



# ANTIRACIST EDUCATION IN QUÉBEC: CRITICAL ASSESSMENT AND PROSPECTIVES

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*Fighting Racism and Ensuring Equity in Society and Schools:  
New Paradigm in Great Britain and Canada*

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# **PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT**

# 1. THE CONTEXT

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- A growing diversity and a raising consciousness of issues related to lack of equity and exclusion
- An uneasy relationship with antiracism, as a pedagogical movement:
  - A early interest as “victims”
  - The current dominance of the intercultural paradigm
  - Some common (i.e. with English Canada) and specific resistances

## 2. THREE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

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- Why did the antiracist approach, which gave rise to interesting developments in the 1980s, failed to take hold in the Québec school system?
- Why are many teachers and other school professionals afraid of, or indifferent to, antiracist education? Can this be explained by some weaknesses inherent to the approach?
- In the face of both these resistances and the theoretical criticisms raised in the literature, how should antiracist education be redefined?

### 3. THE THEORETICAL AND HEURISTIC FRAMEWORK

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#### ***Antiracism, as an explicit or implicit “added-value” to other currents***

- Five central elements:
  - A priority:
    - Equal opportunities and results for minority students and teachers
  - A dominant explanatory system:
    - Unequal relationships between various groups, at the national and global levels
  - Three main strategies:
    - Transforming not only attitudes and behaviors, but also knowledge, practices and rules that have a discriminatory effect
    - Empowering students, teachers and parents to challenge racism and transform society
    - Promoting a pedagogy focused on fairness, justice and discrimination

## 4. THE PROJECT OBJECTIVES

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- Assess the extent to which antiracist education perspectives are implemented at the elementary, secondary and college levels and in teacher training in Québec, as regards both curricula and pedagogical strategies, and the functioning of institutions
- Critically analyze the identified practices, in light of the antiracist literature and the perceptions of those involved in their implementation
- Explore the conceptions of key school professionals regarding the relevance of antiracist education, and the main criticisms levelled at it
- Identify opportunities and obstacles with respect to the introduction and development of antiracist education in the Québec francophone school system
- Provide input at the Québec, Canadian and international levels on the most efficient antiracist education approaches and practices, and contribute to the development of a dialogue between scholars, decision-makers and stakeholders on this issue

## 5. THE METHODOLOGY

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- A content analysis and mapping of documents related to policies, programs, curriculum and curricular and extracurricular activities
- Interview with 26 stakeholders and education professionals involved in antiracist activities (government, school boards, schools, colleges, universities and NGOs)
- Two main limits:
  - Francophone educational milieu in Montreal
  - No interview with primary and secondary school teachers

## 6. THE TEAM AND ITS PARTNERS

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- Three researchers
  - Maryse Potvin, UQAM
  - Fasal Kanouté, University of Montreal
  - Marie Mc Andrew, University of Montreal
- Funded by the joint initiative between SSHRC and Heritage Canada on *Issues related to multiculturalism*
- An impressive Advisory Committee:
  - Québec Ministry of Education (MELS)
  - Québec Human Rights Commission (CDPDJ)
  - Montréal School Board (CSDM)
  - College's Intercultural Service (SIC)
  - Third Avenue Resource Center (CRTA)





**AN OVERVIEW OF  
RESULTS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

# 1. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

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- The existence of numerous and significant opportunities to practice antiracist education, within the prescribed curriculum and regular and extracurricular activities at all levels of the school system

# 1. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

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- The lack of a coherent and global framework in this regard
  - A difficulty, or even resistance, to name racism
  - An almost exclusively individualistic analysis of its causes and consequences (i.e. ignorance of the systemic dimension)
  - A lack of relationship between antiracist approaches and endeavours aiming at promoting school success among minorities (mostly compensatory)
  - A discussion of unequal power-relationship focussed on the international scene of, if discussed within Québec, outside of schools and classrooms
  - A lack of systematic consideration of the role of schooling in the production of educational and social inequalities

# 1. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

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- The existence of multidimensional sources of resistances to antiracist education
  - Lack of familiarity with the concept
  - Perception that it is too narrow, too polarized (race vs. religion, poverty)
  - Specific difficulty for francophone teachers to recognize their recent dominant status over “new” minorities
  - Structural factors (lack of time, etc.)

# 1. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

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- An emergency context favouring the increased salience and dynamism of antiracist approaches, both internationally and nationally (i.e. *Québec* ...)

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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- 1) Antiracism should be promoted through a wide perspective, better articulated to other major concerns of the educational milieu and regular programs, both as it regards its systemic and curricular dimensions
- 2) A better understanding and mastery of concepts related to racism, antiracism and their manifestation in the educational milieu should be supported among decision-makers, curriculum planners, school professionals and NGO's

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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- 3) A specific stress should be put, in this regard, to the grasping of the systemic dimension of inequalities and the capacity to identify and critically analyze educational norms and practices that may have a negative impact on ethnocultural and racial equity
- 4) Educational and wider society stakeholders interested in promoting an increased debate and taking into account of equity and antiracism issues should be better supported