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Course

Date

Bill 40 Case Study on Educational changes

Bill 40 was announced on October 1st 2019, by the education minister, Jean Roberge, and looked to bring reforms in the education sector. It aims at depoliticizing schools and heightening government control over schools in the province. The main issue in the bill is its proposal on the removal of school boards in Quebec and replacing them with service centers (Lau). School boards have been overseeing the education of elementary and secondary schools in the province since 1845; hence the bill poses a drastic change in the system. Various stakeholders in the education sector are accustomed to the previous order and therefore view the proposed changes as unwelcome (Riga). According to the legislation, the service centers will comprise of community members, volunteer parents, and school staff. The centers' mission will include supporting schools and taking on administrative duties (Riga). Generally, Bill 40 has been contentious, facing several objections from pertinent stakeholders besides rising several concerns on its effectiveness. Although bill 40 aims at revolutionizing the education sector, it has raised several concerns, questions, and reactions on the appropriateness and practicality of the proposed reforms.

Bill 40 Background

Bill 40 is founded on the need to reduce government spending by 45 million over four years and depoliticize school systems. Along with getting rid of school boards, the bill suggests a wide range of changes. It puts an end to school board-level elections for francophone schools' administrations, excluding the English-language ones (Riga). The proposal, when implemented, will drastically change the conditions for teachers. Besides, it compels towns and cities to accommodate the real estate needs of learning institutions (Montpetit). The bill also changes areas where students can take their children to school. Thus, the proposal will cause tremendous alterations in the education system.

Reactions to Bill 40

Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) argues that Bill 40 is confusing, convoluted, and complicated hence challenging to implement. The team reasons that there is no indication that the education system requires reforms; therefore, the bill is uncalled for (Lau). The government has not shown any dire needs that necessitate the suggested changes. As such, the law could be following the wrong path. They fear that it could have minimal positive impacts, and the reforms could instead work toward heightening the currently existing inequalities between schools.

QESBA holds that the benefits to be reaped from these reforms are unclear since the bill does not outline how it will improve students' success. There were no consultations with pertinent stakeholders before writing the proposal (Greig). Subsequently, it lacks clarity on the expected benefits from the suggested modifications. QESBA argues that the government should

have a consensus with relevant parties before the adoption of these reforms to expound on its associated benefits.

The association argues that the Bill fights against local democracy and could accentuate discrimination against certain groups. The proposed reforms will see the French system lose its rights to hold elections and elect directors and commissioners (Bruemmer). Conversely, the English system will be allowed to continue with its elections. Thus, besides compromising democracy, the bill will cause discrimination against the francophone community.

QESBA reasons that for such reforms to be successful, some amendments are critical. The association holds that the current bill is a massive gamble than needs in-depth consensus before being executed. The minister's power over service centers should be reduced to allow more self-governance within particular bodies (Lau). Additionally, elections should be conducted together with municipal ones to reduce costs and ensure a large voter turnout (Riga). The association holds that the government should have sought to improve school boards instead of replacing them.

Concerns about Bill 40.

The Bill will give more control to the government. By doing away with school boards, a harmful administrative uniformity will result. Subsequently, power will be centralized to the education minister; hence the government will have much control over schools. The bill also takes teachers' strengths away by creating student-success committees (Riga). Under this law, teachers will form the minority in these boards; hence they will have a minimal say in evaluation

and education practices. Thus, there will be lesser control by teachers and committees as it previously was.

There are concerns that Bill 40 promotes unfairness. The law allows English schools to vote who they want as their service center members while denying francophone institutions similar rights; hence it is unfair to the French (Bruemmer). Despite banking on the low voter turnout among French schools, the bill still discriminates against them by not allowing them to elect their commissioners. It is disquieting that residents from French school areas are required to pay school taxes yet deprived of their right to vote.

The government did not consider the needs or wants of stakeholders when drafting the bill. Part of the reason behind the encountered opposition is the lack of consensus between relevant parties and the government before proposing. Stakeholders feel that the outlined reforms were unnecessary since there are other more pressing needs, such as the high dropout rates, and he needs to upgrade infrastructure (Montpetit). Thus, there lies a considerable mismatch between the proposed changes and stakeholders' needs.

While the government sought to change the bureaucratic structure in schools, the reforms fail to improve the education system. One of the primary aims of bill 40 is to reduce bureaucracy in schools, which will subsequently ensure more services to students and increased powers to those who run schools (Montpetit). However, it is unclear how the law will improve student success. Thus, opponents of the bill argue that the suggested restructuring will have no significant impact on the primary target group; the students.

Another concern is the lack of clarity on the power that service centers will have over school activities. Previously, school boards oversaw different operations in schools to ensure they offered students the best education (Montpetit). It is, however, unclear on what impact service centers will have on schools in the province. The bill fails to provide a clear outline of the specific authorities of the new overseeing bodies.

Bill 40 could lead to a hike in municipal taxes. Under the law, cities and towns could be forced to relinquish land to the province for service centers and schools. Subsequently, a significant part of the taxes could be channeled toward paying for new schools, leading to tax hikes (Greig). In the past, towns and cities could give land freely and were not coerced to building institutions. However, with the changes, they could transfer the law's requirements to the residents through increased taxes.

Overall, bill 40 has faced significant opposition eliciting vast reactions and concerns among stakeholders and Quebec residents. The law aims at depoliticizing schools, reducing bureaucracy, and ensuring better service delivery. However, there are fears that it propagates discrimination against francophone schools and lacks a notable impact on the learners. Besides, the law could lead to tax hikes and give the government more control over schools as it centralizes the governing structure. Several questions arise from the government's push for the restructure. For instance, what benefits will the proposed system have over the previous one? What process was followed in drafting the law to ensure the inclusion of the needs of different stakeholders? What could be the drawbacks of centralization?

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