

A quill pen with a silver-colored nib and a dark, textured body is positioned diagonally across the left side of the page. It rests on a piece of light-colored parchment paper that is slightly curled at the top. The background is a solid dark blue color.

Immigration and Education

Québec's *Policy on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education*

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Conseil supérieur
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Québec 

Canada

An immigrant-receiving country with a higher immigration rate than the USA

- ❑ Federation: Division of powers between federal and provincial governments, either exclusive or shared.
- ❑ Immigration: Jurisdiction shared between federal and provincial governments.
- ❑ Education: Exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces.

Quebec

- ❑ Québec public school system: Once organized along denominational lines (Catholic/Protestant), today organized around linguistic school boards (French/English).
- ❑ Québec immigration: Volumes and origins.
- ❑ September 11, 2001 and its aftermath.

Key Dates and Legislations

1977 *Bill 101*: French becomes the official language of Québec. All children of immigrant backgrounds in the public school system must now attend French-speaking schools. (Prior to this date, most immigrant children would have been enrolled in the Anglo-Protestant school system.)

Key Dates and Legislations

1990 The *Canada-Québec Accord*: giving Québec jurisdiction over the selection of immigrants and exclusive powers in their linguistic and economic integration.

- ❑ Offsetting the demographic deficit and its economic and political impact;
- ❑ Compensating for an aging population;
- ❑ Preserving the demographic balance in Canada;
- ❑ Ensuring the predominance of French in Québec.

Québec adds about 50,000 immigrants per year to its population of 7 million. Today, 65% of immigrants know French. 80% of immigrants hail from countries other than in North America or Europe.

Key Dates and Legislations

1998 The Government of Québec releases *A School For the Future: Policy Statement on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education. A New Direction for Success.*

1998 Amendment to the Canadian Constitution to reorganize denominational school boards (Catholic/Protestant) into linguistic ones (Francophone/Anglophone).

School Population and Immigration in Québec: some statistics

- 18% of all elementary and secondary school students are children of immigrant backgrounds.
- 48% of students in Montréal public schools are children of immigrant backgrounds (partly due to a strong geographical concentration of immigrants in Montréal and the flight of non-immigrants to suburban areas or private schools).
- No systematic correlation between multi-ethnic schools and disadvantaged groups.

Objectives of Québec's *Policy on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education*

- Strike a balance** between Canadian multiculturalism (perceived as essentializing cultures and isolating them from one another) and American-style assimilation or French-style republicanism (which tend to relegate diversity to the private sphere).
- Recognize the pluralism** that results from immigration (past and recent) and the move toward:
 - a Francophone culture open to the contributions of immigrant groups (“cultural communities”);
 - common, fundamental and democratic values such as: gender equality, children’s rights, non-violence, pluralism, cooperation among communities, and fundamental freedoms.

Three key principles

- ❑ The promotion of equal opportunity.
- ❑ The proficiency of French, the common language of public life in Québec.
- ❑ Citizenship education in a democratic, pluralistic society.

Central concept: Intercultural Education

Learning how to live together in a democratic and pluralistic French-speaking society. Challenges include:

- ❑ Representing ethno-cultural diversity in hiring within the education system.
- ❑ Training and professional development of teachers.
- ❑ Adapting both the official Québec Education curriculum and the taught.

Ongoing societal Debate (cycles)

- From intercultural education (openness to and respect for diversity) to fighting discrimination (racism, prejudice, stereotypes) to citizenship education (rights and responsibilities, participation).
- From language of instruction (mandatory French vs. freedom of choice, mandatory French in elementary and secondary school vs. in elementary, secondary and college) to religion (“reasonable accommodation”, open secularism or French-style republicanism).

Ongoing societal Debate (cycles)

- The wearing of religious symbols by teaching staff.
- Teaching cultural identity (language, religion and history) and integrating an intercultural perspective throughout the curriculum.
- Ethics and religious culture courses, the importance of religion, and the place of Christianity.

Programs and Initiatives

- Orientation classes with French language support and a smaller student/teacher ratio (instead of placement in regular classes): learning the language of instruction and raising awareness of the host society's cultural codes and references.
- Programme d'Enseignement des Langues d'Origine* [PELO, or Teaching the Language of Origin Program]: for allophone students in French schools.
- The Québec Education Program's domain of Learning *Citizenship and Community Life*, available through Geography, History and Citizenship Education programs: openness to diversity in societies and in the community.
- Ethics and Religious Culture courses: focusing on Christian and Aboriginal spiritual traditions, and world religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism.

Programs and Initiatives

- Bias-free teaching material— + Ministerial approval process —that reflects diversity.
- Initial teacher training and continuing professional development: Intercultural and bias-free teaching included in the competency framework for teachers, as well as formal courses and internships.
- Continuing education programs offered by the Education Department, school boards, the Human rights Commission, and community organizations, covering:
 - ❑ intercultural communication;
 - ❑ initiatives in multi-ethnic school communities;
 - ❑ preventing racism;
 - ❑ relationships with parents;
 - ❑ reasonable accommodation.

Programs and Initiatives

- In school boards: community liaison officers and translation resources to build relationships with immigrant parents.
- Equal opportunity hiring policies in representing minorities across education faculties and school boards.

Role of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

- The Conseil has prepared many briefs and reports exploring the notion of interculturalism and citizenship education; the concept of ethics, religion and citizenship education; the “deconfessionalization” of the education system; and the recognition of diversity and advancement of pluralism in the curriculum.

Publications of the CSE (Accessible on the Website)

1993: *Pour un accueil et une intégration réussis des élèves des communautés culturelles.* [Towards a successful welcome and integration of students from different cultural communities].

1996: *La réussite à l'école montréalaise : une urgence pour la société québécoise.* [The success of Montréal schools: an urgent priority for Québec society].

1998: *Éduquer à la citoyenneté* [An education for citizenship].

2005: *Pour un aménagement respectueux des libertés et des droits fondamentaux : une école pleinement ouverte à tous les élèves du Québec.* [Towards an environment that promotes rights and fundamental freedoms: a school fully open to all Québec students].

2010: *Conjuguer équité et performance en éducation, un défi de société.* [Balancing Equity and Performance in Education: A Challenge For Society].

Successes and Challenges

Linguistic Integration: Success

- ❑ Proficiency of French is as good among allophones as among Francophone students.
- ❑ A trend toward the predominant use of French outside the classroom and in school.
- ❑ French as the language of instruction in post-secondary education has reached 63%.
- ❑ 65% of those who attended a French-speaking school now use French as their common language in public adult life.

Successes and Challenges

Equal Opportunity and School Success: Mixed results

- ❑ Immigrant students or children of immigrants tend to integrate into secondary school with a greater delay than other students and continue to lag, even when they enter at the right time.
- ❑ These students are less likely than other students to obtain a secondary school diploma after 5 years (46.5% compared to 55.4% respectively) or after 7 years (62.1% compared to 68.2%).
- ❑ Variables include: gender, origin of parents, delays on entering and during secondary school; public vs. private school.
- ❑ A heterogeneous group reflecting a range of realities.
- ❑ In Black communities, English and Creole speakers from the Antilles have a 17% gap in certification (40%).

Successes and Challenges

Intercultural Relations in Schools: Work in progress

- ❑ A multiplicity of successful initiatives: around 1,000 examples of best practices.
- ❑ A priority for Québec and Canadian teachers: integrating students in school culture and educational success, beyond incorporating an intercultural perspective to the curriculum.
- ❑ Pressure to accommodate—in general schools have learned how to manage demands from various cultural communities and parents.
Approximately:
 - 50% of cases are granted;
 - 25% are declined;
 - 25% reach a compromise;
- ❑ Demands from Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims.
- ❑ Race-related issues are treated under crisis management and ad hoc conflict resolution.

Is the glass half full or half empty?

Students:

- ❑ Have different values than their parents lean toward the host society.
- ❑ Quebec (French-Canadian heritage) and Canadian (cultural and linguistic diversity) identity.

Conclusion

- ❑ A Trojan horse that upends a demolingistic education system and the identity of the host society itself.
- ❑ A work in progress.
- ❑ The importance of continued research and efforts in:
 - following the educational paths of students from immigrant backgrounds;
 - evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives and “reasonable accommodations”;
 - guiding the host society in the transformation of its identity.

Le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

The Conseil's briefs and reports are available
online at www.cse.gouv.qc.ca.