



Gouvernement du Québec
Comité Catholique



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS AND
MORAL INSTRUCTION
AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

TOWARDS DEVELOPING
FAVOURABLE WORKING CONDITIONS:
FOR GOOD QUALITY TEACHING

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Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction at the Secondary Level

**Towards developing favourable working conditions:
for good quality teaching**

CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR
DE L'ÉDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

In a report addressed to the Minister of Education in June 1991, entitled L'enseignement moral et religieux catholique au secondaire. Pour un enseignement mieux adapté aux jeunes et aux contextes actuels, the Catholic Committee made a number of recommendations for improving the educational quality of courses in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction at the secondary level. It stated essential elements that ought to be imparted today; it requested that current curricular content be reduced in order to concentrate on the essentials to be taught; it suggested to increase the pedagogical latitude of teachers; and it proposed that teaching practices in the class be rejuvenated.

In keeping with its expressed intention¹, the Committee believes it is now time to broach another facet of religious instruction at the secondary level: working conditions. Many teachers think teaching conditions are not conducive to quality instruction. The Committee appreciates observations already made in this regard as well as the real problems that have been encountered, and has already drawn up a list of the conditions under which Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction is taught at the secondary level today². The list includes not only the problems encountered but also solutions already implemented locally or envisaged here and there as being desirable.

In this report, the Committee expresses its thoughts on the situation. Part one proposes an interpretation of the problems posed. Since each of the problems raised by the teachers stems not from a single cause but from a set of interrelated factors, the Committee presents four factors that may have a major effect on courses in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction. This perspective fosters a broad understanding of difficulties that are often

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1. The main recommendations of June 1991 seek essentially to improve study programs and classroom teaching. The Committee also states its intention of looking closely at the teaching conditions for Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction at the secondary level.
 2. Rapport d'une étude du Comité catholique. La situation de l'enseignement moral et religieux catholique au secondaire, June 1991, pp. 108-135. The fourth and last chapter of this study deals with prevailing working conditions.

thought of as being solely specific to religious instruction. In part two, the Committee invokes a number of courses of action likely to solve some of the difficulties of the present situation and to create a more favourable teaching environment. These courses of action all demand the participation of the various partners. In fact, this is the basic option proposed: without denying the importance of the major rules that structure the system, it can be asserted that improved teaching conditions in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction depend upon local endeavors — both at the individual and collective levels — for initiative and renewal, in order to attain better quality courses in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction.

1. DIFFICULT CONDITIONS: SOME CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The ways sought to improve teaching conditions in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction depend upon how the problems are understood. A systemic approach is useful here. A number of problems seem to stem from a combination of factors, most of which have to do with educational, social, organizational or financial choices which have been reinforced over the past decade. These choices have had, of course, positive repercussions, but they also have often had a negative effect, reducing the leeway of school agents, and in particular, limiting the pedagogical latitude of teachers.

The Committee has identified four contributing factors that have an important incidence on teaching in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction: the division of workload according to the collective agreement and the rules governing administrative and financial management, the organization of secondary-level instruction around disciplines, the burdensome and complex character of school curricula with new evaluation requirements, and the wide diversity of student clientele.

1.1 Division of educational tasks on the basis of the collective agreement and rules of administrative and financial management

During public hearings, secondary school religion teachers revealed that certain teaching conditions are still too often detrimental to the development of human relations in class and do not favor quality teaching. The main element invoked is the **quantitative aspect of the work as decreed by the collective agreement**: the number of teaching hours and hours of presence required in the school, the number of students per class, the number of groups of students to be taught, particularly when these groups are spread over several different classes, different categories of students or different study cycles. Many teachers in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction must deal with these difficult conditions and say they lack available time necessary to cater to the students³.

3. Association québécoise des professeurs de morale et de religion (AQPMR), Dossier sur la tâche au secondaire, January 1989.

There is also dissatisfaction with the fact that certain duties are assigned as an **additional workload** without any educational pertinence or regard to the teacher's particular situation. In general, it is appreciated when diversity in the teaching task increases the possibility of meeting with the same students. But management rules are sometimes applied without any effort to find means of organizing tasks that would promote better student-teacher relationship. It must be noted that some young teachers starting out in the profession are given the heaviest additional workload.

While certain general parameters found in the collective agreements are definite assets, **the practical application of these general parameters** is not always sufficiently flexible. Teachers feel that increased flexibility should be sought so as to leave more room for autonomy, an element that is so indispensable to attain good quality teaching⁴.

1.2 Organisation of secondary-level instruction around disciplines

The modern secondary school is polarized around the disciplines to be taught. Educational objectives, work organization and teaching are all based on the system of disciplines⁵. This general system also affects the Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction program.

The main educational objectives are not clearly identified. When one tries to specify the essential, particular and concrete contribution of the secondary school to the general education of young Quebecers, it is difficult to isolate any major general educational

4. For many, the school system has become far too centralized over the years. Decisions continue to be made at a central level, the schools and the teaching personnel have still very little room to manoeuvre in spite of the fact that some attempts have allegedly been made to decentralize the system in the pedagogical field... The use of a highly centralized and very bureaucratic organizational model in the application of budgetary rules, pedagogical programs and collective agreements can contribute in reducing the status of the teachers especially at the elementary and secondary levels to that of a mere executant or performer with the result of "taylorizing" to a certain degree the very act of teaching and of further isolating the teaching profession. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1990-1991 Annual Report on the State and Needs of Education. The teaching profession: for a renewal of the social contract, Québec, 1991, p. 18.

5. The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation has developed this aspect at length in an opinion entitled L'intégration des savoirs au secondaire: au coeur de la réussite éducative, Québec, 1991.

objectives from the curriculum objectives as a whole. Although theoretically inspired by major educational aims, education in secondary schools corresponds in practice to the sum of the objectives of each of the thirty or so programs at secondary level. Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction alone accounts for more than 150 objectives. The actual number of objectives is far too high and the objectives themselves are too specific, too detailed and too varied to define a unifying high school leaving profile⁶.

In this context, **school organization is fragmented**. Each discipline — including Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction — must protect its place in the course timetable and in the minds of the students. There is a feeling that there are not enough periods in the timetable to get through all the objectives and all the subject matter. There are complaints that there is little or no connection or cooperation between the various disciplines. There is an impression of overwork, of task-splitting, of exhaustion, even of competition and isolation. This compartmentalization of disciplines contributes to the splitting up of subject matter, creating in the student an impression of discontinuity and incoherence among the courses.

The many objectives to be met, the heavy program to be taught and, in certain places, the emphasis on performing well in summative tests give rise to **instruction aimed purely and simply at transmitting knowledge**. A philosophy evolves around the idea that the more there is to teach, the better the education. The teaching method adopted thus gives rise to a passive attitude among the students, who are not strongly tempted to link what they have already learned, with what they are learning in other subject areas or with real life situations. They play the game that the system has created and study mainly to pass examinations.

The above are some of the effects of an educational system, an organization and teaching methods that focus too exclusively on the disciplines to be taught.

6. Defining secondary education on the basis of major general objectives or fundamental skills has become a main concern in a number of Western countries. The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation recommends that the same effort be made in Québec. See L'intégration des savoirs: au coeur de la réussite éducative, pp. 29-31.

1.3 Heavy, complex character of school curricula and new evaluation requirements.

In 1978, the ministère de l'Éducation began an in-depth review of school curricula on the premise that program outlines for elementary and secondary instruction were too vague. Program objectives as well as curriculum content needed to be made more specific. Ten years later, this implication resulted in several thousand pages of documentation.

Programs for Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction were thus based on a much broader reference model: planning of instruction was based on objectives as defined by current taxonomy, with a careful distinction between the cognitive objectives and objectives pertaining to the affective domain, while creating a hierarchy between general objectives and a large number of terminal objectives. The new programs in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction also had to incorporate pastoral guidelines as defined by the Assemblée des évêques du Québec in 1984.

The search for specificity at the outset seems to have given rise to overly detailed and complicated statements. Drawing from their experience, teachers in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction soon realized that it was no easier to work with the new programs. Recent efforts to foster greater understanding and more appropriate application of the programs consist in adapting the program in order to retain essential elements to be learned nowadays.

Evaluation of learning is a major concern for teachers of Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction at the secondary level. Teachers who met with the Committee maintain that certain practices in pedagogical evaluation have become too complicated and occur too frequently. There is a danger that the evaluation process becomes engulfed in technicalities thus disregarding students needs not emphasizing sufficiently the essential elements of learning.

1.4 Diversity of students.

A great characteristic of the present school context is the great diversity of students. Since universal access to education is a basic tenet of past decades, public schools in Québec have been open and accessible to all children, regardless of their language, their ethnic origin, their socioeconomic situation, their aptitudes or abilities. Upon arrival, new Quebecers must constantly adjust and adapt to their new situation. There is a continual challenge to integrate students with learning disabilities or adjustment difficulties, whether in a regular classroom or in classes offering individualized learning. Teachers who met with the Committee spoke spontaneously of the "new students" in the secondary schools, referring to the many cultural, economic, family and social milieu from which they come. They spoke of this pluralistic element as being an asset but also as yet another challenge to be met.

When teaching in the classroom, the teachers are often faced with disparities to which they are unaccustomed: a novel cultural heterogeneity, some highly gregarious behaviour, autonomous, assertive characters, unstable and fragile personalities, groups of students whose knowledge of French and whose acquired skills, motivation and attitude toward school are diversified.

Religious beliefs held by the students are varied and sometimes contradictory. Some children come from families obviously attached to their faith and to Christian practices, while others come from families that have drawn away from any form of religious expression. The students themselves evolve along personal paths that open up to a variety of possibilities, from indifference to commitment and to different forms of spiritual and religious experiences.

While this pluralism is a cultural asset for the classroom and the school, and while it may lead to greater mutual understanding, it can also generate strong tensions. In fact, **the diversity of the student groups and the diversity within one's own classroom** are seen as

added challenges for teachers in carrying out the pedagogical act and are viewed as an added burden to the workload.

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Certainly the adoption of uniform measures, standards and programs did serve to implement the educational reform and continues to serve the needs of equity and access to services. But it is not clear whether the growth in quality now unanimously sought will be possible when continues to use the same developmental model. Local rules enhancing better organization of workload as well as specific projects developed by teams of teachers could become more determinant in the future. The road to solving the problems described above seems to point in this direction.

2. COURSES OF ACTION

In the preceding pages, the Committee sought to demonstrate that a set of factors inherent in the organization of the school system have a determining influence on working conditions in religious and moral instruction at the secondary level. It is now time to seek possible solutions. Must the structural changes required to improve the organization of instruction emanate from the system itself? Such changes would be long sought if one is to consider factors of time and resistance to change. In order to circumscribe obstacles that hinder the quality of religious instruction, the present search for solutions must be guided by actions already taken or in the process of emerging in classrooms and schools. The consultations held by the Committee suggest that some of these solutions merit further exploration without delay. For example the following steps could be taken: introducing greater flexibility into the main rules governing the system, drawing from projects already under way in schools, experimenting as a team with the decompartmentalization of instruction, experimenting with new teaching methods in the classroom.

2.1 To introduce greater flexibility into the main rules governing the system.

The desire to improve working conditions in the education milieu may at first trigger a spontaneous reaction. It would be easy to say if only the main rules of the system could be changed. The major parameters set on a province-wide scale, mainly the collective agreements, the curricula and the budget rules, are contributing factors of quality teaching, of working conditions and of the pedagogical practices that prevail. They guarantee equal services for all and help maintain a minimum quality threshold in all schools. Nowadays, however, the hope that solutions can stem from such rules is slight and uncertain. The current tendency, visible even in official discourse, is toward decentralization. All the groups concerned are in basic agreement on the need to soften rules governing the educational milieu and on **the need for greater latitude for schools and school boards.**

There seems to be a reversal of perspective which will make the system as a whole gravitate around the school and its educational project⁷.

This new perspective can only produce concrete results if it is accompanied by decisions designed to build greater flexibility into the system, in particular when applying collective agreements. If the educational system is to cater to the needs of the school, once again, measures must be introduced to support local efforts effectively and favor greater participation of support personnel and teachers in particular in educational decisions that affect school life and that encourage creativity in pedagogical endeavors.

When speaking with respect to working conditions in religious and moral instruction, the Catholic Committee joins its voice to the many others calling for **flexibility in the collective agreements** in order to allow schools to be more manageable when applying certain parameters. Greater autonomy can thus be achieved when appointing personnel, in the grouping of students and in assigning duties and responsibilities.

Models must be developed locally to ensure that tasks foster quality of instruction and do not become burdensome. The Committee believes it is useful to demonstrate that there are thresholds beyond which a good teacher-student relationship is not really possible. The Committee became convinced this is so after making a great many observations and hearing a number of reports from teachers who state that their tasks are extremely burdensome. As an example, a teacher in a small school who, in five days, gives courses in 12 different programs to groups of thirty or so students in both cycles at the secondary level. Such conditions are particularly demanding in subjects related to personal and social development which call for constant adaptation due to the diversity of the students, frequent recourse to

7. Suffice it to recall the recent words of the Minister of Education in Education: Driving our Future (1991-1993 Orientations): "The challenge facing the school system is therefore to allow the schools enough latitude to attain Québec's educational goals in a creative and relevant manner, taking into account the particular needs of each community. To be sure, administrative decisions and pedagogical choices are often more relevant and more effective when made at the grass-roots level, by local authorities. Decisions and choices imply responsibilities which must be assumed. This means accepting the fact that different communities have different needs and that their choices will vary accordingly. To allow greater latitude, we will need to refrain from imposing across-the-board uniformity".

current events and the ability to tap the emotions, feelings and convictions, as experienced by the students.

By introducing greater flexibility of standards and rules and by allowing greater responsibility and greater latitude for pedagogical organization, teaching conditions could certainly improve. This would result in greater scholastic success for the students.

Avenues point to this direction. There are schools that, despite of the importance and the detail of certain organizational rules, manage to use the small leeway they have to invent models that are better adapted to their situation.

2.2 To draw from developments already under way in schools

In recent years, schools throughout Québec have adopted organizational methods and responsibility-sharing models which are better adapted to the needs of the students and the staff. Analyses of these developments reveal that local teams of teachers, supported by their school administration and the counsellor in Christian education at the school board, have taken advantage of the leeway available to them to find ways to reduce some of the constraints inherent in the rules governing the system. The Committee believes that many schools can be inspired by such models in order to solve the problem of heavy and varied workloads so as to improve the quality of instruction and students' acquisition of aptitudes and attitudes.

The following paragraphs outline some of these developments.

One teacher teaching more than one subject to the same students.

Almost 50 percent of teachers teach two or three programs to the same students: Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction, Personal and Social Development, Career Choice Education. This variety in the teaching task fosters a wider knowledge of the experience and

culture of the students, develops a more consistent teacher-student relationship, and fosters integration of subject areas as well. Course preparation is less demanding in related programs since the teacher is already aware of the concerns and the progress of the students.

Sequential distribution of instruction in some subjects areas over a year span.

Some schools have definitely opted to concentrate instruction in certain subjects areas over a period of a few months, thus offering Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction or Moral Instruction, Personal and Social Development and Career Choice Education, consecutively throughout the year. In order to concentrate these courses, the schools have used different organizational models for scheduling. According to the reports received, it is the students who benefit most by this innovation; they more easily perceive links between courses and sense the particular focus of each of the disciplines. The feedback of these innovations with respect to the teaching task is unanimous: the teacher's burden becomes lighter since it no longer involves the simultaneous preparation of so many different programs.

A more appropriate additional workload.

Many teachers enjoy having the equivalent of two, three or four periods, acting as homeroom teacher, or providing pedagogical support, or supervising school activities as additional workload rather than merely performing student supervision duties. Overly complex or burdensome tasks can be alleviated by assigning more appropriate duties as additional workload and providing greater and more varied contacts with the students.

Homeroom teachers teaching several subjects.

Some first cycle secondary schools have gone back to assigning homeroom teachers thus creating stability in student grouping. A teacher entrusted with responsibility for one group of students may teach several subjects to that group, French as well as a few subjects related to personal development for instance. A number of religion teachers have tried this formula and have found it to be to their advantage.

This formula or analogous ones, though requiring greater versatility among secondary school teachers, may be called upon to expand in the coming years. As such the Catholic Committee is disposed to review its regulations regarding teacher qualification requirements. The Committee favors the usefulness of introducing new organizational models as well.

2.3 To experiment as a team in order to reach a decompartmentalization of instruction

In some schools the Committee noted other organizational models: a model of collective responsibility for the students. The quality and effectiveness of these projects depend on joint action. Rather than having each staff member in the school define, pedagogical activities for each member and work in isolation, a team of two, three, four or more teachers examine, pool and define essential educational objectives together.

Here and there, teams have been created and assume collective responsibility for the fundamental aspects of student education. In such cases they can better provide a general education based on fundamentals concepts and skills to be acquired⁸. Teaching fundamental concepts to the students through appropriate teaching methods certainly can create an impetus for new organizational choices thus giving rise to various projects. Many of these projects are not new. They were actually rather widespread in the 1970s: team teaching, interdisciplinary projects, interrelation of subject matter, etc. But a degree of rigidity in applying the rules for organizing work has sometimes accentuated the isolation and compartmentalization of school agents. Therefore it is not surprising that these models could not be maintained or others explored. Nor is it surprising to see some of these team models reappear with the collective challenge to motivate secondary school students and reduce the dropout rate. The Committee believes that such cooperative formulas point to the path we

8. "Today, basic education and the quality of education constitute a major theme for reflection. In provinces such as Alberta and Ontario, in France, Great Britain and the United States, the effectiveness of the school in educating students is being questioned. Concern is expressed over the fact that too many children can be classified as functional illiterates; their lack of reading and writing skills seems irremediable. This situation presents a major challenge if a greater number of students are to obtain a basic education, the result of learning essential skills for on-going personal development and active participation in a society undergoing constant and rapid change." Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, La formation fondamentale et la qualité de l'éducation, 1983-1984 Annual Report (translation). It must also be noted that the Minister of Education intends to give this basic education to the greatest possible number of students. This is actually the objective of the Minister of Education for the years to come.

must take: an end of "to each his own" mentality and the realization that educational success is the fruit of a collective responsibility that must be assumed within the school. Efforts aimed at decompartmentalization are particularly promising.

The following paragraphs outline some of these experiments in cooperation and decompartmentalization.

Sharing with colleagues

A number of teachers recall with nostalgia the great years of the comprehensive school. Everything had to be built up from scratch. And they did it together. Through mutual support and a will to share, they obtained demanding but stimulating working conditions. This cooperation also led to research and experimentation in teaching methods. The challenge faced by schools today seems to foster a return to increased cooperation. There is no choice now but to implement some form of cooperative effort, be it only sharing class preparations, teaching material, personal concerns, failures and successes with a colleague, even if this means a dramatic change in mental attitudes and behaviour.

Team teaching

In some schools, courses in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction are given by a team to a group of two or three classes altogether. The main advantages of this formula are found in the alternation of group leaders, the support of several adults during individual student activities or team projects, increased disciplinary control, greater professional motivation and mutual assistance in preparing teaching material. The students benefit from more dynamic, varied and participative teaching: one which is attentive and caters to the ability of the students and geared to various methods and approaches based on student motivation, different learning styles and different learning rates.

The global task

For over ten years, another school introduced what is called global task. This organizational model consists of entrusting the whole educational project, a student population of a few

hundred students — in particular, students following individualized paths of learning⁹, — to a certain number of teachers, that is, the number authorized by teacher-student ratio rules. This team supervises and teaches all disciplines. The religious and moral education of the student is carried out in close cooperation with pastoral animation and guidance coordinators. The entire team is supported by an administrative team thoroughly convinced of the educational advantages of this model of collective responsibility.

Link between subjects

In some other areas, the link between subjects is being explored by religion teachers who also teach Personal and Social Development and Career Choice Education. In a number of schools, the same teacher is responsible for teaching these three subjects to the same class of students. Students sometimes find the thematic or anthropological content repetitive especially in courses that explore life experiences and deal with contemporary cultural references. It could prove rewarding to emphasize the link between these fundamental themes, even if it means that in each discipline, in due time, must concentrate on objectives, content and approaches that are specific to it.

Transdisciplinary projects

Interdisciplinary projects are being set up in personal development programs. Presenting projects on peace, health, environment, interpersonal relations, social responsibility, etc. are often more successful than lecturing to the students. Project work promotes the integration of the various fields of knowledge and individual commitment at one's pace and to one's particular learning style. These projects can only be carried out under certain conditions. They require a motivated team of teachers and a less linear approach to the work schedule

9. The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation has described the educational merits of this global task in recommendation addressed to the Minister of Education, Les cheminements particuliers de formation au secondaire: faire droit à la différence, Québec, 1990. Similar work groups also exist in classes d'accueil. "In classes d'accueil, teachers feel they belong to a special group whose task more closely resembles a major undertaking, since they must not simply teach as such, but integrate immigrants into the school system and society. Their particular situation creates new rules of the game, new working methods among these teachers — "We do not teach here the same way we teach elsewhere" — a greater solidarity, a remarkable sense of humour has developed so as to protect themselves from other teachers who consider them privileged". Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, Organisation du travail et santé mentale chez les enseignantes et les enseignants du primaire et du secondaire. Research paper by Marie-Claire Carpentier-Roy, October 1991, p. 50.

and the time over which the subjects are spread. Experience has shown that it can sometimes be more profitable to teach a subject in four to six consecutive hours rather than to spread it over a period of four to six weeks. Pastoral animation can become a precious element of partnership during such interdisciplinary learning sessions.

Decomartmentalization: effects in order to succeed

Beyond the mere willingness and determination to engage in teamwork the chances of implementing such projects successfully rest mainly on the support given by colleagues and school administrators. A minimum of support and participation must be ensured so that these experimental projects can emerge and can be carried out by teachers. Research efforts that foster conceptualization and experimentation are also necessary¹⁰. When meeting teachers engaged in teamwork such as described above, the Committee found that the members in such projects continue to be driven by objectives they have clearly defined for themselves. They are motivated to pursue this collective task with their students.

It is therefore desirable to enable teachers to carry out new pedagogical experiences, so as to ensure greater success in teaching moral and religious instruction. It is important that future teachers, as well as those teaching presently, have access to training sessions or attend professional development seminars which will enable them to receive fundamental training as well as training that fosters collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to learning and teaching.

Decomartmentalization: effects on teaching

These experiments are aimed primarily at successful transmission of the essential basic skills students must acquire at the secondary level. The student is the first to benefit from decompartmentalization, flexibility and innovative organization of the workload in Catholic

10. "The organizational problems are both conceptual and existential. Experience precedes the idea, but the idea is necessary to understand the experience, give it form, develop it and push back the limits of the possible". Crozier, Michel, *L'entreprise à l'écoute*, InterÉditions, Paris 1989, p. 50 (translation).

Religious and Moral Instruction. But teachers also benefit. The pedagogical latitude and the professional leeway they obtain often make their work more stimulating.

2.4 To initiate new teaching methods in the classroom

While the importance of the institutional framework for teaching cannot be gainsaid, the personal commitment of each teacher in the classroom is essential for improving conditions in teaching and learning¹¹. Improved teaching conditions are closely tied to the pedagogical act itself, to the determination to make the classroom a place where young people develop and become the principal agents of their own education.

It was pointed out to the Committee that professional motivation and satisfaction demand that each teacher be able to affirm his teaching personality; that each teacher should have the necessary latitude to adjust his teaching to the needs of the students in his class. "There is a definite relationship between the act of teaching and the act of learning. Some methods of teaching are more effective than others to foster learning. Certain teaching styles can contribute more to the student's success. The teacher's dedication inspires students to dedicate themselves as well; student's progress is stimulated through meaningful situations. Conversely, the success attained by pupils through their motivation and their dedication to learning, favourably affects the act of teaching and in turn influences teacher motivation and dedication¹²."

This is why it is necessary for teachers to have all the leeway and latitude they require when teaching. This is why the recent reduction in programs of study was aimed at providing greater latitude in the management of religious and moral instruction classes and, eventually,

11. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, Enseigner: qu'en disent les profs?, Report on a survey conducted among the teaching staff at primary, secondary and college levels in Québec, 1991. This study revealed that over two-thirds of primary school teachers (69.9%) and over three-quarters of secondary school teachers (77.0%) recognize that they play a decisive role in what the students learn.

12. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1990-1991 Annual Report on the State and Needs of Education. The teaching profession: for a renewal of the social contract, Québec, 1991, p. 23.

greater professional satisfaction. In its recommendations of June 1991, the Catholic Committee was attentive to and followed up the many requests from teachers for more realistic objectives in the Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction program. The Committee then defined six essential elements of learning leading to six essential abilities, presented as a sort of high school leaving profile, that is, what is expected that a student will have acquired at the end of the religious and moral instruction over a five year span of secondary education. The Committee also identified a few characteristics of classroom teaching¹³. The Committee also recommended to reduce the four current programs of study as well as to adjust evaluation requirements. As of September 1991, the Direction de l'enseignement catholique acted upon these recommendations, giving schools a proposal for reducing the programs. The teachers are thus more fully aware of the main pedagogical parameters. The steps taken will allow teachers greater autonomy, an indispensable asset to good quality teaching.

These measures also point to the urgent need for teachers to meet certain pedagogical challenges that no one else can meet in their place.

First, a **personal knowledge and mastery of the programs**. Such mastery helps a teacher move away from teaching "by the book" towards a method geared to the student and to the teaching of the essential elements of learning.

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13. The Catholic Committee proposes to reorient the Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction program toward essential elements of learning. Students should learn to:
1. Position themselves in terms of the principal components of Christian life and faith.
 2. Relate to their inner realities.
 3. Deal respectfully and intelligently with the great religious traditions and various current manifestations of religious attitudes in the community.
 4. Exercise their moral judgment.
 5. Read the Bible in terms of its original meaning and in its significance for today.
 6. Interpret current events and events in their own lives in the light of Christian faith and experience.
- According to the Committee, the driving force that should inspire the renewal of the Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction program: teaching centered on the act of learning, so as to ensure that the six essential elements of learning are mastered.

Secondly, the use of **evaluation practices integrated into the learning process**. This way of envisaging and carrying out evaluation fosters teaching that is heedful of student progress, underscores progress in mastering the objectives and essential content and increases motivation to learn. In short, it helps the teacher follow the student's educational progress closely and helps the student to become involved in his own development.

Thirdly, **pedagogical approaches that cater to the diversity of students**, to the students' learning capacity and to their different learning rates and styles. This method, often called differentiated teaching, consists of a variety of approaches, methods and projects. Unlike a uniform or identical teaching method for all courses, it provides greater opportunities to interest students to adjust to the diversity encountered in the classroom.

Fourthly, the use of **made-to-measure upgrading and a support network**. Because such great pedagogical challenges need to be met, upgrading and support must be recognized as a fourth major challenge. In recent years, the support offered to teachers has been based mainly on the implementation of programs of study and on evaluation. The time has come to help teachers with classroom management: to increase their knowledge of the process of learning, to give them real mastery over programs of study and learning evaluation requirements, to introduce variety in teaching, and also to teach them to manage disciplinary as well as motivational problems.

Opportunities for dialogue and mutual support must also be increased to this same end. The isolation of teachers is seen today as a major factor in the loss of motivation. To maintain the dynamic character of the profession and to ensure its growth, team work, exchange of material among peers, regular meetings and a support network must be encouraged. Professional associations and school boards also have a major role to play in the upgrading and support of teachers. It can also be done with the assistance of counsellors in Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction and pedagogical consultants in Christian education in particular.

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What can be said here is that the witnessing of the numerous achievements and ongoing school projects, as well as corrective measures that have emerged, are the fruits of individual and collective efforts at the local level. Efforts geared to create a favorable environment conducive to better teacher-student relationship.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As it was seen, a number of constraints inherent in the very organization of the educational system weigh heavily on the quality of teaching. The principal effect due to these constraints greatly reduces the leeway available in schools and in the classroom. In such a context the danger of losing one's motivation is great. There is a temptation to adopt a passive attitude while waiting for the employer and teacher unions to change the rules and standards that determine the way in which work is to be organized.

Without denying the important role of the Ministry, the school boards and teacher unions with regard to good quality teaching, the Catholic Committee has chosen to bank on local initiative. It does so with conviction since innovative steps are already being taken or developed in schools to create working conditions that are conducive to total quality teaching.

In this perspective, the Catholic Committee:

1. encourages schools to experiment the following:
 - . to have the same teacher teach the following subjects areas: Catholic religious and Moral Instruction, Personal and Social Development and possibly Career Choice Education;
 - . to teach these subjects sequentially over the year;
 - . to assign additional workloads that promote closer, more continuous relationships with the students the teacher is teaching.
2. recommends that school boards and school administrations support teachers who wish to experiment with innovative ways of organizing religious and moral instruction, particularly with regards to the decompartmentalization of instruction.
3. recommends that Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction teachers participate in training sessions that prepare them to practise classroom management adapted students in today's context.

4. recommends that the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Science support and encourage initial training activities for future teachers that promote interdisciplinary collaboration and prepare them to emphasize basic elements of learning when teaching religion.
5. expresses its hope to see less rigid collective agreements in order to give schools greater flexibility in applying the rules for staff appointments, student grouping and assignment of workload and responsibilities within each school.

CONSULTATIONS BY THE COMMITTEE

Data collection in 1989 and 1990

Hearings were held among Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction teachers and Moral Instruction teachers (8), pastoral animators (3) and students (80) in all secondary grades of Joseph-Fecteau and Albert-Carrier schools in the Thetford Mines school board.

Hearings were held among Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction teachers and Moral Instruction teachers (10), pastoral animators (3) and students (200) in all secondary grades of Pierre-Brosseau and Antoine-Brossard schools in the Brossard school board.

A round table was held for Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction teachers (15) working in secondary schools in the Montréal region.

Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction teachers (8) in various regions of Québec were consulted in writing.

A round table was held for secondary level pastoral animators (12) in the Lotbinière, Chutes-de-la-Chaudière and des Découvreurs school boards and the Louis-Fréchette regional school board.

Representatives of education organizations were consulted:

- . the Association québécoise des professeurs de morale et de religion;
- . the Association québécoise des conseillers et conseillères au service de l'éducation chrétienne;
- . the Provincial Association of Teachers of Ethics and Religion;
- . the Conférence de la pastorale scolaire.

Study sessions, January 23 and 24, 1991 — Participants

Paul Beaulieu, Claude Bélanger, Denise Bergeron, Jacques Berthelet, Robert Bisaillon, Mariette Bouffard, Spencer Boudreau, Raymond Brodeur, Jacqueline Brunet, Jacques Charron, Guy Côté, André Doucet, Clément Fecteau, Albert Fink, André Gaumond, Marc-Jacques Girard, Claude Giroux, Jean Gratton, Raymonde Jauvin, François Lafortune, Lise P.-Larivière, Lucie Lemelin, Colette Massé, Konrad Muncs, Marie Nadeau, Robert Poirier, Gilles Raymond, Jean-Louis Rodrigue, Ghislaine Roquet, François Tanguay, Alain Veilleux, José Villar.

Other consultations in 1991

Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

- Robert Bisaillon

Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec

- Fernand Paradis
- Guy Perreault
- Monique Brunelle

Victoriaville school board

- Normand Maurice and his colleagues at the Centre de formation en entreprise et récupération, as well as teaching teams at Le Boisé comprehensive secondary school.

Sainte-Thérèse school board

- Jacques Blais and Albert Cuillerier at Sainte-Thérèse comprehensive secondary school.

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