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QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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BRIEF ON TEACHER CLASSIFICATION

PRESENTED BY

QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

TO

COMMISSION OF STUDY ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHERS

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The Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations at its Annual General Meeting held in May 1973, passed two resolutions on the issue and conflict arising in respect of Teacher Classification to be directed to the Minister of Education.

The first referred to "declassification" of teachers; the second referred to the classification of Technical and Vocational teachers. These resolutions were submitted in due course to the Minister.

This Brief to the Commission of Study on the Classification of Teachers constituted by the Minister represents the continued interest, concern and involvement of our Federation in the very serious issues which have a direct effect on the quality of education of our children.



Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations includes 122 member associations with a total of 15,000 family members. This Brief is based on answers to a questionnaire sent out to all associations; 89 questionnaires were returned, representing 74 associations, or 61% of our membership. This Brief has received the ratification of the Executive of our Federation and thus represents its consensus.

It is the belief of Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations that it has a responsibility to concern itself in the issue and problem of Teacher Classification for several reasons:

1. The present dispute affects the quality of the school life of our children; "declassification" demonstrably undermines the morale of our teachers. Teachers, like everyone else, need to feel that their work is properly appreciated by other people. In Quebec, right now, they do not feel that their employer, the government of the province, has given them due credit or recognition for their work. In many instances "declassification" comes as a most severe blow to the teacher's dignity - a strange reward for a lifetime of dedicated service to his pupils.
2. Preoccupied by disputes over pay which have been embittered and exacerbated by "declassification, the government, Boards and Teachers cannot concentrate on what ought to be their primary concern - the satisfaction of children's needs and the improvement of education.



3. The School Boards and the National Assembly of the Province - the employers against whom the teachers allegedly have a grievance are answerable to voters, including ourselves, who elected their membership.
4. The money paid to teachers - or not paid - comes from us, the taxpayers; our whole parliamentary system of democratic government is derived from the concept that the taxpayer has the means of determining and the right of knowing how his tax money is being spent.
5. Finally, the Minister of Education has called into being the Commission of Study on the Classification of Teachers. This Commission has invited the submission of studies, comments, briefs and recommendations - and to this Commission, Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations hereby addresses this Brief in response to the invitation.

Questions answered by local associations which constitute the consensus upon which this Brief is based were grouped as follows:

- A. How Should a Classification Scale be Made?
- B. How Should Technical and Vocational Teachers be Classified?
- C. The Treatment of "Declassified" Teachers.
- D. The Role of the Province in Teacher Negotiations including Classification.



A. HOW SHOULD A CLASSIFICATION SCALE BE MADE?

It is acknowledged that an effective teacher needs a general education, knowledge of what is to be taught, training in the techniques of teaching and practical experience in teaching.

Our Federation recommends that the above four dimensions be taken into account in the construction of any new teacher classification system and scale of remuneration as follows:-

1. That the principle of years of scholaryty be abandoned; individuals take varying periods of time to attain the same levels of academic and practical preparation; the superior student has frequently been able to complete his studies faster than the average;
2. That the principle of academic (or trade) objectives attained related to the dimensions of general education and the field of teaching together with professional training constitute the basic placement of a teacher on any scale, i. e., academic (or trade) degrees and teacher certification; specific recommendations in respect of technical and vocational teachers will be developed in Section B following;
3. That salary depend upon years of experience - in teaching, and a proportion of years in related fields, to an outside maximum of 15 years;



4. That some criteria be sought for in order to reward or provide incentives for professional development and professional effectiveness;
5. That incentives outside any salary scale be provided to encourage teachers to be willing to offer their services to isolated areas according to need.

B. HOW SHOULD TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TEACHERS BE CLASSIFIED?

Teachers of Technical and Vocational (Trade) Skills and Subjects have special classification problems, because many of them left school quite early to learn their trades. Despite their years of on-the-job experience which would seem to be a prerequisite for teachers of such subjects, they receive no recognition in the "Manual" for much of their training.

The "Manual" seems to assume that universities are the only institutions where preparation appropriate to teaching takes place. This assumption is manifestly wrong, most obviously in respect of teachers of technical and vocational trades and skills. Furthermore, a university degree is no guarantee of wisdom or of maturity.

Just as our schools become polyvalent, so our teachers will have varied skills, but in human terms, the teachers of pupils who do not proceed to university are in a very real way as important as teachers of those who are university oriented. In fact, competent teachers whose orientation is non-university can make a positive contribution to their students by this very orientation.



In view of the above, our Federation submits that for the present there should be a classification system in respect of Technical and Vocational (Trade) Teachers which is quite different from that of Academic Teachers.

It should have built into it recognition of relevant trade training and relevant on-the-job experience. Noting that many who have entered the teaching profession from the trades or technologies are masters in their field and foremen or managers in their former employment, it seems appropriate that such positions should be taken into account in reckoning their placement on any scale of scholarship.

Further, our Federation recommends that great flexibility should be allowed in placing teachers on any scale - with a substantial degree of discretion being allowed Boards in deciding how much on-the-job training and experience should be applied to the "Scholarship" co-ordinate and how much to the "experience" co-ordinate of the scale.

Further, salaries should be such as will attract competent applicants from the trades and technologies to the teaching profession - and to retain them.

Our Federation realizes that the construction of a scale to correspond adequately to the needs of the Technical and Vocational area is exceedingly difficult, that correspondence between various



fields is very difficult to determine, that workload and pressures unique to certain fields may require consideration. But it is completely inappropriate to attempt to simplify the complexities of the situation or to solve the problem by impressing such teachers into an Academic Classification system which is irrelevant.

C. THE TREATMENT OF "DECLASSIFIED" TEACHERS:

Many teachers have been "declassified"; that is, they have been degraded from the classification into which their school board employers had placed them on entering service because of the directives contained in the "Manual."

In respect of some teachers, "declassification" was effective from the time pertinent sections of the "Manual" were issued when Boards reclassified them in accordance with it, and salaries were frozen until they corresponded to the salaries set forth in the new, lowered categories.

In other instances, notwithstanding the "Manual" directives, some Boards were able to sustain the salaries to which these Boards felt their teachers were entitled. When such Boards were no longer able to keep up payment of salaries beyond what was allowed according to the "Manual", the salaries of the now "declassified" teachers were actually reduced - to salaries comparable to those of their colleagues who had been "declassified" previously.



Our Federation recognizes the following:-

In principle, common criteria should be applied to all, and thus "Declassification" would seem appropriate and fair where criteria for a given classification are not met.

However, it is to be noted that such instances of teachers inappropriately classified according to the "Manual" were discovered only after pertinent sections of the "Manual" were issued.

Seemingly many such teachers had been so classified in good faith for several years.

All teachers' expectations as to salary and pensions are based on the minimums established by their previously determined classifications, and many have assumed financial obligations dependent upon the security inherent in such previously determined classifications.

Also, the previously determined classifications, together with the remunerations attached thereto constitute in respect of the teachers, acquired rights - not, as has been said, "acquired advantages" over other teachers - , and on the part of the employing Boards, at least morally, contractual obligations. Further, the loss of earnings and anticipated earnings as a consequence of "declassification" results in grievous hardship in the face of mounting costs-of-living.

Finally, since the Minister has ordered that the whole issue of teacher classification is to be restudied, it is evident that decisions as to classification, including the directives contained in the "Manual" itself are thus rendered tentative.



In view of the foregoing, our Federation recommends until the Minister acts upon the completed recommendations of the Commission of Study:-

1. That no teacher shall be declassified;
2. That all teachers who have already been declassified shall have their original classification restored - save and except in those cases where there has been an obvious and flagrant previous misclassification;
3. That monetary loss sustained by teachers already declassified be restored to them.

Our Federation further recommends to the Commission of Study that it formulate procedures for dealing with cases of teachers whose classification may have to be altered to their disadvantage as a consequence of the establishment of any final scheme of classification. Such procedures should reflect certain principles, including the following:

1. That no teacher shall suffer actual loss of present earnings based on a restored salary.
2. That any "declassified" teachers shall continue to be remunerated according to their original classifications, subject to the requirement that they shall bring their qualifications up to the level of their original classification within a reasonable period of time.



3. That anticipated remuneration shall be reduced to that of the new classification in respect of teachers who have failed to comply with the requirement that they improve their qualifications within the period of time determined;
4. That the intent of the principle of up-grading is to provide professional improvement - not to launch a credit chase.

D. THE ROLE OF THE PROVINCE IN TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS  
INCLUDING CLASSIFICATION.

Since 1966, the provincial government has directed the negotiation of teachers' contracts including salaries, until it now has assumed complete control over all questions of classification and salary.

The classification system imposed upon teachers as a consequence can only be categorized as rigid.

The entry of the provincial government into the whole area of teacher negotiation has resulted in the major problem we face at the present time.

It must be admitted that the salaries paid by school boards to teachers have in fact been derived from or guaranteed by the provincial government, and that this provincial participation has enabled smaller boards to improve their services and to make the quality of education more equal across the province. Thus it is right for the provincial government to continue as a party to the



construction and application of any classification system or systems, but within reasonable limited, as explained below.

The "Manual" has not simplified the process of classification. It has not abolished inequities. It has not overcome administrative inefficiency. It has in fact complicated the whole process; it has created new inequities; it has led to new delays, indecision, and plain irresponsibility. The "Manual" has yet to justify its existence though it has grown to gigantic proportions, and is still growing as new pages are added to it in their hundreds. As its size is gigantic, so is its complexity. And, after three years or more of growth, thousands of teachers still await their final classification or "attestation of scholaryity"; thousands who have received their attestations contest them.

Therefore, our Federation recommends that the Provincial government establish a new policy as follows:-

1. That the provincial government withdraw partially from the whole area of the negotiations of teachers' contracts, including working conditions, and in particular from the classification of teachers;
2. That local Boards and Teachers shall have the right restored to them to work out their own contracts;
3. That the provincial government shall continue to provide guidelines and limits to classification systems and salary scales.



In any event, the documentation for teacher classification should be kept at the local level. In cases where the government suspects irregularity, there could be a system of audit by the Minister of local dossiers pertaining to teacher classifications.

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