

## INTRODUCTION

Vocational and technical training programs are offered at both the secondary and college levels. Each level of education has its own legislative and regulatory framework, practices and culture. Both levels, however, share a concern for **ensuring continuity between secondary- and college-level programs** by establishing bridges between vocational and technical training programs.

The bridges in question are measures to facilitate students' transition between the programs. They contribute to continuity in the students' training by **avoiding needless deviation from their training goal**.

Let us consider two types of bridges: the harmonization of training programs and the continuous training paths. The relationship between these bridges is as follows: they are **different**, they are **sequential** and they are **complementary**.

## HARMONIZING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING PROGRAMS IN ORDER TO RECOGNIZE PRIOR LEARNING

■ The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) harmonizes its vocational and technical programs by establishing similarities and continuity between secondary- and college-level programs, in order to avoid overlap in program offerings, **to recognize prior learning** and to optimize the students' progress.

■ This orientation has led to the application of organizational measures: the classification of the training programs in 21 training sectors on the basis of the compatibility of their competencies, the adoption of the so-called competency-based approach and the establishment of a process for developing and revising training programs common to both levels of education. **These measures constitute the basis for the harmonization** of the training programs.

■ Harmonization establishes consistency between training programs and is especially important in ensuring that the tasks of a trade or occupation are clearly identified and described. Harmonization makes it possible to identify tasks requiring competencies that are common to more than one program and to make sure they can be easily recognized. It is for this reason that the harmonization of training programs is an important aspect to consider in terms of the description of the trades and occupations and the conditions under which they are practiced.

■ **Initially**, training programs are harmonized by the MELS when they are developed or revised. The results, that is, the identification of common competencies, are presented in the harmonization tables that accompany the training programs.

■ *For example, a person with a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) in Machining Techniques (5723) may receive recognition for nine common competencies in the Mechanical Engineering Technology program (241.A0), in other words, approximately 700 hours of training should the person decide to enroll in that program.*

■ **Later on**, educational institutions are responsible for recognizing these common competencies, or even, in some cases, identifying additional common competencies in order to facilitate the transition between the training programs as much as possible. After this, it is up to these institutions to establish academic paths that help students save time and promote educational success.

■ In addition to harmonizing and coordinating training programs, educational institutions can **share** their resources, expertise, equipment, premises and all types of activities, such as those related to promotion, continuing education and business services.

## LACK OF CONTINUITY: AN OBSTACLE TO THE PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

■ Notwithstanding harmonization, however, students making the transition from vocational training programs to technical programs still face obstacles. These obstacles consist in the general conditions for admission set out in section 2 of the College Education Regulations, and in certain cases, specific admission conditions that may be established by the MELS. These conditions **limit the access of DVS holders to college-level programs**.

■ This situation obliges DVS holders to take a series of general education courses that lengthen their time in school. This is particularly unacceptable in training programs that are based on continuity with previous training and share a significant number of competencies with certain technical training programs. This situation **does nothing to promote** the recognition of previously acquired competencies and neither does it encourage students to continue their studies beyond the secondary level.

■ *For example, to be admitted to the Mechanical Engineering Technology program (241.A0), a person with a DVS in Machining Techniques (5723) is obliged to take general education courses that can vary from 500 to 750 hours.*

■ To get around this problem, a provision was added to section 2 of the College Education Regulations in 2001, to the effect that a "person who holds a Secondary School Vocational Diploma may also be admitted to a program leading to the Diploma of College Studies designated by the Minister. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Minister may however prescribe conditions to ensure the continuity of training, based on the vocational training received at the secondary level." The **application of this provision** took the form of the continuous training paths.

■ *For example, for a DVS holder, taking into account the general education acquired in the Machining Techniques program (5723), the admission requirements for the Mechanical Engineering Technology program (241.A0) are now limited to approximately 245 hours of additional training, which is a saving of 500 hours.*

## CONTINUOUS TRAINING PATHS : A WAY TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO COLLEGE

■ Two related training programs selected by the MELS, one at the secondary level and the other at the college level, constitute a continuous training path.

■ The selection of a continuous training path is based on several conditions **related to the students' chances of success and their interest in the path**. More precisely, the vocational training programs are chosen on the basis of their duration, their admission requirements, their continuity in terms of a natural career progression with the technical training programs as well as the amount of time students can save in their chosen college programs.

■ A continuous training path, selected by the MELS, is attributed to a **single consortium of educational institutions** so that they may **develop the path** and field-test its implementation. Subsequently, the continuous training path will be made available to other **consortiums of educational institutions**. The MELS will provide the consortiums with technical and financial support.

■ Ten continuous training paths have already been attributed, and the MELS is considering 20 more : 10 in 2007-2008 and 10 in 2008-2009.

■ Once a continuous training path has been defined and developed, the Minister establishes the **admission requirements** for the path, **in keeping with the College Education Regulations**.

## CLARIFYING CONCEPTS: A WAY TO PROMOTE CLEAR UNDERSTANDING

■ *Continuity* involves uninterrupted connection between the parts of a whole. Something is continuous if it is uninterrupted. Continuity refers to linkage, succession, a combination forming a whole. It evokes **links, transitions, joints and bridges**. Often, continuity entails a chronological order with a starting point, steps and a destination based on an ultimate aim. Continuity is a fitting term to describe the connections between the levels of education and between the training programs.

■ *Bridge* is a **generic term** referring to **means** that facilitate the transition from one level or program to another by avoiding needless deviation from their training goal. The type of bridges adopted depends on the nature and extent of the obstacles faced. Bridges may serve different functions in the education system: they may play a pedagogical, organizational, regulatory, or financial role. For example, the harmonization tables that present the competencies common to more than one training program constitute one type of bridge. Paragraph 2 of section 2 of the College Education Regulations is another type of bridge. Bridges help **ensure continuity** between levels of education and between training programs.

■ *Harmonization of training programs* concerns the **identification of competencies common to these programs in order to recognize competencies already acquired, while the term continuous training paths between the training programs has to do with the identification of admission requirements at the college level, for these programs, in order to ensure a smooth transition between the two levels of education**.

■ While all continuous training paths are based (among other things) on the harmonization of training programs, the harmonization of training programs does not necessarily always lead to a continuous training path.

■ And while the continuous training paths do feature a significant number of competencies common to more than one training program, as a result of harmonization efforts, these paths are above all an application of paragraph 2 of section 2 of the College Education Regulations. This regulatory provision comes under the authority of the Minister, whereas this is not the case with the harmonization of training programs.

CONCLUSION

Difference :

The harmonization of vocational and technical training programs is a MELS orientation (Investir dans la compétence, October 1993) designed to reduce the overlap between such programs and to recognize previously acquired competencies.

The continuous training paths are an application of a regulatory provision (paragraph 2, section 2 of the College Education Regulations) which seeks to ensure the most direct transition possible between certain training programs leading to a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) and others, leading to a Diploma of College Studies (DCS).

Sequence :

A continuous training path must, by definition, save students time in working toward their DCS. There must be a significant number of competencies common to the vocational and technical training programs, and the competencies must be accepted as equivalencies. The competencies are identified during the harmonization process. Harmonization precedes the emergence of continuous training paths.

Complementarity :

For effective recognition, at the college level, of competencies acquired at the secondary level, there must be increased access to certain technical training programs for the holders of some DVS. This is a precondition for the continuous training paths.

*For example, the continuous training path Accounting and Accounting and Management Technology enables the holders of a DVS to enroll almost directly in the corresponding technical training program, saving 1340 hours toward their college diploma: 620 hours for the general education component acquired in the secondary Accounting program and 720 hours for the program-specific component at the college level.*

VOCATIONAL  
AND TECHNICAL PROGRAMS OF STUDY

CONTINUITY  
ENSURING  
CONTINUITY

BETWEEN  
VOCATIONAL AND  
TECHNICAL PROGRAMS  
OF STUDY

FOREWORD

This document, addressed to our partners in the education community and the job market — particularly educational institutions — is designed to answer various questions regarding the harmonization of vocational and technical training programs and continuous training paths.

The document should help readers gain a better understanding of the application of certain lines of action in the Vocational-Technical Training Collaboration Plan.

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