



Gouvernement du Québec
**Conseil supérieur
de l'éducation**

Comité catholique

FAITH EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

**Catholic Moral and Religious Instruction and
Faith Education: the Role of the Teacher**

Recommendations to the Minister of Education
May 1985

E3S9
C65/
E382
1985 A
QCSE

Recommendations Adopted at the 228th Meeting
of the Comité catholique
on April 25-26, 1985

ISBN 2-550-08576-0
Legal Deposit
1st Quarter 1986
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec



Comité catholique

FAITH EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

**Catholic Moral and Religious Instruction and
Faith Education: the Role of the Teacher**

Recommendations to the Minister of Education
May 1985

E3 59

C65

E382

1986 A

QLSE



«L'éducation est un façonnement de l'homme
par l'homme, un apport de substance.»

G. Gusdorf

(Education is the shaping of man by man;
it is an essential ingredient.)

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
I. The problems	4
(a) The sociocultural context	5
(b) Teacher training, upgrading and retraining	9
(c) Elementary school teachers	13
(d) The status of high school teachers of Catholic moral and religious education	17
(e) The teacher as witness to the faith	19
II. The Role and responsibility of teachers in charge of Catholic moral and religious instruction	20
(a) Moral and religious education in the schools: the ecclesial framework	22
(b) Moral and religious education in the schools: its specific role	27
(c) Approaches to moral and religious education in the schools	31
(d) The teacher as believer and witness	37
III. Planning and development	43
(a) The training of elementary school teachers	44
(b) The hiring of teachers	49

(c) The right to refuse to give religious instruction	52
(d) The concrete task of the Catholic moral and religious education teacher at the high school level	57
(e) The professional improvement of the Catholic moral and religious education teacher	60
(f) Teacher support	66
(g) Practical suggestions	70
Conclusion	72
Recommendations	73

Catholic moral and religious instruction and faith education: the role of the teacher

Introduction

1- For nearly a decade, the Comité catholique has been greatly concerned with the situation of the Catholic moral and religious education teacher¹ and with the quality of faith education. On several occasions, the Committee has taken a stand on the concrete conditions affecting Catholic moral and religious instruction in the schools. These interventions have no doubt played a part in improving the situation. However, one must admit that many problems remain unsolved or inadequately resolved; for example, the working conditions of religious education teachers, their initial training or professional upgrading, and the uneasiness a number of teachers feel about giving religious instruction. These difficulties are not unrelated to the questions that are increasingly being raised about the quality of the faith education of the young.

2- Recent events have again focused attention on religious education teachers. First, talks have been held on school reorganization. To parties expressing concern over the fate of confessionality, the Minister of

1. In this report, the pronouns he, him, his, himself used in reference to "teacher", apply equally and without prejudice to women teachers.

Education,² has consistently stated, notably before the parliamentary committee on Bill 40, that the department would take every means necessary to ensure quality religious instruction, in accordance with the expressed wishes of the people.³ Recently, in its final report on the status of teachers, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation deplored the plight of high school teachers allotted two periods a week per course⁴ -- this is the case of teachers specializing in religious education. In May 1984, the Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec issued new pastoral orientations for religious instruction in elementary and secondary schools;⁵ these guidelines are the source of new programs to which teachers must adhere. Finally, passage of the Act respecting public elementary and secondary education does away with most confessional school boards. Thus, the Comité catholique remains the sole public body which represents the Catholic community and is empowered, under the law, to

-
2. See the statements made by Dr. Camille Laurin before the Standing Committee on Education, January 24, 1984, pp. B12939, B12969, B12970 and B12997. See also Dr. Laurin's address to members attending the convention of the Association québécoise des conseillers au service de l'éducation chrétienne, October 31, 1982.
 3. On this subject, see Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, Confessionality and the Schools of Québec, 1981, pp. 29-31 (50-2053A).
 4. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, La condition enseignante, 1984, pp. 75-76. (This particular reference is not given in the abridged English version, The Conditions of Teaching, 1984.)
 5. Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec, L'enseignement religieux catholique dans les écoles primaires et secondaires du Québec, Orientations pastorales, May 1984.

set essential standards guaranteeing quality confessional services to the Catholic population. Among its other duties, this body shall issue regulations concerning teacher qualification for Catholic moral and religious instruction.

3- For all these reasons, the Comité catholique believes it is of vital importance to assess the situation affecting Catholic moral and religious education teachers thoroughly. In particular, it wishes to stress the necessity -- after seeing to the application of the law that guarantees religious instruction and the revision of pedagogical methods -- of establishing concrete measures that answer to the training and upgrading needs of teachers. These measures are necessary to ensure quality religious instruction bearing the mark of unimpeachable educational value and making its own distinctive contribution to the faith education of the young.

4- The Comité catholique does not intend to cover in detail all that it wrote ten years ago in the third volume of Voies et Impasses on religious education teachers. It must, however, reassess a situation that has evolved considerably. This will be the concern of the first part of the present text. Next, the Committee will specify the proper role and responsibility of the religious education teacher in a school environment. Finally, the Committee will propose concrete measures it hopes are capable of improving the situation of religion teachers, as well as the quality of moral and religious instruction, and of supporting teachers in the exercise of their task.

I. The problems

5- In each of its hearings, the Comité catholique has had no difficulty gathering direct testimony from pupils praising their teachers for providing excellent religious instruction despite the trying circumstances in which the latter work. It was noted each time that the human and Christian qualities of the teacher are an important factor, as are school atmosphere, the attitude of administrators, the cooperation of the pastoral team and, at the primary level especially, the cooperation of parents.

6- Nonetheless, serious problems remain. The members of the Committee have heard religious instruction teachers express their dissatisfaction, their disappointment, their discouragement. Later, they would sometimes hear young people voice their criticisms and their disillusion. Then, in the evening, they would hear parents describe instances of false hopes or empty promises; or again, they would hear about the powerlessness of administrators to solve the problems. On this score, the Comité believes it important that an attempt be made to pinpoint what is wrong or what it is that prevents teachers from giving religious instruction wholly capable of attaining its overall objective, that is, of contributing to the faith education of the young. The Committee also believes it important to offer solutions.

7- It is obvious that the difficulties encountered are of different kinds and do not stem solely from the attitude of religious education teachers. Nor, for that matter, do they stem solely from the conditions in which religious instruction is given. There are many factors shaping the present situation,

notably the sociocultural climate, initial teacher training and subsequent upgrading, the course load at the high school level, teacher attitude with respect to the Christian faith, etc. Hence the importance of grasping the exact nature of the problems and of spelling them out as clearly as possible, so as to propose acceptable, realistic and effective ways to resolve them.

(a) The sociocultural context

8- In the Québec that most adults remember, the sociocultural context supported the faith education of the young in various ways. In particular, certain values relating to life in society, family life, religious and Christian practice were accepted spontaneously. This consensus had a number of consequences: the school strengthened and completed, through religious instruction, the faith education begun at a very early age; this teaching continued throughout life by means of various religious practices -- for example, participation in the celebration of the sacraments and Sunday mass, attending closed retreats -- that kept adults in regular contact with the realities of their faith. Even society, in its laws and standards, reflected an idea of the human person and of society put forward by the Catholic Church. Ways of being, of thinking, of doing, ways of understanding reality were not alien to Christianity. The press, radio, the arts, all cultural life generally, equally respected this way of understanding the meaning of life. This resulted in a kind of stability that facilitated the task of the school and the teacher. It is evidently not the intention of the Comité to idealize the past, but only to recall a situation that existed, and that had both advantages and drawbacks.

9- Many of these values inspired by Christianity are being seriously put to the test not only, according to the Bishops of France, by contemporary ideologies, but by everyday living.⁶ The mass media, openness to the world and to the diversity of lifestyles, and to technology transfer, progress in all areas, the economic crisis, all raise a number of questions. Where is progress to be found? Happiness? Truth?

10- In this context, choosing an opinion becomes more difficult. If life has a meaning, adds the French Conference of Bishops, it does not appear to be written in the nature of things, but rather it is to be discovered among the many interpretations of reality or as emerging out of their confrontation.⁷ And it is about the meaning of life, about values, that Catholic moral and religious education teachers must speak to their pupils, of values that in addition are being challenged in different ways and to varying degrees.

11- First of all, religion itself is being challenged. In particular, secularism has invaded the culture in which all Quebecers live, young and old alike. The result is that, among children and parents as well as among teachers, there are different levels of faith, of indifference and unbelief, which make neither dialogue nor mutual understanding of one another's expectations any easier. These expectations are many; they are often viewed differently

6. Conférence épiscopale française, La catéchèse des enfants, texte de référence, Lourdes 1979, Centurion, p. 16.

7. Ibid., p. 17.

by different people and sometimes misunderstood. It is in the course of its hearings that the Comité catholique is able to spot these misunderstandings. Teachers do not understand the quality of faith expected of them by parents who, at least on the surface, do not seem to the teachers to be practising Catholics or even believers to any great extent. For parents, on the other hand, it is inconceivable that religious education teachers be non-practising or incapable of bearing witness to their faith. Finally, some pupils do not spare their criticism when it comes to teachers who "do not seem to believe what they say, are ill-prepared or teach everything else but religion". These comments must of course be weighted against the praises that are also heard in the course of the hearings. Still, they must be taken seriously.

12- The breakup of families and the questioning of the ways of understanding and experiencing the realities of family life also have a considerable impact on religious education. The growing number of single parent families, increasing divorce rates, family instability, all greatly alter the atmosphere in which the young are educated. To this must sometimes be added other factors such as poverty or too much wealth. Many parents no longer know what to make of religious values, yet they uphold the importance of these values for the children. Thus some children enter kindergarten without having received any Christian upbringing at home.

13- Then there is the blend of students that make up each class. The homogeneous class no longer exists, says the report of the Association québécoise des conseillers au service de l'éducation chrétienne on the status

of teachers.⁸ Schooling is available to all: children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, whether rich or poor, loved or neglected, children with serious learning problems, children from single parent homes. All of these children in search of a meaning to life are confronted with a slew of possible choices, of contradictory views. To give but one example, children are faced with a multiplicity of sects, which relativizes the appeal of the Catholic faith.

14- Religious instruction is given in a school -- usually a confessional school -- that often finds it difficult to define clearly its educational project; a school that is increasingly influenced and conditioned by technology; a school where religious instruction is considered a "minor subject"; finally, a school where the specialized teachers spend little time with their pupils.

15- It is hardly necessary to add that the Church community itself has been shaken by these changes. Quite obviously, the spiritual dimension of the person is becoming blurred. So many activities, so many things to do compete for our attention; the normal constraints of daily life are such that it is difficult to keep one's balance. There is little time left to devote to the spiritual and religious dimensions. Not to mention that a formerly omnipresent Church has today lost much of its visibility, and is thus becoming increasingly alien to the young.

8. Association québécoise des conseillers au service de l'éducation chrétienne, La condition des enseignantes et des enseignants chargés de l'enseignement religieux et de l'enseignement moral au primaire et au secondaire, March 1984, p. 18.

(b) Teacher training, upgrading and retraining

16- A number of problems have to do with the initial training, professional improvement and upgrading of teachers. In the third volume of Voies et impasses, on religious education teachers, the Comité catholique has described at length the problems encountered in this general area. That analysis need not be repeated here, although a number of observations and recommendations remain valid today. However, certain facts have been brought to the attention of the Committee in the course of recent hearings or brought to the fore in several reports to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation on the status of teachers. In light of these facts, the Committee believes it important to draw attention to certain situations directly affecting teacher efforts in the faith education of the young.

17- Clearly, the matter of teacher competence is still the main issue.

18- We should first note that some elementary school teachers are assigned to give religious instruction without having received the proper training during their university years. One report states that most Québec universities do not really offer the concrete possibility of acquiring the preparation that would enable teachers to give Catholic religious instruction or moral instruction.⁹ This lack of training is all the more serious since, for

9. Ibid., p. 11.

one thing, insufficiently prepared teachers are more and more numerous as the years go by and, for another, pedagogical support is increasingly meagre if not totally inexistent in many school boards, owing to personnel layoffs and transfers. Lastly, the sociocultural context described above does not leave much hope that such shortcomings will be attenuated, let alone remedied, by persons in the field or other parties.

19- At the high school level, the complaint most often heard is that teachers without any prior training have had to agree, whether as a complement to their workload or as their main assignment, to give religious education courses. Another complaint is that any teacher in another discipline may teach religion instead and to the detriment of those whose specialization is religious education. Others speak of the "glorification of seniority", adding that although seniority is not necessarily opposed to competence, it is wrong to consider it the major criterion of competency. Finally, a new problem has emerged in recent years: that of teachers specialized in teaching at the high school level, who are then assigned to teach at the elementary school level, without the minimum prior training required. As early as 1978, the Catholic committee had sent a message to the Minister of Education advising him as to possible solutions to the problem of teacher reassignment.¹⁰ Certain

10. Comité catholique, Pour remédier à l'instabilité chez les professeurs d'enseignement religieux et moral au niveau secondaire, July 1978. In 1981, the Committee again broached the subject in Quatre sujets d'actualité pour l'école catholique, June 1981, pp. 2-5.

corrective measures have been taken, but the results have fallen short of a satisfactory solution.

20- Of course, beginning in 1977, there was the Plan de développement relatif à l'éducation chrétienne. This plan was to assist school boards with the immediate training of teachers who had received no prior training in religious education and moral education and who were about to give courses in these disciplines.¹¹ In 1979, a Politique d'appoint was drawn up whose objective was to provide immediate pedagogical assistance to high school teachers who had not been trained to give moral and religious instruction.¹² These initiatives have yielded some results. But it must be pointed out that the assistance brought to school boards by the Politique d'appoint ended in June 1981 and that many of them, especially where the school population is on the decline, are somewhat wary when it comes to infusing funds for the professional improvement of teachers. From one year to the next, school officials are never sure a teacher will be giving courses in his or her field of specialization.

11. . Ministère de l'Éducation, Service de l'enseignement catholique, Plan de développement relatif à l'éducation chrétienne dans les écoles confessionnelles du Québec, p. 69.

12. Ministère de l'Éducation, Service de l'enseignement catholique, Politique d'appoint, Québec, 1979, p. 4.

21- All Catholic moral and religious instruction programs are being revised. Some programs have already been rewritten and are now being implemented. It is unfortunate that changes in the programs imposed by the ministère de l'Éducation are being brought about so fast. It is particularly regrettable that their implementation is being carried out before all the necessary pedagogical tools are made available. The Direction de l'enseignement catholique of the ministère de l'Éducation is no doubt seriously trying to devise an effective strategy for the implementation. Yet school boards are often overburdened and unable to cooperate properly with the people responsible for implementing the programs. In some instances, the person or persons designated by the school board are competent, accomplish their task well and follow up on the work done by the teachers in the field. But it is not always so. For instance, one school board might not send anyone to working sessions on the implementation of the programs; another might send someone who is not up to the task; yet another will name someone who does not have the time to follow up beyond the working session or who simply neglects to do so. It is not difficult to understand that a new program and new teaching guides, however excellent they may be, could eventually be useless should teachers receive no training whatsoever in their proper use.

22- Nor must one neglect the retraining of teachers who not only must adjust to new programs, but at the same time must also teach at another class level. Not to mention the more general need of professional upgrading expressed by the teachers. If one adds to this the ever growing and easily observable trend to cut pedagogical support personnel in religious education,

one gets a clearer picture of the difficult task awaiting teachers who, using the programs and teaching guides, must both give quality religious instruction and foster quality faith education. By the same token, we can understand the frustration and discouragement that lead some to abandon the teaching of religion.

23- Some local communities provide teachers with very dynamic support. In other regions there are serious shortcomings, especially concerning refresher courses for teachers. The support given by parishes appears to be minimal. Still, one must not rule out the possibility that parishes could be asked -- and might just be willing -- to do more.

(c) Elementary school teachers

24- There is a special situation. In principle, they all have the responsibility of giving their pupils confessional moral and religious instruction or moral instruction. But on the grounds of freedom of conscience, they may refuse to give confessional moral and religious instruction. In order to facilitate the exercise of this freedom, the Comité catholique decided, in 1974, to include section 25 in its regulations. This new section granted teachers the right to be exempted from giving religious instruction. Ten years later, there is little doubt that teachers have not availed themselves of this right. According to certain figures the Comité catholique was able to obtain, there are only 1.34% of the teachers who are formally exempt in all of Québec for the 1984-1985 school year. The Committee has been told, however, that in a number of school boards there are many teachers who, in

fact, do not give religious instruction. They have chosen, for instance, to exchange disciplines with other teachers. Since this practice is not current in all Québec regions, one must conclude that the regulations have not yielded all the anticipated results.

25- Does this mean that the number of teachers not wishing to be exempted from teaching religion is less than it was in the 1970s, which was between 20% and 30%?¹³ As it has not recently inquired into the matter, the Committee can give no sure answer. Bits and pieces gathered from the hearings, however, would seem to indicate that the reasons that had then prompted teachers not to ask for exemption still exist today. Given the decline in student population and the atmosphere created by the negotiating process involved in collective agreements, the exemption clause in the regulations has become more difficult to apply. Some school officials do not make it easy for teachers to avail themselves of this right. Some even go so far as to cause administrative harassment on purpose. Teachers are often hesitant to apply for the exemption, since they are quite well aware of the concrete consequences that may befall them or their colleagues. It has also been said that some teachers are urged to abstain from applying for the exemption; in return they may effectively drop religious instruction from

13. Comité catholique, Voies et impasses no. 3, Les maîtres et l'éducation religieuse, 1979, pp. 24-31.

their teaching. Should this situation exist, however infrequently, it is bound to create a climate of untruth, even of hypocrisy, which can in no way be conducive to the faith education of the young.

26- Nor do such attitudes create a favourable and unambiguous situation at the moment of hiring teachers. In 1974, the Comité catholique wrote: "Employers have to inquire into the preparation and the availability of candidates to teach religion. These questions are seldom touched upon when the dossier of a new teacher is examined."¹⁴ A survey, commissioned in 1977 for the Association des commissions scolaires de la région de Montréal, concluded: "Visits to various school boards lead the Comité catholique to believe that there has been little change in the situation since the Committee made that statement. The question of the candidates' preparation and availability in regard to religious instruction remains largely ignored in the hiring process."¹⁵ Apart from a few more or less successful efforts, it would appear that this situation still prevails in hiring practices. Neither of the parties involved in the hiring process is interested in clarifying this situation.

27- A recent decision of the Québec bishops issued in June 1983 has somewhat modified the requirements of religious education at the elementary

14. Ibid., p. 39.

15. Association des commissions scolaires de la région de Montréal, Étude pour la revalorisation de l'école, 1977, p. 43.

level. Henceforth, religious instruction and faith education activities directly leading to the reception of the sacraments is the responsibility of local Christian communities. The task of teachers consists in preparatory catechetical instruction on the sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist and Confirmation. Some teachers said they were happy with the decision. It was even said at one of the hearings that some teachers were willing to return to giving religious instruction, "since they no longer had to prepare the children for the reception of the sacraments or to give witness". Such an interpretation of the bishops' decision is surely arguable, especially after the publication, in May 1984, of the pastoral orientations that Catholic religious instruction must follow. At any rate, not having to give religious instruction directly leading to the reception of the sacraments has been welcomed by some teachers.

28- Another important factor is bound to alter the present state of equilibrium. It is the application of the regulation of the Comité catholique on the choice between Catholic moral and religious instruction, on the one hand, and moral instruction, on the other. The implementation of this choice may well have an impact on teachers' willingness to continue teaching religion. Since moral instruction has become a formal discipline, to be given at set times, regular classroom teachers must release some of their pupils to the care of other teachers and give religious instruction at a given time. Teachers will no longer be able, if ever they were used to doing so, to devote part or all of the time allotted to religious instruction to other disciplines.

29- Finally, if to all of this one adds that, according to some accounts, senior teachers tend to maintain religious instruction, while younger ones -- who often have received no special training to teach religion -- tend to seek exemption, the question of specialized religion teachers will inevitably come to the fore. Will the regular classroom teacher have to choose between giving religious instruction and moral instruction? Or will two specialized teachers, one in religious instruction, the other in moral instruction, be responsible for these courses? These are questions that will be asked more and more frequently. One may expect, then, that sooner or later the situation will reach a point where the ministère de l'Éducation and the school boards will have to find new ways of ensuring that quality religious instruction is given by teachers who wholeheartedly agree to do so.

**(d) The status of high school teachers of
Catholic moral and religious education**

30- As regards Catholic moral and religious education teachers at the high school level, the Comité catholique has recently pointed out the problem created by the application of the rules of seniority. The Committee wishes now to focus on the status of high school teachers who must meet a large number of pupils each week and whose situation has been described in the report released by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation on the status of teachers.¹⁶ As early as 1983, the Committee noted that the high school

16. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, La condition enseignante, 1984, pp. 75-76. (See above, Note 4.)



religion teacher's load was too heavy and suggested possible solutions.¹⁷

31- The Committee does not wish to belabour the point. But it is clear that, with such a load, the faith education of the young is hindered. Let us briefly consider the situation. On a six-day-week schedule a teacher must meet from 10 to 13 groups, or between 300 and 400 pupils. He or she must often make three or four separate preparations for courses to be given to pupils of two or three different age groups; teachers must fine tune their methods and often use different teaching techniques for each group; they must sustain the young in their faith development; they must bend to the various demands of pedagogy and organization. All of which is done within the sociocultural context described above and in often difficult material conditions, such as timetable and locale.

32- It seems obvious to anyone giving the least bit of thought to this situation that under such conditions it is hardly possible to achieve quality religious education, let alone faith education. The latter presupposes at least a minimum amount of knowledge on the part of the pupil, a sufficient amount, in any event, for relevant interaction between pupil and teacher to occur.

33- Whatever one might think, teaching religion is not like teaching mathematics. It presupposes constant personal commitment and demands

17. Comité catholique, Deux questions pressantes pour l'école catholique, June 1983.

considerable involvement since it is a matter of ultimate questions, of questions on the meaning of existence. If one adds to that some very difficult day to day working conditions and the practically non-existent possibilities of professional upgrading and in-service refresher courses, it comes as no surprise to see weary, drained and exhausted teachers bowing out of the field of religious instruction as soon as they can, quitting a field in which they would have been willing to remain under more favourable conditions.

(e) The teacher as witness to the faith

34- The regulations of the Comité catholique stipulate that those who give Catholic religious instruction must adhere to the Catholic faith. But what degree of faith are we talking about? In the course of the hearings, the Committee saw no sign whatever of an emerging consensus on this subject. Parents and children who spoke on the question seemed to expect a dynamic testimony of faith from teachers. The young say what matters is that the teacher "sound as though he believes in it". In other words, the teachers young people respect are those capable of witnessing to their faith. Other speakers think it is above all a matter of transmitting an objective content that complements especially the knowledge and understanding of what is learned and experienced in the home and in the Christian community. If giving religious instruction were seen in this way, there would be less pressure on teachers to bear witness to their faith. A distinction was also drawn between giving religious instruction, which demands serious professional

work on the part of the teacher, and its effects in the pupil's Christian life of faith, which would be primarily the concern of pastoral animation and of pastors.

35- For their part, teachers are often exasperated by the too numerous and heavy burdens that are placed on their shoulders. Besides, teachers may not always view or live their own faith in exactly the same way. Every believer experiences periods of uncertainty in his or her life of faith -- periods of doubt or of more or less prolonged wavering -- without for that matter becoming an agnostic and, in certain cases that are of concern to us, without losing the ability to give valid religious instruction.

36- This concludes the brief survey of questions and problems concerning primarily religion teachers. These matters are difficult ones and have become so important that they can no longer be ignored and that solutions have to be found.

II. The role and responsibility of teachers in charge of Catholic moral and religious instruction

37- In order to solve some of the problems raised in the preceding pages, the Committee would like to propose a few concrete measures. But before doing so, it seems essential to define the characteristics of Catholic moral and religious instruction as it should be given in the classroom. These will also bring to light the corresponding characteristics of the responsibility of the religious education teacher. There is no need to repeat here the

reasoning developed in Religion in Today's School and to justify the teaching of religion in public schools. This seems to be an established and undisputed fact which, besides, is confirmed in the new Act respecting public elementary and secondary education. The matter before us is that of establishing the proper role of moral and religious education and of pointing out its implications for teaching.

38- For this, one must first refer to the position taken by the Catholic Church and situate Catholic moral and religious instruction in the schools in relation to the global effort of all those who are involved in the faith education of young people. Second, an attempt will be made to determine the characteristics of religious education in the schools. Third, the different types of approaches to be used by religion teachers will be examined. Finally, some special demands laid upon teachers of religious education in the schools will be pointed out.¹⁸

18. By religion, religious education or religious instruction "in the schools", the Comité catholique often means in this paper the Catholic moral and religious instruction included in the school curriculum.

**(a) Moral and religious education in the schools:
the ecclesial framework**

Catechetics: responsibility of the church

39- The Church considers faith education one of its fundamental responsibilities. Pope John Paul II reminds us of this when, at the very beginning of his apostolic exhortation Catechesi Tradendae, he says that catechetics has always been considered by the Church one of its most important tasks.¹⁹ He then states two particular objectives: to help initial faith develop and to educate the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and message of Jesus Christ.²⁰

40- It is within this global task that the faith education of the young takes place. To understand clearly the proper role of moral and religious education, it is important to look closely at how the Church itself perceives the role of other parties that contribute to its global catechetical endeavour.

The role of bishops and Christian communities

41- In its document on the pastoral orientations in Catholic religious instruction, and following the lead of John Paul II, the Assembly of Bishops²¹

19. Jean Paul II, Catechesi Tradendae, no. 1.

20. Ibid., no. 9.

21. Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec, op. cit., No. 1.

states that it is the duty of the Church to assist the baptized in the development of their faith. It is a duty that is incumbent notably upon all who are called to pastoral ministry, namely, bishops in their dioceses and priests in the midst of the Christian communities they are appointed to serve. Bishops are therefore responsible for what touches upon the essentials of faith education. In particular, they must clearly define what they want and expect of religion teachers. This they must do by giving precise guidelines that make clear the objectives of Christian education that religious instruction programs in the school must pursue.²² It is their responsibility to assist and support the schools which, by means of the Catholic religious instruction they offer, cooperate with the Church community in the Christian education of the young.

42- The Christian community also has an important responsibility toward young believers. It must support the work of teachers by offering the young a life environment that is conducive to Christian experience and to the celebration of the Christian mystery in and with the Church. The bishops state

22. This responsibility has, in effect, been recognized in a letter from the Minister of Education, Jacques-Yvan Morin, to the President of the Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec on October 22, 1980. The Minister states: "It is appropriate to recognize, in particular, that the Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec, by virtue of the specific responsibility of bishops with respect to content, objectives and the process of faith development that are essential to these programs, has the right to intervene in the elaboration of programs and pedagogical guidelines relating to Catholic religious education."

that the parish -- the local Christian community -- is a privileged environment for catechization. But they equally recognize that in the Church today other forms of groups and associations can offer an environment that is conducive to catechetical instruction. The Comité catholique wholeheartedly endorses these statements. It was in agreement with this idea that in Religion in Today's School No. 2 it described the role of Christian communities.²³ However, it appears that what is urgent today is the implementation of effective means to support teachers and to allow communities to assume more systematically the responsibility for the initiation of young people to Christian celebration and commitment.

The role of the family

43- It is not up to the Comité catholique to dictate to families their proper responsibilities with respect to the religious education of their children. But it must recognize that the efforts demanded of the school and of religious education yield but meagre results without the example of parents or friends celebrating their faith and endeavouring to live their daily lives according to the exigencies of the Gospel. Early childhood in this respect appears crucial. The religious awakening of young children comes about through deeds and shared religious attitudes. But it is above all in the truth of the fundamental option of parents, in the climate that is thus created, that

23. Religion in Today's School No. 2 - Religious Instruction: Rationale, Objectives, Policies, Nos. 46-47.

the deeds become deeds of the heart, attitudes that deeply affect the child. The school may well attempt to fill the void of initial religious education, if need be. But its distinctive role consists in extending, through a more cognitive and structured approach, the initial education in the faith of the Church received in baptism and awakened in the home. It should come as no surprise then, where initial religious education has been neglected, that the school proves powerless to fill the void, especially with respect to the demands of Christian behaviour in everyday life.

44- The responsibility of parents continues when their children enter school. It is expressed first through the choice they make regarding the religious education of their children, who are also made aware of this choice and to whom it must be explained as clearly as possible. Then, children must be supported so that they may remain faithful to their choice and learn to live with other children who do not pursue the same goals in life. As the children grow, the parents must take an interest in the development of their faith as proposed from year to year in the school. They must also share and encourage their involvement in religious celebration and in the faith commitments they will eventually make.

45- Finally, parents must honestly cooperate with the school in the elaboration of a school project that is in tune with their expectations regarding the faith education of their children; they must encourage and support all within the school who have quality faith education at heart, especially religious education teachers. To the best of their ability and careful not to cross

into other peoples' fields of responsibility, parents must, whenever necessary, lend a helping hand to those experiencing difficulty in the accomplishment of their task.

The role of the school

46- The school contributes in many ways to the faith education of the young. It does so most definitely by offering religious education courses. It does so in an important way by providing pastoral animation. And one should not forget either the presence and witness of Christian men and women who, in their various capacities, contribute to the school's excellence; this is without a doubt a significant contribution to the faith education of young people.

47- This contribution could result in some areas -- should the parents request it -- in an educational project integrating the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith. The school Council may also apply to the Comité catholique for the school to be officially recognized as Catholic. Should this come about, it would allow all parties to better identify the special character of their school and to respect its distinctive orientations. The coherence that should result from such a school project would certainly help specific faith education activities produce genuine results.

**(b) Moral and religious education in the schools:
its specific role**

48- All Catholic moral and religious education, whether or not it is school related, is therefore part and parcel of the overall teaching function of the Church with regard to all its members. That is why the primary objective of religious education in the schools is intimately bound to the teaching function of the Church: to assist initial faith in reaching maturity and to educate the true disciple of Christ through deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and message of Jesus Christ. This is what the bishops stress, and quite rightly, in their pastoral orientations for religious education. The objective of religious education in the schools is, therefore, to help nourish and develop the Catholic faith sown in the young at the moment of baptism and nurtured in the family and the Christian community. Seen from the angle of its primary objective, religious education in the schools is most certainly a genuine participation in the general catechetical effort of the Church.

49- It is no less true that Catholic moral and religious education in the schools, precisely because it is given there, acquires a number of distinctive characteristics of its own. The Committee has expanded on this subject in previous publications.²⁴ It may be useful, however, to recall some of the

24. See Religion in Today's School, Nos. 39-88 and Religion in Today's School No. 2 - Religious Instruction: Rationale, Objectives, Policies, Nos. 11-29.

points dealt with. They shed light on the teacher's precise responsibility concerning the religious education to be provided for Catholic pupils.

50- First of all, it is religious education given in the school. As such, it must give priority to the aims of that school, that is, contribute to the education of the person or, in other words, to the process by which the school intends to ensure the total development of the person. Otherwise, religious education would not have its place in the school. The Committee has already shown in the previously mentioned documents that religious education fulfils that requirement. To young persons in search of meaning in their life, it offers significant insight into questions that neither the study of language, nor science and technology, can answer. For religious education in the schools, therefore, the teacher has to adopt an approach to religion and to the teaching of religion that is the same as that of all other disciplines, that is, an educational approach.

51- One of the basic and distinctive aims of the educational approach is to place the pupils at the centre of pedagogical activity. That is why, when the school and, consequently, the teacher offer to provide religious education, they do it first as a service to the Catholic pupils and not as a service to the institution to which they belong, namely, the Church. And if the school does accept the orientations of the Church authorities, it is out of respect for the young people belonging to that Church. By the very fact of attending school, pupils have the right, in view of their integral personal development, to the religious education of their choice. They also have the right to seek the development of their religious dimension, just as much as that of the other

dimensions of their being, within the educational process or through the education provided in the schools.²⁵ It is out of respect for the young that the teacher must offer genuine Catholic instruction in conformity with the official religious education programs approved by the Comité catholique. Catholic religion is taught in schools because it is the religion of the pupil. The teacher must guide children in the knowledge and experience of their religious world because it is their religious world and because it contains an educational dimension that corresponds to human needs and to a fundamental dimension of human beings. Clearly, religious education is not in the school curriculum to satisfy the demands of the Church. It is there for the pupils, to foster their integral education.

52- After having described the educational approach that characterizes religious education in the schools and insisted on the respect due the pupil as a person -- respect that must ever guide the teaching of religion -- it is necessary to specify the conditions that confer genuine educational worth to this educational approach. Programs and teaching guides provide content and essential materials offered the pupils. But it may not be amiss to indicate briefly two fundamental objectives that are to guide teachers in the faith education of the young.

25. See Ministère de L'Éducation, L'école québécoise, énoncé de politique et plan d'action, No. 2.2.16.

53- In the first place, their teaching must ensure a systematic presentation of the person and message of Jesus Christ as a beacon in the search for meaning in the life of the young person. One must not be content to offer purely objective information about the Christian message. The teacher must present this message with continued reference to the young persons' life experiences, to their persisting questions, to their search for meaning in life, to reality, to the world. The teacher must show that the message and person of Jesus Christ constitute a coherent answer to their quest for meaning. It is by means of this special way of learning that religious education in the schools brings the young to an ever more adequate understanding of the Christian mystery.

54- Secondly, the teacher must always present the subject matter in such a way as to encourage the pupils to celebrate their faith with those who share their beliefs and to witness to their faith in everyday life through concrete commitments. Should religious instruction neglect these two requirements, it would no longer be genuine, because it would ignore the needs of the young. Not only do young people need to grow in the knowledge of their faith, they must also translate it into concrete deeds enabling them to celebrate their discovery of faith in community and to make it operative through a commitment to service in the world or in the Church. The age of the youths and a grasp of the learning process will determine whether these experiences or activities should be included in a classroom situation or whether the teachers should only elicit a response in pupils that will be celebrated or carried out elsewhere.

55- To ensure that these fundamental objectives are reached, any undertaking in religious education in the schools should comprise three essential components: knowledge of the Word of God, normally presented in systematic form; the celebration of faith, particularly through the sacraments; and witness to one's faith in everyday life. In addition to a systematic presentation, religious education in the schools should also include, to a greater or lesser extent, elements of each of the last two components; in any event, it should be open to them.

(c) Approaches to moral and religious education in the schools

56- Having explored the distinctive elements of moral and religious education in the schools, the Committee should like to make a few suggestions about appropriate approaches to religious education. On this subject, the previously mentioned pastoral orientations issued by the bishops allow one to take a critical look at the educational and pedagogical achievements of the past two decades.

57- One thing is certain: if teachers in charge of giving moral and religious education in the schools wish to stimulate in the young openness to a meaningful understanding of the Christian mystery, they must be mindful of the process underlying every educational approach, that is, they must make constant reference to the students' life, their experience and their daily living. The Committee fully agrees with the bishops, who stress this

necessity in their pastoral orientations.²⁶ When the bishops say that religious instruction must relate to the day-to-day living of young people and to human experience, they mean to fundamental human experience as also lived by the young in everyday life. Often, the shift from the particular day-to-day experiences to the more general experience does not take place. What happens in such cases is that young people are so caught up in their own individual experiences that they fail to recognize fundamental human feelings and events within their own experiencing. One might say the message does not get through. There exists, then, the danger of spending too much time exploring human experience and day-to-day living of young people and of neglecting the structured presentation of the message proper, of omitting its interiorization and of avoiding concrete commitments. In so doing, the primary objective sought is sidetracked in a confusing maze of pedagogical means. That is why it is important never to forget that helping young people to understand their faith and to reach an ever broader understanding of the mystery of Christ, appears to be the primary and indisputable requirement one is entitled to expect of all Catholic religious education provided in the schools.²⁷

58- This statement does not mean to reduce religious instruction in the schools to merely informational activity. In no way should it preclude an understanding of the Christian mystery that involves a faith commitment.

26. Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec, op. cit., Nos. 21, 33, 37, 45.

27. Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec, op. cit., No. 8.

The statement's intent is to ensure that the method employed will truly attain the objective sought: knowledge of the mystery of Jesus transmitted in a way that places young people face-to-face with their fundamental options. In this way, religious instruction is focused anew on one of the essential objectives of education: to know -- to know how to think and to do, to know how to speak, to live, to be. It is to be hoped on this score that programs, pedagogical methods and other aids will help teachers develop a pedagogy that allows young people progressively to form a basic synthesis of their faith; a synthesis which would influence their career options, their choices, their commitments; a synthesis which would enable them to pursue, as part of a long-term continuing education project, the development and the mature expression of their faith.

59- On this basis, the pedagogy of Catholic religious education should be approached in two privileged directions. The first is inspired by the catechetical approach; the other, while maintaining this dimension, is more didactic. The first seems better suited to elementary school pupils and, on the whole, to those of the first cycle of the secondary level; the didactic approach is more appropriate for the second cycle of the secondary level. Such are the suggestions the bishops' orientations offer on how to reach the objectives of Catholic religious instruction in the schools.

60- How is one to interpret or understand these two approaches? How do they differ? What do they require of teachers?

61- To elucidate these questions, one must refer to the educational approach previously mentioned. To begin with, one may say that whatever the approach or the grade level, religious instruction in the schools must always include the first component, that is, it must always ensure a systematic presentation of the person and message of Jesus Christ, a presentation capable of providing possible answers to young people's search for meaning. As for the other components, whether celebration or commitment, they should be considered valid classroom activities to the extent they are required by the educational task at hand.

62- This is why development of the religious dimension in elementary school children or in high school pupils of the first cycle is hardly conceivable without the integration of religious celebration and commitment in the educational process proper. Otherwise, the education provided would not be adapted to the pupils' age level and would be of little value. In addition, it is the very goal of religious instruction that requires the teacher to provide experiences of this kind for younger children. Certain activities that naturally express one's faith are essential to the learning process. They foster integration, self-appropriation, internalization, in a word, learning. But does this mean that such religious instruction satisfies the requirements the Church has set for the whole of catechetical instruction? The Committee does not believe so, since it is commonly admitted, for instance, that the immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments and for religious celebration generally, is the responsibility of parishes or Christian communities.

63- In other words, with respect to younger children, religious instruction in the schools must be complemented by other activities. Thus the Christian community, the family, and especially pastoral animation share the responsibility of initiating children to the various ways and activities of Christian living. A collective effort appears even more necessary if one considers the sociocultural context outlined at the beginning of this document. It would be unrealistic to require of the teachers more than is implied in their professional teaching activity itself. Is not this the very reason why we have always demanded that pastoral animation be recognized in the schools? It is because pastoral animation plays a special role in faith development, a role that religious instruction is not asked to fulfil.

64- This view of things allows one better to delineate the role of each party in the general catechetical function of the Church. In this way, the proper role of teachers is better understood. Obviously, the shortcomings of one or the other party will at times have to be compensated for. But it is important for teachers, first, to grasp very clearly what only they are able to accomplish and, second, to see what they can do to compensate for a non-existent or inadequate initial religious awakening in the family or for a lukewarm commitment on the part of Christian communities.

65- As far as the second approach is concerned, it has to be more didactic out of respect for the needs of the young at the second cycle of high school, although it will continue to challenge the young in their day-to-day experiences. This approach explores the intellectual, emotional, personal and communal aspects of faith, so as to help young people in their search for

meaning and to allow them to make enlightened faith decisions and free choices, and to form an adequate synthesis of their faith. The approach must remain open to the celebration of the Christian mystery and to bearing witness to the faith. However, it is not in the classroom that children generally bear witness of their faith and celebrate it, but during pastoral activities in the school and in the Christian community.

66- It is no doubt at this level that teachers must remedy the more important shortcomings of the anthropological process, all the while avoiding the other extreme. Although it consists of a more doctrinal content and a more didactic approach, religious instruction given in the schools must be attentive to the reactions of students and allow them to express themselves. This obviously creates some difficulties, especially when teachers have to deal with the young at the secondary level, who are not always spontaneously open to the message of Jesus Christ. Here too, the teacher should be guided by the needs of the pupils and by the pedagogical requirements appropriate for that age group. It is a matter, on the one hand, of responding to the pupils' need to know, to understand, to attain a more explicit understanding of their faith, all of which allows them to make ethical choices and guides them in the search of a life project. On the other hand, it is important to adopt pedagogical methods that allow students to give a more systematic answer to basic questions. Teaching guides are invaluable to the teacher aiming to strike a necessary balance between the need of young people to know the message of Christian revelation and their need to seek the meaning that message has for them in their own lives.

(d) The teacher as believer and witness

67- In the context of our reflection, to pass over the teacher's faith and witness would almost amount to defining the task of a French-language teacher without considering his or her ability or desire to speak the language. It is therefore a task that the Comité catholique must not shirk. True, it is a delicate matter in more ways than one. For it has to do with teachers exercising their profession in a public common school and centres on questions of conscience. Nonetheless, few and far between are those who would not, upon reflection, admit the need to study the problem. It is to the benefit of both teachers and young people to define as clearly as possible reasonable norms on this subject. Otherwise, an existing situation could well become permanent and feed the fires of the sometimes unjustified criticisms of pupils or foster a climate of hypocrisy among teachers. Both of these possibilities would have a deleterious effect on religious instruction proper.

The teacher as believer

68- As regards the heart of the matter, namely, the necessity of faith for the teacher who intends to provide Catholic religious instruction, there is no room for doubt. The Church and the theologians who have studied this question are clear: genuine Catholic religious instruction requires Catholic faith of the teacher who would give it. It is a basic requirement that is valid for the teaching of religion at any level. That is why the Committee maintains this requirement as a necessary condition to teach Catholic moral and religious education courses.

69- One might ask, in the present context of religious evolution in Québec generally and in the teaching profession in particular, whether it is realistic to maintain such a requirement. And whether, from the strictly educational perspective that the Committee favours, it is justifiable. These two questions should be answered in as clear and nuanced a way as possible, and the reasons for this requirement and its educational relevance should be spelled out.

70- The hearings held by the Comité catholique in the various regions of Québec in the past years have revealed a number of things. For one, parents who choose to have Catholic moral and religious instruction for their children expect it to be quality education. For another, the students themselves expect a well constructed course given by teachers, as they put it, "who sound as if they believe in it". These hearings have also revealed that more teachers, especially at the elementary level, admit that they feel uneasy about giving religious instruction. Discussions with elementary school teachers showed that many of these men and women, nevertheless, prefer, for various personal or pedagogical reasons, to continue giving religious instruction to their class. The Committee also believes that, with a bit of flexibility, and provided appropriate solutions are sought in each milieu, teachers able to meet the basic requirement of faith can be found. It is the opinion of the Committee that the demands of parents and students can realistically be met, without impinging on the conscience of teachers who do not feel capable of offering adequate Catholic moral and religious instruction courses. Concrete suggestions in this matter will be made in the final section of this document.

71- Again, can the requirement of faith be founded on or justified by an educational approach? In the preceding pages, it was established that, for religious instruction to be educational, it must not remain content to provide objective information about religion or the Christian message. It must also present this message as a possible and coherent response to the young person's quest, a response in turn capable of generating a free, personal, enlightened and conscious commitment within the Christian perspective. "Similar reasoning leads us to say that an adult asked to undertake the religious instruction of children should have something more than religious knowledge or erudition: he should feel at home in that sphere, have personal experience, be a believer."²⁸

72- One has but to think of elementary school pupils, of their all-encompassing spontaneous reactions, their sense of wonder, their way of seeing things -- which is that of the heart -- to understand that the teachers who would provide quality religious instruction must often expect to find themselves in a situation where they are called upon to bear witness to their faith. For young people have a spontaneous need of expressing through actions and attitudes the religious instruction they receive. It is difficult to see how a teacher could respond to this need without a personal conviction. Finally, does the very essence of teaching require conviction on the part of the teacher?

28. Comité catholique, Religion in Today's School, Québec, 1974, No. 57.

73- At the high school level, the needs of pupils are different, but no less imperative. As they grow older, adolescents feel the need of a more structured understanding of their faith. In their moral and religious instruction courses, they seek to understand, to compare, to scrutinize the sources of their faith, the documents upon which it is based. They expect to find help for interpreting the knowledge and experience they have of themselves, of the world and its manifold realities in relation to the message of Jesus Christ; they expect help for making choices and serious commitments and for attaining coherence in their life. It is difficult to imagine that those who are expected to offer guidance to the young in the thick of this quest, would not themselves have gone a good part of the distance in order to establish their own coherence.

74- There appears to be no other conclusion from all this but that teachers, whether at the elementary or high school level, must be relatively comfortable with their own Catholic faith. In other words, teachers may sincerely agree to give Catholic religious instruction if "in their soul and conscience" they have a positive attitude toward the Gospel and the essentials of the Catholic faith as professed by the Church. A certain realism and common sense lead one to believe that any person providing Catholic religious instruction must be able, as regards the essential tenets of the faith -- for instance, the death and resurrection of Jesus -- to speak about them in personal terms. It seems to the Committee that this is a minimum below which a teacher should, in all due respect, refuse to give religious instruction; which, of course, does not preclude some hesitation, questions, doubts about one or the other Church teaching. What matters above all is that teachers

feel capable of honestly presenting, not what they do or do not believe, but what the Church believes and professes.

The teacher as witness

75- Teachers must be believers; but can they be expected to be witnesses to the faith?

76- What may be expected of them is the testimony typical of those who believe in their subject matter, who deliver it with enthusiasm and who can transmit the motivation it generates in them to their pupils. This is basically what is expected of any teacher: warmth, conviction, enthusiasm for teaching, whatever the subject matter. One must not ask of teachers more than is expected of them as professionals or more than the daily, normal testimony expected of any believer. All the better, obviously, should the teachers' faith commitment move them to do more. It is important to point out clearly that this testimony must flow from their professional teaching activity. There is no place here for that type of intensely personal witness which consists in the display of special spiritual experiences. There are other places more suitable than the classroom for this sort of faith expression.

77- The sort of testimony that is relevant is that of competent teachers who are dedicated to the discipline they teach and who seek to establish an authentic educational rapport with their students. Georges Gusdorf says that teaching is first and foremost establishing a human relation whose meaning

varies with the age and personality of those who come together. This relating, says he, has its proper worth; it is educational independently of the specialized activities that serve as a pretext or are the reason for its existence.²⁹

78- In religious education, the quality of this human relation, of this educational rapport finds its privileged expression in the teacher's ability to present a Christian message that is relevant to the young person, not out of the intention to indoctrinate, but out of the hope of eliciting from the student a personal and freely chosen response. Among some educators, one may readily sense deeply felt convictions that are a source of freedom and foster deliberate and conscious loyalties.

79- It is by respecting their own professional requirements or, one might say, the requirements of professional ethics, that genuine teachers, regardless of the subject matter, become more than transmitters of knowledge; they become inspiring witnesses and guides. According to Gusdorf, one expects teachers not only to have knowledge, but also to witness to the truth and to assert values.³⁰ The Comité catholique does not believe, therefore, that it is going beyond the bounds of professional requirements in asking that

29. Georges Gusdorf, Pourquoi des professeurs?, Paris, Petite bibliothèque Payot, 1977, No. 305, p. 54.

30. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

Catholic moral and religious education teachers bear witness to the truth of the Gospel and the faith of the Church, and endorse human and Christian values.

80- To conclude, the Committee would hope that every young person come into contact with teachers capable of bearing such witness in their religious instruction courses. Without taking anything away from the important and essential testimony of parents, the Christian community and the pastoral animator, a teacher's testimony, stemming from deeply felt and well structured religious instruction, is irreplaceable. One has but to hear the way young people speak of such teachers, to dispel any doubt on this score. According to Jossua, witness consists, above all, in extended loyalty to being and in brief opportunities of expressing the secret of one's life.³¹

III. Planning and development

81- After having described the problems affecting religious education teachers and defined the latter's role and responsibility, the Comité catholique would now wish more specifically to propose some adjustments and improvements concerning the school environment. Particular consideration is given to the institutional framework. This is not to deny that other persons, notably parents or other institutions, like Christian communities, must make

31. J.P. Jossua, La condition du témoin, Paris, Cerf, 1984, p. 63.

their contribution to help teachers with their task. These suggestions reflect the many observations made by teachers to the Committee in recent years.

82- With these various suggestions, the Comité catholique hopes to contribute in the most concrete way possible to the solution of a variety of problems facing teachers. In so doing, it does not intend to replace those who are directly responsible for determining the overall conditions concerning religious instruction and religion teachers. The Committee simply wishes to assume its own responsibility with respect to religious education and religion teachers in Québec public schools.

(a) The training of elementary school teachers

83- Ever since the closing of teachers colleges, initial training for Catholic religious education teachers has been in search of a valid solution. Efforts have been made here and there, with rather limited success. In 1974, the Comité catholique proposed a number of recommendations.³² The results have not been entirely satisfactory. There is no need to undertake yet another in-depth analysis of the situation. It is enough to point out the following facts. In general, universities offer only a variety of optional courses concerning doctrinal content, the pedagogy of religious instruction, or psychology. It should also be noted that these optional courses form part of a

32. Comité catholique, Voies et impasses No. 3, Les maîtres et l'éducation religieuse, 1979, Nos. 44-73.

very large pool, which thus reduces the probability that they will be chosen or that they will be given, owing to an insufficient number of students registering for the courses. As a result, very few prospective teachers have taken one or another of the optional courses; but even those who did, did not necessarily receive adequate training. This situation cannot continue in an educational context where the law makes it mandatory to give Catholic religious instruction in Québec schools, and makes it possible for institutions to be officially recognized as Catholic. This law, may it be pointed out, contains provisions whose intent is to respect the expressed will of the majority of parents.

84- To this day there is a prevailing custom in Québec to the effect that regular classroom teachers at the elementary level provide Catholic moral and religious instruction to their pupils. This practice has pedagogical advantages that are frequently mentioned by teachers themselves in the course of the regional hearings held by the Committee. It is true that the Committee has encouraged the exemption of teachers from giving religious instruction courses where the teachers do not provide instruction in accordance with the Committee's regulations or where their freedom of conscience requires it. But such exemptions have never invalidated the general rule.

85- Will the new Act respecting public elementary and secondary education change this custom? The Comité catholique does not believe so. The law recognizes that, on the one hand, the pupil has a right to choose between Catholic moral and religious instruction, Protestant moral and religious

instruction or moral instruction and, on the other, that teachers may exercise their right to refuse to give moral and religious instruction according to the tenets of a particular religious denomination. Given these provisions, the Committee sees it as part of the normal duties of an elementary school teacher to give Catholic moral and religious instruction, Protestant moral and religious instruction, or moral instruction.

86- As a result, the person studying to become an elementary school teacher must necessarily acquire the ability to teach one of these three subjects. This means that university programs must provide training in these disciplines and that each future teacher's program must necessarily include the required credits for at least one of the disciplines. In an area such as this, it appears absolutely essential that teachers be given adequate preparation. There must then be effected a fundamental readjustment of perspectives in the policy document entitled La formation des maîtres de l'éducation préscolaire et de l'enseignement primaire,³³ which continues to serve as a guideline for universities. It is also important that this policy regarding the training and proficiency of teachers, which is presently being elaborated, take into account this new objective of teacher training.

33. Ministère de l'Éducation, La formation des maîtres de l'éducation préscolaire et de l'enseignement primaire, Québec, October 1977, code 37-2548.

87- In order to reach this objective, the Comité catholique believes it is first necessary that future teachers be well informed on all confessional aspects of our school system. In addition, they must acquire the necessary competence to teach at least one of the three previously named disciplines authorized by the law.

88- Furthermore, by virtue of the powers conferred upon it by section 22 of the Act respecting the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, the Comité catholique will establish qualification requirements for teachers giving Catholic moral and religious instruction. Universities will have to certify that graduating students have successfully received a university level formation that includes a synthesis of the essential contents of the Catholic faith. In addition, theoretical and practical training will be required of teachers in the Catholic moral and religious instruction program at the elementary level. This training is, of course, minimal but nonetheless sufficient to enable them to understand and teach the program.

89- In order to meet the minimal requirements of the Comité catholique, universities must provide this training. Now that the debate has revealed that the majority of Quebecers want religious instruction and that a recent survey has confirmed the fact,³⁴ it should be more pressing for individual universities to respond to the population's wishes by setting up a program of teacher training for that purpose. Finally, it is a secret to no one that the vast majority of future teachers have received no religious training since the

34. See Le Devoir, September 8, 1984, Section 5.

end of their high school years and have grown in a cultural climate that does not support Christian convictions as much as it once did. These facts merely add to the reasons the Committee already has to set specific qualification requirements for future Catholic moral and religious education teachers. In any case, it would hardly be normal for teachers to give courses in a discipline that is part of the general education of pupils, without having received the proper training during their teacher-training years.

Recommendations

1. That the Minister of Education see that the new teacher training and professional improvement policy render mandatory adequate preparation of future elementary school teachers to give either Catholic moral and religious instruction or moral instruction.
2. That, in order to comply with the regulatory requirements of the Comité catholique, future elementary school teachers have the genuine possibility of acquiring, during their teacher-training years, a synthesis of the essential tenets of the Catholic faith, as well as a theoretical and practical introduction to the Catholic moral and religious instruction program.
3. That the course on the Québec school system required to obtain a teaching permit include as compulsory:
 - . appropriate information on the confessional aspects of our school system;

those elements of information that make it clear to the future elementary school teachers that they will have to give either Catholic moral and religious instruction or Protestant moral and religious instruction or moral instruction.

(b) The hiring of teachers

90- As stated in the first part of this document, school board officials have seldom in the past taken into consideration the regulatory requirements of the Comité catholique when hiring teachers. By virtue of the new Act respecting public elementary and secondary education, the Committee will amend its regulations. It is certain that at the very least it will require of those who will have to give Catholic moral and religious instruction, to acquire the previously mentioned training and to belong to the Catholic faith. Obviously, it will be left to the school principal when teacher assignments are made, to see that teachers meet the qualification requirements demanded by the Comité catholique, as stipulated in the second paragraph of section 97 of the Act.³⁵

35. The second paragraph of section 97 of the Act respecting public elementary and secondary education stipulates the following: "The principal shall also satisfy himself that every teacher he assigns to Catholic or Protestant moral and religious values instruction and every professional he assigns to pastoral care and guidance or religious care and guidance has the qualifications required by the Catholic or the Protestant committee, as the case may be".

91- Still, this provision is insufficient. It is equally during the hiring process that school boards must pay heed to the regulations of the Comité catholique. If they wish to respond adequately to the needs of their Catholic pupils, they must hire teachers who have acquired the necessary training. Otherwise, they would be shirking part of their responsibility. It is indeed important to ensure that Catholic moral and religious instruction be given under the best possible pedagogical conditions. It has also been ascertained that, in the opinion of teachers themselves, it is preferable that at the elementary school level Catholic moral and religious instruction be given by the regular classroom teacher. The Committee hopes, therefore, that school boards will seriously consider teacher competency during the hiring process.

92- In the opinion of the Committee, this requirement at the time of hiring does not in any way violate the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. According to the terms of section 20 of the Charter, it is a matter of employment qualification requirements. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine that a teacher could satisfactorily give quality Catholic moral and religious instruction without the minimal training required. The Comité catholique has the right to set the requirements of this minimal training, since the law empowers it to draw up regulations respecting the qualification of the teaching personnel giving Catholic moral and religious instruction.³⁶ Consequently, school boards must require that the persons they hire to give,

36. Act respecting the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, section 22.

among other things, Catholic moral and religious instruction, comply with the qualification requirements set by the regulations of the Comité catholique.

93- Finally, it appears that the task of the person responsible for the support mentioned in section 302 of the new Act must include a specific responsibility with respect to the hiring process of teachers having to give Catholic moral and religious instruction.³⁷

Recommendations

4. That the job description and the hiring conditions of the support person mentioned in section 302 of the Act respecting public elementary and secondary education indicate a specific responsibility in the hiring of teachers having to give Catholic moral and religious instruction.
5. That the school boards see at the time of hiring that the candidates having to give Catholic moral and religious instruction fulfil the regulatory requirements of the Comité catholique.

37. The first paragraph of section 302 of the Act respecting public elementary and secondary education stipulates the following: "The school board shall appoint a person responsible for administrative support to Catholic schools and for services of moral and religious values instruction and pastoral care and guidance to the Catholic pupils of the schools in its territory; that person must be a member of the executive staff and be authorized by the bishop of the diocese in which the corporate seat of the school board is situated".

(c) The right to refuse to give religious instruction

94- In Québec, elementary school teachers must generally give all the subjects pertaining to what is called general education. Both moral and religious instruction and moral instruction are among these subjects. However, in 1974, the Comité catholique provided in section 25 of its regulations that teachers be exempt from giving religious instruction if they so requested for reasons of freedom of conscience or if they persisted in giving religious instruction that was not in conformity with the requirements stipulated in the regulations. Henceforth, it is the law that grants teachers the right to refuse to give moral and religious instruction of a given religious denomination on the grounds of freedom of conscience.

95- The Committee considers it particularly important that sections 35 and 36 of the new Act be diligently applied.³⁸ The quality of religious

38. Sections 35 and 36 of the Act respecting public elementary and secondary education stipulate the following:

"35. Every teacher has a right to refuse to give instruction in religious and moral values of a religious denomination on the grounds of freedom of conscience.

No teacher may be dismissed, suspended or disciplined for exercising his right under this section.

36. A teacher wishing to exercise his right to refuse to give instruction in religious and moral values of a religious denomination shall so inform the principal, in writing.

The right is exercisable before 1 April for the next school year.

A staff member's refusal to give instruction in religious and moral values of a religious denomination stands until the principal receives notice in writing to the contrary."

instruction is also at stake here. The teacher's freedom of conscience has to be recognized not only because of an inalienable right of the teacher, but also because of the student's right to quality religious instruction.

96- Experience has taught the Committee that the exercise of this right is fraught with difficulties. On the one hand, teachers often wish to continue giving religious instruction even though they are not comfortable doing so. The reasons are manifold: personal or pedagogical, real or perceived. On the other hand, school administrators do not always facilitate the exercise of this right, since they sometimes complicate school organization considerably. If school administrators can hinder the exercise of the right to refuse, it also happens that teachers hinder the right to manage of administrators who, seeing a teacher's uneasiness with religious instruction, would like to have him or her relinquish it. The attitudes of both sides are most often damaging to the quality of religious instruction and to the climate of good relations that must exist in a school. Means must, therefore, be taken to ensure that Catholic moral and religious instruction be given by teachers who quite willingly and in conscience accept to provide it. School officials must give serious thought to teacher requests for exemption from Catholic religious instruction.

97- At times, this request will be made by teachers who object not so much for personal reasons but because they feel insufficiently prepared, poorly supported and, consequently, insecure in teaching a program they do not master.

98- In this case, it is possible that with a minimum of support or assistance a teacher would prefer to continue providing religious instruction to the pupils of his or her class. This assistance or support is given by the person specifically assigned to the task, a pedagogical counselor, another teacher at the same class level who is better qualified, or by the person in charge of pastoral animation.

99- When it is a question of freedom of conscience, school officials must do their utmost both to find ways of respecting a teacher's right and at the same time to safeguard, as much as possible, the excellent pedagogical practice of having the regular classroom teacher give all general subjects. Here are some suggestions as to how this could be done:

- . Where there is a sufficient number of pupils, there could be homogeneous classes, that is, classes containing pupils who have made the same choice. A teacher agreeing to give Catholic moral and religious instruction would be assigned to the group that has chosen to receive it; another teacher preferring to give moral instruction would be assigned to the group that has chosen to take this course.
- . Where the number of teachers availing themselves of section 35 is higher than the number of teachers required to respond to the needs of the pupils who have opted for moral instruction, various situations may arise. First of all, moral instruction should be given by these teachers, rather than by teachers specialized in other disciplines who would do so to complete their teaching load.

Another way which exists in a number of schools and often works quite smoothly, is that of having regular classroom teachers, whether at a same or at a different class level, exchange subject matters. These exchanges may be multiplied at will, depending on teacher creativeness and the spirit of collaboration among the teaching staff. For, if it is in the interest of the pupils, it is certainly worth the while to make the effort of considering such exchanges. The Committee has heard of the following instance. In a school comprising nine classes, four out of nine teachers prefer not to give religious instruction; two regular classroom teachers have accepted an exchange of subjects so as to give religious instruction in the classes of the exempted teachers. This is but an example; one may readily imagine that many kinds of arrangements could be arrived at if the problem were approached in a flexible way.

Finally, where these initially attempted solutions prove insufficient, there is the possibility of hiring a specialized teacher to give Catholic moral and religious instruction. In this case, school board officials must see that this teacher have sufficient training, in accordance with the regulations of the Comité catholique.

Where teachers who are ill at ease or incompetent in their teaching do not wish to exercise their right to refuse, the principal, in order to protect the right of the pupils, should exercise the right of management and assign religious instruction to other teachers. But he or she should not do so before having examined with the teachers concerned

the true reasons for their refusal and having made reasonable efforts to have the teachers exercise their right to refuse.

100- To conclude, the Committee should like to point out that the exercise of the right to refuse may equally be invoked at the high school level. This would be the case, particularly, where high school teachers are asked to accept Catholic moral and religious instruction to complete their teaching load. School officials must see that the exercise of the right to refuse on the grounds of freedom of conscience be respected. Special attention must equally be given to teachers specialized in religious instruction at the high school level but who, for reasons of conscience, feel they are no longer able to give Catholic moral and religious instruction as they should. Here too, solutions that respect the rights of both teacher and pupils must be preferred.

Recommendations

6. That school officials take the necessary means:
 - . to respect fully the teachers' right to refuse to give Catholic moral and religious instruction on the grounds of freedom of conscience;
 - . to guarantee the right of pupils to receive quality catholic moral and religious instruction.

7. That school officials, in order to replace teachers exercising their right to refuse to give Catholic moral and religious instruction at the elementary level on the grounds of freedom of conscience, choose solutions allowing, as much as possible, other regular classroom teachers to give Catholic moral and religious instruction.

(d) The concrete task of the Catholic moral and religious education teacher at the high school level

101- In the first part of this document, the Comité catholique made a brief survey of problems described in a prior study and confirmed by the report of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation. It now wishes to put forward one or more concrete solutions aimed essentially at reducing the number of groups assigned religious education teachers. It is important to note that the Committee's preference for a given solution does not detract from the worth of other possibilities. Moreover, the Committee believes that the solution it prefers may be modified in a number of ways that could render its application quite flexible.

102- Essentially, the solution that the Comité catholique proposes would have the teacher who gives Catholic moral and religious instruction or the one who gives moral instruction also offer the pupils one or two other subjects, preferably in the same general field. In this instance, it would be personal and social development, and perhaps career orientation.

103- One must not think that the Committee wishes to claim the exclusive right to these programs for religious education or moral education teachers. It is obvious that other teachers can also give these courses, just as a religious education teacher may well be capable of teaching a subject other than the ones previously mentioned. But it seems obvious to the Committee that these subjects are more closely related to the type of training or experience acquired by a moral and religious education teacher. Experiences of this kind are going on in various school boards and, it would seem, with good results. Concrete applications of this solution may vary from one school board to another. The Committee has noticed, for instance, that in some areas each course is taught every week according to the number of periods allotted each subject. In another, each subject is taught in units so as to have, for example, a unit in religious instruction at the beginning of the school year, followed by a unit in personal and social development, then by another in career education and, to end the school year, a final unit in religious instruction.

104- This solution, in the opinion of the Committee, offers many advantages. It is, first of all, possible within the framework of collective agreements or other work agreements. It does not require any changes in programs which, for the most part, have just come into effect or are about to. Nor does it displace program objectives or do away with the specific character of each program. It allows students to have a continuing relationship with the same teacher in courses that pursue related objectives with respect to personal development. It also reduces notably the number of groups and thus allows for a better educational relationship with pupils. It seems to please many

teachers concerned. It can avoid repetitious teaching that could occur where different teachers occasionally give courses with complementary objectives. One may recall, for example, the section on sexuality in the personal and social development program, and elements of Christian ethics on the same topic. Finally, it offers the possibility of trying new arrangements, new ways of teaching these subjects, while holding to the objectives proper to each one.

105- Doubtless this solution also has its conditions. The main one is to oblige the teacher giving moral and religious instruction to undertake the required training to provide these courses with competence. This development may be resented by some teachers. But, according to the report of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation on the status of teachers, it would seem that manifold competence at the high school level will be preferable in the future even though some subjects at the Secondary III, IV and V levels demand greater competence and more specialized studies. It could also be beneficial for teachers not to be limited to only one subject, and for pupils to see that their teacher gives courses in other disciplines.

106- Other solutions are also possible. The creativity of the various localities can find ways to try them and to make them work. The Committee is not opposed in principle to any other solution which would comply with the requirements of its regulations and with the essential objectives of the various religious instruction programs.

Recommendation

8. That, at the high school level, school boards see that teachers giving Catholic moral and religious instruction or those giving moral instruction also be allowed to give their pupils one or two other courses, preferably in the same subject area.

(e) The professional improvement of the Catholic moral and religious education teacher

107- The following observations will broach but a few of the concrete problems relating to the professional improvement of religious education teachers. The Comité catholique believes that, if progress could be made on the points it has singled out, the quality of religious instruction would be much improved and teachers would feel more comfortable in providing religious education.

108- During the course of the hearings, the members of the Committee often heard teachers say that professional upgrading in religious education was becoming increasingly rare. For a variety of reasons that are often quite understandable, resources for teacher improvement have been used to the benefit of other disciplines. This is explained in large part by the appearance of new programs in most disciplines. The proven weakness of pupils in subjects as important as English and mathematics have created an emergency situation calling for the need of in-service courses for teachers. While it

understands this situation, the Comité catholique expresses the hope that, within the next five years, a budget will be determined for teachers giving religious instruction, and a number of hours for in-service courses will be provided in proportion to the amount of time allowed for religious instruction in the overall distribution of teaching-time. The Committee hopes that this rule will apply to the elementary as well as to the high school level.

109- Once this objective is attained, efforts to upgrade religious education should centre around the situations mentioned in the following paragraphs.

110- In the next two or three years, all Catholic moral and religious education programs will have been totally renewed. Teachers will therefore have to adapt to offer better defined programs containing essential and compulsory objectives. The Direction de l'enseignement catholique has devised a system of implementation for each program. The Comité catholique hopes school boards will ensure that, when a new program is being introduced, teachers concerned have been allowed, or will be later, to upgrade their skills or take appropriate in-service courses. Otherwise, the great efforts made to ensure better programs will be partially neutralized for lack of teacher training. It would undoubtedly be preferable to delay the introduction of a new program rather than to improvise its application. On this score, the Comité catholique believes it is very important that the persons chosen by school boards to attend sessions organized by the Direction de l'enseignement catholique on program implementation, be competent and truly available. These persons must in turn organize similar sessions for school

teachers. There should be no need to insist on the necessity for the teachers concerned to be granted the time needed in order to attend these sessions.

111- Because of the high rate of teacher transfers in recent years, it often happens that teachers must offer a moral and religious instruction program they have never taught before. In order that these changes not be made to the pupils' disadvantage, the Committee would hope teachers receive a retraining necessary to assimilate properly the requirements of the program. The Committee proposes, in its regulations on the requirements of teacher qualification, to render compulsory some upgrading for all non-specialized teachers who must offer a new religious instruction program.

112- In recent years, decreasing pupil enrolment has particularly affected high schools. Some regions have been spared, but many others have felt the shock of shrinking numbers, to the point that some teachers have been transferred from high school to elementary school. These teachers are offered a rapid, eight-day retraining covering all subject matters generally. The Committee thinks this upgrading is insufficient in the case of religious instruction. For, more often than not, these teachers have not received adequate training in religious education, and some of them have not had any at all. Moreover, most have never given religious instruction. For all these reasons, the Committee believes it essential to require, if these teachers are to give religious instruction, that they receive a retraining of at least 15 hours. These teachers would be in the same situation as those who must provide religious instruction for the first time. As recommended by the Conseil

supérieur de l'éducation, the time teachers devote to upgrading should be considered part of their overall workload.³⁹

113- In 1978, the Comité catholique made certain recommendations to the Minister of Education and to the Fédération des commissions scolaires catholiques du Québec, in view of finding a solution to the high turnover among high school moral and religious education teachers.⁴⁰ These recommendations were made to improve collective agreements on this point. Since then, the Comité has moved beyond job seniority as the sole basis of guaranteed employment. Thus in the present collective agreement, under 5-3.19, there is now a competency criterion. This section of the agreement stipulates that "the teacher who holds a diploma which does not mention a specialty shall be considered competent to teach pupils other than those with learning and emotional problems either at the elementary level as a homeroom teacher or at the secondary level in the general instruction disciplines other than physical education, music, plastic arts and computer science".

39. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, Vers des aménagements de la formation et du perfectionnement des enseignants du primaire et du secondaire, commentaires sur un projet ministériel, Sept. 1984, p.28 (50-336).

40. Comité catholique, Pour remédier à l'instabilité chez les professeurs d'enseignement religieux et moral au niveau secondaire, July 1978, reprographié 787912.

A teacher having taught part-time for at least one year in a given discipline and within the last ten years is also presumed to comply with the requirements of the discipline.

114- The Comité catholique considers these criteria based on competency clearly insufficient. The specialized teacher giving religious instruction at the high school level must normally have taken, in addition to basic psychopedagogical training, university courses equivalent to 60 credits in theology or catechetics.

115- The Committee understands that it is perhaps not possible for teachers coming from other disciplines and now assigned to religious instruction to comply perfectly with these requirements. Teachers should however receive a retraining of at least 15 hours for each of the programs they must give. Moreover, it would be desirable that they receive regular guidance, either from a counselor or from another teacher specialized in religious education.

116- Finally, the Committee notes that, for the past few years, it has become increasingly difficult to use pedagogical days for retraining purposes or for refresher courses. These days are filled with various other useful and necessary activities. School officials must therefore think of offering, even during normal working hours, refresher courses and updating sessions which have become necessary either because of program changes or because of new teaching assignments.

117- It is the duty of the person responsible for confessional support services to see particularly to the various development needs of religious education teachers. He or she must see that the quality of religious instruction is maintained in the schools. Within the linguistic school board, it is he or she who must see that the regulations of the Comité catholique are respected, especially those concerning the qualification of religious education teachers.

Recommendations

9. That, within five years, a budget and a number of hours for professional improvement be granted to teachers giving Catholic moral and religious education, in proportion to the amount of time allotted for religious instruction with respect to the overall distribution of teaching time.
10. That school boards take the necessary means to see that teachers who must offer a program of religious instruction now being implemented upgrade their skills or take appropriate proficiency courses, and that participation in these activities be compulsory.
11. That school boards organize, for all non-specialized religious education teachers who must offer for the first time a program of Catholic moral and religious instruction, proficiency courses of at least 15 hours, and that attendance at these courses be compulsory.

12. That school boards organize, for teachers who have been transferred from the high school to the elementary school level and who must give Catholic moral and religious instruction, proficiency courses of at least 15 hours, and that attendance at these courses be compulsory.
13. That a specialist teacher in another discipline, who is assigned to provide Catholic moral and religious instruction at the high school level, be given proficiency courses of at least 15 hours for each program he or she will give.

(f) Teacher support

118- Giving Catholic moral and religious instruction has always been a delicate task, and often a difficult one. Without demanding special treatment for these teachers, it appears to the Committee that a special kind of support must be given them. There are various reasons why this is so. One must remember that at the elementary school level younger teachers have not had adequate and appropriate preparation for religious instruction during their training. One should also be realistic and note that the social and cultural environment in which both teacher and pupil live is less supportive of the pedagogical action of teachers than it once was.

119- For all of these reasons, the Comité catholique believes it necessary to make some concrete suggestions in view of assisting teachers. The

proposals are addressed to various categories of people who have some responsibility, be it great or small, in this area.

120- In principle, at the school board level, the new law ensures teacher support: it is to be found in the person responsible for administrative support to Catholic schools and for services of moral and religious values instruction and pastoral care and guidance. This person will henceforth play a key role in all confessional aspects of the school system. The Committee will, in due time, explicate the essential role of this person. As of now, one must insist that this person have the possibility, by means of budget allocations and a competent staff, of ensuring real and effective teacher support.

121- Each school principal can also give needed support and encouragement by insisting, for instance, that a reasonable share of the sums allotted for professional proficiency be set aside for upgrading in religious education.

122- In their pastoral orientations, the bishops have expressed the will to assist and support schools.⁴¹ Depending on the diocese, various initiatives have been taken to assist either the persons responsible for Christian education at the school board level, pastoral animators, or even the teachers themselves. The persons that, in the future, will be responsible for the assistance and support previously mentioned, will pay particular attention to these initiatives. They will doubtless attend personally, or through their immediate aides, the diocesan meetings to which they will surely be invited. Such

41. Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Québec, op.cit., No. 12.

meetings foster the sharing of concerns among persons responsible for this support. These meetings also offer the opportunity to become better acquainted with the pastoral orientations of both the diocese and the bishop from whom the support persons have received their mandate. Sometimes a diocese will offer spiritual renewal sessions for pastoral animators and moral and religious education teachers. The person responsible for teacher support must encourage the personnel working for the various confessional services to take advantage of these opportunities. He or she shall also see to smoothing the way, so that they may be allowed to attend. The person responsible for teacher support shall also take note of diocesan resources for teacher improvement. Resource persons are not always easy to find to organize teacher proficiency sessions. It would be to the advantage of the person responsible for teacher support to organize such proficiency sessions in cooperation with diocesan officials.

123- Teachers also need parental support if their work in the schools is to bear all its fruit. This support is indispensable and cannot exist unless the school, through its principal, its teachers and its pastoral animator, sees that parents receive the necessary information relating to religious education programs and to the choice they must make -- in association with their child -- between Catholic moral and religious instruction, and moral instruction. Otherwise, parents may lose interest, and the assistance they could provide would be very meagre, not to say non-existent. The teacher would then be unable to count on the support parents could have given had they been sufficiently informed about how their child was doing in religious instruction.

Recommendations

14. That, in order to apply the law, school boards grant the person responsible for support of confessional services suitable means (time, budget, staff) to ensure real and effective pedagogical support to Catholic moral and religious education teachers.
15. That the school principal, in cooperation with teachers and the pastoral animator, see that parents receive appropriate information regarding Catholic moral and religious instruction and pastoral animation.
16. That school boards recognize the following as normal tasks of the person responsible for administrative support to Catholic schools and for services of moral and religious values instruction and pastoral care and guidance:
 - . to attend, along with his or her immediate collaborators, meetings organized by the diocese for persons responsible for various confessional services of school boards;
 - . to foster the presence of Catholic moral and religious education teachers and pastoral animators at spiritual renewal sessions organized by the diocese;
 - . to organize occasionally, in cooperation with the diocese, professional improvement sessions for teachers.

(g) Practical suggestions

124- In view of improving the quality of Catholic moral and religious instruction, the Comité catholique wishes to add a few other suggestions. These have to do especially with pedagogical material, the quality of the environment and certain other practical measures that could render the task of teachers much easier.

125- The first has to do with the implementation of the new programs. On this subject the Committee agrees with the recommendations of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation on the status of teachers. The Council recommends: "That, with concern for pedagogical coherence and effectiveness, a curriculum should become mandatory only when all the conditions required for its successful application have been assembled, particularly with respect to the training of teachers, availability of the pedagogical guide, textbooks, teaching material and evaluation instruments".⁴² However, given the existence of teaching guides that are often quite elaborate and of good quality, and the need felt by many teachers to apply the new programs immediately, the application of the programs may be authorized without the textbooks being available. It would nevertheless be highly desirable that pupils have one.

42. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, The Conditions of Teaching, 1984, p. 17, No. 18.

126- The importance of the classroom for elementary school children is well known. This is particularly true when it comes to religious or moral instruction. This is why special care must be taken to ensure that a group which, because of its size, has to leave the regular classroom to go for religious or moral instruction, have the benefit of a room reserved for that purpose.

127- Moreover, Catholic moral and religious education teachers at the high school level should have their own classroom. Thus, teachers who use more elaborate teaching material will be spared the coming and going from one classroom to another and the lugging of all their material all day long.

128- With the introduction of the choice between Catholic moral and religious instruction, and moral instruction, some elementary school teachers have drawn the attention of the Committee to a trend that exists in some areas: under the pretext of avoiding continual moving to and fro all day long, religious instruction and moral instruction are given during the last period of the day. Once again, it is not a matter of claiming special treatment. However, both the importance of these subjects, which deal with values and the meaning of life, and the relative difficulty of teaching them, should persuade the people responsible to insert them at the most suitable time in the pupils' timetable.

CONCLUSION

129- In the wake of the reforms affecting the world of education in general and of religious education in particular, the Comité catholique has attempted, through this report, to underscore the irreplaceable role of the Catholic moral and religious education teachers and to help them accomplish their task with enthusiasm and under the best possible conditions.

130- The Committee knows how difficult a task that is. The vastly increased number of religious groups and the multiplicity of values make it difficult to identify the fundamental demands of the Catholic faith. They further make people hesitate to belong openly to a Church perceived, rightly or wrongly, as not understanding sufficiently the realities of the times. Because of this, many teachers are tempted to abandon such an exacting task, where they are not always supported as they ought to be.

131- In this context, the Comité catholique thought it necessary first to analyse the problems teachers must face every day. It then appeared necessary to the Committee to delineate accurately the distinct responsibility of teachers in the faith education of the young: neither total nor marginal, but complementing at once that of parents and of the Church community. This responsibility has its proper requirements with respect both to the young to be educated and to teachers. The teacher must present the message and person of Jesus Christ in a way that will allow the young to perceive them as an answer to their quest for meaning, an answer that will lead them to celebrate with their brothers and sisters and to bear witness to their faith

through concrete commitments. It is directly from this task that are derived the requirements that may be formulated concerning the competence and faith of the teacher.

132- Finally, the Comité catholique feels it is its duty to indicate a number of measures required to comply with government decisions to guarantee quality religious education. Such a commitment by the government would be illusory if its recommendations were to be ignored, especially those concerning the initial training of future teachers and the improvement of presently active ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Minister of Education see that the new teacher training and professional improvement policy render mandatory adequate preparation of future elementary school teachers to give either Catholic moral and religious instruction or moral instruction.
2. That, in order to comply with the regulatory requirements of the Comité catholique, future elementary school teachers have the genuine possibility of acquiring, during their teacher-training years, a synthesis of the essential tenets of the Catholic faith, as well as a theoretical and practical introduction to the Catholic moral and religious instruction program.
3. That the course on the Québec school system required to obtain a teaching permit include as compulsory:

- . appropriate information on the confessional aspects of our school system;
 - . those elements of information that make it clear to the future elementary school teachers that they will have to give either Catholic moral and religious instruction or Protestant moral and religious instruction or moral instruction.
4. That the job description and the hiring conditions of the support person mentioned in section 302 of the Act respecting public elementary and secondary education indicate a specific responsibility in the hiring of teachers having to give Catholic moral and religious instruction.
 5. That the school boards see at the time of hiring that the candidates having to give Catholic moral and religious instruction fulfil the regulatory requirements of the Comité catholique.
 6. That school officials take the necessary means:
 - . to respect fully the teachers' right to refuse to give Catholic moral and religious instruction on the grounds of freedom of conscience;
 - . to guarantee the right of pupils to receive quality Catholic moral and religious instruction.

7. That school officials, in order to replace teachers exercising their right to refuse to give Catholic moral and religious instruction at the elementary level on the grounds of freedom of conscience, choose solutions allowing, as much as possible, other regular classroom teachers to give Catholic moral and religious instruction.
8. That, at the high school level, school boards see that teachers giving Catholic moral and religious instruction or those giving moral instruction also be allowed to give their pupils one or two other courses, preferably in the same subject area.
9. That, within five years, a budget and a number of hours for professional improvement be granted to teachers giving Catholic moral and religious education, in proportion to the amount of time allotted for religious instruction with respect to the overall distribution of teaching time.
10. That school boards take the necessary means to see that teachers who must offer a program of religious instruction now being implemented upgrade their skills or take appropriate proficiency courses, and that participation in these activities be compulsory.
11. That the school boards organize, for all non-specialized religious education teachers who must offer for the first time a program of Catholic moral and religious instruction, proficiency courses of at least 15 hours, and that attendance at these courses be compulsory.

12. That school boards organize, for teachers who have been transferred from the high school to the elementary school level and who must give Catholic moral and religious instruction, proficiency courses of at least 15 hours, and that attendance at these courses be compulsory.
13. That a specialized teacher in another discipline, who is assigned to provide Catholic moral and religious instruction at the high school level, be given proficiency courses of at least 15 hours for each program he or she will give.
14. That, in order to apply the law, school boards grant the person responsible for support of confessional services suitable means (time, budget, staff) to ensure real and effective pedagogical support to Catholic moral and religious education teachers.
15. That the school principal, in cooperation with the teachers and the pastoral animator, see that parents receive appropriate information regarding Catholic moral and religious instruction, and pastoral animation.
16. That school boards recognize the following as normal tasks of the person responsible for administrative support to Catholic schools and for services of moral and religious values instruction and pastoral care and guidance:

- . to attend, along with his or her immediate collaborators, meetings organized by the diocese for persons responsible for various confessional services of school boards;
- . to foster the presence of Catholic moral and religious education teachers and pastoral animators at spiritual renewal sessions organized by the diocese;
- . to organize occasionally, in cooperation with the diocese, professional improvement sessions for teachers.

Members of the Comité catholique

Jean-Guy BISSONNETTE
President, Comité catholique
Longueuil

Lucien BEAUCHAMP
Teacher and animator
Centre de formation pastorale
Valleyfield

Denise BELANGER
Parent
Cap-de-la-Madeleine

Luc BERGERON
Teacher at l'école
Marcel-Raymond
Lorrainville

Sylvia CHESTERMAN
Director
Services éducatifs
C.E.C.M. (English sector)
Ville Mont-Royal

Rita DUBE
Pedagogical advisor in
religious and moral
instruction
C.S.R. de l'Estrie
Saint-Denis-de-Brompton

Bernard FORTIN
Director
Office de la Famille
Montréal

Pierre GAUDETTE
Professor of theology
Université Laval
Sillery

André GAUMOND
Pastor
Paroisse de Saint-Pamphile
Saint-Pamphile

Joseph HOFBECK
Professor of theology
Concordia University
Pierrefonds

Doris JOBIN
Professor, École
Albert-Schweitzer
Saint-Bruno

Marie-Alice LUPIEN
Nurse at l'Hôpital
Le Gardeur
Saint-Sulpice

Fernand PARADIS
Director-general
Fédération des commissions
scolaires catholiques du Québec
Québec

Pascal PARENT
Pastor
Paroisse de Sainte-Blondine
Sainte-Blondine

Jude SAINT-ANTOINE
Auxiliary Bishop of Montréal
Montréal

Michel STEIN (ex officio member)
Associate Deputy Minister
Ministère de l'Éducation

Guy MALLETT
Secretary

CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION



QCSE005508

Edited by the Direction des communications
of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

50-1017 A