the most decisions, simultaneously and in several different areas. It is therefore not surprising that they seem to have difficulty making, and sticking to, some choices. This already critical stage is made even more perilous by the fact that social reference points are hazy, or even contradictory. It is clear that college students find it difficult to choose a direction not simply because they have received inadequate support at the secondary level, but also because they are involved in a specific process that is becoming increasingly complex. The Conseil considers that the guidance provided for students at the college level must be redefined to mirror present-day realities. **The second axis of development defined in this brief proposes that the occupational indecision experienced by college-level students should be seen as a natural event in the development process.**

It is important to emphasize that young people display a wide range of attitudes towards academic and occupational choices. Not all young people find it difficult to define a direction, but when they do, their discomfort can be expressed in various ways. Highlighting the problems experienced by a large number of college students in making academic and career choices should not obscure the fact that many do actually begin their college level studies with a relatively precise plan for their future. However, this does not mean that their approach cannot be improved.

RECOGNIZING

the colleges' involvement in this part of their mission, and circumscribing constraints

The data collected from college guidance counsellors and from over thirty success plans drawn up by individual colleges demonstrate the scope and diversity of the guidance measures available. The Conseil considers that **colleges have made a real commitment with regard to this component of their mission, although the level of commitment varies from college to college and is not often emphasized in the success plans filed with the Minister.** The Conseil finds this surprising. The integration of guidance counselling with learning assistance strategies appears tenuous, tentative, or in some cases non-existent. The availability of professional resources within the college network is also a cause for concern. Low ratios among professional non-teaching staff and apparently insufficient collaboration with the teaching staff, often busy implementing the reform, lead the Conseil to doubt the ability of colleges to meet all student needs. In addition, a form of confusion seems to colour the perception of the roles played by the various professionals (guidance counsellors, academic and career counsellors, and one-on-one tutors, in particular). This is especially concerning in that it could, in certain cases, lead to a watering-down of guidance services into information services, and make concerted action even more difficult to achieve. The way in which students' academic results are considered is also a matter of concern for the Conseil, because it can trap them in terms of the choices they make. Last, several components of the curriculum and teaching schedule do not seem to be properly applied to provide support for occupational development.

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The Conseil shares the view expressed by most of the individuals consulted that more substantial support could and should be offered to help students to choose their occupational paths. Without making judgments concerning the quality of the services provided, the Conseil has noted several types of difficulties with regard to this component of the colleges' mission. The drafting of success plans has certainly helped mobilize efforts to provide support for success, but the current context places pressure on the colleges to increase their graduation rates. They must therefore concentrate on finding strong candidates, and on motivating them once enrolled to ensure that they continue on to graduation. Colleges focus essentially on academic achievement, and students are under increasing pressure to earn their diploma within the prescribed time. Is this the kind of context in which occupational maturity can be developed? In the view of the Conseil, no. If support for occupational maturity is to be provided in the form of tutoring, then the tutoring program must not just consider the academic aspect.

There is a strong focus on success, and the Conseil supports it wholeheartedly. However, **by choosing to use graduation rates as their main indicators of success, the colleges run the risk of being inattentive to the needs of students and the conditions in which they develop.** It is possible that the diversity and complexity of the guidance process are being minimized, and that as a result, important aspects of personal development may be sacrificed. There is even a risk that neither academic nor educational success rates will improve significantly. The Conseil is worried that the need to provide support for occupational maturity is being underestimated. Although academic success and increased graduation rates are justified objectives, precautions must be taken to ensure that these objectives are not attained by compromising educational success. The Conseil considers that the focus should not just be on students who obtain their diploma within the prescribed time, but who may begin to wonder about their options once they have graduated, but also on those who follow a more winding path and take more time, but who nevertheless find their direction. Admitting that occupational indecision is part of young people's development process allows us to recognize a wide range of possible paths. However, the drafting of success plans by educational institutions is still a positive event, since they constitute an incentive for action, provided they are not reduced to an administrative exercise designed to promote exclusively academic objectives.

MAKING GUIDANCE COUNSELLING A KEY FACTOR IN STUDENTS' SUCCESS :

three major challenges

In the current context, there is a risk that we will lose sight of the meaning of educational success and compromise the quality of the academic success achieved by focusing exclusively on quantitative objectives. This is why the **third axis of development defined by the Conseil is based on the idea that guidance counselling must be a key element in strategies to promote educational success, and part of an integrated approach in which systemic and institutional responsibilities are also taken into account.**

This third axis of development poses at least **three major challenges.** The **first** implies less rigid reliance on academic results, to avoid limiting the options available to students. The **second** involves making better use of the possibilities offered by the curriculum to develop occupational options. The **third** concerns the need to ensure systemic, institutional responsibility for student guidance counselling services.

THE FIRST CHALLENGE – ensuring less rigid reliance on academic results, to avoid limiting the options available to students

Doubt is one of the important facets of the quest for personal identity, and has real educational value. This statement should be recognized as a postulate, leading to the establishment of a critical view of the current use of academic results to guide students. **Academic results are, clearly, relevant for the prediction of success. However, they are also limited, in that they fail to reflect the difference between problems of occupational maturity and purely intellectual problems.** Current practices fail to recognize this fact, and tend to trap students in terms of the options available. Grade-based selection, especially in certain subjects, has a major influence on those options, and its impact is increasing. Students experience it well before they enter college. Also, there are too few second chances. These are some of the signs that the current system is too rigid.

While recognizing the predictive value of academic achievement in success at the college and university levels, the Conseil considers that **academic results should no longer be the sole factor considered in the college admission process,** especially in the technical sector. The specific requirements of the programs and professions concerned should be given more weight. Other ways of assessing student applications—tests, interviews or port-

folios, examinations, for example—could be introduced to counterbalance the "power of marks" factor. This type of approach is currently used for admission to specific programs (police technology, graphic art, ambulance technology, computer science, etc.) and the Conseil considers that, without becoming generalized, it should at least be more widespread.

Precautions must be taken, however, to ensure a maximum of transparency and, especially, to ensure that the use of other—non-academic—criteria does not have unintended effects such as giving an unfair advantage to certain social groups. The need for precautions becomes clear when we consider the kind of discrimination until recently found, and sometimes still found, in training traditionally "chosen" by one or other gender group. Precautions are needed to ensure fair and objective treatment for all, which that does not penalize certain students on grounds or sex or social background, for instance. It is important to understand that in expressing its reserves concerning the use of academic results, the Conseil is not questioning the relevance of this reference criterion; it is well aware of the limits of interests, values or motivation as criteria for success. Other criteria could, however, be introduced into the student admission process in addition to academic achievement, provided this is done in a way that is equitable for all students.

College students should also be given a second chance to succeed. The process must be structured, however, and students must receive support to enable them to learn from their experiences, whether good or bad, and reinvest the results in a constructive fashion. The Conseil has noted that the possibilities for retaking a failed course are extremely limited, and that "fail" marks are never removed from a student's record, even if the course is subsequently passed. It is often hard to obtain the prerequisites for many college programs. These constraints mean that recognition is granted not for the competencies acquired by a student, but for the way in which the competencies are acquired. This approach contradicts the educational philosophy underlying the current reforms, and it will be necessary to explore various options and introduce changes to ensure that the system better reflects the actual needs of the students.

■ THE SECOND CHALLENGE – making better use of the possibilities offered by the curriculum to develop occupational options

The current system of college education has **several features that promote students' occupational development**, including the cohabitation of two main types of training (pre-university and technical) within the same institution, the general education component shared by all programs, the on-the-job training made available as part of the first year of the technical programs and the activities designed to analyze occupations, the orientation and integration sessions, and the session-based program schedules. The integrated design of each program according to the "program approach" in which learning objectives are presented in the form of competencies is also a positive feature that must be consolidated.

Various difficulties are nevertheless associated with the first year of college studies, meaning that a major re-organization is necessary in order to meet both the requirements of the higher education system and the need to ensure the occupational development of the students. With regard to programs, the Conseil considers that the current program design model in which learning objectives are defined in terms of competencies as part of a "program approach," should be retained. However, all players in the college system must be made aware of the foundations and potential of this approach, in order to define appropriate methods of implementation. The Conseil also stresses the relevance of versatility, which led to the current structure of the college system. Versatility has become even more important today, and highlights the importance of not limiting the links between programs at the college level by an excessive emphasis on specialized programs.

Switching programs is not the best way for students to acquire occupational maturity, but in many cases program changes are appropriate and should be possible without unduly penalizing the students concerned. The new sharing of responsibility for program design should not prevent colleges from allowing students to transfer from one program or college to another.

Last, **the entire process for developing and managing programs must be re-assessed from the standpoint of occupational development, and other changes must be considered**, in particular in connection with the recognition of prior learning, complementary general education, extra-curricular activities, non-program courses, and the date at which first-year students can drop a course without incurring a penalty.

■ THE THIRD CHALLENGE – ensuring systemic, institutional responsibility for student guidance counselling services

It is important to better define the responsibilities of each player, at each level in the education system, to ensure that students receive the guidance and supervision to which they are entitled. The students themselves have a primary responsibility in the guidance process—without their commitment, no choices are possible. While working to increase their autonomy, parents must support them and encourage them to make a commitment to the guidance process. Teachers, as key players in the system, have a role in the process that can easily be integrated with their other professional duties. Specialized non-teaching staff (guidance counsellors, academic and career counsellors, and one-on-one tutors, in particular) remain indispensable for their contribution not only at the individual level, but also in the group activities that target educational success. Last, guidance counselling is also a responsibility of each college, and of the college system as whole which, over the years, has become more accessible but also more complex.

Through a concerted approach, it will be possible to provide all young people, and not just those who request assistance, with the guidance they need to fully utilize their power to make occupational choices. However, our ability to take up this challenge will depend on the allocation of a sufficient number of resource persons, the training of various players in the requirements of modern counselling, the decompartmentalization of services, better communication between the different levels of the education system, and appropriate financing.

PROVIDING SUPPORT

for the proposed new approach by implementing the following recommendations

■ The Conseil recommends that the *Minister of Education and all players in the college system*:

1. Consider guidance counselling an essential process in student development with a view to attaining educational success:

- by taking clear responsibility for providing guidance counselling for students
- by integrating counselling with the various components of the education process
- by ensuring that all their actions match the new approach

2. Change the way in which the needs of young people are considered:

- by recognizing their diversity
- by dealing with occupational indecision as a regular part of the developmental process
- by modifying their practices accordingly

3. Consider guidance counselling as part of an integrated approach and as a systemic and institutional responsibility

■ The Conseil recommends, more specifically, that *colleges*:

4. Introduce more flexibility into the way academic results are used, so as not to limit the occupational options open to students:

- by examining the student admission process in terms of the influence of academic results on possible educational paths
- by basing the student admission process—at least in certain technical programs for which occupational requirements have been clearly established—on a set of justifiable, rigorous criteria rather than just academic achievement, while taking care to ensure that the process is as transparent and fair as possible
- by allowing students to retake failed examination, within an established framework

- by reviewing parts of the procedure for calculating the student classifications that govern access to college-level programs
 - by taking steps to ensure that all players in the college system, including students and parents, understand the admission procedure for university-level programs, and especially the "*cote de rendement (cote R)*", in order to limit the constraints on students' exploration and choice
- 5. Modify the organization of the first year of college studies to reflect the need of students to receive support as they face the requirements of higher education and of their own occupational development:**
- by giving the "Analyze the occupation" competency substantial importance in all technical programs, to ensure that the corresponding learning activities allow students to attain the program objectives
 - by developing learning activities targeting the acquisition of a similar competency, but adapted to pre-university programs in various fields
 - by extending the use of exit profiles to be defined for each program
 - by designing local programs with courses to meet two separate objectives, namely knowledge of a specific field of study, and possible transfers to other programs (in particular by including, from the first session, learning activities focusing on program-specific knowledge, as well as on the general education component)
 - by emphasizing academic and career guidance for students beginning their college-level studies
 - by establishing mechanisms, such as information systems or staff teams, to promote close collaboration between teaching staff and support staff, ensuring that students are offered supervision and occupational support that reflect their needs
 - by giving first-year students special status, especially concerning the right to retake exams

- 6. In developing and managing programs, take into account students' occupational development needs and especially their need to explore and change programs:**
- by harmonizing, whenever possible, learning activities that target the acquisition of competencies shared by several programs offered in a given college
 - by entering into agreements with other colleges, especially colleges offering the same programs, concerning the competencies students are expected to acquire by the end of the first year of study
 - by establishing mechanisms to allow all students who intend to change programs to receive personalized supervision adapted to their needs
 - by developing and using tools for the recognition of prior academic learning
 - by improving the availability of learning activities that provide missing training, in order to recognize prior academic learning
 - by promoting points of contact between the technical and pre-university sectors, and between programs, in local program design and organization
 - by facilitating access to accelerated learning paths for students who change programs after completing the general education component
 - by complying with the spirit of complementary training when deciding on course availability
 - by helping design multi-disciplinary programs (such as the *Science Literature and Languages*, *Creative Arts* program) with a genuinely exploratory component for weaker students in the pre-university sector
- 7. Ensure that all players in the college system participate in a concerted effort to help all students achieve educational success, which necessarily involves:**
- ensuring that all categories of staff receive professional development in the guidance process, taking into account their respective responsibilities and paying particular attention to professional development for teaching staff
 - informing students and parents about the goals and requirements of the guidance process, and about the tools and services available
 - taking the necessary steps to decompartmentalize teaching and students services as far as possible, and to ensure that responsibilities are better understood and shared, thereby maximizing the effects of individual efforts as part of a joint process

- ensuring that guidance counselling services take part in the planning, implementation and evaluation activities of committees working to enhance student success at the individual college level
 - establishing a system for the systematic monitoring of student progress, not only in academic terms but also in terms of occupational development, giving students opportunities throughout their college career to assess the choices they have made
 - ensuring that concerns relating to the occupational maturity of students are taken into account in the design, implementation and evaluation of the success plan in each college
- 8. Encourage college teaching and non-teaching staff to participate in research focusing on guidance for young people in the current context and in the dissemination of the research results, in order to:**
- increase awareness of the current situation among various players in the education system, including the parents of college students; and
 - update the expectations and actions of parents, institutions and the government to match the new realities

Such research could focus more specifically on:

- the nature and influence of academic factors on student choices
- strategies to promote student involvement in the guidance process
- ways to give students as much power as possible concerning their options
- the specific needs of college-level students in the present-day context

■ **The Conseil recommends more specifically that *colleges and secondary schools*:**

9. Agree on ways to provide students with flexible, varied services to increase their access to the training required to enter certain college programs, and to prevent their educational pathways from being decided too early
10. Increase the opportunities for exchanges of views between teaching and non-teaching staff at both levels of education concerning courses that are or should be available, training conditions and student guidance services, in particular to ensure that:
 - secondary-level students receive accurate, up-to-date information on college requirements and specific programs
 - expectations are more realistic
 - the academic and occupational paths followed by students at the college level are consistent with the paths begun at the secondary level

■ **The Conseil recommends more specifically that *universities*:**

11. Modify some of the procedures for calculating the *Cote R* for access to university-level programs, in order to remove undue restraints on the academic and occupational students, in keeping with the Conseil's proposal in one of its recommendations to the Minister of Education, that students be allowed to retake exams
12. Increase the range of information available on university programs and admission requirements, in order to give college-level students who plan to attend university as much guidance as possible

■ **The Conseil recommends more specifically that the *Minister of Education*:**

13. Grant first-year college students special status, by providing that:
 - first-year courses failed by a student but retaken and passed at a later date not appear as "fails" in the student's record
 - the results of courses failed initially, but later retaken and passed not count in calculating the student's *Cote R*
 - the date for dropping a first-session course without penalty be set back by a few weeks, to allow students to make better choices

14. Provide appropriate regulatory and financial support, to consolidate and promote measures that are already conducive to occupational maturity, such as:

- the cohabitation of the two major educational paths (pre-university and technical)
- program structures that provide for a general education component that is shared by both technical and pre-university programs
- the complementary general education component
- the "Analyze the occupation" competency included in the new technical training programs
- session-based programs
- orientation and integration sessions
- competency-based and "program approach" program design

15. Facilitate the organization of on-the-job training in technical programs, which gives students an opportunity to verify or consolidate their occupational choices

16. Undertake program design work to:

- enrich the pre-university programs (especially in the *Natural sciences*) by introducing a competency similar to the "Analyze the occupation" competency in technical programs, adapted to the objectives of pre-university education
- continue, as far as possible, to harmonize competencies between programs, especially in the same program family, as part of the "program approach"
- avoid over-specialization in programs aimed at students beginning their college education
- design multi-disciplinary programs with an exploratory dimension for weaker students in the pre-university sector
- maintain the complementary general education component but make it more flexible to provide, in particular, for the recognition of relevant extra-curricular and other activities, to meet the objective of genuinely complementary training

17. Ensure that the extra time needed to graduate following a change of program be taken into consideration for student loan purposes, to avoid penalizing students who change programs

18. Provide the funding needed to:

- allow research activities (on the subjects listed previously) to be conducted in colleges and universities with the participation of teaching and non-teaching staff
- promote the dissemination of research results
- improve the availability of courses needed as prerequisites, especially in outlying regions
- offer professional development for various categories of college staff
- allow colleges to hire sufficient numbers of qualified staff to offer varied, personalized and on-going guidance for all students, especially those beginning their college education
- meet needs relating to the recognition of the prior academic learning of students who have changed programs (recognition tools, learning activities to complete missing education, and recognition activities)
- allow fairer access to non-program courses, especially for students who change programs, to ensure student mobility, but without compromising the "program approach" currently used in the college education system

19. Look more closely at the question of course quotas, whether officially imposed or resulting from the number of places available in the colleges, to ensure that colleges are able to respect the program choices made by students as far as possible.

In this brief filed with the Minister of Education, the Conseil has tried to demonstrate the importance of guidance in helping students achieve educational success. By raising and analyzing certain questions, the first objective of the Conseil was to better understand the realities facing young people today and identify ways to promote educational success. The Conseil wishes to combat the reductionist view of success that places too much emphasis on academic achievement, by underlining the importance of guidance as a developmental process in which the students themselves have a primary responsibility. The process must be designed to empower students to make their own choices, since this power is one of the keys to educational success.

The Conseil has stressed the contribution made to the guidance process by the whole of society, and especially the education system. The influence of the education system, although certainly major, remains little known and, in some ways, overlooked. The Conseil considers it important to recognize it explicitly, to allow it to be exercised more effectively. To act in the way proposed by the Conseil, it will be necessary to recognize the specific characteristics of the current system, both in terms of the constraints it imposes and the possibilities it offers. The Conseil is adamant that this examination of the education system should go beyond the individual assistance measures, intentions and objectives officially pursued. Without a better understanding of both the implicit and explicit effects of the system on the paths followed by students, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to determine where improvements are required to provide better support.

In addition, the Conseil believes that it is necessary to renew our understanding of the range of needs and behaviour patterns of young people today, the constraints they encounter and their hopes for the future. The Conseil considers that it is also necessary to take into account the social and cultural changes of recent decades in analyzing young people's attitudes to education and their educational behaviour. Without this kind of background information, it will be difficult to provide young people with appropriate and effective support. This is why the Conseil considers that a new perspective on the question of guidance counselling for college-level students is required.

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