



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

Comité catholique

REGULATION RESPECTING THE RECOGNITION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AS CATHOLIC AND
THEIR CONFSSIONAL CHARACTER

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INTRODUCTORY DOCUMENT



Québec

The creation of the ministère de l'Éducation in 1964 was the outcome of an historic compromise between the Québec government and the bishops of Québec. The result was a state-controlled school system which would respect the confessional objectives of both Catholics and Protestants.

The Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation and its two confessional committees (Catholic and Protestant) were also formed at this time. The Act respecting the Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation gives the Catholic committee the responsibility of formulating regulations concerning educational institutions recognized as Catholic.

The current regulation was formulated in 1974. This regulation had to be updated in order to respond to the events that have marked the world of education since that time, and to more effectively meet the needs of an increasingly pluralist society. The Catholic committee's new regulatory measures can be seen in terms of a main objective ordered toward three major challenges.

The main objective of the Catholic committee's new regulatory measures was to enact a series of rules which are clear, specific and concrete, with a view to providing guidance to those who frequent a Catholic school or who work in a Catholic school in an administrative or other capacity.

The new regulatory measures are also intended to help meet three challenges: that of the quality of Catholic education in schools recognized as Catholic; and of Catholic religious instruction in schools not recognized as Catholic; that of the authenticity of the Catholic school, whether public or private; and that of respect for the the young people attending or adults working in Catholic schools.

To this end the Catholic committee has enacted three new regulations:

- ° the regulation respecting the recognition of elementary and secondary schools of the public school system as Catholic and their confessional character;
- ° the regulation respecting the recognition of private educational institutions at the elementary and secondary levels as Catholic and their confessional character;
- ° the regulation respecting the qualification of teachers having charge of Catholic religious instruction in public and private elementary and secondary schools not recognized as Catholic.

The present document explains the main features of the Catholic committee's Regulation respecting the recognition of elementary and secondary schools of the public school system as Catholic and their confessional character.

1- THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

High quality education cannot be guaranteed by a regulation alone. The concept of quality is both too broad and too complex to be fully encompassed in a regulation. This is particularly true with respect to the quality of religious education for young people. But whatever one's concept of quality, and whatever the strategies one uses to ensure a high level of quality, the Catholic committee believes it necessary to set a number of minimum requirements. These will allow the pupils and the persons dispensing religious instruction in Catholic schools to use all the creativity at their disposal to attain the high level of quality desired by both users and educators.

The regulation, with respect to quality, does not attempt to define content or develop teaching methods. The Catholic committee has already dealt at length with these subjects, particularly in the series entitled Religion in Today's School. Moreover, the Catholic committee's responsibility in these areas is exercised more directly in its role as the body which approves the programs, textbooks and teaching material used in pastoral animation and in Catholic moral and religious instruction.

In order to foster Catholic education of high quality, the Catholic committee's regulation introduces certain requirements with respect to:

- the principal of a school recognized as Catholic;
- the personnel working in the area of moral and religious instruction;
- the personnel working in the area of pastoral animation;
- moral instruction and moral and religious instruction;
- pastoral animation.

School Principals

The regulation first specifies the responsibilities of the principal of a school recognized as Catholic. The principal must ensure that the school's educational project is being carried out. This means ensuring that the educational project, while respecting the freedoms of conscience and religion, incorporates the beliefs and values of the Catholic religion. The principal is responsible for ensuring the orientation, animation, coordination and evaluation of activities of Catholic moral and religious instruction and pastoral animation in the same manner as the principal's responsibility extends to all activities in other areas of study. In other words, the school administration must be prepared to direct the specifically Catholic confessional activities of the school. School boards must make this responsibility known to all persons who apply for the position of principal in a school recognized as Catholic.

In the exercise of their duties, school principals may wish to utilize the competencies of the school board's Christian education counsellor whose responsibilities include working with those responsible for carrying out the educational project at various levels of the school system.

Personnel Working in the Area of Pastoral Animation and Catholic Moral and Religious Instruction

The regulation sets out specific requirements with regard to the qualifications of persons dispensing Catholic moral and religious instruction or pastoral animation.

Teachers dispensing Catholic moral and religious instruction must be of the Catholic faith. They must have a given number of university credits in specific areas of study. This applies to teachers in all schools, regardless of whether the school is recognized as Catholic or not. These requirements are not found in the Catholic committee's 1974 regulation; the committee therefore believes it necessary to note that beginning in 1992:

- ° In elementary schools, teachers must have acquired at least nine university credits pertaining to the moral and religious dimension of the person and the essential content of the Catholic faith as well as the programs of Catholic moral and religious instruction. Nothing prevents more qualified people or specialists from working in this field in the elementary school. However, for the moment the Catholic committee continues to place emphasis, inasmuch as possible, on religious instruction carried out by the teacher giving the general classroom education. This has certain pedagogical advantages which teachers themselves have often pointed out during hearings with the Catholic committee. At the same time, this option demands that requirements be formulated accordingly with respect to teacher qualifications. The requirement of nine university credits will help make future elementary school teachers more aware of the moral and religious dimension of the human person. This dimension is included in the conception of the person put forward in The Schools of Québec as one of the aims of education. By "essential content" the Catholic committee wishes to indicate that these credits must not relate to marginal aspects of the faith, but rather to the fundamentals of the Catholic faith necessary to enable teachers to effectively dispense the programs of Catholic religious and moral instruction in elementary schools. A pedagogical preparation to teach these programs must be assured. Studies represented by these nine credits constitute a minimum further enriched by the teacher's experience, by forms of pedagogical support, and by continuing education programs for teachers.

- ° In secondary schools, teachers must have acquired at least 60 university credits. This training, centred mainly on the Catholic faith and the pedagogy of teaching it, must also make teachers more aware of the moral and religious dimension of the human person, and of the growing phenomenon of the diversity of beliefs.

It should come as no surprise that the Catholic committee's regulation sets specific educational requirements for teachers. In 1975, in its publication Religion for Today's School, the Catholic committee made recommendations with respect to the initial and continuing training of teachers. Teacher competency in religious education already appeared to the committee to be a major element determining the quality of religious instruction in the schools. In 1983, when consulted on policy formulation with regard to teacher training, the Catholic committee underlined the urgent necessity of taking concrete steps to preserve the high quality of religious instruction in elementary and secondary schools. The Catholic committee made its recommendations even more explicit in May 1985, in a document entitled Faith Education in the Schools.

Sections 15 and 16 of the new regulation set down the required academic qualifications for personnel dispensing Catholic moral and religious instruction. The Catholic committee expects the school boards to ensure that moral instruction is also carried out by qualified personnel, so that both types of instruction are characterized by a high level of quality.

The Catholic committee also deemed it important to indicate in the regulation minimal requirements with regard to the qualifications of personnel in charge of pastoral animation. In elementary schools, any person in charge of Catholic pastoral animation should have the equivalent of 30 college credits in theology, catechetics or pastoral animation. (Relevant experience may be judged equivalent in some cases.) This academic requirement applies only to persons who, from 1 July 1992, are placed in charge of pastoral animation for the first time. In secondary schools, pastoral animators will be required to possess more extensive training; this will give them the skills and knowledge (theological, pastoral) they need to effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

School boards hiring or assigning personnel in pastoral animation or religious instruction may wish to use the competencies of the Christian education counsellor.

Catholic Moral and Religious Instruction

A minimum number of required hours has been set for Catholic religious instruction. Unlike the old regulation, which prescribed a minimum number of required minutes per week, the new regulation prescribes a minimum number of required hours per year. This allows the school to integrate the instruction into the calendar and timetable in a manner appropriate to pedagogy, pupil needs, and the school's educational project.

Pastoral Animation

As an auxiliary service, pastoral animation must be carried out during the time allotted to educational services (i.e., during the pupil's regular school day). The regulation also demands certain resources (premises and a budget), so that pastoral animation can be carried out under conditions which foster its continued existence and quality.

II- THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The Catholic committee has on several occasions¹ explained its reasons for believing that the continued existence of schools recognized as Catholic is justified. This is not the place to take up these points again.

The new regulation is intended to assist Catholic schools in ensuring that the day-to-day life of the school is consistent with its legal status as Catholic. Catholic schools must continue to find ways of affirming their Catholic identity while at the same time respecting the beliefs and faiths of their non-Catholic populations. This said, the Catholic school is well aware of the inevitable gap which separates the ideal from the real. This gap can be bridged in part by an educational project which is further developed and improved upon each year. It is in this sense that the Catholic committee intends certain sections of its regulation to be understood, in particular those sections intended to foster the authenticity of the school's Catholic character.

The Recognition Process

First of all, the Catholic committee considers it necessary to make the recognition process more open. The decision to request recognition as

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1. The following documents of the Catholic committee might be consulted on this subject:

- ° Comité catholique, Religion in Today's School, 1974.
- ° Comité catholique, The Catholic School in an Evolving School System, 1982.
- ° Comité catholique, Recommendations Concerning the Proposed Policy Statement on School Reform, 1982.

a Catholic school must be reached as democratically as possible. To this end, the regulation requires not only that school boards requesting recognition consult the school committee as stipulated in the Education Act, but that they also consult all parents whose children attend the school. The regulation further requires that the results of both these consultations be transmitted to the Catholic committee.

The purpose of this is clear: the Catholic committee wants to be aware of parents' wishes and wants the schools boards to be aware of them as well. The decision to request recognition must remain founded first and foremost on the democratically expressed wishes of the parents.

Where consultation shows the parents are divided on the question, the Catholic committee will attach a great deal of importance to the views of the school committee and the commissioners. As active participants in the milieu, the commissioners and school committee members are in a good position to evaluate the impact of a given decision on the population.

Although the question is not raised in the new regulation, the Catholic committee has the power to revoke recognition. The Catholic committee intends to propose a specific procedure to be followed by school boards wishing to request the revocation of Catholic status on behalf of one of their schools.

The Educational Project

It is not enough that a given school be legally recognized as Catholic. It is also important to construct, with all those who participate in the life of the school, an educational project which reflects the school's confessional character in the daily routine. This is not a matter of creating an ideal project in theory, but rather of developing a project which incorporates as effectively as possible the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith while simultaneously respecting the freedoms of conscience and religion. This undertaking, difficult and demanding though it may be, is necessary in order

to ensure that the formal status of the school as Catholic finds its authenticity in the reality of school life, a reality which draws its inspiration from the Christian concept of the person and human life as proposed by the Catholic faith,² and which takes into account the values³ privileged in the Gospel.

The authenticity of such a process requires as a minimum that these fundamental orientations be respected by all personnel in the exercise of their professional responsibilities.

School Principals

More than any other member of the school's personnel, the principal of the Catholic school is responsible for seeing that the educational project is carried out. The very existence of an educational project which respects the school's Catholic orientation depends largely on the principal. Given the principal's importance in the day-to-day routine of the school, it is clear that such a project cannot be implemented without his or her leadership. The Catholic committee counts on school boards, before appointing principals to Catholic schools, to remind candidates of these obligations under section 6 of the regulation. This fundamentally is a question of integrity and authenticity.

Evaluation of the School's Functioning as a Confessional Institution

One of the major obligations set out in the new regulation is that which requires Catholic schools to transmit to the Catholic committee, at least once every five years, a report evaluating the school's functioning as a

2. See: Comité catholique, L'École catholique, situation et avenir, 1986, pp. 10 and 11.

3. See: Comité catholique, C'est-à-dire, 1981, p. 65.

confessional institution. The objective here is not to require school authorities to reapply for recognition every five years. Rather, the operation is intended to allow the partners in each school to take stock of their situation, to make certain improvements, or to request the revocation of confessional status if this status no longer serves a useful purpose.

It is hoped that the exercise will be found useful in a number of ways: to allow an assessment of the authenticity of the confessional aspects as they are actually experienced in the school; to help measure the gap between the ideal and the real; and to stimulate all those who work for the welfare of the school to proceed with needed improvements. The evident intention is to allow those who make up the school to assess progress together, make decisions and implement changes, so that the school is not Catholic in name only.

Instruments for evaluation are available from the ministère de l'Éducation. These instruments are based on the Catholic committee's 1980 guidelines concerning the assessment of school life from the perspective of confessionalism.⁴ In this document the Catholic committee sets forth three criteria with which to assess the quality of Catholic schools:

- ° an explicit and respectful presentation of the Christian faith;
- ° priority attention given to the climate of human relations (including respect to non-Catholics);
- ° the will to educate the whole person.

4. See: Comité catholique, The Catholic School, in The State and Needs of Education, annual report of the Superior Council of Education 1979-1980, pp. 132-155.

The committee also proposed ten indicators to help determine whether these criteria are in fact met. The schools, then, have at their disposal precise and workable instruments which they can use to satisfy the regulation's requirements concerning the evaluation of the school's functioning as a confessional institution.

Respect for the School's Confessional Character

The school's decision to be recognized as a Catholic school can only be meaningful if all partners in the school respect this Catholic orientation. This question, delicate though it is, cannot be ignored. Persons directly responsible for dispensing instruction in the Christian faith are required to be Catholic. Others are requested to respect the confessional character of the school in the exercise of their responsibilities. This means that, in general, the Catholic orientation of the school must at least be accepted and respected as the point of reference and inspiration of the educational project. It would be unrealistic to expect increased religious homogeneity among the teachers, parents and pupils in the public Catholic school of the 1990s. The Catholic committee nonetheless wishes to ensure that the Catholic school's confessional dimension is characterized by some degree of coherence. For this reason the Catholic committee requires, at the very least, respect for the Catholic character of the school on the part of all members of the school community.

III- RESPECT FOR FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

In a recent publication the Catholic committee draws attention to the specific character of the Catholic school in Québec.⁵ It is a school which, while recognized as Catholic, is a public school which must remain welcoming and open to young people who do not share the Catholic faith. For more than one hundred years both Catholic and Protestant schools in the public system (with the exception of schools under the jurisdiction of dissentient school boards) have been required to provide education to pupils whose religion is neither Catholic nor Protestant.

In recent years the phenomenon of immigration has made itself felt to a greater or lesser extent in many regions of Québec. The 1987-1988 statistics from the Direction de la gestion des données of the ministère de l'Éducation reveal that there are 71,151 allophone pupils attending Québec schools, representing 6.2 percent of the student population. This population represents a variety of different cultures, ways of life, and religious traditions. The latter often differ from the religious traditions of Québec's Catholic and Protestant communities. The same statistics show that 54.1 percent of Québec's allophone pupils are of the Catholic faith. The Québec population is thus becoming increasingly diversified with respect to culture, ethnic origin and religion. Even among people whose roots in Québec go back a long way (traditionally Catholic or Protestant), there is no longer the same degree of unanimity. Here too differences appear which cannot be ignored; indeed, such differences, which extend also to teaching staff, must be respected.

For the Catholic population the following facts remain: at least 90 percent of francophone pupils in Québec's public elementary and secondary schools

5. See: Comité catholique, L'École catholique, situation et avenir, 1986, pp. 9-10

register each year as Catholic; 95.7 percent of Catholic allophone pupils attend schools under the jurisdiction of a Catholic school board or a school board for Catholics; in recent years the majority of these parents, when asked to exercise their responsibility with respect to the status of a new elementary school, have always opted for Catholic status.

The regulation thus attempts to be fair to everyone. However, it can only be appreciated by those who understand the fact of diversity in Québec and who are willing to be mutually enriched by these differences.

To this end the regulation draws attention to three realities which must be taken into account by the personnel of Catholic schools: an educational project which respects the public character of the school; the choice between moral instruction and Catholic moral and religious instruction; and the right of teaching staff not to dispense religious confessional instruction for reasons of freedom of conscience.

An Educational Project which Respects the Public Character of the School

The Catholic school must integrate the beliefs and values of the Catholic religion into its educational project. In doing so, it must respect the freedom of conscience and of religion. No one must be required to take or to teach a course of religious instruction. As well, no one must be obliged to participate in activities of a religious nature.

In a context of social and cultural change, no legislation or regulation alone can perfectly guarantee the exercise of individual and collective rights. Learning to live in a pluralist society (a society which, in this case, features a majority population whose rights have long been recognized) requires the cooperation of everyone and is not something that can be achieved overnight. Teachers, parents and administrative personnel, all must show tact, judgement and a spirit of tolerance in order to honestly and respectfully apply the legislation and regulations governing the Catholic school.

The Option

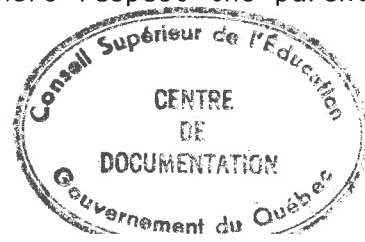
Since 1985, schools recognized as Catholic have been offering a choice between Catholic moral and religious instruction, which draws its inspiration from the Catholic faith, and moral instruction, which is based on fundamental human aspirations as expressed in the various charters of rights.

This decision of the Catholic committee ensures respect for pupils and for the choices of parents. Clearly such respect does not reside solely in the fact that parents check one box or the other on the registration form. Although this does represent an important symbolic aspect. Beyond the gesture itself, however, it is necessary to understand the implications of the regulation for the various partners.

For parents, the regulation means making a voluntary and informed choice every year. This choice represents a kind of commitment, a commitment to following the child's progress in a search for meaning in accordance with an approach which, in the parents' opinion, best respects the child's social and cultural development within the family before beginning school.

For the school's administrative personnel, the regulation means respecting parents' choices by organizing groups in such a way as to ensure a high level of quality for both types of instruction. It must also see that this instruction occupies an adequate place in the timetable. At a time when science and technology are increasingly emphasized, the Catholic school should make it a point of honour to accord an important role to subjects which examine the meaning of existence and the principles of moral behaviour.

For the teaching staff, the fact that the parents make a choice indicates that the young people are in the classroom to be provided with serious and authentic instruction, whether religious or moral. Teachers dispensing Catholic religious and moral instruction can thus feel free to propose the teachings of the Catholic faith in the knowledge that no young people are only present because the school requires it. Teachers respect the parents'



choice by allotting the proper amount of time to this instruction (as stipulated in the regulation) and to approved programs, and by assuming their responsibilities in the area of faith education as described recently by the Catholic committee.⁶

The Rights of Teachers

On this point, the new regulation is no different from the old one. The regulation reaffirms the teacher's right not to dispense Catholic religious and moral instruction, and the school must facilitate the teacher's exemption. Some would have preferred that the Catholic committee had implemented an option system for elementary school teachers as was done for pupils. For reasons recently outlined elsewhere,⁷ the Catholic committee did not judge it opportune to change its regulation in this respect. The same conclusion was reached during the discussions which surrounded the enactment of the 1984 Act respecting public elementary and secondary education. The Catholic committee thus considers that the suggestions and recommendations it made on this question in the above-mentioned document remain valid.

Certainly, this aspect is sometimes difficult to apply. But the Catholic committee is convinced that it remains the solution which will allow each milieu to evolve at its own rhythm, and to find solutions which foster respect for both the pupil and the teacher. But this in turn depends on the willingness of the unions and of management to truly respect the right of pupils to receive religious instruction of high quality, and the rights of teachers who, for reasons of conscience, cannot or do not wish to dispense this type of instruction.

6. Comité catholique, Faith Education in the Schools, 1985.

7. Ibid., pp. 52-55.

The regulation fosters respect for the teacher's freedom of conscience, but it cannot work effectively without the good will of all parties, whose concern for the young people should constitute the focal point. On this particular point, the Catholic committee would like to see a situation which would allow the system as a whole to be more authentic, more respectful of teachers and pupils, and would increasingly ensure the high quality of religious instruction received by young people.

CONCLUSION

The Catholic committee hopes that its new regulation will enable the various milieux to achieve more easily the objectives of quality, authenticity and respect. The Catholic committee is well aware of the fact that the regulation's requirements are, if not broader, then at least clearer and more precise. Clearly it will be more difficult to simply ignore these requirements in silence.

Schools unable to meet the demands of the regulation should take corrective measures or request the revocation of their recognition as Catholic schools. This is a conscious intention of the Catholic Committee in formulating the regulation. The revocation process, when necessary, will be rendered less difficult given the obligation of submitting an evaluative report every five years. The Catholic committee will suggest a procedure which will aid in decision-making based on the wishes of parents.

Finally, while the regulation is more demanding on the issues of quality and authenticity, this must not adversely affect the public character of the school, the free choice of pupils, or the freedom of conscience of teachers.

In this way the Catholic committee hopes to achieve a healthy balance which will help Catholic schools develop an authentic Catholic character while maintaining openness and respect for those who do not share the Catholic faith. It must also be hoped that, where parents opt for a different type of public school, the beliefs of Catholics attending the school will likewise be respected.

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