



DIFFERENT ANGLES ON EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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ANTIRACIST EDUCATION IN QUEBEC: DIAGNOSIS AND PROGNOSIS A Research Project Summary¹

Current Situation

Universal and mandatory, elementary and high school have a major impact on the lifelong opportunities of minority youth and on the future of intercultural relations within society (McAndrew, 2001; Banks, 1988). To address these challenges, Canadian educational institutions have adopted various programs and practices that can be divided into three major approaches: multicultural or intercultural, antiracist and civic (Pagé, 1993; McAndrew 2001).

Multicultural and intercultural education have traditionally emphasized inter-group harmony and the struggle against individual prejudice, mutual enrichment through the celebration of diversity and intercultural exchange, and strengthening the self-image of minority students by promoting the value of their cultural heritage, among other things (Banks and McGee-Banks, 1989; Fleras and Elliot, 1992; Lynch, 1992).

Civic education, which has been gaining ground in Canada since the early 1990s, promotes human rights and democratic values. Moreover, it seeks to train future citizens as members of a shared national community (Bourgeault et al., 1997). Antiracist education is distinct from civic education, and pursues a three-pronged strategy:

1. To transform attitudes and behaviours that promote knowledge, practices and rules that foster inequality.
2. To transmit to students, teachers and parents the ability to identify and denounce racism and become active participants in social change.
3. To adopt a pedagogical approach that focuses on issues of equity, justice and discrimination.

The antiracist approach, which first emerged in the 1970s, was a response to the limits of multicultural education, which still predominates in English Canada, and to interculturalism, the preferred term in Quebec. The terms race, racism or antiracism are virtually absent from the normative discourse, as much in the MRCI's 1990 *Policy Statement* as in the 1998 *Educational Integration and Intercultural Education* plan which relegated the discussion of racism to a few lines and treated it as a potential individual transgression rather than a systemic problem (McAndrew, 2004). Nevertheless, in the 1980s, antiracism did constitute a focal point in certain analyses and pedagogical developments, most notably within unions and, above all, within the anglophone network (CEQ, 1982; CEPGM, 1988).

Consequently, any antiracist practices today within the Quebec school network occur at the

Universal accessibility and equal chances of success still aren't a reality in Montreal public schools, despite the attempts of current and past reforms. Individuals and groups who confront inequalities daily know too well the harsh consequences. The *Different Angles on Education and Social Justice* series was launched to make academic research useful to advocate for school policies and practices that help create equality. (*Disponible aussi en français.*)

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level of intercultural or civic education. Since the 1990s, Quebec schools, particularly in Montreal, have embarked on a process of systemic adaptation to diversity, still largely unrealized, that affects all dimensions of school life (teacher training and recruitment, the definition of programs and didactic material, relations with parents, adaptation of the schools' standards and practices, student relations). The Quebec school system is presently involved in a similar process of institutional adaptation, although it lags behind anglophone provinces with large immigrant populations. (McAndrew, 2001).

The current climate is ripe for reopening the debate on the importance of intensifying antiracist education, or at least introducing an antiracist component to intercultural or civic education programs. One of the most important factors in favour of this shift is the failure rate of visible minority students, which is finally being acknowledged after years of denial (Kanouté, 2002; McAndrew et al., 2004a and b), as well as racist attitudes that quickly become apparent during legitimate debates that have been taking place since the 1990s on the place of religious diversity in the schools (McAndrew, 1994).

During these conflicts, the limits of an intercultural or even civic perspective are made clear by their failure to take into account prior negative constructions of the groups targeted by the debate as well as the need to train teachers on these issues (Kanouté 2004; et al., 2004). Other arguments in favour of a better integration of antiracist perspectives within Quebec schools include the particularly difficult issues of identity and socio-economic status faced by second-generation youth from visible minorities (Potvin, 1999, 2002, et al., 2005), as well as the often hidden reality of racism within the schools.

Antiracist Education in Quebec: Diagnosis and Prognosis

Thanks to funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and from Heritage Canada, a team of researchers from the Université de Montréal's *Chaire en relations ethniques* (Chair on Ethnic Relations) is conducting a research project on antiracist education in Quebec called

L'éducation antiraciste au Québec : diagnostic et prospectives [Antiracist Education in Quebec: Diagnosis and Prognosis]. The research will be made public in Spring 2006.

The project findings will shed light on the obstacles encountered by institutions as they look for effective solutions to the challenges of increasing diversity and, in particular, the problems confronted by youth from ethnoracial minorities. The research also seeks to promote a better alignment of antiracist programs and interventions with the complex reality of Quebec schools, as well as a better grasp of Quebec's specificities in relation to the Canadian context.

Research Team

- Marie McAndrew, professor in the Educational Administration Department at the Université de Montréal and a researcher at Immigration and Metropolis
- Fasal Kanouté, professor in the Pyschopedagogy and Andragogy Department at the Université de Montréal and a researcher at Immigration and Metropolis
- Maryse Potvin, research associate at the *Chaire en relations ethniques du Centre d'études ethniques des universités montréalaises*, Université de Montréal

Partners

- *Direction des services aux communautés culturelles, Ministère de l'Éducation*
- *Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse*
- *Service des ressources éducatives, domaine éducation et relations interculturelles de la Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM)*
- *Service interculturel collégial*
- Third Avenue Resource Centre

¹ This summary is based on excerpts of a funding proposal written by Maryse Potvin, Marie McAndrew and Fasal Kanouté.

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Third Avenue Resource Centre
3535 av. du Parc
Montréal (Québec) H2X 2H8
514.279.1286
info@crt.ca www.crt.ca

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