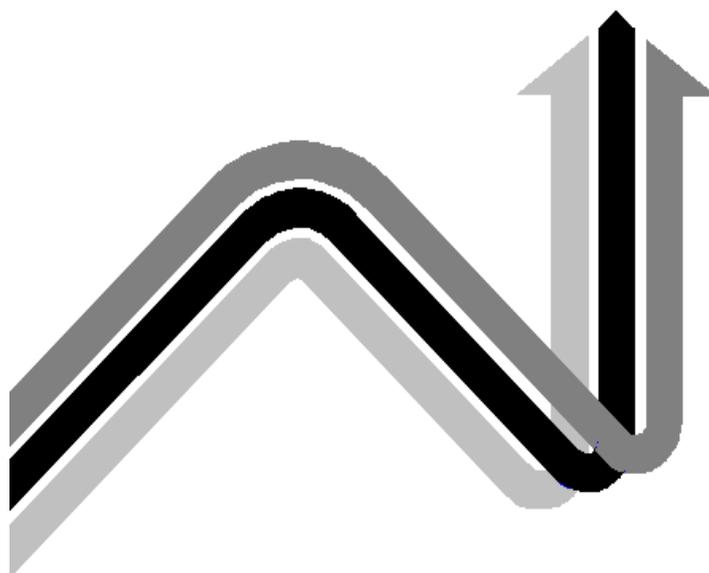


# **THEMATIC REVIEW OF THE TRANSITION FROM INITIAL EDUCATION TO WORKING LIFE**



## **CANADA**

**COUNTRY NOTE**

**NOVEMBER 1999**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *Objectives and organisation of the comparative country reviews*

As part of OECD's follow-up work to the Jobs Study and of other preceding work<sup>1</sup> the Education Committee launched in 1996 a series of country reviews focusing on institutional frameworks and policies currently affecting young people's transition from initial education and training to employment. The target group of these reviews is young people in the age span between about fifteen and thirty -- that is from just before the end of compulsory education to the age where the large majority of a cohort is in the labour market rather than in initial education. The reviews are to examine both education and labour market institutions and policies and, in particular, the interaction between both as it affects young people.

Six countries were visited in Round 1 of the review in 1997: Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Norway and Portugal. Each visit lasted about ten days and was undertaken by a team of four reviewers, coming from different countries and from different administrative, research and policy making backgrounds. Within countries, the visits were co-ordinated by education ministries, in co-operation with other ministries concerned. Each country prepared a detailed Background Report according to guidelines agreed by country representatives and the OECD Secretariat.

The visits enabled reviewers to deepen and analyse the information contained in the country background reports on the basis of discussions with representatives of administrations, employers and trade unions and educators. Site visits and contacts with young people in schools and enterprises provided further opportunities for improved understanding of main transition problems and interesting solutions in each country. After each visit, the review team prepared a Country Note synthesising the team's observations on the main transition issues and policy responses in the country under review. On the basis of the six Round 1 visits an Interim Comparative Report was prepared for the Autumn 1998 meeting of the Education Committee. The final Comparative Report, incorporating insights gathered from all fourteen countries taking part in the thematic review, will be presented to the Education Committee in November 1999.

### *Canada's participation in the Review*

The Canadian review took place from 1 to 10 October 1997. The members of the review team and references to the Canadian background report can be found in the Annexes to this document. Unless indicated otherwise the data cited in this document are taken from the background report.

Among federally organised countries Canadian provincial institutions and policies, as well as interactions between federal and provincial policies, are particularly varied. In addition, Canada has strong multicultural traditions due not only to the variety of indigenous populations and the continuous flows of immigration from all parts of the world, but also to the long-standing coexistence of two official languages and related cultures.

Cultural pluralism, the heterogeneity of institutional settings and the jurisdictional sole responsibilities of provincial governments with regard to education make it very difficult, if not impossible, for foreigners to gain an overall picture of young people's transition from initial education to employment in Canada as a

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1. For example a substantial project on vocational and technical education conducted during the early 1990s, a 1995 Round Table on school-to-work transition in OECD countries, and a chapter on youth in the 1994 issue of *Employment Outlook*.

whole. The team was provided by the Canadian authorities with a background document describing the social economic and educational context as well as transition issues for Canada as a whole, and had the opportunity to visit two provinces -- Quebec and Nova Scotia. These two provinces provided additional background documents. To the extent that Quebec and Nova Scotia illustrate the diversity of institutional settings and policy approaches to transition in Canada, and taking into account the different focus of the visit in each province, the observations and suggestions presented in this report should also be relevant to other Canadian provinces and to the federal government.

The next Section reviews the main features of the pan-Canadian context of transition. Section 3 describes an example of system wide approaches to transition in Quebec, and Section 4 an example of federal-provincial co-operation in a large-scale school-to-work pilot project in Nova Scotia. Section 5 discusses major policy issues perceived by the review team and formulates a number of suggestions on problems which appear to deserve particular attention by educators, employers and policy makers<sup>2</sup>. Section 6 presents the review team's conclusions.

## 2. THE PAN-CANADIAN CONTEXT OF TRANSITION

A large number of surveys and research projects as well as the importance given to transition policies at federal, provincial and local levels indicate that school-to-work transition is a major preoccupation among students, parents, educators and policy makers in Canada. Continuing high youth unemployment compared to adult unemployment, a reduction in secure full-time jobs for youth and, finally, an increase in low-pay and in part-time jobs for young people have all contributed to pessimism about lifelong incomes and rewarding employment, including for those who participate in tertiary education. In 1996 the federal government addressed transition issues in a report by a Ministerial Task force on Youth: *Take on the Future -- Canadian Youth in the World of Work*. Prepared for the Minister of Human Resources Development, it contained a Ten Point Action Plan and a Call to Action addressed to young people, parents, employers and community-based agencies.

A rather recent phenomenon in Canada is the interest in transition issues demonstrated by the private sector labour market partners, and the influence they have started to exercise on policy developments. Leading private sector organisations such as the Conference Board of Canada (CBC) which is an employer organisation, industry sector councils (representing employers and workers within a sector of industry) and the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB), which brings together business, labour, education and training and equity groups representatives, have started to systematically analyse transition problems and have made recommendations to government, stakeholders in education and, not least, to their own constituent members. The thorough analysis and wide-ranging recommendations of the CLFDB Task Force on Transition into Employment<sup>3</sup> has already had a major impact on ideas and policy developments at federal and provincial levels. It emphasises the importance of coherence between transition policies and frameworks, including comprehensive labour market information systems, career and employment counselling, employability, linkages between education and the world of work -- including the need for an overhaul of co-operative education<sup>4</sup>.

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2. Unless otherwise indicated information contained in this Country Note is based upon the Canadian Background Report.
  3. Canadian Labour Force Development Board (1994), Putting the pieces together: Toward a coherent transition system for Canada's labour force.
  4. de Broucker, P. (1995), Moving away from the maze. Paper prepared for the OECD Round Table School-to-Work Transitions in OECD Countries.

### *The economic context*

Canada, with its 30 million population (1996 data), produces some US\$580 billion worth of GDP, measured on purchasing power parity basis<sup>5</sup>. Its per capita income of US\$21 529 is lower only than the United States and Japan among the G-7 countries, as is its labour force participation rate (76%). Real GDP growth rates over the last three decades have been higher than the G-7 average, usually higher than the United States (although not typically since the 1990s). Real GDP expanded by 3.8% in 1997 and is projected by the OECD to grow by 3.3% and 3.0% respectively over the two closing years of this century<sup>6</sup>. The medium term growth scenario is for 2.8% growth over the 2000-2003 period.

Over the last three decades, the economy has experienced sustained re-structuring as the locus of economic activity has shifted from the resource and manufacturing sectors to the service sector, which accounts for 73% of total civilian employment, the second highest sector share in the OECD countries. Through population growth, immigration and increased participation rates, the labour force has grown at the highest rate among the G-7 countries, at more than double the average for these countries. There are significant cross-provincial variations in economic activity -- the differences in Quebec and Nova Scotia are noted in the relevant sections.

### *The Labour Market*

Relative to other OECD countries, the Canadian labour market is characterised by high rates of growth of employment and the labour force. In 1997, its 1.9% employment growth was second only to the US among the G-7 countries, and employment is projected to grow by 1.8% in 1999<sup>7</sup>. Canada also displays a high degree of labour market turbulence, with high flows between employment, unemployment and inactivity. As in other OECD countries, there has been an increase in non-standard work in the form of part-time work, short-tenure jobs and self-employment. Some emerging trends are worrying. The Background Report notes the signs of a growing polarisation between “good jobs” in dynamic services like financial and business services and “bad jobs” in retail trades and consumer services. There are as well, compared to the 1970s, more Canadians in high-earner and low-earner categories than in the middle. Another paradoxical trend is that Canada’s employment growth performance ranks among the highest in the OECD countries, higher even than the United States, but its unemployment rate has risen significantly higher than the United States since the mid 1970s.

Despite high employment growth rates, the unemployment experience, especially since the mid-seventies, has been poor. Overshadowed by the pronounced cyclical fluctuations, the rate has moved along a long-term upward trend, from 2% in 1947 to a high of 13% in 1983. With the steep recession triggered in 1990, the rate rose from around 7.5% to a peak in late 1992 (11.9%), falling thereafter to the 1997 rate of just under 9.2%. The unemployment rate is expected to continue its downward trend, falling to 7.9% in 2003<sup>8</sup>. There are significant inter-provincial variations, typically lowest in the Prairie provinces and highest in Atlantic Canada. The rate in Quebec (11.4%) is higher than the Canadian average (9%), and in Nova Scotia the rate is even higher (12.2%). Unemployment duration in Canada is much shorter than in OECD countries as a whole, in part due to relatively high flows into and out of unemployment.

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5. OECD database.

6. *OECD Economic Outlook*, June 1998.

7. *OECD Economic Outlook*, June 1998.

8. *OECD Economic Outlook*, June 1998.

## *Youth Labour Market*<sup>9</sup>

Youth labour market experience needs to be seen against a background of demographic and labour force participation developments. The youth population (15-24 age group) declined sharply in the 1980s following the rapid growth of the 1960s and the 1970s. It remained constant in the 1990s and is projected to grow over the next two decades, although its share of the working age population will be declining<sup>10</sup>. Major changes have occurred in youth labour force participation rates over the last twenty years. While participation rose during the 1980s, it has fallen from over 70% at the beginning of the 1990s to 61% in 1997. Rising school enrolments and falling student participation in the labour force account for almost 90% of this decline<sup>11</sup>.

Typically, youth unemployment rates are approximately double the adult rate. Compared to adults, youth unemployment is typically of shorter duration and rates of flow into unemployment are much higher. This is because youth jobs, too, are of shorter duration: between 50% and 60% of young job starters have jobs that last less than six months<sup>12</sup>. Canada's youth to adult unemployment ratio rose from 1.7 to 2.1 between 1990 and 1997, suggesting that Canada's young people have experienced increased difficulty in competing on the labour market during the 1990s<sup>13</sup>. Moreover the fact that the youth population has stabilised and that its labour force participation rate has declined means that a given youth unemployment rate today denotes a tighter labour market for youth than it did ten years ago. The rise in educational participation rates can be viewed as a positive long-term development. Successive cohorts of youth are staying in school longer partially in response to rising rates of returns to investments in additional education. Part of the rise in enrolment rates, and of the falling non-student participation in the labour force, seems due to the increased labour market difficulties experienced by Canadian youth. Another illustration of these increased difficulties is the trend in youth earnings. The average earnings of young men and women have declined substantially since the early 1980s, and the gap in earnings between 17-24 year-olds and all other age groups has widened over time<sup>14</sup>. Part of this decline can be explained by the fact that students form an increased share of the youth population. Students are more likely than other youth to be employed part-time, to spend periods of time out of the labour force, and to work in relatively low paid clerical, sales, and services occupations or in personal services or retail trade industries. But increased school enrolment does not account for all of the decline in average youth earnings. Part of the decline can also be explained by the increase in part-time employment of non-students.

Young Canadians' labour market difficulties vary markedly according to a variety of demographic, ethnic, educational and labour force participation characteristics. For example among non-students unemployment is some 50% higher among the 15-19 year-old age group than among older youth. Youth as a whole were revealed to have an unemployment rate of 16% by 1991 Census data. However among first nation youth the unemployment rate was 25%, for other visible minorities it was 19%, for those with disabilities it was 21%, and for youth in rural areas it was 17%. Educational attainment is a key determinant of labour force prospects. The unemployment rate for those who have completed high school is half that found among high school drop-outs, and the rate among university graduates is a third that found among those who have

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9. Unless otherwise indicated, the text in this sub-section draws from a paper entitled "What Is Happening to Canadian Youth?", prepared by HRDC.

10. What is happening to Canadian Youth? p.6.

11. Jennings 1998, School Enrolment and the Declining Youth Participation Rate.

12. Facts on Employment p. 22.

13. Source: OECD (1998) *Labour Force Statistics 1977-1997*, Paris. The youth to adult unemployment ratio is defined as the ratio of the unemployment rate among 15-24 year-olds to the rate among 25-54 year-olds.

14. Facts on Employment and employment, p.16.

not completed high school<sup>15</sup>. Among university graduates, unemployment rates are much higher for fine and applied arts, humanities and social science graduates than for others<sup>16</sup>. Youth with high school or less have seen their employment situation worsen dramatically over the past twenty years. This may be a result of two parallel trends: the changing composition of labour demand in favour of those with higher skills<sup>17</sup>, and the changing nature of jobs in which young people with low skills are hired<sup>18</sup>.

An increasing proportion of the youth population is now made up of students. Post-secondary enrolments have continued to grow throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, despite the decline in the size of the youth population. And an increasing proportion of youth are enrolled in schools. Between the early 1980s and 1997 full-time participation among 15-24 year olds increased from just under 40% to over 58%. For the 15-19 age group, participation has peaked at just over 80%, but for the 20-24 age group participation has more than doubled since the early 1980s, reaching 34% in 1997<sup>19</sup>.

Students have distinctive patterns of labour market experience, when compared to non-students. They are more likely to be employed part-time, to spend periods of time out of the labour force, and to be working in clerical, sales and service occupations or in personal services or retail trade industries. They earn less than their non-student counterparts. Students looking for part-time work accounted for about 32% of youth unemployment in 1996, more than double their share in the early 1980s. On average students with jobs worked for 14 hours a week in 1996, with nearly one in five of those who were teenagers and almost a third of those aged 20-24 working for 20 hours or more a week. While the proportion of 15-19 year-olds who combined full-time schooling with part-time jobs increased dramatically in the 1980s, it has fallen sharply during the 1990s.

One of the most critical factors in youth labour market success is the job-experience paradox: youth of all ages find that they need a job in order to get work experience. But they have difficulty finding a job without experience. Here the problem has worsened as a result of falling participation by students in part-time work.

### ***Education and training***

Education is the responsibility of provincial governments. There is no federal ministry of education. Cross-provincial consultation and co-operation among ministers of education takes place principally in the framework of the Council of Ministers of Education (Canada) [CMEC].

In 1993, 7.3% of the Canadian GDP was spent on education, compared to an OECD country mean of 5.9%<sup>20</sup>. 11% of educational expenditure in Canada is contributed by the federal government, 57% by provincial governments, 21% comes from local taxes, 6% from fees and 5% from other sources.

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15. OECD (1998), *Education at a Glance - OECD Indicators*, Paris.

16. National Graduates Survey, 1992.

17. While it is projected that over the short-term (up to year 2000) the demand for workers with low skills and education will be strong, the long-term trend in job growth is for rising demand for increasing skills and educational qualifications.

18. i.e. high demand for low skilled workers in short term jobs which increases the incidence of short term unemployment.

19. What is Happening to Canadian Youth?, p.7.

20. Total expenditure from public, private and international sources for educational institutions plus public subsidies to households. Source: OECD (1998), *Education at A Glance Indicators*, Paris.

Responsibility for labour market programmes, including transition programmes for young people, is shared in different ways between the federal government and provincial employment and education ministries. As a result of labour market development agreements with the federal government, territories and provinces are now assuming greater responsibility for active labour market measures under the Employment Insurance Act, which came into effect in 1996. Notwithstanding this recent redistribution of responsibilities the federal government continues to support many provincial and local programmes that assist the transition from initial education to employment<sup>21</sup>.

The structure of education systems varies little between provinces and territories. Elementary education lasts between five and eight years, and it is followed by secondary education which ends with grade twelve. In Quebec, primary education is preceded by two years of pre-school. Secondary education ends after grade eleven (see Section 3). While some secondary schools offer only academic or only vocational programmes, most offer a mix of academic and vocational courses<sup>22</sup>. However, because of a drastic decrease in student participation in vocational education, secondary vocational programmes have in many provinces been declining almost to the point of non-existence over the past decades.

After secondary school, students may continue their studies in community colleges and/or universities. In Quebec, students go from secondary school to general and vocational colleges (*collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel, or CEGEPs*), where they follow either a two-year pre-university programme or a three-year technical programme (see Section 3). There also exists a wide range of adult education facilities and services, provided in public and private secondary and post-secondary institutions, in training programmes in business and industry, and through distance education services. Many of these provide vocational and technical education and training to young people above the age of compulsory schooling (age 16).

Due to a decline in the size of the youth population, enrolments in elementary and secondary schools declined between the beginning of the 1970s and the mid 1980s. Since then they have increased. Full-time enrolments in colleges and universities, on the contrary, have been rising steadily for the past three decades and are continuing to grow<sup>23</sup>. Between 1989 and 1997 the proportion of 15-24 year olds attending school full time increased by 10.5 percentage points, reaching almost 58% in 1997. With an increase of 12.2 percentage points, the enrolment growth has been particularly high among the 20-24 age group, while enrolments among 15-19 year olds increased by about 6 percentage points during the same period. The percentage of 18-24 year olds enrolled in full-time undergraduate programmes increased by close to 18% between 1981 and 1992, when it reached 28%.

In 1991, the high school completion rate of 20 year-olds was 82%. In 1995, by the time these people had reached age 24, the high school completion rate increased to 85%. For some, finishing high school is a longer process than it is for others. The rate is higher for women than men (89% versus 81% for 24 year olds). Among those who complete high school 80% acquire at least some further education or training towards a certificate, diploma or degree<sup>24</sup>. About 42% of high school graduates go to university and

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21. For a more detailed presentation of the transfer issue see the sub-section below on Policy responses across Canada.

22. The Transition from Initial Education to working Life -- A Canadian Report for an OECD Thematic Review, Minister of public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998, p. 4.

23. cf Figure on College and University Enrollments 1976 -- 1996, What is happening to Canadian Youth?-- Louise Boyer, HRDC.

24. Gilbert and Frank, 1998, p. 12.

another 30% go to colleges<sup>25</sup>. Women now account for 54% of full-time undergraduates and 44% of graduate students.

Among high school graduates, 72% earned their diploma at age 18 or younger. Another 17% graduate at age 19. However, 11% of graduates finish high school at the age of 20 or older, with men more likely to be in this category (14%) than are women (8%)<sup>26</sup>. These figures show the importance of further and adult education in Canada in providing early school leavers (“returners”) with a minimum level of education as a basis for employment and further learning. However, they also show that an appreciable minority of young people leave high school without a diploma (often after they have already dropped behind in their studies) and that others take lengthy and costly detours which tend to be detrimental to subsequent education and employment careers<sup>27</sup>.

It is also noteworthy that non-completion rates vary considerably across provinces and territories, ranging from 11% at age 24 in Alberta and Saskatchewan, through to 17% in Nova Scotia, 19% in Quebec<sup>28</sup>, and 21% in Prince Edward Island. Finally, the 1995 School Leavers Follow-Up Survey shows that more than limited part-time employment during high school has negative effects on completion rates and further study. 43% of non-completers and 42% of graduates with no more than a high school diploma in 1995 had worked 20 hours per week or more while still in high school. Conversely, those who had graduated from university by 1995 were the least likely to have worked long hours during high school<sup>29</sup>.

Overall, educational attainment has increased strongly over the past twenty years. The proportion of adult males with a post-secondary certificate or diploma increased from 22% to 46% between 1976 and 1995, and among women it increased from 24% to 48%. Among the OECD countries, Canada ranks fourth in the proportion of the 25-34 year old population with a university education (after Korea, the United States and the Netherlands)<sup>30</sup>. It leads OECD countries in the proportion of that age (53%) who have completed any form of tertiary education<sup>31</sup>. However, according to the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), there exists a polarisation in literacy levels. Canada has the second highest proportion of adults at the highest literacy levels (levels 4 and 5) next to Sweden, but it also has the highest proportion at the lowest literacy level (17%)<sup>32</sup>.

In broad terms the main focus of Canadian education and training policy intended to improve the transition has been on encouraging high school completion, encouraging participation in post-secondary education, expanding vocational and technical education as well as co-operative education and internship programmes, providing career development courses, orientation and counselling and, in some provinces, developing youth apprenticeship.

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25. What is happening to Canadian Youth? p. 29.

26. Gilbert and Frank 1998 -- High school may not be enough, An analysis of results from the school leavers follow-up survey, 1995, p. 9 and What is happening to Canadian youth? p. 38.

27. de Broucker, 1994 -- Moving away from the maze, Paper for the OECD Round Table on Transitions from School to Work.

28. The rate is 18.8% for the 1997-98 school year (Education Indicators, Ed. 1999, Quebec Ministry of Education).

29. Gilbert and Frank 1998, p. 18.

30. OECD (1998), *Education at a Glance - OECD Indicators*, Paris.

31. OECD (1997), *Education at a Glance - OECD Indicators*, Paris.

32. OECD and Statistics Canada (1995), *Literacy, Economy and Society*, Paris.

### *Policy responses across Canada*<sup>33</sup>

Canadian views are changing about the degree to which market mechanisms alone can ensure the responsiveness of education and training to changing skill requirements and to economic restructuring, and ensure a smooth transition of young people from education to employment. This change of views has been driven by growing concern over youth unemployment and by a perception that too many young people in Canada are entering the labour market without appropriate preparation for employment and career development. The need for organised intervention is gradually being recognised at federal and provincial levels, and a broad range of public education and labour market policies, as well as industry initiatives, are today addressing school-to-work-transition in Canada (de Broucker, 1994).

### *Bridging the gap between the education system and the labour market*

Many measures specifically designed for youth in the past ten or fifteen years have attempted to bridge the gap between the education system and the labour market. Canada does not have a tradition of social partnership comparable to co-operation frameworks and traditions in many European countries. Nevertheless industry has recently started to take major initiatives to help bridge this gap. Two examples, among others, are the “Employability Skills Profile” developed by the CBC<sup>34</sup> and the mobilisation of several industry sector councils to support Youth Internships<sup>35</sup>.

Three major approaches have been developed with programmes that engage the active participation of employers, community-based organisations, educational institutions and public agencies: co-operative education; internship; and -- so far to a limited degree -- youth apprenticeships.

*Co-operative education* places students in real jobs as one component of their formal course of studies. The work is jointly supervised by the employer and an academic adviser. Employers may be compensated through tax credits, wage subsidies, or simply by the free or low-cost labour provided by the student. Responsibility for organising co-op programmes lies mostly with schools or with community organisations. The intention of many recent co-op programmes is to promote the concepts of co-operative education, which were initially developed in post-secondary education, at the secondary education stage.

The success of such programmes at secondary level is so far considered relatively disappointing. In part this is because less than 10% of secondary students opt for them. In part it is because, according to evaluation studies, they have no effect on the labour market participation of students. Analysis also shows that the participation of co-op students in post-secondary education is below average. This is explained by the fact that co-op programmes do not provide credits towards admission to post-secondary education. Students intending to continue to post-secondary education are therefore more likely to focus on accumulating academic credits. Finally, there is no significant difference in drop out rates between co-op and other students. Evaluation thus suggests that secondary level co-op programmes have not yet produced the desired success.

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33. Unless mentioned otherwise, the text in this sub-section is extracted from a 1998 paper on “Labour market policies and programmes affecting youth in Canada”, prepared by Richard Marquardt, Consultant, Ottawa for the OECD Education and Training Division.

34. seen by many as the conceptualising tool that was missing to move the school system towards redefining its goals, its relationship with the surrounding world, and its methods.

35. for example: Career Choices for Youth, a programme intended to help young people having difficulty in finding employment to prepare themselves for a career in the car and truck repair and service industry, environment internship programmes, a range of initiatives in the electrical/electronic sectors.

Co-op education at post-secondary level has a longer history and a somewhat more positive record. Participants are mainly students in engineering, computer science, commerce, and economics. Typically one trimester per year is spent in a co-op placement and two in formal studies. However, there is a shortage of employers who are willing to take on students for the work semesters. Evaluation shows some benefits in terms of enhanced employment prospects and higher incomes for university co-op students in the fields of mathematics, science, commerce and economics, whereas engineering graduates appear to gain no significant advantage from co-op programmes. However, it is suggested that success or lack of success could be due to the socio-economic and educational characteristics of the students participating in such programmes rather than to the co-op approach as such.

*Internships* are a more recent type of programme, providing paid work experience for unemployed and under-employed high school, college or university graduates, typically in their field of study and for a period of six to twelve months. HRDC funds the Youth Internship Canada programme and delivers it in co-operation with other federal government departments and partner organisations across the country. These partners include private sector employers, non-profit and voluntary sector organisations, industry sector councils, professional associations, other levels of government, and First Nation band councils. The financial and in-kind contributions of partners are estimated to match or exceed the federal contributions.

Youth Service Canada is another federal programme whose aim is to assist higher risk youth in gaining life and employability skills through work on local community service projects. Projects are developed and delivered by non-profit community organisations, and often include a work experience component. Participants receive a regular allowance over the duration of the project. An example is Manitoba's Partners for Careers programme, with the principal objective of developing working relationships between educational institutions, Aboriginal organisations, and the business community.

Finally, a major internship programme, Career Edge, was launched in 1996 in the private sector, with the support of some of Canada's largest corporations. Among several hundred "host organisations" that have signed to take on interns is the federal government. The target group is graduates from high school, college or university willing to spend six, nine, or twelve months gaining career experience with a host organisation. They are employed by Career Edge, and host organisations pay Career Edge a fee to cover the student's stipend and all related costs. The intern jobs must be newly created jobs and cannot replace permanent positions or other education-sponsored programmes.

Although it is too early for thorough evaluation, internship programmes seem to enjoy a positive image with all the actors involved. The major problem appears to reside in the lack of placement opportunities and the difficulties experienced in mobilising smaller enterprises.

*Youth apprenticeship*, finally, is still in an early phase of development and the numbers of young people attracted by this pathway are small. It is somewhat surprising to the foreign observer that an April 1997 report prepared by the National Apprenticeship Committee for the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB), "Apprenticeship in transition" mentions youth apprenticeship only in passing.

Apprenticeship in Canada is traditionally little developed (only about one per cent of the labour force is in apprenticeship), concentrated in a small number of trades (mainly automotive repair workers, carpenters and construction electricians), and typically involves adult workers (the average age of participants is 27). Some provinces recently developed youth apprenticeship programmes which provide young people with an option that allows them to get started on training in skilled trades without abandoning their secondary school studies. They aim to attract more youth, especially women, in order to alleviate skill shortages in specified trades and to correct age and gender imbalances. Such programmes have now been established in five jurisdictions: Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories. All follow essentially the same model, providing an alternative path into apprenticable occupations at a younger age while allowing students to keep open the option of attending college or university later. Training occupations tend in most cases to be concentrated in traditional trades (manufacturing,

construction, traditional services) where job growth is weak and only relatively small numbers of young people have registered to date (for efforts to develop youth apprenticeship in Quebec see Section 3 below).

### *Redistribution of responsibility between federal and provincial governments*

The federal government entered the field of adult education with the Adult Occupational Training Act (AOTA) in 1961, replaced by the National Training Act in 1982. Its role was reinforced by the creation of the federal Department of Manpower in 1965, the forerunner of the present federal Department of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). The federal government has, since then, been responsible for labour market policy and the financing of employment measures across Canada. The role was further expanded with the major overhaul of the Unemployment Insurance Commission in 1971, when the coverage provisions and benefits of unemployment insurance were greatly expanded. In the 1980s and 1990s, as active labour market programmes were given greater priority, growing shares of the Unemployment Insurance fund were used to finance federal labour-market training programmes.

In 1996, the federal government passed the Employment Insurance Act, which provides a framework for the transfer of responsibilities to the provinces where this is desired. By September 1998, the federal government had negotiated Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) with nine provinces and both territories. Five provinces -- Alberta, Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan -- have assumed responsibility for the design and delivery of employment programmes funded by the Employment Insurance Account (see the example of Quebec in Section 3 below). Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, and the Yukon have opted for various co-management models. In these, labour market programmes are managed in each province or territory by a joint federal-provincial management committee, and the federal government continues to deliver the programmes (see the example of Nova Scotia in Section 4 below).

In December 1997 the federal government and all provinces except Quebec agreed “that youth employment is a national priority requiring the involvement of both orders of government...”. The provinces participating in the agreement are developing a common Agenda for Action, which is intended to set clear objectives in the following areas:

- Maintaining and improving access to education and skills;
- Providing more work opportunities for those at risk in the transition;
- Helping youth adapt to an increasingly complex and changing labour market; and
- Helping youth address the social and cultural barriers that prevent full labour market participation.

Quebec, while sharing the same concerns, stresses “its will to exercise fully its control over the development, planning and management of social policies in its territory, in full accordance with its exclusive jurisdiction in this field”. Quebec will, however, participate in common data gathering and analysis.

Under the new arrangements the federal government will continue to control the Employment Insurance fund and to pay out passive income support directly to unemployed claimants. Funds for active labour market programmes previously financed by the federal government from the Employment Insurance fund will be transferred to the provinces annually to allow them to take control of these programmes. Each province has been guaranteed funds for an initial five-year period.

The federal government plans to withdraw from all labour market training activities over a three-year period, or even sooner where desired by a province. It will, however, retain responsibility for data collection and analysis by HRDC and Statistics Canada and for a number of pan-Canadian activities, such as measures enhancing inter-provincial labour mobility. Among activities that have been defined as pan-Canadian is youth unemployment programming. Since each province also has programmes for youth in the areas of employment and school-to-work transition, there will continue to be a need for co-operation between federal and provincial governments in this area. To address these concerns, in March 1998, federal and provincial labour market Ministers (except Quebec) endorsed a national youth agenda. They agreed to undertake bilateral discussions toward new partnerships which would ensure better co-ordination of federal and provincial youth programming, and more effective use of resources to achieve common goals. Discussions have begun in all jurisdictions.

### *Youth labour market policies and programmes in the 1990s*

During the 1990s demand side measures for youth (such as job creation and employment subsidies) have declined. Labour market policies and programmes for youth have shifted towards those which encourage young people to complete high school and to engage in further formal education, as well as towards programmes facilitating the school-to-work transition. With few exceptions, most youth employment programmes are now designed with supply-side objectives in mind. Even programmes designed to provide young people with summer jobs are justified on the grounds that they provide income in a period of rising costs for post-secondary education. Moreover, an increasing number of temporary job programmes for youth emphasise study-related placements that allow young workers to develop their skills and to begin building personal networks in their field<sup>36</sup>.

Many programmes attempt to address the needs of disadvantaged youth who face multiple barriers to employment -- such as low levels of education, lack of employability skills, and lack of self-confidence. Such programmes often are multi-faceted, combining counselling, career information, job search assistance, work experience, on-the-job and classroom training, support for returning to formal education, and various forms of wage subsidy to assist transition from unemployment to full-time work<sup>37</sup>. The results of these and similar programmes are found to be positive but modest in size. They may, nevertheless, have an important impact on the lives of the young people concerned.

It should be noted that most labour market training in Canada is not segregated by age group. The typical programme is designed for unemployed people with a low level of formal education and a lack of marketable skills. Youth account for large proportions of clients, but labour market restructuring has left many prime age workers in this situation as well. There is no exhaustive picture of the numbers and groups of young people participating in one or the other sort of training and transition measures.

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36. Examples are: the Newfoundland Graduate Employment programme, assisting post-secondary graduates in obtaining employment related to their field of study; Saskatchewan's Job Start/Future Skills programme, linking youth to employers and providing on-the-job training for new full-time positions in the workplace; British Columbia's Workplace Based Training (WBT) programme, providing youth who would otherwise receive income assistance with full-time employment, enabling them to acquire portable work skills.

37. Examples are: Alberta's Youth Employment Services Centres, offering packages of services tailored to the individual; Youth Futures, a pilot programme in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, a community initiative assisting young people dependent on social assistance to gain the skills and experience they need to be successful in the labour force and break the cycle of dependency; Newfoundland's Linkages programme, offering 'at risk' youth aged 18 to 24 who have not completed secondary education (over half of them being social assistance recipients) the opportunity to engage in 26 weeks of career -- related employment, participate in regular career planning workshops, and earn a training incentive toward the cost of post-secondary education).

### 3. QUEBEC -- A SYSTEMIC POLICY APPROACH TOWARDS TRANSITION

The visit to Quebec provided the review team with interesting insights into the ways in which education and training are organised in one of Canada's larger provinces, and into what is at stake with the transfer of active labour market policies from the federal to the provincial government. While Quebec is unique in many respects, it also provides foreign visitors with excellent opportunities to observe the systemic aspects of provincial institutions and policies and their interplay with federal government action. Furthermore, major reforms currently under way in Quebec offer illustrations of the difficulties involved in achieving coherence between education and employment policies.

This Section provides a brief overview of the main features of Quebec's education system and labour market and highlights important reforms currently under way. Unless mentioned otherwise it is based on the Quebec Background Report.

#### *Education and training in Quebec*

##### *Structure of Quebec's education and training system*

Quebec's education and training system differs from the systems of other Canadian provinces in two main respects: secondary education ends after grade eleven; and for all those continuing on directly into post-secondary education the next stage is the *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* (or general and vocational education college). As its name indicates, the CEGEP offers two distinct lines of study within the same institution: pre-university programmes lasting two years; and technical programmes geared to the labour market lasting three years. Unlike in other parts of Canada, successful completion of college is a pre-condition for university entry in Quebec. The CEGEP is therefore often called the "gateway to university".

As elsewhere in Canada, university education is organised in three levels of study: three or four years leading to the bachelors degree, another two years preparing for the masters degree and finally the doctoral stage, lasting usually about three years.

Vocational education is provided in high schools, and 176 different programmes were offered in 1995-96<sup>38</sup>.

In addition to initial education institutions, there are a significant number of vocational schools and training centres under the authority of the Quebec Ministry of Education<sup>39</sup> which provide adults, as well as young people who have left initial education, with general, vocational and technical education and training which leads to secondary and college level diplomas and certificates. Finally, a small youth apprenticeship sector is currently being developed under the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education and *Emploi-Quebec*, which is part of the Ministry of Social Solidarity<sup>40</sup>.

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38. 170 different programmes in 1999-2000.

39. Training centres for young people, CFJ; general education training centers for adults, CFGA; and vocational and technical training centers for young people and adults, CFPJA.

40. Following a recent change in the Ministry, the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity, formerly co-responsible for vocational education during the Review visit no longer exists.

### *The certification system*

The Quebec certification system includes general, vocational, technical and professional/academic diplomas corresponding to each level of education<sup>41</sup>, and a number of vocational certificates<sup>42</sup>. The latter have resulted from the streamlining of a very large range of vocational diplomas and certificates existing prior to the vocational education reform undertaken in the mid-1980s. A recent agreement between the Ministries of Education and Employment and Solidarity has added the certification of youth apprenticeship to the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education.

In addition to its regular diplomas, the Ministry of Education developed a path-breaking system of assessment and accreditation of prior learning during the 1970s and 1980s. This allows educational equivalence to be granted to the achievements of adults who desire to enrol in further education at college and university level. Quebec has received much attention in the international arena for its policies concerning the assessment and recognition of prior learning of adult workers in general and of immigrants in particular<sup>43</sup>.

Admission to colleges and universities cannot be granted without the completion of the prior educational stage or its equivalence, but this does not mean that graduates are guaranteed access to the subsequent stage. Colleges and universities are free to admit students according to their own selection criteria, and in particular grades obtained in high schools and colleges. As discussed below, this raises questions about the government's capacity to ensure the continuity of educational pathways, especially between vocational secondary education and technical education in the CEGEP.

### *Educational participation*

Educational participation in Quebec, as in other parts of Canada, has been characterised by a constant increase of participation in post-secondary education (from 40% of a cohort in 1979-80 to 65% in 1995-96. 86% of 16-19 year-olds and 42.4% of 20-24 year-olds are in full-time or part-time education. 63% of young Quebecers continue into college. Of these 38% enter pre-university CEGEP programmes, 19% technical programmes and 6% Explorations programmes. In recent years enrolments in pre-university education have declined somewhat (from 44% of a cohort in 1992-93 to 39% in 1995-96) while enrolments in technical education rose slightly (from 18% in 1989-90 to 19% in 1995-96)<sup>44</sup>. Over the past fifteen years the gap between women and men going on to college has widened steadily. In 1995-96, 72% of young women went on to college, compared to 55% of young men. Higher proportions of women are also going on to technical programmes<sup>45</sup>.

Among the university-aged population 35% undertake studies leading to a bachelors degree. The proportion of bachelors students has decreased by 4% during the last three years, dropping below the level reached in 1989-90. Slightly over 8% of the relevant age group were enrolled in Masters studies in 1995-

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41. Secondary School Diploma, SSD; Secondary School Vocational Diploma, SSVD; Diploma of College Education, DEC; Bachelor, Master, Doctorate.

42. Short Vocational Diploma; Long Vocational Diploma; Secondary School Vocational Certificate; Attestation of Vocational Specialisation; Vocational Education Certificate.

43. OECD 1996 -- Assessing and Certifying Occupational Skills and Competences in Vocational Education and Training, OECD, 1996.

44. In recent years, only enrolments in Explorations programmes have increased. Those programmes were introduced in the school year 1993/1994.

45. Education Indicators, Edition 1998.

96 and 2% in Doctoral programmes. Again, female participation is higher than that of men in bachelors programmes (40% compared to 30%) and Masters programmes (8.8% compared to 8.1%). Female participation is lower than that of men only in Doctoral programmes (1.6% compared to 2.1).

Enrolments in vocational education in secondary schools, particularly among young people under the age of 20, have declined in recent years, and in 1993-94 less than 17 000 young people aged less than 20 participated in vocational education. First results of ongoing reforms (diversification of programmes, co-operative education, apprenticeship) are encouraging. Between 1993-94 and 1996-1997 the number of students under the age of 20 has increased by 45 per cent, while total student enrolment of the same age group increased by 25 percent.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the lack of attractiveness of vocational education continues to raise concern, in particular because of its dead-end character. That is, even if formally it is possible to move from vocational education in secondary schools to technical programmes in the CEGEP, in reality this rarely happens. CEGEP students, both in the general and the technical stream are recruited among general education students.

### *Educational attainment*

Educational attainment has increased together with participation, though not to the same extent<sup>47</sup>. In 1995-96, by the age of 20, over 73% of a generation were obtaining the Secondary School Diploma (DES). When attainment by adults is taken into account, the probability of obtaining this diploma is now close to 87% (94% for women, 81% for men). These rates are similar to those in the rest of Canada and higher than the OECD average, but it should be kept in mind that primary and secondary education together last only eleven years in Quebec<sup>48</sup>, while the duration in other provinces and countries is twelve years at least. Only 6.4% of all young people who obtain their diploma under the age of 20 are in the vocational sector. This figure illustrates once more the extreme weakness of vocational education at the secondary level. Non-completion is higher among students in vocational programmes. Finally, 33% of high-school graduates enter the labour market with a general secondary certificate only. One worrying phenomenon is the low educational attainment of young men. Except at the level of Doctoral studies men participate less and are less successful in post-compulsory education, and the gap between men and women has been widening considerably over the past fifteen years.

The proportion of each generation obtaining a CEGEP or other post-secondary non-university diploma has increased from 22% in 1975 to 40% in 1995 (33% of men and 49% of women). The greatest growth has occurred in pre-university diplomas, which are now obtained by more than 25% of a generation (20% for men, 31% for women), while 15% obtain a technical college diploma (13% for men, 18% for women). A very major concern is the high and rising drop out rate of students in technical CEGEP programmes. Of the students enrolled in technical education who left college at the end of 1994-95, only 52% obtained the college diploma (DEC); this figure has dropped by more than 6% since 1990-91. The drop out rate from pre-university programmes is 35%. Even if a significant number of initial college leavers obtain a diploma later on, the wastage is alarming. In addition, the duration of studies of college diploma holders is 7.3 full-time terms as compared to the expected 6 full-time terms (3 years). 28% of a generation now obtains at least a bachelors degree, but 36% of bachelors students leave without having obtained a bachelor's degree.

The proportion of each generation that enters the labour market without training and qualification for work is a major worry. As the ministerial Plan of Action that was developed following the mid 1990s Estates

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46. The Transition from Initial Education to Working Life, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998, p. 42 (Canadian Background Report).

47. The educational attainment is a measure of the highest level completed or diploma obtained by a student.

48. In Quebec, however, there are two years of pre-school in addition to primary and secondary education.

General on Education (discussed below) underlines, the challenge today is “to move on from the goal of access to education for as many as possible to that of success for as many as possible”. The plan states that by the year 2010 at least 85% of a generation should obtain a secondary school diploma before the age of 20, at least 60% a college diploma, and at least 30% a bachelor’s degree<sup>49</sup>. This means that participation at the CEGEP level needs to increase and that considerable improvement of completion rates is needed both in secondary education and in the CEGEPs.

### *Minority groups*

The chances of access to and success in education differ widely among various groups of young people. *The English speaking minority* is clearly more successful than average. According to the 1991 Census 30% of English speakers over the age of 15 had studied at the university level, compared to 18% of all adults in Quebec. *Native peoples* have very low graduation rates from secondary school. For example, despite above average spending per student, the graduation rate in the Cree and Kativik School Board areas in 1996 was approximately 23%, compared to 73% for the overall student population during the same year.

### *Combined study and work*

A typically Canadian phenomenon is the frequent combination of study and work by a large proportion of students from the secondary level onwards. In Quebec, about one out of two students hold a paying job during the school year. Full-time students having a job work an average of 15 hours per week, compared to 33 hours for part-time students. Evaluations show that student work can have some negative as well as positive effects on the transition process. On the one hand, research indicates that relatively high numbers of weekly work hours (20 hours and more), often starting as early as grade 8 or 9, have a negative impact on completion rates.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, at the post-secondary level, student work helps to cover important proportions of educational fees as well as students’ living costs. Some work experience gathered during secondary and tertiary studies can increase young people’s chances of finding employment when they leave the education system. This is all the more important as employers do not have a tradition of providing young workers with organised in-firm training. They expect young employees to be productive at least partly due to prior work experience. In Quebec, as elsewhere, the experience that students gain in part-time jobs is most often not related to their fields of study. And, especially at tertiary level, students often work in jobs below their “level of qualification”. Nevertheless the experience gained helps young people to acculturate them to the work environment.

### *Co-operative education*

Like other provinces, Quebec has in recent years made considerable efforts to develop co-operative education both at the college level and, since 1990, at secondary school level. In secondary education, co-operative education is expected to be beneficial in particular to students in vocational programmes, and it is seen as a means to motivate less successful students to finish secondary education. At the tertiary level the objective is more particularly to improve the relevance of young people’s preparation for jobs in their field of study, including their familiarisation with up-to-date technical equipment, effective work methods and appropriate work attitudes. In Quebec the reviewers learnt about the highly successful and well-established

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49. Ministère de l’Éducation, *A New Direction for Success*, 1997.

50. Sales, Arnaud, et al. *Le monde étudiant à la fin du 20e siècle. Rapport final sur les conditions de vie des étudiants universitaires dans les années quatre-vingt-dix*. Department of Sociology, Université de Montréal, 1996.

programme of co-operative education at the University of Sherbrooke. In this programme students in a variety of disciplines spend one or more periods of three or more months in paid work related to their field of study. Not only do the work placements help to finance their studies, but in addition students from this programme are up to 20 per cent more likely to get a job after graduation than are students as a whole.

However, only about 4% of secondary school students and 10% of CEGEP students are currently participating in co-operative education. Most places for CEGEP students are concentrated in business and engineering, others in agriculture, fisheries and tourism. Several factors account for the so far modest success of co-operative education. At the secondary level, the image of vocational education and of training in the enterprise is still rather negative in the eyes of students and parents. The fact that co-op education does not lead to credits for entry into the CEGEP evidently does nothing to improve this situation. At the CEGEP level the main barrier to a wider coverage of co-operative education is the difficulty of finding employers willing to accept student trainees. Although a number of large enterprises have in recent years become active in this area, the large majority of small employers are still not convinced, in spite of generous tax credits which can cover up to 40% of trainee remuneration. A 1995 survey of Quebec businesses showed that almost 20% of establishments with five or more employees did not offer any form of training. Among those that do provide training, 80% offer on-the-job training, which is generally not recognised or transportable in the labour market.

However, the reticence of employers is not the only reason for the slow development of co-operative education in Quebec. All the schools and CEGEPs which we visited complained about insufficient budget allocations. Co-operative education requires considerable staff time in order to contact and convince employers, negotiate student contracts with them and ensure the pedagogical follow-up of enterprise-based training. The cuts in public spending and uncertainties about the transfer of co-op funds from the federal to the provincial level led to a reduction in the finances available for co-op programmes in the school year 1996-97. Some of the schools we visited have provisionally used money from other budgetary areas in order to safeguard the programmes already underway. There was strong concern, however, about the sustainability of successful co-operative education programmes at the college level.

**Box 1:**  
**Co-operative education at Limoilou CEGEP**

At Limoilou College in the city of Quebec 250 students out of a total number of 6540 are involved in co-operative education. All of them are technical education students. Periods of practical work in enterprises are dispersed throughout the three years of college studies: during the first four semesters students should spend altogether at least 12 weeks in an enterprise, beginning with an initial one week "observation" programme followed by several "training" periods, usually of two weeks duration. In addition, students are expected to pass another 16 weeks within an enterprise during the so-called "integration stage". During the first two types of practical learning periods the students are closely followed and evaluated by their teachers. Student performance during these periods is validated as part of the study programme. This is not the case for the "integration stage" during which the teacher pays only one visit to the enterprise. Nevertheless, four weeks after the beginning of the "integration stage" students must send a report on their work experience to the school. The evaluation of the student's work and progression at this stage is left to the enterprise which can deliver a letter of recommendation to the student.

Not all students who want to participate can be included because of a lack of enterprise training places. Beyond the availability of training places in different fields of study, participants are selected and can return to further practice periods depending on the success achieved in their theoretical studies. In order to obtain a practice place the student must have succeeded in 75 per cent of the preceding courses. For successful students who could not be placed during their studies the college tries to find training places at the end of the college programme. The job placement rate of graduates from co-operative education programmes at Limoilou College is 100 per cent. 40 per cent find a job within their training enterprise.

The students we met saw several advantages in co-operative education: it provides work place experience which enterprises ask for when hiring employees; it renders learning at school less abstract and motivates students to

succeed in their theoretical studies in order to be allowed to enter the next practice period; and students are remunerated. Salaries and working conditions are determined by the training enterprise alone. The enterprise receives a tax credit or subsidy of up to 40 per cent of the student's salary.

College representatives underlined the positive results of co-operative education in terms of effective learning, subsequent placement and teacher contacts with enterprises. At the same time, they expressed concern about the lack of training places in enterprises and in particular about insufficient budgets for the organisation and follow-up of practical work periods. In Limoilou College three staff and two secretaries are occupied with student placement in enterprises, while the follow-up of students is assumed by the teaching staff. Like other institutions, Limoilou College is obliged to use resources from other budget items to finance the placement service.

### *Youth apprenticeship*

Efforts by certain trade bodies and the Employment Ministry<sup>51</sup> to introduce youth apprenticeship as one possible pathway for secondary vocational students have so far not led to significant results. Less than 200 youth apprenticeships existed in Quebec at the time of our visit. Our impression was that in schools, at the enterprise level, and in local employment centres all the key actors -- apart perhaps from the representatives of a small number of trades such as construction and automotive repair -- perceived the introduction of youth apprenticeship as an unnecessary and potentially harmful competition with co-operative education. These same actors see co-operative education as responding better to the conditions of education and youth training in Quebec.

### *Information, guidance and counselling*

Information, guidance and counselling will play an increasingly important role in helping young people to make effective career choices in view of changing labour demand and the increased diversity of education and training pathways. Quebec is often cited as one of the most advanced Canadian provinces in this respect, because it provides career counsellors with specific university level preparation for their tasks. However, the review team heard strong concerns about recent cuts in school budgets for educational counselling and guidance. It was also told that while counsellors are well prepared for educational and psychological counselling of young people they are not sufficiently aware of developments in the labour market. A repeated complaint was that both teachers and counsellors tend to reinforce the overwhelming dominance of general education at the secondary stage. While this may be so, we do not think that counselling is the major cause of students' preference for general education at the secondary level. Vocational diplomas are not accepted by CEGEPs for college entry; vocational programmes are designed mainly for at risk youth; and schools and employers have so far been unable to develop attractive co-operative education programmes at the high school level. These seem to be the more fundamental reasons for the lack of success of vocational education so far.

The main problems in the educational domain in Quebec, which will be discussed at greater length in Section 5 below, relate to:

- A lack of diversification in secondary education;
- An insufficient number of young people obtaining technician level qualifications for the labour market;
- High initial drop out rates both in secondary education and in technical CEGEP programmes; and

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51. Has since changed. There are now a Ministry of Labour and a Ministry of Social Solidarity.

- Weaknesses in the provision of counselling and guidance to young people while they are still at school.

### ***Youth employment and unemployment in Quebec***

Overall, the employment and unemployment situation of young people in Quebec is quite similar to that in Canada as a whole: young people are exposed to unemployment to a considerably larger extent than adults. In 1997 the youth unemployment rate was 20%, higher than the Canadian average (17%). The gap between early school leavers and graduates is increasing. In 1995 the unemployment rate of early school leavers was 17%, compared to 6% for university graduates. Young people are particularly affected by employers' increasing reliance on casual or contract staff. Many young people are therefore excluded from full-time permanent jobs. Multiple part-time jobs, on the contrary, are not uncommon among young people. On the other hand, in Quebec as in other parts of Canada, young people stay unemployed for much shorter periods than do older members of the labour force.

Among graduates of pre-university college programmes who obtained their diploma in 1994-95 and were working in 1996, 53% had a full-time job. This percentage has been declining since the late 1980s. On the contrary, the employment situation of vocational and technical education graduates has improved since 1994 and is considerably better. Among 1994-95 graduates working in 1996 more than 75% had a full-time job. However, many graduates have jobs for which they were not trained, usually at a lower level of qualification than the one for which they were trained.

### ***Recent policy responses in Quebec***

In the mid-1990s, the "Estates General on Education" (*Etats généraux sur l'éducation*) provided the opportunity for a very extensive consultation with all individuals concerned in education policy and the population. This huge stock taking exercise led to the formulation of priority objectives for education and to wide-ranging reforms of the education system, which are currently underway. At the same time, the transfer of responsibilities for labour market policies to the provincial level has necessitated a re-definition and the re-distribution of responsibilities for training and employment within Quebec. Each of these reforms, separately as well as in their interaction, will affect young people's transition from initial education to employment in the years to come.

### ***Educational reform***

Following the Estates General on Education, a ministerial Plan of Action defined seven "lines of action", including three of particular relevance for young peoples' transition from initial education to working life. These were:

- Intensifying the reform of vocational and technical education;
- Consolidating and rationalising post-secondary education; and
- Providing better access to continuing education.

The main objectives are higher participation and completion rates in technical education at the CEGEP level and a significant increase in participation in vocational education programmes at the secondary level.

A related goal is to improve access to continuing education and to provide services responding more effectively to the diversity of adults' needs. Among the means envisaged to achieve these objectives are:

- The diversification of vocational education in high schools;
- The reinforced development of alternating learning in schools and enterprises at the secondary and post-secondary levels;
- The active involvement of industry in curriculum design in co-operation with schools; and
- Greater school autonomy, allowing for effective co-operation and responsiveness to labour market opportunities at local and regional levels.

The creation of integrated training centres providing secondary and post-secondary vocational and technical education within the same establishment aims at improving the linkages and continuity between secondary and post-secondary education.

#### *Reforms in the employment sector*

On the employment side, wide-ranging reforms are currently being implemented following the transfer of active labour market programmes from the federal government to the province. The reforms relate both to decision-making structures and to the content of employment programmes. Four main lines of action are envisaged:

- The reduction and reorganisation of programmes in order to improve transparency, efficiency and coherence of the so far highly dispersed efforts;
- The strengthening of regional management and financing of programmes combined with increased responsibilities for regional and local actors;
- The integration of the employment service (*Emploi-Quebec*) into the Ministry for Employment and Solidarity<sup>52</sup> together with a decentralisation of employment services from the provincial to the regional level; and
- The development of consultation as the dominant mode of decision making. It is envisaged that at the provincial level the *Commission des partenaires du marché du travail* will define overall needs and objectives for Quebec, and these in turn are to be elaborated in greater detail and implemented regionally by the *Conseils régionaux des partenaires du marché du travail*.

As all these reforms are in the process of being implemented in Quebec it is too early to judge their effectiveness. The review team did, however, get the impression that an overlap of responsibilities and competition between different decision-making and advisory bodies at the central, regional and local level and within industry sectors could occur. At the time of the visit the situation was fluid. The overall impression was that of a very dynamic and perhaps somewhat “disorderly” mobilisation of actors at central, regional, local and industry level whose roles, responsibilities and relationship one to another had not yet been clearly defined (see Section 5 below).

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52. This service is now part of the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

### *Labour market measures affecting young people's transition*

Three sorts of employment programmes for young people and adults can be distinguished in Quebec: measures aimed at individuals; measures designed at the level of the enterprise (job protection and job creation); and sectoral, regional and local level employment measures. When the OECD experts visited Canada, more than three quarters of the Ministry for Employment and Solidarity's expenditure on employment measures were concentrated on the first type of measures -- those aimed at individuals -- whose objectives explicitly included the support for individual pathways in transition.

At the time of the review visit labour market measures available to young people were numerous, difficult to understand by young people themselves, and their relationship to one another was not always clearly articulated. Almost all of these programmes are addressed at young welfare recipients. They include: information, guidance and counselling; the development of young people's employability through complementary training or job experience; and the recent launching of the youth apprenticeship system. By far the largest number of young people served are those receiving information, guidance and counselling.

Despite their diversity and their aim to meet individual needs, many young people drop out of employability improvement measures, especially those enrolled in work experience programmes. Nevertheless, such programmes seem to be relatively effective for young people with strong personal handicaps, for young women who are long-term unemployed, and for young migrants. The overall effect of these measures seems to lie less in helping young people to obtain stable employment than in limiting, at least temporarily, the risks of marginalisation.

In order to respond more effectively to the needs of young people aged 16 to 35 who are not on welfare, in 1995 Quebec created the *Carrefours Jeunesses-Emploi*. These centers aim to mobilise local and regional actors in favour of youth employment and to offer labour market oriented information and guidance services to all young people, including drop-outs as well as successful students. In 1997, 50 such *Carrefours* existed across the Quebec territory. Their success has encouraged the decision makers to speed up their development. 20 additional centers were to be created in the near future. In the 1998 budget credits voted for the *Carrefours Jeunesses-Emploi* had risen by 28% compared to the previous budget and the number of *carrefours* was scheduled to reach 88 in 1998. In 1999, there are 92 *carrefours* and 59 contact agencies.

### *Concluding remarks concerning transition policies and arrangements in Quebec*

As is the case elsewhere in Canada, consideration of Quebec's education system and of the ways in which participation and educational attainment have evolved suggest that a lack of diversification in secondary education is at the root of relatively high initial non-completion rates. While Quebec has a well organised system of technical education at the CEGEP level, it has so far not been able to establish vocational secondary pathways which provide access to post-secondary education. The revival of vocational secondary education, including efforts to develop co-operative education at the secondary level, have so far suffered from a vicious circle. Vocational programmes, including co-operative education in secondary schools, are designed mainly to encourage weaker students to finish secondary school and to obtain a recognised vocational certificate, albeit at a relatively low level of qualification. By the same token, more competent students who might be interested in vocational education as a preparation for technical studies at the college level are discouraged from choosing vocational programmes. Consequently CEGEPs continue to select their candidates exclusively among general education graduates. At the tertiary level Quebec has made particularly impressive efforts in developing the technical CEGEP programmes and in increasing participation in such programmes. However, as indicated before, almost half of those who left such programmes in 1995-96 left without the college diploma (*Diplôme d'études collégiales*, or DEC). We therefore fully support the Ministry of Education's guiding principle for the reforms currently under way which is to move "from access to success" for young people in post-secondary education.

There are a number of major issues that can be highlighted about reforms in the Quebec education system, as well as about labour market policies and frameworks. These include:

- The effectiveness and complementarity -- as far as labour market measures are concerned -- of actions by the federal government and the provincial government;
- The co-ordination and coherence of reforms undertaken by different ministries inside Quebec; and
- Ambiguities, complexities and opaqueness in the decentralisation of responsibilities for decision making and consultation on public policies towards regional and sectoral bodies, and sometimes a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what.

The transfer of responsibility for active labour market policies from the federal to the provincial level has led to a re-distribution of policy and administrative responsibilities, including responsibility for regionalisation and for the mobilisation of industry. Together with action for increased school autonomy and the wide-ranging educational reforms that followed the *Etats généraux de l'éducation*, it is clear that there are many parallel initiatives in operation simultaneously. The review team felt that several risks may be inherent in these changes. These include:

- The possibility that lines of responsibility and financing arrangements could become dispersed;
- The likelihood of competition between labour market programmes launched by different bodies;
- A lack of coherence between education and labour policies; and
- Like elsewhere in Canada, a lack of sustainability of transition programmes for young people.

But while official structures may appear cumbersome, the reviewers were impressed by the degree of responsiveness to changing skill needs shown by the two vocational education and training centres visited in Victoriaville<sup>53</sup>. These centres are close to their local labour markets and show a willingness to act flexibly to accommodate changing skill needs that appeared to serve their students and community well. While increased flexibility of response raises issues of equity and coherence discussed below, it is reassuring to note that School Boards responsible for vocational training in Quebec appear to enjoy sufficient autonomy to react responsively to changing skill needs.

Taking into account these circumstances, the output of Quebec's education system in terms of participation in and completion of post-secondary and higher education can be judged as very positive. In addition, initial non-completers can and do find numerous possibilities to return to school or post-secondary institutions. Nevertheless, we agree with the conclusions of the report of the Estates General on Education and the Minister of Education that a greater diversification of secondary education pathways, and increased continuity between secondary vocational and post-secondary technical education are needed if the number and proportion of successful technical education students in the CEGEPs is to increase. To judge from recent experience in European countries (for example France and the Netherlands), more competent students can be attracted to vocational programmes if these programmes offer more demanding curricula and a greater degree of student selectivity. In order to keep the doors open for reorientation and further study, opportunities for horizontal two-way moves between general and vocational education need to be provided, together with continuous pathways across different educational stages.

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53. Centre de formation professionnelle Vision 20/20; Ecole québécoise du meuble et du bois ouvré.

#### 4. NOVA SCOTIA: A LARGE SCALE FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL PILOT PROJECT

Youth transition problems in Nova Scotia parallel those in the rest of Canada, as identified in Section 2, but they are somewhat more poignant. To see why and in what dimensions the problems are more accentuated it is useful to note briefly some of Nova Scotia's economic and educational context and trends, in comparison with the overall Canadian picture.

##### *The economic and demographic context*

Nova Scotia is a small province with a population of around three-quarters of a million, which is 3.1% of the Canadian population. French-speaking Acadians make up between 3% and 4% of the population, while African-Canadians number about 2% and MiMak account for around 1%.

The overall age profile is similar to that in Canada as a whole. The 5-14 year-old population shrank between 1981 and 1991, while the population aged 15-24 grew by over 2% per year<sup>54</sup>. By the 1991 census, the size of the under 24 year-old population as a whole had stabilised. The school age population will continue to shrink as a percentage of the total population, a trend that is consistent across the country. Total growth in the 4-24 year-old age group over the 1991-2001 period is projected to be around 10.6%<sup>55</sup>. The demand for elementary, secondary and post-secondary education will stabilise between 1996 and 2001. One element of the demographic picture that is of particular relevance to youth transition is the migration of the young to other provinces. While many migrants return, there still is a net migration.

Several features of Nova Scotia's economy differentiate it from the rest of Canada. In common with trends elsewhere, the service sector is expanding as manufacturing's share of employment declines. However Nova Scotia has suffered more severe adjustment pains over the last three decades than other areas of Canada. This is the result of fishery, its main industry, experiencing a particularly steep decline since the 1960s. This has had a pronounced impact on its economy, the education and training system, and the way of life more generally. Some regions, such as Cape Breton, have suffered particularly heavily as resource-based industries have declined. Community, business and personal services now form the largest employment sector. Public administration is the next largest employer, followed by retail trade and manufacturing. Nova Scotia is rapidly becoming a leader in information technology, with 100 companies and 6 000 people employed in computer hardware and software production, marine communication, geomatics and telecommunications.

##### *The labour market*

The seasonality of the economy, and the consequent reliance on the employment insurance system, is also more pronounced in Nova Scotia than elsewhere in Canada. Superimposed over the seasonal economic variations is the longer term trend of unemployment. During the 1980s employment growth was relatively robust and the unemployment rate fell below 10%<sup>56</sup>. The 1990-93 recession caused a substantial increase in the unemployment rate, which climbed to a high of 15%. The rate has fallen since then and was 13% in

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54. Education Indicators in Canada, p. 29.

55. Ed. Indicators, Chart 4.2a, p. 31.

56. Background Report.

1997, higher than the national average. The projection for 2001 is close to 14%<sup>57</sup>. The labour force participation rate in Nova Scotia, at 60%, is below the national average.

Employment growth up to 2001 is projected to create around 2 500 jobs per year. Total job annual openings, including those arising from attrition, number around 10 300. By far the largest increase in jobs is projected to occur in sales and services (3 300 per year), a distant second being business and management occupations. Occupations in fishing, forestry and mining, once the mainstay of the economy, are projected to create less than 250 jobs per year, and lie at the very bottom.

Between 1985 and 1990, the rate of employment growth in Nova Scotia, at 12.5%, was slightly above the Canadian average<sup>58</sup>, but the severe impact of the 1990-93 recession led to employment actually declining by two per cent. Over the 1995-2001 period, employment growth is likely to be a paltry 4%, compared with the 11% expansion foreseen in Canada as a whole. The expected overall unemployment rate in year 2001 is 14%.

As in other parts of Canada, the labour market is continually changing. Part-time employment has risen from 11% to 19% of total employment in Nova Scotia since 1976<sup>59</sup>. Nearly half of part-time workers worked part-time because they could not find full-time jobs. More than four in ten part-time workers were between 15 and 24 years of age. Self-employment too is expanding, and in 1994 some 14% of Nova Scotian workers were self employed. Approximately one-third of all entrepreneurs were women. In 1993, approximately 31% of the employed were in firms with less than 50 workers, and some 49% were employed in firms which had more than 500 employees.

As in other provinces of Canada, and indeed elsewhere in the OECD, unemployment rates are closely tied to the level of educational attainment. University degree holders have a 5% unemployment rate compared with unemployment rates of around 18% for those with educational attainment less than Grade 12<sup>60</sup>. Job losses during the 1990-93 recession provide a telling illustration of the link: high school drop-outs experienced the most severe decline in employment (in excess of 20%) while employment of those with university degree actually expanded by 12%. Earnings differentials are similarly large: the average annual income of persons with a completed university degree is close to \$35 000 compared with \$15 000 for those have not completed high school<sup>61</sup>.

Youth unemployment in Nova Scotia, as in other parts of Canada, is higher than the adult rate. However, the differential between the two is greater than for the Canadian average. The unemployment rate for young adults (20-24 year olds) is very volatile, and is above the rate for the 15-19 year olds in cyclical downturns but below it in other times. The duration of youth unemployment is typically shorter than for adults, with the inflows and outflows being much larger.

Unemployment rates vary significantly across Nova Scotia's regions. Regional differentials in the unemployment rate can be as large as 10 percentage points. For example in December 1995, the unemployment rate in Cape Breton area was 17% while it was and 7% in the Halifax area<sup>62</sup>. The differential can be even wider in the case of youth unemployment. In the Cape Breton region youth unemployment rates were often reported to be close to 50%.

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57. Career Options, p.5.

58. Career Options, p.5.

59. Career Options, p.12.

60. Career Options, p. 8.

61. Career Options, p.10.

62. Career Options, p.4.

### ***The structure of educational provision***

As in other provinces, public schools in Nova Scotia are operated by elected school boards, and are funded by the province and municipalities. The province establishes the program of studies and general guidelines for some areas of operation. The boards are responsible for hiring and supervision of staff, the delivery of educational programmes and services, budgeting and the general management of resources.

The normal starting age of elementary education in Nova Scotia is six. Grades 1 to 6 constitute elementary education, which is followed by three years of Junior High and three years of Senior High. Altogether twelve years of schooling are offered through Nova Scotia's 385 elementary schools, and 146 secondary schools. This pattern differs from Quebec where the standard pattern is eleven years but Quebec, like Ontario, has two years of pre-elementary education. Nova Scotia has one year of pre-elementary education.

After completing secondary schooling, students may go to a college or a university, if they qualify. Colleges consist of vocational or technical institutes, community colleges, and institutes of technology. Nova Scotia's college system offers programmes of continuing education as well as programmes for developing skills for careers in business, applied arts, technology, social services, and some health sciences. They award diplomas and certificates but no degrees. Programmes leading to degrees are offered through 12 universities and degree-granting institutions.

Judging from the distribution of graduates from the tertiary education system, the structure of qualifications in Nova Scotia is significantly different from the Canadian average. The proportion of graduates from colleges in Nova Scotia (7%) is significantly below the Canadian average (24%), while for trade and vocational educational institutions it is much higher (37% versus 22%). University graduates make up somewhat similar percentages (57% in Nova Scotia compared to 54% for Canada)<sup>63</sup>.

The educational attainment of the Nova Scotian population has improved rapidly over the previous three decades, but continues to trail the Canadian average slightly. The rapid progress in recent years can be measured in terms of the 20-34 year-old age cohort. Between 1981 and 1991, Nova Scotia recorded the largest increase in education levels in Canada, raising the percentage of population who have completed post-secondary education or attended a post-secondary institution from 59% to 72% (the Canadian average is 73%). Although the percentage of 20-34 year-olds who attended a post-secondary education institution is 60%, which is higher than the Canadian average (57%), the percentage without a secondary school diploma is higher in Nova Scotia (43%)<sup>64</sup>. The discrepancy is explained by the non-graduation rate from post-secondary institutions.

### ***Recent policy initiatives***

Youth transition problems began receiving wider attention in the aftermath of the 1990 recession. In January 1994, the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, in association with the Innovations Program of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) launched the *Nova Scotia School-to-Work Transition (NSSWT)* project. The project is a pilot to test six different interventions in preparation for introducing new school-to-work transition programmes. In parallel, Nova Scotia's school system has been restructured, reducing the 22 school boards to seven, one of which is for the Acadian population, responsible for francophone education throughout the province. School advisory councils have been piloted in the province, and legislation has been passed to encourage the establishment of school councils. These will have representation from students, teachers, support staff and the community, with the school

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63. Table A.2 The Class of 90, A Compendium of Findings, HARD, p.71.

64. Education Indicators, Table 4.4b, p. 35.

principal as a member. New educational legislation has been adopted following two years of consultations on restructuring the system.

New types of expanded offerings are intended to enhance more traditional academic programme offerings in schools.

- *Co-operative Education* refers to community-based experiential learning, undertaken by a senior high school student, which is taken in conjunction with a high school course and which integrates community-based experiences with in-school instruction in a provincial or locally developed and approved course.
- *School-to-Work Transition*, open to senior high school students, is in-school instruction, combined with a community-based experience.
- *Work experience*, open to a junior or senior high student, is community-based experiential learning, typically of 10-50 hours, integrated with an approved course taught in school.
- *Job Shadowing*, typically a one-day experience, aims to familiarise junior or senior high (and other students who could benefit from the programme) students with the workplace.

### **The NSSWT Project**

The NSSWT represents a large federal-provincial research project to evaluate six different interventions. It combines a minimum of 20 hours of classroom instruction (the in-school component) with a minimum of 140 hours of work experience. The NSSWT programme, leading to a Nova Scotia High School Completion Certificate, is open to students enrolled in Grade 11 and who are 16 years of age at the time of work placement. The programme targets students with average to above-average academic performance (without excluding at-risk students) and those who are judged to be mature enough to accept a heavier workload and higher level of responsibility. A training plan was individually tailored to each student's work placement. The research design entails a comparison of the experience of the students in the programme (experimental groups) against a comparison or control group. It tracked pairs of two cohorts of experimental and control or comparison groups through 1995 to 1998, assessing various intermediary and final outcome parameters and employability skills at the beginning and the end of the programme.

The NSSWT project was the highlight of the review team's visit to Nova Scotia, to the point of relative neglect of other programmes and issues. The review team was impressed by the scope and the aims of the project. It is an excellent example of co-operation between the federal and provincial levels of government. The approach to develop transition policy through carefully designed experimental/quasi-experimental pilot research is a testimony both to the importance attached to the transition issue and to the desire to base policy on as sound information as can be obtained.

The team was also impressed by the dedication of the team that was implementing the project, both in Halifax and at the sites visited. The dedication of project co-ordinators was particularly visible and they clearly had established excellent working relationship with the students participating in the programme. Students themselves by and large appeared to enjoy the experience, were well-motivated but realistic in their expectations from the programme. The parents and employers we spoke to were very supportive, often enthusiastic. One side effect of the project may be that it can serve as a catalyst for generating greater awareness of and interest in transition issues among employers. The dominant impression remained, however, that much depended on the dedication of the project co-ordinators.

In general, the review team supports the thinking that motivated the NSSWT project. However, there are some caveats to be kept in mind. First, while meeting the needs of average to above-average students is important, the project does not cater to the students most at risk. In fact, since most early school leaving occurs at Grade 10, this issue is not addressed. The programme was clearly built on top of existing curricular requirements and requested greater motivation and levels of responsibility than would be associated with the typical school leaver. Second, the project was not designed to test alternative mixes of academic and experiential learning, a key issue which is of such critical importance in generating and sustaining motivation for learning among the young. Finally, one difficulty with demonstration projects is their inability to guarantee that their results can be replicated when the tested programmes are applied on a wider scale. For example, while a small number of job placements can be found through persistent efforts of project co-ordinators, it is uncertain whether they can be equally successful when the programme is extended beyond a small sample of students, especially in depressed economic regions.

### ***Concluding remarks concerning Nova Scotia's transition policies and projects***

In broad outlines, youth transition problems in Nova Scotia appear to be similar to the rest of Canada. The transition process is becoming longer, more diversified and more complex. Youth unemployment is persistently higher than the adult rate, usually about double; youth earnings have taken a further dip in real and relative terms. Vocational education is under-emphasised, as in other provinces. Educational preparation in schools is heavily oriented towards university-bound students. Employer involvement in educational and skill development programmes is traditionally weak in Canada and Nova Scotia is no exception.

Transition problems may be more serious in Nova Scotia than elsewhere in Canada for a number of reasons. *The first* is the province's relatively weak economic base and the sharp decline in its traditional resource-based industries. The relative differential between youth and adult unemployment rates and between the relative earnings of young people and adults are even greater for Nova Scotia than for Canada as a whole. *A second reason* lies in its regional dimension. The province is beset with serious regional variations in the unemployment situation. Faced with these unemployment problems, some young people have the possibility of migrating out of the province to better labour markets elsewhere in Canada. *A third reason* could relate to higher migration rates out of the province of qualified personnel. However, it should also be kept in mind that Nova Scotia has a large number of degree-granting institutions which attract many students from other provinces. When these students leave Nova Scotia after their studies they contribute to increasing the emigration flows of qualified youth.

The NSSWT project is a systematic attempt at developing policies to address transition problems. However the pilots may suffer from two limitations.

- They seem to address the needs of the average to the higher-than-average students. In most examples of the operation of the schemes we saw it seemed to cater to the more motivated and better-qualified students. The needs of students most at risk of early school leaving appeared not to be addressed.
- Second, the pilot schemes may be more successful because they are applied on the margin. Once the same pilots are extended more widely it is no longer certain that they will be as successful, unless a much wider effort in involving the employer community is made.

More generally, Nova Scotia will need to pay attention to developing more diversified education-to-work pathways, including attractive vocational pathways. The review team did not have the opportunity to assess whether this was being done on a systematic basis. The link between secondary schools and the community

colleges appears to be very weak and we did not hear any indication that serious efforts might be underway for improving the linkages.

## **5. MAJOR POLICY ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

In this Section we summarise what we perceive to be the main policy issues and concerns related to young people's transition from initial education to working life in Canada. While our arguments are illustrated by examples from Nova Scotia or Quebec we consider that they are of relevance to Canada more generally. Where appropriate, we offer proposals for possible future policy directions, and a summary of our main policy suggestions is provided in Section 6 below.

There is a high degree of consensus in Canada that transitions are today different from what they used to be. Transition processes have become more difficult for young people in general, including some who have college diplomas and university degrees. Greater persistence and initiative in searching for and keeping employment that corresponds to acquired levels of education and training would seem to be necessary at all levels of education. The review team would, therefore, wish to stress that innovative thinking and well-targeted -- and at times individualised -- action is required for all young people in order to prepare them to cope with the more complex transition process. In Canada, as in other OECD countries, particular concern is expressed with regard to the transition problems of young people with the lowest levels of education and, in particular, those who leave initial education without a high school diploma.

### ***Growing risks related to young people's transition into the labour market***

#### *Difficulties of young graduates*

Different groups of young people adopt different strategies to cope with the transition from initial education to working life, depending in part upon their prior educational attainment. In Canada, the situation of young graduates who are unable to find suitable jobs is frequently more difficult than that of many of their European counterparts, since it is common for students to take out loans to finance their studies which are repayable after graduation.

The success rate of university graduates in finding employment varies considerably by subject area studied. Particular concern was expressed about general education graduates from high school and college who enter the labour market without recognised occupational qualifications. It may therefore be useful to reconsider the provision of counselling and guidance to potential students who may need better information about the employment prospects of the different fields of study at crucial choice points in their educational careers. We shall return to this issue below.

#### *Lasting disadvantages for the least-qualified*

The period from the mid 1980s onwards has seen an increase in inequality, as measured both by levels of real earnings and by unemployment rates for groups with different levels of educational achievement. This phenomenon has been noted in a number of countries, including Canada. Those young Canadians who graduate today from university continue to master the transition from school to work with considerably less difficulty than those with lower level achievements, and particularly the (approximately) 15% who leave initial education without a high school certificate. In Canada overall and in the two provinces visited during the review, unemployment in the group without a full secondary education is between two and three

times that of the group with a university degree. Despite, and perhaps also in part as a result of, changes in the supply of educated youth -- the proportion of those with less than a high school diploma is declining -- the gap between the unemployment rates of the two groups is increasing. Among those most at risk of unemployment and social exclusion are young First Nations and other minority groups.

The situation of those with less than a high school certificate is characterised by more than just a high incidence of unemployment<sup>65</sup>. Their overall unemployment rate (15% for Canada as a whole) conceals a more complex picture of frequent entry and exit from the labour market, and of employment that is characterised by jobs of short duration for this most vulnerable group. This pattern has serious consequences for access to further education and training. In Canada, as in other OECD countries, those with the lowest levels of education are the least likely to pursue further education after leaving school. The School Leavers Follow-Up Survey shows that of those who leave high school without a certificate, less than a quarter follow courses of further education or training, compared to over three quarters of those with a high school diploma<sup>66</sup>. In Quebec while over 80% of those with a high school diploma follow at least one course of further education or training, less than one fifth of high school leavers have any further training. The transitions of the least educated are likely to be characterised by low-level jobs of short duration interspersed with periods of unemployment. In these circumstances they are likely to receive only the most rudimentary training on the job and are in danger of falling progressively behind others of their age group who are in jobs in which employer-financed training is available.

In Canada, as elsewhere, the difficulties for young people leaving school without a high school diploma are increasing. Policy makers should therefore concentrate in particular on policies and measures which prevent young people from early school leaving and which encourage them to obtain recognised occupational qualifications -- if possible at post-secondary level -- before entering the labour market. We shall discuss these issues further below in the sub-section on Education and training provision: Reducing/eliminating school failure.

### ***Changing demands for skills and changing conditions of skill formation***

Rapidly changing labour markets, increased competitive pressures and rising customer expectations inevitably translate into new demands on schools, colleges and universities. These pressures also have consequences for the transition of young people to the labour market. Employers in Canada, and in particular small and medium-sized employers, do not have a tradition of providing structured training for new employees compared to many European countries or Japan. The costs of the inexperienced learner to firms are higher today than in the past and firms place higher value on the capacity to learn and adapt rapidly. Lack of relevant labour market experience, therefore, now appears to be a more severe handicap for young people than it was in the past. In addition, young people compete today with increasingly well qualified adults. Finally, the demand for skills is becoming more volatile. The so-called 'soft' skills (interpersonal, organisational and thinking skills) need to be made an integral part of occupational preparation of the young, and the knowledge and skills of teachers and trainers need to be updated or changed more frequently than in the past.

In both Quebec and Nova Scotia, young people look not only to their own province, but also to the wider Canadian labour market and, to a more limited extent to the labour market of the US, for employment. However, among young people from Quebec, those who do not master the English language may be disadvantaged. High school drop outs can and do leave Nova Scotia for work elsewhere in Canada while

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65. Human Resources Development Canada *After High School: The first years* Statistics Canada 1996.

66. Frank, 1996.

this is more difficult for French speaking young people in Quebec. Those most likely to migrate from Quebec to work elsewhere in Canada are drawn principally from university graduates.

### *Traditional approach to skill formation in Canada*

For a supply of qualified employees, business in Canada has long depended upon the immigration of well-trained individuals and on students from publicly-provided vocational centres, community colleges and, of course, universities. On balance, business appears to have been well served by the system. The cost of training was met from public funds and by the trainee or student. Judging by wage levels and unemployment rates over time no serious and lasting skill shortages were encountered by business. Such a system inevitably rested on an assumption that employers' skill needs would be relatively stable over time and that changes could be predicted well in advance so as to allow new courses to be developed, approved and provided. This approach to skill supply is becoming less efficient in unstable and unpredictable labour markets.

There appears to be a tendency for business in Canada to take a fairly short-term view of skill needs and skill development, and this was the general attitude observed in Quebec and Nova Scotia. This view is unlikely to best serve the longer-term interests of the student and of the community. Employers may press for narrow training focused on immediate skill needs and they may abstain from input into curriculum design. Training provision may, therefore, become relatively unspecific and "general" in nature. This situation needs to be corrected to emphasise the students' lifetime skill and learning needs and the longer-term requirements of economic development. Both may be better served by providing well designed combinations of general and occupationally specific skills. The development of occupationally oriented programmes at the college level and the efforts deployed in Quebec to increase participation in technical studies in CEGEPs are moves in the right direction.

### *Employer involvement in initial education and training*

Except for apprenticeship training which is normally not on offer to young people without labour market experience, most vocational and technical education and labour market training in the provinces visited is provided in publicly-funded colleges or institutes or in private training organisations. There is little tradition in Canada of direct involvement of employers in the design and provision of initial education and training. Attempts to develop work experience placements for students as described above involve costly and labour-intensive processes. Nevertheless, some initiatives have been developed to improve this situation, such as the Sectoral Youth Internships, the National Education and Business Centre, and the Canadian Business Education Network.

The discussions that the review team held with local employers in Nova Scotia who had taken students on work placements suggested that employers are more or less passive participants in this process. Employer organisations did not appear to consider that relations with schools and colleges and the training of young people should form part of their agenda. When approached by schools and community organisations to participate in offering work experience to school and college students, some employers participate willingly. But the reviewers received the strong impression that, as a rule, such initiatives were taken by project co-ordinators, schools and community organisations and not by individual employers or employer organisations like, for example, Chambers of Commerce.

In Quebec, a structure of tripartite committees is in place to contribute to local and provincial plans for the development of training provision. However, at the level of individual schools and training centres, the search for work experience placements for students did not appear to be facilitated by the existence of

these official structures for consultation. As in Nova Scotia, placements appeared to be the result of intensive work by school staff to develop and maintain relationships with individual businesses.

### *Education and training provision and the transition from school to work*

Schools need to respond to the changing demand for skills while retaining their fundamental goals of promoting educational development and citizenship. In order to do this, educational authorities need to ensure that they have access to relevant and up-to-date information on employers' changing skill requirements, and are willing to adapt existing curricula, teaching methods and learning pathways, so that students can become responsive to changing demands for labour.

### *Responsiveness to economic developments and quality of education*

Across OECD countries publicly provided education and training institutions are finding it difficult to reconcile their public mission of equality of access to education and training for all citizens with increased responsiveness to rapidly changing demands for new skills and knowledge and higher standards for all. Combining flexibility and responsiveness in education with a guarantee of high and uniform quality of provision and opportunity for work-based training across the entire administrative area is a difficult and -- some would say -- impossible task. A high degree of responsiveness to markets can have the tendency to lead to an unequal distribution of opportunities. Rapid changes in course content and teaching personnel make guaranteeing the quality of courses and teaching standards more difficult. However, while ensuring quality may slow down or inhibit responsiveness, it may be in the longer-term interests of the student. Educational institutions must ensure that courses offered are of good quality as well as being relevant to employment needs of the locality. A healthy private training sector working alongside the public sector can meet the demand from individuals and organisations for the more specialised, tailor-made training programmes that public institutions may not be well suited to provide.

### *The need for diverse and coherent pathways through education and into employment*

Compared with many European countries educational participation and attainment in Canada are high. However education systems in Canada offer relatively few opportunities to young people who may wish to pursue a vocational stream, be it in scope, quality or in terms of integration with other educational streams. This seems to be due partly to traditional employer behaviour, abstaining from participation in education and training provision and relying on academic-based recruitment criteria. The "academic bias" is maintained and reinforced by educational institutions themselves. For example, in Quebec, the de facto exclusion of graduates of secondary vocational education from colleges and universities, including from occupationally oriented "technical" programmes not only explains why secondary vocational education has almost disappeared, but also hinders the development of more practically oriented and work-related courses of high quality in high schools.

The failure to provide vocational pathways which provide clearly defined linkages between secondary and post-secondary vocational courses to more advanced levels of the education system has contributed to the decline in popularity of these courses with parents and students. Parents and students are well aware of the good labour market prospects of university graduates and students are increasingly reluctant to embark on school programmes which will not contribute to the credits needed for university entry. Positive efforts such as those in Quebec to re-develop vocational education and to expand co-operative education in high schools remain unattractive. If these programmes are designed to provide immediate access to the labour market, they are likely to attract only low achievers in high schools, particularly in a country such as

Canada, which traditionally has high participation in tertiary education. This, in turn, reinforces CEGEPs and universities in persisting in not admitting students from vocational education. It might therefore be necessary to offer a broader range of secondary vocational courses with the main objective of preparing young people for tertiary level occupationally oriented studies. Preparation for immediate labour market entry should be seen as a secondary or preventive role to play for those who are not successful in either general or vocational secondary education.

This approach requires agreements to be reached between the authorities responsible for secondary education on the one hand and tertiary institutions on the other about the types and qualities of secondary vocational programmes that will provide and increase access to colleges and universities. Barriers that discourage movement through the education system need to be dismantled in order to encourage higher participation in occupationally oriented tertiary studies and to reduce drop out both at secondary and tertiary levels.

### *Improving the continuity between initial and 'adult' education*

The once clear distinction between initial and 'adult' education is becoming blurred in Canada, as in other countries, and this creates both administrative and educational anomalies. The Quebec Estates-General on Education, for instance, criticise the growing trend for young people between the age of 16 and 18 in Quebec to enrol in adult education in order to avoid the stricter prerequisites of the initial system<sup>67</sup>. While in both of the provinces that we visited there is no fee for initial education, fees are charged for adult education. Young people who leave school prematurely may be charged fees if they return at a later age to complete their education. This may have negative consequences for the most disadvantaged students. They pay more compared to non-leavers, though their initial consumption of years of education had been low compared to many of their contemporaries who faced no financial penalty for additional years of study because they stayed within the recognised age-related boundaries.

Thanks to the flexible North American credit-based approach to curriculum organisation, education and training provision in Canada is better organised, compared to many European countries, for encouraging individuals to take up their studies again in later life or while working. An individual who drops out of a course can retain the credits accumulated and return later to complete. Many qualifications can be obtained as a result of the accumulation of credits attached to separate courses which, when completed, give entitlement to a recognised qualification. This is an area where other countries could probably learn a great deal from Canada.

### *Barriers between school and the workplace*

With the exception of teachers on vocational courses who are more likely to have recent labour market experience, most teachers in Canada have little opportunity to appreciate the changes taking place in the workplace and the new demands these are making on young people. Given the academic bias of Canadian education highlighted above, it is not surprising that teachers continue to value the success of students in the academic tracks more highly than success on the more vocational or work-related options. They understand best the needs of students who perform well in academic subjects and who plan to follow the well-trodden route from school to university. There appears to be less support and guidance for the student body not choosing this pathway. It is generally agreed that this problem results from a lack of communication between the two worlds of school and work.

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67. Gouvernement du Quebec: MEQ *The Estates-General on Education 1995-1996 -- The State of Education in Quebec*.

It has been pointed out earlier on that poor communication between schools and enterprises is exacerbated on the employer side by the lack of organised employer involvement, for instance through the Chambers of Commerce or other employer bodies, in the design and provision of education and training. Recent initiatives to improve the school to work transition of which we have seen examples in Quebec and Nova Scotia need to be understood in part as a response to this situation. One important aim of such measures is the development of co-operative education and similar programmes providing students with relevant work experience. Within the Canadian context it seems unavoidable that the initiative for establishing contacts between schools and enterprises has to come mainly from educational institutions. However all the examples of work placement programmes which we saw suggest that developing such contacts can be expensive and time consuming, as student placement necessitates multiple visits to enterprises by school or community based placement officers. If such programmes are to be extended to cover a larger body of students, it will be essential that employers themselves get together and participate actively and collectively in their organisation and implementation.

### *Reducing/ eliminating school failure*

It has already been indicated at several points in this report that the needs of those who do not respond well to academic education are frequently overlooked in Canada, as in many other countries. Under good economic conditions, the problem of poor school achievement was to a large extent 'hidden', as these low-achieving students easily found work in unskilled and semi-skilled manufacturing. The shift away from manufacturing and the increased skill requirements of jobs in all sectors of the economy has brought the problems of low-achievers to the fore. Their relative disadvantage in the labour market has been greatly increased by changes in the nature of the market. These changes include more flexible working and short-term contracts; the demand for a wider range of more sophisticated skills and in particular a basic familiarity with information technology; and responsibility for decision-making and interpersonal skills. Policy makers therefore have to face the challenge of ensuring that all students reach a threshold level in these basic skills. This implies the elimination of early school leaving and action to ensure that all students leave school with a broad range of portable skills.

The level of drop-out from secondary education in Canada in general, and in the two provinces visited in particular, suggests that schools have not yet fully succeeded in developing appropriate pedagogy and curriculum to tackle the causes of drop-out and school failure at an early stage when remedial action is still possible. The difficulty of this challenge should not be under-estimated. Key answers lie in the direction of a broader range of vocational courses and more integrated programmes of general and vocational education and training. They will require innovative approaches and increased resources. In particular, changes will be required in the curriculum offered and in teaching methods. Where attempts are made to reintroduce vocational education at the upper secondary level, as in Quebec, clarification may be needed on the objectives. Should secondary level vocational education prepare participants primarily for immediate entry into the labour market? Or is it seen mainly as a pedagogical means of motivating students to complete high school and to move on to occupational preparation at the post-secondary level? Answers to these questions would help to clarify what is expected of teachers and of students and to define resource commitments, both human and financial.

## *The management of transition policies*

### *The coherence of transition policies and measures at federal and provincial levels*

Transition issues lie at the cross-roads of several policy jurisdictions. This means that in any one province a number of official bodies and government departments can be involved in setting up measures to improve transition. Within each province a number of different ministries finance transition measures, and their co-ordination poses certain problems of confusion and overlap. Quebec among other provinces offers lively illustrations of such risks. Three ministries -- the Ministry of Education (MEQ), the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity (MES) and the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS) -- all finance measures designed to assist the transition of young people<sup>68</sup>. At the same time, government policy is promoting the devolution of responsibility for transition measures to regional and sectoral bodies where possible. Such devolution of decision making is seen as a means to render training and employment policies more responsive to local needs and to find different ways of sharing the costs between various public budgets and industry. Regional and local actors and industrial bodies welcome such developments because they can help to reduce the uncertainties related to declining public budgets and to improve coherence between decision making and financial responsibilities. However the apparent convergence of interests hides more problematic, and sometimes contradictory, realities.

The effectiveness of decentralised management of training and employment measures meets with several difficulties. The trend towards decentralisation is counteracted by the need for provincial governments to mediate between common orientations agreed at the federal level on one side and local needs and projects on the other. Contradictions furthermore tend to arise between regional and sectoral training and employment initiatives. In a country with weakly developed industry organisations this can lead to less than optimal mobilisation of industrial bodies. At the same time, regional decision making powers are usually not matched by autonomous financial resources available at the regional level. Taxes are collected at federal, provincial and local levels. Regional decision making powers are dependent on budgets made available to the regions by the provincial government, while local communities can take more independent decisions on how to utilise their tax revenues with regard to training and employment measures. The mediating and co-ordinating powers of the regions are thus squeezed between provincial and local decision making powers and authority.

### *Multiplicity of programmes and a lack of long-term strategy*

Young people in transition are a heterogeneous group. Policy responses need to take account both of short-term needs of young people for help with finding and keeping a job and with longer term needs of education, training and the acquisition of social skills and attitudes. This requires consistent policy direction over a period of time whereas policies usually have a short time-horizon.

The overview of recent transition policies in Canada referred to in Section 2 above and what we have seen during the visits in Nova Scotia and Quebec indicate that a considerable range of services is available in Canada to aid young people with job search, education, training and social integration. However, as underlined for instance by the Estates General on Education in Quebec, "these programs (tend to) have proliferated in the wake of hasty decisions and growing competition among the various ministries and levels of government. This has led to inefficiency and a confusing array of programs."<sup>69</sup> Besides this

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68. Since the recent change, the Ministries are as follows: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

69. op. cit. p. 91.

profusion of programmes and measures there seems to exist a lack of long-term strategic provision for marginalised groups. Bodies providing for these groups are often in financial difficulty and unsure of future funding. In many areas the amount of provision is inadequate to meet the need and there is no guarantee that young people experiencing difficulty integrating in the labour market are able to find the help they need.

In Nova Scotia, while a number of strategies were in place to help marginalised young people, there was no way of assessing whether the needs of the group as a whole were being met. Funding for these schemes was usually short-term and originated principally from the federal government. Local authorities and organisations were encouraged to bid for funds from the federal budget set aside for labour-market integration of young people. This in turn meant that policy was often short-term and did not pay sufficient attention to diagnosing and reacting to local needs.

In general, the decentralisation of transition programmes provides an image of relatively fragmented developments involving numerous actors and consultation bodies. While this contributes to reinforcing flexibility and pragmatism in dealing with diverse needs and conditions, it also raises obstacles to coherence in policy objectives and implementation. Eliminating wasteful overlap or -- the opposite -- the neglect of groups which fall through the gaps between jurisdictions are important challenges which policy makers have to face.

Finally, it cannot be overlooked that policies and measures aimed at the supply side of the labour market can help to solve only part of the problems related to young people's transition into employment. Supporting industrial restructuring and development, especially in poor regions such as those which we have seen in Northern Nova Scotia are another indispensable part of coherent and long-term policies in favour of transition from school to work.

### *The role of information in the transition from school to work*

The availability of timely and relevant information to the different actors involved in the transition of young people from school to work is crucial to the successful management of transition. Information needs to flow: from potential employers to young people about labour market opportunities; from education and training providers to students about suitable ways of preparing to qualify for labour market opportunities; from employers to education and training providers about labour market needs; and from education and training providers to employers about the skills produced by the education and training system. Finally, policy makers require information on what individuals' needs are, how programmes are meeting these needs and how individuals are using the available government services to ease their transition to work.

In general, Canada and the two provinces visited appear to be well-served by information on the supply of qualifications, and on training and employment programmes. Many of the information problems that we observed seem to relate to the multiplicity of the actors involved (for example various decision making bodies, advisory bodies, or statistical offices) and the to the uncoordinated, sometimes parallel, production of information by these actors. The maze of initiatives and programmes appears to be reflected in a maze of information that is not easy for the non-professional user of information to access and utilise. This does not make decision making easier, be it for policy makers, enterprises or young people. One of the key recommendations in the Canadian Youth Foundation's report *Making the Connections: Improving Access to Information for Canadian Youth*<sup>70</sup>, recognises this difficulty. The recommendation states that "a dynamic and accessible information system be established for youth and youth-serving agencies. This system would be free and provide convenient, up-to date information through a variety of formats including the Internet and print".

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70. Canadian Youth Foundation, 1998.

### *Information, counselling and guidance for young people*

In Quebec concern was voiced by bodies representative of parents, students and other young people that school guidance services did not provide adequate and relevant information on labour market opportunities and access to careers other than through the academic route. In Nova Scotia young people with whom we spoke felt that the time available in schools for careers advice had been inadequate and that the information given had not been sufficiently useful. The time of school counsellors was taken up with administrative tasks and they were perceived as not sufficiently well informed on local labour market opportunities.

There is, however, more information available now than ever before. Young people who have left school can consult the Internet information services of Human Resources Development Canada for labour market information, but public access to this valuable resource is not always available. In Quebec, the review team noted the efforts of the Ministry for Employment and Solidarity to develop information and counselling services for young adults (those aged 16 to 35) in the framework of the *Carrefours Jeunesse-Emploi*, where young people can obtain information and personalised counselling. The major difficulty may be in having access to the information and in being able to interpret it. To help alleviate this problem, a number of different organisations in Canada are working to co-ordinate initiatives designed to improving career and labour market services for youth. For example, the Canada Career information Partnership (CCIP), a network of federal and provincial/territorial organisations, is working to avoid duplication in product development and to ensure that Canadian youth have easy access to career and labour market information. Quebec shares the same preoccupations but has opted for strategies and systems which emphasize greater importance to personalized information for young people.

### *Monitoring transitions: the role of longitudinal surveys*

The introduction to this report stressed the importance of viewing young people's transition to work within a lifelong learning framework. In this framework, it is essential to be able to follow the careers of young people throughout transition -- say to the age of 29 or 30 -- as they move, back and forth, between learning and work. Without such information it will not be possible for policy makers to ensure the provision of appropriate structures and facilities.

In both Quebec and Nova Scotia it is not easy to build up a picture of the post-school careers of young people who are no longer in school after the age of 16. Nor is it easy to discover the agencies and services that they find most useful in the search for work and further education. The achievements of cohorts or classes are monitored while in school and there are follow-up surveys of graduates. However few records are collected on the progress of individuals through the education system over the period of schooling and working life. At the federal level a start has been made in investigating the careers of a sample of young people, some of whom have left the education system, by the establishment of School Leavers Follow-Up Survey which gives information on transitions of young people from age 18 to age 24. The age group would need to be compared to 29 or 30 to get a better grasp of the transition process. In addition, the federal government is now developing two longitudinal observations, the Youth in Transition Survey and the Postsecondary Transition Survey. It is hoped that the sample size in these studies is sufficiently large to allow detailed information to be derived for the smaller provinces such as Nova Scotia. Quebec plans to introduce its own follow-up survey of young people after high school.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The review team was impressed by the importance that is being attached to youth transition issues at both federal and provincial levels. Considerable research has been carried out to diagnose the nature of transition issues, and new initiatives have been taken. The review team agrees with the general policy

directions set out in “Facts on employment and unemployment: Canada’s youth and the labour market”<sup>71</sup>. These emphasise the need for a variety of education, training and work experience interventions, for improved information and guidance services and for expanded opportunities of work experience in secondary schools, colleges and universities

In this section we briefly summarise some suggestions which might be of some relevance in pushing these policy orientations further. These centre around seven main points. In addition, it should be kept in mind that one of the most important condition for young people’s successful transition into employment is strong economic growth and a more even distribution of employment opportunities across regions, issues which lie beyond the scope of the review.

The review team would like to emphasise the importance of developing, in a more systematic way and within the context of a long-term strategy, diverse, interconnected and coherent pathways through education and into employment. The diversification should include greater attention to pathways that involve vocational education, especially at the secondary level. The roles of apprenticeship and co-operative education (*alternance études/travail*) need to be strengthened and clarified, and in particular by ensuring that both provide access to further education and training at the post-secondary level. Without this assurance, these courses will not be attractive to a significant group of young people and will continue to remain of marginal importance.

A higher priority needs to be given to further reducing the incidence of early school leaving. One approach is to broaden the curriculum and the range of teaching methods to cater to a variety of learning needs. These efforts call for different mixes of academic and experiential learning. The latter can take place both in schools and at the work place. The key point is motivating students to continue to learn and this motivation may require paying greater attention to the type of curriculum and teaching methods that best suits individual learning needs and aptitudes.

A major weakness in the Canadian approach to the transition process is the traditionally limited role played by the employers. Ways must be found for greater involvement of employers and unions. A number of approaches, co-operative education in particular, are being pursued in this direction. These efforts will need to be substantially increased. The involvement of small employers is of particular concern. Here, initiatives such as the Group Employment and Training Companies that have been used in Australia to mobilise small employer participation in apprenticeship training may be a particularly fruitful avenue to pursue.

Efforts must be made to address the inequalities caused by regionally diverse labour market situations. This will require greater clarification of the ways in which roles and responsibilities for transition policies complement one another at regional and sectoral levels respectively, and by improving the coherence between financial responsibility and decision making powers.

In addition to more diverse and coherent learning pathways a variety of labour market measures will continue to be needed to assist those most at risk of exclusion. In this respect it would seem important to clarify the immediate objectives of each programme and to examine longer-term effects on the employment, careers and further learning of participants. The transferability of successful grassroots experiences and pilot projects, and especially their sustainability over time, could in many cases be strengthened if clearer frameworks of decision-making, financing and evaluation were put into place.

Significantly greater effort will be needed expand and reshape the guidance and counselling services available to the young. The services traditionally provided at the school level are not only limited -- they are also biased in an academic direction. For many on the teaching staff this is a waste of their time. As the

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71. Human Resources Development Canada, October 1997, p.27.

Nova Scotia experiments reveal, intensive guidance and counselling services can make a difference. But this approach can be resource intensive and it needs to be independently provided for in the school staffing formula and budget.

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