IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY IN QUEBEC SCHOOLS: THE POLICY CONTEXT AND ITS IMPACT ON TEACHER TRAINING

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ABSTRACT To understand the challenges Quebec faces in the intercultural training of future teachers, it is important to consider it in the broader context of the province's immigration and diversity policies and programs.

IMMIGRATION POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON SCHOOL CLIENTELE. The pluralist transformation of French-language schools is a relatively recent phenomenon that has not yet been fully integrated into the collective consciousness. Therefore, convincing future teachers of the issue's importance is often a difficult task, especially when those teachers intend on working in relatively homogeneous regions. The significant presence of immigrants from Muslim countries (which is explained by higher immigration rates from French-speaking countries during the selection process) is also at the heart of many debates about the place of religion in the public domain. However, given the selective nature of the immigration policy, immigrant families that come here tend to have high social capital. Future teachers thus do not consider children from immigrant families as all being "at risk" cases as it might be the case in other contexts. Their great diversity also explains to a certain extend the broadness of the approach that is taken when dealing with diversity.

INTERCULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION. Quebec's commitment towards interculturalism, an approach which values diversity all the while delineating its boundaries to a greater extent than Canadian multiculturalism does, and the existence of a policy on intercultural education (1998), are assets for the intercultural training of future teachers. However, the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of interculturalism represents a challenge. Students, especially those of French-Canadian origin, often identify with the version of intercultural discourse which sets in opposition relatively homogenous notions of "us" and "them", but teachers generally have a more complex perspective on identities.

LEARNING FRENCH. Our current context is marked by a certain excitement towards the implementation of innovative practices that attribute greater value than they did in the past to multilingualism. This certainly creates a degree of dynamism in language teaching programs. However, there is still a long way to go before all teachers adhere to an additive approach to language learning and attribute greater value to the mother tongue of their students. This represents a major challenge in a society where the status of French is still fragile and where we often tend to adopt the same attitude towards immigrant languages as the one we have towards English. Moreover, many future regular classroom teachers are not fully aware of their future responsibility in the integration of allophone students.

DIVERSITY IN THE CURRICULUM. The tensions that arose in Quebec during debates surrounding the accommodation of religious beliefs and the teaching of ethics and religious culture courses have repercussions on the pre-service training of future teachers. The ad hoc manner in which other issues related to diversity have been treated in the curriculum often also limit the legitimacy given by future teachers to intercultural training, especially when those teachers do not foresee themselves working in a multiethnic setting. The place given to diversity throughout the curriculum at the elementary level or in the high school course they will teach thus plays a key role in those teachers' level of interest.

RESUME Afin de comprendre les défis vécus au Québec en matière de formation interculturelle des futurs maîtres, il est important de se pencher sur le contexte des politiques et des programmes plus généraux en matière d'immigration et de diversité dans cette province.

LA POLITIQUE D'IMMIGRATION ET SON IMPACT SUR LES CLIENTÈLES SCOLAIRES. La transformation pluraliste des écoles de langue française est un phénomène relativement récent qui n'a pas pleinement intégré la conscience collective. Il est donc souvent difficile de convaincre les futurs enseignants de l'importance de l'enjeu, surtout lorsqu'ils ont l'intention d'enseigner dans des régions relativement homogènes. La présence importante des immigrants originaires de pays musulmans (liée à la valorisation du français dans la grille de sélection) nourrit aussi de nombreux débats sur la place de la religion dans l'espace public. Cependant, étant donné la nature sélective de la politique d'immigration, les familles immigrantes ont généralement un capital social élevé. Les futurs enseignants ne considèrent donc pas les enfants issus de l'immigration comme étant tous « à risque », comme dans d'autres contextes. Leur grande diversité donne aussi une certaine légitimité à une approche large de la prise en compte de la diversité.

L'INTERCULTURALISME ET L'ÉDUCATION INTERCULTURELLE. L`engagement du Québec en faveur de l'interculturalisme, qui valorise la prise en compte de la diversité tout en la balisant davantage que le multiculturalisme canadien, et l'existence d'une politique d'éducation interculturelle (1998), sont des atouts en faveur de la formation interculturelle des futurs maîtres. Cependant, l'ambiguïté qui marque le concept d'interculturalisme constitue un défi. Les étudiants, tout particulièrement ceux d'origine canadienne-française, s'identifient souvent à une version du dialogue interculturel qui oppose un « nous » et un « eux » relativement homogènes, alors que les professeurs ont généralement une vision plus complexe des identités.

L'APPRENTISSAGE DU FRANÇAIS. Le contexte actuel est marqué par une certaine effervescence dans la mise en œuvre de pratiques novatrices qui valorisent, davantage que par le passé, le multilinguisme. Cela crée un dynamisme certain dans les programmes de didactique des langues. Cependant, il reste encore bien du chemin à parcourir avant que tous les enseignants adhèrent à une vision additive de l'apprentissage des langues et acceptent de valoriser la langue maternelle de leurs élèves. C'est un défi majeur dans une société où le statut du français est encore fragile et où on a souvent tendance à adopter la même attitude à l'égard des langues issues de l'immigration qu'à l'égard de l'anglais. Par ailleurs beaucoup de futurs enseignants des classes régulières ne sont pas pleinement conscients de leur responsabilité future dans l'intégration des élèves allophones.

LA DIVERSITÉ DANS LE CURRICULUM. Les tensions qu'a vécues le Québec autour de l'accommodement des croyances religieuses ou l'enseignement du cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse ont des répercussions dans la formation initiale des futurs maîtres. La nature ponctuelle du traitement des autres enjeux liés à la diversité dans le curriculum a aussi souvent pour effet de limiter la légitimité accordée par les futurs enseignants à la formation interculturelle, tout particulièrement lorsqu'ils ne pensent pas enseigner dans des milieux pluriethniques. La place de la diversité dans l'ensemble du curriculum au primaire ou au sein de la discipline qu'ils enseigneront au secondaire joue alors un rôle déterminant dans leur degré d'intérêt.

IMMIGRATION POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

Since the late 1960s, Quebec has sought to play a major role in immigration in order to ensure a selection and retention of immigrants that would contribute to its specific character as the only French-speaking province in Canada. A series of agreements with the Federal Government ensured Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction in selecting 'independent' immigrants (who account for almost 70% of total movement) and in the linguistic and economic integration of all newcomers to Quebec (MICC, 1990).

Given the feared consequences of a demographic deficit and an aging population, the province has favoured for the last ten years a significant increase of the number of immigrants. It still receives less than its fair share of 25% of the Canadian total, and much less than Ontario. But with an average annual intake of 51,000, immigration rates are higher than ever since the end of the 50s and experienced as so by many sectors of the population (McAndrew & Arcand, 2013).

Quebec's selection policy attempts to balance competing selection criteria: the recruitment of French-speaking immigrants, the contribution of immigration to economic development, the promotion of family reunification, and the commitment to international solidarity. This has led to a socio-economically diversified and rather specific immigrant population in terms of language skills and national origin (when compared to Canada as a whole). Although knowledge of French is not an eliminatory criterion, currently over 60% of admitted immigrants speak some French. In addition, the ten main contributing countries are largely francophone and among those, the presence of Muslim societies is significant. Nevertheless, combined together these 10 sources account for less than 50% of all entrants, which explains the heterogeneity of most multi-ethnic classrooms (MICC, 2013).

The school population now comprises some 146,377 students (14.6% of the total) whose first language is not English, French, or an Aboriginal language. Students of immigrant origin (e.g. those born abroad or with at least one parent born abroad), now number 249,005 (24.9% of the total). Nevertheless, the impact of diversity is not uniform across the province nor between the English or the French sectors (MELS, 2013).

On the one hand, even if efforts aiming at a better regional distribution of immigrants have started to bear results, especially in suburbs such as Laval, most immigrants still settle in Montreal. On the other hand, for now more than 35 years, the Québec Language Charter has made schooling in French mandatory for newcomer students, with a few exceptions. In 2012, 93% of first- and second-generation students attended the French sector (while this was the case for less than 10% of them in 1969). Consequently, French-Language schools on the Island of Montreal have been transformed into multi-ethnic settings with 44% of students who do not speak French as their first language and 64% who are of immigrant origin (including 26% of first generation).

The Policy context related to immigration in Quebec bears some challenges in terms of intercultural pre-service training of teachers, but also some assets. On the negative side, the pluralistic transformation of French language schools is a relatively recent phenomenon and one that has not totally percolated in the collective consciousness (McAndrew, 2013). Thus, it is often difficult to convince future teachers of the centrality of the issue of diversity to their work, especially when they envision teaching in relatively homogeneous regions. The important presence of immigrants from Muslim countries also fuels debates on the place of religion within the province (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008), to which student teachers are not immune. On the positive side, the fact that immigrant families usually have a high degree of social capital, given the selective nature of the Immigration Policy, contributes to an interest of student teachers towards their children, who are not systematically identified as at-risk, as it is the case in many international contexts (McAndrew et al., 2014). The high diversity which characterized most of multi-ethnic classes is also a good antidote against the "natural tendency" of many student teachers to ask for recipes on how to deal with students from background X or Y and gives some legitimacy to a wider, less ethnicized, approach to the taking into account of diversity (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2013).

INTERCULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: A LONGSTANDING NORMATIVE COMMITMENT, SOME AMBIGUITIES

Once Quebec's francophone community had reasserted its majority status and committed to increasing immigration, it was faced with the challenge of defining a normative position vis-à-vis the growing pluralism in its public institutions and in civil society. Quebec interculturalism may be described as the quest for a middle path between Canadian multiculturalism, which has been criticized for essentializing cultures and for isolating them from each other, and French Jacobinism, whose relegation of diversity to the private sphere is considered too extreme (Juteau et al., 1998). But they are competing versions of what is meant by interculturalism, which unlike the Multiculturalism Policy, has never been legislated (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008).

In the 1980s, in the wake of *Quebecers, Each and Every One* (Gouvernement du Québec, 1981) the government adopted an approach of intercultural rapprochement between individuals whose membership in clearly distinguishable groups was taken for granted. The idea was to create a culture of convergence, centered around a modern francophone culture, and enriched by the province's various ethnic groups. Nevertheless, this vision, which has experienced a return in popularity

in recent years, opposes an "Us" and a "Them" who do not enjoy the same legitimacy to influence Quebec's future. It also overlooks complex issues linked to multiple identities and to inequalities.

With *Let's Build Quebec Together* (MICC, 1990), theoretically still in effect, expanded recognition of cultural hybridity began to emerge. This document acknowledged both plurality as a fundamental aspect of Quebec culture, and the right of Quebecers of all origins to express their cultures *"within the limitations imposed by the respect for fundamental democratic values and the need for intergroup exchanges"*. The policy statement expressly identified gender equality, respect for children's rights, non-violence, and Quebec's societal choices (including language rights) among the democratic values to be promoted. It also called for the lifting of the many barriers still facing citizens of immigrant origin to their full participation and the equal contribution.

The *Policy Statement on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education* (MEQ, 1998) followed a similar path. Intercultural education was defined as learning how to live together in a democratic, pluralist, French-speaking society. The document stands out for its complex treatment of the concept of culture. It urges that instead of essentializing differences, teachers should regard ethnic identity as only one among many factors influencing integration and academic success. It also highlighted the importance of ensuring equity through schooling for immigrant and minority students and implementing a pluralist transformation of the formal and real curriculum. But this later objective generated some resistances. The tension between the use of ambiguous terms such as common values and the recognition of diversity is thus evident throughout the final version of the Policy (McAndrew, 2001).

Although it was adopted over a decade ago, this policy's principles still form the basis of MELS initiatives and have significantly influenced statements formulated by school boards with the highest concentration of students of immigrant origin. However, while the policy statement was meant to extend the recognition of diversity to homogeneous milieus, progress in that front has been limited. Overall, the Policy does not enjoy a high visibility and the fact that its message has not been updated in response to the fifteen years of changes in immigration flux and integration issues the Province limits its legitimacy (McAndrew, 2013).

In the area of intercultural pre-service training of teachers, the existence of the Policy is clearly an asset as it can serve as an argument to give impetus to the field in faculties of education as well as a basis for the content of many courses (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the ambiguity surrounding the concept itself constitutes an important limitation. Student teachers, especially those from French-Canadian backgrounds, often identify more easily with the "Us" vs. "Them" version of intercultural dialogue, while instructors generally promote a more integrated approach to diversity.

RECEPTION SERVICES FOR NEWLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANTS

In contrast to the model prevailing in the rest of Canada, Quebec has opted, since the end of the 60s, for a closed "welcoming class" model which benefits from a lower teacher/students ratio (McAndrew, 2009). This choice reflects the wide-spread perception that the best way for allophone students to learn French is through a systematic intensive and structured approach, and not by merely exposing them to the language in regular classes. In outlying regions, if there are not enough allophone students, they attend regular classes but receive linguistic support.

Even if the province has been supporting Heritage Language Teaching for allophone students attending regular classes since 1978, the recognition of immigrant student mother tongues in welcoming classes for new arrivals has been rather limited. A subtractive bilingualism perspective, in which one language is considered to be learned or kept at the expense of the other, is still very popular among teachers and decision-makers who often invoke the socio linguistic situation of Quebec to justify their position (Thamin et al., 2013)

Recently, though, welcoming programs have started evolving following a growing debate around some of the negative effects of the traditional model or its lack of adaptation to new challenges (Koninck, Z. et Armand, F., 2012 ; Armand et Maraillet, 2013). Observers note that the 10 months that students are to spend in a welcoming class tend to be extended, up to two years or sometime even more, which causes concern regarding their social integration. Specific services are also considered to contribute to the sense among the school staff that immigrant students are not really their responsibility. Finally, many argue that not building on the strengths immigrant students already have in their heritage language is not a wise pedagogical choice. Therefore, one has witnessed the experimentation of various alternative models such as partial immersion in regular classes tackling less linguistically demanding subjects, team teaching between teachers from welcoming classes and heritage language classes, or placing allophone students in regular classes with linguistic support. The development of students' linguistic heritages within regular classes is also better promoted, under the approach of Language Awareness.

The current context of experimentation in the area of multilingualism opens interesting avenues for intercultural pre-service teacher training and thus departments related to language curriculum among various faculties of education are among the most active in this field (Larochelle-Audet et al.,

2013). Nevertheless, there is a long way to go before all student teachers accept the additive nature of language learning and the consequent necessity to value the mother tongue of their future students. This is still a major challenge in a society where the status of French is fragile and where its' specific relationship with English is not always distinguished from that with other less dominant immigrant languages (Thamin et al., 2013). Many student teachers destined to teach in regular classes are also yet not fully aware of their future responsibility in the integration of allophone immigrant students.

DIVERSITY IN THE CURRICULUM: AN IMPORTANT BUT *AD HOC* PRESENCE

Although Quebec has adopted a Policy with such a name, Intercultural Education in not a subject per se and even less a mandatory one within the K-11 school curriculum. But there are many points of entry for promoting intercultural, anti-racist, or citizenship education within the detailed descriptions of targeted student competencies, broad areas of learning, and various academic subjects in the Quebec Education Program (Potvin et al., 2006; McAndrew, 2013). The learning area entitled Citizenship and Community Life, which comprises the teaching of Geography, History, and Citizenship Education, has the greatest number of stated commitments to providing education on diversity. Moreover, all three of these subjects involve a common educational aim: "openness to the world and respect for diversity". Three targeted student competencies which must be aimed at in all programs can also contribute to intercultural education. "To exercise critical judgment" stresses the recognition of prejudices and the importance of putting opinions in perspective; "To construct his or her identity" requires students recognize their cultural roots and acknowledge those of others; and "To cooperate with others" encourages respect for differences, developing openness to others, and constructively embracing pluralism and non-violence.

But the main substantive treatment of diversity in the Quebec curriculum is carried through the Ethic and Religious Culture course, which replaced in 2005 the denominational teaching of Catholicism and Protestantism, which could be opted out in favour of moral education that prevailed until then (MELS, 2005). Through this course, which is mandatory from Grade 1 to Secondary 5, all students learn about major world religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism, although the primary emphasis is on Judeo-Christian and Aboriginal traditions. The program targets two complementary aims: acknowledging each student's sense of belonging or not belonging to a religious tradition; and promoting the sharing of values and involvement in co-operative projects in a pluralist society. Students learn to weigh ethical questions, demonstrate their understanding of religious phenomena, and discuss these topics with people who do not necessarily share their own beliefs.

These are clearly important skills contributing to the capacity of living together in a pluralist society (Estivalèzes, 2013). But the program also has many raised criticisms, which are largely linked to resistance to the adaptation to diversity among some sectors of Quebec society. Others question what they consider its undue focus on religion in a secular school system or its potential effect on student's perception of immigration and religious challenges as overlapping (Estivalèzes et al., 2013).

These tensions are also encountered in pre-service teacher training where the accommodation of religious beliefs or the teaching of Ethics and Religious Culture, especially by primary teachers who must teach all subjects, raises some of the most important challenges (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2013). The *ad hoc* presence of other issues related to diversity within the school curriculum also hinders, in many instances, the legitimacy that future teachers are willing to grant to intercultural training. For those who do not plan to work in multi-ethnic settings, the extent to which they have to cover diversity issues in the elementary curriculum or in the specific subject they intend to teach at the secondary level is often the main determinant in this regard.

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