

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

Debates regarding managing diversity in schools have in some degree failed to develop an impartial system based on minority students' rights (Akkari and Radhouane, 2019). In fact, the educational system in the Americas is embedded in a neoliberal system that attempts to marketize schools (Connell, 2013). Therefore, educational policies emerging in the last 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). Both teachers and students are removed from having a real voice in the teaching-learning process. While students are subject in many cases to what is called the "banking" concept in education (Freire, 1974; 2001; 2018), teachers are reduced to the status of technicians (Giroux, 2010) and are without any power within the school system. They are overwhelmed by work that is prescribed through directives, such as those relating to planning and evaluation. This has shifted teachers' concerns away from fostering racial and ethnic diversity to fulfilling the requirements of the new neoliberal movement (May and Sleeter, 2010).

Although many educational policies have been established to urge teachers to support the integration of minority students in their classes, they haven't definitively been able to equip them to handle the complexity of the underlying challenges, thus denying them the opportunity of help in eliminating the opportunity gap between cultural, ethnic and social class backgrounds. In challenging existing relations of unequal power, teachers must restructure their roles and be engaged in a process of "repositioning" (Apple, 2011). In critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; 1971; 1972; 1974; 2001; 2018), enabling democratic teachers (Apple, 2011; Freire, 2018; Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg, 2011) to act on their new perceptions of reality means they have more of a voice and can be more engaged in the process of transformation. They need to develop a

critical thinking mindset to see the world through the eyes of the oppressed and to act against the institutional system that reproduces oppressive and unequal conditions (Apple, 2011).

Based on the research project, "Se raconter", (Audet et al., CRSH, 2017-2020; Audet et al., FRQSC 2018-2021), this chapter discusses how teachers take on the responsibility to support minority students' social and scholarly integration in the classroom to gain equal access to opportunities. To document teachers' actions, pragmatic examples (Desgagné, 2005) were collected. Teachers were asked to narrate a story related to either an event or a problem that occurred in their classes with one of their minority students. Data was collected from several multi-ethnic schools in Quebec through teacher interviews (Vermersch, 2017) lasting approximately 60 minutes. These stories were reconstructed by the researcher and validated by the teachers before being analyzed.

For the purpose of this chapter, four stories from different volunteer teachers were selected and analysed using critical pedagogy. By giving a voice to the teachers, we aimed to analyze in what ways teachers reflect on the situations they recognize as limit-situations (Freire, 1974) and how they act critically to transform them, thereby facilitating the teacher's process of conscientization (Freire, 1974; 2018) of the multi-ethnic reality of schools and the rights of minority students.

Our results showed that teachers' actions vary from being limited by the context, being anchored in the reality of minority students, being transformed by new perceptions of reality, and lastly, being aimed at raising awareness about diversity. These different actions reflect different levels of conscientization. Two of the stories examined in this article demonstrate that the teachers have only a partial recognition of the limit-situation of their minority students and so are approaching the transitive consciousness phase in their process of con-



# ABSTRACT >> 16

ROLA KOUBEISSY  
GENEVIÈVE AUDET



ENGLISH

scientization. Thus, the process of change went unnoticed. The other two stories indicated that the teachers reflected on the situations and acted critically, revealing that they are on the margins of the critical phase of consciousness. Therefore, the process of change was more advanced. Finally, teachers whose approach was embedded in a conservative, multicultural, and educational mindset needed to shift their actions to adopt a critical view to promote equality and social justice. This necessitates not only a change to the way teachers perceive reality but also implies a change to their personal stance, values, and ideologies.