Chapter 2
Broad Areas of Learning

2.1 Introduction

The Québec Education Program presents a number of broad areas of learning, which deal with issues that are important to both individuals and societies, and of particular concern to young people. They are:

– Health and Well-Being
– Personal and Career Planning
– Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
– Media Literacy
– Citizenship and Community Life

These areas of learning were chosen on the basis of their importance for society and their relevance for the students' education. Their inclusion in the Québec Education Program is intended to encourage students to make connections between what they learn at school, their everyday lives and present-day social realities. The broad areas of learning provide opportunities to develop a sophisticated understanding of various life contexts and to envision a variety of possible actions in related situations. They enable students to relate different areas of knowledge and to look critically at their personal, social and cultural environment.

Each area of learning has an educational aim, whose purpose is to guide teachers and other school staff, and focuses of development, which indicate the knowledge required to take effective action and the behaviour and attitudes to promote in each area. These focuses of development may serve as the basis for intellectually stimulating learning situations that are conducive to the development of both cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies.

The Broad Areas of Learning: Focal Points for the Integration of Educational Activities

The broad areas of learning, with the cross-curricular competencies, provide a frame of reference that gives coherence and complementarity to educational activities. The complex issues these areas involve call for the construction of multidisciplinary responses based on various sorts of knowledge. Matters as important as choosing a lifestyle, exercising critical judgment with respect to consumer goods and the media, and making and carrying out plans are too broad to be dealt with in a time slot and context devoted exclusively to one subject.

Because it is not always possible to predict the ideal moment for raising concerns or issues pertaining to the broad areas of learning, teachers and other educators must not only work together to prepare and carry out activities related to the broad areas of learning, but should also be ready to act spontaneously, using events in school or the outside world as source material for targeted learning situations.

By their very nature, activities related to the broad areas of learning require the participation of all partners: the cycle team, the school team and administrators, the governing board and the local community. Although schools do not have sole responsibility for educating young people in these areas, and indeed cannot prepare them to answer all the questions these areas raise, they do have an essential role to play. In particular, schools can provide students with the opportunity to carefully examine

these questions, using a great deal of their subject-specific knowledge and taking into account the cognitive, social and affective dimensions.

Different Ways to Address the Broad Areas of Learning

Because they are the responsibility of all school staff, the broad areas of learning can be addressed in school and classroom life in a variety of ways: while teaching the subjects; by means of interdisciplinary projects; within the framework of the school's educational project; in everyday activities; in cooperation with the complementary educational services, and so on.

Certain subjects provide particularly suitable contexts for addressing certain broad areas of learning. For example, because it deals with the principles on which our laws, society and institutions are based, the *Geography* and *History and Citizenship Education* programs can be particularly useful for learning about *Citizenship and Community Life*. However, the history and geography courses cannot, by themselves, ensure that students become responsible citizens, capable of using their intelligence and competencies for the common good. The attitudes and behaviour necessary for responsible citizenship are acquired in practice. This means that schools must offer students a large variety of opportunities to experience democratic participation, in the manner of a citizen (e.g. student council, governing board of the school, participation in the development of rules of conduct, discussion of various social issues). Indeed, all aspects of school life offer lessons in citizenship education. Similarly,

there are complementary relationships between the *Physical Education and Health* program and the broad area of Health and Well-Being, between the *Science and Technology* program and the broad area of Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities and between the subjects in the *Languages* subject area and the broad area of Media Literacy. Although these subjects provide knowledge that is particularly relevant to these broad areas of learning, they alone cannot be used to achieve all the educational aims associated with the broad areas.

Although some subjects, because of the knowledge they convey, are more directly linked than others to certain broad areas of learning, in all the subjects, the incorporation of issues raised by the broad areas of learning can make students' learning more meaningful. These issues serve to establish connections between questions that concern students and the more formal knowledge presented in the subject-specific programs.

Interdisciplinary projects represent another way to approach issues related to the broad areas of learning. Such projects, which may be individual or collective, provide opportunities to use—and transfer—subject-specific knowledge in the analysis of problems important not only to young people, but also to society as a whole. These projects also allow students to draw on various cross-curricular competencies, for example, to become familiar with research and the processing of different types of information, to solve multidimensional problems, to use their critical judgment, to debate issues and to work together.

Any broad area of learning can form the basis of the school's educational project. Although all the broad areas are socially relevant and should, for that reason, be included in the school's educational project, some are

more likely to correspond to problems a school actually faces and thus represent a viable starting point for that educational project. The relative importance accorded to each broad area and the various ways in which they are addressed are thus likely to vary from one school to another. Schools must show both flexibility and rigour in this regard, because on the one hand they have the latitude to adapt the content and the way in which they address the broad areas of learning, but on the other hand they must ensure that the broad areas are really an integral part of school and classroom life.

The educational aims of the broad areas of learning may also have an impact, particularly through the school's educational project, on the spontaneous everyday actions of educators. All teachers and other school staff must take responsibility for this component of the program. Certain behaviours and attitudes associated with the broad areas of learning can be developed only if they are encouraged in a variety of contexts and if teachers themselves act as role models. Taking satisfaction in work well done, establishing egalitarian relationships, paying attention to the influence of one's behaviour and attitudes on one's psychological well-being, relishing challenges and having a sense of responsibility for one's successes and failures are examples in this regard. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that the values they seek to promote are consistent with those embodied in both their organization and their practices.

The focuses of development of the broad areas of learning provide opportunities for students to use all the different sorts of knowledge that they have acquired or are acquiring to guide their actions in the various areas of their personal, school and working life. They can receive help in this task from the complementary educational services, which have an important role to play in ensuring students have access to the various resources available

in the schools. These services can contribute to the development of behaviour, attitudes and competencies that foster educational success, and to the establishment of connections between schools, parents and the community. People from outside of the school should be seen as a source of enrichment, and also as potential points of comparison, which enable students to develop a sense of perspective and better appreciate the impact and potential benefits of their school education.

2.2 Five Broad Areas of Learning

Health and Well-Being

Educational Aim

To ensure that students develop a sense of responsibility for adopting good living habits with respect to health, safety and sexuality

Introduction

Being in good health means, on one hand, possessing the physical and psychological conditions for satisfying one's needs and carrying out one's plans, and on the other hand, being at ease in one's surroundings, developing harmoniously and having confidence and a sense of well-being and security. But a number of factors can affect a person's efforts to maintain a physical or psychological equilibrium. Young people face many problems related to health and well-being: difficult family or peer relations, unhealthy lifestyle, psychological problems, issues related to sexuality, high-risk behaviour, poor nutrition, substance abuse and so on.

Schools should be attentive to adolescents' problems and provide appropriate support. They should also give students the tools they need to take responsibility for their own health and well-being. Schools have an important role to play in helping students to understand issues related to this area of learning and to the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. This responsibility goes well beyond the physical education and health program; it requires concerted action by all school staff members, working closely with parents, health professionals, community planners and others in the school and community.

In secondary school, students should be encouraged to recognize their problems and the consequences of their decisions for their health and well-being, given access to the knowledge they need to make choices and encouraged to help create conditions conducive to the expression of their concerns, interests and feelings. It is essential that young people recognize the negative consequences that behaviours such as taking unwarranted risks, exclusion, discrimination and all forms of abuse can have on their own psychological health and that of their peers.

Focuses of Development

- **Self-awareness and awareness of his/her basic needs:** self-affirmation; respect for his/her physical and psychological well-being; need for acceptance and growth; need for recognition and fulfillment
- **Awareness of the impact of his/her choices on health and well-being:** diet; physical activity; sexuality; hygiene and safety; stress management and management of emotions; influence of his/her behaviours and attitudes on his/her psychological well-being
- **Active lifestyle and safe behaviour:** physical activities in the classroom, at school, in the family and elsewhere; safe behaviour in all circumstances; healthy lifestyle

Personal and Career Planning

Educational Aim

To enable students to make and carry out plans designed to develop their potential and help them integrate into adult society

Introduction

The transition to secondary school is a major step for students, as it is at this level that most students seriously consider their academic and career plans. Choosing a career path is increasingly complex, because of the information explosion, changes in the organization of work, growing job mobility and competition from global markets. In addition, many students have an inadequate understanding of the job market and its requirements and find it difficult to see how school learning can prepare them for it.

Uncertainty about the future, a lack of self-confidence and a sense that they have no control over their learning reduce the motivation of many young people and disrupt their educational progress. Yet these same young people often develop interests outside of school and display initiative, commitment and autonomy in those activities. It is therefore important that the school help them to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and provide them with many opportunities to develop their potential, make use of the physical and social resources of their environment and complete various projects. Whether carried out at school or elsewhere, these projects can help students realize the relevance of school learning to their plans for the future and provide opportunities for them to envision the many career options available and choose from among them.

Although the school's mandate goes well beyond preparing young people for the job market, one of its essential responsibilities, related to its mission to provide qualifications, is to guide students in choosing a path that corresponds to their aspirations, interests and aptitudes. Schools should prepare students to handle the career choices that they will face throughout their lives. Every subject can contribute to this and can provide opportunities to foster the development of the qualities students need to fulfill their potential: creativity, self-confidence, initiative, tenacity, leadership, boldness, love of challenge, and satisfaction in work well done.

Focuses of Development

- **Self-knowledge and awareness of his/her potential and how to fulfill it:** recognition of his/her talents, strengths, interests and personal and career aspirations; motivation, taste for challenges and sense of responsibility for his/her successes and failures; familiarity with the resources of the school system, the options offered and their requirements; awareness of factors related to success in school subjects; satisfaction in work well done

- **Adoption of strategies related to a plan or project:** awareness of the connection between his/her self-knowledge and plans for the future; self-visualization in various roles; plans for the future based on his/her interests and aptitudes; strategies related to various aspects of carrying out a plan or project (gathering information, making decisions, planning, adjustment and completion); strategies for collaboration and cooperation

- **Familiarity with the world of work, social roles, and occupations and trades:** the nature and demands of roles related to his/her social integration and family and community responsibilities; occupations and ways of life related to different school subjects or to his/her immediate community; goods and services associated with these occupations; workplaces (factories, stores and businesses in the school's region); principal job functions and conditions of employment; the legal framework of work; reconciling career, family and social responsibilities; requirements of the world of work

Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

Educational Aim

To encourage students to develop an active relationship with their environment while maintaining a critical attitude toward consumption and the exploitation of the environment

Introduction

The increasing importance of science and technology, the proliferation of consumer goods and the exponential growth of information and communications technologies have radically changed our physical and social environ-ment, our lifestyle and our world-view. It is essential to exercise critical judgment regarding the pressure to pur-chase goods and services of all sorts and to assess their impact on the environment, our social relationships and our well-being.

As regards the environment, the school must enable stu-dents to see human beings' relationship with the world in terms of sustainable development and to become more aware of the interdependence of systems on a global scale. It is important that students realize that their own

actions affect the survival of an environment on which their own living conditions depend in large measure, and that they be made aware of the long-term impact of the uncontrolled or abusive exploitation of natural resources.

Adolescents are major consumers of goods and services, and consumption plays an important role in shaping their behaviour. For many of them, the possession of material goods is an important value and may constitute a motive for performing remunerated work. The distinction between real needs and desires is often a tenuous one. The school should ensure that students look critically at the consumer behaviour of their society and the values underlying it, that they examine the economic and social repercussions of such behaviour and that they acquire the knowledge, values and attitudes necessary to act as informed consumers who make wise choices and behave responsibly.

In secondary school, the subject-specific learning, together with collective activities, should provide students with many opportunities to take a proactive and critical approach to their surroundings and to examine their behaviour as consumers. The social sciences, mathematics, science and technology, and personal development subject areas provide complementary information on the social, political, economic, scientific, technological and ethical dimensions of human interaction with the environment. They also promote reflection on the many factors that influence our lifestyles, particularly as regards consumption, and the consequences of those factors for the planet. Students should acquire an understanding of the impact of their actions on their surroundings and adopt responsible behaviour with regard to the environment.

Focuses of Development

– **Awareness of his/her environment:** understanding of certain characteristics and phenomena of the human environment; establishment of connections among the various elements characteristic of an environment; awareness of the interdependence between the environment and human activity; biodiversity; knowledge of renewable and non-renewable resources; integrated resource management and waste management

– **Construction of a viable environment based on sustainable development:** understanding of connections between the satisfaction of the needs of the members of a community and the territory in which they live; rational resource use; habits and attitudes that ensure the protection, conservation and improvement of the environment; effects of the use of science and technology; respect for our heritage

– **Responsible use of goods and services:** distinction between needs and desires; influences on consumption habits (media, family, friends, groups, etc.); informed consumer choices; balanced budget; relationship between production and consumption; individual and collective needs

– **Awareness of social, economic and ethical aspects of consumption:** origin of various consumer goods; consequences of globalization for cultures, ways of life and the distribution of wealth; working conditions of those who produce consumer goods or services; viable, socially responsible consumption; equitable distribution of resources

Media Literacy

Educational Aim

To enable students to exercise critical, ethical and aesthetic judgment with respect to the media and produce media documents that respect individual and collective rights

Introduction

Many different media are omnipresent in our daily lives and represent an important dimension of our cultural universe. The press, books, audio and video cassettes, radio and television programs, multimedia games, the Internet, music and so on provide access to a world of knowledge, thought, sound and images as well as information of all kinds from a wide range of sources. They influence our world-views, our values, our tastes, our personalities, our relationships with the environment and our personal, social and cultural identities.

Although schools and the different media are rivals in many respects, the school has a major role in the following areas: familiarizing students with the functions of the various media, enabling them to master the different modes of communication employed in the various media, helping them develop the critical judgment necessary to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the different media and enabling them to recognize their potential effects. Various media resources can be useful for obtaining information, learning or communicating in the framework of learning activities. Although the different media can be used to advantage in all the subjects, the language programs lend themselves particularly well to the development of students' ability to produce media documents and to understand the way the various media work, the ways they are used and how to evaluate their effects.

By producing media messages and analyzing this production process, students will become familiar with the codes that govern them, their uses and their positive or negative effects on their target audience. They will also learn to use the different media for a variety of purposes while respecting individual and collective rights.

Focuses of Development

- **Awareness of the place and influence of the different media in his/her daily life and in society:** media functions (information, entertainment, promotion, influence, propaganda); media consumption habits and guidelines; influence of media messages on his/her world-view and everyday environment
- **Understanding of media representations of reality:** elements of media language (sound, image, movement, message); comparison between facts and opinions; recognition of the positive and negative impact of media messages; distinction between reality, imagination and virtual reality; the aesthetic qualities of media productions; comparison of media productions based on different techniques and forms of artistic expression
- **Use of media-related materials and communication codes:** procedure for producing, constructing and distributing media products; use of various techniques, technologies and modes of communication
- **Knowledge of and respect for individual and collective rights and responsibilities regarding the different media:** intellectual property, freedom of expression, privacy and reputation
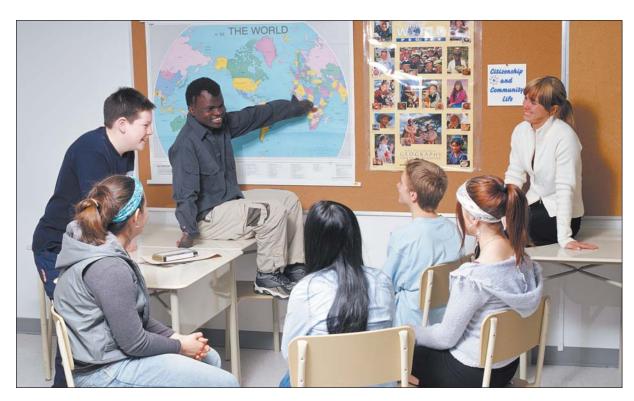
Citizenship and Community Life

Educational Aim

To enable students to take part in the democratic life of the classroom or the school and develop an attitude of openness to the world and respect for diversity

Introduction

Like the society of which they are a part, schools bring together students of diverse social and cultural origins, with a variety of traditions, beliefs, values and ideologies. Students therefore confront on a daily basis situations that pose challenges related to cooperation. This makes the school an ideal place for learning to respect others and accept their differences, to be receptive to pluralism, to maintain egalitarian relationships with others and to reject all forms of exclusion. The school also gives students opportunities to experience the democratic principles and values that are the basis of equal rights in our society. This preparation for an active role as citizens should not, however, concern only the students' social development; it depends as much on the acquisition of knowledge and attitudes as on the promotion of a set of shared values and a sense of belonging.

Québec Education Program

Schools have a major role to play in educating young people about their role as citizens and facilitating their integration into a democratic society. They have several means to achieve this goal. A school's educational project can provide an institutional framework conducive to respect for the principles of citizenship. Its pedagogical practices can help students to develop the competencies required for responsible citizenship. Its subject-specific instruction should enable students to learn about the principles and values characteristic of a democratic society and about its laws, its social and political institutions, the roles, rights and duties of citizens, the role of debate in the democratic process, etc.

In secondary school, it is important to provide activities that allow students to explore different aspects of citizenship in the classroom and in the school as a whole. By participating actively in decisions that concern them, solving problems collectively by means of discussion and negotiation, debating various issues of importance to them and making decisions cooperatively with respect for individual and collective rights, students acquire hands-on experience in exercising their citizenship. With appropriate pedagogical practices, all the subject areas can contribute to students' awareness of citizenship and community life. Some subject areas, such as the social sciences, languages and personal development, are, however, especially useful for helping students to discover the diversity of options and beliefs, to place their own standards in perspective and to participate in discussion in a spirit of dialogue.

Focuses of Development

- **Promotion of the rules of social conduct and democratic institutions:** democratic process for establishing rules of conduct in the school and in the municipal, national and international contexts; principles of democracy; charters and basic laws; actors in the democratic process and respect for the role of each one; rights and responsibilities associated with democratic institutions; other ideologies and forms of political organization; protection of the citizen and mechanisms for redress
- **Participation, cooperation and solidarity:** principles, rules and strategies for teamwork; decision-making process based on compromise, consensus, etc.; establishment of egalitarian relationships; debate and argumentation; leadership; mutual help; community action projects
- **Contribution to a culture of peace:** international conflicts; concept of power, interdependence of individuals, generations and peoples; equal rights; negative consequences of stereotypes and other forms of discrimination or exclusion; action to combat poverty and illiteracy; familiarization with situations of cooperation and of aggression; peaceful management of power relations; respect for agreements or contracts