

**FLEXIBILITY IN A QUALITY
SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA IN
THE ADULT EDUCATION SECTOR**

ABRIDGED VERSION

BRIEF TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION,
RECREATION AND SPORT

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C O N S E I L S U P É R I E U R D E L ' É D U C A T I O N

The present Brief was prepared for The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation by the Commission on Adult Education and Continuing Education, whose members are listed on page 33.

Coordination and Text

Isabelle Gobeil, Coordinator, Commission on Adult Education and Continuing Education

Research

Isabelle Gobeil, Coordinator, Commission on Adult Education and Continuing Education

Annie Jacques, Researcher

Collaboration

Jean-Denis Moffet, Coordinator, Commission on College Education

Francine Richard, Coordinator, Commission on Secondary Education

Technical Support

Administrative Assistants: Lise Ratté and Vicky Paquet

Text: Vicky Paquet

Translation: Marisa Panetta-Jones

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The use of the masculine gender includes the feminine and is employed solely to facilitate reading.



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INTRODUCTION

In May of 2007, the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport decided to defer the date of application, scheduled for July 1, 2007, of new requirements related to obtaining a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) in adult general education. The Minister deferred the application by three years, the time needed to comprehensively study the impact of the requirements. In July of 2007, the Minister submitted a request to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation for a brief on the question of the objectives linked to certifying secondary studies in adult general education. The Minister's request was formulated as follows:

"The purpose of a general diploma certifying secondary studies is to reflect the basic skills which prepare individuals to be active citizens, find a fulfilling place in the labour market, and assume personal and family responsibilities. It is a platform of competencies that promotes lifelong learning, be it formal, non-formal or informal. This notion of a diploma certifying secondary studies, which was addressed in the *Government Policy On Adult Education and Continuing Education Training* adopted in 2002, raises the question of whether these new requirements established for the adult sector, in order to be harmonized with those in the youth sector, are in fact aligned with defined functions and whether they are adapted to the realities of adult students."

Note: la traduction est du Conseil

The Conseil mandated the Commission on Adult Education and Continuing Education to prepare the present Brief. The initial studies focused primarily on understanding the requirements for obtaining an SSD in adult general education, both current requirements and those whose application was deferred. Secondly, starting from an analysis of adult general education demographics, the Conseil was able to create a profile and determine the learning paths of students enrolled in this type of education, seeking to obtain a diploma.

The Conseil also held consultations in adult education centres and with various stakeholder organizations in adult and continuing education. Interviews were conducted in October and November of 2007 in five adult education centres in four administrative regions (Montréal, Capitale-Nationale, Chaudière-Appalaches and the Laurentides). In addition, interviews were also conducted with the education centres' administrators, teaching personnel and student services personnel, as well as some 50 adult students of differing ages seeking to obtain an SSD. For these consultation, two certification profiles were considered: one representative of current requirements for obtaining an SSD, the other including the proposed SSD requirements. The Conseil also interviewed representatives from two economic sectors and a consultant from a human resources firm who has chaired several committees on careers and outplacement. Moreover, in November of 2007, the Conseil consulted various stakeholder organizations in the adult and continuation education sector.¹ Lastly, the Conseil twice carried out internal consultations with members of the Commission on Secondary Education and the Commission on College Education, who shared their perspective on concerns in their respective levels of education. The Conseil would like to thank all who have generously contributed to the preparation of the present Brief.

1. For a list of participating organizations, see Appendix 3.

The present abridged version on the Brief comprises four chapters. In Chapter One, the Conseil will present its analytical framework for the preparation of the brief. In Chapter Two, the characteristics and paths of students seeking to obtain an SSD in adult general education will be examined. In Chapter Three, the Conseil will define key issues linked to obtaining an SSD in general adult education and will formulate guiding principles for its study. It will also propose its general approach in defining the requirements for this diploma in the adult education sector. Lastly, in Chapter Four the Conseil will formulate its proposal on these requirements and its recommendations.

CHAPTER 1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Several organizations that participated in the Conseil's consultations stated that the current debate on the requirements for a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) has elicited divergent views among their members. Some members were in favour of the same requirements as those currently in effect for the youth sector, emphasizing that a single diploma based on the same requirements in both sectors would guarantee equality in terms of education rights. Others believed that the SSD should continue to certify secondary studies in the adult sector but the path leading to certification, however, should depend on the individual's own plan. Lastly, some members favoured a diploma distinct from the one awarded in the youth sector, one that would take into account the personal educational goal of adults.

It would appear, then, that the requirements for obtaining an SSD could be confined to simply the number of credits required in a given subject or subject area.² However, because of the social value attached to a diploma, the differing views on these requirements reflect both the notion of a diploma's purpose and what should constitute a solid basic general education.

The issues stemming from the decision regarding requirements for obtaining an SSD in the adult sector are crucial, for the adults themselves as well as for Québec society. In the *Government Policy On Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, basic education is a major and urgent concern. "[...] every citizen of Québec who has the ability should have a basic education that meets social standards. [...] In the long term, actions targeting basic education for adults and youth will allow Québec to position itself most favourably on the world chessboard of the knowledge-based society and economy." (MEQ 2002, p.8). In the spirit of the *Government Policy*, the basic education acquired by individuals should empower them to understand and use written information, to communicate effectively and use information and communication technologies, and to fully contribute to the growth of society. Moreover, this education should "introduce the adults to the social sciences, science and technology, culture and citizenship. Finally, although it essentially targets the same competencies as the youth sector curriculum, the basic education curriculum for adults should be distinguished by content related to the roles of adults in our society" (MEQ 2002, p.10).

Concerns in Québec related to basic adult education are also seen on an international level. For its part, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes that the quest for "economic efficiency and equity" (OECD 2005, p.15) demands a particular focus on investing in adult learning. If access to higher learning appears important, so is obtaining an SSD. Basing its analysis on work by Coulombe, Tremblay and Marchand (2004), the OECD emphasizes that an equitable distribution of competencies among citizens has a positive effect on overall economic performance: "Raising the basic skills of all individuals can have a larger impact on economic growth than investing in improving the skills of a select group of high skilled individuals" (ibid.).

Thus adult learning, including basic education, entails more than just economic impact. In fact, it can reap political benefits that foster considerable civic engagement. "Learning for civic and cultural

2. Subject areas group subjects that share common similarities. In the Québec Education Program the six subject areas in the youth sector, Secondary Cycle II are: Languages; Mathematics, Science and Technology; Social Sciences; Arts Education; Personal Development; and Career Development. In the adult sector, for Secondary III, IV and V, the subject areas are the same, only the name of Personal Development differs.

purposes helps people acquire competencies as conscious actors in political and social change and for taking independent decisions in the design of their career and private life" (ibid.).

To address the Minister's request, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation has taken into account the following five considerations:

- The first consideration is on increased requirements for obtaining an SSD, to which the Conseil concurs. Following the Estates General On Education (1995–1996), there was in fact a general consensus on the need for this increase in the recommendation of including acquired learning deemed essential by the end of secondary studies. On an international level, particularly in OECD countries, a common platform of solid competencies in basic general education is also a recommended course of action.
- The second consideration is on the reaffirmed objective to increase the number of certifications, both in the youth and adult education sectors. This is a matter, then, of reconciling the increased requirements with the objective of acquiring a solid basic general education for a greater number of people.
- The third consideration is on flexibility in the education system, which the Conseil has often advocated (CSE 1996, CSE 2003, CSE 2004a, CSE 2004b). It recommends that this flexibility be an integral part of conditions for obtaining an SSD in adult general education, without, however, lessening the value of the certification.
- The fourth consideration is related to a specific reality of adult education: the learning plan of the adult student being at the heart of an educational response.
- The fifth and final consideration pertains to consistency in the education system when transitioning between education levels: the underlying rationale for establishing general admission requirements for college based on a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS)³ should also be valid for SSD holders in adult general education.

In light of these considerations and its studies, the Conseil will herein formulate a concept of the objectives of a Secondary School Diploma in adult general education, and a proposal on the requirements for the certification that defines it.

3. As of Autumn 2007, holders of a DVS meet the general admission requirements for college if they have earned, in addition to six credits in Secondary V Language of Instruction, four credits in Secondary V Second Language and four credits for Secondary IV Mathematics.

CHAPTER 2 CHARACTERISTICS AND PATHS OF STUDENTS SEEKING A SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA IN BASIC ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION

In order to broaden its study, the Conseil undertook an analysis of statistical data on the demographics of basic adult general education.⁴ How many people are enrolled in basic adult general education and how many of them are seeking to obtain a Secondary School Diploma (SSD)? The Conseil was also interested in the characteristics of SSD holders, notably their age. Is the age of the student therefore a factor in the question of the requirements for earning an SSD? In addition, the Conseil studied the path of graduates by considering their certification profile in the area of meeting (or not meeting) general admission requirements for college studies. What did SSD holders do after they receive their certification? Lastly, the Conseil examined the course selection of adult students seeking to obtain an SSD. Considering the choice of services provided, in which elective courses do adult students enroll and what is the importance of courses that are not compulsory requirements for obtaining a diploma?

First, the Conseil noted that two types of instructional services related to the latter half of secondary studies—that is, Secondary Cycle II or Vocational Training—were the ones that showed the greatest increase in enrollment.⁵ Also, a considerable percentage of students in these two instructional services were under the age of 20, or four out of ten students for 2005–2006.

In addition, during the same period, the Conseil observed that a large number (between 50% to 67%, depending on age) of students who obtained an SSD at the age of 19 or younger met the requirements of an SSD+.⁶ This rate dropped to 24% for those aged 20 or older. This last group comprises the greatest number of diploma holders in basic adult general education (63.4%), and yet has the lowest rate of diploma holders meeting the requirements for an SSD+.

Moreover, starting from data on enrollment in courses meeting the requirements whose application was deferred as well as other courses, the Conseil noted a wide selection of elective courses. The offer of a more or less varied range of courses will undoubtedly influence the choices of adult students. However, course selection was not limited to courses where a passing grade was not required for college admission. Indeed, students were enrolled in Secondary IV Mathematics, Physical Sciences and History, as well as Secondary V Second Language, yet other students chose Secondary IV or Secondary V Computer Science, Biology, Chemistry, or Personal Development.

The Conseil also noted that 37% of students who earned a diploma in basic adult general education in 2005–2006 were absent from education network the year following their certification. The rate of those who opted for vocational training was 26.4%, and 7.8% were enrolled in basic adult general education, most likely to meet the admission requirements for college. Some 28% of diploma holders

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4. Chapter 2 of the unabridged version of the present Brief is devoted to a study of profiles in adult general education demographics and the paths of those seeking to obtain an SSD.
 5. Other instructional services include pedagogical support, literacy, preparatory services for secondary education, Secondary Cycle I education services, social integration, sociovocational integration, and francization.
 6. This certification profile referred, until May 2007, to general admission requirements for college.

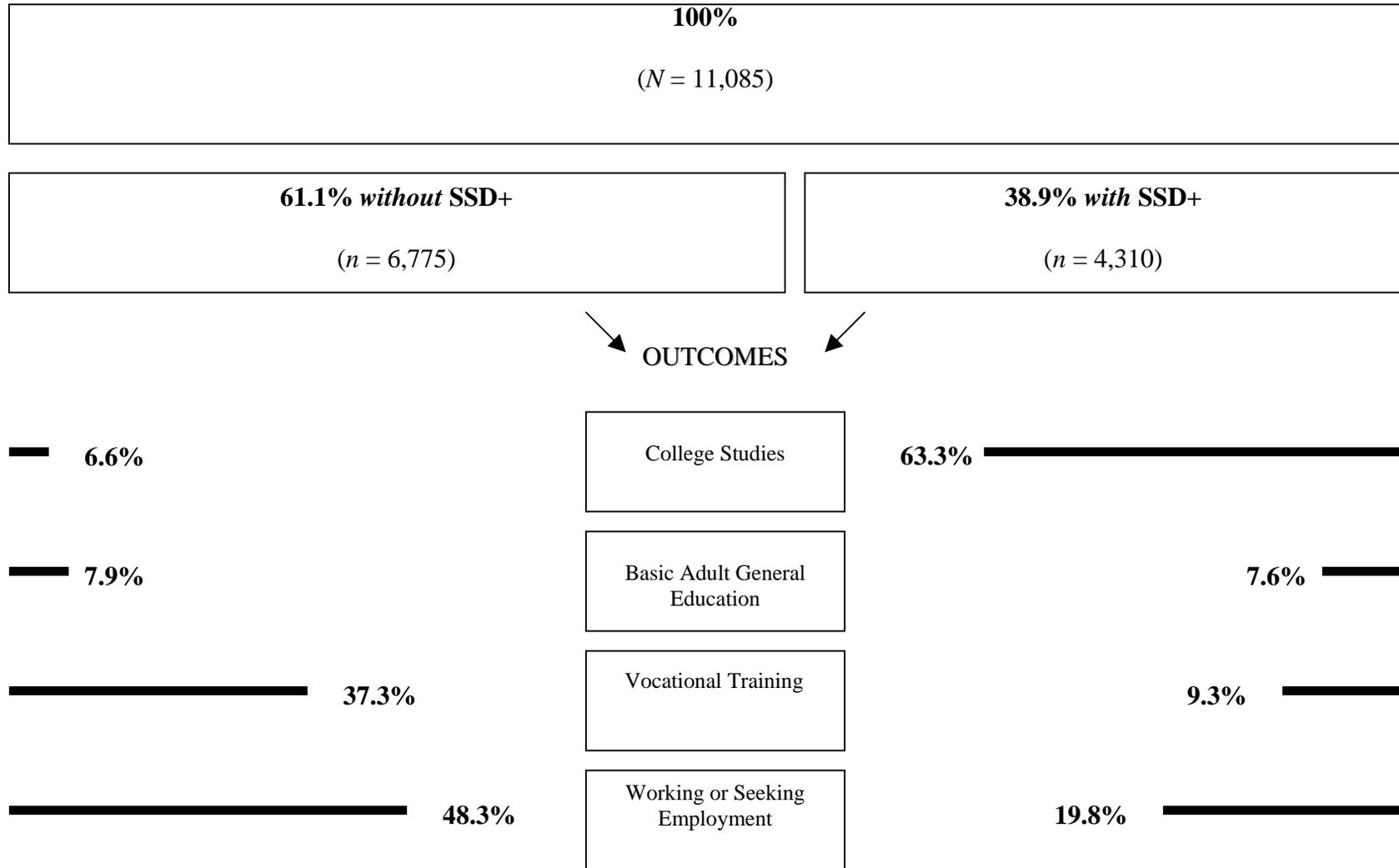
in the adult education sector went on to pursue college studies (28.7%). In the youth sector, 77.9% of the 57,402 diploma holders for 2004–2005 enrolled in college studies the following year.

In brief, from this analysis the Conseil concludes that more than age, personal goals in seeking a diploma seem to be the determining factor in the certification profile of students, depending on whether they meet (or not) the SSD+ requirements. In fact, as Figure 1 shows, a survey of SSD holders the year following their certification reveals that their paths vary depending on whether or not they have satisfied the requirements for an SSD+. The Conseil deems that students seeking a diploma in basic adult general education do so for many reasons, depending on their goals at a given stage of their education path. Consequently, the Conseil believes that while the presence of students aged 20 and under might be a challenge in the education of adults at the secondary level, age should nevertheless not be an issue that influences decisions on the requirements for obtaining an SSD. It deems, rather, that the personal goals of adult students pursuing a diploma should be a factor to be taken into consideration.

FIGURE 1

**Distribution of SSD Holders In the Adult Education Sector 2004-2005
Outcomes Following Certification, With Or Without SSD+ 2005-2006**

Source: MELS-SESAME and Banque de cheminement scolaire (excerpt), April 2007



CHAPTER 3 KEY ISSUES, THE CONSEIL'S APPROACH AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The analysis of statistical data on basic adult general education demographics, particularly on students affected by Secondary School Diploma (SSD) requirements, has allowed the Conseil to specifically gain an insight into the various paths of students enrolled in adult general education and the range of elective courses chosen. Based on this examination, in this chapter the Conseil will define the key issues related to requirements for obtaining a diploma in the adult sector, as well as present the guiding principles for its approach.

3.1 Two Key Issues Related To SSD Requirements

In the opinion of the Conseil, two key issues arise from the requirements for certification of secondary studies. The first involves increased requirements for certification. The Commission For the Estates General On Education and the subsequent work in education that has followed have shown a need for this increase by promoting learning deemed essential at the end of secondary studies. The Conseil believes that this increase must also take place in basic adult general education. The question is knowing whether adult education should be modeled on the concept of a school with compulsory attendance for students, and whether the criteria for awarding a diploma should mirror those in the youth sector.

For this reason, the *Government Policy On Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* emphasizes that "Adult education must take into account the characteristics and needs related to the situation of this specific group" (MEQ 2002, p.9). For their part, the various stakeholders in the adult and continuing education sector have always advocated the importance of considering realities and needs specific to students for whom these educational services are offered.

The second issue is closely linked to the first and can be defined as follows: should the requirements for certification in the adult sector take into account the learning plan of adult students, a fundamental principle in adult education? It is the opinion of the Conseil that this principle be entrenched in any decision related to requirements for certification of secondary studies in the adult sector.

The Conseil's interpretation of these issues is reflected in its approach regarding the requirements for certification as outlined in Section 3.2.

3.2 The Conseil's Approach

In order to define the requirements for obtaining an SSD in the adult sector, **the Conseil favours the following approach: learning plans and personal goals of adult students seeking to obtain a diploma should be the determining factors in any decision related to the certification of secondary studies in the adult sector, and the ensuing diploma that certifies these studies should also reflect a level of requirement equivalent to that of the youth sector, without, however, being identical.**

The Conseil favours increased requirements for certification in basic adult general education, for the rationale applicable to the youth sector should be equally valid for the adult sector. The notion of a continuing education indeed requires the mastery of basic competencies. The Conseil, however, also prefers a path leading toward a diploma based on requirements comparable to those applicable in the youth sector, which would allow access to college studies, should students wish to do so. The Conseil thus upholds a path leading to certification that includes a flexible component to take into consideration the adult student's learning plan and ensuing goal of the diploma.

It would not be an overstatement to assert that the learning plans and goals of adults are often transitory: any objective an adult student sets during learning may change and evolve over time. The temporal nature of the goal need not, however, redefine the importance of its consideration when envisioning adult and continuation education from a lifelong learning perspective.

Moreover, the Conseil does not deem it prudent to create another diploma for certifying secondary studies in basic adult general education.⁷ The SSD has gained credibility in Québec and its social value is now unquestionable. Indeed, it is also a hiring requirement in many businesses and economic sectors of Québec. For some employers, having an SSD is an additional requirement to having a DVS.

It should be noted that secondary instruction in Québec, both in the youth and adult sectors, permits other paths leading to qualification for entering the labour market: pre-work training certificates, training certificates in sociovocational integration of adults, and training certificates for a semi-skilled trade. Awarded by the Minister on the recommendation of the school board, one or the other of these certificates enable young and adult students alike who cannot meet SSD requirements to nevertheless earn certification and qualification.

3.3 Three Guiding Principles

The Conseil based its proposal on the requirements for an SSD in basic adult general education on three guiding principles. These principles pertain to the quality of the SSD awarded in the adult sector, the equity for holders of this certification and the flexibility in the requirements given personal goals in acquiring a diploma. The Conseil's definition of each principle is hereby followed by the methods considered in its proposed requirements for an SSD:

- The *quality* of the diploma obtained in the adult sector must preserve its social value.

This quality is manifested in:

- ✓ *Increased requirements* for certification in the adult sector, similar to the increased requirements deemed necessary for the youth sector;⁸

7. In Québec, two types of diplomas are awarded at the end of secondary studies (or basic education): the Secondary School Diploma (SSD) and the Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS).

8. In its final report, the Commission For the Estates General On Education (1995–1996) called for a need to reform the curricula in compulsory basic education and to define essential learning. Basing and adapting its recommendation on The Task Force On Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles' *Preparing Our Youth For the 21st Century* (the Corbo Report), the Commission proposed that learning profiles be focused on six areas: languages; technology, science and mathematics; social sciences; the arts; personal development; and general competencies of a more methodological nature: analyzing, synthesizing and selecting information, etc.

- ✓ *Identical requirements* to those in the youth sector as to the number of credits (54) and the passing grade (60%);
- ✓ *Identical minimum requirements* as in the youth sector as to the number of Secondary V credits (20).
- The *equity* for holders of an SSD in the adult sector must show, at the end of their secondary studies, solid core competencies certified by a socially recognized diploma.

This equity is manifested in:

- ✓ *A core curriculum defining a platform of essential competencies* in the areas of languages, social science, mathematics, science and technology that would enable students to pursue their further learning, be it in school, at work or elsewhere;
- ✓ *Access to the various dimensions of basic general education*, through requirements that would ensure adult students acquire knowledge in the six subject areas: Languages, Mathematics Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Personal Development, the Arts and Career Development;⁹
- ✓ *Requirements for meeting criteria for general admission to college studies*;
- ✓ *Requirements equivalent to those applicable in the youth sector*, in other words, of the same value: Secondary IV or V credits for the same subject areas.
- The *flexibility of certification requirements*, given personal goals for obtaining a diploma, must be consistent with a principle of adult education: a learning profile and certification that considers adult learning plans as well as personal goals that results in a branching of education paths.

This flexibility is manifested in:

- ✓ The selection of compulsory credits and elective course credits in the six areas of learning.¹⁰

9. Subject areas groups subjects that share common similarities. In the Québec Education Program the six subject areas in the youth sector, Secondary Cycle II are: Languages; Mathematics, Science and Technology; Social Sciences; Arts Education; Personal Development; and Career Development. In the adult sector, for Secondary III, IV and V, the subject areas are the same, only the name of Personal Development differs.

10. In establishing the curricula for the education reform in adult general education, five areas of learning were defined: Languages; Mathematics Science and Technology; Social Sciences; Personal Development and Working Life. Nonetheless, the Conseil maintains the importance of adding programs in the Arts, as in the youth sector. According to the administrative document *General Education For Adults: 2007–2008 Directives*, in Secondary Cycle II there are some local programs in Secondary III, IV and V Arts, but no official program.

CHAPTER 4 REQUIREMENTS FOR A SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA IN BASIC ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION: PROPOSAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to inform the decision of the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport on the requirements for a Secondary School Diploma in basic adult general education, the Conseil will in this chapter present one proposal and formulate four recommendations. The first recommendation pertains to the statutory wording of the requirements. The second recommendation is on the value of offering a wide selection of programs to take into account the diversity of personal goals in pursuing a diploma in the adult education sector. The third proposes to meet the specific guidance needs of adult students. The fourth and final recommendation is on the promotion of the diploma itself.

The Conseil's proposal on the criteria for obtaining an SSD in the adult sector aims to reconcile the requirements that reflect the basic competencies needed to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world; the consideration of personal goals in pursuing a diploma in the adult sector; and finally, the importance of a socially-recognized diploma that is *different* than the one earned in the youth sector yet its *equivalent*. This proposal also adheres to the principles of a quality, equitable and flexible diploma for its holders and allows for internal coherence of inter-level transitioning in the education system.

4.1 The Conseil's Proposed Requirements For Obtaining An SSD

Table 1 illustrates the requirements for obtaining an SSD proposed by the Conseil for application as of July 2010. These requirements are also compared with those that will come into effect in the youth sector at the same time as well as current requirements in the adult sector. Figure 2 shows the Conseil's proposal.

Regarding current requirements for obtaining an SSD in basic adult general education, the objective of the Conseil's proposal is to increase the level of requirement of the second language (French or English). Moreover, in addition to the required credits in Languages, this proposal would make it compulsory to earn credits in Social Sciences and Mathematics, Science and Technology.

Regarding requirements for obtaining an SSD coming into effect in the youth sector in July 2010, the Conseil proposes the same requirements in Languages. The number of compulsory credits in Social Sciences remains the same, however credits for History and Citizenship Education are not compulsory. In addition, the Conseil recommends the same number of compulsory credits for Secondary IV Mathematics (4 credits). However, the Conseil leaves adults the choice of the other compulsory credits in Mathematics, Science and Technology (4 credits). Lastly, the Conseil recommends that adult students may, depending on their area of interest and/or goals, earn credits in the Arts, Personal and Career Development, as in the subject areas of Languages, Social Sciences and Mathematics Science and Technology without, however, making these credits compulsory.

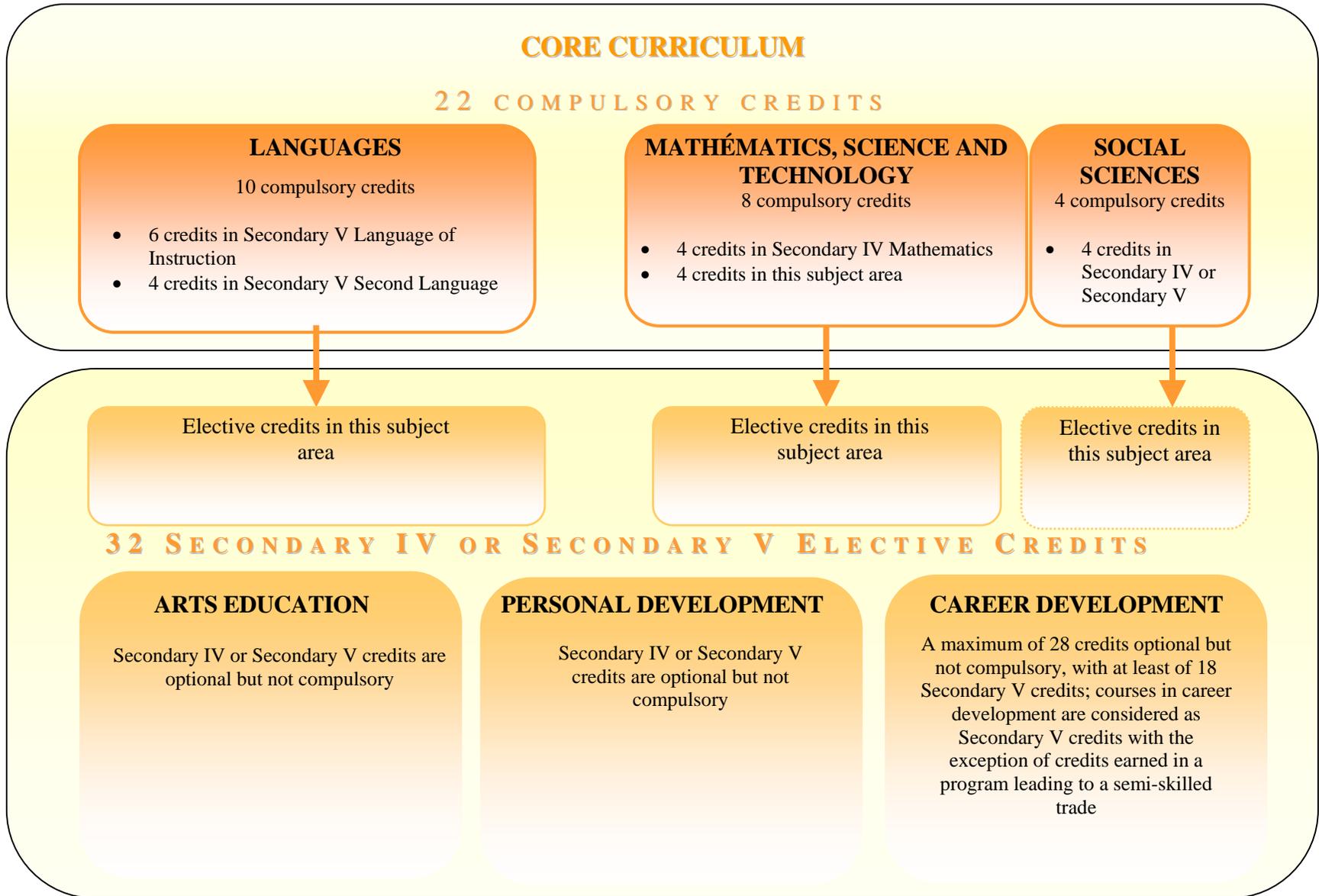
In brief, the Conseil's proposal reflects the value it places on a diploma earned in the adult education sector so that adults may be able to demonstrate solid competencies acquired in basic general

education. The Conseil also assigns equal importance to the consideration of the characteristics of students enrolled in adult education and their goals in pursuing a diploma by offering them a wider range of elective courses.

Table 1
Comparison of Requirements For Obtaining a Secondary School Diploma:
Current Requirements In the Adult Education Sector vs. the Conseil’s Proposed Requirements
vs. Prescribed Requirements For the Youth Sector In 2010

Current Requirements For An SSD	Requirements For An SSD As Of July 2010	
Adult Education Sector 54 credits in Secondary IV or Secondary V (18 of which are compulsory and 36 in elective subjects) allocated as follows:	Adult Education Sector PROPOSAL OF THE CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION 54 credits in Secondary IV or Secondary V (22 of which are compulsory and 32 in elective subjects). Among these credits the adult student must earn at least 20 Secondary V credits and the following credits:	Youth Education Sector CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AS PER THE BASIC SCHOOL REGULATION FOR PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION 54 credits from Secondary IV or Secondary V (22 or 20 compulsory, depending on the education path, and 32 or 30 in elective subjects). Among these, the student must earn at least 20 credits in Secondary V and the following credits:
SUBJECTS	AREA OF LEARNING	BROAD AREA OF LEARNING
12 credits in Language of Instruction, including at least 6 credits in Secondary V	Languages (n = 10 credits) 6 credits in Secondary V Language of Instruction 4 credits in Secondary V Second Language + credits in elective subjects optional but not compulsory	Languages (n = 10 credits) 6 credits in Secondary V Language of Instruction 4 credits in Secondary V Second Language
6 credits in Secondary IV or Secondary V English Second Language (for adults whose mother tongue is French) or 6 credits in Secondary V French Second Language (for adults whose language of instruction is English)	Social Sciences (n = 4 credits) 4 credits in Secondary IV or Secondary V + credits in elective subjects optional but not compulsory	Social Sciences (n = 4 credits) 4 credits in Secondary IV History and Citizenship Education
36 credits in elective subjects, including at least 18 in Secondary V; the credits earned in a vocational training program shall be considered as credits earned in Secondary V, with the exception of credits earned in a vocational training program leading to a semi-skilled trade	Mathematics, Science and Technology (n = 8 credits, half in Mathematics) 4 credits in Secondary IV Mathematics 4 additional credits in Secondary IV in this area of learning + credits in elective subjects optional but not compulsory Total: 22 compulsory credits	Mathematics, Science and Technology (n = 8 or 10 credits) 4 credits in Secondary IV Mathematics 4 credits in Secondary IV Science and Technology or 6 credits in Secondary IV Applied Science and Technology
The number of credits earned in Language of Instruction and in Second Language shall not exceed 36. To obtain a Secondary School Diploma an adult student must have earned credits for at least 1 course in Secondary V offered in an Adult Education Centre	Arts Secondary IV or Secondary V credits optional but not compulsory	Arts Education (n = 2 credits) 2 credits in Secondary IV Arts Education
	Personal Development Secondary IV or Secondary V credits optional but not compulsory	Personal Development (n = 2 credits) 2 credits in Secondary V Ethics and Religious Culture or Physical Education and Health
	Career Development A maximum of 28 credits optional but not compulsory, with at least 18 Secondary V credits; courses in career development being considered as Secondary V courses with the exception of credits awarded in a program leading to a semi-skilled trade	Career Development Credits optional but not compulsory

Figure 2
REQUIREMENTS FOR A SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA
PROPOSED BY THE CONSEIL



4.2 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

Considering the need for increased requirements to obtain a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) in the adult education sector so that holders of this certification may master the basic competencies that attest the achievement of a solid basic general education;

Considering that the SSD is an official certification and that consequently the diploma awarded in the adult sector must reflect the same level of requirement as those applicable in the youth sector to preserve the social value attached to it;

Considering the interest in a diploma founded on requirements comparable to those applicable in youth sector, featuring a shared but variable component that takes into account the adult student's learning plan and goal in obtaining the ensuing diploma;

Considering moreover that the Conseil understands that methods for certifying learning and competencies in basic general education, as defined in the *Administrative Manual For the Certification Of Studies In General Education For Adults And In Vocational Education*¹¹ will remain in effect in order to grant adults credits toward obtaining an SSD in accordance to stipulated conditions,

The Conseil recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport to amend Section 30 of the *Basic Adult General Education Regulation* to include the following requirements in obtaining a Secondary School Diploma:

- Must earn at least 54 Secondary IV or Secondary V credits (at least 20 of which are Secondary V), including the following:
 - 1) 6 credits in Secondary V Language of Instruction;
 - 2) 4 credits in Secondary V Second Language;
 - 3) 4 credits in Secondary IV Mathematics;
 - 4) 4 additional Secondary IV credits in Mathematics, Science and Technology subject areas;
 - 5) 4 credits in Secondary IV Social Sciences subject areas.

11. These are general education examinations; tests from the *General Educational Development Testing Service*; areas of generic competencies; Prior Learning Examinations (English, second language and French, second language) (MELS 2005). See Chapter 5 in the 2005 *Administrative Manual For the Certification Of Studies In General Education For Adults and In Vocational Education* for recognition of experiential learning. This guide was last updated in Autumn 2006. However, considerations that have led to deferring the requirements for an SSD in adult general education together with basic general education for the youth sector have prompted the Direction de la sanction des études of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du loisir et du sport to postpone the updating of this manual, now scheduled for release in March of 2008.

- To obtain this diploma, 32 credits earned in elective subjects must be taken into consideration, notably those elective credits earned in Secondary Cycle II in one of the six subject areas: Languages, Mathematics Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Career Development, Personal Development and Arts Education.

- To obtain an SSD:
 - 1) The number of credits in the Language of Instruction and Second Language may not exceed 32;
 - 2) The number of Secondary IV or Secondary V elective credits in Career Development subject areas may not exceed 28;
 - 3) The number of credits acquired in a Vocational Training program are considered as Secondary V credits, with the exception of credits acquired in a program of studies leading to a semi-skilled trade.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Considering that the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport has the responsibility of establishing the requirements for obtaining a Secondary Studies Diploma;

Considering that the offer of education programs must be aligned with policies on the requirements for the certification of secondary studies;

Considering that the work in establishing current programs of study within the framework of the education reform in Secondary Cycle II basic adult general education is focused primarily on programs that are aligned with the general and special criteria for admission to college studies, with the exception of Secondary IV Physical Education and Health;

Considering that the Conseil's proposal for the requirements in obtaining a diploma is predicated on a varied offer of programs in the six subject areas: Languages, Mathematics Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Career Development, Personal Development and Arts Education,

The Conseil recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport to offer a range of programs of study that allow for diverse personal goals in obtaining a secondary school diploma in the adult sector.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Considering that to ensure certification for a greater number of students, support measures for success should be accessible both in the youth and adult sectors;

Considering that the recommendation pertaining to requirements for obtaining an SSD in basic adult general education would involve increased requirements;

Considering that the path leading to an SSD may be difficult for some adult students, notably for those experiencing academic difficulties or who have dropped out of secondary school for several years;

Considering the need for special support of some students enrolled in basic adult general education; notably those seeking to obtain an SSD;

Considering that during the consultations of the Conseil, front-line stakeholders—that is, adult students and adult education centre personnel—have overwhelmingly expressed concerns on the subject of success and perseverance in earning an SSD due to increased requirements in certification,

The Conseil recommends that the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport allocate the necessary resources for improved guidance and pedagogical support services, particularly in the area of complementary services and access to professional resources that promote certification and ensure success for a greater number of students.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Considering that many adult students consulted on the new certification requirements, whose application has been deferred, have questioned the validity of compulsory passing grades for some courses in order to obtain an SSD;

Considering that the organizations consulted have also expressed some reservations on the selection of compulsory subjects or subject areas leading to an SSD, notably for adults whose goal is integration into the labour market;

Considering that it can be reasonably assumed that adults—notably those who had interrupted their studies for several years, and whose immediate objective is entering the labour market—may consider the utilitarian aspect of some subjects first before becoming interested in them,

The Conseil invites stakeholder organizations in the adult and continuing education sector and, in particular, adult education centres, to promote the diploma of secondary studies in the adult sector by advocating the right of adults to demonstrate solid and basic competencies at the end of their secondary studies, certified by a socially-recognized diploma like that of the youth sector.

CONCLUSION

In her request for a brief addressed to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport specifically raised the question of the relevance of requirements established for adult students in obtaining a Secondary School Diploma (SSD), consistent with the requirements in effect in the youth education sector.

An analysis of the current demographic profile of basic adult general education reveals various paths among diploma holders in the adult education sector. Indeed, interviews carried out by the Conseil corroborated these findings. This alone supports the consideration of personal goals when defining the requirements for obtaining a diploma in the adult education sector, while still acknowledging the transitory nature of this goal.

In the opinion of the Conseil, the proposed increased requirements, together with relative flexibility in the criteria for certification, would assure the value of the SSD awarded in the adult sector and guarantee a consistency befitting its social role. These conditions would enable a considerable number of students to obtain a diploma equivalent to that awarded at the end of compulsory education, while respecting the needs of adults and their personal plans at the time of certification.

In closing, as it formulated in its final recommendation, the Conseil invites stakeholder organizations in the adult and continuing education sector to promote the proposed SSD by advocating the rights of adults to demonstrate solid and basic competencies at the end of their secondary studies.

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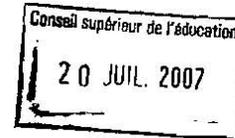
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APPENDIX 1 LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION



Gouvernement du Québec
La ministre de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
et ministre responsable de la région de Laval

Québec, le 16 juillet 2007



Madame Nicole Boutin
Présidente
Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
1175, avenue Lavigerie, bureau 180
Québec (Québec) G1V 5B2

Madame la Présidente,

Conformément à l'article 10.1 de la Loi sur le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, je sou mets à votre examen la question des besoins et objectifs liés à la sanction de fin d'études secondaires en formation générale des adultes. Cette demande, que j'adresse formellement au Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, nécessite de prendre en compte la perspective de différents groupes d'acteurs concernés par l'éducation des adultes.

Ainsi, l'avis demandé devrait se fonder, au premier chef, sur le point de vue d'adultes qui obtiennent le diplôme d'études secondaires (DES) après avoir suivi des cours de la formation générale des adultes et celui d'employeurs ou de représentants du marché du travail. Pour compléter, le point de vue de membres du personnel enseignant et professionnel œuvrant en formation générale des adultes, celui d'analystes de la société ou de spécialistes intéressés par l'éducation, ainsi que celui de personnes ou de groupes identifiés par le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation seraient d'intérêt.

L'entrée en vigueur des nouvelles conditions d'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires (DES), qui devaient s'appliquer à compter du 1^{er} juillet 2007 en formation générale des adultes, a été différée de trois ans. Entre-temps, une réflexion doit s'engager sur la sanction de fin d'études secondaires en formation générale des adultes. À cet effet, un comité de réflexion vient d'être mis sur pied. Il réunit des représentants du monde scolaire et des partenaires stratégiques de l'éducation et de la formation des adultes. Pour mener à bien sa tâche, le comité de réflexion aura besoin d'être alimenté par des recherches, des analyses et des avis spécialisés. Les enjeux qui se profilent sous cet exercice de réflexion sont importants et structurants. C'est dans ce contexte que s'inscrit la question que je vous sou mets.

...2

Québec
Édifice Marc-Cuvier, 16^e étage
1035, r. De La Chevotière
Québec (Québec) G1R 3A5
Telephone : 418 644-0664
Telecopieur : 418 646 7555
Courriel : ministre@meles.gouv.qc.ca

Montreal
500, rue R. P. Duménil
Montreal (Québec) H2K 4L1
Telephone : 514 873-4792
Telecopieur : 514 873 1082

Les besoins et objectifs relatifs à l'obtention du DES en formation générale des adultes sont régulièrement mis sur la sellette. Si le propos d'ensemble voulant qu'il faille tenir compte des besoins des adultes se révèle assez unanime, la teneur plus précise de ces besoins en rapport avec les exigences de sanction du DES est peu documentée.

Un diplôme général de fin d'études secondaires a pour fonction de refléter les apprentissages de base qui outillent les personnes en vue d'exercer une citoyenneté active, d'occuper une place satisfaisante sur le marché du travail et de répondre aux obligations personnelles et familiales. C'est un socle de compétences qui vise à faciliter les apprentissages ultérieurs tout au long de la vie, qu'ils soient formels, non formels ou informels. Cette conception des buts du diplôme de fin d'études secondaires, dont fait état la Politique gouvernementale d'éducation des adultes et de formation continue adoptée en 2002, amène à se demander concrètement si les nouvelles exigences de sanction du DES, établies pour les adultes de manière harmonisée avec celles en vigueur pour les jeunes, se situent en cohérence avec les fonctions énoncées et sont adaptées aux réalités des élèves adultes.

Avant de prendre la décision de reporter de trois ans l'application des nouvelles conditions d'obtention du DES décerné aux adultes, des représentants du réseau des commissions scolaires et des partenaires stratégiques, dont ceux du marché du travail, ont été consultés. Les commentaires reçus mettent en relief un questionnement sur la correspondance entre les nouvelles exigences de sanction et les compétences clés à acquérir par les adultes pour couronner la fin des études secondaires en formation générale, considérant leur concordance avec les conditions d'admission au diplôme d'études collégiales. De plus, si une formation de base solide, large et de qualité est privilégiée par tous, des interrogations sont soulevées sur la justification d'ajouter certaines matières obligatoires. Ces ajouts ont notamment pour effet de réduire le nombre d'unités de formation professionnelle pouvant être considérées comme unités optionnelles pour l'obtention du DES. Un approfondissement paraît donc nécessaire.

Compte tenu des décisions et mesures que pourraient engendrer les résultats des travaux du comité de réflexion, les délais sont serrés. Aussi, je vous saurais gré de me transmettre l'avis du Conseil supérieur de l'éducation pour la fin de décembre 2007.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame la Présidente, l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs.



MICHELLE COURCHESNE

APPENDIX 2 LETTER TO ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED BY THE CONSEIL



Direction des communications

Québec, le 19 novembre 2007

MODÈLE

Objet : Appel de mémoires en vue de la production d'un avis du Conseil supérieur de l'éducation sur la sanction des études secondaires en formation générale des adultes

Madame, Monsieur,

Afin de répondre à une demande de la ministre de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport sur la question des besoins et des objectifs liés à la sanction des études secondaires en formation générale des adultes, le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation a confié la préparation d'un avis à sa commission de l'éducation des adultes et de la formation continue.

En mai dernier, la ministre décidait de surseoir à l'entrée en vigueur, le 1^{er} juillet 2007, de nouvelles exigences pour l'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires en formation générale des adultes. Elle diffèrait de trois ans leur application, le temps d'examiner leurs conséquences plus en profondeur.

Il faut rappeler que les règles de sanction sont différentes au secteur des jeunes et au secteur des adultes. En bref (les détails apparaissent en annexe à la présente lettre), le régime de sanction qui devait s'appliquer le 1^{er} juillet 2007 maintenait à 54 le nombre d'unités requises, mais il rendait obligatoire l'obtention d'unités de mathématique, de sciences physiques et d'histoire, en plus des unités de langue d'enseignement et de langue seconde déjà demandées. Les exigences auraient été de la sorte harmonisées avec celles qui sont en vigueur présentement au secteur des jeunes.

Les travaux de recherche menés au Conseil jusqu'à présent pour élaborer cet avis ont porté sur l'analyse des données statistiques produites sur l'effectif de la formation générale des adultes ainsi que sur le parcours de ceux et celles qui visent l'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires. Des entrevues ont aussi été conduites dans des centres d'éducation des adultes, auprès des membres du personnel et auprès d'adultes en formation.

En raison de l'importance sociale que revêt la question des exigences d'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires, notamment au regard des besoins et des objectifs des adultes qui souhaitent l'obtenir, le Conseil juge indispensable de recueillir aussi le point de vue des organisations qui s'intéressent à l'éducation des adultes et à la formation continue de même qu'au développement et à la reconnaissance des compétences de la main-d'œuvre. C'est dans ce contexte que s'inscrit le présent appel de mémoires.

1175, avenue Lavigerie, bureau 180
Québec (Québec) G1V 5R2
Téléphone : 418 643-3850
Télécopieur : 418 644-2530
www.cse.gouv.qc.ca

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Étant entendu que votre organisation pourrait aussi aborder tout élément relatif à la sanction des études secondaires en formation générale des adultes, le Conseil aimerait connaître en particulier votre point de vue sur les deux pistes suivantes :

1. Le principe d'un diplôme d'études secondaires délivré au Québec selon les mêmes conditions et les mêmes exigences au secteur des jeunes et au secteur des adultes devrait-il obligatoirement s'appliquer, malgré la visée ou la finalité de formation de la personne qui veut l'obtenir?
2. Sur la base d'exigences de niveau comparable, un diplôme d'études secondaires obtenu au secteur des adultes pourrait-il être *différent* du diplôme qui serait obtenu au secteur des jeunes mais tout de même *équivalent* à celui-ci?

La différence tiendrait compte des besoins des personnes inscrites au secteur des adultes, peu importe leur âge, et de la visée ou de la finalité de leur formation (réaliser un projet personnel, répondre à la condition minimale d'embauche dans plusieurs secteurs d'activité économique, poursuivre des études, les conditions d'admission au programme choisi étant par ailleurs satisfaites, comme c'est le cas actuellement).

Si cette voie était retenue, le diplôme obtenu au secteur des adultes, *différent* de celui qui serait obtenu au secteur des jeunes mais tout de même *équivalent*, devrait-il rendre compte de compétences dans certains domaines, par exemple les langues, la mathématique, les sciences et technologies, l'histoire du Québec et du Canada ou les arts?

En raison des courts délais dont il dispose, le Conseil aimerait recevoir par écrit vos réponses et commentaires d'ici le 12 décembre 2007. Vous voudrez bien faire parvenir votre mémoire à M^{me} Isabelle Gobeil, coordonnatrice de la Commission de l'éducation des adultes et de la formation continue, à l'adresse électronique suivante : isabelle.gobeil@cse.gouv.qc.ca. Vous pouvez communiquer avec elle pour tout renseignement, par courriel ou par téléphone, au numéro suivant : 418 643-5125.

Vous remerciant de votre collaboration, je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, mes salutations distinguées.

La présidente,

Nicole Boutin

APPENDIX 3 PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED BY THE CONSEIL

Association québécoise des intervenants en formation générale des adultes

Centrale des syndicats du Québec

Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'œuvre pour les personnes handicapées

Confédération des syndicats nationaux

Conseil du patronat du Québec

Fédération des cégeps

Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec

Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec

Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes

Mouvement québécois des adultes en formation

Quebec English School Boards Association

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Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

INTERIM SECRETARY GENERAL

Josée Turcotte

The full text (in French) of the Brief

De la flexibilité pour un diplôme d'études secondaires de qualité au secteur des adultes

as well as its abridged versions in French and English (*Flexibility In A Quality Secondary School Diploma In the Adult Education Sector*)

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- by e-mail: panorama@cse.gouv.qc.ca
- by mail: 1175, avenue Lavigerie, bureau 180
Québec (Québec) G1V 5B2

Published by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
1175, avenue Lavigerie, bureau 180
Québec (Québec) G1V 5B2
Telephone: (418) 643-3850
Fax: (418) 644-2530
www.cse.gouv.qc.ca

