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Future Prospects for Education Graduates

When the National Union of Teachers estimates that there are 20,000 unemployed teachers in England and Wales, when in the U.S.A. a quarter-million teachers are reported to be either out of work or to have found employment in other fields, and when enrolment in Quebec schools dropped by 56,653 in 1976, it is hardly surprising that Teacher Associations and students in teacher-training programs express concern about job-openings and employment prospects. This concern is nowhere more acute than when the Freshman classes at the McGill Faculty of Education gather together at orientation sessions in mid-September. Each student looks around at the hundreds of others and not one of them is prepared to believe that there will be sufficient job-openings for everyone. The Faculty is generally condemned for having admitted too many students. During the past few years I have been in a position to offer some reassurance on this matter but it seems that only in rare instances have these reassurances been believed. What then are the facts as they relate to employment prospects in the English-language education sector of the Province of Quebec?

Each year the English-language universities in Quebec graduate about 800 newly qualified teachers. The vast majority of these are graduates of McGill which supplies about 750 new teachers: 300 from the 3-year B.Ed. programs and 450 from the 1-year post-graduate Diploma programs. In addition, there are about 50 new teachers from the Early Childhood (Nursery and Kindergarten) and Art programs at Concordia University, and some 24 new secondary school teachers who graduate from Bishop's University each year. The raw data would seem to suggest the need to find appropriate placements

for about 800 graduates annually in the English-language education sector. Rarely do all 800 actively seek such employment. Information from the Quebec Teacher Placement Bureau and the McGill-Canada Manpower Office indicates that only about 500 actively seek employment in Quebec. What happens to the remaining 300 teachers?

According to Faculty surveys that have been conducted during the past few years, about one-third of the McGill graduating students do not immediately enter the Quebec teaching force. Some obtain teaching posts in other Provinces or in other countries; some sign contracts to teach overseas with C.U.S.O.; some teach in the Yukon or North West Territories where there are no local teacher-training institutions; some teach in Federal institutions; some enter Graduate Schools; some find employment in para-educational or social work activities; and a surprising number opt out of teaching. Of this latter group, some enter different occupations, ranging in recent years from air-line hostessing to journalism, and some decide not to seek any type of employment. It has been traditional, it seems, for a number of students to enrol in teacher-training as a form of insurance-security rather than as an immediate means of obtaining a livelihood. To them, obtaining a credential and knowing that they have a qualification to use if necessary, seem to be sufficient.

In addition to those new teachers who graduate in Quebec each year and actively seek employment in education, there are others who apply for posts in Quebec from outside the Province. In the past these have constituted a large number, especially from the Maritimes and from abroad. Recently, immigration of teachers has shown a considerable decline, due in part, perhaps, to the economic and political situation (and salary scales) within the Province itself. But of considerable significance is the fact that the Provincial Government has been raising the standards required of all new teachers to the Province of Quebec. Ten years ago, a total of 13 years of schooling was sufficient to meet minimum standards; in 1969 it was raised to 14 years; whereas today, and with the sole exception of certain technical-vocational teachers, the Government now requires a minimum of a degree and 16 years of schooling. This means that most trained teachers from, for example, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and the United Kingdom, are not now eligible to teach in Quebec. And, because of the *scolarité* requirement, trained teachers with bachelor degrees from U.S. universities are also not now able to qualify. The net result has been to restrict job opportunities primarily to Quebec-trained teachers.

In this discussion of teacher employment prospects in Quebec it

is necessary to consider the question of teacher demand — especially the demand for English-speaking teachers. The following two tables have been derived by interpolation from the numbers of students enrolled in the English sector. *Table 1* illustrates that there are approximately 13,000 “anglophone” teachers employed in the Province.¹ This total is subdivided into the various levels of instruction and, where appropriate, by confessionality. If the demographers are able to supply reasonably accurate projections of student

Table 1

Numbers of Full-time Equivalent “Anglophone” Teachers Employed in the Public and Private Sectors, Province of Quebec, 1974-75.			
	CATHOLIC	PROTESTANT	TOTAL
Kindergarten	162	193	355
Elementary	1994	2115	4,109
Secondary	2866	3462	6,328
Collegial			1,412
Special Education	365	628	993
			TOTAL 13,197

Notes: 1. These figures have been calculated by interpolation from *Statistiques de l'Enseignement, Clientèles Scolaires, 1974-75*, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 22-G-7475-1.

2. The total number of students enrolled at each level, public and private, has been divided by the following student-teacher ratios which were the official ratios at the time:

Kindergarten	1:40
Elementary	1:26
Secondary	1:17
Collegial	1:15
Special Education	1:12

It should also be noted that the number of teachers actually employed is certainly higher than the calculated numbers for the following reasons:

- a. The numbers calculated are full-time equivalents and thus ignore the widespread use of part-time teachers.
- b. The ratios employed in the private sector are often lower than the official Government norms.
- c. The ratio “chosen” for Special Education is often lower than 1:12 depending upon the type of handicap.
- d. Teachers employed by the Federal Government in Quebec and by Quebec Ministries other than Education have not been included.

enrolments and if the annual attrition rates are known, it should be possible by using this method to estimate the total demand for teachers with a reasonable degree of accuracy. *Table 2* illustrates the regional distribution of "anglophone" teachers within the Province. It shows the predominance of the Montreal region which, according to this calculated basis, employs 85% of the Province's "anglophone" teachers. There are over 2,000 "anglophone" teachers employed outside of the Montreal region and this number becomes especially significant when one considers attrition or turnover rates.

No precise information is available as to the Province-wide attrition/turnover rate in the English sector, but data from individual School Boards suggest an annual rate of at least 10%. By simple arithmetic, 10% of 13,000 teachers would indicate an annual demand for about 1,300 new teachers — far more than the annual total of

Table 2

The Regional Distribution of Full-Time Equivalent "Anglophone" Teachers Employed in the Public and Private Sectors, Province of Quebec, 1974-75.						
	KINDER- GARTEN	ELE- MENTARY	SECOND- ARY	COLLE- GIAL	SPECIAL ED.	TOTAL
Lower St. Lawrence	4	62	79	7	28	180
Saguenay	4	41	28	—	8	81
Quebec	7	81	245	28	31	392
Three Rivers	3	27	24	—	8	62
Eastern Townships	9	118	224	70	47	468
Montreal	302	3463	5333	1287	784	11,169
Ottawa Valley	17	221	330	20	64	652
North West Quebec	3	34	43	—	4	84
North Shore and New Quebec	6	62	22	—	19	109
TOTALS:	355	4109	6328	1412	993	13,197

Note: The source and method of calculation is the same as for *Table 1*. Again, the number of teachers actually employed is higher than the calculated numbers for the reasons given in the Note to *Table 1* above. But it should also be noted that the distribution of the English-speaking population outside of the Montreal region is widely dispersed. The scattered distribution of schools will probably increase the number of teachers employed at the Kindergarten and Elementary levels because the ratios cannot always be strictly applied.

Unfortunately, the 1975-76 version of *Statistiques de l'Enseignement* reports enrolments on a completely different basis and, thus, more recent estimates of teachers employed are not available. However, the drop in enrolments has been approximately balanced by a reduction in the ratios and the total numbers now employed can be assumed to be similar to the numbers in the *Tables*.

new graduates from all three English universities. This would appear to demonstrate that, in total numbers, the universities are not flooding the market as is sometimes assumed. The attrition/turnover rate is subject to fluctuations from year to year and from region to region. In some of the more rural areas, an annual rate of 50% is not uncommon whereas, in certain Montreal Island Boards, it can sometimes be as low as 8%. Even if the school population is declining and even if some Boards are hiring a number of "francophones" for French-Immersion classes, the raw data do not yet indicate a severe problem of over-supply.

It should be remembered that the English sector has only recently emerged from a period of severe teacher shortage. Numerous three-summer and other types of "emergency" teacher-training programs have been mounted by the Faculty of Education in the past 15 years. The last major program of this type came to an end in 1974 but both Concordia and McGill continue to operate on-going "emergency" programs to alleviate the problems of School Boards that are unable to find a sufficient supply of qualified teachers in certain subject areas.² Additional evidence that an over-supply does not exist is to be seen in the fact that the Government issued a total of 738 Provisional Teaching Authorizations in 1974-75 to teachers in the English sector who were not legally qualified in the level or field in which they were employed.³ Headlines and newspaper stories that refer to a surplus of teachers must be referring to a myth so far as the English sector is concerned.

The main problem appears to be not one of a surplus in absolute terms, but rather of an actual shortage in certain geographical regions and in some subject areas. The more isolated regions in the Province have always experienced great difficulty in attracting and keeping qualified teachers. At least one Director-General from a rural Board is known to make annual pilgrimages to England to recruit qualified teachers. One Montreal Board recently found it necessary to recruit almost 50 Special Education teachers from the U.S.A. There are major shortages in technical-vocational, special education and, perhaps surprisingly, in French. Although the total demand is a limited one, McGill is also unable to find enough qualified applicants for Music and Home Economics. On the other hand, there have been far more qualified applicants for English, History, Social Studies, Biology, and Elementary Education than are likely to be absorbed by the Quebec school system alone.

There are too many imponderables in Quebec for anyone to forecast future trends confidently. It is known that the birth rate has dropped. This is already causing a severe decline in enrolments in

some School Boards.⁴ It should be kept in mind that reduced student-teacher ratios, as recently negotiated in the Teachers' Contract, can actually increase the demand for teachers or, in a period of declining enrolments, can serve to stabilize the demand. There are other factors that should be considered, such as the number of qualified teachers who might wish to return to the workforce after a period of absence; the number of teachers who leave the Province for greener pastures and higher salaries; the effect on teachers of protracted and bitter contract negotiations; the effects of the Quebec Official Language Act (Bill 22) and the extent to which it is implemented and enforced.

At this particular juncture in Quebec's history, the long-term future of the English-speaking teacher is somewhat questionable. What is clear is that teacher-training institutions have a responsibility to research the supply-and-demand issues, to keep their students and potential students informed of the changing nature of the job market and, if necessary, to reconsider the levels and restrictions of programs and certification so as to allow for greater flexibility in job-placement.

notes

1. The total of 13,197, less the CEGEP instructors (1412), corresponds closely to a total derived by adding together the membership of P.A.P.T. and P.A.C.T. (Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers and Provincial Association of Catholic Teachers).
2. The numbers enrolled last year in the emergency-type Teacher Certification Programs were 51 at McGill and approximately 75 at Concordia.
3. The number of 738 PTA's also includes those teaching special education, remedial reading, etc. and, at the same time, enrolled in the relevant certification program.
4. One large Catholic Board, for example, projects a decline of 50% in its English-language enrolment between 1975 and 1987. However, this particular Board has been hard hit by the effects of the Quebec Official Language Act.