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ABSTRACT

As part of its ongoing reform of occupational and technical training, Quebec has adopted a sectoral initiatives policy that has provided the mandate and organizational structure to sectoral committees for planning occupational and technical training based on dual cooperation between employers and unions in various sectors and between representatives of the work environment and representatives of planning authorities within Quebec's department of education. Research on the sectoral committees formed to date has established that the situations of the individual committees vary widely, in terms of their origins and financial resources and in terms of the boundary of the given sector and its dynamics. The new committees are investing in the planning of occupational training and are participating in the regulation of training at the sectoral level through development of collaborative efforts between actors from the field of education and the economic domain. Some committees are experimenting with and even institutionalizing new ways of working in the fields of basic and continuous training. Although the committees cannot impose any training on companies, they can identify resources and content and propose training activities. Even though many are still in the experimental stage, the sectoral committees are coming to exercise some influence over the regulation of training supply. (Contains 38 references.) (MN)

# Co-operation as a New Mode of Regulating and Planning Occupational and Technical Training: Québec's Sectoral Committees[1]

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Co-operation as a New Mode of Regulating and Planning Occupational and Technical Training: Québec's Sectoral Committees[1]

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, Québec has carried out a variety of reforms in the area of occupational and technical training. Comprehensive reviews of occupational and technical training programs have been undertaken with the aim of responding to new labour market needs. Changes have been made to a number of educational policies and manpower policies. These changes have led to the establishment of new institutional frameworks. An example of this is the adoption of a sectoral initiatives policy within the *Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre* (SQDM)[2] which provides the mandate and organizational structure for sectoral

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[2] The *SQDM* is now called *Emploi Québec.*

committees. The creation of these sectoral committees reflects the government's desire to develop new modalities for planning occupational and technical training based on dual co-operation: between employers and unions in various sectors, who are ex officio members of the committees, and between the representatives of the work environment and representatives of planning authorities within the *Ministère de l'Éducation* (MEQ, Québec department of education). By setting up these sectoral committees, the government is seeking to develop partnership between employers and unions at the sectoral level (industry). Like American and Canadian industrial relations, union-management relations in Québec are chiefly based on discussions at the establishment or firm level. Thus, the creation of sectoral structures to bring together employer and union representatives to discuss and regulate occupational training in a sector of economic activity, can be seen as an innovative approach. It opens the way for establishing systematic and regular relations between those in charge of planning occupational training and representatives of the work environment.

This paper examines this new institution for planning and regulating occupational training. In Part 1, we briefly review the traditional mode of regulating occupational training and present factors that, in our view, indicate that there may be a new form of regulation. In Part 2, we first describe the conceptual framework for the study of union-management co-operation and collaboration between the fields of education and work. In Part 3, we present a number of facts regarding the structure and operation of the committees (their mandate, organizational modalities, etc.). Part 4 is devoted to the committees' initiatives. The paper concludes by raising several questions about what we view as a new mode of regulation, among other things,

exploring the respective roles of the state and actors within the committees, and their impact on the supply of training.

## 1. IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW REGULATION?

### 1.1 Definition of Regulation

In the field of education, planning can be seen as a tool used by education policy makers to apply "a systematic and rational analysis to the process of developing education; its objective is to put education in a position to be able to satisfy the needs and objectives of students and society effectively" (Coombs, 1970: 14, our translation). The primary function of education planning, according to Françoise Caillods, was "to orchestrate the huge expansion of educational systems from the dual perspective of democratizing teaching and providing national economies with the skilled labour forces they need" (Caillods, 1989: 1). Thus, interventions by planners were aimed at three aspects of education planning. The first was to establish and distribute the resources needed for the operation of the educational system, given established social and economic objectives. Planning also played a role in program content in both general and technical training, although the form and modalities of planning varied according to country, nature of training and level of education. Finally, planning played a direct role in the design and implementation of institutional frameworks, which establish the parameters of pedagogical action of the actors.

While we do not intend to review the entire theoretical debate, it must be said that the notion of regulation is vast. It takes on different meanings depending on the discipline and subject of

study, evolving over time within the same discipline. Essentially, regulation refers to the series of mechanisms that feed a particular social dynamic (in this case, the supply of training ), given the economic and social structures in effect (Tremblay, 197: 432). Boyer (1986) broadens the traditional concept of regulation, that is the self-regulation of economic systems, drawing more on the active role of institutions and social structures in the dynamics of a society. Within this meaning, the overall operating method of a system is defined as a conjunction of economic adjustments associated with a given configuration of social relations, institutional forms and structures. The adjustments observed are therefore derived from institutions and structures which have a certain degree of autonomy and cannot be reduced to projecting a global mechanism that merely implements the principle of supply and demand. We suggest a view of supply of training based on this perspective, but at a different level—the meso-social or meso-economic—as opposed to the rather macro-social or economic vision of Boyer and other regulation theorists (Tremblay, 1997: 432-438). Thus, we emphasize the importance of the role of institutions and social structures in the adjustments under study, in this case changes in training and allocation of resources. We propose that this transformation be viewed as the product of adjustments resulting from the actions of autonomous institutions and structures, and not merely as a result of the reciprocal adjustments of training supply and demand.

Regulation and planning in education are based on three dimensions: (1) the dynamic mechanisms of allocating educational resources to various actors; (2) mechanisms to determine program and course content; and (3) the variable roles of the actors who ultimately make the policy decisions. First, it should be emphasized that allocation of resources is dynamic, that it is never final, but changes frequently over time, if only due to the pressure exerted by various

actors. Second, the transformation of training supply and course content involves determining what knowledge will be sought and which skills and qualifications will be required. This also involves defining the boundaries for occupational fields according to specific sectors of economic activity and a specific training supply. Finally, it is necessary to determine who among the actors involved will ultimately make decisions about content and training supply. Does true parity exist or does one actor dominate? At what level are decisions really made—centrally, or at the local or decentralized level? These are all important questions that need to be addressed in order to determine to what extent innovation truly exists in Québec's mode of regulation of training.

### 1.2 Indicators of a New Regulation

Over the last ten years, a number of government interventions have largely changed Québec's methods of planning and regulating occupational training, both basic and continuous. Although educational reform in the 1960s helped to integrate occupational training into the educational system in the name of polyvalence in educations, more recent changes aim to bring occupational training and the work environment closer together (Landry and Mazalon, 1995). This *rapprochement* is meant to be bilateral since it introduces new forms of co-ordination to foster partnership between actors in the educational system and those in business, as well as amendments to the laws, regulations and programs of two levels of government with the intention of increasing the interest in labour force training and development among business actors.

In the area of basic occupational training, since 1986 there has been a major review of the content of various programs. A "rejuvenation" of programs was sought and to achieve this, a new method of planning programs was put into practice, namely the skills-based approach, which became "mandatory." The approach introduces a specific representation of the skills and qualifications used in a job. It also establishes a division of roles between the various actors who are participating in the definition of "useful" skills. It obliges those in charge of reforms to involve representatives of the work environment directly. The very legitimacy of the skills chosen depends on this. Thus, changes were made with regard to which institution would be responsible for reforming programs. MEQ's *Comité national des programmes d'études professionnelles et techniques* (CNPÉPT, national committee on occupational and technical study programs) replaced the former bodies whose members had been drawn entirely from the educational system. The national committee became bipartite, bringing together representatives from both the work environment and others from the educational system.

Other changes to occupational training have also been introduced according to two strategies. First, the state adjusted the pedagogical frameworks of programs and increased the entrance requirements for occupational training so that students registered a year later than was previously the case.[3] This increase in the educational standard did not achieve the expected results since young Québecers continued to abandon occupational training. Thus, another strategy was adopted in 1992. This involved changing pedagogical approaches to better adapt the training to

[3] This strategy was part of the movement to improve educational levels in several countries and was expressed, for example, through mandatory schooling to the age of 18 (Belgium) or directives such as "80% of a certain age group must obtain a high school diploma" (France).

the clientele.[4] One result of this strategy was to introduce a distance between teaching in general education and that in occupational training, the latter seeking pedagogical approaches that came close to the world of work. This can be seen as a process of "deschooling" of occupational training. Similar changes were also made in technical training where, for example, an increasing number of firms sat on governing boards.

Moreover, at the local level, a great number of bodies working directly with firms were created in educational institutions. For example, centres of excellence and technology transfer centres were created in many of Québec's CEGEPs (community colleges). These centres provide technical support to firms, R&D, as well as customized training. Changes to the organizational maps of vocational education programs also provide the opportunity for many school boards to create training centres that offer occupational training exclusively. These centres often established steering committees which included representatives of firms or sectoral associations.

New income security measures also provided for a closer link between participation in occupational training and employment integration. Thus, resources were invested with the aim of motivating young school drop-outs to register in occupational training programs which, from 1986 onwards, were intended for both youth and adults. Moreover, the fact that the average age of students registered in occupational training is 28 years old reflects the significant proportion of adults among the clientele.

[4] Various approaches were used: development of co-operative training programs, changing the entrance requirements for occupational training (the co-existence of general education/occupational training), support for occupational exploration by young people, creation of new programs leading to semi-skilled trades, implementation

The primary objective of interventions in continuous training was to increase the investment by firms and organizations in training their employees. Support was primarily financial, through grants or tax credits for firms that carried out training activities. Subsequently, under federal-provincial agreements, public resources were mobilized for the creation of customized training. This formula was intended to ensure greater collaboration between educational institutions and firms, the latter relying on the former to plan and provide training activities.[5] Another change was brought about by customized training, that is, market principles played an increasing role in the regulation of training supply, firms being able to choose between private or public trainers, and between public institutions. More recently, the Québec government enacted new legislation (Bill 90) on the development of in-firm training. This law obliges firms to invest at least 1% of their payroll in training their employees, or even taking on trainees who are registered in occupational and technical training programs. Public interventions in the field of school-work relations became more directly coercive compared to previous years when they had clearly been incentive-based. This was a significant change given the rather neo-liberal North American context.

At the same time, the network of institutions attached to the *Ministère de l'Emploi* (Québec Department of Employment) were granted additional powers by the Québec government to take action in the field of adult education. First, the department was given responsibility for setting up a new apprenticeship system in which participating firms would be in charge of what is known as occupational training, with MEQ providing general education. Second, the role of the Manpower

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of new pedagogies (technological paths ) and integration of occupational and technical training programs into a single area of specialization.

[5] To meet this new demand, a number of school boards as well as general and vocational colleges (CEGEPs) created business services programs alongside their adult education programs.

Vocational Training Commissions was then increased in terms of funding in-firm training and logistical support to firms. The commissions were subsequently united under the *Société québécoise de main-d'oeuvre* (SQDM), which had a mandate to foster manpower training development for both the employed and unemployed. Finally, in 1997, the government made the SQDM part of the M*inistère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité* by creating the current department, called *Emploi-Québec*.[6] *Emploi-Québec*'s courses of action include a sectoral initiatives policy which governs the creation of sectoral manpower committees. The established goal is to create a sectoral institution which is essentially made up of representatives of firms and unions and which must take responsibility for labour force development and training in its sector's firms. These institutions have a further role, that is, to act as spokespersons for the work environment when dealing with MEQ planning officials. Thus, in terms of education/work relations, the sectoral committees are characterized by a dual collaboration: between union/management partners/adversaries and between the work environment and various educational authorities.

In our view, the sectoral initiatives policy adopted by *Emploi-Québec* represents a major break from previous practices in Québec in industrial relations and planning of occupational training.[7] Indeed, union-management co-operation is not usual practice in the field of occupational training in North America, where basic occupational training is seen as a responsibility of the individual, and specific or continuous training in firms tends to be done on the job. Moreover, employers usually have the prerogative in training, and an over-supply of labour (a chronic unemployment

[6] *Emploi-Québec* also includes federal officials responsible for labour force development who were transferred to the Québec civil service under a federal-provincial agreement granting Québec exclusive jurisdiction in this field.
[7] It should be emphasized that other types of sectoral committees have existed for a long time in Québec. However, they clearly had a narrower mandate than the one in force since 1995, which applies to the committees under study. For example, previously there was less collaboration with the school system and that which did exist was more informal. Other committees were temporary, for example, the manpower adjustment committees established in firms in the case of mass layoffs.

rate of approximately 10% for almost three decades) has not led to changes in this field. Union-management negotiations usually take place at the establishment or firm level. rather than at the sectoral level (industry) where there would be diverse actors sitting on the committees established. Thus, the two innovative aspects of planning and regulation of occupational training are: union-management collaboration and inclusion of the sectoral level.

To sum up, in light of the variety of principles and objectives that have been implemented in the development of occupational training for the last 15 years, we can hypothesize that there is a new form of regulation of occupational training, one that is different from that established during the 1960s. Indeed, the observed changes are meant to achieve co-operation between different authorities responsible for planning the supply of occupational training, particularly between schools and business. However, it should be noted that this movement towards partnership has proceeded by trial and error. In basic training, for example, the aim of developing occupational training was at first pursued through a strengthening of academic standards. This strategy was later replaced by changes made to curricula and methods of pedagogical organization, bringing them closer to firms. In continuous training, public interventions were at first incentive-based, however, this approach is much less used today since many grants have disappeared and more coercive agreements have been adopted.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATION

Sectoral committees and joint committees[8] have been the subject of a number of studies in recent years (Fournier, 1982 and 1986; Sexton, Leclerc and Audet, 1985; Bernier, 1993a, 1993b and 1994; Bernier, Bilodeau Grenier, 1996; Charest, 1997). These studies all tend to be based on the perspective of industrial relations, examining union-management co-operation and possible changes to the modes of relationships between the parties. Sexton, Leclerc and Audet sought to bring out the factors that influence the creation , operation, results and survival of joint labour-management committees. Fournier underlined the conditions that have worked against the development of union-management co-operation. Bernier, Bilodeau and Grenier examined the effects of creating sectoral committees and the *comités d'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre* (CAMOs - labour force adjustment committees) in terms of the implementation of a new model of union-management relations; the authors bring out three scenarios: a mixture of conflict and co-operation in relations, high-conflict relations, and co-operative relations. Our analysis differs from these approaches in that it also examines collaboration between the educational system and practices carried out in the context of this collaboration.

According to Doray and Maroy (1995), the study of relations between the worlds of education and work constitutes a conceptual space with blurred boundaries which takes on various forms over time and space depending on the different theoretical positions adopted by researchers. The subjects of research involved and the approach used bring out different conceptions of the relationship between education, training, work and employment. Based on a review of the literature, principally in the fields of the sociology of education and of work, Doray and Maroy

[8] Sectoral committees and joint labour-management committees focusing on some aspect of labour force development have existed for many years. However, it was only in 1995 that a comprehensive public policy was decreed by a labour force development authority.

identified five broad conceptualizations of relations between education and the economy.[9] Other studies have also specifically examined the question of separation and rapprochement of education and the economy. Some authors stress that the **separation between the two sectors is intimately related to capitalism** (Stroobant, 1993) and the rapprochement related to the development of a new post-Fordist economy (Brown and Lauder, 1992). Others studies examined the practical collaborations between the worlds of education and the economy. For example, they emphasize notions such as partnership, which runs through most studies on occupational and technical training, social and employment integration, academic success and dropping out, continuous training and teacher training (Landry, Anadon, Savoie-Zajc, 1996, Zay 1994). Among these are studies of policies and curricula as well as of the organization and effects of programs and measures (Stern et al., 1995, Landry and Serre, 1994). Others examine the school-to-work transition with regard to social and employment integration (Laflamme 1996; Dupont and Bourassa, 1994). A few studies have focused on an analysis **or** the effects of different forms of partnership in the field of pedagogical transfer, particularly with regard to co-operative education (Landry and Mazalon, 1997), internships in firms (Lemieux, 1993) and various apprenticeship systems (Gregson, 1995).

Research studies on collaboration[10] generally adopt a perspective of inter-organizational relations (Grabowski, 1991; Hord, 1987), which brings them closer to organizational sociology. This type of analysis identifies the dimensions (formalization, intensity, reciprocity, integration and

[9] The five conceptions are: structural analyses of the links between the economy and education; structural relations **diffused by the actors' interactions; dynamic and reciprocal relations of causality (with a stake in the production** of systemic effects, that is of a "societal" effect); analyses in terms of the forms and symbolic and structuring categories of links; and approaches in terms of constituent negotiations (Doray and Maroy, 1995: 663).
[10] According to the diagnosis made by Zay (1997), many studies in the field of educational sciences approach the relationship between the educational milieu and its environment in terms of collaboration, cooperation or partnership

empowerment) and indicators that help determine the state of relations between the actors in a partnership approach to training (Landry, 1994). These studies also reveal perceptual and structural conditions that promote inter-organizational relations in co-operative education (Landry, 1993).

These studies also present typologies for describing the nature and intensity of education-work relations. For example, Landry and Mazalon (1997) propose a typology of school-business relations that could be representative of many of the activities being carried out together by the educational and production environments in Québec. This typology borrows certain aspects of the traditional economic theory of supply and demand applied to the training-employment relationship, as well as notions of interaction and interdependence from the systemic approach, in addition to Blanc's (1992) notion of social transaction. The following three types of relationships can be identified.

-A *service relationship* is observed when the school is in the position of requesting (training or other services) from the firm, and the latter is not in a position to hire. The school is at the mercy of the personal involvement of certain actors within the firm and adopts a relation of dependency on the firm.

-In the case of a *negotiated relationship*, the firm's role is to request labour and the school's role is to supply. Actors from both environments negotiate their relationship since they have common interests to defend, for example, the skills of the labour force being provided. This type of relationship fosters the development of common structures of collaboration.

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but confuse the model of analysis and the model of action. Researchers in education frequently develop models of analysis with the often unstated aim of influencing action and thus fostering change in education.

-A third type of relationship emerges between some training establishments and firms that have been collaborating with each other for some time and are now engaged in a *reciprocal relationship*. In this position, the school and firm complement each other and interact on a regular basis. For example, the school provides custom-made training services to the firms, which voluntarily agree to take on trainees and participate in school-firm committees.

Thus, given the wide range of research subjects and approaches to understanding education-work relationships, an option must be chosen. Since our aim is to understand the possible emergence of a "new mode of planning and regulating" occupational training, we are interested in examining the process of constructing the links between these two worlds. Thus, we approach education-work relations, and more specifically, the practices of co-operation between the two worlds, as a social construct, that is, a result of the social work between the actors who join forces to take action in a different way in time and space. These practices can be understood according to several levels of analysis: policies and measures adopted by the state, which is always present and wields great influence in the construction of the relations between these two worlds (Doray and Maroy, 1995), organizational practices in the different bodies and organizations as well as the links between the two levels. A case in point is the creation of sectoral committees in Québec.

## 3. SECTORAL COMMITTEES: ORIGIN AND DYNAMICS

In 1998, we began a study of existing sectoral committees in Québec. The first stage (of the study) was to examine the 26 committees and produce a monograph on each based on the

documentation provided by the committee,[11] an interview with its co-ordinator and an interview with the relevant government official from Emploi-Québec. The first question to be addressed with regard to the committees' participation in a new form of regulation concerned their insitutionalization. Was there indeed true institutionalization, even though the committees were highly varied in terms of their origin and their boundaries? On the whole, the sectoral initiatives policy provides a flexible framework insofar as it provides guidance for committee action without specifying the activities to be carried out. The strictest requirement relates to the make-up of the committees: parity is mandatory (although the exact number of employer and union representatives is not always the same). The second question dealt with the committees' initiatives, a topic that we will return to in Section 4.

### 3.1 Mandate

Sectoral committees were set up following Emploi-Québec's adoption of a sectoral initiatives policy in 1995. The policy provided for the creation of 35 committees to cover all sectors of Québec's economy. To date, 26 committees have been established.[12]

Depending on their mandate, with regard to training, committees may intervene on many issues and in different ways. For example, based on a sector diagnosis, a committee may identify current and future skills needed by the labour force to practice a trade or occupation. They may assess training needs, participate, in collaboration with MEQ and other partners, in the process of

[11] plan of action, **annual reports**, sectoral studies, minutes, etc

[12] At one time there were 31 organizations that in some way assumed the function of a sectoral committee, certain round tables (dance/music/theatre; authors/artists/performers; fine crafts; museology) having recently been united to

updating or developing occupational or technical training programs or developing organizational maps of vocational education programs. Committees may also be given responsibilities in the implementation of an apprenticeship system, for example by identifying the trades for which this training approach would be suitable. Sectoral committees are also called upon to play a role in supporting businesses in the area of continuous occupational training and in implementing the *Act to foster the development of manpower training* (Bill 90). For example, they may develop sectoral training plans and/or customized training activities for a sector's firms, or they may promote these activities to individuals and organizations concerned. They may also collaborate with firms in carrying out training activities or act as a form of collection agency to recover funds from firms that have not devoted the amount required by Bill 90 (1% of their payroll) to training activities and which must therefore compensate by paying amounts that add up to this percentage to a national training fund.

Sectoral committees can engage in many types of activities: analyzing the situation of their sector, developing plans of action for firms, analyzing training programs or activities, acting as a "mutual" fund body for amounts not spent by firms, and promoting or supplying training activities to the sector's firms.

### 3.2 Structuring of Committees

The first finding to emerge from the documentary research and interviews was that the situations of committees are very diverse, both in terms of their origins and financial resources as well as the boundary of the sector and its dynamics. As for origins, some committees have formed

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form one committee. It should also be underlined that some committees originate from previous sectoral bodies while others are completely new, and often more recent, creations.

voluntarily, some as a result of pre-existing associations, and others have been initiated by Emploi-Québec. Sectoral boundaries can be "natural" or well-defined in some cases, while in others they have been the subject of analysis, construction or delimitation. We believe that this has an impact on the nature and degree of collaboration as well as on the committees' interventions.

### *3.2.1 Origins of Committees*

Committees have dual origins. Some committees have come together voluntarily while others have been created at the state's request. Moreover, it seems that the dynamics of collaboration between the actors and committee initiatives differ depending on whether the sector is defined very narrowly (e.g., clothing, textiles, aerospatial, etc.) or very broadly (e.g., environment, tourism, cultural sector), or even whether the committee addresses a particular population (immigrants, persons with disabilities) or an industry.

The typology presented in Table 1 is based on the combination of these two dimensions. Four groups of committees are defined: committees that have been formed more on a voluntary basis, and often predated the state's sectoral initiatives policy; those that were created essentially (but not always exclusively) at the state's initiative; those that have a narrow sectoral delimitation and those that have a broad, and therefore often non-sectoral, delimitation. Although sectoral delimitations (broad or narrow) may be clear, a committee's origin can certainly sometimes result from diverse influences. Nevertheless, we have categorized the committees according to what seemed to be the determining influence or the main factor that **triggered the committee's creation, to use Shuler's terminology**. In fact, the sectoral initiatives policy provided an

incentive or opportunity, but the dynamics behind the committee's creation and the factor that gave rise to co-operation between the actors vary after all, since for some, co-operation dates back to a triggering factor that predates the policy.

**Table 1.**
**Classification of Committees According to Origin and Delimitation of Sectors**

| **Triggering Factor** | *Voluntary Initiative of Actors* | *Incentive Provided by the State* |
|---|---|---|
| **Delimitation**<br>*A) Narrow* | • Lumber<br>• CAMO-road transport<br>• Rubber<br>• Circus<br>• Retail Trade<br>• Graphic Communications<br>• Industrial Metal Products<br>• Fishery<br>• Plastics Processing<br>• Door, windows, ... Aerospace (CAMAQ)<br>• Agricultural Production<br>• Textiles (CCRHT) | • Forest Management<br>• Chemical, petrochemical, refining<br>• Electrical, electronic (cluster)<br>• Clothing (cluster)<br>• Auto services<br>• Information technologies and communications<br>• Tourism (CCRHT) |
| *B) Broad* | • Disabled persons<br>• Immigrants | • Culture<br>• Social Economy (Socio-economic Summit)<br>• Environment (cluster) |

The origin of the committees varies. Several of those that were created voluntarily and which sometimes existed prior to the state's sectoral initiatives policy were formed from existing groups. On the other hand, several were created to take advantage of the resources made available by the sectoral initiatives policy. A number of the voluntary groups came from former associations, of which we will cite but one example. The *Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre de l'aérospatiale du Québec* (CAMAQ - Committee for Aerospace Manpower

Assessment in Québec) was created in 1978 at a time when the industry wanted to establish a sectoral organization to deal with its labour force issues. CAMAQ continued to exist for a long time, though its existence was sometimes precarious since governments threatened to reduce or stop its funding. However, the large corporate members agreed to become a sectoral committee in 1996-97. Other committees are voluntary groups which cover a broad sector, indeed, sometimes several sectors. These committees come from the community or community associations, as is the case for the following labour force adjustment committees: CAMO-disabled persons and immigrants, although in the latter case, firms such as Hydro-Québec and the STCUM (Montreal Urban Transport Commission) joined with community associations (Multi-ethnic Liaison and Aid Centre, women's centres, etc.)

Of the committees that were set up as a result of state initiatives, some are direct products of action to mobilize actors in certain sectors while others originate from another partnership structure— the industrial clusters—which were given the opportunity by Emploi-Québec officials to form committees. In all these cases, the state has played an essential role in bringing actors together. The sectoral committees on the environment and clothing, as well as those on electrical and electronics industries were thus created largely as a result of work and members brought together under the industrial clusters, which had been created previously by the *Ministère de l'industrie et du commerce du Québec* (Department of Industry and Trade). For its part, the committee on social economy is the product of a recommendation by the working group on social economy, which was formed in the context of the socio-economic summit initiated by the Québec government in autumn 1996. The automobile services sector was also formed at the

request of the state, but apparently it was not easy to unite the sector's fifteen pre-existing associations.

On the whole, the voluntary groupings have a greater tendency to foster discussions and cooperation between the actors, since trust has, in general, already been well-established, though the state-initiated cases based on industrial clusters or the socio-economic summit also show that concertation can be successfully continued in new forms. Moreover, the previous existence of associations or sectoral groups may both facilitate sectoral concertation (CAMO-road transport) and create certain problems related either to being grouped in a single committee (automobile services, culture) or to the constraints and new requirements imposed on them by the state (CAMAQ). Also, although the origin of committees has an impact on membership, concertation within the committee and resulting activities, it is nevertheless impossible to say what the ideal situation would be. There is no doubt that the voluntary nature of the group is important, but the state can also initiate cases of successful collaboration.

### *3.2.2 Structure of Committees and Their Membership*

The research revealed that the committees have created relatively different structures to achieve generally similar objectives. These can be differentiated according to priorities set , means chosen, and so on. Nevertheless, we can take this diversity into account and still put forward hypotheses concerning the links between the committee's structure and the dynamics of discussions and cooperation observed within the committee.

***The composition of boards of directors.*** The sectoral initiatives policy provides for the presence of employer and union representatives, as well as for representatives of Emploi-Québec and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), to be ex officio, non-voting committee members. The boards of directors are made up of between 8 and 33 people, depending on the size of the sector and the degree of concentration. Thus, some committees clearly include the majority, if not all, of the major players in the sector while others have trouble integrating the different components of their sector. In the latter case, established structures are sometimes used to facilitate the organization of the sector, as is the case for retail trade, in which the *Conseil québécois du commerce de détail* (Québec retail trade council) has played a major role. Thus it can be seen that the diverse origins of the committees have an effect on their composition.

***Union-management representation.*** The composition of committees according to the origin of representatives also varies. In addition, some committees with a broader mandate (immigrants, persons with disabilities, social economy and community action) bring together community representatives. Here again, the specificity of the field covered explains the diversity of backgrounds and, again, representation partly depends on the origin or the factor that gave rise to co-operation.

The number of employer and worker representatives depends on the characteristics of the sector, and origin has a significant impact on how the committee is structured. Some sectors are, in fact, concentrated not only in terms of the number of firms, but also in terms of worker representation, while the reverse is true in other cases. Thus, for example, the aerospace and steel sectors have few but large firms. Similarly, worker representation is quite concentrated in a limited number of

unions. The reverse is true of sectors such as retail trade, where workers are quite isolated in a large number of establishments and few are unionized. Likewise, "emerging" sectors such as information technologies and communications, or even social economy, are not characterized by high union representation. This raises the question of the representativeness of the people mandated to represent the workers in this context. The same applies to the cultural sector, where workers are often self-employed and are in a way "their own bosses," even though they are otherwise subjected to working conditions governed by employers through temporary contracts. Here again, the diversity of these situations raises the question of the representativeness of members and their ability to bring together the interests and needs of the people being represented.[13]

Nevertheless, it should be noted that employers are generally better represented than workers on the committees, to the point of being a strong majority in certain cases. Only a few committees have true parity, with equal representation of employers and unions (aerospace, CAMO-road transport, plastics processing, sawn timber and textiles). Apart from a small number of sectors in which employer and union representatives assert themselves (steel, CAMO-road transport, aerospace, clothing, and so on, even though the question of integrating sub-contractors into a given sector makes the sector's boundaries less obvious, a subject that we will come back to), several committees have in a way been obliged to define themselves and delimit their field of intervention in order to define their composition (environment, information technologies and communications-TIC, social economy).

[13] Thus, the agricultural committee, for example, has no worker representative (seasonal or casual workers or other farm workers) since there was a desire to reflect the reality of the agricultural sector in which unionization is practically non-existent. The committee is very close to the *Union des producteurs agricoles* (UPA- Québec

### 3.2.3 Defining the Sector Boundaries

Actors have a significant amount of leeway in defining their field of intervention, which is the first **strategic task in putting the committee into operation**. The definition of the sector has not been a major issue in all sectors, since many are already clearly defined. This is true of committees that are products of previous groups of actors (e.g., CAMAQ, CAMO-road transport), of Québec's industrial clusters (environment, electrical products and electronics, clothing) or even of pre-existing organizations, such as the *Conseil québécois du commerce de détail* (Québec Retail Trade Council), or even of many associations in the cultural sector. In these various cases, delimiting the sector is partly achieved through previous divisions established by the association or pre-existing group.

However, even in sectors that assert themselves or see themselves as clearly defined, different contructions of the sectors can be envisaged. The fields may be defined more or less vertically, from top down (including sub-contractors or product users, as in the case of the environment, and possibly in the chemical, petrochemical, refining or even information technologies/communications sectors) or more horizontally, grouping together similar activities, without "service" links between them (retail trade, marine fisheries, windows and doors, graphic communications, etc.).

Specific committees (e.g., immigrants and persons with disabilities) have similar characteristics as regards the importance of the coverage of the field and have the possibility to forge common

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Farmers' Union) although it considers itself as having a specific and distinct mandate, which it carries out in collaboration with the UPA, but, it is stressed, not under its management.

interests, which if not a priori convergent, are at least non-competitive. Thus, the delimitation of the field appears to have an effect on the actions, dynamics and impact of committees. Other factors also play a role, including the origin of the committee, the presence of strong sectoral associations, and **organizational** interests of members, so that results are not always identical, but the probability of successful concertation, or of reciprocal relations—to adopt Landry and Manzalon's (1997) typology—seems to be stronger when the field is delimited according to general agreement, and it is not necessary to determine which sub-sectors or sub-groups are to be included or excluded, and so on. It is clear that there are multiple actors or sub-sectors, that certain actors are accustomed to working together and see themselves as part of the same sector whereas it is not the same for other sectors, and that this has an impact on the type of collaboration or concertation achieved as well as the committee's dynamics.

## 4. THE COMMITTEES' INITIATIVES

The committees' activities are relatively broad in scope since they include all initiatives aimed at labour force development. Thus, some have conducted prospective studies on the development of markets in order to determine the potential changes in labour force needs. Most often, initiatives focus directly on training issues. Several have examined the planning of training supply. For example, committees produce studies on labour force needs or job or trade analyses. They provide opinions to MEQ regarding occupational training programs. They are also responsible for communicating information on government laws and programs and may sometimes act as direct suppliers of continuous training.

### 4.1 Action in the Field of Continuous Training

Sectoral committees have developed different strategies and are quite heavily involved in continuous training. Several sectors include a large number of big firms that have formal training policies and carry out training activities. Thus, the committees do not feel justified in investing in these activities because they believe that they would be duplicating work. In other sectors, however, in-firm training is relatively undeveloped and committees are attempting to make progress in this area. A variety of activities have therefore been developed and implemented.

Actions initiated before training actually takes place:

-actions that set the parameters for training by gathering information on actors and relevant activities. Inventories are produced from the information gathered: list of available training for committee members or firms in the sector, list of private or public trainers, and so on. The inventories often come with a status report, which is often a survey on the importance of continuous training in the sector or on training needs. Once completed, these inventories are written up in a report (increasingly in electronic form);

-actions to diffuse information on how to administer Bill 90 on the development of in-firm occupational training. The committees have acted as intermediaries, providing information about the regulations in force in Québec. In this way they were part of a strategy to provide tools to local actors to deal with the prevailing institutional frameworks;

-actions in the area of politics (lobbying) aimed at making changes to the current institutional frameworks that are considered to be unsuitable to certain economic situations;

-actions aimed at creating co-operation between sectoral committees over common issues;

-and finally, initiatives aimed at accrediting the skills of workers employed in the sector.

Several committees have indicated that they do not intend to become direct suppliers of continuous training activities. Some do not wish to duplicate current training supply, while others prefer to focus their efforts on "upstream activities" related to planning and "instrumentation" in order to mobilize the sector's firms and organizations around the issue of continuous training. Others, however, are directly involved in producing and diffusing training activities through various courses of action .

-One course of action is to plan and organize management or technical activities considered pertinent to the sector's firms. A variation of this is to supply Québec firms with training activities developed elsewhere. For example, this is true of sectoral committees that are in direct contact with their Canadian counterparts, the Canadian Manpower Councils. This training usually involves updating of skills, but some might be related to employee career development (e.g., career management in the cultural field) or certification of firms (e.g., maintenance training programs for firms that operate in the event of a shutdown of chemical and petrochemical firms. It should be noted that the technical training programs frequently include training related to quality (e.g., quality management, training in ISO Standards).

-Having had mitigated success, to say the least, in diffusing technical or management training, the committees turned to training focused on building a training infrastructure, such as training for trainers and training in the management of in-firm training.

-Some committees have also developed initiatives in what might be called basic or core training for workers, such as literacy training and basic skills acquisition for a trade and accreditation in the industry (e.g. professional accreditation program in the tourism industry).

Thus, although the committees' activities in the field of continuous training aim at building a training infrastructure, can they really be considered as a new form of co-ordination of in-firm training? On the one hand, it should be acknowledged that collaboration between economic actors is effective insofar as its often numerous actions are actually carried out. These actions are frequently carried out with teaching institutions. Information on existing rules and the planning of training is conveyed, which helps put "training" on the list of firms' preoccupations. On the other hand, the diversity of the courses of action taken—locating stakeholders and practices, "instrumentation" activities, skills accreditation, providing technical and management training, training trainers, basic training—makes it impossible to bring out a single model of planning.

**4. Dynamics of Committees' External Collaboration**

The main thrust of Emploi-Québec's sectoral initiatives policy is that the sectoral approach should foster co-operation between private and public partners towards the common objective of labour force and employment development. More particularly, the activities of the sectoral committees are aimed at promoting and consolidating partnership on a sectoral basis, in collaboration with the relevant government departments and organizations. Their purpose is to allow the sector to take charge of the development of the factors which affect the competitiveness of firms and workers. This approach requires close collaboration with several Québec and federal government authorities, a number of sectoral committees, and other related organizations. In this section, we examine the dynamics of the external collaborative activities of sectoral committees.

Broadly speaking, the majority of committees (21 out of 26) have carried out external collaborative activities with other organizations in one of the three types mentioned above. Of the five committees[14] that have not engaged in specific collaborative activities, four have just been created and are therefore focusing all of their energy on the committee's internal affairs. Several of these committees are still in the process of defining the configuration and scope of their sector, as was noted earlier. The committees' stage of development thus influences their capacity to establish relations with other organizations.

The four main types of external collaboration are those with: (1) other sectoral committees; (2) Québec government or parapublic institutions; (3) federal government and parapublic institutions; and (4) local organizations.

***Collaboration with other sectoral committees***. On the whole, the majority of sectoral committee activities, including the planning of training activities, take place between members of each committee or with related organizations in the sector. However, a dozen committees have initiated collaborative activities with other sectoral committees. Two committees, (electrical industry, metal Manufacturing) have officially formed a joint subcommittee on training activities while several related committees, depending on what they produce, work together on common activities.[15] Other sectoral committees also participate in joint activities. Committees with a wide scope covering several economic sectors (Immigrants, Persons with Disabilities, Environment) are very interested in having other sectoral committees participate in their activities.

[14] Five committees do not engage in specific external collaborative activities: sawn timber, retail trade, graphic communications, automobile services, information technologies and communications.

***Collaboration with Québec government and parapublic institutions.*** This type of external collaborative activity is growing. It includes collaboration with (1) MEQ and other institutions in the education sector such as school boards, CEGEPs and universities; and (2) MICST(Department of industry, trade, science and technology) and other organizations with an economic vocation such as the industrial clusters.

Several collaborative activities with MEQ are the result of direct requests from the department authorities, including the *Comité national des programmes d'études professionnelles et techniques* (CNPÉPT). The latter consults the sectoral committees on changes to programs of study, or asks for their general opinion on new programs to be developed or implemented. These operations are carried out under the collaborative agreement between Emploi-Québec and MEQ. Collaboration is therefore mandatory, but most actors interviewed indicated that their relationship with MEQ is good. However, some coordinators said that it is difficult to put forward their point of view to the CNPÉPT. Moreover , many of the collaborative activities with organizations in the field of education are established directly and voluntarily with training institutions at all educational levels, but mainly at the secondary and college levels. In a number of cases, there is collaboration on the operational aspects of training which have more immediate repercussions on the labour force, while activities with MEQ fall within longer term planning. According to the actors interviewed, collaboration with these centres is frequent and productive with regard to both basic and continuous training.

[15] Examples: rubber. plastics processing, clothing, retail trade.

Some committees collaborate with MICST or other sectoral departments and organizations with an economic mandate. Although fewer than those in the previous type, these activities are nevertheless very important inasmuch as many sector committee members were already associated with each other in MICST committees and organizations, such as the sectoral round tables, industrial clusters, and so on. MICST also conducted a number of economic and development studies which enriched and laid the groundwork for many of the sector appraisals needed to establish and plan basic and continuous training activities. Given that in several cases, relations with MICST had been established for quite a while, collaboration with the committees is smooth and there is a true co-operative spirit.

***Collaboration with federal government and parapublic institutions.*** Although these collaborative activities are five times less frequent than those with Québec institutions, they nevertheless allow some committees to take advantage of the expertise and funding of various organizations, including the Canadian sector councils, which are the equivalent of Québec's sectoral committees. Five committees[16] collaborate with the Canadian sector councils. These committees operate in large scale economic sectors which exceed provincial and national boundaries. The majority face common problems in the area of labour force skills (indeed, professionalization) related to technological development, production quality and exports.[17] Thus, globalization and exports are currently among the issues on which the committees collaborate. Economic and strategic interests (market) thus appear to fuel the sectoral committees' collaborative activities with federal government and parapublic institutions.

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[17] For example, the Tourism Sectoral Committee collaborates with the Canadian Human Resources and Tourism Council (CHRTC) to establish standards and a training program that leads to certification and professionalization of

***Collaboration with local bodies***. At first glance, there appears to be a great number of organizations that collaborate with sectoral committees. However, this number includes the eleven regional tourist associations that collaborate with the tourism sector as a single organization. Thus, for the other committees, the actual number of collaborators from the community is small. They are diverse and mainly represent professional or socio-economic associations related to each of the sectors. This is one way for committees to achieve one of their objectives which is to broaden their sectoral or regional representation. The committees with a broad mission (Persons with Disabilities, Immigrants, Culture) covering a wide field have a more collaborators of this type.

On the whole, our analysis of the sectoral committees' external collaborative activities indicates that there are a number of characteristics that suggest, at least from an organizational point of view, that a new method of regulating and planning occupational and technical training is establishing itself in Québec:

-the number of external collaborative activities and the diversity of organizations involved in them helps to broaden the traditional vision of dual relations between organizations in the field of education and those in the world of work;

-the number and diversity of external collaborative activities of a sectoral committee appear to be based on the sector's definition and boundaries on the one hand, and on previously established associations with other organizations related to the socio-economic activities of the sector on the other.

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the sector's labour force. Thus, several pedagogical documents produced by the CHRTC have been translated, adapted and used by the Tourism Sectoral Committee.

-the collaborative activities with MEQ, although mandatory, now allow workers' unions to make their training needs known formally and directly through their participation in the sectoral committees;

-the sectoral committees are now new formal vehicles for representing Québec's specificity in the area of labour force training, particularly through their participation in certain Canadian sector councils;

-finally, the dynamics of the external collaborative activities of sectoral committees in their current experimental state may be characterized as service partnerships (Landry and Mazalon, 1997) with a great number of organizations which are beginning to build new relationships but which still only bring structural and superficial changes to the way in which technical and occupational training is planned.

**Conclusion**

Beyond the diversity of factors that give rise to the creation of committees and those that influence their composition and internal dynamics, it is possible to establish a typology and to propose certain linkages and hypotheses to the effect that this might constitute a new form of regulation, one that is in line with the shift described at the beginning of this paper. This hypothesis of a renewal obviously remains to be developed and confirmed in further stages of the research project.

As regards the hypothesis concerning new forms of regulation, several questions can be raised on the basis of our observations, particularly with respect to the innovative character of the structure

put in place (the committees themselves), and the effect of the committees' initiatives on the supply of training. Indeed, having defined the regulation of training as a dynamic process of resource allocation by the actors, we can evaluate the extent of innovation or change in this process.

Our analysis suggests that new actors are investing in the planning of occupational training and they are participating in the regulation of training at an intermediate or meso-economic level (i.e., sectoral rather than national) through the development of collaborative efforts between actors from the field of education and the economic domain. As was indicated above, although this does not always entail a fundamental change in decisions about the supply of training (in terms of content or programs), it nonetheless remains that the involvement of new actors has transformed the traditionally dual relationship between the worlds of education and work by multiplying the number of actors who can make their voices heard. Although the positions adopted by committee members are not always followed by the MEQ's managers and planners,[18] the various types of initiatives taken by the committees before training actually takes place have a significant impact. Moreover, it is likely that the supply of training will be gradually transformed over the coming years, as the committees become institutionalized and build their legitimacy and expertise.

Thus, different ways of working are being experimented with, and even institutionalized, in the field of basic and continuous training. Because continuous training has traditionally been the preserve of firms, it seems easier for the committees to intervene in this area. Although the committees cannot impose any training[19] on companies, they can identify resources and content

[18] This is particularly the case for the committees on tourism and culture.
[19] Even though Bill 90 requires firms to provide continuous training to their employees.

and propose training activities. At the very least, there is a process for voicing concerns about training within these institutions. The key issue is clearly to penetrate industry and reach firms, especially those that do not have a "training culture." As regards basic training, MEQ retains its dominant influence over decisions made about the content and supply of training, even though there is now consultation with employers and unions through the sectoral committees and even though many of them can exercise a significant influence over decisions.

Finally, returning to the hypotheses developed at the beginning of the paper, one question can be raised regarding innovation in the mode of regulation of training. This question stems from our observation of a wide diversity of practices and a significant degree of discretion enjoyed by the actors within the committees. In view of the diversity in committee composition, the decentralization of decision making over committee structures and the wide range of activities undertaken by the committees, it seems relevant to ask whether it is appropriate to speak of a new mode of regulating occupational training. For it is clear that there is no *one* new process; and, although co-operation between the actors exists, the state continues to play a key role, particularly in the field of basic training. Several new modes of regulation seem to be emerging, which are an innovation in themselves compared to the centralized decision-making that prevailed in the past. However, this can be considered as an arrangement or a new configuration of the actors.

There is evidently innovation at the sectoral level in labour-management co-operation in the field of training; and sectoral committees are coming to exercise some influence over the regulation of

training supply, even though many of the committees are presently only at the experimental stage and have not yet reached the point where they can exercise any external influence.

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