

Vocational Training for Industrial Workers

Léonce Girard

Volume 6, numéro 4, septembre 1951

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1023141ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1023141ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Résumé de l'article

Whose business is it ? The State's or Industry's ? — Opinions from Paris, Romans, Brussels and Rome. — Should Quebec adopt a rigid formula ?

Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Girard, L. (1951). Vocational Training for Industrial Workers. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 6(4), 109–114.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1023141ar>

Vocational Training for Industrial Workers

Whose business is it ? The State's or Industry's ? — Opinions from Paris, Romans, Brussels and Rome. — Should Quebec adopt a rigid formula ?

by LÉONCE GIRARD, Director,
Apprenticeship Commission of the Shoe Industry

Vocational training is today a necessity. The world is in a state of perpetual change. New machines are continually appearing on the market and hundreds of new methods and techniques are daily being adopted. Because of these inventions the problems of manufacturing are constantly increasing in number, so that the employee who wishes to rise in his trade — or even to make a living out of it — has a need for a sound vocational training.

Enacted for the purpose of answering this need, the Apprenticeship Assistance Act has presented many problems to the representatives of Industry, to sociologists, and to the Government. In certain circles, this act has long been considered as a revolution in the teaching of trades.

From our point of view, the act has at least resulted in awakening those interested and in clearly presenting the following problem: On whom does the responsibility for vocational training fall ? On the State ? Or is it rather the part of Industry and the trades to see to the technical training of employees ?

For the past five years, all sides of this question have been considered — sometimes heartedly and with interest; sometimes with the level-headed approach which such problems demand. These years of experience now enable us to express an at least plausible opinion on this subject, which is of great and current interest, especially for the future of our province's industries.

THE PRINCIPLE

The Apprenticeship Assistance Act of 1945 stated the principle that associations of employers and employees are really concerned in the problems of apprenticeship, of vocational adjustment and re-adjustment, and that the public authorities should help in solving these problems.

By means of this statement, the Legislative Assembly of Quebec seemed to accept the fact that the part to be played by the public authorities was to assist in the solution of these problems rather than to take the place of labour and management groups.

This principle, it seems, was simply another wording for that great principle of Christian sociology which requires the state to leave to smaller bodies the settlement of business and problems of minor importance at the same time it requires the state to perform its duties of directing, watching, stimulating and restraining these groups, as circumstances suggest or necessity demands.

Here again the State is asked to limit itself to its proper function of assisting, or more precisely, of directing, inspecting, stimulating, and retraining these groups. The state must not necessarily give this assistance always through the same medium, but according to needs and circumstances, and inasmuch as the interested parties are capable of settling their own problems.

More concretely, the State should assist in vocational and technical education according to the needs of each industry. Here the state should direct and stimulate apprenticeship in order to develop it; there, it should inspect and restrain it in order to prevent abuses.

The Canadian Government delegates to the Third Conference of United Nations Members of the International Labour Organisation also came to the conclusion that every apprenticeship programme should assure full representation of employers and employees, by means, for example, of joint committees in the trades and apprenticeship committees in Industry.

Concerning the principles themselves, there is at present in our Province very little difference of basic opinion. With very rare exceptions, all admit that Industry should promote vocational training and that the public authorities help. There has been no resistance to this from the State, nor from the higher administrative levels of the government, or from the heads of schools; there has been, on the contrary, only the loyal adhesion to the principle.

APPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE

It is in the methods of applying the principle that differences of opinion are felt. The State should render assistance according to needs and circumstances. But what can the State do, and what can the trades do?

In 1945 we heard a director of technical education (who is no longer there today) say to a group of employers and employees who wished to organize a school for apprentices in a very complicated industry: "We'll organize your school for you and you'll be content with it." According to him the part of Industry was to do nothing, but simply to take what the State gave it.

The State was to do everything alone. Between this opinion and that which insists on the State doing nothing there is a margin, and it is this margin which we seek to establish.

Last October, I had the great opportunity of visiting several vocational training establishments in Europe. I am indeed pleased to have been invited to reproduce here a few notes taken during interviews on the participation of the State, the trades, and the individual in apprenticeship and the teaching of trades.

Italy

In Italy the sort of education connected with vocational training is in need of reorganization. Italy is at present undergoing a period of post-war reconstruction. The Italian Government have, properly speaking, no vocational training schools except in the building trades: Anyone who wishes may open a vocational training school. After checking the competence of the school, the equipment used, and the methods of instruction, the Government will grant the school a subsidy — provided that everything is judged to be satisfactory. Depending on the case, it may pay part or even all of the school's expenses. Up to the present, vocational training was intended only for ex-servicemen and for the unemployed. Now the Government hopes to open real vocational training schools in the near future. In Italy the training of youth comes under the Ministry of Education; the training of adults, under the Ministry of Labour.

In the building trades, the Government has undertaken the building of workmen's houses, a project which also serves to train apprentices. Under pain of being deprived of assistance, the unemployed are obliged to learn a trade — that is what the building construction

works are for. The buildings are built on behalf of government and the disbursements are divided between the two Ministries concerned with the building of houses — the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Public Works. The former pays for vocational instruction; the latter is responsible for the purchase of building materials.

France

Romans

In Romans, France, we visited the schools of the shoe industry in particular. Romans is a shoe manufacturing town; in fact, the town lives almost exclusively from this industry. About 90% of employees in the town subsist from it. Romans and its surroundings number more than 100 shoe factories and nearly 4,000 employees. There are two vocational training schools for the shoe manufacturing industry, namely, the Department of Shoe Manufacturing of the *Collège Technique* of Romans and the shoe industry's vocational training establishment (*Institution de formation professionnelle de l'industrie de la chaussure*).

The *Collège Technique*, a technical school, is government owned. The social group, labour and management representatives, intervenes in the school's affairs only in two respects:

a) They give advice and suggestions on technical organization and on the improvement of courses.

b) For every workshop hour they pay each student a certain sum which varies from six to ten francs per hour. The purpose of these payments is to make certain that the most intelligent students take up shoemaking; at a time when there was no payment the students were more inclined to go into such trades as electricity.

The *Collège de Romans* admits students from the ages of 14 to 18,

that is, students who are legally obliged to follow vocational training courses.

Monsieur Audemart, secretary of the Shoemakers' Union (*Syndicat de la Chaussure*) of Romans made the following statement: "The Board is called upon to give advice or to formulate suggestions on all questions which relate to apprenticeship or to vocational training in the schools of Romans. The *Collège Technique* (now the *Collège National*) is under the direct control of the Ministry of Education, and the labour-management group has no connexion with its technical or financial administration for which a special committee on technical improvement (*Conseil de Perfectionnement Technique*) has been organized at both the local and national levels.

"Nevertheless, in order to encourage and improve apprenticeship in the school's department of shoe manufacturing, these groups give grants of six, eight, or ten francs per hour — according to whether they are in 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year — to students from Romans and Bourg-de-Péage for every hour spent in the department of shoe manufacturing, and they pay this out of their own funds.

"Let us not forget, however, that this school, which admits students aged 14 to 18 from all parts of France, and even from foreign countries, trains not only apprentices, but workmen and supervisors".

L'Institution de Formation Professionnelle, 1, ave Duchesne, Romans, a vocational training establishment, does not compete with the *Collège Technique*. It teaches only those workmen, already employed in the shoemaking industry, who wish to improve their technique or to learn other technical processes. This school was founded during the occupation. At first it was limited exclusively to the shoemakers of Romans. Today students — even the majority of them — come from localities outside Romans.

This school is still under the ownership of the industry. Because of the great number of students from outside Romans, the school will soon come under government administration, and the industry will be able to interfere only for the purpose of rendering some sort of assistance. Courses are free; the workman who follows them is paid for every hour of schoolwork at the same rate as he is in his workshop.

The teaching staff is paid a straight government salary plus a grant provided by contributions from the employers. Instructors in the evening courses are men of experience, employed in shoe factories during the day.

At the *Institution de Formation Professionnelle* the social (labour-management) group has much more influence than it has at the *Collège Technique*. The group, composed of representatives of management and labour, meets frequently to make suggestions and help in the administration of the school.

The Shoe Industry's *Institution de Formation Professionnelle* is recognized by the Ministry of Labour and managed by the interprofessional social group (*Groupement Social Interprofessionnel*) for the region of Romans. This school, which is for adults, trains qualified workmen and supervisors for the shoe manufacturing industry.

The establishment includes four departments.

The object of the Workmen's Promotion Department is to improve the quality of labour in the industry. Applications for admission have to be made by the employer.

The Department of Vocational Re-adjustment is intended for persons who wish to find positions in the shoe industry; it is also for the unemployed and for those persons who, for physical or economic reasons, are obliged to change occupation. Such persons get an hourly wage fixed by a decree of the Ministry of Labour.

Within the limits of the industry's demands the school finds positions for its student apprentices.

The special courses of the Workmen's Promotion Department are reserved for those who are unable to follow the regular courses or who have already followed them.

The school admits as regular students adults who have completed their general studies and who would like a quick introduction into the technique of shoe manufacturing.

Paris

L'Ecole Hotelière de Paris, a school for training hotel personnel, is the property of a trade association for the improvement of technical and professional teaching in the *Corporation des Hôteliers, Restaurateurs et Limonadiers*, a sort of Innkeepers', Restaurant keepers' and Victuallers' Guild. Here the employers are the owners. This sort of school comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education. The government subscribes funds for the construction of the building and takes out a mortgage on the school. The Guild may at any time remit the amount to the Ministry and thus remain sole proprietor.

The Guild has no say in the management of the school. Nevertheless, representatives of the Guild form part of the jury at students' examinations. Representatives of the guild also form part of the Committee on Technical Improvement. Recently the Committee has not been in session very frequently because of post-war reorganization; but it will soon be called upon to meet regularly.

The school is supported by means of an apprenticeship tax levied upon all establishments which form part of the trade; a hotel keeper is free, for example, to pay his tax either directly to the school or to the tax collector. The State pays the teaching staff.

Belgium

Brussels

In Belgium the position of the State and the individual as regards vocational training has to date remained a matter of voluntary effort. The Catholics have promoted technical education and have organized technical schools. At present there are private schools, communal schools, and provincial schools. It is the individual, the commune, or the province which must first of all build a school at their own expense. After the school has been functioning successfully for some time, the government steps in and starts granting subsidies. These subsidies vary according to the party in power. If the government is made up of supporters of the Left, the latter do not close the schools; they simply cut the grants to a minimum. If, on the other hand, the government is made up of Rightist elements, which favour the Catholics, the grants are then more generous. Here, for example, is some idea of the percentage in grants that a school might receive once it has been recognized. The government may perhaps pay as much as 75% of teaching staff salaries, the remaining 25% to be paid by the individual, the commune, or the province, or by both depending on the case and on which groups may be concerned with the school.

Brussels' Institute of Arts and Crafts is a communal school; that is, it was founded and is supported by the City of Brussels.

Unlike France, Belgium has no compulsory education for the 14 to 18 age group. Nevertheless a great number of young persons follow vocational training courses at night. They do so from personal conviction; for a young apprentice knows very well that he will never be promoted if he does not get his school diploma. Managers generally encourage their

employees to follow apprenticeship courses.

For each school which is a member of the Institute, there is an inspection committee made up of representatives of management and labour. This committee makes suggestions for bettering the teaching and also helps find positions for the students. The committee also takes part in the final examinations.

In Belgium, the *Conseil Supérieur du Travail* (Superior Labour Council), engages in vocational training activities — which are, in fact, its main function. The *Conseil* suggests changes for the purpose of standardizing the regulations which have already been approved by the communes; it also makes recommendations to the vocational training schools.

La Bouverie

The School of Shoe Manufacturing of La Bouverie is the property of the communes which make up the province of Hainaut in the South of Belgium. The students of the school come from La Bouverie and the surrounding towns and villages. Expenses are covered in the following way: The Belgian Government pays 60% of the instructors' salaries; the provincial government of Hainaut pays 60% of the budget; the communes, the balance. Courses are not absolutely free, but almost. Day students pay 50 francs a year, that is, \$1.00, and night students, 20 francs a year. The school is administered by an administrative council made up of delegates of labour and management from the shoe industry. If, for example, the director wishes to appoint a new instructor, he applies to the administrative council and sends his request to the national Ministry of Labour which then puts a notice into *Le Moniteur*, to the effect that a position is vacant and that any candidates may present themselves at the examination.

Quebec

These few examples, it seems to me, are sufficient to demonstrate that there are a thousand and one ways of promoting vocational training or apprenticeship within an industry. Everything depends upon needs and circumstances.

In the Province of Quebec, since the enforcement of the Apprenticeship Assistance Act, co-operation between Industry and the State has been effected in various ways.

Here are three examples. The building industry in Montreal has established its own school; it obtained a spacious building from the government, and grants from the Department of Labour. The shoe industry, on the other hand, has sought rather to co-operate with Technical Education and with the Department of Social Welfare. The Apprenticeship Commission pays for the material and equipment and takes care of the technical side of the teaching; the Department of Social Welfare supplies the buildings and pays the instructors. In the printing trade there was already in Montreal a Graphic Arts School which was the property of the provincial government; the Apprenticeship Commission made no attempt to build another school but simply constituted itself the school's advisory Council provided for in the Act respecting specialized schools; the Parity Committee applies the apprenticeship regulations by decrees.

Hundreds of other formulas are possible. What seems important to us is not so much the formula or the methods, but the fact that Industry should take the responsibility for the vocational and technical training of its employees and that the State should help according to circumstan-

ces and necessity. The employers and employees may concern themselves more particularly with the recruiting of top quality students, the designation of machines in use in the industry, student placement, the application of a technical and even theoretical syllabus to comply with the needs of the trade. The state should aim first of all at obtaining suitable premises, remunerating highly competent instructors, at obtaining modern machinery and equipment, and at supplying skilled advisors for the organizing and continual betterment of the schools.

Every industry should have either a school for apprentices or a vocational training school. Management and labour should co-operate in the training of apprentices in vocational and occupational adjustment and readjustment by means of an apprenticeship commission. If the industry has no such school, the apprenticeship commission with the help of the government's technical advisor should see that one is established.

If the State has already established such a school, why should not the apprenticeship commission become the advisory council provided for in the Specialized Schools Act? The directors of the technical schools and arts and trades schools could then draw on these apprenticeship commissions not only for valuable advice on practical instruction, but also for considerable help in the placement of their students.

The problem of the participation of Industry in vocational training will still be a subject of discussion for some time to come. I think that it is a good thing that opinion remains divided. In this way, we will be able to form clearer and more precise ideas on this important problem.