

# IN THOUGHT AND DEED, COMMITTED TO AN INTERCULTURAL QUÉBEC



ÉDITH GAUDET  
Sociology Professor  
Collège Ahuntsic



SYLVIE LOSLIER  
Anthropology Professor  
Collège Édouard-Montpetit

Toward the end of the 80's, particularly in the Montréal region, the cégep network began to welcome first- and second-generation immigrants. Faced with this new reality of Québec society, professors, socio-cultural animators and professionals got together in 1988 to launch the Service interculturel collégial (SIC)<sup>1</sup>.

Owing to the strong conviction of SIC's founding members and those who followed in their footsteps, various means were set up to manage this ethnocultural diversity, to stimulate reflection on pedagogical issues and carry out timely interventions in cégeps. On several occasions, the SIC assisted in the development of common orientations regarding intercultural education. The main objectives of the SIC are:

- Develop a common orientation for intercultural education in Québec cégeps.
- Provide collegial contributors with conceptual and practical tools to better grasp the particulars of intercultural reality in cégeps.
- Sensitize and train collegial intervenors in matters of intercultural education.
- Collect, analyze and disseminate theoretical and practical information in intercultural education.
- Intervene and make recommendations to the appropriate collegial and government agencies.

To achieve these objectives, means of intervention such as training programs, conferences, the creation of a website, and partnerships etc., were expanded. Over the next few years, the SIC joined

forces with the MEQ in dealing with intercultural issues in colleges. Today, four main axes guide their activities: Training, information, research, and intervention.

This article discusses two of these axes: Research and training. The first section presents a synthesis of concepts related to the definition of three fields of study: Intercultural education, rights, and citizenship. Then, the objectives and content related to intercultural education, rights and citizenship are investigated; followed by the skills and attitudes acquired via these fields of intervention. In the second section of the article, one of SIC's major concerns is introduced: Training. For this purpose, relevant actions and interventions undertaken by cégeps and the SIC in the last few years to best meet the needs of colleges are identified.

## RESEARCH AXIS

Over the years, the SIC has initiated a number of studies on the definition, scope and limitations of intercultural education. Education concerning rights and citizenship came later. Although these educational fields differ in their specific content, they overlap in three areas of knowledge that share several common characteristics. Intercultural education, education on rights and education in citizenship have contents that require a systematic and interdisciplinary approach within a program. However, intercultural education, education on rights, and education in citizenship differ in their respective source contexts, application fields, and particular perspective: Multi-ethnicity for intercultural education; rights, freedom, and democracy for education on rights; and civic commitment and participation for education in citizenship. In addition, these three fields complement each other and overlap: They appeal to the overall student body, encompass a totality of disciplines, deal with certain topics such as human rights and the fight against discrimination, and take a critical stand on public events linked to diversity here and abroad.

An interdisciplinary approach should help students develop short- and long-term attitudes and skills that will allow them to become active and responsible citizens with personal opinions and the ability to make critical judgments. The goals of intercultural education, education on human rights and education in citizenship can be achieved only within the scope of a program and not within the context of a specific course.

## THREE COMPLEMENTARY FIELDS: INTERCULTURAL, HUMAN RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Intercultural education prepares students to live together in a pluralistic society and develop skills such as the capacity to communicate, manage intercultural reality,

<sup>1</sup> SIC offices are located at 625 Ste-Croix Avenue, Saint-Laurent (QC) H4L 3X7. You can reach us at 514-747-6521, ext. 7287, or at [sic@videotron.net](mailto:sic@videotron.net). Website: <http://www.service-interculturel-collegial.qc.ca>.



and be receptive to differences without negating one's own cultural identity. Its goal is to sensitize students to the plurality of society and encourage fair participation of all students, regardless of origin. It is education that is diverse, a "cultural education for all". The main goals of intercultural education are:

- Prepare students to live together in a pluralistic society, by providing knowledge.
- Develop communication skills for multi-ethnic contexts and be receptive to differences without negating one's own cultural identity.
- Encourage students to have an open attitude towards the positive aspects of ethno-cultural plurality in Québec and the world.

**Human rights education** can be defined as the development of tolerance, respect, and solidarity for human rights and alertness to acts of discrimination. The main objectives of education in human rights are:

- Sensitize and encourage the emergence of social consciousness that identifies inequalities and works towards their eradication.
- Develop a sense of responsibility, to foresee and assume the consequences for one's actions.
- Work towards transforming the world by rearranging social relationships between individuals and changing the underlying intellectual mindsets.

**Education in citizenship** refers to social inclusion and focuses on the commitment of citizens in both public and private arenas within society. It is based on an ability to participate in the democratic organization of social and political life. The main objectives of education in citizenship are:

- Assert one's identity through membership in social, cultural, national, and supranational groups and through one's political, legal, social, and global citizenship.
- Learn to live together in a democratic society with rights based on equality, civic and political participation.
- Participate actively in political life and society through social debates, the peaceful management of conflicts and social commitment.

The following table<sup>2</sup> illustrates the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to promote with regard to intercultural education, education on human rights and education in citizenship.

## TRAINING AXIS

In 1998, the MEQ took a major step forward by adopting a *Politique d'intégration scolaire et d'éducation interculturelle* (Academic integration and intercultural education policy) to specify the key orientations in this field and provide educational institutions with a real action plan.

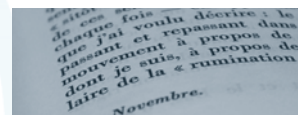
<sup>2</sup> Comparison table taken from SIC's *Penser, agir et s'engager en éducation interculturelle, en éducation aux droits et à la citoyenneté*, Montréal, Service interculturel collégial, Montreal, May 2004, p. 27-28.

Knowledge  
of concepts

Knowledge  
of facts

Skills

Attitudes



## KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES TO FOSTER<sup>3</sup>

### Intercultural education<sup>4</sup>

#### Concepts related to:

- Intercultural relations: culture, ethnicity, nation, minority, community, aboriginal peoples
- Intercultural communication: identity, culture shock, cultural code, verbal and non-verbal communication
- Obstacles to intercultural communication: stereotypes, prejudices, ethnocentricity, racism, xenophobia
- Management of ethnocultural diversity: intercultural mediation, reasonable compromise

#### Facts related to immigration:

- Historical, demographic, juridical, socio-economic, socio-cultural data
- Adaptation, integration, acculturation

#### Facts related to First Nations:

- Historical, demographic, juridical, socio-economic and socio-cultural data
- National minorities, aboriginal peoples
- Living together in a pluralistic and democratic society
- Using communication in an intercultural context
- Analyzing intercultural situations
- Learning about intercultural negotiation and mediation
- Intervening in intercultural situations
- Moving away from one's cultural group
- Promoting intercultural meetings and exchanges
- Remaining receptive to ethnocultural diversity
- Assuming one's social responsibilities

### Human rights education<sup>5</sup>

#### Concepts related to:

- Human values: dignity, justice, liberty, solidarity, reciprocity, equality and cooperation
- Human rights: history, individual and collective rights
- Discrimination: harassment, exploitation
- Protection of human rights institutions and mechanisms
- Words that affirm and protect rights and freedoms: charters, laws, declarations, agreements
- Recourses, reasonable compromise, mediation

#### Facts related to situations:

- Struggles with claims, affirmation, liberation
- Violations of rights, inequalities, oppression, exploitation
- Recognize and integrate differences in conformity with democracy
- Analyze conflicts involving rights
- Understand and use mechanisms that protect and promote human rights
- Adopt solutions that respect human rights
- Develop critical thinking within the framework of democracy
- Recognize individual equality in value, dignity and human rights
- Accept the differences acknowledged in charters
- Display empathy for those whose human rights are not respected
- Commit to and participate in democratic life

### Education in citizenship<sup>6</sup>

#### Concepts related to:

- Political, juridical and global citizenships
- Social identity and belongingness on a social, ethnocultural, national and supranational level
- Civil society and non governmental organizations

#### Facts related to:

- Globalization and international relationships
- Situations of inequality and exploitation in the labour market, access to natural resources and the distribution of wealth
- Effective system of human rights: access to equality programs and measures
- Analyze contemporary issues
- Identify local and global solutions to problems caused by globalization
- Develop critical thinking as regards the media
- Assume responsibility relative to major local and international issues
- Promote fairness among cultural groups and within societies
- Develop one's social commitment and participation as well as one's capacity to debate important social and political issues
- Create solidarity
- Participate actively in social and political events
- Make a social commitment

<sup>3</sup> This table is a synthesis of the reflections and research in intercultural education as well as civil rights and citizenship education. It reflects contemporary facts and concerns. It is therefore not exhaustive but requires continuous updating.

<sup>4</sup> Taken from: SIC in collaboration with the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (Charter of human rights and freedoms), *Les contenus d'information en interculturel et en éducation aux droits et libertés*, Montréal, AQPC, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>6</sup> Content inspired by the research of Gagnon and Pagé (1998) for the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (Charter of human rights and freedoms) (2003) and the SIC (2003).



At the beginning of the new millennium, shortly after the publication of *Politique d'intégration scolaire et d'éducation interculturelle un atout pour le collégial* (SIC), several cégeps took stock of the intercultural situation in their institution in order to analyze the orientation required to draft a policy or a declaration of intent for intercultural education. From more than four years, from 1999 to 2002, the MEQ mandated the SIC to provide the necessary services to cégeps that wanted to develop a policy relative to school integration and intercultural education (more than 20 cégeps participated in the program). Since then, the SIC has provided training, ongoing support and hosted meetings so that participants could exchange ideas and position themselves relative to school integration and intercultural education.

In its mandate, the SIC assigns special importance to the accomplishments of cégeps. Within the framework of SIC seminars and conferences, they are given an opportunity to display their achievements. SIC members come from all the cégeps throughout Québec. Additionally, the website features work carried out by the SIC and facilitates communication between interveners from the participating cégeps. The following section introduces a few examples of projects undertaken by cégeps and presented at seminars and conferences organized by the SIC during the last three years.

#### PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY CÉGEPS

At a seminar in 2002, the SIC distributed information on tools to identify ethnic diversity among the student population (Cégep du Vieux-Montréal and Cégep de Rosemont); information on the participation of students from ethnic minorities in activities organized by Student Services (Cégep Ahuntsic) and on a twinning experiment with students from Vanier College and Cégep de Sainte-Foy.

As part of the symposium on *Formation interculturelle pour le Québec et pour ailleurs* (2003) (Intercultural Training in Québec and elsewhere), we invited professors from Cégep Édouard-Montpetit and Cégep Maisonneuve to comment on the document *La formation interculturelle dans les programmes pré universitaires* (Intercultural training in pre-university programs). At the same time, a group of professors and educational advisors from Vanier College, cégep d'Alma and cégep de Rosemont presented a report titled *Bilan du volet Politiques institutionnelles d'intégration scolaire et d'éducation interculturelle dans les cégeps du Québec* (Institutional policies as regards school integration and intercultural education in Québec cégeps). Participants also debated the question of Intercultural Training for work placements abroad. Here again, we called upon the expertise of various colleges: François-Xavier Garneau, St-Laurent, Ahuntsic, Vieux-Montréal, Marie-Victorin and Jonquière. Finally, professors from Cégep de Sainte-Foy discussed the issues pertaining to *La formation interculturelle entre la pédagogie et le para-académique* (Intercultural training between pedagogy and para-academic).

#### TRAINING ON A VARIETY OF THEMES

The SIC also offers reflection-training on themes relating to components of education in citizenship (intercultural and human rights). As such, several seminars and symposiums focused on these issues.

In 2002, the SIC organized a symposium entitled *S'interroger sur les citoyennetés* (Questions on citizenship) that united university researchers like Ricuado Petrella and Marie McAndrew as well as researchers from various colleges (Montmorency, Rosemont and Ahuntsic), the Human rights commission and community groups (Équiterre).

*The SIC also offers reflection-training on themes relating to components of education in citizenship.*

In the same spirit, the 2004 symposium on *Le cégep: reflet d'une société pluraliste et ouverte sur le monde* (Cégeps: The reflection of a pluralistic society open onto the world) showcased several events: A sociocultural portrait of immigration (Citizenship and Immigration), and a conference on the *Portrait sociologique des communautés arabophones* (Sociological portrait of Arabic-speaking communities) including, socio-professional, religious, demographic and other data, as well as the integration of these communities into Québec society since their arrival. As part of the theme *L'adaptation institutionnelle des cégeps au pluralisme ethnoculturel* (Institutional adaptation of cégeps to ethnocultural pluralism), a presentation on *La négociation interculturelle: un outil prometteur pour les cégeps* (Intercultural negotiation: A promising tool for cégeps) broached the subject of intercultural mediation at Cégep de Rosemont. A round table discussion on lay and religious diversity stimulated reflection on this important social issue while identifying the limitations of the Charter of human rights and liberties.

The guests at this round table included Micheline Milot (UQAM), Yolande Geadah (intercultural consultant) and Pierre Bosset (Human rights and freedoms and Youth



Protection). This symposium closed with the viewing of a documentary *La colère des panas* (The anger of the Panas), featuring modern slavery, and certain crucial citizenship issues.

In June 2005, the most recent SIC symposium *Société civile et citoyennetés* (Society and citizenship), shed considerable light on specifics of this subject through various activities.

The conference given by Mireille Tremblay from Institut du Nouveau Monde and the Observatoire de la démocratie au Québec dealt with the role of cultural diversity and rights and liberties in a definition of citizenship, while the presentation of Ali Daher focused on integration strategies and the sense of belonging of Muslim communities in Québec society. Then, from the perspective of access to citizenship and environments of inclusion, Rachida Azdouz defined the place of religion in the integration of citizenship in schools; Annick Germain talked about the integration of immigrants into the city starting with places of religious worship and lastly, Sylvie Gravel outlined issues surrounding what was at stake regarding public health services adapted to cultural diversity.

## CONCLUSION

The SIC touches all cégeps and during the last few years has seen many different players join our ranks, with diversified levels of expertise and needs.

Take for instance pluralistic cégeps that must offer services to immigrant youth, regional cégeps that must prepare their students to live in a pluri-ethnic society, cégeps that offer training abroad and take advantage of this expertise to promote intercultural education, and finally,

cégeps that include aboriginal peoples and English-speaking cégeps where diversity is experienced on a daily basis.

If ethnic and religious diversity is well rooted in cégeps and in Québec society as a whole, globalization forces us to face a variety of lifestyles and behaviours while raising a number of questions. The challenge of promoting intercultural education, as well as human rights and education in citizenship at collegial level, where change is constant, remains therefore a very present concern. ●

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Édithe GAUDET is a sociology professor at Collège Ahuntsic and keenly interested in intercultural pedagogy and relationships. She has published several works including her most recent *Relations interculturelles. Comprendre pour mieux agir*, published in 2005 by Éditions Modulo. She is a member of the board of directors of Service interculturel collégial for several years now. It is within this role that she has co-authored this article..

Edithe.Gaudet@collegeahuntsic.qc.ca

Anthropology professor at Cégep Édouard-Montpetit, Sylvie LOSLIER is also in charge of projects for the SIC and sits on the board of directors since its creation in 1988. Over the years, she organized several training sessions and carried out various research in the field of intercultural relationships and human rights education. Among her published work is *Des relations interculturelles, du roman à la réalité*, and two books written in collaboration with the Commission des droits de la personne, *Droits et liberté... À visage découvert* (2002) and *Un parcours de lutte et d'espoir* (1999).

sylvie.loslier@sympatico.ca