

The High and Low of the Canadian Multiculturalism: overview of federal and provincial inclusive education policy

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Abstract

This research examines teachers pre-service training programs offered in several Canadian universities, in their coherence with the federal and provincial policies in connection with the multicultural education. The provincial governments of the Ontario and Quebec adopt the same principles of justice and social equity, in spite of the terminological and ideological differences. From the point of view of training programs, a break seems to exist between the political principles promoted by the governments federal and provincial and the preparation of the future teachers to teach in a multiethnic context in both provinces.

Résumé

Cette recherche examine les programmes de formation initiale à l'enseignement offerts dans plusieurs universités canadiennes, dans leur cohérence avec les politiques fédérales et provinciales en lien avec l'éducation multiculturelle. Les gouvernements provinciaux de l'Ontario et du Québec adoptent les mêmes principes de justice et équité sociale,

malgré les différences terminologiques et idéologiques. Du point de vue des programmes de formation, une rupture semble exister entre les principes politiques promus par les gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux et la préparation des futurs enseignants à enseigner dans un contexte pluriethnique dans les deux provinces.

Ethnocultural diversity, mainly due to immigration, represents today a reality in major Canadian cities. Indeed, immigration is the most important factor in population growth in almost all regions of Canada, especially in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2003). The 2% population growth rate recorded by the cities of Toronto and Vancouver from 1996 to 2001 comes from international immigration (ibid.). At the same time, the Government of Canada believes that net labor force growth will be entirely attributed to immigration in 2011 (ibid.).

Immigrants represent 18.4% of the total population of Canada (ibid.), the highest level since the last five decades. However, the most radical change is found in the origin of immigrant groups¹. While in the 1960s and 1970s most immigrants were from countries of Western Europe (81%), new entrants come now from different countries.

Most immigrant concentrations are in large urban agglomerations as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal. Ethnocultural diversity is more and more expanding to regions considered so far (ibid.) as the most homogeneous in this view, such are Ottawa-Gatineau and the Calgary-Edmonton corridor. This certainly changed the ethnic composition of the society in general, but also has a considerable effect on the ethnic composition of the student population where youth cohorts are more diverse ethnically than older cohorts (ibid.).

¹ For instance, 57% of immigrants who established in Canada between 1991 and 1996 come from Asia, 13% are from Caribians, Central and South America, 7% are from Africa (ibid.)

Following this ethnocultural profile briefing, it is appropriate to ask if Canada is ready to integrate those newcomers of different ethnic origins and cultures. Politically, Canada is built for over forty years as a country open to international migration and has made this clear about its identity, at the beginning of the 1970s, as a multicultural society. The promotion of multiculturalism policy, initiated at the federal level by the Royal Commission investigative report on bilingualism and biculturalism and following the Official Languages Act, found answers at the provincial level. Most provinces have therefore established languages of origin teaching programs and, due to the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988), adopted policies of multicultural education at primary and secondary levels. Ontario, for example, has implemented policies of antiracism and ethnocultural equity in school boards as early as 1993, while Quebec introduced intercultural education policies as components of its education system reform (1998).

Recent studies emphasize limits of the said political establishment (Bannerji, 2000; Dei & Caliste, 2000; James, 2005). In the light of these observations, assumption can be made that the capacity of Canadian society to integrate those various cultural groups in a harmonious way relies in large extent on its inclusive education of all students, regardless their ethnocultural belonging. For this reason, teacher multicultural training for those already at work in Ontario's public schools, and above all, of future teachers, becomes an essential aspect in preparing for the profession. Indeed, given the population dynamics during the last ten years and medium term forecasts, it becomes imperative that teachers could adapt their pedagogical approach to the needs of increasingly cultural heterogeneous groups. In this context, we propose to examine the political framework in which the multicultural education occurs in Ontario and Quebec.

More specifically, our intervention is aimed at: 1) presenting multicultural education policies at the federal and provincial government levels; 2) scanning the degree of consistency between federal and provincial policies on multicultural education; 3) analyzing the degree of consistency between provincial policies and initial teacher education programs of important universities.

This text is divided into six sections. In the first, we will recall some historical markers over the multicultural policies in Canada. The second section will present provincial responses to Federal multicultural policy. A review of the concept of multiculturalism will be undertaken in the third part, while the fourth part will focus on the integration of multicultural approach within some initial teacher education programs. After having discussed the results based on the theoretical framework of multiculturalism, the findings will be presented in the sixth part.

1. Canadian multicultural policy: some historical benchmarks

At the beginning of the Confederation, 60.6% of the inhabitants of Canada were of British origin while 31.1% of the inhabitants were of French origin. At that time, immigration was seen as a source of settlement. Before the 1960s, Europe was the main source of immigration, providing 90% of immigrants settled in Canada.

Briefly, remember that at the beginning of the 20th century, Canadian immigration policy closed the door to immigrants from Asia and Africa. At the end of the 1940s, the Prime Minister, Sir Mackenzie King, promised a more opened policy of immigration, but in a way which does not "alter" the nation's character (Moodley, 1988).

It was only in the 1960s that, under the pressure of ethnic groups, the multi-ethnic character of Canadian society had been put forward upon the presentation of the Royal Commission report's conclusions on bilingualism and biculturalism (Houle, 1999). The immediate result of this report, in 1969, was the Official Languages Act declaring the English and French as official languages of the Canadian Federal Government. The assertion, in 1971, of multiculturalism as characteristic of Canadian society by the Liberal government headed by Pierre Elliot Trudeau, exceeded however the initial objectives of this report. Following the adoption of the Charter of rights and freedoms of the Constitution Act in 1981, the multiculturalism Act of Canada, adopted in 1988, is the completion of this process of liberalization and democratization of immigration in Canada. Indeed, the Act confirms the multicultural nature of Canada and provides legal support to minority groups who wish to preserve their cultural heritage while fully attending development of the main stream society.

2. Provincial responses to the Federal Act on multiculturalism

On another hand, every province has its own multicultural policies, except Manitoba (Ghosh and Abdi, 2004). Quebec, meanwhile, has implemented its own intercultural policy. Here are a few historical information of the establishment of provincial multicultural policies:

- Ontario: 1977: The Heritage Language program; 1987: Report about "Developing a political equity in racial and ethnocultural relations"; 1993: Policy of antiracism and ethnocultural equity;

- 1990 : Building Our Multicultural Future Together (Saskatchewan);
- 1993: Multiculturalism Act (British); education: 1995, revised in 2002;
- 1996: Human rights, citizenship and the Alberta Multiculturalism Act.

Provincial policies rely on the same values of cohesion and social equity, and support cultural communities in their efforts to preserve languages and cultures of origin.

3. Multicultural education, a political concept?

Multicultural policy has been, for years, resistance and calling into question. According to McAndrew, Helly and Tessier (2003)'s critics, multicultural policy would encourage minority groups' "ghettoisation", put forward a static and folklorized design of culture and identity as well as concealed power stakes within pluriethnic societies. As demonstrated by Houle (1999), the said politic has always aimed to social integrating effects.

Analysis has showed different guidelines, which nevertheless don't call into question its original spirit. Thus, McAndrew, Helly and Tessier (2003) identify three stages of the multicultural policy implemented under a folkloric approach in the 1970s, during which the focus was on the preservation of the languages and cultures of origin. In the 1980s, antiracial approaches of citizenship awareness among the main stream population have been preferred. Finally, strengthening the sense of belonging and of social cohesion seemed to mark the 1990s.

Over the years, the Federal Government has produced documents that explain its guidelines for multicultural policies such are:

- The Multiculturalism Act (1988);
- Canadian multiculturalism... to be Canadian (1989);
- The point on multiculturalism (1991);
- Multiculturalism. Respect, equality and diversity (1997);
- Report on the 2000/2001 Canadian multiculturalism.

Our analysis is based on these above documents.

4. Multicultural education in Ontario and Quebec teacher training programs

4.1 *Ontario*

Several documents stated Ontario's multicultural diversity management policies:

- Antiracism and ethnocultural equity in school boards. Guidelines for the preparation and implementation of a (MÉFO, 1993) policy;
- Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in school boards. Guidelines for policy development and implementation (Note MÉFO No. 119 of 13 July 1993);
- For the Love of Learning. Report of the Royal Commission on Learning (January 1995);
- Values, influences and peers. Resource Guide (revised edition 1996) ;
- Standards for the teaching profession (OE, 1999).

Analysis of Federal and Ontario's multicultural policies related documents highlights continuity of values and approaches preferred for a diverse social and school management. The following table shows the key elements of the so-called political.

Federal framework	Ontario Educational policies	Suggested actions
Ethnocultural diverse considered as a source of enrichment for the Canadian society	<p>Adaptation of teachers to differences with pupils' cultural, spiritual and language learning in respect of their diversity</p> <p>Linking student's learning to their life experiences as well as to their spiritual and cultural characteristics.</p> <p>Encouraging students to accept their own identity and to develop their self-esteem</p>	Initial teacher education and professional development
Multicultural policy aims to assure equal and equitable participation by everyone into social life, regardless his/her ethnocultural origin.	<p>See to eliminate discrimination and eliminate prejudices linking to people's ethnocultural and cultural origin</p> <p>Promote an equitable education which will give equal chances to everyone</p>	<p>Antiracist policies in school boards</p> <p>Equity program of access to employment and teacher training</p>
The Federal Government sustains minority groups in	Encourage students to	Initial teacher education

Federal framework	Ontario Educational policies	Suggested actions
preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage	<p>deepen knowledge about their cultural heritage</p> <p>Understand the impact of cultural heritage, language, family situation, sex and community, on learning</p>	and professional development

Table 1: Key elements related to the Ontario and Federal Governments multiculturalism policies

To understand how these policies are reflected in the multicultural training of future teachers, we analyzed initial teacher training programs offered in five Ontario universities which are the University of Toronto (OISE), Queen's University's (located in Kingston), York University, the University of Western Ontario (located in London) and the University of Ottawa. It should be noted that the University of Ottawa, a bilingual university of Ontario, provides two different teacher's pre-service training programs: in English and in French.

The presence of various aspects of multicultural education remains very strong at the University of Toronto, which provides one compulsory course dealing with relationships between the school and society, diversity in the classroom, educational policies and education orientations. Furthermore, nine optional courses (among 49 courses offered) cover all aspects of multicultural education and antiracism, including Aboriginal education.

At the University of Western Ontario (London), one optional course is offered on equity in education and social justice. There is no compulsory course on multicultural issues.

Queen's University's (in Kingston) offers one optional course dealing with multicultural education, one compulsory course introducing the issue of Aboriginal education and three optional courses on Aboriginal education. If the Aboriginal education seems well represented in the program, multicultural education however does not carry any compulsory course.

York University provides one compulsory course on urban education, which deals, *inter alia*, of multicultural education. There is no course specifically dedicated to multiculturalism.

The University of Ottawa francophone program includes one optional course on the values of Canadian society and, since September 2003, a compulsory course on class management within pluriethnic minority settings for students preparing to teach at the secondary level. For students preparing to teach at the elementary level, one optional course on teaching in pluriethnic minority settings is offered. On the other hand, the English program provides one compulsory course (Schooling and Society) dealing with the issue of the role of teachers in the reproduction and the elimination of social inequalities without directly showing a particular interest for the problem of ethno-cultural diversity. The English program also offers one optional course that specifically discusses the issues of the equity in education that examines the theories and practices of educational equity in relation to sexism, racism, and other social inequalities.

In despite of some differences which appear between universities selected for this study at the listed items such are mandatory/optional, general and specific course, their approaches seem to be similar from the point of view of enhancement of the multicultural education in their curricula. As such, table 2 summarizes the number and type of link with multicultural education courses offered by the studied faculties of university education. While specific courses deal only with the issues of multicultural education, general courses only consider this among other issues. For example, the course *Gestion de la classe en contexte minoritaire francophone - Class management within pluriethnic minority settings* (University of Ottawa, francophone program) is exclusively dedicated to issues of multiculturalism education. On the other hand, the course called *Schooling and Society* (anglophone program) is assumed to deal with antiracism and multiculturalism, educational values and popular culture topics, according to the description published in the Yearbook of the Faculty of education.

Analysis of the explicit curricula offered in five universities selected for this study reveals that initial teacher education doesn't seem to be concerned about multicultural education to the same extent as the provincial and federal governments do. This emerges from the number of courses dedicated to multicultural issues over all the courses offered, along with their status as compulsory or optional courses, together with the scope of approach related to aspects of multiculturalism. Indeed, multicultural issues are most often treated in optional courses. This state of facts leads to the conclusion that multiculturalism education is not at the heart of the preparation of future teachers. In addition, it is rare that a specific course is dedicated to multicultural education; far from it, certain aspects are among topics to address in dealing with the values of Canadian

society and education within courses where equity and social justice are general ideals shared by all democratic education system.

	University of Toronto	University of Western Ontario	Queen's University	York University	University of Ottawa (English program)	University of Ottawa (French program)
Specific compulsory course						1 (secondary level)
Specific optional course	9		1			
General compulsory course	1			1	1	
General optional course		1			1	1

Table 2: Courses link to multicultural education offered at the studied Ontario universities

4. 2. Québec

Quebec, on its own, has developed another intercultural approach. From the point of view of education, the Québec intercultural approach is presented in the following documents:

- Prendre le virage du succès. L'École, tout un programme. Énoncé de politique éducative. (1997)
- Une école d'avenir. Prendre le virage du succès. Politique d'intégration scolaire et interculturelle. (1998)

- Plan d'action en matière d'intégration scolaire et d'éducation interculturelle 1998 – 2002. (1998)
- Plan stratégique 2000 – 2003. Mise à jour 2001.
- La formation des enseignants. Les orientations. Les compétences professionnelles. (2001)

Analysis of these documents help identifying key elements of Québec intercultural policy. In despite of an opposition between Quebec's and the Federal terminology and ideology, the values that underpin the Quebec intercultural policy are consistent with those of the Federal Government:

- recognition of immigration and diversity as factors of change;
- success of all youth according to their potential;
- equal opportunities relatively to the access to knowledge and expected skills;
- zero exclusion;
- how to live together: respect of differences and sharing the same social values;
- mastering French : the common language in public life.

It is interesting to note that, in the teachers' referential of competencies established by the Ministry of education of Quebec in 2001, there is no specific competency related to intercultural education. Intercultural education is found, instead, in some skill components. This way, intercultural education is put to a secondary plan, ethnocultural diversity management is not expected within novice teacher output profiles.

Confirmation of the previous note came from studies made over six Quebec universities programs chosen for this purpose:

- Université de Montréal : One compulsory course on urban education

- Université Laval (Québec) : One compulsory course (Aspects sociaux et éducation - *Social aspects in education*); three optional courses (Éducation en milieu interculturel – *Education within intercultural context*; Minorités ethniques et nationalitaires - *Ethnic minorities and nationalistic*; Choc des cultures : le Québec contemporain - *Culture clashes: the contemporary Quebec*)
- Université de Sherbrooke : One compulsory course (intercultural approaches) offered only to students with special training in international program teaching – Bachelor of education at preschool and primary level teaching (about 25 students out of 180) et one compulsory course of two credits offered to students enrolled in the program of bachelor in education at the secondary level teaching; 1 compulsory course (Fondements de l'éducation et système éducatif – *Basis and system of education*) offered to students enrolled in the program of bachelor in education at the preschool and primary level teaching which deals with ethnocultural diversity and school relations with the ethnic communities;
- Université du Québec à Montréal : primary school education: one compulsory course (Éducation et pluriethnicité au Québec – *Education and pluriethnicity in Quebec*), one optional course (Problèmes interculturels à l'école – *Intercultural issues at school*) ; secondary school education: one compulsory course (Problèmes interculturels à l'école – *Intercultural issues at school*);
- Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières : one compulsory course (École, pluralisme et réalités sociales – *School, pluralism and social realities*)
- Université du Québec en Outaouais : one compulsory course (Valeurs et société – *Values and society*)

The Table 3 below presents summary of offering courses in connection with the issue of multiculturalism in six Quebec universities. Among those, only two do not offer specific course on this theme, but only general courses in which multiculturalism and cultural diversity are not the focal point. At least, this seems to testify, if not a first step to dialogue, a more adequate response of the training programs to policy guidelines expressed by the Government.

	Université de Montréal	Université Laval	Université de Sherbrooke	Université du Québec à Montréal	Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières	Université du Québec en Outaouais
Specific compulsory course	1		2	2		
Spécific optional course		3		1		
General compulsory course		1	1		1	1
General optional course						

Table 3 : Courses related to multicultural education offered at universities in Quebec

5. Ideological and pragmatic breaks in multicultural policy

As this study has demonstrated, a high degree of consistency is found between the Government of Canada's multicultural policies and education objectives formulated in official documents of the various Ontario and Quebec agencies. However, Quebec adds

its specific touch on intercultural approaches, especially in the visible attention given to the French language and, more recently, the definition of the Québec identity.

Ontario and Quebec educational approaches fall as part of the "social action" defined by Banks (1989) to the harmonious integration of members of cultural groups in Canadian society. However, analysis of the twelve major Ontario and Québec universities curricula demonstrates a rupture between provincial education system requirements and initial teacher education programs: university approaches are instead of "add-on" type (according to Banks, 1989). These institutions contented themselves to add some courses (mostly of an optional type) with ethnic contents, principles of justice and social equity, without any integrating effort of substance in their curricula. Indeed, didactic courses refer very rarely to how to deal with ethnic diversity and multicultural issues.

At the same time, while official policies are consistent with the objectives of multicultural or intercultural education (Pagé, 1993), scanned initial teacher education programs have evaded important dimensions. The University of Toronto remains the only university to integrate all aspects of multicultural education. Although concepts which recognize and valorize diversity as well as justice and social equity are found in offered courses, it is rare that those concepts are treated as being linked, this leads to fragmented representations and so biased on the issue.

This state of fact seems to be the consequence of the lack of concerted actions aimed to unify education multicultural approaches in initial teacher education in Ontario and in Quebec. Still left to the initiative of each faculty, sometimes kept outside the concerns of training programs, multicultural education is not valued in university curricula. Future teachers then begin their work without understanding issues, which

explains the discriminatory phenomena which still reported in empirical studies, and which will certainly be reproduced outside of school. Multicultural policy promoted by the Federal and Provincial governments may not be effective as long as it has no support of initial teacher education programs.

In the context of growing social demand and a systemic framework, binding enough from the political point of view, the Ontario faculties of education should adapt their programs of initial teacher education to provide future teachers a preparation enabling them to provide a fair and inclusive education. This adjustment is made possible through the implementation of clear institutional policies, establishing a uniform and systematic training base. A sustained application effort must accompany the adoption of such a policy. In the direction of a deeper integration of multicultural education principles, curricular changes with applied training provided by teachers acting within initial teacher education are needed.

6. Conclusion

This search is only a starting point for exploratory. We pointed out not only inconsistencies between the formal programs of twelve major Canadian universities but also the political guidelines of the education system in Ontario and Quebec. These results reach the same conclusions drawn from outstanding studies on multicultural preparation of future teachers in major Canadian universities (Mujawamariya & Moldoveanu, 2003b, 2006a and 2006b).

Certainly, more studies in depth are necessary to better reflect what means multicultural education in initial teacher education in Ontario and Quebec. On another

level, examination of consistency between multiculturalism guidance in education system and teaching practices in public school in Ontario and Quebec would constitute another not yet explored track of research. Supported results of such researches could conduct improvements to pre-service teacher training offered by Canadian universities in order to implement multicultural education principles, in terms of respect and appreciation of diversity as well as equity and social justice.

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