

Education in the Catholic Schools

Although Catholic education in Quebec has been considered sufficiently atypical to warrant a separate diagram and description, it is conducted after much the same fashion as education in the other provinces. All types of schools familiar to Canadians elsewhere are to be found in Quebec, including the ungraded rural elementary schools, the graded urban schools, the secondary schools with academic bias, vocational schools, and at the top universities, and, with these, school boards, school inspectors, a department and departmental officials. Such differences as exist are of historic origin and arise out of the traditional French-Canadian conception of education. This involves the beliefs that the greatest contribution by French Canadians to Canada's future can be made by preserving their language and certain customs related to their racial origin, that religion should be an integral part of education, that boys and girls are best educated separately, that education is a privilege and that those who consider entering the professions may make such a decision at the end of the elementary school. On this view, the majority can contribute most by being good citizens, the girls through home-making courses and the boys through vocational-education courses.

In Quebec schools, religion permeates most classes and accounts for about one-eighth of teaching time for the first five years, after which it is lessened somewhat. English, in the French-language schools, and French, in the English-language schools, are generally taught as second languages. A third difference is found in the organization of the system so that, at the end of the seven years of elementary schooling, the pupil can decide whether to attend the church-operated collège classique, which provides an eight-year course leading to the baccalauréat and entrance to several university faculties, or the public secondary school, which provides four years preparation for certain technical fields, trades, arts or home economics, and, in a growing number of schools, an academic course somewhat similar to that offered in the first four years of the classical colleges. The choice made at the end of the elementary school is no longer irrevocable; able students from the public secondary school may upon completion enter the upper division of the collège classique or enter university, and students from the higher technical schools may enter the faculties of science and engineering in the universities. Thus the Quebec school system has so developed as to be comparable with those of the other provinces. A fourth difference is, however, in the major development of vocational education administered by the Department of Social Welfare and Youth, and other vocational schools conducted by the appropriate departments of government.

Special Schools and Special Education

Interest is increasing in exceptional children, including the gifted, as well as in the disabled or those who are emotionally, mentally, physically or socially handicapped. In the 1953-54 school year, facilities were provided for 42,430 exceptional children, under the charge of 1,900 teachers in 108 special schools and 588 special classes provided from public sources, and in 130 private schools. The largest group was found among the mentally retarded, followed by those requiring speech correction, the orphaned and neglected, institutional cases, delinquents, hospital cases, and a variety of other categories. New types of special classes are sometimes started, by parents of children with a common disability, who band together to provide help and show the need for such service, which is then taken over by public bodies. Similar classes are initiated by the department of education or municipal authorities. Progress in providing such education varies from province to province. It generally begins in the city-school system; there is usually little provision for assistance for the rural child who needs special attention, except for those who are taken to institutions.