



Towards critical teaching in a multi-ethnic context for a just integration of minority students

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CONTEXT AND PROBLEMS

The Americas and many other nations have been engaged in a process of social, political and educational transformation due to a massive global migration. Banks and Banks (2020) stated that racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity is on the rise in the USA and other countries. The same applies to Canada, who took in around 321,000 immigrants in 2018. In the same year, the province of Québec¹ alone welcomed 51,100 (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2019). This phenomenon has altered demographics and changed the economical and sociopolitical aspects of societies.

The impact of immigration can be felt in the educational systems as well; school structures, residents, and environment have all been transformed. Therefore, teachers are faced with both the challenge and the opportunity of instructing students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds (Banks, 2020). Teachers must support both the students and their families in their sociocultural integration. As Armand (2013) stated, teachers adapt and adjust their practices in a multi-ethnic context. In such a context, the USA, Canada and many other countries have long advocated for multicultural² education and this was supposed to become common practice in all schools decades ago (May and Sleeter, 2010). Banks (2020) defined multicultural education as an educational reform movement and a pro-

cess whose goal is to change the structure of the school to allow students from diverse backgrounds to have an equal opportunity for academic success. Likewise, Sleeter (1992 in Akkari, 2001) argued that multicultural education is a process in which schools work with the oppressed, and not against them. In this context, many countries have developed governmental policies, measures and action plans to manage diversity in schools. However, the transformational role of multicultural education as a process to change the school structure is not necessarily reflected in governmental policies and practices.

INTEGRATING MINORITY³ STUDENTS IN QUÉBEC: POLICIES AND PLANS

In Quebec, the educational system opts for measures that defend and promote the province's Francophone heritage, including the French language. The earliest measures to support the integration of immigrant students into French schools were put in place in the 1960's. The "Welcome" class model was implemented in 1969 and focuses on building French language skills and educating new immigrants on matters of citizenship (Mc Andrew, 2010). Attendance in these classes increased after the adoption of the Charter of the French language (Bill 101) in 1977, which promulgated French as the official language of instruction and imposed its inclusion in all aspects of public life (Pagé and Lamarre, 2010). French-language schools became mandatory for all francophone and allophone students. Schools that were traditionally monoethnic were now faced with the challenges of pluralism (Mc Andrew, Audet and Bakhshaei, 2016).

Furthermore, the educational reform of the 1990's was accompanied by many policies whose main focus was on diversity in schools, as well as on linguistic and cultural integration (such as the Policy Statement on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education published in 1998) (MEQ, 1998). This policy defines intercultural education as the ideal for a democratic, pluralist and francophone society. Moreover, it urges teachers to facilitate students' social and cultural integration, encourages them to value their own culture, and enables them to respect the cultures of others (MEQ, 1998). The policy targeted three main areas: increasing the representation of ethnocultural diversity in various classes that prepare immigrants for employment, providing professional development for teachers, and integrating approaches to diversity into the curriculum

(Mc Andrew and Audet, forthcoming; Mc Andrew, Audet and Bakhshaei, 2016). To what extent have policies rooted in multicultural education succeeded in achieving their declared goals in terms of equity and justice?

MANAGING DIVERSITY BETWEEN NEOLIBERALISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Across the world, debates on managing diversity in schools fail – to some degree – to develop an impartial system based on minority students' rights (Akkari and Radhouane, 2019). The structural inequalities continue to persist across school systems in most countries (May and Sleeter, 2010; Mc Andrew, forthcoming); the school curriculum and teaching practices may still exclude some students from different backgrounds and fail to support them in their education (Akkari and Loomis, 2012). Some teachers are still wary about the growing diversification of students (Audet, 2011), who have not always received the same access to learning opportunities. This is the result of an unequal educational system rooted in the sociocultural case of humanity. The school, as a social organization, is not necessarily fulfilling its real role. Schools need to help the public understand the advantages of diversity as a possible opportunity for innovation, creativity, and economic prosperity (Banks, 2020). However, this is often not the case. Morin (2013) argued that the school should fulfill its role by promoting solidarity with others, and by teaching the major problems facing students and society in general: who we are, how we understand others, and how we face the unknown.

In a multi-ethnic context, the school is challenged to give due value to students' languages and cultures of origin. In terms of language, many educational systems are still mainly governed by monolingual policies and practices (Akkari and Loomis, 2012), even if an effort has been made to value students' multilingualism (2018). Cummins (2001) considered this to be a phenomenon of assimilation as students are deprived of their mother tongue at school. The question of honouring cultures has also been raised. Dagenais (2008) argued that immigrant students are more likely to perform poorly in school if their cultures are not respected in the classroom. The student's culture, language and personal cases can be recognized by the teacher as a valued resource and an asset (Datta, 2007; Declercq, 2007). Consequently, all the debates based on students' rights in a multi-ethnic context – and on the principles of multicultural education – have been cut short (May and Sleeter, 2010).

To further problematize the situation in schools, we point out that for the last four decades, many countries have been governed by globalized neoliberal policies. Connell (2013) argued that neoliberalism is not merely a matter of political economy but represents a broad social agenda that introduces cultural changes that give rise to inequalities of income and wealth. Neoliberalism has entrenched the differences between the privileged and the disempowered (May and Sleeter, 2010). Accordingly, the schooling systems have been transformed in many countries (Apple, 2011; Connell, 2013; Parker, 2017; Rezai-Roshti, Segeren and Martino, 2017). In its agenda, the neoliberal system attempts to marketize schools (Connell, 2013). Educational policies that have emerged in the past decades have been influenced by the international economy, which has led to the marginalization of equality and social justice practices in schools (Apple, 2011; Giroux, 2010; Grimaldi, 2012; Rezai-Roshti, Segeren and Martino, 2017).

As a result of this system, the movement of improving standards and testing in schools in the USA has shifted teachers' concerns away from racial and ethnic diversity and toward fulfilling the demands of the new neoliberal movement (May and Sleeter, 2010). Likewise, in Canadian schools, teachers are overwhelmed by the many measures, action plans and directives issued by schools and ministries regarding assessment, testing, curriculum, etc. In addition, the neoliberal educational systems have had an impact on public schools. According to Giroux (2010; 2014) these schools become dead zones cut-off from imagination, self-reflection, and critical thinking, and are detached from any democratic notion of teaching and learning. Consequently, both teachers and students are demotivated and disempowered. For instance, in the Québec educational system, public schools are classified according to a deprivation index and the system leans more towards market-based accountability, as private education is supported by the provincial government (Desjardins et Lessard, 2011). From a systemic point of view, the integration process of minority students is affected by services, budget, measures, etc.

THE TEACHERS' ROLE: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN DOMESTICATION AND LIBERATION

When challenging unequal power dynamics in schools, teachers must restructure their roles and be engaged in a process of "repositioning" (Apple, 2011). Giroux (2010) has argued that educators lack a critical vi-

sion of education and that they are reduced to the status of technicians without any power over the school system. The primary role that education should occupy in combating social exclusion (Grimaldi, 2012) has been transformed. Students are considered as human capital, competing to fulfill the needs of the market (Parker, 2017). Teachers working under the umbrella of the neoliberal system and who receive minority students in their classrooms need to be aware of the reality surrounding them, including the ways in which schooling is organized, the relationship between policies and educational practices, the marketization of schools, and the tangible realities of their students. Teachers need to develop a critical thinking to see the world through the eyes of the oppressed and to act against the institutional system that reproduces oppressive and unequal conditions for their students, as well as themselves (Apple, 2011). The dilemma is that issues related to social justice continue to appear in the neoliberalist agenda as a “cliché” and are thus submerged under a discourse of liberal hegemony (Grimaldi, 2012). In this context, teachers and students embrace neoliberal educational policies that work against their own interests, unconscious of the ways this negatively affects educational values and norms. By the same token, Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011) mentioned that individuals in countries like the US, Canada, Britain, etc. were acculturated to feel contented in relation to domination rather than to equality and independence. However, teachers’ visions to promote the integration of minority students might be skewed. In the context of neoliberalism and multiculturalism, how can teachers take responsibility and act in their classes to support minority students’ social and scholarly integration in terms of equity, justice, and access to opportunities?

To answer this, we will need to analyze and discuss four stories of practice in which teachers narrate situations they faced with minority students in their classes. Stories were collected in the context of a research project in Quebec called “Se raconter” (Audet et al., CRSH, 2017-2020; Audet et al., FRQSC 2018-2021). We will present the core elements of the critical and pedagogical approach (Freire, 1970; 1971; 1972; 1974; 2001; 2018) that is used here as a theoretical framework. Although Freire didn’t report directly on the problem of education in a multiethnic context, his discourse about social class, dialogue, equity, social justice, conscientization, etc. allows for the development of a critical view on the subject of minority students. The four stories were chosen for this analysis to understand

how teachers and minority students could be engaged in the process of change toward a democratic education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS DEMOCRATIC CHANGE: FROM OPPRESSION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

As mentioned before, the educational system in the Americas supports economic models and modes of agency in which freedom is reduced to consumerism (Giroux, 2010). The school as an organization may reproduce – through its policies and curriculum – a larger social system that promotes unjust relations of power. Both teachers and students are removed from having any real power in the process of change. Many thinkers advocated critical pedagogy as a means to empower educators and students to act critically and transform the world of oppression and inequality. (Apple, 2011; Freire, 1974; 2018; Giroux, 2010; 2014; Macedo, 2018). Critical pedagogy focuses on critical analysis and situational observation to address social inequalities and considers education as a project for liberation: *“Critical pedagogy attempts to understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts and seeks to constitute students as informed subjects and social agents”* (Giroux, 2010; p.717).

By considering education as a political act, Freire (1974; 2018) argues that the dominant educational systems refute education as a process of inquiry and remove any initiative to transform it. He rejected this system and stated that it is a planned process so that the student – the oppressed – adapts to the situation without even being aware of it. For him, education was part of a project of freedom that offered students the conditions for self-reflection and critical agency. Thus, critical thinking should be encouraged, promoting students to participate in the promise of democracy. He said that education should be the starting point for critical reflection and used as a means of action for transforming reality (Freire, 1972). On that basis, he criticized the narrative character of the teacher-student relationship that abolishes the transformative power of words and knowledge. He referred to this as the “banking model of education” that serves the interest of the oppressor by reducing the student to a passive learner without any creative power or means to develop his critical conscience

(Freire, 2001). He argued that people in this system are viewed as empty minds, filled from the outside world, and not engaged in any transformation – other than to adjust to this world (Freire, 2001; 2018). Isn't this, to some extent, the situation for many teachers overwhelmed by ministerial and institutional directives that serve only the interest of the current structure? This new perspective puts more onus on teachers working in a multi-ethnic context. Thus, their vision of diversity and how to manage it in their classroom becomes more complex.

TEACHERS' ROLE IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Freire (1972) placed the responsibility on teachers when he stated that education is either for domestication or liberation, and that when teachers are engaged in political acts, it is already implied that they have made an ideological choice. Thus, democratic teachers (Apple, 2011; Freire, 2018; Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg, 2011) must have more voice and be engaged in a process of transformation to act on their new perceptions of reality. They need to develop methods and strategies to balance unity and diversity to avoid cultural and linguistic hegemony (Banks, 2020). However, in the context where neoliberal educational policies dominate, teachers may not be conscious of the reality of oppression and become resigned to the dominant structure (Macedo, 2018). In some cases, they have no purpose except those prescribed by their oppressors. Freire (2018) argued that the oppressed suffer from the duality they feel: freedom versus being reconciled to oppression and following directives versus having free-will. Education should take this into account by helping the oppressed solve this dilemma, so teachers can have the freedom to act. Once becoming empowered, critical teachers can challenge students to learn how to negotiate with the world around them (Macedo, 2018). Students should learn how to read the world critically instead of just knowing how to read and write (Freire, 1970; 2001; 2018), so that they can understand the hidden dominant ideologies (Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg; 2011). For this reason, reading a story to students about diversity shouldn't be a goal in and of itself, but should aim to develop their critical thinking skills. Freire (1970) stated that critical reading involves an authentic relationship with the text.

In his famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2018) exhorted the oppressed to think critically and identify the causes of their oppression. He argued that as long as the oppressed remain unaware of the reasons

for their condition, they accept their oppression and exploitation. Upon discovering the reality, they will begin a process of liberation through praxis to make a change in the world. He described praxis as a means of action and reflection to make change. That said, it is not enough for the teachers to merely observe or notice an oppressed situation, they must act, not for the student but with him, in order to transform the situation. Thus, teachers have to develop a constructive dialogue with students that questions their existing knowledge, situations, and problems, and dismantles the power relations that have isolated them (Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg; 2011). Freire (1970) stated that: *"for dialogue to be a method of true knowledge, the knowing subjects must approach reality scientifically in order to seek the dialectical connections which explain the form of reality"* (p. 218). Both teachers and students must reflect critically on their reality, recreating knowledge through reflection and action. Once this has been achieved, they will discover themselves as creators of knowledge and become principal actors engaged in the process of liberation (Freire, 1974; 2018). Teachers and students achieve this through investigating the generative themes present in their limit-situations.

TOWARD A PROCESS OF CHANGE: DISCOVERING LIMIT-SITUATIONS AND GENERATIVE THEMES

To start the process for change, the teacher and the student should recognize the situation of oppression as a limit-situation that they can overcome. Limit-situations are defined as situations characterized by the obstacles that people encounter in their personal lives and that are necessary to overcome (Lenoir and Ornelas, 2007). Freire (1971; 2018) argued that an environment of hopelessness is not generated by a limit-situation, rather it is affected by how people distinguish it, and that if they analyse it critically, they can overcome it. However, the oppressed who become aware of the reality but who do not intervene critically, cannot engage in a process of transformation (Freire, 1974). Limit-situations contain and are contained in what Freire (1972; 1974) has called the "generative theme". He argued that the search for generative themes by both teacher and student initiates the dialogue of education. Akkari (2001) explained that these themes should be contextually rich and related to real problems. In a multi-ethnic class, teachers in collaboration with students have to discover these themes and transform them to objects of reflection. These themes can be used to develop the curriculum and to discuss with immi-

grant students some notions related to their concrete situations, such as war, immigration, oppression, loss, and mourning. It may be that some teachers who lack a critical understanding of their reality, only partially recognize these limit-situations (Freire, 2018). This relates to the teachers' conscientization process.

PROCESS OF CONSCIENTIZATION: FROM TRANSITIVE TO CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Conscientization, defined as a source of liberation (Lenoir and Ornelas, 2007), implies that people go beyond the realm of fear of reality to a critical realm where they can take possession of the sociocultural reality that determines the existence of the subject (Freire, 1971). In this sense, being aware or conscious of something doesn't mean conscientization. For Freire, consciousness referred to the degree of apprehension of reality in a historical and cultural context (Loiola and Borges, 2012). He distinguished between different levels of consciousness, including the "primary consciousness" which refers to a limited perception of reality, and the "magical consciousness" from which human beings attribute the power to a higher force (Loiola and Borges, 2012). At both levels, people don't react. The "transitive consciousness" emerges when human beings give up their magical consciousness and perceive the dominant relationships existing within a situation, as well as the themes that constitute them (Lenoir and Ornelas, 2007). However, this phase is characterized by a simple and naïve reading of the world. The transition to "critical consciousness" involves critical pedagogy and a scientific knowledge of social reality, leading to the problematization of the situation (Lenoir and Ornelas, 2007; Pereira, 2018). At this level, people analyze situations, question themselves, and revise their positions, then seek to act on the world. Thus, conscientization, is the culmination of this critical consciousness and the acquisition of skills related to the praxis of liberation (Loiola and Borges, 2012). This allows people to better understand the sociocultural reality that determines their existence and provides them – through praxis – with the capacity to transform their reality (Lenoir and Ornelas, 2007). In short, conscientization cannot exist outside of the action-reflection process (Freire, 1971). From this point of view, dialogic teaching is essential to be able to reach this level. Teachers have to understand the reality of their students when they are confronted with their limit-situations, and be able to reflect critically and to take action together, rather than on their behalf.

METHODOLOGY

To document teachers' actions to support minority students' social and scholarly integration in terms of equity, justice and access, stories of practice (Desgagné, 2005) were collected. In Quebec, the "Se raconter" project (Audet et al., CRSH, 2017-2020; Audet et al., FRQSC 2018-2021) has been ongoing since 2017. Teachers were asked to narrate a situation they faced in class with an immigrant or refugee student and to tell a case related to intercultural education in their classes. Data was collected from several multi-ethnic schools through 60 minute explicitation interviews with teachers (Vermersch, 2017). An interactive session to explain the project to participants was held before the interviews took place. These stories constitute the main data source. They were reconstructed by the researcher and then validated by the teachers before being analyzed. Inspired by the use of the critical method used in the research (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg, 2011) (that asserts the role of teachers as partners in research), data was analysed according to categories used in the teachers' stories. Thus, the researcher assumes an analytical stance (Demazière and Dubar, 2004) that focuses mainly on the participants' discourse and the predetermined theoretical concepts. For the purpose of this chapter, four stories from different volunteer teachers from multi-ethnic schools in Montreal and Quebec City were selected. The stories were chosen for analysis because of their potential to illustrate – through the teachers' explanations – how to act when facing a situation with minority students. The results emerging from the corpus were then analysed through our theoretical framework and are presented in the following section.

RESULTS

The four stories are presented one by one. For each, we start with a brief description of the situation, before presenting a summary of the story that highlights the main actions taken by the teacher. Then, we give a brief analysis of these actions. Pseudonyms were adopted in place of the teachers' real names and dialogue is written in italics. These reports have been translated into English by the authors.

CLAIRE: A TEACHER WHOSE ACTIONS ARE LIMITED IN BY CONTEXT

Claire, a francophone teacher, narrates the story of Bassem, a first-grade student newly arrived in Canada from a Syrian refugee camp. He was

suspended from recess at the beginning of the school year, because his *"attitude was judged to be violent during play"*. Claire argued that the strategies implemented by the supervisor to suspend the student were the same as those used with any other non-immigrant student: *"we applied the same rules as we do for a non-immigrant student, the same consequences, without considering our objective."* She mentioned that: *"Bassem probably did not understand why he had been suspended."* She added that the school: *"did not understand that he was playing. We judged him to be violent, because we looked at him through our eyes and from our cultural viewpoint."* She thought that: *"he probably would not have been found violent in a more multi-ethnic environment."* Claire decided to act by reading a story to Bassem's class about diversity. *"It was not in the program, but the way the student was excluded gave me the idea that I needed to work to integrate him more and to arouse the empathy of other students."* However, she said she was: *"not sure how much the children understood the connection between the act of exclusion and the story"*. Later in her narrative, Claire says that: *"by the time, Bassem understood how he should play, he had made this discovery by himself."*

Confronted by Bassem's suspension, Claire decided to act by reading a story to the students in the class. Although she realizes her action wasn't ultimately effective, she didn't do anything further, remaining subjected to the limits of the situation. She mentions that *"the opportunity did not occur again to do another activity, because I was not at that school very often."*

STÉPHANIE: A TEACHER WHOSE ACTIONS ARE ANCHORED IN HER UNDERSTANDING OF THE REALITY OF STUDENTS

Stéphanie tells the story of Mohamed, a sixth-grade student immigrated from Syria. He was experiencing, according to her, a cultural shock – mainly because he hadn't mastered the French language.

Stéphanie began her story by describing her classroom principles: *"through my teaching practices, I always try to honour the mother tongue of the country where my students came from. I think it is important."* She mentions that other teachers at the school *"believed that Mohammed had a behavior and attitude problem. I told myself it was not that, that there was something that made him unhappy, but it escaped me. He needs time."* She declared: *"I tried to value his mother tongue, even if I was not sure of*

his competence in Arabic.” She believed that: “for some children, it is not that they cannot learn French, but they refuse to. It’s something emotional, it’s identity. Learning the language was my first goal with Mohammed.” To support him, she said that: “one of the first things I did to support him was to ask him to write his texts in Arabic, then translate them into French, which he immediately refused.” Later in her story, she mentioned that “by the end of the year, Mohamed was less passive than at the beginning, but we had not bonded in the way I had with the other students. It hurt me to see him leave without being able to bond with him.”

Stéphanie valued her students’ backgrounds and used tools that were anchored in their culture as a way to support them. This is why she asked Mohamed to write his texts in Arabic. Although Stéphanie persisted in supporting Mohamed by using different strategies, the story showed that the student lacked motivation and resisted her attempts. Nevertheless, a slight change in his attitude was noted at the end of the school year.

SOPHIE: A TEACHER WHOSE ACTIONS ARE TRANSFORMED ACCORDING TO HER NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE REALITY

Sophie gave us the example of Inaya, a preschool girl who came from Rwanda many years ago. According to the story, Sophie had a negative perception of Inaya’s passivity, as she wasn’t aware of the conditions that the child had endured after migrating from Rwanda after the genocide. Sophie voiced her first impression: *“in all honesty, after three or four weeks, I started to dislike that child. I didn’t question myself at all!”* She added: *“I did not understand the role I was supposed to play in supporting her adaptation in the classroom.”* After a meeting with the parents, Sophie said that she understood the migratory experience of Inaya and her parents. She admitted: *“when they left, I felt so guilty. In fact, I cried with remorse. I was wondering what I was thinking at the beginning. Then, things changed overnight. There is a before and an after.”* Of her new goal she said: *“I only had one goal for the end of the year. I wanted her to be happy! My goal was to fill the gap I had observed between the world she knew and the school world.”* She described her subsequent actions: *“I spent a lot of time playing with her. Our relationship changed instantly! I bonded with her. She was happy. She started to smile, to be interested in what I did in class. She was radiant! By the end of the year, Inaya had completed all of the expectations for pre-school, but I am absolutely convinced that if I had not made that effort, the*

outcome would have been different.” The change she mentioned was not only in Sophie’s actions and practices with Inaya: “another thing that has never been the same since then has been my meetings with the parents. I want to hear them talk about themselves and make adjustments based on what they tell me.”

Sophie said that initially she didn’t implement any specific strategy to support Inaya. However, after meeting her parents, Sophie reacted differently with Inaya and with all the other students. Based on that experience, not only did she set new goals to help Inaya integrate, but she also changed her opinion on teaching in a multi-ethnic context.

SARAH: A TEACHER WHOSE ACTIONS DEMONSTRATED A WILL TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT DIVERSITY

Sarah, a francophone teacher, told the story of Samuel, a preschool immigrant student from Africa who, she felt, was being undermined by his classroom teacher.

Sarah admitted: *“I felt the teacher had some aversion towards this student, and it was then that I decided that my mission with these children would be to make them feel loved, accepted and welcomed.”* She described her strategies to support the students in learning a new language: *“I had them interact and we played a lot. We learned French through different situations and games. I worked a lot on the interactions between children, as well as on learning strategies. I helped them to feel they have their place. Everyone had the right to speak and to have his own special and privileged moment.”* She commented: *“I was trying to make Samuel’s teacher understand where the student was coming from in order for her to change her perception of his situation.”* She mentioned that Samuel became more enthusiastic: *“Samuel quickly started smiling and speaking in class. He interacted with the other students in the class and participated with enthusiasm in all the class activities.”* At the same time, Sarah made another decision:

in my position as an educational consultant, I am becoming even more aware of this because it is not just the teachers, but it is the administrators too. For this reason, I want to set up training programs and workshops for school administrators in intercultural education, so they have a better understanding of reality, and because I realize that there is something that can be done. There is a lot of misunderstanding.

Confronted with the classroom teacher's attitude, Sarah not only made the decision to support the student, but also decided to raise awareness about intercultural education among teachers and school administrators. Her story showed that she had started to take steps towards this goal.

DISCUSSION

Having presented the actions the teachers took to confront the limit-situations they observed, we will now discuss these results in light of critical pedagogy. This section consists of two parts. In the first part, we will delve deeper into our one-by-one analysis. To do this, we identify the limit – situation and the generative theme of each story. We will then discuss the ways in which the teachers reflect on these themes and act critically, and how they transform the limit-situations that are seen as oppressive for the students. This allows us to extricate their process of conscientization. In the second part, we will deepen our analysis by examining the four stories transversally. Here, the aim is to discover further elements relating to the teachers' critical actions and conscientization.

ONE-BY-ONE DISCUSSION: FROM TRANSITIVE TO CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The stories are classified according to the different degrees of consciousness that emerged from our analysis. The first two stories demonstrated that both teachers partially recognized the limit-situation, and, thus, were moved toward the transitive consciousness phase in their process of conscientization. The second two stories indicated that the teachers reflected and acted critically, revealing that they are on the margins of the critical phase of consciousness.

CLAIRE: CONSCIENTIZATION AS A REACTION THAT DOES NOT TRANSFORM PRACTICES

Claire's story shows that she perceives Bassem's punishment as a limit-situation and that she felt that she must react to it so she read a story about diversity to the students in his class. The generative theme she wants to develop with her students is empathy. By doing this, she hopes that her students will help Bassem integrate socially. This means that Claire's transitive consciousness emerged as she began to understand the dominant relationships imposed on Bassem by the school system.

However, her actions do not reflect that she made a critical analysis of the situation. Although she realized that she had not achieved her goal through reading the story, she didn't transform this to a new object of reflection. She was subjected to the school context and only perceived the limit-situation partially, therefore, the desired change regarding Bassem's situation was not fully achieved. Moreover, it was Bassem who adjusted to the school system. In this sense, Freire (1974; 2018) argued that the process of change and liberation should lead to a transformation of the structure, not the other way around (as in Bassem's case.) Her discourse showed that she was aware of the multi-ethnic context, but that this was not translated into real actions: *"the whole school environment needs to be made aware of difference and diversity. This situation has taught me that, as a language support teacher who is aware of these differences, there is a need to educate the stakeholders in the education community."* In Freire's opinion, discourse deprived of action is unauthentic as it is unable to transform reality. Claire's actions proved to be more into verbalism than into praxis (Freire, 2018).

STÉPHANIE: CONSCIENTIZATION EMBEDDED IN THE REALITY OF STUDENTS: "BUSINESS AS USUAL"

Stéphanie's story affirms that she was aware of the reality of the situation surrounding immigrant students and that she chose to develop cultural tools to support them. Mohamed's cultural shock and his refusal to learn the language were perceived by Stéphanie as a limit situation that could be overcome and the generative theme for her was to have Mohamed comply with learning French. She didn't want him to feel that learning French would be to the detriment of his language of origin: *"It is by showing interest in who they are and by valuing their background that we support them in their journey, not by trying to make them learn French coercively."* Based on the generative theme, she focused her support on getting him to learn and to succeed at a new language so that he would come to terms with his new reality: *"I was happy to tell him that he had passed his exams from the Ministry of Education."* She used his mother tongue as a learning tool. Many authors say that the teaching strategies used with immigrant students must focus on the linguistic resources available in both languages (the mother tongue language and the language of instruction) (Armand, 2012; Collin & Allen, 2011; Cummins, 2001; Datta, 2007). However, near the end of her story, Stéphanie mentioned that she failed to develop a strong

connection with Mohamed: *"if I had managed to bond with him, he would have achieved more."* It seems that Stéphanie should have collaborated with her student to initiate supportive, co-constructed teaching practices (Koubeissy, 2019 a; 2019 b). Although she tried to initiate a dialogue with him, Mohamed's attitude did not alter and he did not engage in the process of change: *"There has been an evolution in our relationship during the year, for sure. He came to speak to me more often, asked me questions, but he never came and talked to me about himself, despite all the interest I showed in him."* As Freire (1970; 1974; 2018) stated, an educational dialogue is initiated when the teacher and the student both reflect critically on the situation and develop a basis of mutual trust. However, this was not the case here. Stéphanie cannot liberate Mohamed without his cooperation. In consequence, her actions did not lead to a real transformation. It might be that Stéphanie's actions and her discourse were not attuned to the concrete situation of the students (Freire, 1974). Thus, the transition to the critical level of consciousness did not occur. The generative theme may have seemed inconsequential to Mohamed and his wants were something other learning French.

SOPHIE: CONSCIENTIZATION ACTIVATED AFTER CONFRONTATION WITH THE REALITY

The story told by Sophie seems to have two phases: before and after the meeting with Inaya's parents. Before the meeting, she had made a judgment about the student without giving any thought to her situation. As Apple (2011) argued, some teachers hold overly general stereotypes about what refugee students and their parents are like. He considered that effective teaching requires not only that we understand the students, but also the sum of their experiences. This is what happened to Sophie after the meeting. She uncovered a new reality when confronted with the personal experience of the student and her family. She took on this new reality as an object of critical reflection (Freire, 1971). She perceived the situation of Inaya – who was experiencing hardship and was keeping to herself in class – as a limit-situation and decided to change it. The generative theme discovered by Sophie was spreading love instead of hate: *"I took care to share with my first-year colleagues that there is a key to socializing a child: love!"* Love is the one essential requirement for educational dialogue that leads to change (Freire, 2018). Both, Sophie and Inaya, were engaged in a process of change for Inaya *"to feel happy."* Thus, Sophie's actions shifted.

She critically adapted her understanding of the situation in the light of social justice, and the change she made was not bound by a time frame. Her entire understanding of her role as a teacher was changed: *"I would never say that it is the fault of a child if building a relationship with them is difficult. At the start of my career, I spent a lot of time creating beautiful material and activities. Yes, that's important, but what's more important is taking the time to bond and create a good class environment."* This was a transition toward a critical consciousness. In Sophie's case, the situation was transformed by praxis; her discourse was embedded in her new actions. During her process of conscientization, she discovered herself while questioning her values and perceptions (Lenoir and Ornelas, 2007): *"The lives of our immigrant students do not start the day they set foot in our school or in Quebec. It is our duty to adapt to their needs so that things go well. From this experience, I learned not to make judgments based on my values, my representations or my perceptions."*

SARAH: CONSCIENTIZATION THAT ASSERTED ITSELF AFTER AN IMPACTFUL EVENT

In Sarah's story, she recognized that Samuel's situation — in which he is being undermined by his teacher — is a limit-situation to be transformed. She discovered two generative themes: showing love towards Samuel and raising awareness about diversity within communities. Sarah's actions toward Samuel led to a positive change in his situation. Sarah and Samuel were both engaged in this process of change. Sarah then transformed Samuel's situation into a new object for reflection (Freire, 1974; 2018). This helped her to understand his reality (Akkari 2001) and she decided to take action: *"there is still work to be done though! My mission is just beginning!"* The raising awareness generative theme, discovered by Sarah, allowed her to develop a project aimed at school communities. This reflects the importance of the theme itself. In Sarah's case, the transformation of the situation occurred by praxis; her discourse — reflecting her vision about being aware of the situation of minority students — was aligned with her actions: *"I also like to tell teachers that it is important to know who is in front of you and to go and learn the student's story. Samuel, he's not just a preschool student, Samuel has a story. This story is important because it explains who is this little human I have in front of me."* Concerning the second generative theme, the process of change continued over time: *"I sow seeds. I have been working more with full-time teachers. I take time to*

explain all these things, and I see that it gets results. It is not just the teachers, but it is the administrators as well. I want to set up training programs and workshops for school principals, because I realize that there is something I can do. So, my mission is just beginning." In her process of conscientization, Sarah's actions testified to a critical thinking and an understanding of the reality. She emerged from the closed sphere, where she acted within a limited context, to a larger sphere where she was engaged in a project with the school communities. Thus, she moved toward critical consciousness.

TRANSVERSAL DISCUSSION: FROM TRADITIONAL TO CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

As mentioned above, the first two stories demonstrated that both teachers — Claire and Stéphanie — had a partial recognition of the limit-situation. Yet, their practices were rooted in multicultural education. Both teachers were conscious of the needs arising from their multi-ethnic environment and acted to support the integration of their students. However, this did not necessarily lead to a transformation of the reality. May and Sleeter (2010) observed that multicultural education is limited by the fact that it deals with the roots of cultural conflict in schools as a misunderstanding of differences, rather than one of unequal power dynamics. They argued that this gap is not reduced when culture continues to be viewed through a set of concrete classroom practices that utilize artefacts, instead of having students dig deeply into the issue of identity and practices. For instance, Stéphanie mobilized many cultural tools to resolve Mohamed's problem with learning French, but she did not problematize this to the point where it became an object of reflection. Claire didn't reconceptualize the notion of literacy. She didn't teach her students how to decode the meaning behind the words (Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg, 2011), and how to reflect critically on the process of reading or on the profound significance of language (Freire, 1970). Therefore, the goal of developing empathy towards Bassem was not realized. The teachers' desire to integrate the students was a noble one, but there was no critical analysis of the situation. The generative themes they discovered remained in a closed sphere.

The second two stories, on the other hand, showed that the teachers did reflect and act critically. Both Sophie and Sarah engaged in a process of critical reflection and took actions that led to a transformation. Their actions were embedded in critical multicultural education (Akkari, 2001;

May and Sleeter, 2010). Sophie, in cooperation with Inaya, used love as an element of dialogical teaching. The change was not only observed in Inaya's situation, but also in Sophie's vision and personal stance. This new reality was used as a new object of reflection in dealing with other parents and students. In addition, Sophie developed a new critical position regarding multiculturalism: *"I think we have to go beyond asking the kids 'Are you from Algeria? You speak Arabic? Students are more than a language and a country.'"* This corroborates with May and Sleeter's (2010) views about critical multiculturalism in which practices should be more than just a focus on cultural artefacts. Similarly, Sarah gave herself the dual mission of transforming Samuel's situation and of raising awareness about diversity. To do that, she developed a project that engaged other stakeholders in initiating a collaborative process. Her actions shared the same purpose as that of critical pedagogy: to develop critical thinking amongst others so that they are able to ask questions for themselves, instead of letting others find solutions for them.

Our data analysis showed that there was a lack of coherence between the discourse of some teachers and the practices they implemented (Grimaldi, 2012; González-Monteaudo, 2002). In Claire and Stéphanie's cases, their discourse and actions were not fully coherent. There is a certain level of conscientization, but this is still far away from the possession of the reality. In both these cases, inequity persisted. This is contrary to Sophie's and Sarah's cases, where the process of change was more advanced, and their stories showed greater coherence between reflection and action. However, dialogue could have been used to fill the gap between reflection and action. Lenoir and Ornelas (2007) argued that dialogue makes it possible to overcome and remove the dominant relationship. Mohamed and Bassem were not engaged in an educational dialogue with their teachers. Samuel and Inaya, in the other two cases, were more involved in the process of change – especially as the teachers and their students shared the generative themes. As Freire (1974; 2018) argued, it is essential that the student participates in the process of change with a growing critical awareness of his or her role as the subject of transformation.

CONCLUSION

The teachers' stories of practice, analyzed in the light of a critical, pedagogical approach, revealed many of the ways in which teachers took on the responsibility in their classes to support minority students' social and aca-

demic integration in terms of equity, justice, and access to opportunities. Shor (2018) considered that this pedagogy serves to question the status quo in the name of social justice. The stories discussed concerned refugee and immigrant students. In both scenarios, through the telling of their own stories, teachers were able to recognize to some extent the limit – situations of their students, and this reflected on their level of conscientization.

When working in a multi-ethnic context, teachers are expected to deal with students from different backgrounds and facilitate equal opportunities. Multicultural education's challenge is to help students from diverse groups mediate between their home cultures and school culture (Banks, 2020). In a critical sense, teachers should realize that they should both educate and learn from the student. This is the challenge that multicultural education faces in the classroom. Claire and Stéphanie's cases are good examples. If multicultural education is called on to find solutions to the problems of equity and justice, a radical shift in the school's role is essential to the democratization of education. Thus, teachers and students should be engaged in critical thinking to aid in this change. In this way, education acquires a new role: the promotion of critical thinking that engages students' participation in the process of change (Giroux, 2010), self-discovery, and development of their capacity to cooperate with others (Chomsky, 2017). Therefore, education is a continuous engagement in social praxis where each situation serves as a new opportunity for reflection (Freire, 2018). This is shown in the second two cases discussed.

To conclude, Giroux (1991 in Mahmoudi et al., 2015) held that there are teachers who seek changes and act critically while there are others who seek to conform. The cases of Sophie and Sarah correspond to the first type, while Claire's and Stéphanie's cases belonged to a third type: teachers who seek change, but who do not act critically to pursue it. Therefore, teachers whose approach is embedded in a conservative, multicultural, educational mindset must shift their actions to a critical view to promote equity and social justice. Akkari (2001) considered that in order to build a sociocultural conscientization, multicultural education needs to go beyond the decontextualization of the curriculum and go towards a deep critical reading of reality. He argued that conscientization requires a change not only to the content of conscience, but also to mental views and behaviors. Consequently, this necessitates a change in the way that reality is perceived and implies a change in personal stance, values and ideologies.

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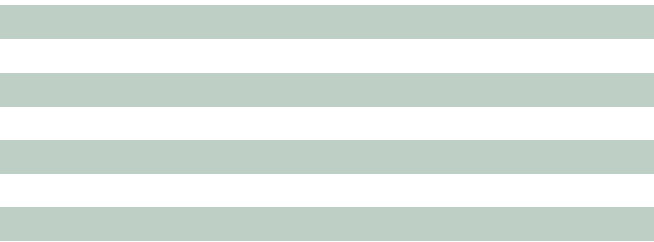
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ENDNOTES

- 1 Our project takes place in Quebec, a French-speaking province in Canada.
- 2 Throughout this chapter, we use the terms multicultural education and multiculturalism. However, we do recognize that Quebec opted for interculturalism and intercultural education. The way in which these two normative frameworks are relayed in a class context tend to be the same (Mc Andrew, 2013).
- 3 Throughout this chapter, we will use the term minority to denote immigrant and refugee students.



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