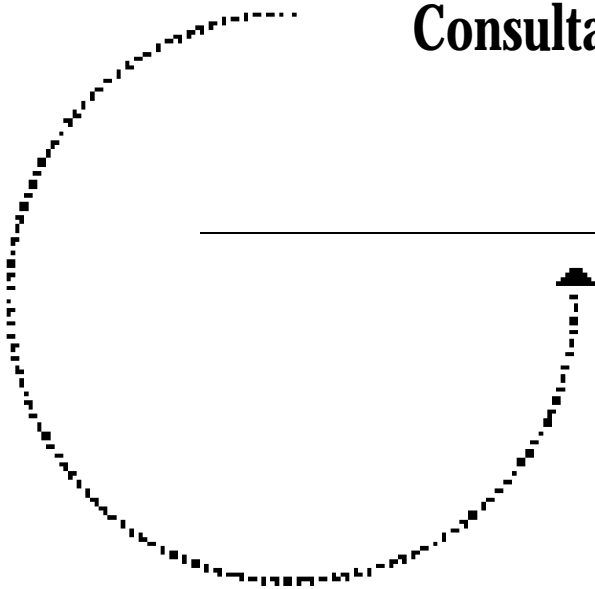


OWARD A POLICY ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Consultation Paper



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The ministerial plan of action made public in February 1997 targeted access to continuing education as one of seven major lines of action for the reform of the education system. The plan stressed that, to ensure the success of the reform, it was important for the Ministère de l'Éducation and the educational institutions to focus on the youth sector while remaining aware of the needs for retraining and continuing education in the adult sector.

Regarding this latter point, it quickly became clear in the course of work carried out within the Ministère that the objectives could not all be addressed by a single ministerial project to reform continuing education. This is reflected in the title of this consultation paper, which also clarifies the underlying intention: to move toward a government policy on continuing education or lifelong learning.

Essentially, this means two things. First, this consultation paper is not intended as the sole possible vision, nor as an exhaustive examination, of the current state of continuing education in Québec. Second, the education sector cannot, alone, be expected to meet the needs of both individuals and communities.

This consultation paper constitutes an invitation to all key players, and there are many, to play an active role in the reform, by beginning a far-reaching and complex process based on both the ministerial commitments and the elements of government policy set out in this document.



Pauline Marois

Minister of Education

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INTRODUCTION

This consultation paper constitutes one more step in the on-going development of continuing education in Québec. Since the publication of *Continuing Education Program. Policy Statement and Plan of Action* in 1984, the Ministère de l'Éducation has undertaken a number of actions to help structure services in the continuing education sector. Several other ministries have followed suit, such as the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, who, by centering its *Active labour market policy* on manpower and labour market needs, has now expanded its activities in lifelong learning. It is time to assess how much has been accomplished, if only to emphasize once again the need for concerted government action in the area of lifelong learning.

Any proposed policy for a reform of continuing education draws its currency and relevance from an existing situation. In this particular case, the draft policy must respond to the needs clearly expressed by individuals, businesses and communities, but also remain responsive to government objectives.

Four main courses of action are proposed in this consultation paper. The first focuses on the need to take vigorous action to fight illiteracy; the second concerns the response made to the needs of individuals and groups. The third is a response to demands that continuing education be offered in a variety of locations and a range of forms; and the last proposes increased recognition for prior learning.

However, these courses of action and commitments will produce the desired effects only if we provide the right conditions for success. We must improve the way in which educational services are offered, adjust funding to reflect the chosen priorities, establish indicators to measure our progress, review the programs that are offered and support research. In each case, be it a course of action or a condition for success, the ministerial commitments and elements of government policy are submitted for discussion.

The proposals contained in this consultation paper can be enriched, qualified and reformulated. It is up to all those with an interest in continuing education to give them as much scope as necessary in order to ensure lifelong access to knowledge and skills.



1

CONTINUING EDUCATION IN QUÉBEC: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A Definition of “Continuing Education”

The term “continuing education,” as used in this draft policy, refers to all the means by which individuals acquire learning once they have left school. It encompasses the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby individuals develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications to meet their own needs and those of the society in which they live.¹ Like basic education, which allows students to acquire the rudiments and methods that will allow them to continue learning throughout their lives while giving them the motivation to do so, it is part of a broader process of lifelong learning.²

1.1 CONTINUING EDUCATION PROVIDERS

In Québec, continuing education is dispensed by several different networks of institutions offering a range of courses based on various models. A quick overview will give some idea of the scope of the continuing education services currently available.

At the Ministère de l'Éducation, continuing education services are offered as part of two main structures: a formal structure provided by educational institutions and a popular education structure. These services are also provided by other organizations, such as businesses. In educational institutions, continuing education is dispensed at three educational levels: the secondary level, the college level and the university level.

Educational Institutions

In 1994, the Government adopted the *Basic school regulations respecting educational services for adults*, which governs the **secondary level**. While consolidating existing practices, in particular with respect to the approach used in adult education courses, the regulation authorized school boards to offer a variety of services designed to meet a range of needs in the adult population: orientation, francization, literacy, social integration, sociovocational integration, presecondary education, Secondary Cycle One and Secondary Cycle Two education, vocational education preparation and postsecondary education preparation services. **Vocational education** is governed by a separate regulation, adopted in 1994. Since the reform of the sector in 1986, vocational education courses have been provided for both adult and youth-sector students as a continuation of secondary-level courses. The programs are designed to provide students with the skills needed to enter a trade, and lead to the following diplomas: the Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS, replacing the Secondary School Vocational Diploma as of July 1, 1998), certifying completion of basic vocational education; the Attestation of Vocational Specialization (AVS); and the Vocational Education Certificate (VEC), providing access to semi-skilled trades or certifying a program of customized training activities.

1. This passage is adapted from the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, dated July 1997.

2. Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Schools on Course. Educational Policy Statement* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997), p. 15.

The *College Education Regulations* governs **college-level education**, and provides for two alternatives for adult education: a program leading to the *diplôme d'études collégiales* (diploma of college studies, referred to by its French acronym DEC) in the pre-university and technical sectors, and a program leading to an *attestation d'études collégiales* (attestation of college studies known as an AEC) in the technical sector. In addition, section 6.0.1 of the *General and Vocational Colleges Act* authorizes CEGEPs to contribute to the development of their respective regions by providing customized training to meet the needs of businesses, in other words, manpower training activities. However, customized training programs and courses do not always allow students to earn credits toward a diploma.

At the **university level**, continuing education is generally dispensed in the form of “short programs” or “customized training programs.” The implementation of university-level continuing education programs is under the exclusive responsibility of the universities concerned, and the programs are designed to meet a range of educational objectives: basic education is offered for inclusion in undergraduate degrees; basic multi-disciplinary education is provided to help college graduates qualify for access to university programs; complementary training is intended for individuals holding an undergraduate degree; and professional development courses are offered to those already in the workforce.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that adults can also enroll in courses for personal reasons, without actually registering for a specific program. In addition, seminars and courses are provided for seniors in certain universities.

Popular Education Organizations

The continuing education provided by **popular organizations** focuses on activities designed to involve adults, either as individuals or groups, in an educational process that will allow them to achieve greater independence and take increased responsibility for their lives and the life of the community. It gives individuals and members of various groups an opportunity to play an active, critical role as citizens.

Business and Industry

Under the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*, 1% of a business's payroll must be allocated to employee training, in addition to an amount of public funds invested in the form of income tax credits. In fact, many businesses spend more than the 1% required by law.

In addition to providing access to programs recognized by the Ministère de l'Éducation, many businesses arrange for employee training programs to be offered by public or private educational institutions. These programs, however, do not lead to any form of official recognition.

Other Providers

Several ministries offer their employees training programs in collaboration with various partners; union groups and professional associations do likewise with regard to their members. In general, this type of training does not allow participants to obtain credits.

Lastly, many individuals decide to enroll in training programs on their own initiative, and at their own expense. Once again, the training provided, mainly by private-sector institutions working in the field of information and communications technologies or second language education, for example, does not allow participants to obtain credits.

1.2 ENROLLMENT

Enrollment figures for 1996-97 provide a general idea of enrollment trends in continuing education services.

Thus, **103 268** individuals enrolled in **general education** courses in adult-sector secondary-level programs. The closed budgetary envelope for these programs is established, for the first 90%, on the basis of the activities of the school board concerned in the preceding year, and for the remaining 10%, on the basis of socio-economic variables.

In addition, **57 929** adults registered for **vocational education** courses at the secondary level. These educational services are funded on the basis of graduation rates. The school boards are allocated an amount for each student meeting the requirements for graduation, to be applied against the costs incurred in providing teaching and support staff and material resources, plus an additional percentage, ranging from 5% to 15%, to compensate for drop-outs. Manpower retraining and upgrading costs are funded by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité to promote employability.

At the **college level**, **46 435** adults enrolled in continuing education. In Québec CEGEPs, the sector in which a course is taken, namely the regular sector or the continuing education sector, determines the amount of the subsidy granted to the institution.

At the **university level**, **58 703** individuals registered for short programs in the Fall 1996 session. The current funding formula is based on all credited activities, regardless of the characteristics of the student clientele. The formula also includes an allowance for variations in the number of students enrolled.

The clientele in the **popular education** sector consisted of **76 000** individuals, including **4 000** enrolled in literacy courses.

Overall, almost **350 000** adults were involved in continuing education activities, whether formally recognized or not, that received funding from the Ministère de l'Éducation.

1.3 INVESTMENT IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Considerable amounts of money are invested each year in continuing education. For the reference year, 1996-97, the total funding provided by various ministries, institutions, businesses and community groups has been estimated at nearly **\$2 200 000 000**.

According to the available data, the Ministère's overall budget of **\$700 000 000³** for continuing education can be broken down as follows:

- \$205 543 696 for secondary-level general education;
- \$286 260 955 for vocational education;
- \$46 000 000 for college-level education;
- \$130 000 000 for university-level education;
- \$15 000 000 for popular education and literacy.

According to the same data, another **\$1 500 000 000** is provided for continuing education by the following organizations:

- \$640 000 000 by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité;
- \$46 000 000 by the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration;
- \$16 000 000 by the Ministère de l'Agriculture;
- \$2 000 000 by the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Faune;
- approximately \$700 000 000⁴ by private enterprise for the 1996 calendar year, according to a rough estimate based on data collected by the Ministère du Revenu as at 30 September 1996 concerning the amount invested in qualified continuing education programs under the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*.

3. These figures represent amounts paid by the Ministère de l'Éducation.

4. These provisional data have been provided by Emploi-Québec.

1.4 THE TRENDS BEHIND THE FIGURES

The development of continuing education in Québec has been marked by a certain number of specific events. Besides their immediate impact, they have had a cumulative effect that has significantly changed the way in which continuing education services are implemented, organized and funded.

For example, one of the main policy directions in the policy statement and plan of action on continuing education published in 1984—essentially the government's initial response to the report of the Commission d'étude sur la formation des adultes (the commission on adult education)—was that priority should be given to programs leading to qualifications. In other words, it defined continuing education in terms of labour market needs. This left little room for programs designed to meet the need for personal, social and collective development. The policy statement also favoured the customized training approach, reflecting a "willingness to adjust" educational services, and denounced the artificial barrier between the youth and adult sectors, especially in higher education.

In 1988, adult education programs offered by school boards were at last granted official recognition. Québec amended the *Education Act* to give school boards responsibility for adult education, in addition to their responsibilities in the youth sector. Then, in 1990, the Ministère de l'Éducation merged adult- and youth-sector services in the field of vocational education. In 1994, the government consolidated the adult education sector by making basic school regulations on educational services in both general education and vocational education.

Next, in 1997, as part of the educational reform that began in 1996, the government introduced amendments to the *Education Act* in Bill 180, which granted greater freedom to vocational education and adult education centres. It also provided for the establishment of governing boards to better reflect the composition of the communities in which the adult education and vocational education centres are located. The functions of school boards in relation to the services they provide to the business community were also extended, allowing the implementation of technological innovation projects.

During this period, at the college level, two new approaches were designed as a response to the characteristics and needs of the population:

- first, a wide range of technical programs were established, leading to a number of diplomas (*attestations d'études collégiales, certificats d'études collégiales, diplômes de perfectionnement de l'enseignement collégial*), later brought together under the name "*attestations d'études collégiales*;"
- second, new models, such as customized training programs, were introduced.⁵

5. Conseil des collèges, *L'éducation des adultes dans les cégeps* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1991).

At the university level, the scope of short training programs has broadened considerably over the last 30 years. They include courses, attestations, micro-programs, certificates and diplomas, and the broadened range of programs has led to the establishment of separate continuing education services in universities catering to the needs of both the university and business communities. Both undergraduate and graduate programs are available. University-level continuing education models will be examined during the upcoming consultations on government policy with regard to universities.⁶

Within the government, many different ministries are involved in continuing education. However, the key player in this area is the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, in particular through the active sociovocational integration measures it has implemented in recent years, that have in turn had an impact on enrollment at various educational institutions.

In 1995, the coming into force of the *Act to foster the development of manpower training* placed a new emphasis on the role played by businesses in continuing education and required educational institutions to adapt accordingly. The recent transfer of responsibility for manpower training activities from the federal to the provincial government has further reinforced the importance of Emploi-Québec in the continuing education sector.

Lastly, a new forum for concerted action between the manpower and education sectors will be created by the establishment of local employment centres by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité. Local employment centres will offer one-stop access to employment services for both job-seekers and prospective employers; the links between education and employment, in their various forms, will be clearly established.

The active labour market policy implemented by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité increases the tendency to consider continuing education as a way to meet manpower needs. The policy focuses on five main aspects: preparation for employment, integration into employment, on-going employment, employment stabilization, and job creation. Continuing education programs must take into account the needs of all the target clienteles affected by the policy.

Lastly, the establishment, under the *Act respecting the Ministère des Régions*, of local development centres (LDCs) with responsibility for promoting entrepreneurial development, also creates a need for collaboration with the education sector. In addition, the new mandate of regional development councils (RDCs) to promote concerted action among all regional partners underlines the role played by the education sector in the socio-economic development of the regions.

6. Ministère de l'Éducation, *Universities and the Future. Government Policy Options Regarding Québec Universities*, Consultation Paper (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1998).

1.5 FACING NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

The field of continuing education has clearly undergone considerable development, especially in recent years. While the Ministère de l'Éducation has focused on providing training leading to qualifications and social recognition for the diplomas it awards, the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité has emphasized active measures that underline its key role in the area of manpower training. Because of the differences between the two approaches, the field of continuing education will remain subject to a dynamic tension between qualifications acquired through direct experience, on the one hand, and qualifications acquired through certified studies, on the other; between standardized programs and individualized learning paths; between immediate employment needs and the need for a broader educational base; and between the needs created by economic development and the need for personal development.

In other words, continuing education must provide an opportunity for adults with no prior training to acquire the qualifications they need to join or re-enter the labour force (preparation for employment and integration into the job market), just as it must help those already in the workforce to adapt to changing needs (continuing employment, employment stabilization and job creation).

A productive approach will necessarily involve the development of closer ties between the key players at the provincial, regional and local levels. The education sector obviously has a major role to play, even if it is no longer the main source of funding for continuing education, since it remains the main provider of services leading to specific qualifications. Because of the increase in outside funding, especially following the reallocation of federal resources for manpower training, it is now time to define the new partnership that must be created between the two ministries and that must be expressed in terms of reciprocity, a pooling of expertise and joint responsibility for certain areas. These requirements are made evident in the government's willingness to grant more autonomy at the local and regional levels. In the education sector, the establishment of governing boards in vocational education and adult education centres and of college-level programs leading to attestations of college studies attest to the greater freedom that educational institutions enjoy in meeting the needs of the workforce and of individuals in general.



2

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Québec's continuing education policy must be founded on the needs of individuals and communities, and on government objectives.

2.1 MEETING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

An analysis of the current social context highlights the set of educational needs that must be met if adults are to play their social roles to the full as workers, citizens and parents, and if society as a whole is to face the future with confidence.

Basic Education

A sound basic education has come to constitute a prerequisite for all further education and for the obtaining of a diploma. Overall, Québec has recorded steady progress in terms of educational achievement over the past decades: the percentage of the adult population with at least nine years of schooling increased from 57.7%, in 1971, to 81.9% in 1996; the percentage holding a secondary school diploma increased from 53.9%, in 1981, to 64.5% in 1996; and access to university doubled over the same period.

Literacy

Despite this progression, the level of schooling of four out of ten Québec residents was below the Canadian average, according to the 1991 census data. Over one million had only eight years of schooling, a fact confirmed by the International Adult Literacy Survey, carried out in 1994 and 1995 in 12 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Although this tendency is more marked in the older segment of the population, it also affects the young and the middle-aged: one out of five Québec residents between 20 and 44 years of age does not hold a secondary school diploma.

Adults with low literacy and little schooling have to face a number of difficult situations; they stand a greater risk of being unemployed, poor, and excluded from society.

Society as a whole—and the education system in particular—must face up to its responsibilities regarding individuals who, for whatever reason, have been unable to reach the levels of education that are today considered to be a minimum. Clearly, their living conditions must be improved, but it is also clear that Québec's development will suffer if a concerted effort is not made to raise the cultural level and occupational qualifications or skills of the adult population.

The message contained in the statistics is clear: the deficiency in terms of literacy and basic education has yet to be corrected, and the need to address this issue should be given immediate priority.

Vocational, Technical and Scientific Education

The labour market has undergone a major restructuring process over the last few decades. Against a background of market globalization, increased productivity, the ability to innovate and provide better-quality products and services have become the essential objectives of all businesses. Concurrently, the introduction of new technologies has, in many cases, resulted in a change in the qualifications expected of employees; they now need to possess higher-level skills and training and master technological tools and environments, and the focus has shifted to problem-solving abilities, independence, and the ability to work as part of a team.

Each year, almost one-third of youth-sector students leave secondary school without a diploma. If we also consider the number of students who drop out of college and university programs before graduating, or who obtain only a general education diploma, we begin to get an idea of the deficiency in basic occupational qualifications afflicting Québec's adult population. This deficiency must be corrected as soon as possible.

Retraining and Professional Development

A skilled workforce that is able to adapt quickly to the requirements of a constantly evolving labour market will be the mainstay of Québec's socio-economic strategy. Increasing the pace of reform in vocational and technical programs constitutes one way of meeting the challenge, but will not in itself be sufficient, for two reasons. First, even the skills acquired by newly trained workers—including many adults—will not be sufficient to take them to the ends of their careers, and at some point they too will have to become a part of the continuing education process. This observation also applies to university graduates. Second, given Québec's demographic profile, most of the manpower available for the first years of the new millennium is already on the job market, meaning that Québec's competitiveness will in large part depend on the ability to upgrade the skills of the active population as it currently exists. In this connection, it is important to note that workers who must learn new skills or retrain in order to keep their jobs, or who must relocate as a result of a business closure, will have enormous training needs. Some will be even forced to go back and complete their general education, since their basic education will be insufficient to provide a sound basis for retraining.

Mastery of Information and Communications Technologies

Information and communications technologies are now ever-present in the workplace, and the ability to use them constitutes a clear advantage for anyone trying to find or keep a job. In addition, since they are increasingly becoming the principal means of access to knowledge and culture, it is important that as many citizens as possible become proficient users of these technologies. Currently, access to computers and the information highway is most common among the younger, better-educated and better-paid segment of the population. The public authorities, and in particular the authorities responsible for education, thus have an essential role to play in ensuring access to technological tools and training, so that they become a means of sharing knowledge and reinforcing a sense of civic responsibility, rather than a source of cultural duality.

Support for Personal Development and Social Involvement

Traditional social relationships and social organizations have experienced profound changes in recent decades. Changes in the workplace have led to changes in social roles, often accompanied by personal and social identity crises. Culturally speaking, Québec society has also become far more diverse, and traditional values are often called into question. Traditional roles often seem insufficient when faced with the new realities, and many people lack points of reference and feel unable to reorganize their lives to make a contribution to the community. In addition, given the emphasis in Québec on local and regional participation as a means of developing and promoting democracy, individuals and communities must be able to count on a range of resources and institutions to assist them in analyzing situations and determining appropriate actions. Education thus has a key role to play in helping adults adjust to social change.

Support for Community and Regional Development

The need for continuing education comes not only from individuals but also from communities which, at various stages in their development, feel the need to assess their situation, reorganize their activities on a new basis, or initiate renewal projects that, in many cases, will create a need to train their human resources. The education system has extensive experience in research, technological transfer, community leadership and ongoing training, and it is essential that educational institutions remain aware of the needs in their communities and contribute their expertise and resources toward the goal of community development.

2.2 HELPING TO ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

The government of Québec has set five main objectives for the year 2000. The objectives for continuing education proposed here by the Ministère de l'Éducation take into account the need to comply with those objectives.

By raising the level of schooling and improving the qualifications of students enrolled in continuing education, the Ministère de l'Éducation hopes to **contribute to Québec's economic and social prosperity**, which cannot be achieved without a workforce equipped to fill the positions available. New types of employment are expected to develop, especially in connection with emerging economic sectors and information and communications technologies. Workers will acquire the knowledge and skills needed for these jobs through continuing education. On-going action by educational institutions in these areas, in the business services sector and in entrepreneurship support, will also be of crucial importance.

The Ministère also intends to help build a **fairer society, more open to providing support for the underprivileged**. The commitments made by the Ministère to fight illiteracy, to ensure access to continuing education for adults, and to guarantee free schooling up to the end of the secondary level, now considered to be the threshold for the ability to function in society, are all steps that it has made in this direction. Similarly, the Ministère will examine and revise its financial rules to bring them into line with the goal of equity, as set out in this document.

In terms of a **reduction in public spending**, in light of the close link existing between low levels of schooling and social and professional exclusion, it seems fair to expect that any investment made today by the Ministère to reduce illiteracy, raise levels of schooling and improve adults' qualifications will lead, in the future, to savings for the public purse. Moreover, the Ministère, in choosing the courses of action it intends to pursue, takes into account the limits of the public budget and attempts to meet new needs for continuing education by improving the level of collaboration between government players in order to avoid duplication and promote complementary action.

The courses of action pursued by the Ministère focus on providing **more effective public services, better adapted** to emerging needs. This is the case, for example, for the proposals concerning diversification in how and where services are provided, improved coordination of services to avoid overlapping, and raising levels of schooling among adults. Similarly, the Ministère's efforts to clarify roles and ensure closer collaboration in the field of secondary-level continuing education have been based, wherever possible, on the new provisions of the *Education Act* and on existing structures, and comply with the government's commitment to reduce administrative and regulatory complexity.

Lastly, the proposals contained in this document are designed to help achieve the government's objective of **preserving and promoting the characteristic features of Québec society**. Providing adults with access to education not only makes them better equipped to function in their daily lives, but also allows them to share in Québec's rich culture while respecting the province's characteristic cultural diversity.



COURSES OF ACTION

3.1 FIGHTING ILLITERACY

Orientation

Persistent illiteracy compromises the individual and collective ability of Québec's population to face new social and economic challenges. In addition, the discrepancies in levels of literacy observed in the population may eventually lead to the emergence of a dual society and a curtailment of democratic rights. For these reasons, there is an urgent need that Québec confront the problem head on to raise literacy levels among the adult population.

Background

Although, traditionally, the term "illiteracy" is used to describe individuals who are unable to read, write or count, the concept today encompasses a far more complex reality, one that can no longer be equated with the inability to read and write. In Québec, as in many other developed countries, illiteracy is now understood to mean a poor ability to process information, and thus an inability to meet the minimum requirements for functioning in society on a personal, social and professional level. Individuals with low literacy levels, often described as the illiterate, are those whose reading skills in their native language allow them only to accomplish the simplest tasks, such as locating a single piece of information or solving a simple mathematical problem, and only when the written materials are clear or already familiar to them. Their reading skills fall into the lowest range on a five-level scale, as established during the most recent International Adult Literacy Survey.

According to the results of the survey, the Québec population includes a relatively high percentage of adults with low levels of literacy compared to several European countries and the other Canadian provinces.

Some Figures

• The Gender Factor

The situation of the male population, especially among the young, gives cause for concern. The percentage of young males between 16 and 24 years of age who have good reading skills is considerably lower than among young females (63% compared to

71%), a problem that can probably be traced back to their difficulties at school.⁷ In addition, men show greater levels of dissatisfaction with their abilities; twice as many men as women (18% compared to 9%) admit to having difficulty writing. Lastly, studies have shown that boys read less than girls during their school years and that the discrepancy is increasing over the years.⁸ Overall, equal numbers of men and women take advantage of the literacy services provided by school boards, although men represent two-thirds of students in the under-30 bracket and women are in the majority in the other age groups.

- **Disparity among Language Groups**

In Québec, a majority of adults with literacy problems are Francophone. The problem is highlighted by a comparison with Anglophones, 68% of whom have good reading skills, compared to 58% of Francophones.

The situation faced by allophones (those with a native language other than French or English) is particularly difficult. Approximately one-third (31%) of allophones living in Québec have limited reading ability in French or English, almost double the provincial average. This observation, however, varies according to the language group concerned.⁹

- **Regional Disparity**

Given the close relation that exists between low levels of schooling and illiteracy, it seems fair to expect that certain regions will be more affected than others. According to data from the 1991 census, 20.1% of Québec's adult population had eight years of schooling or less, a percentage that varied from 16.2% in the Laval region to 31.4% in the Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine region.

The Inter-Related Causes of a Complex Phenomenon

Illiteracy is only one facet of a social problem, and can be traced back to several causes. The factors are mainly related to family, school and social aspects, although some physiological factors such as certain intellectual or physical disabilities or learning difficulties can sometimes lead to illiteracy.

The early years have a determining influence on children's ability to read. The parents' level of schooling, especially the mother's, and the reading habits of the family influence children's development, their interest in reading and, in the long term, their success as readers. Not all children have an opportunity to observe adults reading, enjoying written materials and interacting with other adults in connection with books.

7. In 1995-96, over one-third of male students (33.6%) left school before obtaining a secondary school diploma, as compared to 20.8% of female students. Boys are also more likely than girls (28% as opposed to 18%) to fall behind in elementary school; see *Education Indicators 1991* and *Éducation Indicators - 1996 and 1997* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation).
8. Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, *La culture: en pantoufles et en souliers vernis, Rapport d'enquête sur les pratiques culturelles au Québec* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997).
9. Claude St-Germain, *La scolarité de la population adulte des principales communautés culturelles du Québec en 1991* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1996).

Children beginning school already display notable differences in terms of oral expression, basic knowledge and awareness of written language, three indispensable elements in the reading process.

Socially speaking, illiteracy and professional status are partially linked. Individuals with low reading ability are less likely to find a job, and the jobs they do find are generally temporary, unspecialized and badly paid. A close relationship exists between reading habits and their use in the workplace. Individuals who are unemployed have less cause to read, and their reading skills may deteriorate as a result. Individuals with low literacy levels read less, whether at home or at work, and as adults participate less frequently in educational activities.

A Changing Situation

Over the last ten years, a considerable amount of energy has been expended in research and development work and the development of new teaching instruments. Experiments have been conducted to adapt literacy services to the needs and interests of adult students, in particular in connection with workplace literacy, distance education, information and communications technologies and the prevention of illiteracy. In 1987, the Ministère published a program of study, called *A Guide to Customized Literacy Training*, and updated it following the coming into force of the *Basic school regulations respecting educational services for adults*. In short, progress has been made, considerable experience has been gained, programs are offered in a variety of locations, teaching materials and practices have been adapted to reflect real needs, and the Québec population has been made more aware of the fact that illiteracy is a social problem.

Priority Areas for Intervention

The main thrust of the Ministère's intervention must be directed toward three areas: prevention, the provision of increased and diversified services, and assistance for children and adults in maintaining their reading skills. These three areas correspond to three periods in the linear development of reading skills: the period before difficulties emerge, the period of involvement in education, and the period following involvement in education. Although they operate at different levels and involve different players, the three areas are closely linked.

Prevention

The actions of the Ministère have, in the past, focused on the provision of literacy services, and must now be reviewed. First, a preventive approach must be introduced to attack the problem at its source and prevent the reoccurrence of illiteracy. Next, educational activities must be supplemented by vigorous measures to promote reading as an enjoyable social activity, along with measures to facilitate the social and professional integration of individuals with low literacy levels.

Recent discoveries in the field of illiteracy prevention confirm the importance of using continuing education as a tool, but also underline the need for prior action involving preschoolers, young children of school age, and families. Prevention must be practised not only in the youth and adult education sectors, but also in the work of other government ministries and in society as a whole.

The process of providing literacy skills begins long before a child starts school; it is important to introduce children to written language as soon as possible. The importance assigned to reading and writing in the child's immediate environment, and most importantly in the child's family, is one of the most reliable indicators for predicting the child's later involvement in reading and writing. However, not all children have the same opportunities to become familiar with written language and social usage, or to develop and achieve their potential and succeed as readers. Illiteracy prevention measures must therefore be implemented for young children before they begin to experience problems with reading. The measures must be designed to introduce preschoolers to reading and writing, and must allow them to develop their abilities so as to begin their school careers with the greatest chances of success.

The first years of elementary education have a determining influence on the successful development of reading skills. This is why preventive measures must also be introduced to support students aged six to nine so that they learn to read and write at school, and to reinforce habitual reading at school, at home and in the community to allow all students to read with ease and continue learning throughout their lives.

While it is true to say that children learn to read and write at school, it is also clear that it is in their families and in the community that they lay the foundation for learning how to read, discover its real meaning, use it for practical purposes and consolidate it. The status of reading and writing in the family is a determining factor in the development of a child's reading and writing skills. In addition, it is essential for a child to have the support of parents and family in order to benefit fully from prevention measures and maintain the knowledge acquired before and at school. The role played by parents with children in these age groups cannot be underestimated. Their values and skills must be respected and recognized, just as their help must be solicited. Lastly, the parents themselves may require support, which is why information, training and resources must be provided to assist parents as they prepare their children to read and write, and later, as they help them with reading assignments.

In order to prevent illiteracy, all the players in the educational, socio-cultural, social and community sectors concerned by the well-being of children and families must be mobilized, and their collaboration and cooperation ensured. Introducing children to reading and writing, teaching them proper reading habits, and enabling them to achieve success at school, must be the priorities set for all players, and close relationships must be established to ensure an integrated, sustained level of intervention. In addition, government ministries and bodies may need expert advice in order to develop actions to prevent illiteracy, and may be open to suggestions as to how to promote reading and writing among children or make them aware of the importance of reading and writing skills.

The First Priority Area: ***Preventing Illiteracy***

- Ministerial Commitments**
- Raise the awareness of preschool and elementary school teachers through professional development activities on the importance of using teaching methods that increase reading and writing readiness.
 - Integrate illiteracy prevention objectives into the educational services provided in adult-sector general education and support programs for literacy in the popular education sector.
 - In collaboration with the school boards, offer activities on reading and writing readiness to the parents of preschool and elementary school students.
 - Offer the teaching staff employed by school boards and popular groups activities to promote the implementation of prevention programs aimed at families, and set standards for measuring the success of prevention programs and design appropriate materials.
 - Pay particular attention to the regions most affected by the drop-out problem and low levels of schooling, and in particular the Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Côte-Nord, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Nord-du-Québec regions.
 - In collaboration with universities, introduce course content dealing with the prevention of illiteracy into teacher training programs.
 - Support the actions of Communication-Jeunesse to promote reading among preschool children and their parents.

- Elements of Government Policy**
- Ministries and Government Bodies**
- Integrate illiteracy prevention objectives into the tools produced to promote and publicize services offered by various ministries and government bodies, especially in connection with underprivileged families.
 - Establish partnerships with ministries and government bodies that offer programs to families, especially underprivileged families, in order to broaden the scope of the actions to prevent illiteracy.

Télé-Québec

- Integrate illiteracy prevention as a theme in young people's television.

Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité

- Improve access to continuing education programs for immigrant parents of children aged 0 to 9 years who are income security or employment insurance recipients.

Access to Literacy Services

In order to improve accessibility, flexible and diversified services must be provided to help low-literacy adults assume their roles as parents, workers and citizens. Integration into the workforce and the literacy process must not work in opposition; rather, mixed formulas must be found to make them two complementary aspects of a single approach. Literacy, which is often a prerequisite for all other forms of education, must become an indispensable component in all durable, successful integration processes, and in all local and regional economic development projects. This approach will clearly facilitate the recruitment of low-literacy adults, since their need to join community life and the labour market will be taken into consideration.

The Second Priority Area:

Increasing and Diversifying Services to Provide an Integrated Vision of the Social Role of Adults

Ministerial Commitments

- Double, by the year 2002, the number of individuals enrolled in educational activities, in other words 4% of the potential clientele of low-literacy adults, or 38 000 persons. The approximate objectives will be 30 000 individuals served by school boards and 8 000 by popular literacy groups.
- Step up literacy training undertaken in the workplace, in collaboration with educational institutions, popular education groups and participating businesses.
- In planning and implementing recruitment operations, in collaboration with key players in the network, focus on adults aged 30 and under who have low literacy levels, in light of the fact that illiteracy represents a handicap for integration into the active population.
- Offer professional development sessions for school boards and popular literacy groups in the areas of strategic planning and communications, in order to increase enrollment and promote literacy training in their regions.
- Increase collaboration and complementarity between the youth and adult sectors, especially in connection with students aged 20 and under who have fallen behind significantly in their studies.

Elements of Government Policy

Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité

- Take into account the needs of the population regarding literacy when establishing employment measures.

CLSCs and Community Groups

- Undertake joint action to promote literacy services among the parents of preschool and school-aged children.

Maintaining Literacy Skills

The time spent reading, and the range of materials read, play an essential role in maintaining and improving reading skills. Individuals with low literacy skills tend to read less and have less occasion to read, especially if they are not part of the workforce. It has also been observed that the time spent reading decreases when a student leaves secondary school, especially among male students aged 20 and under.

Steps must be taken to increase reading among individuals with low literacy levels who presently spend little or no time reading, since this will increase the effect of literacy services as regards the transfer of knowledge. Where reading skills are maintained, the effects of education are prolonged and made permanent. The maintenance of reading skills is also indispensable if individuals are to fulfill their roles as adults, citizens, parents and workers.

This is a relatively new field of study, and must be examined carefully and enriched as needed. It also clearly exceeds the sole responsibility of the Ministère de l'Éducation and involves other players, in particular the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications. Activities designed to maintain literacy skills receive strong support from the measures contained in the *Politique de la lecture et du livre* (policy on reading and books). This is clearly a propitious time for the education system to contribute to the measures contained in the policy by promoting reading in all its forms and by setting aside areas for reading.

The Third Priority Area:
Working to Maintain Literacy Skills

**Ministerial
Commitments**

- Integrate the maintenance of literacy skills as an objective in general education and vocational education programs, particularly social integration programs and socio-vocational integration programs leading to semi-skilled occupations.
- In collaboration with other players in the education system, develop teaching-learning strategies adapted to the needs of young students, especially male students.
- Participate in the implementation of the measures set out in the policy on reading and books.

**Elements
of Government
Policy**

Ministries and Government Bodies

- Examine and, where necessary, revise documents intended for the general public to ensure compliance with readability criteria.

3.2 RESPONDING SPECIFICALLY AND CONSISTENTLY TO THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

Orientation

Equitable access to knowledge requires accessible, high-quality enrollment, assistance and referral services.

Background

Clarifying Responsibility for Enrollment, Assistance and Referral Services

Adults who wish to return to school or upgrade their skills need assistance in order to clarify their objectives and determine which training programs or activities are most appropriate. The same is true for businesses and groups looking for the type of continuing education best suited to their needs. In recent years, enrollment, information and referral services have been provided by various ministries and government bodies in various locations. During the Estates General on Education, there were many calls for the establishment in each region of a one-stop, multi-level service point. The results drawn from the experiences of the regional enrollment and referral services established during the 1980s call for a careful appraisal of the need to create a new structure that would not overlap with other structures presently being introduced and deprive school boards and educational institutions of one of their major functions, a function provided for in the legislative and regulatory provisions governing their activities.

Nevertheless, every educational institution must be able to provide, in an integrated fashion, the enrollment, information and educational services needed by citizens, together with services to assist individuals in returning to school or joining the workforce. This does not mean that all needs will be met on the spot, but rather that, through the educational institution, citizens will be able to discover the services available in the region. The range of educational needs is extensive, and varies considerably from one person to another according to personal characteristics, experience, prior schooling and goals. It is essential that the education system maintain a balance, in the educational services it offers, between the responsibilities of each institution and the need to provide adults with access to resource persons to assist them in clarifying their learning plan, exploring possible avenues and carrying out their learning plan. This is why changes will be made to the *Basic school regulation respecting educational services for adults in general education*, specifying the nature of enrollment and assistance services.

The same balance must also be maintained between the response made to requests for education leading to employment and the response made to requests for education to meet personal and social needs. The same problem arises in connection with the active measures taken to support employment, whereby the overriding importance given to training designed to increase employability and integration into the workforce leaves less room for certain individual and group projects with other objectives.

Priority Area for Intervention:

Changing the Manner of Responding to the Needs of Groups and Individuals

- Ministerial Commitments**
- Review the organization and funding of enrollment and assistance services, by specifying the nature of these services in the basic school regulations for general and vocational education.

- Elements of Government Policy**
- The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité***
- Clarify the responsibilities for enrollment, assistance and referral services of the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité in order to settle by agreement their respective roles. This will, first, enable local employment centres (LECs), as part of their mission, to provide information on the educational services provided at the secondary, college and university levels and second, enable the enrollment and assistance services of educational institutions to provide information on training support programs and customized measures to individuals who have not been reached by their LEC.

3.3 DIVERSIFYING THE FORMS AND LOCATIONS IN WHICH EDUCATIONAL SERVICES ARE PROVIDED

Orientation

Educational services adapted to the lifestyles of adults wishing to enroll in continuing education must be provided in various locations, and in a range of forms.

Background

The Forms and Locations in Which Education is Provided

The decision, for adults, on whether or not to enroll in continuing education often depends on their ability to reconcile education with their professional and family responsibilities. It is unreasonable to expect most adults to attend school on a full-time basis, especially in the daytime; many also live at a distance from the place where services are currently provided. However, there are alternatives to full-time attendance that can meet a wide range of needs, if they are properly supported and publicized.

Various options such as part-time education, distance education, on-the-job training and popular education must be maintained and consolidated, along with the new forms of education made possible by information and communications technologies. In addition, true accessibility requires that education be made available to adults both in the community and in the workplace and, in certain cases, in customized programs.

Part-Time Education

Part-time education meets the needs of individuals who wish to upgrade their skills or retrain by taking courses without enrolling in a complete program, and individuals who, for example, have functional limitations. Timetabling constraints, though, especially at the college level, tend to restrict the possibility of part-time attendance. This situation must be corrected, in particular as regards technical education. In other words, the provision of part-time courses depends to a large extent on more efficient scheduling of the time available.

Distance Education

Thanks to distance education, adult students no longer have to travel to school and can progress at their own pace. Distance education is an important means of bringing education to the public and can be facilitated by new information and communications technologies, provided the way services are offered is brought up to date at the same time.

At both the secondary and college levels, most distance education courses in recent years have been provided in the general education sector. A special effort must be made to extend course availability to the popular education and English-language sectors and, as far as possible, to the vocational and technical education sector. In its present form, distance education is best adapted to the needs of general education and would be hard to use in large-scale vocational and technical applications, since the competency-based approach requires the acquisition of skills through practical training and job-related knowledge.

The available data shows that students enrolled in distance education, at both the secondary and college levels, tend to fail or drop out of almost as many courses as they pass, meaning that the pass rate is far below the rate for students enrolled in regular programs. Studies currently under way should shed light on the causes of this situation. It nevertheless appears that, without focusing exclusively on an andragogical approach, it will be necessary to apply vigorous corrective measures to provide adult students with appropriate support and supervision and enable them to develop a maximum of independence and personal discipline. This method will increase the credibility of distance education as a form of continuing education while retaining its comparative advantage over other forms, especially in terms of cost.

At the secondary level, the efforts made to decentralize services have led to the creation of over fifty service points in approximately the same number of school boards, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of adults enrolled, higher infrastructure costs, and the difficulty of providing appropriate promotion and pedagogical support services, especially given the limited numbers of students involved.

Lastly, despite the number of players in the field of distance education, no efforts have been made to rationalize the offer of services.

Employee Training

The number of adult students receiving employee training has increased as a result of the coming into force of the *Act to foster the development of manpower training* and the implementation of apprenticeship and qualification schemes, together with the introduction of the work-study formula.

For several years, the Ministère has collaborated with the Société québécoise de la main d'oeuvre, and more recently with Emploi-Québec, to facilitate the development of employee training, and to establish productive links between the world of education and world of work through the development of vocational and technical education programs and by providing recognition of prior learning.

Popular Education

Individuals for whom school was a bad experience, or who have little schooling, tend to take less advantage of educational services that, in theory, are open to all. In addition, not everyone wants to return to the classroom in order to acquire qualifications, and some people prefer to learn by experience, in particular through social involvement. The popular education system has, over the years, developed expertise and a unique approach to serving students whose needs cannot be met by the formal education system or who are unwilling to enroll in an educational institution.

Popular education groups are active at the local, regional and provincial levels, offering a broad range of services covering literacy and various other fields, such as good citizenship, effective parenting and awareness of the problems caused by violence and other social phenomena. The adults enrolled in popular education activities acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow them to become more independent and take increased responsibility for their lives and the life of the community, and also to take their place as citizens and members of society.

It is important that the mission of the popular education groups be clearly established and recognized within a legislative framework.

Information and Communications Technologies in Education

Continuing education providers must take into account the far-reaching changes and new challenges involved in integrating new technology into teaching and learning activities. Technology is playing an ever greater role in our everyday lives, so that we must redefine the knowledge relationship, develop new paradigms, and design new methods based on new teaching and learning models. The transmission of knowledge and the development of basic and cross-curricular skills using the new media require an in-depth review of existing programs of study, evaluation methods and pedagogical practices to reflect the lifelong learning approach. The transformation must, however, take place in a manner that reflects the characteristic culture, language and values of Québec society.

Priority Area for Intervention:

Diversifying the Forms and Locations in Which Education Is Provided

Ministerial Commitments

- Encourage college-level institutions to reschedule class time to make their programs more accessible to adults who wish to attend as part-time students.
- Provide legislative recognition for the role and contribution of popular education.
- Transmit information on educational services and continuing education methods using new information and communications technologies.
- In collaboration with other partners in the network, define objectives to be used in a review of the organization of distance education, leading to the modernization of teaching materials and better coordination of human and financial resources.
- Encourage the organizations responsible for distance education to provide for the use of new technologies in their development plans.

Elements *The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité*

of Government

Policy

- Seek agreement with the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité on the target clientele for vocational and technical education, and on the most appropriate ways of organizing services and funding sources.
- Seek agreement with the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité and other socio-economic partners on the best means of improving access to education for adults who do not hold the necessary prerequisites or do not meet the admission requirements for programs of study.
- Request that the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (the commission of labour market partners) ensure tighter control of the rules governing the accreditation of those providing training.

Socio-Economic Partners and Union Groups

- In collaboration with other social and economic partners and union groups, establish services to provide public access to the information highway, through public service points giving access to communications tools, production and distribution services, value-added content and educational services.
- Encourage the Ministère's partners and union groups to use the services offered by community organizations in order to increase the clientele with access to continuing education, especially in underprivileged areas.

Employers, School Boards, College-Level Institutions

- Seek agreement among labour market partners, school boards and college-level institutions on measures to provide adults with better access to work-study programs.

3.4 REVISING THE PROCEDURE FOR RECOGNIZING PRIOR LEARNING

Orientation

The recognition of prior learning is an essential component in the process to improve access to continuing education and rationalize the cost of the system. Conditions that are favourable to its development must be established.

Background

Defining and Setting Objectives for the Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognizing prior learning means recognizing the learning that takes place outside the academic environment, on the basis of a predetermined system of reference.¹⁰

The recognition of prior learning is part of the Ministère's mission to facilitate access to programs leading to qualifications and a diploma. It also meets other objectives: it facilitates career reorientation, allows training obtained in other countries to be recognized, and gives businesses a means to evaluate the skills of their workforce.

The recognition of prior learning is strategically important in terms of meeting the need for job mobility at a time when the new labour market realities require thousands of workers to update their skills, transfer them to a new job or acquire new ones.

Recognition should also lead to substantial savings of time and money for institutions and individuals, since it will reduce the time students spend in training.

Recognition Services

The *Education Act* requires school boards to provide secondary-level adult students with recognition services for prior learning.

10. A system of reference is a set of elements used as criteria to define or recognize a real situation, such as the skills taught in a program of study or the specific requirements connected with an occupational qualification.

General Education

In the general education sector, there are three ways in which the recognition of prior learning can be developed:

- the first is connected with the certification of studies, and is based on the content of programs of study and the corresponding credits (examinations only);
- the second is a service provided to adult students and employers and is not based on the credits corresponding to courses and programs of study (academic equivalence tests);
- the third is also connected with the certification of studies and the issue of the secondary school diploma (SSD); it is based on the generic skills required at the SSD level, even if they are not specifically mentioned in the Ministère's programs of study.

In general education, for 1996-97, 11 222 adults applied for services that provide recognition of prior learning.

Vocational Education

In the vocational education sector, special evaluation materials have been developed for more than 40 programs. Several of the evaluation instruments were produced following the implementation of the qualification scheme and, more recently, the apprenticeship scheme, under an agreement with Emploi-Québec.

A General Development Test (GDT) has also been developed for adults who do not meet the admission requirements but whose level of general development is sufficient to allow them to undertake vocational training. It should be noted that the success rate for adults who enter vocational education after passing a GDT is comparable to the success rate for adults who gain admission by other means.

In the vocational education sector, since 1994, over 2 000 adult students have obtained recognition for their prior learning, and over 4 000 adult students have been admitted after passing a GDT. The success rate for the GDT is roughly 90%. According to the data available for the 1996-97 school year, 668 adults acquired 4 421 competencies in 45 programs.

Higher Education

The provisions of the *College Education Regulations* authorize institutions to grant equivalence to students who are able to show that, because of prior schooling or prior learning, they have already achieved the course objectives. The evaluation and recognition of prior learning is entirely under the responsibility of the college-level institution concerned.

The role of the Ministère de l'Éducation is limited to giving general guidelines and collaborating with college-level institutions by providing reports, leaflets, information kits, professional development, and so on. Between 1985 and 1990 several institutions developed their own materials for recognizing prior learning, with assistance from the *Fonds pour l'implantation de la reconnaissance des acquis extrascolaires au collégial* (or FIRAC, a fund to promote the recognition of prior learning at the college level).

At the college level, since 1995, over 1 500 students have obtained recognition for prior learning. Over 90% of the activities concerned involved technical training. At the university level, certain adult students obtain recognition for prior learning when admitted to university studies.

A Necessary Review

Since the adoption in 1984 of the continuing education policy and plan of action, which made the recognition of prior learning a priority for adult education, concrete results have been produced by the Ministère and other players in the education network: recognition of prior learning is now addressed in the *Education Act* and the *College Education Regulations*; research has been conducted; reliable evaluation tools have been introduced; and recognition of prior learning is included in funding rules. However, despite the progress made in the last ten years, certain adjustments are still needed.

Accessibility

It is generally agreed that educational institutions are not the only places where learning takes place. Reading, paid employment, community involvement and Internet surfing all offer opportunities for acquiring and mastering skills. Given the value of diplomas as points of reference and a source of social recognition, the knowledge and skills acquired by adults in a non-academic context, provided they comply with the Ministère's system of reference (programs of study), should be recognized. However, other prior knowledge also deserves recognition, measured according to other systems of reference such as the occupational qualification system that leads to the awarding of a certificate of qualification by Emploi-Québec.

In vocational and technical education, several factors limit the recognition of prior learning. The main factors involved are regional disparity, disparity between educational levels, and the difficulty of integrating prior learning within educational programs. Adults who manage to obtain recognition for prior learning often find that they have reached a dead-end: to obtain certification for their studies, they must still complete certain courses that are not always available, since the low level of enrollment means that they cannot be offered on a cost-effective basis. They must therefore complete, one by one, the courses and modules of the original program, losing any advantage they may have gained by obtaining recognition for prior learning.

Recognition of Prior Learning for Immigrants

It is generally at the college level that immigrants experience the most difficulty in obtaining recognition for prior learning. An *Avis d'équivalence d'études* (education credentials evaluation) issued by the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration indicates the number of years of schooling corresponding to the level of education obtained outside Québec. However, immigrants who believe that this evaluation will provide recognition for their prior learning and gain them admittance to a program of study generally find that this is not the case. They are thus required either to abandon their plans or to begin the program from the beginning, a process that generates additional costs both for the students and for society. In addition, other factors further limit the ability of immigrants to obtain recognition for prior learning, such as the difficulty they may experience in demonstrating their skills, because of language difficulties or the lack of an adequate description of the courses taken outside Québec.

The difficulty of gaining recognition for prior learning is not the only problem facing immigrants: they often lack the required training. In fact, the particularities of the Québec culture, as well as the standards and requirements of certain occupations, are such that it is often necessary for immigrants to adapt the knowledge and skills they already possess. This adaptation could be done in courses that, unfortunately, are often unavailable.

The First Priority Area:

Ensuring That Every Adult Obtains Recognition for Prior Learning and Access to Required Training

- Ministerial Commitments**
- Encourage universities to adopt policies on the recognition of prior learning.
 - Review current service structures, especially at the college level, in connection with the recognition of prior learning and the related question of access to required training.
 - Offer in-service training for personnel working in enrollment, assistance and referral services in educational institutions, in the area of recognition of prior learning.
 - Encourage educational institutions to ensure that immigrants are able to obtain recognition for prior learning and thus begin or continue a program of study without having to backtrack.
 - Implement a large-scale communications plan to provide information on prior learning recognition services.

- Elements of Government Policy**
- Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité*
- Ensure that adults are able to obtain recognition for skills likely to increase their chances of employment.
 - Revamp and develop the qualification scheme in order to consolidate, increase and recognize skills acquired in the workplace.

Partnerships

As in several other areas of concern in Québec's education system, joint action and the conclusion of partnership agreements with other ministries and players in society are the key to providing high-quality services to the population. Collaboration, whether on-going or newly established, also helps to rationalize the cost of government services.

However, it is essential to reaffirm the mission of the Ministère de l'Éducation regarding the recognition of prior learning. Although it is true to say that schools are not, and have never been, the only places where learning can be acquired, diplomas still represent, in our society, an important form of social recognition and provide broader access to the job market. From this point of view, our education system, particularly at a time when it is increasingly clear that skills must be continually updated, must provide services to recognize prior learning as part of the continuing education system, in order to meet the range of needs existing in the population. The leadership of the Ministère in this area is necessary to ensure that diplomas retain their status as reference values, while allowing the sharing of information and the development of joint actions to meet the needs of the population served by other ministries and government and community organizations. For this reason, discussions must be initiated with partners in manpower and immigration in order to continue and complete the harmonization of systems to recognize prior learning.

The Second Priority Area:

Establishing Links Between the Various Systems to Recognize Prior Learning

Elements of Government Policy ***Ministries and Government Bodies***

- Ensure joint action by all partners in developing instruments to recognize prior learning, in order to avoid duplication and ensure credibility and transparency, whatever the reference system involved.

Ministère de l'Éducation, Emploi-Québec and Other Organizations

- Consolidate existing links and establish new links between the reference systems based on diplomas of the Ministère de l'Éducation, and the reference systems based on qualifications, such as those of professional orders and the qualification scheme of Emploi-Québec.



4

CONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM

4.1 BETTER COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Orientation

In every sector, the coordination of services, especially at the regional level, is an important aspect of service organization. There also exists a need for coordination between all the ministries involved in continuing education. Coordination cannot be imposed, but must come from agreements concerning the main elements that determine which services are offered and where they are offered.

Background

The current tendency to provide the same services in every institution must be brought under control. Since in many cases enrollment levels are low, some services are really only available in theory; adult students are sometimes left unable to complete the final courses of their program, and are thus forced to abandon their learning plan. It is to be hoped that closer collaboration between institutions will increase the accessibility of services by increasing the range of courses available.

Institutions at the secondary and college levels have also begun working together to avoid duplicating services. A similar approach is needed at a higher level, between colleges and universities. Each program should be examined to ascertain whether it is consistent with the educational level concerned, taking into account the complexity of the job for which students are prepared by the program.

Complementarity between institutions must lead to benefits for the students: a better allocation of responsibilities, based on the expertise of each institution, would make it possible to better meet the full range of training needs. Since each region has a considerable pool of educational institutions, and since most organizations in the community see the region as being the basic unit used to define which services are to be offered, joint action should focus on complementarity within the region concerned.

The ministerial plan of action for the reform of the education system provides for the establishment of an inter-level advisory authority in each region of Québec to foster better coordination between the various levels of education. Besides conducting research in areas of regional interest, and planning possibilities for vocational and technical education and for joint action between academic institutions and organizations involved in regional and economic development, the authorities can help to enrich, balance and increase the continuing education services offered.

The objective is not to impose uniform conditions of operation, but rather to give the authorities an opportunity to create their own dynamic contribution to education on the basis of the needs and characteristics of each region.

The First Priority Area: ***Establishing Inter-Level Advisory Authorities***

- Ministerial Commitments**
- Encourage network partners to establish inter-level advisory authorities with responsibility for determining, in collaboration with the institutions concerned, the regional availability of the following services:
 - joint enrollment and referral services and enrollment and assistance services;
 - recognition of prior learning;
 - distance education;
 - required training.

The services offered must take into account the skills and expertise available.

The Need for Inter-Ministerial Collaboration in the Field of Continuing Education

There is a clear need for collaboration to define the roles and responsibilities of ministries in the field of continuing education. Certain responsibilities must be better allocated, and others must be assessed on the basis of each ministry's mission.

All ministries are affected in some way by continuing education. Some take occasional or regular action to upgrade the skills of their personnel; others deal directly with the population. In this last area, links must be established between the ministries concerned and the Ministère de l'Éducation.

The new spirit of collaboration should be most apparent among the ministerial departments providing services to the segments of the population that need to return to school to be able to function better at a personal, economic and social level.

Responsibility for providing French-language skills to immigrants must be clarified. Programs relating to francization must be provided by institutions located in the same vicinity as the immigrant population, not only to avoid the creation of ghettos but also to ensure access to the whole range of educational services.

The Second Priority Area:

Ensuring Coordination of Government Services in the Field of Continuing Education

Elements *Ministère de l'Éducation and Government Bodies*

of Government

Policy

- Agree, with the ministries concerned, on providing a range of services related to education, employability and maintaining a job for adults and businesses, to be applied in a complementary fashion.
- Design and implement mechanisms to ensure that all continuing education is transferable and leads to qualifications.
- Establish rules governing the active participation of the inter-level advisory authorities in all stages of the *plan régional de développement de la main d'œuvre* (PRDMO, the regional manpower development plan) and collaboration with LECs and RDCs.

The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration

- Harmonize the responsibility of the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration regarding integration into Québec society with the responsibility of the Ministère de l'Éducation for providing francization services for persons newly arrived in Québec, taking into account the schooling and upgrading needs of the persons concerned and their desire to seek employment or continue their studies.
- Publish a policy statement on the francization of immigrants.

4.2 FINANCING PRIORITY AREAS

Orientation

The priorities defined in this policy will require the review of financing methods within the Ministère de l'Éducation and the sharing of certain costs with other ministries.

Background

Variations in Resource Allocation Methods at the Different Educational Levels

Resource allocation methods, particularly in the field of continuing education, tend to vary considerably from one level of education to another, on the basis of an internal logic that sometimes makes it difficult to see the overall coherence of the system. For example, financial measures to encourage educational success have been introduced for some segments of the population but not for others; graduation rates are not always taken into account in allocating financial resources, since some programs are funded on the basis of student enrollment, while others are funded on the basis of pre-established ceilings.

The financing of continuing education at the college level and the budgetary rules for adult-sector general and vocational education at the secondary level must be redefined to move toward overall management of all funding intended for regular instruction and continuing education. This new approach would be consistent with ministerial guidelines concerning decentralization and local autonomy. In addition, given that continuing education is not yet firmly established in Québec and that adult education services are in a precarious situation in some communities, existing services must be given a higher profile.

Part-Time Adult Enrollment

Many adults who enroll in continuing education must, in light of their professional and family responsibilities, pursue their studies on a part-time basis. In addition to timetabling constraints, registration fees and childcare costs represent major expenses for many students with low incomes.

Financial Assistance for Adults

On April 1, 1998, all training programs provided under the employment insurance program were transferred to Québec and replaced by a measure known as Individual Training Support. From June 1, 1998, this measure also replaced the other educational measures for income security recipients. Within the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, Emploi-Québec has responsibility for all training measures.

It is important to specify that the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité will continue to provide and, within the meaning of the *Regulation respecting financial assistance for education expenses*, pay for the training of most recipients, including those receiving employment insurance benefits. The fact that the needs of individuals attending subsidized public educational institutions are met by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité should reduce the number of applications for student financial assistance; formerly, students registered as "independent students" and who attended such institutions were eligible for financial assistance.

Individuals who are attending institutions where not all services are subsidized and whose needs are not all covered by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité are in a situation similar to that of individuals classified as "independent students." They should be eligible for student loans and bursaries in 1998-99, and benefits paid under Individual Training Support will be considered in their employment income.

The Literacy Challenge

Since illiteracy may hinder the future of individuals and of society, the efforts made to reduce illiteracy must be increased and diversified. The amounts reallocated to this priority should lead to an increase in enrollment, with support from the other partners.

Financial Assistance for Popular Education

The Ministère de l'Éducation provides financial assistance to popular groups through two specific training programs: the *Programme de soutien à l'alphabétisation populaire autonome*, or *PSAPA*, a support program for literacy, and the *Programme de soutien à l'éducation populaire autonome*, or *PSEPA*, a support program for popular education.

From 1993-94 to 1997-98, the amounts granted increased from \$9 300 000 to \$14 000 000 and the number of accredited groups increased from 757 to 922.

However, before the current financial framework can meet the needs repeatedly expressed by popular groups and allow them to play their role in the educational process, it must be reviewed and the amounts granted must be analyzed and readjusted.

Collaborative Financing

The Ministère de l'Éducation is by no means the only provider in the field of continuing education. It shares this mission with several other ministries and organizations and it is important that each contribute financially. It will also be necessary to assess how much of the federal employment insurance resources transferred to Québec should be used to meet needs in continuing education and the conditions of payment.

Priority Area for Intervention:

Revising the Rules Governing Ministerial and Governmental Financing to Reflect the Priorities Established

- Ministerial** • Maintain the current level of financing for continuing education.
- Commitments**
- Make recipients of the Individual Training Support program, whose needs are not entirely covered by the program, eligible for the loans and bursaries programs, subject to the conditions currently in force for individuals considered as “independent students” under the employment insurance program, beginning in 1998-99.
 - In connection with the recognition of prior learning at the secondary and college levels, agree with interested partners on how to achieve the level of enrollment needed to generate a sufficient volume of activity and allow the emergence of centres of expertise in each educational field, in order to provide services at an acceptable cost.
 - Realign funding to take account of the following priorities:
 - literacy;
 - financial assistance for part-time study;
 - college-level continuing education.
 - Review the current funding framework for popular education.
 - Provide stronger support for the enrollment and referral services and enrollment and assistance services provided by school boards and educational institutions.
 - In collaboration with its partners, introduce measures for ensuring accountability, in particular in connection with the recognition of prior learning by institutions.
 - Require that continuing education activities be distinguished from other activities in the proposed accountability measures.
- Elements of Government Policy** *The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité*
- Enter into agreements, in particular with the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, to ensure continued access to employability measures for individuals who wish to obtain recognition for prior learning without obtaining an official diploma or meeting the conditions for admission to a program.
 - Agree on funding methods for the transition from passive to active measures.
 - Give public educational institutions access to a budgetary envelope to be used to enable adults in precarious jobs in small- and medium-sized businesses to acquire training leading to specific qualifications.

4.3 PROGRESS INDICATORS

Orientation

Given the importance of the investments made and the need to provide leadership in the field of continuing education, ministerial and governmental indicators must be established to measure the progress achieved.

Background

Achievement Indicators for Various Situations

Achievement indicators designed for use with students in basic education cannot be used to give a true image of the situation of adult students. For example, many adults take courses for personal reasons but have no intention of obtaining a diploma. Similarly, part-time attendance, which is the path chosen by many adults because of their family or employment responsibilities, necessarily affects the time they take to complete a program and the chances that they will obtain a diploma within a normal time frame. Also, adults who take courses to improve their chances of finding employment, in particular under employability programs, may be forced to drop out before completing them, not because they have failed in their educational endeavour but because they have succeeded in finding a job. Comparing the results achieved by adults with those achieved by youth-sector students, without qualifying the factors involved, could lead to an unfair appraisal of adult achievement and of the effectiveness of the services currently provided to adult students. It is interesting to note that the education system possesses little or no data on the satisfaction levels among adult students concerning the services provided.

Adequate achievement indicators must be developed, since they alone can give the education system the feedback it needs to assess its effectiveness and introduce appropriate corrective measures in problem areas. If adult students, too, are to achieve success in their studies, several changes must be made.

Priority Area for Intervention:
Designing Varied Achievement Indicators

- Ministerial
Commitments**
- Establish a system to collect and analyze data on programs that do not lead to a diploma.
 - Implement a system for reporting the number of diplomas awarded upon completion of local programs.
 - Request that the *Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial* (the Québec assessment board for college-level education) examine, within the scope of its mandate, the quality of the education provided in CEGEPs and colleges, with a view to broadening attestations of college studies.
 - Ensure that data on the types of services provided, attendance, financing and educational achievement are included in annual reports of CEGEPs and colleges.
 - Obtain data on the satisfaction levels among adult students concerning the services received.

4.4 REVIEWING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Orientation

To meet the multiple, ever-changing needs of adult students and to continue the educational reform, we must review adult-sector general education and vocational and technical education programs, initial and in-service teacher training programs, and where necessary, create new programs.

Background

General Education

In accordance with the Educational Policy Statement,¹¹ a review of elementary and secondary-school curricula will inevitably lead to a review of the general education programs offered to adults. The Ministère has always been careful to avoid creating artificial barriers between the youth and adult sectors and has, in fact, tried to ensure as harmonious a transition as possible from one to the other.

Other factors must be taken into consideration as part of the program review process. In particular, Québec's changing population profile will require that people born here, and those arriving from outside the province, develop new values and attitudes. For this reason, as mentioned in the *Policy Proposal on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education*,¹² adult-sector general education programs must be adjusted to integrate new objectives based on intercultural relationships and the changes they bring.

We must develop new courses on the media in light of their increasing importance in our lives. Television, radio, video and the print media are now available to all, but often create passive consumers. It is important to help students develop a critical attitude toward the media and learn how to use them to update their knowledge and share information; the media must become dynamic tools in the hands of parents, consumers and citizens.

11. Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Schools on Course. Educational Policy Statement*, (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997).

12. Ministère de l'Éducation, *Policy Proposal on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education*, (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1998).

Vocational and Technical Education

If lifelong learning is to be made an integral part of vocational and technical education, the skills acquired in initial training programs must be transferable and must meet labour market requirements. The current program development and review process establishes no distinction between youth-sector and adult-sector programs, and thus already responds in part to these two objectives.

The program review process is based on a high level of collaboration between the world of education and the world of work. Throughout the process, input is provided by industry representatives and specialists from the specific trades and occupations targeted by the programs, and the advice received from the sectorial committees concerned is also taken into consideration.

Program development based on competencies facilitates the rapid adjustment of the programs to meet the changing needs of the labour market.

In addition, the review of the programs as a whole provides an opportunity to harmonize the services provided as much as possible. This should, in the long run, avoid duplication and unnecessary delays when objectives change.

It should be noted that the possibility already exists for educational institutions to develop and implement their own programs to meet specific needs for skills upgrading or career re-orientation. The main difficulty resides in financing the very development of such programs.

The First Priority Area:

Reviewing Current Programs and Designing New Ones

Ministerial Commitments

- Review secondary-level general education curricula in accordance with the Educational Policy Statement and the *Policy Proposal on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education*, especially in connection with citizenship education and the use of the media.
- Continue the review of vocational and technical education programs from a perspective of lifelong learning.
- Continue to work together with other partners to ensure that programs correspond as closely as possible to the needs of the labour market.
- Integrate the concept of continuing education as a concept of lifelong learning into youth-sector programs.
- Introduce intercultural education objectives into college-level programs, especially programs leading to occupations involving direct contact with the public.

Teacher Training

The review of elementary and secondary-level curricula provides an opportunity to review initial teacher training programs and to integrate the lifelong learning concept, since the skills acquired in the programs must allow teachers to interact effectively with both youth- and adult-sector students. It is therefore important that future teachers learn the methods and approaches specific to adult education, and that they do practicums in both sectors, youth and adult. This approach is preferable to the establishment of two separate programs, one for youth-sector teachers and one for adult-sector teachers, and also has the advantage of increasing teacher mobility while preserving the quality of the pedagogical or andragogical approach.

Adequate in-service training must be provided for teachers currently employed in the system so that they will be prepared should they ever change sectors. Also, there is general agreement that the need for teachers to hold legal qualifications, awarded after undergoing specific training, should not be extended to those working in popular education.

The Second Priority Area:

Ensuring Versatility Among Teaching Personnel and the Updating of Knowledge

- Ministerial
Commitments**
- Review teacher training programs, in collaboration with Québec universities, to prepare teachers for work in both the regular and the continuing education sectors.
 - Ensure the availability of in-service training to prepare teachers to work with reviewed and new programs.

4.5 SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

Orientation

Research in the field of continuing education is essential in order to improve accessibility to services, and it must take into account the needs of all players and partners in the field.

Background

The overall direction of research within the Ministère must be clarified. Although many research projects have relevant content, they mostly focus on collecting data on student populations and managing services. There is a lack of prospective and fundamental research, in particular into the causes and effects of illiteracy, with the light it could shed on possible solutions.

Research into how adults learn, the transfer of learning, educational environments, the support and supervision of distance education, the evaluation of andragogical approaches and recognition of prior learning, to name only a few possible topics, could make an important contribution to improving continuing education.

The goal of decentralization contained in the amendments to the *Education Act*, and the move toward greater autonomy for educational institutions, is based on the assumption that institutions will have access to the tools they need to correctly assess the needs of their target populations. From this point of view, research is an essential tool not only in the orientation of organizational development, but also in the identification of the needs of the population and the renewal of approaches adopted by educational personnel.

In addition, although progress has been made in a number of fields, research is still given low priority in the field of literacy. Given the context of budgetary constraints and the problems resulting from decreasing enrollment, school boards and popular literacy groups tend to concentrate on providing services and raising public awareness of the importance of education. Despite a few well-directed, structured projects, research in the field of literacy is fragmented and of varying value, and the links between specialized research and practical applications have yet to be established. Even fewer research projects have been designed to evaluate the success of various types of intervention. Lastly, there is a lack of detailed data on the reading abilities of adults in Québec, as contained in the *International Adult Literacy Survey*, and census data is generally under-used.

Priority Area for Intervention:

Providing Support for Research at All Educational Levels

***Ministerial
Commitments***

- Encourage active research, multi-disciplinary research, and university research, in particular in the fields of literacy and information and communications technologies.
- Support collaboration with other researchers, especially those working in Francophone communities.
- Ensure that a fund for pedagogical research and development is established to support the research efforts of those involved in continuing education.
- Request that the Fonds concerté d'aide à la recherche (FCAR, the Québec research funding board) establish, over a four-year period, a thematic program on innovative research in continuing education.
- Ensure that the *Programme d'aide à la recherche pour l'enseignement et l'apprentissage* (PAREA, a program to assist research in teaching and learning) at the college level take into account the need for research in the field of continuing education.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this draft policy is to clarify objectives and set out the commitments of the Ministère de l'Éducation in connection with continuing education. The range of needs to be dealt with are considerable, and many types of action, in some cases urgent action, must be taken in response. Besides the commitments made by the Ministère de l'Éducation, the actions will require the active collaboration of all the ministries and social and economic partners already involved in the field of continuing education.

This draft policy thus constitutes a call for a collective undertaking, the limits of which are defined by the on-going, constantly evolving challenges facing all adults. Educational institutions and ministries will be required to work together as they take up their respective responsibilities. The consultation process that will begin shortly will allow the form of this joint action to be better defined.

APPENDIX 1

Before the outline of this draft policy for continuing education could be fixed, it was important to draw on the expertise of the education community itself and of its various partners. To this end, a ministerial committee, backed up by an advisory committee bringing together various resource persons from the field of continuing education, was established.

LIST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE DRAFT POLICY ON CONTINUING EDUCATION

- Alain Mercier, chair
Direction de la formation générale des adultes
- Michèle Berthelot, secretary
Direction de la formation générale des adultes
- Diane Charest
Direction de la recherche
- Jacques Couture
Direction régionale de Québec—Chaudière-Appalaches
- Sylvie Demers
Direction générale de la formation professionnelle et technique
- Barbara Goode
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- Marc Leduc
Direction de la formation générale des adultes
- Michel Mailhot
Direction générale du financement et des équipements
- Lino Mastroiani
Direction de la formation générale des adultes
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Direction de l'enseignement et de la recherche universitaires
- Lili Paillé
Direction des affaires éducatives collégiales
- Andrée Racine
Direction de la formation générale des adultes
- Claudette Rhéaume
Direction de l'enseignement collégial
- Laila Valin
Direction générale de la formation des jeunes

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE DRAFT POLICY ON CONTINUING EDUCATION

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- Michele Berthelot, secretary
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