

Editorial

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Didactique des diversités, diversité des didactiques
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EDITORIAL

The idea of bringing together contributions around the articulation between teaching and the diversity of school audiences came from an international conference held on 12-14 October 2017. Titled “Cultural diversity and citizenship: Educational issues in the age of globalization,” the conference was organized by Université de Corse Pasquale Paoli under the responsibility of Bruno Garnier, Régis Malet, and Jean-Louis Derouet. Six years later, the issue of diversity has become central to education policies. Because a consensus has not been reached on this issue’s means or objectives, Bruno Garnier and Angela Barthes deemed it necessary to give it a new opening for discussion through a call for contributions in the McGill Journal of Education.

The call aims to study the way diversity, in the broadest sense, can be integrated in teaching to better inform the citizen of today and tomorrow. While North American countries, and more broadly Anglo-Saxon countries, acknowledge the presence of minorities within their borders and grant them specific rights, other countries, such as France, put up a certain resistance in the name of the emancipatory purpose of the school. This purpose is to extract children from their environment and teach them how to function by themselves in the society in which they must be integrated. To achieve this, an equivalence is established between a single people, a single state, a single language, and a single nation, which has long led to indifference toward differences in education. Yet, beyond these national specificities, the plurality of cultural identities that make up all the countries of the world is a universal fact. The objective of this issue is to study its pedagogical and didactic implications.

The development of the citizen – the eco-citizen today – is the main subject of study in this issue, which brings together several social, societal, and institutional aspects of the question of diversity. The definition of citizenship is enriched by new dimensions in societies whose cultural references are as diverse as the communities that inhabit them. Thus, we are witnessing the renewal of cosmopolitanism corresponding to the conjecture of globalization, in an international context marked by the rise of intercultural and interreligious tensions and health and environmental uncertainties (Garnier, Malet, and Derouet, 2020; Malet & Garnier, 2020).

The turning point of the 20th and 21st centuries was marked by the consideration of diversity in different aspects: gender and sexual orientation, social origin, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, state of health, age, territories of residence or territories of origin. The objectives of education have therefore been reformulated: the social integration project must henceforth develop in the recognition of differences. But beyond that, societal diversity is expressed through an acceleration of knowledge circulation and the mobility of women and men, while the specification of places and territories by various bodies has multiplied and fragmented the processes of social and political integration at several scales – local, regional, national, transnational – and according to several registers of civic, religious, linguistic, and social norms.

In the field of education, the diversity necessary to take on major societal developments such as globalization and the recognition of diversity is partially accommodated by the form of schooling and the disciplines as they are traditionally presented. In France, one of the answers seemed to lie in the development of “education in” (“environment and sustainable development”, “health”, “sexuality”, etc.), which appeared in the eighties (Barthes, Lange & Tutiaux, 2017). In Canada, an overly strict separation between disciplines seems incompatible with preparing future generations to become human beings living in society, socially emancipated, able to reflect and to critically examine society, and to understand the complexity of the world (Lenoir, Larose, and Lessard, 2005; Turner 2000). From this perspective, educational actors propose the development of interdisciplinarity. On the Anglo-Saxon side, the fields of “cultural studies” (Ang, 2008), “political studies” (Håkansson et al., 2017) or “controversial issues” (Levinson, 2017) complete the panel.

Today, to respond to diversity and to make sense, it seems necessary to diversify didactic approaches, to integrate and open up the disciplines towards questions that encompass society and territory, and to confront various theoretical and methodological approaches. Many of this issue’s contributors recommend mobilizing the capacity for initiative of formal and non-formal education actors, diversifying training and support needs, integrating the issue of diversity of audiences in didactics and, ultimately, showing the possibilities of didactic diversity.

The articles gathered here fall into three categories.

In the category of diversity didactics, the contributions study the way in which certain lively or sensitive issues are addressed in front of a multicultural, multi-confessional, multi-ethnic audience.

In an article titled “Essentialization of teachers’ representations of immigrant students and their families in Quebec,” Xavier Saint-Pierre focuses on the way in which the essentialization of teachers’ social representations of pupils identified as having an immigrant background and their families manifests itself. Three

empirically illustrated processes lead to recommendations for teacher training. Angela Barthes turns her attention to higher education by focusing on the “Internationalization of higher education through the sustainable development goals: Multiculturalism, diversity, or interculturality?”. This article examines the curricula of European universities, which are required to adapt to new audiences and new issues, and it values disciplinary transversality in the management of major societal issues, and particularly the objectives of sustainable development. Finally, Hasheem Hakeem’s text, titled “Between performance and fragility: Constructions of masculinity in high school boys’ discourses on gender”, closes this first section with the presentation of a qualitative case study on high school boys’ perceptions of gender diversity and their pedagogical implications.

In the category of didactic diversity, the articles explore the ways in which classical didactic approaches can be reformulated due to the diversity of audiences or knowledge mobilized.

First, Laurent Hen, Maria Popa-Roch, Odile Rohmer, and Nadege Doignon-Camus, in a contribution titled “The development of phonological awareness. Comparison of teaching practices in and out of priority education”, observe teaching practices to develop the phonological awareness of pre-electoral students, which vary according to their socio-economic background. It turns out that teachers prefer inefficient methods, especially in priority education schools. Marc-André Éthier and David Lefrançois propose an article titled “History at school, two steps back or one step forward? The nature of historical thinking and the didactic approach to diversity in citizenship education”. They study the articulation between the plurality of cultural identities, the registers of knowledge and the epistemological norms that give rise to debates in the teaching of history. The article supports the development of historical thinking in the classroom in the service of intellectual autonomy, critical thinking, and the spirit of tolerance. But does the current state of the educational institution allow this?

Finally, the ambition of this issue leads us to propose a third category of contributions, diversity education, which studies the complementarities between didactic diversity and diversity didactics in order to move towards an understanding of what diversity education could be.

With this in mind, Virginie Boelen has written a paper titled “Cross-disciplinary, subject centered, place-based didactics: For diversity education that is both biotic and epistemological”. Beyond humanity, it is for all living things that the environmental crisis calls for education in diversity. Based on this, the article develops an educational proposal focused on ecological living together and on the reception of epistemological diversity to develop a finer understanding of our relationship to the world. Then, Laure Moretti, whose article is titled “Experimenting with an educational strategy to develop a learning territory on the island of Corsica: Impacts on students’ eco-citizen profile”. Experimentation of an educational strategy developing a learning territory on the Corsican

Island territory: impacts on the eco-citizenship profile of students”, studies a pedagogical strategy based on the construction of a learning territory as a lever for educational development for quality eco-citizenship education, understood as an eco-citizenship that is emancipated, responsible, willing, and capable of commitments. Finally, under the title “Intercultural competences in teacher education: a polyphonic response to cultural diversity”, the article by Marie Lucy and Karima Gouaïch discusses the didactics of diversity on the basis of intercultural teaching in a plural context. The study questions the notion of intercultural competences and proposes avenues for teacher training using participatory and innovative pedagogies. Cultural diversity is both a scientific and ethical issue for higher education and research.

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