

Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers
l'Association provinciale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec

QPAT Brief:
Building Vocational Training for the 21st Century

**Presented in conjunction with the reflection on vocational training conducted
by Sébastien Proulx, Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport**

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Before specifically addressing the questions presented to us, it is important to note that we have identified a number of observations and priorities mentioned by our members during our discussions with them.

- First, it would seem that vocational training is not valued by our society, and is considered to be an “alternative route” or “way out” for students who have little or no hope of obtaining their Diploma of Secondary Studies. As a result, the academic level and/or abilities of many of the students who enroll for these programs makes it more difficult for them to achieve the level of competency they need to graduate. For some, graduation is impossible.
- Given this, the complementary support service resources available for vocational training students who have special needs are clearly insufficient to help them achieve success.
- In addition, the fact that a large percentage of students are immigrants creates an additional challenge, in particular with regard to language skills, meaning that the students need even more support.
- With regard to the decisions made in the vocational training sector, our members have the impression that they are excluded from the consultation process at the provincial level. This impression reinforces their belief that decisions are made by the authorities based on the priorities in the French-speaking sector, without consideration for the specific concerns and needs of the English-speaking sector.
- To our astonishment, we also found that, in some programs offered by English school boards, the English language teaching materials to which the teachers and students have access are not of the same quality as those available in French. This makes the task of our teachers even more difficult.
- **Summary of recommendations:** Our members all hope the process launched by the Minister of Education will result in a situation where all the ministries concerned, and especially the Ministère de l'Éducation, make decisions and propose significant measures that will:
 - Assert the true value of vocational training programs, publicize them and make them accessible;
 - Directly involve our teachers in a meaningful way throughout the consultation process;
 - Make sure teaching and complementary resources are available in sufficient quantities so that the students are in the best possible position to succeed;

- Ensure that the program review and updating process is as effective and flexible as possible;
- Provide sufficient funding for school boards to upgrade their equipment in line with technological developments;
- Take into account the specific concerns and needs of the English-speaking sector in the Ministry's choices;
- Provide students from remote regions with access to a range of vocational training programs and qualification paths in their language;
- Give priority to the needs of students, not of the market.

As you can see, we have used the template provided to make our recommendations. As a union organization representing teachers in the English-speaking vocational sector, we have limited our recommendations to the issues that we feel are relevant to our members.

TOPIC 1: Partnership-based approaches

1.1 A better, more flexible and more rapid process for revising programs of study

In your opinion, which stakeholders need to participate in improving the process of revising programs of study? What role could each of these stakeholders play? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- Teachers must be actively involved in reviewing and updating programs, at the same table as centre administrators, ministerial representatives and sector partners. Not only do teachers, as people who have worked in a given industry, have expertise in the area of training, they also have expertise in pedagogy, which should mean that, as key players, they are included in the program design and review process. At present, teachers do not feel that their expertise is being used to the full.
- The program review process must be simplified and speeded up, so that programs can be updated without long delays, bureaucracy and cumbersome requirements.
- Program content must be open or flexible enough to allow for changes to address new situations, technologies and so on, without the need to subject the program to the formal review process, as is currently the case.
- The English-speaking community has a specific set of needs that are not currently taken into account. The MEES should make sure this situation is addressed during the consultation process.

1.2 Mechanisms for taking emerging needs and 21st-century competencies into account in program offerings

In your opinion, how could we work toward meeting emerging workforce needs? How could we introduce 21st-century competencies into vocational program offerings? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- To meet the emerging needs of the workforce, the Ministry's choice should be based on realistic future projections for the labour market rather than on outdated information (from two years ago) from *Emploi Québec* as is currently the case. The job market situation is often different for English-speakers and French-speakers. Specific consideration should be given to this.
- Although the available training meets the current needs of the job market, it should also allow for the development of skills that are general enough to be transferred to more than one industry, to avoid a situation where graduates are limited to only one company as their potential employer.
- MEES program managers should be aware of the situation in the communities and in the field, so that they can meet needs properly and make the best decisions.
- The school boards should receive more funding so that they are able to renew or adjust the equipment needed for vocational training programs. The use of outdated equipment should not be an option if we want to train competent graduates who are properly prepared for the labour market.
- Integration of 21st-century competencies: take an inventory of these competencies and define them ... we would prefer to focus on the basic competencies that must be developed by all students from the beginning of elementary school onwards. The acquisition and consolidation of basic knowledge, competencies and attitudes should form part of the normal school curriculum for all students, and should continue regardless of the path chosen by the student, including in vocational training programs. The development of a critical mindset and training of responsible, versatile citizens who are able to adapt should be the core focus of the educational process.
- To provide better access to a variety of programs for students, in their own language, the inter-board program loan process should be facilitated and simplified.

1.3 Closer ties between the Ministry and the school boards

In your opinion, what process could be put in place to make the circulation of information among the partners more effective? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

1.4 Closer ties between the education system and the job market

In your opinion, what steps could be taken to improve the exchange of information between the education community and the workplace community, including the municipalities? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- Closer ties should be forged between the industry and schools with respect to training placements, to make sure the training is in the best interests of the students and not of the company that hosts them.

TOPIC 2: Program offerings adapted to needs in the different regions

2.1 Concerted development of vocational program offerings

In your opinion, how could the provision of vocational training programs be better adapted to the needs of each administrative region? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- To ensure that all students in Québec have access to as broad a range of programs as possible, in their language and in the regions, the Ministry should change the funding method and allow school boards to open programs for small groups without it generating a deficit.

2.2 Closer and more effective regional cooperation

In your opinion, how could we provide a more coherent regional program offering? What mechanisms could be established to foster regional cooperation? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- The Ministry should ask for better collaboration or cooperation from the partners, to avoid duplication and competition for clients (school boards and CEGEPs). The programs offered by the CEGEPs should complement and be of a higher level than the programs leading to a DVS. The CEGEPs should not be able to offer Attestations of Collegial Studies in a given specialty if an equivalent program is available at a vocational training centre in the same region.

2.3 Vocational training in support of regional development

In your opinion, what measures should be implemented so that vocational training better supports regional development? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- Because of our language situation, our students can choose to enter the job market in another Canadian province. This factor is not considered by the Ministry in its evaluation of needs, especially in the area along the Ontario border (Outaouais). It should be taken into consideration in order to meet the specific needs of the English-speaking community.

2.4 Stimulus to continuing training and business services

In your opinion, how could we further support the development of continuing training? Does it still meet the needs of business services? If not, how could we make it more effective? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

TOPIC 3: Stakeholders committed to innovation

3.1 Innovative training approaches

In your opinion, how could we use new technologies to better advantage in and for our training approaches? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution? In your opinion, how could the RAC process be improved? How could CERACs and *Qualifications Québec* work together to improve services? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- Online training should be developed to make certain programs more accessible to students in remote regions, but this should not be done to the detriment of face-to-face training. The student-teacher relationship is fundamental and should continue to be the core element of the pedagogical relationship.
- Proper funding should also be provided by the Ministry, so that teachers can be released for training purposes.
- Technologies should be introduced only if sufficient and proper infrastructures are in place and a training plan has been drawn up.
- More funding should be available to guarantee adequate, ongoing technical support.

3.2 Innovative training paths

In your opinion, is increased workplace training a way of the future? If so, how can more workplace training be introduced into programs of study? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution? In your opinion, how could we facilitate the implementation of SSD-DVS double-diploma programs? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

Review the legal and regulatory frameworks governing the conditions of admission and awarding of academic equivalencies. Funding should be allocated to training programs to acquire missing competencies, regardless of their number. More flexibility should be given regarding the rules of admission for missing training.

- With regard to part-time training, funding should be provided for training of less than 15 hours per week.

- Regarding work-study concomitance, make sure students do not become cheap labour for businesses, by ensuring that the businesses are truly committed to the training.
- It is also important to ensure that concomitance does not become a way of providing access to a program without meeting the prerequisites.
- Give priority to paths that allow for double or even triple graduation (DVS-SSD-DCS).
- Create more complementarity between vocational training programs and technical training in colleges.
- Encourage CEGEPs to allow for more bridges for vocational training graduates. A DVS should not be an end in and of itself, but should provide access to higher education in the same field.
- The Ministry should consider the possibility of introducing a path that will allow students to start a diploma of vocational studies and then, along the way, opt for certification in a semi-specialized trade, based on a skills assessment and any problems that may have been encountered.

3.3 Collaborative efforts to attract and retain students

In your opinion, how could we give new impetus to the promotion of vocational training? How could we better position vocational training in the Québec school system? How do you view the current role played by the Ministry in this regard? How could the Ministry improve its practices in order to become part of the solution?

- The Ministry should publicize and assert the value of vocational training by ensuring that the programs meet the highest standards. With this in mind, it goes without saying that the prerequisites required to access a program should not be lowered.
- The ministries concerned should launch a campaign for this, and all the system's stakeholders should be involved. Over the years, the Québec Government has invested massively in highly effective awareness campaigns against conjugal violence, drunk driving and other issues, and could be just as effective in changing the perceptions of the public in general, and parents in particular, with respect to vocational training programs.
- Specifically for the English sector, we note that basic teaching materials are not available in English for all the vocational training programs offered by English school boards. This means that our teachers do not always have access to the basic tools they need to provide their students with the best possible education. It also means that not all students have access to the learning materials they need to succeed. As a result, teachers and school boards must produce in-house materials – something their French-speaking colleagues do not have to do – and they must do this without

any additional funding. The Ministry should take the lead here, by asking the publishing companies concerned to provide the same materials in both English and French, as they do for youth sector programs. Money is available for this under the Canada-Québec Agreement, precisely to allow Québec's English education system to provide educational services of equivalent quality to those available in the French sector.

- It is important to ensure the fluidity and continuity of complementary educational services for vocational training students with special needs. Funding should be increased so that adequate and proper support can be provided. In other words, complementary services should be expanded and adapted to the vocational training network. The students should have access not only to more support services, but also to a sector-appropriate evaluation service.
- To improve program accessibility, the Ministry should award mobility and accommodation scholarships, so that students from remote regions can enroll in vocational training programs outside their region. This would help reduce drop-out rates.