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ADULT EDUCATION IN MARIE-VICTORIN COLLEGE, MONTREAL

Marie-Victorin College has more than 6,000 students and more than 4,000 of these are in Adult Education. In this school we offer post-secondary education which is equal to the first cycle of university education. The students proceeding to the university follow the general program of instruction and those who are preparing for some particular employment follow professional programs of instruction. Marie-Victorin College is named after one of our confreres, Brother Marie-Victorin, who was a famous botanist in Quebec.

The college belongs to nine provinces of religious teaching Brothers and the Brothers Provincials of each of these make up the Administrative Council. Yet, after twenty years of its existence marked by a rapid evolution and the introduction of numerous programs, the institution can count only about a dozen religious among its personnel. However, the original purpose of the college, which was the training of teachers, has so left its mark that the social orientation of programs has been maintained. Thus, the college continues to train men and women technicians in specialized education, in social assistance, child care, specialized religious activities and the free care of the aged.

Adult education has always existed in the province of Quebec, but what is surprising nowadays is the adult population which has invaded the colleges and universities for full-time studies. It is true that a number of governmental programs encourage this movement by subsidies paid to the institutions and even by giving salaries to individuals,

particularly those affected by unemployment. The efforts of the state in this regard are even more pronounced on the level of secondary studies. Parallel to this effort of permitting adults, to a certain extent, to satisfy the needs of the present economic movement, the State is trying to keep the phenomenon of illiteracy in check. Out of six million (6,000,000) people, more than six hundred thousand (600,000) persons cannot read and write in an elementary manner.

Adult instruction has been developed with programs on the post-secondary level. The types of instruction have so quickly multiplied that soon it went beyond the confines of the Marie-Victorin Campus.

At present, 75% of its adult clientele receives its instruction outside of the main campus in more than fifty (50) different sites located in general in the metropolitan region of Montreal.

The programs provided which correspond most closely to the orientations of the college are those in our Center for specialized pastoral activities. There, both men and women are trained as technicians of pastoral communication. Specifically, that means teachers of parish catechism, people for carrying out religious activities in the schools, and catechetics for maladjusted children. This year we have more than 1000 adults in these programs. We work together with organizations in charge of teaching the faith in six (6) different dioceses. It should be noted here that in Quebec, religious or moral instruction is in the program for primary instruction, but preparation for the reception of the sacraments and religious practices is in the hands of the parishes or the parents. It is there that the bishops have decided to train numerous lay catechists.

We also have a gerontology Center which has been in existence for ten years already. During the initial years, those trained there were adults who, for the most part, were already working in institutions caring for the elderly. Then a program of active retirement was inaugurated intended for persons on the point of retiring, which has al-

ready been taken by twenty times as many people as expected. This intended one-year program was such a success that many adults who followed it have asked for a second or third year to allow them to obtain their college degree. It was from within this same group that we were requested to train volunteer workers who wished to devote themselves to working in institutions for the elderly and in hospitals. This year the gerontology Center has more than one thousand (1,000) adult students.

The college offers to adults other programs which can be found also in other similar institutions. We train particularly men and women technicians in social work, in specialized education, child care, and techniques in clothes making. Of course, we also provide what is called general education. That is where Marie-Victorin College has distinguished itself in the way it carried on its instruction. Thus the flexible time schedules, the venue and the manner of instruction allow the adults, both men and women, to receive their courses locally, during the daytime as well as at night, and even during intensive weekend courses.

To this we might add, that several of these programs cited previously are given also in the English language. From this was born an entire English-speaking section which at present counts more than seven hundred (700) students. What is more, our institution provides instruction at the college level in English as well as in French to the state prisons of Quebec.

To the longer programs, training courses have been added especially with regard to economics. We have training programs in management and administration in connection with the Chamber of Commerce and a training center for professional salesman. We also offer a course in collaboration with the biggest French daily in Quebec, *La Presse*, through two weekly publications during each of the autumn and winter sessions.

Adult education is ever taking on more numerous and varied forms. The fact of not being linked to traditional places of an institution but of giving courses at various times and places allows for meeting the needs of various people and organizations. This is a type of popular education which is different from that intended for youth. We must add that the North American youths are very well taken care of educationally at least as far as the material resources and personnel resources put at their disposal. But the adults who have not had the possibilities of enjoying the same advantages or who further have been short changed by an economic world in development very much appreciate an education which is at their disposal and they are highly motivated in benefiting by it.

A well established institution, with good teachers and a bit of imagination in setting up adapted programs is all that is needed to pursue our objectives of popular education.

Brother Hubert BOULANGER

*College Marie-Victorin
7000, Rue Marie-Victorin
Montreal H1G 2J6
P.Q. - CANADA*