GIRLS’ SCHOOLING IN QUEBEC, 1639-1960

Micheline Dumont

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Cover photo: Senior matriculation class in the laboratory at the Cardinal Léger Institute, 1957.
Back cover photo: Teaching drawing at the Napierville Boarding School, 1907.
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Micheline Dumont was born in 1935 and completed her studies with the Sisters of Sainte-Anne. Following graduate studies in history at the University of Montreal and Laval University, she taught at L'École normale Cardinal-Léger in Montreal and then joined, in 1970, the History Department of Sherbrooke University.

GIRLS’ SCHOOLING IN QUEBEC, 1639-1960

Between the days of New France and the structural reforms in Quebec’s educational system after 1960, schooling for girls evolved within its own private world. Indeed, schooling was included in the more general topic of the overall education and upbringing of girls: in fact, the two realities overlapped. For three and a half centuries, educational discourse evoked objectives for the upbringing as well as the schooling of girls. First put forward in the seventeenth century by Fénélon, Fleury, and Madame de Maintenon, this approach placed greater emphasis on upbringing over schooling: it recommended the separation of the sexes in the schools; it did not even conceive of schooling identical to that for boys; it reduced their intellectual learning and advocated practical instruction for no other reason than preparing girls to fulfil the feminine destiny of maternity. Thus, the education of girls reflected the more general cultural roles of women, mothers, and housewives. “Reading, writing, counting, and all the little tasks peculiar to their sex, [this is ] all a girl has to know,” wrote Marie de l’Incarnation around 1665. “Give the young girls a culture adapted to their nature, to their form of intelligence, to prepare them for their lives as wives and mothers, that is success.” was advice echoed in 1953.

Besides, all these objectives were for a long time part of a greater purpose, that of religious instruction. As a matter of fact, the main objective of the school was to Christianize the masses. In pursuing this Christian ideal, boys and girls were treated alike. Better still, Catholics and Protestants shared the same fervour. During the seventeenth century, the school was a religious institution. It evolved slowly during the eighteenth century, as the needs of the industrial revolution led gradually to the creation of today’s complex educational system with its far reaching ramifications. In New France, girls’ religious instruction adopted a particular framework: the boarding school operated by nuns, a model which survived the upheavals of the Conquest, the Industrial Revolution, and the modernization of Quebec.

It is a truism that education does not occur only at school. The family, peers, the work place, and especially social models contribute much more. However, for reasons dictated as much by the limitations of these booklets as by the present state of research, this present synthesis will be limited to the evolution of the scholastic framework. Furthermore, institutions for English-speaking people, which depend on a distinct cultural model, will be excluded from the analysis.

The history of girls’ schooling in Quebec has hardly started to take shape. In recent years, more innovative work trying to establish beacons for a coherent interpretative framework has been added to a fairly long list of pious and traditional monographs on the subject. The historiographical
tradition has existed for less than fifteen years and the only debate has concerned the evaluation of the roles of nuns. Were they enlightened people in charge of scholastic development on propagandists for an alienating ideology? Did they mainly serve the girls of the bourgeoisie or those of the working classes? There seems to be no clear-cut answer to these questions at the moment. However, there is a sort of unanimity in using the analytical model which reflects the social division of the sexes in the scholastic institutions being studied. Some studies emphasize the importance of the philosophy of education; others emphasize the dichotomies of private and public systems and of school programmes for boys and for girls; and, lastly, others stress the teachers and the administration, whether religious or secular. The absence to date of significant studies on literacy programmes or on financing is unfortunate. The present synthesis, which is necessarily tentative, attempts to address this neglected reality in the general history of education, through analyzing the development of schooling for girls.

Despite its distinct nature, girls’ schooling has not avoided being affected by the social and cultural context in which it evolved. The sharing of responsibilities between the Church and the State; the importance of the women’s religious orders (or congregations); the reluctance of the State to finance public schools; the great number of institutions; the dichotomy that splits the private and public sectors — all these phenomena have joined together in a new way and have had profound effects. Girls’ schooling was also a key element in the overall educational structure.

To demonstrate this thesis, it is appropriate to trace the key stages in the long development of formal education for girls. Beginning with the model inherited from the Old Regime, which was passed along to the French Regime, and survived until the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was thereafter the age of the great expansion of boarding schools run by nuns, which lasted the whole of the nineteenth century. After 1907, the year of the founding of the first “secondary level teaching institution for young girls,” the girls schools increased their number of programmes, their models, and their levels. This period ended with the creation of the Quebec Ministry of Education in 1964. The Parent Report, which promoted major reforms, put an end, in theory at least, to the distinctiveness of girls’ schooling. The importance of this reform is beyond the scope of this booklet, but it is possible, however, that this recent period was characterized mainly by ambiguous mirages of democratization, co-education, and equality.

*The Legacy of the Old Regime, 1639-1823*

The arrival of the Ursulines in Quebec in 1639 marked the official beginning of the history of girls’ education in New France. Actually, it was not until after the construction of the first convent in 1642 that Marie de l'Incarnation
received her first students. From that date on, except for a few brief periods when the house was unable to operate, the Ursulines received twenty or so boarders and likely a greater number of day students each year, admitted without charge, to the adjoining school. During the seventeenth century, they also received some “savage girls” in a seminary and tried in vain to instruct them. This aim to convert was at the heart of the preoccupations of Marie de L'Incarnation, who, for that purpose, increased efforts to learn American Indian languages. The results, however, were never commensurate with the efforts expended.

Boarders had to pay 120L each year, the equivalent of a skilled worker’s annual salary. However, most students benefitted from bursaries or reduced rates. After 1750 the number of boarders justified the opening of a new classroom. The length of stay at the Ursulines varied greatly, ranging from a few months to many years. Some students left the boarding school to get married or become nuns. The majority stayed two or three years.

During that time, Marguerite Bourgeoys founded a different establishment in Montreal. Arriving in 1653, she succeeded in opening her first school in 1658. A few years later, she laid the foundation for a new congregation or order of women teachers. Being members of a secular congregation, these women could move about in order to found new schools in different parishes; no less than ten existed at the end of the seventeenth century. It is important to mention the mission of La Montagne, around 1678, about which the records of the time noted “that the free education of savage girls produces much more conclusive results than the Quebec method.” During the same period, Marguerite Bourgeoys established a community workshop called “La Providence,” where she taught young girls housework, having decided that it was not necessary to teach them how to read or write. A workshop was being operated in Quebec City between 1685 and 1692 as well. At the request of the citizens of Montreal, Marguerite Bourgeois opened a boarding school in 1676. Gradually, the sisters accepted boarders in each of their schools, thus transforming them into boarding schools/day schools. Charges for board were relatively reasonable.

In time, new institutions appeared. The Ursulines founded a religious community in Trois Rivières in 1697. They received a few boarders, but since the institution also sheltered a hospital, students were never very numerous. The women from the General Hospital at Quebec also decided to open a boarding school, which competed with that of the Ursulines after 1725. This competition was most likely the cause of the extension of studies in the two schools where boarders were separated into “classes” according to age. This period also marked the beginning of the teaching of the fine arts: viola, violin, flute, guitar, painting, and lacework.
There was only one boarding/day school in New France in 1650, ten in 1700, and sixteen in 1750, including the school at Louisbourg founded and maintained with difficulty by the women of the congregation. At that time, there were close to twenty-five schools for boys. It is more difficult to count the number of students. Several assumptions based on various qualitative sources give the following figures: 50 girls in 1650, close to 485 in 1700, and almost 700 in 1750. After the Conquest of 1760, young English girls were willing to attend the Ursulines' boarding school or that of the General Hospital, which had an excellent reputation. Furthermore, it is well known that the congregations of women were readily tolerated by the British and that each order skillfully overcame the difficulties of the war and the occupation. After a period of crisis, the Congregation of Notre-Dame again began to found boarding schools after 1800: there were twelve in 1800, seventeen in 1828, and twenty-seven in 1850. The Congregation of Notre-Dame, however, was the only one to spread out; the other congregations were restricted by their cloistered status. The French model of education for girls, offered by nuns in a boarding school adjoining a free day school, was, therefore, successfully adapted to New France.

Generally, the boarding school generated enough revenue to be self-sufficient. In addition, the dowry requirement for new nuns was an additional source of revenue. Also, congregations obtained and operated seigneuries and occasionally received donations from the colony’s leading clergy or lay citizens. In practice, the superiors, faced with important expenditures for construction and reconstruction (fires were frequent), had recourse to other means of income: investments, real estate transactions, requests for royal gratuities, and various work. Concerning the latter, the Ursulines were well known for their priestly ornaments, their liturgical laces, their paper flowers, and their embroidery on tree bark. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the royal gratuities accounted for only a small part of their revenues. This explains why each congregation was successful in weathering political changes without major problems and in keeping its revenues from France. In danger of losing this revenue at the time of the “plundering of clerical assets” during the French Revolution, they even succeeded in recovering a substantial part of it around 1820. From the partial studies already underway, it has been shown that the sisters were skilful administrators. This, however, did not prevent each mission from occasionally living through periods of great poverty. It is important to remember that the revenues generated by the boarding schools helped to finance the nuns’ other educational work.

For a long time, schooling was limited to learning the basics: catechism, reading, writing, arithmetic, and introduction to women’s work, especially needlework. In the seventeenth century, there was no question of programmes or grades; there was only primary education. Reading was
taught separately from writing. Late starting by students (around ten years old) and the irregularity and briefness of attendance together reveal the flexibility of a pedagogical organization which was governed, not by intellectual objectives, but rather by moral and social views: a girl educated in a convent would make a better wife. At this time, secondary and higher education was exclusively reserved for a minority of boys. Marie de l’Incarnation estimated that a few Canadian girls gave her more trouble than many French girls. She prided herself in receiving girls from all the great families in the colony. Even distinguished families from Montreal sent her their daughters. The authorities also congratulated themselves regularly for the work done by the nuns, for the greater benefit of families and religion.

Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, the Ursulines increased the length of the studies. Courses in geography, calligraphy, grammar, lacework, and painting on silk appeared. From the time of the reopening of their boarding school, after the war of the Conquest, they introduced the teaching of English and were soon able to open an English class. The same transformation occurred at the boarding school at the General Hospital where the programme was soon extended. New “subjects” were introduced there around 1820, such as geography, grammar, history, and arithmetic.

Marguerite Bourgeoys had more modest aims: catechism, reading, writing, and, especially, sewing, mending, and knitting. She endeavoured to receive students without charge. Nonetheless, she had to resign herself to accepting paying boarders to ensure the survival of her schools, which then became coupled with small boarding schools. In 1780, each house was limited to forty boarders and the price for board increased to 7L a month, plus a bundle of wheat.

At that time, when it was thought to be desirable not to mix social groups, boarders received a better education than the day students. It was even possible to observe a hierarchy between these groups. At the top were the boarders from the Ursulines and the General Hospital. Next were the Ursuline day students, followed by the students of the “day and boarding schools” of the congregation, and, finally, the students of La Providence, an institution which did not survive the death of Marguerite Bourgeoys. However, in all of these institutions, the way of life was largely inspired by the rule of the sisters themselves. The students thus received very rigorous religious instruction. Silence, prayer, discipline, supervision, and frugality were part of daily life. It was this lifestyle, more than anything else, which animated education in the boarding school.

Did the girl students as a whole represent an important part of the female population in New France? At this time, it is impossible to say with certainty. Some seven hundred places for girls aged seven to fourteen years old, out of a possible twelve thousand in 1760, is a very small number. Moreover,
literacy studies, although very fragmentary, are able at the very most to
demonstrate that, as in other countries, women were less literate than men.
However, they seemed to be more literate than women in other countries.
This is easily explained by the fact that girls' schools were more stable and
often more frequently attended than boys' schools. Keeping everything in
perspective, the network remained exceptional for a population so reduced
in size and so dispersed. By comparison, in 1760, Paris had eleven thousand
places available for a population of young girls estimated at fifty or sixty
thousand, three times greater than that in New France.

The first institutions owed their existence to their unusually dynamic
founders, Marie de l'Incarnation and Marguerite Bourgeoys. There had not
been the slightest indication of any educational will on the part of the
authorities in the motherland. The mediocrity of the colonial system may be
explained by the fact that France exported only some of the types of
educational institutions it had at the time. In New France, for example, there
were no secular boarding schools for women, no paying day schools, and
very few schools for "the poor," as there were in France in the eighteenth
century. The tolerance and even the admiration of the British authorities for
the women's congregations ensured the continuation of their educational
institutions despite the change in the imperial connection. As a result, in the
nineteenth century, with the first attempts to establish a network of public
schools in Lower Canada, the older infrastructure of day and boarding
schools run by the nuns became part of that new network.

The Expansion of the Boarding Schools, 1823-1907

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Western world underwent an
important transformation in favour of literacy for the masses and schooling
for children of the middle class. The objective for the school of religious
instruction slowly gave way to objectives more specifically related to
economic development. It is within this framework that the long gestation
period of the school system in the Province of Quebec and the progressive
domination by the Catholic Church of all social life in this province must be
viewed. This context, along with the earlier success of the boarding schools
run by the nuns, explains the important role which the latter played in the
development of girls' schooling throughout the century.

This development occurred in two stages. First, there was a period of
changes in quality within the network of the boarding schools already in
place. Next, there was a period of numerical expansion which affected all
other educational institutions as much as those administered by the nuns. In
1825, there were nineteen boarding schools/day schools attended by a few
hundred students. In 1900, there were sixty-five thousand students in more
than three hundred different institutions. However, between these two dates,
a major break occurred: the nuns were no longer alone in providing schooling for girls. First, from the first decades of the nineteenth century, English schools were also established in the towns. And later, a formal public school system was set up in 1841, with coeducational instruction in the same classroom, often because of necessity, with one teacher in one room.

In 1823, the Congregation of Notre-Dame (CND) made an historic decision. It broke with the modest educational tradition inherited from Marguerite Bourgeoys and expanded its study programme to include English and Geography, "because children go to Protestant schools to the detriment of their salvation." One may conclude, however, that there was a desire to compete with the teaching dispensed by the boarding schools in Quebec City. The CND negotiated with Church officials for permission to teach music. This programme was first introduced into the boarding school adjoining the mother house in Montreal and, then, progressively into certain old and new boarding schools belonging to the congregation according to the availability and aptitudes of their personnel. The congregation founded two new prestigious boarding schools: the Villa-Maria in 1854 and the Mont-Saint-Marie in 1859. In 1833, it assumed administration of the girls schools subsidized by the Sulpicians in Montreal. In 1843, it finally received permission from Bishop Bourget of Montreal to increase the number of its members, which until then had been limited to eighty.

For their part, the Ursulines decided to open their doors wider to the English-speaking population. The impoverishment of those with a French background particularly diminished the revenues the congregation received indirectly from the population. Families were less and less able to pay the money required of the new novices or for the pupils' board. The solution was therefore to recruit more widely from the social groups who were able to pay for the schooling of their girls. The "English sections" were the ideal solution, even though it entailed making rules for Protestant students. "It was bilingualism which saved us from bankruptcy," declared the Ursulines. As for the boarding school at the General Hospital, financial difficulties finally brought about its closure in 1868. The Ursulines of Trois-Rivières, for their part, closed their hospital in 1886 and from then on devoted themselves exclusively to the education of young girls.

These internal transformations were promoted by the new Roman regulations concerning religious orders, regulations which encouraged the establishment of a new type of religious group, known as an apostolic congregation. In the religious structure, this name was given to orders which were made up of a mother house having authority over a network of dependent houses. It was this form of organization which was chosen by most new congregations in Quebec and, of course, by the Congregation of Notre-Dame, which was not cloistered.
Each religious group prepared itself, according to its particular constraints, to integrate its activities into the project of public schooling, which was gradually taking shape under various government auspices. In Lower Canada, however, weakness and failure characterized political and religious efforts up to the middle of the nineteenth century: the relative failure of the Institution Royale in 1801; the failure of schools run by the parish in 1824; the failure of schools run by municipal trustees in 1832. During that time, private initiatives provided the cities of Montreal and Quebec with a considerable number of paying or free schools. By the time a genuine network of public schools was finally put into place progressively after 1841, the two institutions available to manage the educational system were unequal in strength. The State served mainly as a legislative and managerial instrument while the Church progressively took over indirect control of financial matters, teaching staff, and the ideological content of the curriculum.

In fact, in 1841, the State surrendered its powers of taxation to school boards, which were municipal institutions in practice, but ones superimposed on the priest-dominated network of parishes. Furthermore, schooling was not free. Parents were required to pay public day school costs, however minimal they might be. Control of ideology in teaching was entrusted to confessional committees (Catholic and Protestant) which gave guidance to the Department of Education. Later, the Confederation agreement of 1867 protected the scholastic rights of confessional minorities (in article 93 of the British North America Act). The Ministry of Education established in 1867 was abolished and replaced by a Department of Education in 1875. Finally, from the middle of the nineteenth century, the Church already had a great number of religious personnel which it freed in 1846 from the obligation of obtaining a teaching certificate of competence from the Bureau of Examiners. This was the beginning of the network of religious teaching congregations and it is useful to examine their development during the nineteenth century.

The first important point concerns the expansion in the number of congregations. Ten women's teaching congregations (or orders) were founded in Quebec between 1843 and 1894. Several charitable congregations also opened day or boarding schools. As well, Quebec was the chosen location of a still greater number of congregations from Europe, especially from France. It is impossible to examine all the components of this phenomenon, which extends beyond the framework of girls' schooling. It is clear, nevertheless, that its impact was considerable, especially considering its faithfulness to the French-Catholic pedagogical tradition. The following table gives a good idea of the expansion which occurred.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Number of congregations</th>
<th>Number of boarding schools/day schools</th>
<th>Number of teaching nuns</th>
<th>Number of students taught by nuns</th>
<th>Total number of students in Quebec</th>
<th>Proportion of students taught by nuns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Founded</td>
<td>Implanted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
<td>880 *</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>11.539</td>
<td>126.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
<td>d.n.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>19.274</td>
<td>232.765</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>37.157</td>
<td>258.607</td>
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<tr>
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<td>55.571</td>
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<td>2,895</td>
<td>75.294</td>
<td>360.616</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Approximate number
d.n.g. = data not given

Sources: *Rapports du Surintendant de l'Instruction Publique*, 1855, 1877.

*Le Canada Ecclésiastique*, 1887, 1897, 1907.

*A. Labarrère Paulé. Les Instituteurs laiques au Canada français, PUL*, p.46

*Histoire de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame.*

The congregations usually signed an agreement with the many parishes which accepted them, or even invited them. This agreement allowed them to live and teach in a building belonging to the parish. They agreed to maintain these buildings for as long as they taught in them. Because the salaries offered by the school boards were not enough to support them, the nuns obtained authorization to open boarding schools, from which the revenues would ensure the stability of the houses. The model of the eighteenth century boarding school/day school was thus reproduced. In the eighteenth century, it provided free girls' schooling for the masses. In the nineteenth century, it compensated for the insufficient salaries of the teaching sisters. The situation was the following: some nuns taught public classes under the authority of commissioners while receiving boarders in separate classes. The nuns offered these boarders longer studies: special classes in music, painting, or typing; and honours, privileges, and prizes. Thus, they wagered on the desire for social status to ensure a paying clientele.
All previous studies confirm that pupils flocked to the public classes. There were classes of sixty to ninety students in Montreal and Longueuil in 1855 and one class of one hundred pupils in Sherbrooke in 1892! Often the students did not have desks! Much smaller numbers attended classes for boarders. Rooms were more spacious and teaching materials were much more abundant. Gradually, paying day students, called semi-boarders, were admitted. Societal or class distinctions concerning access to schools were thus a fundamental element of nineteenth-century education. However, in Quebec, they had the peculiarity of manifesting themselves in the same network of girls schools.

The great majority of boarding schools established in the nineteenth century were coupled with day schools, reflecting the close link between the two types of institutions in this network. The Reports of the Superintendent of Public Education classified them as “independent institutions, under control.” Such institutions were found in all regions. In 1887, the pupils of “sisters” were distributed almost equally in urban areas, small towns, nearby villages, and remote villages. As the varying prices for board indicated, there were boarding schools for all social classes in Quebec. However, a subtle difference developed between paying clientele, boarders or semi-boarders, and the public clientele of the commissioner’s classes.

Congregations sometimes acquired ownership of buildings in which they taught. This strategy, however, was only possible for the older congregations that had inherited personal effects and real estate under the French Regime, or for the buildings in the vicinity of the mother house. The nuns of the Sisters of Sainte-Anne, one of the largest congregations in Quebec, owned only eight of their boarding schools in 1903. They had the use of twelve others while they taught in four schools belonging to a school board. It can be concluded that the same situation existed for other congregations or orders. Furthermore, all previous studies dealing with many congregations and various environments establish that almost 75 per cent of revenues for these boarding/day schools came from the pupils’ board. Teaching nuns’ salaries and government funding amounted to around 10 per cent of revenues; the rest came from various work and from bazaars.

This considerable network did not reach all the young girls eligible to go to school. Table 1 has already indicated that the majority of children in Quebec came from rural areas and attended mixed public schools where schoolmasters and schoolmistresses taught. In the rural country schools, a schoolmistress, even more poorly paid than the nuns, taught many grades in a one-room school. Some girls schools were operated by single or widowed laywomen in the cities, especially in Montreal. These schools were among the poorest and the least well equipped in the province. In the working class neighbourhoods, where these schools were located, school authorities spent
a small fraction of what it cost to operate a boys school. Besides, these schools were almost completely replaced by the sisters’ schools at the beginning of the twentieth century. The only exception was the Marchand Academy in Montreal.

Literacy studies for Quebec demonstrate the spectacular effects of the boarding and day schools. From 1850 to 1900, the rate of literacy among women was greater than that among men, which is the opposite of trends observed in other countries at that time. The performance of women seemed to be the result of a greater and quicker rotation of students due to shorter periods of schooling. For, besides this phenomenon of literacy among the entire population, boys who were educated still outnumbered girls who were educated. In 1850, the number of boys sixteen years and older at school was tenfold that of girls the same age. In 1900, boys were still five times more numerous than girls. The main discrimination toward girls with respect to boys who pursued their studies was accessibility to prolonged schooling. It seems that, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the fact of literacy being prevalent among women led to the common idea that, in Quebec, women “were more educated than the men.”

It would not be right, however, to think that this phenomenon reflected a conscious aim on the part of those responsible for educational literacy among girls. It was more the indirect result of the administration of school boards. The latter, in fact, constituted the foundation of the school system. The network of boarding schools played a major role in school policy. As a matter of fact, its role was threefold: it ensured the economic functioning of the system; it dominated and structured post-primary education for girls; and it trained the majority of the teaching personnel at lower costs. As seen earlier, the boarding school was an institution which provided the financial support for the public school. It is easy to understand why the school boards laid claim to nuns, for this strategy brought about appreciable savings, with the parish priest’s blessing.

However, their importance was academic as well as financial. Girls wishing to attend school longer did so almost exclusively at the boarding school. The commissioners were thus freed from the obligation to introduce such programmes. Up until 1888, this education was left to each congregation’s initiative. As the tradition of sending girls of around sixteen or seventeen years of age to boarding schools spread in high society, a minority went on to a diploma house, which corresponded to approximately ten years of education. Certain programmes listed twenty different subjects! Yet this number may be misleading, for the programmes were defined by a very modest amount of knowledge, focusing more on appearances than substance. Furthermore, the majority of boarding schools had programmes which attempted to parallel those of the Department of Education.
From 1888 on, the latter programmes were divided into three distinct levels: primary school (five or six years); model schools (two years); academy (two years). Most boarding schools offered model classes and a few high-class boarding schools went as far as the academy. In theory, these study levels were available at the public school, but in practice a very small minority of children had access to them: in 1907, 18.8 per cent of girls attending the model schools were in the public sector and only 10 per cent in the academies “under the authority of commissioners.” All the others were in boarding schools. As for most children, they did not go past primary school.

Corresponding to the network of boarding schools for girls were the colleges for boys which offered a classical education. This programme, however, which lasted eight years after the primary level, mainly served to train priests, doctors, lawyers, and notaries. Not only was it reserved for boys, but it was “independent,” which meant private. (This did not prevent it from being subsidized.) Nevertheless, this sexual and social discrimination is less interesting than the other observation which can be made: that the nuns, with their network of boarding schools, freed the school boards of their responsibility to develop public schooling for girls. In fact, the nuns offered model and academic classes exclusively for girls and offered them mostly to paying students, boarders and semi-boarders. By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, when the State showed an interest in developing post-primary public schooling, it was to boys schools that it directed all its financial efforts. In 1907, there were twenty-one academies for boys “under the authority of the school boards.” While there were ten academies for girls, they only contained one-fifth the number of students.

Boarding schools also took the place of normal schools, institutions where teachers were trained. Already, in 1836, the Legislature awarded subsidies to three boarding schools to train teachers. Though the undertaking was never followed through, the idea that a boarding school could train teachers without great cost was retained. In 1857, the first network of normal schools was inaugurated, one of which was a normal school for girls. The administration of it was entrusted to the Ursulines of Quebec. The number of graduates was clearly insufficient to provide the thousands of teachers who taught in the cities and especially in the many country schools. In practice, the boarding school graduates appeared before the Bureau of Examiners in order to obtain a teaching certificate. Many occupied positions even without a certificate. A model school diploma was considered adequate! In fact, those who appeared before the bureau came precisely from the most modest social groups, hoping that education would be useful. It is not surprising that schoolteachers were so numerous since their training was so limited.

The well-known phenomenon in North American societies — that teachers, until recently, were mainly women — came about much earlier in
Quebec than anywhere else. Already, in 1825, there were thirty-one secular schoolmistresses out of seventy-one in Montreal. For the entire province, an 1835 report indicated that 60 per cent of teachers were women (including nuns). That proportion grew to 78 per cent in 1871. In fact, the teaching profession remained the only option open to educated women for a long time. However, working conditions were so pitiful (salaries, classrooms, isolation of the country schools), that the profession resembled more closely a ministry. It was not surprising that the girls brought up in convents chose to enter the teaching congregations in such great numbers, for the working conditions there were better and chances for advancement much greater!

In 1893, members of the Council of Public Education endeavoured to abolish the 1846 ruling concerning the exemption of teaching certificates for nuns. This undertaking was the cause for an animated debate at the time. Mother Sainte Sabine, headmistress of studies at the Congregation of Notre-Dame, raised five objections: the State has always recognized and approved our institution “with a kind of contract in which conditions cannot be arbitrarily changed”; our novitiate is an authentic normal school; our personnel is up-dated annually on the progress in education; we successfully prepare our students for the certificates which are now being imposed on us; and “the judgement of the Superior General constitutes a certificate of capability.” To this defence, the Superior General added her own arguments of a less pedagogical nature, appealing to the risk of diminishing religious vocations and of disturbing the smooth operation of the community. She threatened to refuse grants rather than oblige the sisters to comply with a proposal which seemed to be an unmerited attack against the congregation. Those who were in favour of the exemption were victorious; the congregations, the school boards, and the schoolmistresses themselves were all interested in maintaining the status quo.

Because the way of life changed little in the world of boarding schools, the status quo was also maintained there. The religious atmosphere continued to permeate the regulations, the educational pastimes, and the pedagogy. The lives of boarders were characterized by silence in the dormitories, the dining rooms, the parlours duly decorated with ferns, the chapel, the classrooms, and the recreation rooms. Here, the educational structure found a powerful means to reinforce religious, moral, and social values. Discipline guaranteed the submission expected of students. Submission was then described as women’s most noble virtue.

The only authentic innovation of the nineteenth century concerned the development of music. By 1820, the Ursulines had bought their first piano and soon each boarding school had several pianos. The bishops tried to forbid piano lessons, but these provided an appreciable income and thus the nuns won their way. This in turn led to the preparation of instrumental or
choral concerts for various ceremonies, public meetings, and examinations. Some boarding schools had music rooms and the corridors were filled all day long with the discordant sounds of daily rehearsals.

This new departure was used by certain educators to criticize the teaching in boarding schools. "One becomes too fond," wrote a Superintendent of Public Schooling in 1873, "of teaching things which are only for mere enjoyment." "The young girl," protested another observer in 1900, "having acquired new habits, ends by scorning the lifestyle of her parents because it demands work, saving, and leaves little time to practise the fine arts."

Nevertheless, the nineteenth-century boarding school as a place of learning should not be compared to American colleges, French "lycées," or Canadian high schools, or even Montreal high schools which were spreading at that time. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, women crossed the thresholds of the universities. In Quebec, it was not until 1903 that the first female student was admitted to Laval University, and not until the 1920s to other universities. This anomaly, however, shocked no one; it went unnoticed! At the end of the nineteenth century, it was clear to everyone in Quebec that schooling for girls was not yet perceived as a strategy which could possibly lead to the practice of a lucrative profession (with the exception, of course, of teaching, which was by no means a lucrative profession!). The instruction girls received in a boarding school was still dependent on the traditional aims of women's education. Rather, according to the unwritten standards of the day, education guaranteed that the educated would not have to work.

In fact, if the network of boarding schools operated by nuns was so important in the nineteenth century, it was not because of the number of students attending these institutions as it was the various roles this network played in the whole of the Quebec school system: low-cost development of post-primary instruction of girls, teacher training, and indirect financing of public schools.

*The New Look of Girls Schools, 1907-1964*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the nuns' hold on the development of girls' schooling seemed to be ensured for a long time. First of all, religious congregations displayed much flexibility and initiative in maintaining their presence in Quebec society as the latter slowly entered into modern life. However, the ambiguity of their position with respect to the work force contributed in the long run to changes in their role as political, economic, and social forces transformed Quebec.
It would take too long to detail the series of measures taken by the Quebec government in the development of education after 1905. Nevertheless, a brief listing of them is necessary in order to understand the changes in schooling for girls. The most important measure, without a doubt, was the increase in funds allotted for education. School construction, increases in teachers’ salaries, subsidies for poor municipalities, special grants, and the innumerable programmes established now guaranteed the development of a solid educational infrastructure. It was not much, but it was much more than in the previous century.

Next came the first centralized schools, with Montreal leading the way. It was also in Montreal that public day-school costs were abolished. The beginning of the twentieth century also marked the beginning of the organization of professional education at secondary, collegiate, and upper levels. Although the latter was first available exclusively for boys, soon afterwards, a trade school for women was established. Also in 1922, coeducational fine arts schools opened in Quebec City and in Montreal.

Innovations spread to the pedagogical level. A complete overhaul of programmes and structures began in 1923. A seven-year elementary programme was established (replacing the old elementary and model schools), and a complementary course replaced the academy. In 1929, the structure was topped off with the addition of three years of schooling called the “superior primary class.” This initiative was threatened, however, by the competition of private boarding schools and by the lack of political will to invest in public secondary schools. Finally, despite the boards’ reluctance, examinations were being organized to mark the completion of studies. It was at the end of the 1930s that certificates for grades seven, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve appeared.

The reformers’ only setback concerned the law for mandatory schooling. It was only finally approved in 1943. Meanwhile, the untimely arrival of the economic crisis in the 1930s resulted in a constant decrease in the number of children enrolled in the schools between 1930 and 1945. All these changes took place in a context of industrial development, movement toward urban centres, and development of the working class. All these transformations in turn put the salaried work of women at risk. Could education continue to guarantee women an existence where they would not be required to work?

The infrastructure of the institutions operated by nuns was not modified by all these transformations. On the contrary, recourse to their services in the teaching of girls continued. There was an important difference however. The nuns no longer had to open a boarding school in order to remain in a school. Actually, starting in 1905, nuns taught mainly in public schools. A few congregations, particularly the larger ones, were concentrated in city
schools. Others, especially the Petites Soeurs du Saint-Rosaire and the Soeurs du Perpétuel-Secours, specialized in schools in remote villages. Until 1950, a good number of these primary schools were mixed.

After having slowed down during the economic crisis, the movement toward founding schools began once again after the law of mandatory schooling in 1943. By 1960, the nuns headed 1,134 primary schools and 96 secondary schools in the public sector, representing 48 per cent of the Catholic system and 83 per cent of all girls schools. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, the nuns continued to extend their network, but lay teachers remained more numerous.

As for the former boarding schools, the nuns proceeded gradually to make them more specialized. In 1905, the Congregation of Notre-Dame transformed its boarding school in Saint-Pascal-de-Kamouraska into a home economics school. Its programme was approved by Laval University and a “classical home economics” diploma was offered. The initiative had the good fortune of pleasing the principal educational and religious authorities. At last, a teaching programme which suited girls perfectly! After many modifications, which would take too long to recount, the initial programme was altered several times. A convention took place in Quebec City in 1923, and a general programme reform resulted which created a “home economics” section in the public complementary course. In the end, the province gradually established a system of many types of home economics schools, for the most part in former boarding schools. Then came the primary home economics schools, which later became middle home economics schools offering nine years of schooling. One notch above were the upper, sometimes called “regional,” home economics schools, which were finally called “family institutes” in 1951, increasing schooling to eleven and then to thirteen years. These home economics courses were crowned with a university programme in Domestic Arts or in Family Pedagogy starting in 1942. These programmes were considered to be the Quebec versions of the home economics programmes of the English-speaking world. The latter, however, progressively oriented their programmes towards the profession of diettitian while the Quebec programme set “female and family” objectives.

The educational principles of these programmes received a lot of effective publicity, especially after 1937. At that time, Albert Tessier was responsible for the teaching of home economics, which had come through the depression with difficulty. The nature of woman, motherhood, and the complementary superiority of the wife were all glorified. These principles gave rise to heated discussions. Despite an impressive title, this study programme offered in the “écoles de bonheur,” contrary to general belief, never attracted a large proportion of young girls. At the height of its popularity in the 1950s, it
received only 10 per cent of students studying at that level. It was only after
the Second World War that traditional thinking in education was gradually
transformed to meet more professional training objectives.

The most important school where young girls went to study continued to
be the normal school. By the beginning of the twentieth century, new normal
schools were being established. One might think that this strategy was an
answer by the congregations of nuns to the criticism of the pedagogical
training of school teachers. After all, the school teachers were trained in
various boarding schools before appearing before the Bureaus of Catholic
Examiners. These normal schools were first founded in diocesan cities, often
with the bishop's support. The study programme took time to take shape
because the chronic lack of preparation on the part of candidates had to be
taken into account. Up to 1950, the normal school programme was part of
post-primary schooling, since the total number of years of schooling was
limited to eleven. The tables were then turned: while boarding schools served
as normal schools during the nineteenth century, now normal schools took
the place of secondary schools in remote regions. Three diplomas were
offered: Elementary, Complementary, and Superior. The great majority of
students were satisfied with a lower diploma. However, graduates of other
study programmes could always take advantage of the possibility of
appearing before the Central Bureau of Catholic Examiners. Evidently, this
situation constantly threatened recruitment for normal schools. After a
debate throughout the 1930s, the government finally decided to close the
Central Bureau in 1939.

The nuns then began to establish scholasticates, a sort of normal school
for nuns. Thirty-three scholasticates appeared between 1937 and 1954 while
normal schools continued to multiply. Instead of centralizing the training of
schoolmistresses in a few institutions, where a better education could be
offered, no less than forty-four normal schools for girls were founded in
Quebec between 1940 and 1960! It was this scholastic orientation which
especially attracted young girls, thus demonstrating the attractiveness of
practising a profession. After 1945, and the beginning of slight salary
incomes for all school teachers, the application of mandatory schooling,
and the arrival at the schools of "baby-boomers," the number of normal
school students jumped from 2,200 a year in 1940 to 6,700 a year in 1960.
Furthermore, schooling was increased and diversified after 1953: normal
schools required a minimum of eleven years of schooling and offered a "C"
certificate (one year), a "B" certificate (two years), and an "A" certificate
(four years) which was the equivalent of a bachelor's degree.

The boarding schools with the "Letters-Sciences Course" must be added
to this already considerable network. In 1916, with a view to standardizing
teaching in boarding schools and especially to certify their studies with a
prestigious diploma, many congregations obtained permission to introduce a course entitled "Letters—Sciences" from the University of Montreal. This course corresponded to the first four years of the classical course, but was a terminal course. Similar steps were taken at Laval University, which offered a less elaborate programme. This course was the choice of upper social classes. It was called a "university course" because it was approved by the university, even though it corresponded to only eleven years of schooling. This programme enjoyed its hour of glory in the 1940s when it was offered in fifty-four boarding schools, a number which gradually decreased to only thirty-eight in 1960. This decrease was not due to disenchantment by the girls for this type of teaching, but rather to an important change in openings for secondary teaching in the public schools. As the public system developed, the need to attend a private institution to have access to secondary studies became less compelling. More and more, graduates of this programme chose careers as nurses, secretaries, and technicians. Only a privileged few undertook the second cycle classical course. 

Indeed, the initiative to create a women's classical college in 1907 resulted in the development of a new sector of excellence for girls' schooling. The Congregation of Notre-Dame, after enjoying a monopoly over this type of schooling for twenty-five years in Montreal, was imitated by other congregations. By 1960, there were no less than eighteen women's classical colleges with a small number of girls. This programme enabled the students to go on to university, which many women chose to do. At the University of Montreal alone, female student enrolment multiplied twenty times between 1940 and 1960 in the professional programmes, going from 92 to 2,009. Evidently, girls' schooling was preparing more and more for the work force. Table 2 shows the distribution of the young people in these many programmes. 

It is difficult to say which is more striking in this chart: the difference between public and private programmes, or between programmes for men and women. It indicates that girls have finally received a certain equity in admittance to secondary studies. However, girls' schooling remained specific; boys and girls were distributed quite differently among the different programmes. A sort of women's knowledge was institutionalized, since only in the second cycle of the classical course was there an identical programme for boys and girls. But it was not equality that characterized the collegiate level. Above all, the dichotomy of the private and public sectors is very apparent. In 1960, gender and class distinctions were still firmly engraved in the school system. The evolution between 1920 and 1960 was, however, a sure indication that major changes had already begun in Quebec during the two decades preceding the Parent Report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic course (1920) Public</td>
<td>3870</td>
<td>2051</td>
<td>4754(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary course (1923) (8e-9e)</td>
<td>(65%)</td>
<td>(35%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary course — Upper Public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1929) (10e-11e-12e) (35%) (65%) (44%) (56%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal school Boys Public</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable school (9e-15e) Girls Private (87%) (13%) (91%) (9%) (77%) (23%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary or middle home-economics school (8e-9e)</td>
<td>1200(^*)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>500(^*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional home-economics school</td>
<td>200(^*)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>288(^*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family institute (10e-13e) (100%) (100%) (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Letters-Sciences&quot; course Private (8e-11e) (100%) (100%) (100%)</td>
<td>646(^3)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business course in classical colleges (8c-12e)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First cycle of classical course (8e-11e) (100%) (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second cycle of classical course</td>
<td>30(^*)</td>
<td>2290(^*)</td>
<td>200(^*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiate level (12e-15e)  (2%) (98%) (5%) (95%) (19%) (81%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public secondary</td>
<td>3870</td>
<td>2229</td>
<td>5623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private secondary</td>
<td>3186</td>
<td>6342</td>
<td>7573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(46%)</td>
<td>(74%)</td>
<td>(57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Approximate number.
1 Approximate number by dividing clientele in 2, sex not being indicated.
2 Of this number, 1591 students attended normal schools.
3 This number is from 1921.
4 In 1960, this was a collegiate level course. The numbers are therefore not included in the secondary totals.

There is more. While private boys schools were heavily subsidized (each classical college received ten thousand dollars annually, starting in 1922), and professors teaching there all received salaries, however minimal, private schools operated by nuns received few subsidies and no public salary dollars. Studies have shown that self-financing of many boarding schools/day schools continued until after 1960. Furthermore, the multiplication of public schools and increases in salaries for teaching nuns therein enabled the congregations to operate, almost entirely without subsidies, training programmes not affiliated with a school such as a normal school, a home economics school, a Letters-Sciences course, or a classical course. However, this financial balance was precarious. By 1950, the boarding school began to lose its popularity, thus affecting the source of revenue of various institutions. Besides, the decrease in religious vocations generally forced the congregations to hire lay personnel, whom they had to compensate.

Life in boarding schools evolved along with all these structural and pedagogical changes. Regulations were slackened; the number of hours given to religious exercises was decreased; educational activities were diversified; and skirts were shortened. It was possible to see contrasts: the normal school was more strict; the home economics school more family oriented; the Letters-Sciences course more modern; and the classical course decidedly more intellectual. However, the most spectacular transformation of the twentieth century was the development of professional schools for girls. Studies in this area have not yet been completed, but an interesting pattern can already be observed.

By the beginning of this century in Quebec, Business Colleges appeared, in which girls quickly made up the majority of the clientele. The nuns also offered business courses in their private and public institutions. This education, however, was less competitive, except in their upper secretarial schools. Following the example of the English-speaking community, hospitals introduced nursing schools. In the French-speaking milieu, hospital nuns founded many of these schools, of which there were thirty-seven in 1960.

In 1932, the Department of Education established a Women's Arts and Trades School with the collaboration of the CND. This effort was small when compared with the system of trade schools for boys. However, an exceptional number of various professional schools were operated by private enterprise. A recent study identified more than 370 in Montreal alone between 1900 and 1960: hat schools, fashion design schools, cutting and sewing schools, business schools, hairdressing schools, communications schools, and the list goes on. Even though the extent of their clientele and programmes remains unknown, the proliferation of this type of school was symptomatic of the times. Moreover, girls were in the majority in the Schools of Fine Arts in Quebec City and Montreal.
Finally, in Quebec, the teaching of music expanded, seemingly as the result of the importance given to it in the boarding schools of the previous century. Many conservatories were established. Between 1926 and 1954, many religious orders founded upper schools of music and affiliated themselves with a university. Thousands of girls attended these schools. Four out of the twelve schools have been studied and it seems unlikely that the 900 laureates, the 400 bacheloresses, and the 85 master’s degree recipients (1935-1960) pursued such advanced studies for the simple pleasure of practising a fine art. The good reputation of the Vincent d’Indy Music School in Outremont alone spoke volumes about the professional objectives of the nuns who operated it, the Sisters of the Saints-Noms-de-Jésus-et-de-Marie.

It is evident from this quick enumeration that, from the beginning of the twentieth century, girls’ schooling quickly aligned itself for the girls’ eventual integration (even if only temporarily before getting married) into the work force. School teachers, secretaries, nurses, telephone operators, and musicians were all professions requiring training. And even though these trends in Quebec did not equal the extent of those found in Ontario, they were nevertheless well in place by the first third of the twentieth century.

At the beginning of the century, working women were hired mainly as domestic help and as unskilled factory workers. Yet girls at that time were more literate than boys. Women’s work was still considered to be a necessary hardship one did well to avoid. Except for school teachers, educated women were not part of the work force. The situation, under the irresistible impetus of social and economic change, was completely transformed in one generation.

In reality, what happened was that the inequality in education for girls was invisible or, in any case, was not viewed as negative. From 1920, it was no longer possible to ignore it. Indeed, after this date, the most important demands for the development of girls’ schooling arose from the need to fill vacancies in the work force; henceforth, girls’ schooling was re-evaluated in terms of the job market.

That the nuns understood this explains all their educational innovations. It was certainly not for nothing that they developed programmes such as normal schools, nursing schools, courses in business, domestic arts, music, medical technology, and social services. Also, in the 1950s, it was not surprising to hear them say publicly, “We do not have to ask ourselves if a woman should or should not work. Women’s work is a fact. It is even a right: a woman’s dignity depends on it.” Despite this, by operating in a structure from the Old Regime which they were attempting to adapt to the modern world, the nuns held an extremely ambiguous position with respect to the girls they taught, and from more than one point of view.

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By jealously guarding educational programmes in the private sector, the nuns slowed the development of parallel programmes in the public sector. This strategy also suited the school boards, as has been mentioned. At the same time, however, the sisters contributed to the development of more interesting educational openings for girls. That is the first paradox.

In addition, the nuns themselves were engaged in the two professions open to women: teaching and nursing. By working without pay or for a very low salary in these two fields, they contributed to maintaining the poor working conditions in these two professions and, in doing so, to depreciating the work of women or to associating it with a vocation.

Moreover, in the teaching orders, only the nuns working in public schools received salaries. The other nuns, those in normal schools, home economic schools, music schools, and classical courses, worked without salaries. Therefore, there were two classes of nuns in the congregations: those who received salaries and those who did not. According to the code of the middle class at the time, which put high value on women's aptitude for volunteer work, the highest prestige was accorded to work without compensation. This perception reflected on the status of the salaried nuns, seen somewhat like that of women workers who "had to work."

Finally, what is there to say about the official philosophy which the nuns continued to expound that claimed that girls' education consisted of preparation for motherhood and marriage, while each nun presented the image of a single woman pursuing her career? Undoubtedly, so many contradictions prevented the nuns from predicting in 1960 what would happen to their empire. At that time, there were seventeen thousand nuns engaged in teaching girls and they occupied more than half the schools' administrative positions. They held the highest positions of responsibility. They believed that the imminent revolution in education would include them. Instead, the new situation transformed their role completely. With the new education system, which introduced universal, free access to schooling up to the end of the collegiate level, there was no place for unremunerated teaching personnel in private institutions.

Conclusion

After 1960, the unified thinking which previously had marked the different phases of educational development was no longer plausible: reality had changed too much. The schooling of girls could no longer be subordinate to their overall education: the post-industrial society required a well-defined expertise from them.

The causes of the discrimination which girls suffered in the educational system were already being pointed out: institutional discrimination, which
required that they attend girls schools still run by nuns; educational
discrimination, which restricted them to so-called women's programmes;
financial discrimination, which favoured institutions for boys over those for
girls; and ideological discrimination, which continued to subject them to a
patriarchal and conservative way of thinking about woman's role in society.

First of all, the school reforms themselves seemed to modify the very
points which caused many of these problems. Co-education, free access,
democratization, equality of the sexes in programmes and orientations, and
the right to work were the proposals of the reformers of the 1960s. However,
a closer reading of the Parent Report reveals that changing the social order
was not what these reformers had in mind. Today, it is apparent that the
discriminatory methods which were abolished concealed a much deeper
discrimination: that which determined social relations between the sexes;
that which regulated the salaried and domestic job market; that which
manifested itself through sexist stereotypes in school texts; and that which
characterized the cultural models imposed on men and women. In the end,
the distinctiveness of girls' schooling ceased to be expressed through a
particular philosophy or institution. It is the whole social and economic
structure which affects the school system and determines girls' education.

As for the nuns who dominated the development of girls' education for
more than three centuries, their presence was no longer considered
necessary. From the moment the State invested the billions necessary to set
up the new structures, such as the regional high school, the CEGEP, the
university, or the adult education programme, the nuns' voluntary expertise
was no longer needed. Not long ago, the teaching sisters' lot had been closely
linked to girls' schooling. In Quebec, it had been impossible to broach the
subject of girls' schooling without mentioning the presence of nuns. This was
no longer the case and, as a result, Quebec no longer stood apart in the
universal stereotype of the socialization of girls through educational
institutions.
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