Thematic issue of the “Bulletin du CREAS”

Title: Inclusive education and school subjects

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Framework:

In recent years, inclusive education has emerged not only as a goal of school education, but also as a condition for its very existence. The expression refers to the idea that no student should be left behind whether at school or in the schooling process in general. It is imbedded in a framework of similar theories such as anti-racist education, intercultural or multicultural education, even citizenship education. Whether it is referred to as "an inclusive school", "an inclusive pedagogy", or, as per the Université de Sherbrooke, an "inclusive approach", inclusive education now seems to rally both scientists and actors from the field.

Derived from numerous rights and declarations, such as the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) and the Guiding Principles for Inclusion (UNESCO, 2005), inclusive education has grown in the last two decades in the special education field (Boutin and Bessette, 2009).

If the concept of inclusive education is not yet a consensus in the scientific community (Prud'homme et al., 2016) or in the discourse of government agencies (CSE, 2010; Messiou, 2016), it illustrates the will of educational systems to adopt a systemic approach (CSE, 2017), based on equity, diversity and social justice for the development of each learner's potential (Potvin, 2013). It thus goes beyond the scope of integrating students with disabilities or in difficulty (CSE, 2017). Today, it takes into account the issues raised by social, ethnocultural, linguistic and religious pluralism in schools. In this sense, inclusive education consists in adapting the school to its environment (Potvin, 2014). According to Audet and Gosselin-Gagné (to be published), "an inclusive education certainly requires a certain split with more traditional school practices (for teaching, pedagogy, management) since it implies that one seeks to achieve the full potential of all students by employing differentiated, innovative practices (Thomazet, 2006) that are specific to their needs (Potvin, 2013)” (S.p.).

This idea is so important that a new intercultural and inclusive professional competence for Quebec teachers has been imagined and is being integrated into the official repository (Potvin et al., 2015) (http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/bs2482627). It is about developing attitudes and abilities to act, contributing to greater equity and social justice. While it does not appear at first sight, the question of disciplinary knowledge is not completely excluded from reflection. It is approached more directly in the following components: "Developing a professional conscience critical of the knowledge, practices, attitudes and school processes that produce or reproduce situations of exclusion and discrimination" (Potvin et al., 2015, p. 40) and "adopt attitudes and practices that recognize and legitimize learners' linguistic repertoire, ethnocultural, religious and migratory experiences and realities to support their educational success" (p. .41). These two components invite us to think about the process of school knowledge selection and the impact of this knowledge on students. To omit these measures would result in an unequal access to knowledge (Sutherland and Dennick, 2002).
Inclusive education, however, often seems to deal mainly with classroom management and educational structures. The various conferences on the subject rarely include focusing on school subjects. In fact, in this global portrait, the reflection on school subjects still seems underdeveloped, which can be understood as an invitation to explore the following question: how does inclusive education challenge the structures of school subjects?

School knowledge is not innocent, it reflects social choices, power relationships as well. We know, for example, that the teaching of history transmits selected and selective knowledge that sometimes (often) tends to reproduce the status quo in place in society. If the issue of transmitted knowledge raises inclusion concerns, can we say the same about disciplinary skills that have a more universal aim? The development of mathematical, scientific or historian thinking has a scope transcending ethnocultural, linguistic or religious boundaries. These rigorous and methodical modes of thinking force one to go beyond empirical knowledge, while still being anchored in it. Is this characteristic a lever for inclusion or is it an obstacle?

Similarly, while inclusive schooling is important for students in difficulty and those of ethnocultural, linguistic and religious diversity, it cannot be addressed without raising some of the issues of Aboriginal student inclusion and the integration of Aboriginal knowledge at school. These types of knowledge sometimes complement the knowledge of the "traditional" school, but they can also question them. Indeed, the nature of scientific knowledge is sometimes challenged, because it would be derived from Western approaches wrongly seen as universal (Aikenhead, 1997; Rich, 2012). So, does the integration of indigenous knowledge exclusively serves to add a new knowledge charge to the list already prescribed? Moreover, would it be necessary to review all these knowledge types with their underlying epistemology, as some authors suggest? How to proceed from here?

This thematic issue of the "Bulletin du CREAS" aims to document how the structure and content of school subjects as well as pedagogical approaches are challenged by inclusive education.

Three axes guide this issue. The texts can belong to one of the following axes:

1. The theoretical models serving as anchors in school subjects

This axis questions existing models and theoretical approaches; explores the conceptual changes, even paradigms, implied by inclusive education in any of the school subjects. The expected texts can be theoretical reflections or empirical research testing one or more of the models.

2. Inclusive teaching approaches in school subjects

This axis will bring together texts mentioning inclusive educational initiatives carried out in any of the school subjects. The presentation of empirical results is desirable, but the texts describing proposed implementation models will also be considered.

3. Nature, configuration and referents of school content

The texts of this axis will question the prescribed school knowledge, their epistemological and social referents and their scope in terms of inclusion.
Timetable for this thematic issue: Deadlines

Notice of the intention to submit a text: July 15th, 2019

Text submission: November 15th, 2019

Issue publishing: January 2020

For more information, or to notify us of your intention to submit a text, please write to Sabrina Moisan: sabrina.moisan@usherbrooke.ca.

References


