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DE FORMATION DE L'ÉCOLE QUÉBÉCOISE

ACCOMPANIMENT OF
THE EVALUATION OF LEARNING
TO SUPPORT LEARNING AND TO RECOGNIZE COMPETENCIES

BOOKLET 4: A PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL EQUITY
FOR THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF EVALUATION

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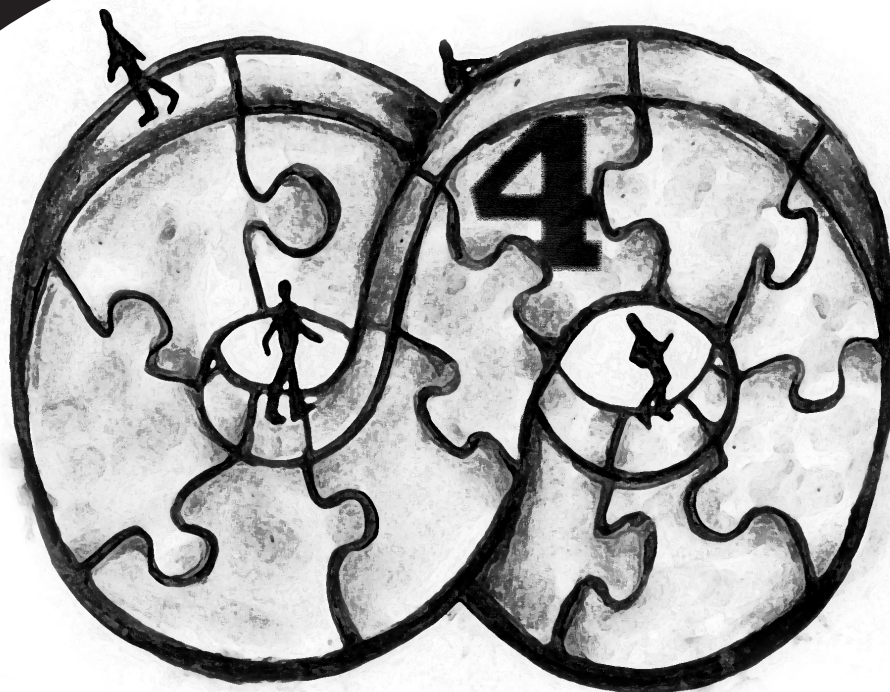Québec 🔷🔷

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Accompagnement-Recherche-Formation pour la mise en œuvre du Programme de formation de l'école québécoise

ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE EVALUATION OF LEARNING

To support learning and to recognize competencies

Booklet 4: A perspective of socio-pedagogical equity for the accompaniment of evaluation

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The publication of the series of seven booklets which make up Accompaniment of the Evaluation of Learning: To Support Learning and to Recognize Competencies is part of the *Projet Accompagnement-Recherche-Formation pour la mise en oeuvre du Programme de formation de l'école québecoise*. This series of booklets serves as a reflection and intervention tool for school staff and is meant to assist them in furthering certain concepts related to the Quebec Education Program and to the evaluation of competencies. The series is also meant to assist them in developing coherent practices to accompany evaluation - as a support for learning and for the recognition of competencies.

Note: Please forward any comments you may have to the following address: **accompagnement@uqtr.ca**

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Booklet 4

A Perspective of Socio-pedagogical Equity for the Accompaniment of Evaluation[1]

Questions for reflection
- **What elements of the Québec Education Program, create openness to a pluralistic world ?**
- **What, within the context of the education reform, creates openness toward a pluralistic world ?**
- **In what ways can the evaluation of learning occur in a perspective of equity ?**

The Quebec Education Program (QEP) includes three aims: construct world view, construct identity and empowerment. It is based on the development of competencies, which requires the mobilisation and the interrelation of a variety of internal and external resources. Its structure includes three components: broad areas of learning ; cross-curricular competencies ; and subject areas, which include the subject-specific competencies (MEQ, 2001, 2004). This dynamic arrangement, based on a democratisation of education where the classroom and the school embrace a diversity of individuals, is preparation for an openness to the world and to the experience of a pluralistic society. In that sense, the spirit of the reform 1) considers students as unique creations who live and will have to live in a pluralistic world ; 2) seeks to take into account all the dimensions of learning (cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, moral, cultural ; and 3) is concerned with the fact that young people will have to live and work with those who are different from themselves. This situation presumes an openness to difference in the various functions of the school and teaching, particularly in the evaluation of learning. Students who wish to succeed in school soon learn what behaviours are expected of them, especially in matters of evaluation, while others wish to remain true to themselves, which can stimulate their creativity. However, that can create problems which may diminish confidence, if it differentiates them from the others, that is, if they employ unusual strategies or strategies that may, while adequate, seem less effective to the teacher. Different learning styles and processes may be difficult to accept ; that demands a reflection on the creation of the learning and evaluation situation (see booklet 2 on situations), and, in particular, on the methods of evaluation both as support for learning and as recognition of competencies or for a competency report. Those differences can result from previous school experience, but also from learning outside the school, in the family and in society.

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[1] Portions of this text are extracted from Lafortune (2003a, 2006a-b).

The contents of this booklet will look at socio-pedagogical equity from the view of principles related to the process of teaching-learning-evaluation, of characteristics of the evaluation of learning, and of the challenges that emerge from social diversity. Theoretical elements relating to the concept of socio-pedagogical equity and a description of the links between this and the reform will also be discussed. As well, the perspective of socio-pedagogical equity is represented through social components such as inclusion, co-education and citizenship education in the framework of socio-constructivist principles that inherently involve reflections and interactions (Lafortune and Gaudet, 2000 ; Lafortune, 2003a, 2006a-b ; Rousseau and Bélanger, 2004 ; Vienneau, 2004). Finally, we will suggest methods for the accompaniment of a practice of equity in evaluation. Throughout the booklet, questions for reflection are suggested, both for personal reflection and the accompaniment on these concepts and for improving the repertoire of strategies for encouraging reflection by those accompanied.

1.   Regarding the process of teaching-learning-evaluation

Questions for reflection
- **What principles of the process teaching-learning evaluation would take into account the diversity of students living in a pluralistic society ?**
- **How might those principles affect the evaluation of learning ?**

Consideration of the pluralistic world in which students live and will have to live along with the various dimensions of learning implies a consideration of the teaching-learning-evaluation process. In order to foster such a consideration, school personnel are encouraged to examine their practices as well as their beliefs (conceptions and convictions), which are influenced by their own attitudes, prejudices, preconceptions…or that influence them. Certain principles direct our consideration of those beliefs and practices ; they are described here in the perspective of the evaluation of learning.

1.1.   Creating openness to diversity

Creating openness to diversity presupposes an acceptance, indeed respect, not only for individuals (attitudes, abilities, etc.) but for their ways of doing things (strategies, procedures, etc.), their ideas or views, as well as their culture or ethnicity. As a practitioner, that presumes, among other things, the knowledge, competencies, understanding and respect to instil in students a sense of the richness in diversity.

Pedagogical reflection

In teaching, learning situations can be analysed with a view to determining whether they are limited to a single possible approach and whether they demand that students employ a particular or predetermined procedure.

Reflection for accompaniment

In an accompaniment process, it may prove useful to help accompanists anticipate different procedures students might use in approaching a learning situation. If that occurs in a cycle-team, a far greater variety of initiatives may arise and assist

teachers in encouraging the verbalisation of various activities in a perspective of openness.

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

Openness to diversity presumes an acceptance of different approaches, whether for evaluation or for the recognition of competencies. However, that is not always simple in practice, since a student may resort to a course of action that seems "complicated" to others but not to the student himself. This requires entering the metacognition of the student rather than imposing a single approach for all students, on the assumption that it is more direct, less complicated or more efficient for confronting certain situations. It may even be necessary to conduct short interviews with some students in order to understand what underlies their choices before making an evaluative judgement.

Questions for reflection
- **How can school personnel be encouraged to develop openness to:**
    - **Diversity ?**
    - **the diversity of learning styles ?**
    - **the diversity of procedures ?**
    - **the diversity of mental approaches ?**
- **How can school personnel be made to understand that an approach different from their own can be simple and relevant for a particular student ?**

1.2. Heterogeneity as support for learning

Heterogeneity as support for learning relates to the idea that learning is a complex process in which students present a broad range of characteristics. In forming classroom sub-groups that are intended to be homogeneous, we too often forget the differing nature of individuals in terms of the cognitive, metacognitive, social, cultural dimensions, which implies that no true homogeneity is possible. Moreover, it is easy to forget that diversity can serve as support for learning, both social and academic. For example, listening to students talk about the strategies they use assists those who verbalise them to clarify and become aware of them, but it also helps those listening to augment their repertoire of strategies.

Pedagogical reflection

Practitioners may wonder why we feel homogeneity in a group or sub-group of the class is desirable. It is possible to discuss with colleagues the advantages and disadvantages of a degree of homogeneity, particularly once those concepts have been satisfactorily defined.

Reflection for accompaniment

In the accompaniment, it may prove helpful to clarify how those accompanied define homogeneity and heterogeneity in the class. Discussion of the role of homogeneity and heterogeneity may be useful in discovering that homogeneity is virtually impossible in light of the limitless dimensions of the individual. Why do we wish homogeneity in the class? How might homogeneity facilitate teaching and learning? Questions such as these should provoke a serious reflection on our vision of

teaching and learning ; such a reflection demands accompaniment, at least for the first meetings.

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

Evaluation serves, among other things, as support for learning, in which heterogeneity can play a significant role. First, self-evaluation and the manner in which it occurs can help the teacher to understand the different approaches of students and to use those approaches to help other students who operate similarly. Co-evaluation and peer-evaluation can help to improve our own strategies through the comments and feedback of others. However, it is necessary to learn self-evaluation, co-evaluation and peer evaluation if those procedures are to occur in respect of the various ministerial documents regarding evaluation (MEQ, 2002-2004, 2004, 2006). Collective reflections are required to learn how to evaluate ourselves and our peers and to discuss an evaluative judgement with the teacher. How should comments be formulated? How do we prepare ourselves to accept comments? How do we react to the comments of others? How can these be applied to subsequent learning? It is similarly necessary to understand the usefulness of evaluation to guide learning, not just to find out what another person thinks about our work or progress.

Questions for reflection
- **How can school personnel and students be helped to view heterogeneity as an aid to learning ?**
- **How should reflection on the role of heterogeneity in learning be accompanied ?**
- **How can school personnel be accompanied to use self-evaluation, co-evaluation and peer-evaluation in a process of evaluation of learning based on its dual function: support for learning and the recognition of competencies ?**

1.3. Believing in the students' capacity to succeed

Believing in the students' capacity to succeed involves the conviction that students can develop a potential greater than may appear. It is therefore important to question first impressions and intuitions and, particularly, any words or gestures that might lead to a perception of weakness that may arise from prejudices or preconceptions. Instead, students should be provided with challenges to develop their various potentials, encourage self-confidence, and allow them to believe themselves fully capable of realising their aspirations.

Pedagogical reflection

In order to understand our own perceptions and interpretations of students' abilities, it is necessary to ask certain questions regarding our interpretation of the ways in which students operate, particularly in the case of those who do not function as we might wish, or those who function in a way we do not consider the easiest, most efficient, or most useful. The temptation exists to tell those "inept" students what to do, which does nothing to help them learn. On the other hand, those who seem "capable of success" may be provided with guidance that leads them to find solutions, and, thus, to understand and to learn.

Reflection for accompaniment

In the accompaniment, it may be appropriate to ask: How can a student's ability to succeed be evaluated? What criteria should be used? How can the ability to succeed be recognised? How can we envision the possibility of success for all?

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

The way in which we perceive a student's ability to succeed can influence our evaluative judgements. Whether quantitative or qualitative, these can never be entirely objective ; certain factors will influence any evaluation - but how? In questioning those factors that influence evaluative judgements, it is possible to correct an evaluation process tainted by subjectivity or to consider work with colleagues to help formulate professional judgements.

Questions for reflection
- **What actions can be taken to show students we believe in their capacity to succeed ?**
- **How may the awareness and recognition of students' capacity to succeed influence evaluative judgements ?**
- **How might a reflection on judgements regarding students' capacity to succeed be accompanied ?**
- **On what principles or bases are those judgements founded ?**
- **How much time must pass before such judgements can be made ?**
- **How can we become aware of students' capacity to succeed ?**

1.4. Countering stereotypes in ourselves and in others

Countering stereotypes in ourselves and in others implies attitudes, words and gestures that show concern that students be treated fairly, but also reaction to actions on the part of students who express prejudices regarding their peers. Countering those stereotypes is part of a reflective practice process.

Pedagogical reflection

A reflective practice process to counter stereotypes could occur in colleague or cycle-teams to discuss the way we speak about our students (one is excellent ; another is extremely difficult to help ; another is sure to drop out…), to ask if we are not too hasty in our judgements, and to consider the impact certain judgements have on student learning.

Reflection for accompaniment

It is not easy to accept and, especially, to share with others the fact that we are subject to stereotypes and prejudices. Nonetheless, awareness is necessary to counter them and to avoid making judgements that will be harmful to students. As well, the simple fact of recognising that they are different invites us to act differently with certain students, which can help them to learn. At the same time, that can be harmful if it hinders them from realising their full potential. An accompaniment can help to understand the impact of stereotypes and prejudices on student evaluation, both as support for learning and for the recognition of competencies. In such an

accompaniment, it is important to learn how to limit the negative impact of prejudices regarding certain types of students, and, at the same time, to learn how to react to negative comments about certain students. Some comments can induce colleagues to judge students even before they have met them: "I know that student ; he's going to give you trouble" ; "There's not much you can do with that student" ; "You'd better take that student in hand from the very beginning, since he's likely to drop out." Often our silence indicates consent or agreement.

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

Students are extremely sensitive to behaviours and attitudes that make them think they are not like the others, even when that occurs in the perspective of support for learning. Successfully countering certain stereotypes and prejudices, both in ourselves and our colleagues, indicates to students a coherence in the various evaluation methods. Where students see justice, fairness and equality, as well as transparency, rigour and coherence, it becomes much easier for them to accept evaluative judgements.

Questions for reflection
- **What role do stereotypes and prejudices play in the evaluation of students ?**
- **How can we counter our own stereotypes as well as those of others ?**
- **How might a reflection on the expression of prejudices, our own and those of others, be accompanied so as to limit their impact on the evaluation of learning ?**

1.5. Avoiding categorisation, labelling, and generalisation

Avoiding categorisation, labelling and generalisation is intrinsic to the concept that learning is a complex process in which it is not really possible to organise students into homogeneous groups or sub-groups. Beyond their different learning styles, students have different interests, perceive their difficulties in different ways, have a range of self-esteem that varies according to how they are viewed by their comrades, their parents, and so on.

Pedagogical reflection

No matter how hard we try, it is difficult not to make comparisons among students, not to create in our mind "categories" of students in order to structure our teaching. However, we can still be aware of how our words and actions influence our reactions to certain behaviours, and, therefore, our evaluative actions.

Reflection for accompaniment

It is possible to conduct an accompaniment of a collective reflection on the tendency to create in our minds "categories" of students with a view to improving our intervention. Such an accompaniment might also serve to recognise the inclination to generalise regarding the behaviours, attitudes or learning styles of certain categories of student. For example, we might be tempted to say, "Boys are like that," or "Students who sit like that…," or "Students of that ethnicity tend to…," or "Students with that kind of problem are…." Whether for reflecting on the creation of

"categories" or on our tendency to generalise, accompaniment is necessary to stimulate self-evaluation of the ways we see and speak about our students along with collective discussion based on our observations and an understanding of the impact our thoughts, words and actions have on the learning and evaluation of students.

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

A collective consideration, in a cycle-group for example, of the functions of evaluation (support for learning or recognition of competencies) can help to understand different ways of evaluating. We may become aware that we have a tendency to evaluate the effort invested by certain students and to forget that it is the level of competency that matters ; we may become aware that certain behaviours bother us and influence evaluation of our students. Whatever factors may colour our evaluative processes, it is important to be aware of them so as to limit their impact.

Questions for reflection
- **What can influence our evaluative judgements ?**
- **Why do we compare students with one another ?**
- **Why do we create in our minds groups of students with particular characteristics ?**
- **What characteristics are we most likely to use ?**

1.6. Constructing the idea of what it means to teach a heterogeneous class

Constructing the idea of what it means to teach a heterogeneous class and imagining the idea of teaching a heterogeneous class imply finding the means to approach a class "as if it were a plural individual" (see Jonnaert and Vander Borght, 1999) rather than as "a plurality of individuals." In that context, the preparation of classes and interventions requires assigning students learning situations that are sufficiently varied to appeal to both their learning styles and their diverse interests and cultures.

Pedagogical reflection

In teaching a heterogeneous class, it is important to plan so as to ensure a diversity of interventions. Diversified intervention is simply the use of different pedagogical approaches along with their use in such a way as to stimulate cognitive engagement in students. If, during an observation process, we observe that we are always reaching the same students, it means that our interventions are not sufficiently diversified. At that point, we should ask what we are doing that is always the same, but, as well, ask our colleagues how they succeed in reaching certain types of students having particular behaviours, interests or learning styles.

Reflection for accompaniment

In the accompaniment, it becomes important to ask what it means to "teach to a heterogeneous class." While it may seem like a good idea, monitoring each student's individual progress, helping students in their various tasks, and keeping a running record of each student's procedures and assignments—all the while maintaining an

appropriate classroom dynamic - appears extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is even possible that evaluation done in the action is mistaken as a result of having been too hasty, or because a student hasn't expressed himself or is preoccupied with something that has nothing to do with school. Looking at the diversity of our interventions can prove a valuable   exercise, and certainly can serve as a complement to the evaluation process in a perspective of support for learning, to make students feel part of a group. That may involve asking questions such as:

- What leads me to say that my interventions are diversified ?
- How might I further diversify my interventions ?
- How can I become aware of the diversity of my interventions and, on the other hand, the lack of diversity in my interventions ?

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

With regard to the process of evaluating learning, a desire to diversify interventions implies asking questions about the results obtained from an evaluation for the recognition of competencies. Did the assignments or situations given require similar treatment? What sort of treatment? Apart from the nature of assignments and situations, why did some students not succeed at certain tasks? Did they have any particular difficulties? At the same time, we can question our own evaluation process: Are the questions clear? Are they complete? Do they include everything students need to deal with them effectively? Are they subject to various interpretations?

Questions for reflection
- **What does it mean to deal with a heterogeneous class ?**
- **What does it mean to deal with a homogeneous class ?**
- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with a heterogeneous class ?**
- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with a homogeneous class ?**
- **How can we help one another in teaching a heterogeneous class ?**
- **How can we help one another to evaluate when dealing with a heterogeneous class ?**

1.7. Being open to reflective practice

Acceptance of reflective practice through an analysis of our practices consists of an examination of our actions (interventions, approaches, strategies, training, etc.), competencies, abilities, knowledge, attitudes and values with a view to understanding the links, the manifestations, the causes, the consequences, the difficulties, the successes - as well as acquiring a representation of our practice in order to effect it in a coherent manner.

Pedagogical reflection

Commitment to a reflective practice process implies looking at our pedagogical practices as well as the influence they have on the development and success of our students. That can involve keeping a record of reflections following interventions that were felt to be more or less effective.

Reflection for accompaniment

The accompaniment of a reflective practice process (see booklet 7 on reflective practice) on evaluation involves examining our evaluative practices as well as a willingness to question and adjust them. Grafting evaluative practices on to current practices may lead to an excess of evaluative methods or methods that are incompatible or inconsistent, however useful they may be individually. This may result in students not understanding the evaluative process and, as a result, not being able to involve themselves in it.

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

An acceptance of reflective practice should lead to coherent evaluative practices, which facilitate the evaluative process. As well, a reflective practice process can create an understanding of the evaluation of competencies as support for learning and for reporting purposes.

Questions for reflection
- **What might help to support a reflective practice process on the evaluation of learning ?**
- **What might facilitate keeping a record of changes in evaluative practices ?**

1.8. Accepting to co-construct in the cycle-team

Accepting to co-construct in the cycle-team implies collaboration toward a collective responsibility for the development of competencies by students in all their personal dimensions as well as a discussion of a perspective of equity in which students are perceived as learners who bring their social identity with them to the class. The colleague team can also play various roles in applying these principles: they can discuss them, question them, challenge them, as well as praise them, use them, and so on.

Pedagogical reflection

One example of something that can be done in the cycle-team to stimulate reflection in a perspective of socio-pedagogical equity is for each person on the team to try to explain how she diversifies her teaching or evaluation ; how she reacts to negative observations regarding certain students (from students or colleagues).

Reflection for accompaniment

Accompanying a cycle-team in the evaluation of learning implies a certain tact in order to foster the commitment of the team members to a process that may require them to ask questions about themselves. One way to do that is to ask: 1) Is anyone capable of being completely objective about himself? 2) How can a team encourage greater objectivity? Another way consists in asking questions about the objective character of our quantitative or qualitative marking (see booklet 3 on professional judgement).

Perspectives for the evaluation of learning

Any individual examination of our evaluative practices is an important step not only to ensuring that they include the functions of support for learning and the recognition of competencies, but, as well, that they are diversified and coherent. However, examination in the cycle-team will provide greater diversity as well as an objectivity that is extremely difficult to achieve alone, given that we all have our own biases, which can be dislodged by questioning from our colleagues.

Questions for reflection
- **In what ways can the cycle-team contribute to the evaluation of learning as a support for learning ? As recognition of competencies ?**
- **In what ways might the cycle-team have a negative influence on the evaluation of learning as support for learning? As recognition of competencies ?**

The perspective of equity described in this booklet cannot be imposed, nor can it be created simply by providing techniques and strategies with no need of adaptation. Certain pedagogical methods, strategies or approaches that can be employed in a perspective of equity can also result in the perpetuation of stereotypes. A philosophy of equity in respect of the social context will take into consideration the attitudes, beliefs (conceptions and convictions), values, ways of looking at students, ways of reacting to statements, actions or views that such a philosophy will confront. It applies to the full range of educational activity and can only be developed through interventions in a framework of citizenship education. It is integral to all the varieties of intervention, in any subject. Let's have a look at some of the characteristics of an evaluation of learning based on these principles.

2. Characteristics of the evaluation of learning in a perspective of equity

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Questions for reflection
- **What characteristics of the teaching-learning-evaluation process would favour an evaluation process in a perspective of equity ?**
- **In terms of pedagogical practice, what do the following refer to:**
  - **openness to diversity ?**
  - **awareness of complexity ?**
  - **support for creativity ?**
  - **the acquisition of autonomy ?**

The eight principles described in the preceding section imply four characteristics of the evaluation learning school personnel should be aware of: 1) openness to diversity ; 2) awareness of complexity ; 3) support for creativity ; and 4) the acquisition of autonomy.

2.1. Openness to diversity

Openness to diversity suggests that we view the classroom and the school with an attitude or spirit of respect for various kinds of difference: socio-economic background, sex, culture, learning styles, disabilities - but also interests, conceptions, representations, values, ways of expressing emotion, etc. That openness allows us to see our students without the filter of biases, prejudices, preconceived notions, but

rather with an intention of getting to know them, to recognise them, to respect them and to help them to develop both their competencies and their full potential.

2.2. Awareness of complexity

An awareness of complexity assumes both a recognition and a comprehension of the complexity of the development and the evaluation of competencies. That complexity requires taking into account the different dimensions of learning (cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, moral, cultural, etc.) in the choice of evaluation methods, using a variety of intervention-evaluation methods in a dynamic process, as well as integrating the teaching-learning-evaluation process into all our interventions. This awareness of complexity presupposes observation and consideration of the social context in which the student lives, not only that of the classroom but also the school and society beyond the school.

2.3. Support for creativity

Given that creation or innovation is the result or product of the process of creativity, support for creativity requires using a range of teaching-learning-evaluation methods addressed to all of the students, while keeping in mind that there are a multitude of processes for developing a creative product. Student potential must be taken into account and must be stimulated ; it is necessary to develop their potential in interaction with others.

2.4. Acquisition of autonomy

Autonomy in learning involves recognising ourselves as learning beings, both in terms of our learning style and of the strategies and conditions that permit us to learn. It also involves knowing how to self-observe and being able to describe, analyse, evaluate, criticise and adjust our learning strategies. In terms of evaluation, autonomy encourages the processes of self-evaluation, co-evaluation, and peer-evaluation. It does not, therefore, imply learning how to work in isolation, but rather a willingness to let others view our creative products and to discuss the process that generated them along with their quality.

There are a number of possible interpretations of the idea of an openness to diversity, of respect for diversity, of the teaching-learning-evaluation process as a support for learning in a pluralistic society. Those interpretations will give rise to the intervention choices made in the context of dealing with a particular challenge.

3. The challenge of equity in the context of social diversity

Questions for reflection
- **What elements of a challenge do you perceive with regard to:**
  - **openness to diversity ?**
  - **awareness of complexity ?**
  - **support for creativity ?**
  - **the acquisition of autonomy ?**

Given the pluralistic world in which we live and the scholastic challenges we face (dropping out, academic failure, more or less serious learning and social

problems, various disabilities, violence, etc.), it is hard to find solutions to problems outside of school that, nonetheless, have a powerful influence on both the school and the classroom.

Various authors stress the traps arising from misapprehension, doubt or distrust that are to be avoided if we are to achieve equity in our teaching, our pedagogy and our evaluation (Astolfi, 2003 ; Crahay, 1999 ; Gillig, 1999 ; Jonnaert, 2003 ; Lafortune, 2003a, 2006a-b ; Perrenoud, 2004 ; Przesmycki, 1991 ; Tomlinson, 2004). Among those traps, we can identify the following aspects:

- reinforcement of heterogeneity or difference ;
- stress on disparities and selection ;
- individualisation of teaching ;
- centration on students in difficulty ;
- ignoring certain students ;
- desire for homogenisation ;
- categorising or labelling students ;
- the disguise of repeating ;
- a reduction of social interactions.

In trying to help students to mobilise their resources (both internal and external) in various situations, in dealing with the reactions of others, and in developing competencies, the following five dimensions are all important: 1) reducing disparities (Demeuse and Baye, 2005) ; 2) openness to all students (Lafortune, 2003a, 2006a-b) ; 3) justification of pedagogical and professional acts (Perrenoud, 2001 ; Lafortune, 2006a-b) ; 4) interventions based on the development of competencies (Jonnaert, 2003) ; 5) stimulation of social interactions. We are proposing here some general methods for encouraging the mobilisation and the development of competencies.

Questions for reflection
- **What is the best way to:**
    - **reduce disparities among students ?**
    - **develop openness to all students ?**
    - **learn how to justify our pedagogical and professional acts ?**
    - **intervene with a constant awareness that the QEP is based on the development of competencies ?**
    - **remember that social interaction is essential to learning ?**

3.1. Reducing disparities

Reducing disparities among students without lowering standards is not easy. It is perhaps best pursued by learning what unites students and stressing those common points (having to make an effort to learn ; cognitive dissonances in learning ; not understanding everything at first ; etc). Consideration of the group and seeing it as "a plural individual" can assist in identifying disparities without, however, centration on those disparities that can lead to the traps of homogenisation or the individualisation of instruction (Crahay, 2000, Jonnaert and Vander Borght, 1999).

3.2. Openness to the diversity of students

Openness to the diversity of students implies an approach that includes thinking about students in terms of what happens outside the class, remembering that they live in an environment or a family, and that the school and society must be seen in a context of globalisation. Rather than focusing on individuals, we can consider the group in light of an openness to diversity by avoiding an emphasis on selection and falling into the trap of categorising or labelling certain students. It is equally important to avoid a centration on particular difficulties being experienced by certain students ; other students are similarly experiencing problems that are unique to them. However complex it may be, this encourages the recognition of differences while avoiding centring on them. This openness requires a consideration of our own social representations as well as our professional and pedagogical acts, in which we ask what might be prejudicial to our students, and, above all, think about what might help them to develop competencies and their full potential. It is possible to acquire an awareness of our verbal and non-verbal gestures, our prejudices or preconceptions, our hasty judgements, our neglect of certain students, our categorising of others - all of which can both encourage or discourage learning. Exercising control over our own professional acts and ensuring we have a certain awareness can lead to changes that can only help our students.

3.3. Justification of our pedagogical and professional acts

Justifying our pedagogical and professional acts consists of reviewing them with a view to justifying, explaining and understanding what is involved in the development of competencies. It also involves adjusting our practices in conformity with the Education Program and, as well, in a perspective of the evaluation of competencies. Several pedagogical and professional acts undertaken intuitively will encourage the learning process, while others can unintentionally interfere with it. Examining our pedagogical practice and studying a variety of interventions can help us understand why students are more or less capable of constructing knowledges or developing competencies.

3.4. Intervention-evaluation based on the development of competencies

In a program based on the development and the evaluation of competencies, the variety of approaches, strategies, or pedagogical interventions employed should be considered in light of those basic principles. An analytical grid of whatever methods are envisioned might usefully include the following aspects:

- competencies to develop and competencies targeted ;
- description of methods used to achieve that goal ;
- observations on actions taken in class ;
- feedback on the actions to evaluate the level of development of the competencies achieved ;
- analysis of adjustments necessary in a subsequent intervention ;
- reflection on and analysis of methods for the evaluation of competencies used in the action and to be used ;
- implementation of the evaluation process in a perspective of aid to learning ;

- methods for communicating the results of evaluation to students, to parents.

3.5. Stimulation of interactions

In the teaching-learning-evaluation process for the development of competencies, it is difficult to imagine students not interacting with others, as they are part of the school and social environment together with adults who support, guide and encourage their learning. The interactions among students in class may take various forms, but whatever the methods used, they should be directed toward the development of competencies. To that end, they should encourage the mobilisation of the students' various resources, both those they have constructed and mastered as well as those in the process of being developed. For example, a discussion to exercise critical judgement requires the examination of the way opinions are constructed, expressed and relativised. Work in groups to develop cooperation implies thinking about contribution to a cooperative effort, the best ways to benefit from it, and the interaction that occurs in a spirit of openness. Such interactions to encourage the development of competencies are worth examining in relation to the competencies and the components of the Education Program. It is in that context that the evaluation of learning can occur in respect of the basics of the Program.

> *Questions for reflection*
> - **In considering the analysis of the five dimensions, how can we:**
>   - **reduce disparities among students ?**
>   - **develop an openness to the diversity of students ?**
>   - **learn to justify our pedagogical and professional acts ?**
>   - **intervene with a constant awareness that the QEP is based on the development of competencies ?**
>   - **remember that social interaction is essential to learning ?**

Consideration of these five dimensions implies examination of the teaching-learning-evaluation process from the point of view of pedagogical and professional practice. In the perspective of the development and the evaluation of the competencies of the Education Program, which include openness to the world, we might ask how it is possible to make our classes more open to the world.

4. Socio-pedagogical equity: definition, components, analysis

The Policy on the Evaluation of Learning (MEQ, 2004) mentions three fundamental values (justice, equality and equity) and three instrumental values (rigour, coherence and openness). The fundamental values recall a pedagogical and social dimension of the school. Gillig (1999) is of the view that:

> « Equity corresponds […] to the idea of justice that consists in appreciating every individual's due. Between a school founded on equality that recognises an obligation solely to the disadvantaged and that is inclined to disadvantage the privileged […] and a school founded on equity that recognises a duty, albeit differentiated and non-uniform, to all is certainly a difficult, though not impossible, choice to make » (Gillig, 1999, p.88, translation).

In other words, those fundamental values exist to foster a socio-pedagogical equity that forces us to think of students in terms of society (co-education, socio-

economic background…), culture (intercultural relations, citizenship…), and school environment (inclusion…).

Socio-pedagogical equity is defined as an attitude associated with the teaching-learning-evaluation process that considers a context larger than just the class as a group. In that perspective, heterogeneity becomes a support for learning and, thus, students are valued for the differences and complementarities that make a contribution to the learning of others. Socio-pedagogical equity allows us to view students in their cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, moral and cultural dimensions. Through it, we view our students in a larger context that transcends the class, the school and the family (Lafortune, 2006a-b).

5.   Socio-pedagogical equity: links with the educational reform

Questions for reflection
- **What actions, in current practice, might foster socio-pedagogical equity ?**
- **How is socio-pedagogical equity, as presented and defined, related to the educational reform ? to the Education Program ?**
- **What is the relevance of discussing such a perspective ?**
- **What solution(s) can be offered in discussion from a perspective of socio-pedagogical equity ?**

5.1.   Socio-pedagogical equity and the aims of the QEP

A perspective of socio-pedagogical equity can be helpful in attaining the aims of the Québec Education Program: constructing world view, constructing identity, and empowerment. A world-view is constructed in a context that takes into account individual and social realities, while encouraging an openness to diversity without prejudices or preconceived ideas. The construction of a personal identity involves interactions with others in a spirit of openness and respect for diversity, regardless of gender, culture or learning styles. It is the unique character of each student that contributes to the richness of the group, of the class characterised by its diversity. The power of students to act is greater when they have developed cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies and are able to mobilise their internal resources and make use of external resources in the classroom, in the school, or, indeed, in the community, thus taking their place in society and participating fully in the life of the collectivity.

5.2.   Socio-pedagogical equity and the broad areas of learning

Socio-pedagogical equity allows us to consider the broad areas of learning as a whole. For example, from such a perspective, the area "Personal and Career Planning" provides students with an opportunity to pursue their own interests and not just those associated with the category they have been identified with. From such a perspective, the elements of the area "Health and Well-being" are discussed in a context of everyone's specific qualities. The area "Citizenship and Community Life" takes on its full significance.

5.3. Socio-pedagogical equity and cross-curricular competencies

Socio-pedagogical equity invites flexibility, while always in a context of rigour, in implementing the cross-curricular competencies. Critical judgement is developed in a context where different arguments are brought to bear or where the clash of ideas is diversified, where unsubstantiated views are questioned, etc. Cooperation is most likely to occur in a context of teamwork where everyone works together to develop the ability to communicate appropriately. Creative thinking is stimulated by situations that encourage a variety of individual and collective productions, all of which demonstrate the development of competencies. The solution of problems is facilitated by offering students the possibility to analyse their own procedures and evaluating strategies, their own and those of others, in order to identify the best possible solutions from a broad range of resources.

6. Socio-pedagogical equity: social components

Socio-pedagogical equity is part of a socio-constructivist perspective in which learners actively structure their knowledge through interaction with others. This conception includes four components: co-education, citizenship education, inclusion, and reflection-interaction in class.

6.1. Co-education

> *Questions for reflection*
> - **What is meant by co-education ?**
> - **What impact does co-education have on classroom students ?**
> - **What is the impact of co-education in a class for teachers ?**
> - **How might co-education contribute to the mission of Québec schools ? To the objectives of the QEP ?**
> - **What acts of accompaniment might contribute to an understanding of the advantages of co-education ?**

Co-education is the presence of both boys and girls in the classroom, and, more generally, in society, with a view to not perpetuating stereotypes of one or the other of the sexes. This means, for example, that in considering research results indicating that the majority of boys or girls have particular behaviours or attitudes it is essential to take into account that neither girls nor boys constitute a homogeneous group (Lafortune, 2003a). An exploration of co-education necessarily involves a reflection based on the fact that girls and boys associate with one another in class. We can thus assume that co-education fosters:

- solidarity between the sexes ;
- social interaction between the sexes ;
- treating one another as equals ;
- the school as a natural place for socialisation ;
- meeting members of the other sex, getting to know them (and oneself) better ;
- introduction to competition in various forms ;
- learning about life and respect for differences ;
- openness of spirit ;
- experience of the reality of everyday life ;

- respect for others and cooperation ;
- the school's function as compensation the home situation ;
- a better classroom dynamic ;
- a greater sharing of diversified strategies (Fize, 2003).

Co-education in a context of socio-pedagogical equity involves:

- giving the same activities to both boys and girls, occasionally offering choices and making no judgements with regard to the choices made by students, regardless of their gender (spirit of openness) ;
- a desire to counter stereotypes propagated by the school, the family and the media, as well as thinking about words and attitudes, both our own and those of our students ;
- a diversity of pedagogical choices that attempt to reach different groups of students as effectively as possible ;
- pedagogical approaches and objectives that avoid generalisation of characteristics we may be inclined to associate with certain students ;
- thinking in terms of "some" rather than "the" students, when we are inclined to fall into generalisations.

Links with the educational reform

Co-education is consistent with the current educational reform that: 1) considers students to be full-fledged participants who live and will continue to live in a world of diversity ; 2) takes into account all the dimensions of learning (cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, moral, cultural, etc.) ; 3) recognises that young people live and will continue to live with those who are different and, in particular, those of the other sex. Such a reflection leads us to examine the spirit of the reform, to adopt changes in practice respecting that spirit by focusing on success for all students, both boys and girls, and, finally, to implement measures to encourage co-education.

6.2. Citizenship education

> *Questions for reflection*
> - **How does citizenship education concern all members of the school staff ?**
> - **How can each subject incorporate it ?**
> - **How might it help tie together the broad areas of learning ?**
> - **What accompaniment actions might contribute to citizenship education ?**

Citizenship education involves education for democracy (rights education), for pluralism (intercultural education), and for collective involvement (civic education) (CSE, 1998). In that context, the selection of teaching themes as well as the methods of intervention and interaction, should consider the fact that the learners come from different cultures (multi-ethnic or multi-cultural) or find themselves at one time or another in their lives in a multi-ethnic environment, whether at school, at work, or in social activities (Lafortune et Gaudet, 2000).

In a context of citizenship education, the Superior Council of Education (CSE, 1998) proposes instructional objectives linked to education for democracy, pluralism, and collective involvement. The Council recommends "putting the accent on so-called

active pedagogical approaches, that encourage interaction and participation, mutual support, respect for diverse abilities and points of view [and] the creation of situations for exposition, discussion, argument […]." (p. 45) [translation]

Lafortune and Gaudet (2000) agree with Volcy (1995) and Gagnon, McAndrew and Pagé (1996):

> " […] the pedagogy of cooperation is a teaching strategy that contributes to training in democracy, pluralism, and social involvement. It does so through elements such as: respect for others, respect for the uniqueness of others, establishment of solidarity based on the interdependence of students involved in a common project. It also supports a climate of respect, cooperation and dialogue in the classroom » (Daniel and Schleifer, 1996, translation) ".

In respect of the three main themes of the Superior Council of Education (1998), Lafortune and Gaudet (2000) emphasise three aspects. First, education for democracy involves: an active and enlightened participation on the part of all the students ; the development of the students' ability to speak out, express themselves, and defend their positions ; and the ability to discuss and settle conflicts in a non-violent way. The next aspect supposes that education for pluralism requires students: to develop an ability to be open and respectful with regard to others ; to know, understand and respect cultural diversity ; to learn to deal with difference ; and to establish intercultural contacts that will serve in the construction of their own identities. Finally, education for collective involvement involves an awareness of values such as equity, solidarity, sharing, responsibility, the development of a critical spirit in the respect of others, and involvement in society, both locally and world-wide.

Citizenship education in a socio-pedagogical perspective involves:

- interventions applied across the curriculum and not restricted to a course on citizenship education ;
- interventions directed at all students, whether they are from areas where the population is homogeneous or where there is a large multi-ethnic diversity ;
- interventions that encourage students to find their own individual strategy, where students experience cognitive dissonance or cultural confrontations which leads them to reflection, discussion and awareness that can be applied beyond the context of the school ;
- interventions based on continuity and accompaniment, which implies that the interventions are integrated into the customary pedagogy and not treated as distinct moments apart, but also that students are supported in their activities when confronted with sexist or racist comments, attitudes or behaviours ;
- interventions based on reflection-interaction, in a climate of respect in which students confront their ideas and views with guidance in the construction of their arguments and justifications to better direct their reflections.

6.3. School inclusion

> *Questions for reflection*
> - **How is school inclusion different from integration ?**
> - **How can inclusion be justified in the current educational context ?**
> - **Who benefits from inclusion and how ?**
> - **What accompaniment acts might foster openness to inclusion?**

School inclusion is generally associated with the area of special education in Québec and Canada (Rousseau et Bélanger, 2004). While Vienneau (2004) feels that the concept of inclusion is flexible (definitions range from the idea of inclusion in a regular class as placement in the least restrictive environment [minimal inclusion] to the inclusion of all as part of a pedagogical objective [complete inclusion]), that author advocates an inclusion involving the pedagogical integration of the greatest possible number of students with handicaps and with learning and emotional difficulties (special needs). Vienneau feels (2002, 2004), working from the ideas proposed by Lupart (1999), that inclusion is different from integration in that "it aims for nothing less than the pedagogical integration into regular classes of all students with special needs, regardless of their intellectual capacities and their functional abilities " (p.128, translation).

> " School inclusion is based on the principle of the normalisation of the schooling experience of ALL students with handicaps and with learning or emotional difficulties, regardless of their abilities or the severity of their handicaps. Inclusion implies: the full-time pedagogical integration of every student in a class of the same age and as close as possible to the student's own age group ; participation in the social life of the school and maximal participation of every student in all the learning activities of his class ; individualisation of the teaching-learning process through the use of teaching strategies and varied evaluation methods ; respect for the unique character of each learner and consideration of all the dimensions of the individual in the educational objectives that are pursued " (Lupart, 1999, p.129, translation).

Vienneau (2004) recounts the results of various research studies, notably that of Moore, Gilbreath and Maluri (1998), which concludes "that the regular class represents the 'least restrictive environment' for the majority of special needs students. In that, the results of this study diverge from those partisans of unconditional and automatic inclusion and adopt instead the position defended by Hocuss (1996) and others: that it is the quality of instruction received and not the placement that is the key to success for students with special needs." (p.134) [translation] According to most research, it seems that the inclusion of students with special needs in regular classes has no effect on the development or learning of the other students. To that effect, the results of Staub and Peck (1995) and Peltier (1997) leave no doubt that inclusion does no harm to students of the regular class by providing all students with challenges that allow them to develop to their full potential. The following points may be highlighted:

- School inclusion is distinct from integration in that, instead of paying special attention to special needs students in a regular class, it encourages the development of a pedagogy by which all students feel involved in the teaching-learning-evaluation process.
- The quality of the teaching-learning-evaluation process takes precedence over any other pedagogical approach of integration or inclusion. That implies that,

despite the most sophisticated model for supporting students, if our pedagogical intentions do not incline toward inclusion or equity, it will be difficult to provide quality in our classroom interventions.

- All students benefit from inclusion, whether those with special needs or those of the regular class. That fact may be counter to certain preconceptions that inclusion can have a negative impact on more gifted students. However, diversity in the class, if perceived as a positive quality by the teacher, benefits all the students in a class. That being said, it is necessary to adopt measures so as not to lower the requirements for students with difficulties, but rather to propose challenges that involve the pooling of skills, the strengthening of internal resources of all students, standards that encourage achievement, as well as recourse to those external resources necessary to accompany students in their learning projects.

6.4. The reflective-interactive perspective

Questions for reflection
- **What are the characteristics of school personnel intervening in a reflective-interactive perspective ?**
- **How can we say that the learning situations employed encourage reflection-interaction among the students ?**
- **What acts of accompaniment might contribute to developing a reflective-interactive perspective in school personnel ?**

A reflective-interactive perspective is reflected in pedagogy by consideration of the cognitive dimension of learning through a focus on the development of abilities of complex thinking. There is a constant attempt to place learners in situations of reflection and interaction relative to their beliefs and prejudices (social dimension), emotions and attitudes (affective dimension) and mental processes and learning styles (metacognitive dimension) (Lafortune, 2004b).

The overall aims of a reflective-interactive perspective in pedagogy may take the following form. Reflection-interaction aims to make students active in terms of cognition, which means that "in the framework of learning activities developed with this in mind, [they put] into play intellectual processes. These processes may be at various levels of complexity: from description to explanation and analysis, as well as modelling." (Lafortune and Deaudelin, 2001, p.203) They further aim to provoke sociocognitive conflicts which are "a state of cognitive dissonance created in the individual by social interactions that place him in contact with an unfamiliar conception or construction that is difficult to reconcile with his own." (Lafortune and Deaudelin, 2001, p.201) Such reflections-interactions also attempt to stimulate awareness as a result of an internal process or an external intervention involving a recognition (verbalised or not) of the impact of the process on the individual, either through personal reflection or interaction with others (Lafortune, forthcoming). These moments of awareness are essential to a learning process that aspires to develop abilities of complex thinking and metacognitive capacities. Finally, these reflections-interactions can enable learners to see their learning processes in a variety of ways: what am I learning ; how do I learn ; what enabled me to learn ; how might I use this learning in a different context….(Lafortune and Martin, 2004).

These four components of a perspective of socio-pedagogical equity influence the evaluation of competencies, incorporated into the teaching learning process, where internal and external resources are widely diversifies, where the attitudes of those intervening assume particular importance, and where the class is perceived in a spirit of openness to diversity and respect for that diversity as support for learning.

7.   For accompaniment

For the accompaniment, two approaches seem most helpful: reflective practice and working in colleague teams. In the framework of accompaniment, teachers might reflect on and analyse their professional practice with a view to developing attitudes and objectives of socio-pedagogical equity. Working in cycle-teams would provide a way of stimulating interactions to create lasting awareness and coherent action.

Conclusion

In light of this consideration of co-education and school inclusion, citizenship education and interactive reflection on pedagogy, there are certain principles that might help in the formulation of a perspective of socio-pedagogical equity. These might include:

- helping students to develop the causal attributes associated with self-knowledge and not with stereotypes of a categorisation imposed from outside ;
- encourage students to share their mental process, thereby developing their metacognitive capacities, which will lead to the development of creative processes rather than simple reproduction ;
- make students cognitively active in their learning in order to stimulate their commitment and discourage dropping out ;
- encourage students to justify their positions and develop communication that is critical, substantiated, defended, and structured, enabling them to deal with a broad range of ideas (sex, culture, etc.) ;
- bring together competencies from the areas of languages, arts, personal and social development, the social sciences, mathematics, science and technology in order to encourage the interconnectedness of interests and creativity.

This entire reflection may unsettle certain ways of conceiving and applying "differentiation" in the practical world of education. A reflection in which pedagogical practices are analysed collectively or in cycle-teams aspires to question certain practices with a view to creating greater rigour, coherence and openness. In applying the instrumental values of the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning, in regulating practices in the cycle-team, and in considering all the types of difference related to social and cultural contexts, it becomes possible to achieve a degree of justice and equity. Despite the best of intentions, certain acts, words or practices can influence positively, but also negatively (which is clearly to be avoided) the future of any number of students. For that reason, we should change our practices in that spirit to encourage a socio-pedagogical equity that takes into account co-education, citizenship education (rights education, intercultural education, and civic education: CSE, 1998) school inclusion, and a reflective-interactive pedagogy. (Lafortune, 2003a and 2006a-b)

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