

EDUCATION FROM A PLANETARY AND CITIZENSHIP PERSPECTIVE



FABIENNE DESROCHES
Director general
Cégep de Sorel-Tracy

Among the many efforts towards greater awareness that are emerging in industrial societies, the project *Éducation dans une perspective planétaire et citoyenne* (Education from a planetary and citizenship perspective/EPCP) tackles head-on the topic of education in peace, democracy, rights, the environment, long-term development as well as intercultural and international understanding. Consisting of both a university section and a collegial section, the project's main goal is the development of responsible citizens. The project received the 2005 Internationalization Leadership Award from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE). This article reviews the collegial¹ portion of the project.

▶ A PROJECT THAT BELONGS IN THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF COLLEGES

This project touches upon the educational mission of colleges in an era where globalization of almost all aspects of individual and collective life challenge us: In the way we define values, review ethical and moral principles and affirm human rights; in the way we search for solutions to social conflicts and environmental problems; and, in a context where interculturalism is seen as a required competency in the exercise of a profession.

Questions arising from new world realities mobilize youth who are in need of orientation and reflection on these very questions, when it comes to choosing their lifestyle and careers. For example, the recent trend towards implementation of Student Mobility Programs requires a training program that includes openness to the world, both for the preparation of trips abroad as well as the re-integration and sharing of the experience when back; the type of elements that are part of education from a global and citizenship perspective. This education is defined as follows:

Global education is a **perspective** (and not an object of learning) that underscores, influences and harmonizes teaching and learning processes in schools. It allows students to study and understand global issues so they may deal with these issues in their own environment. It allows them to adopt sound values based on respect for their environment, global interdependence, social justice for all, peace, individual rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural processes that benefit all. Students have the opportunity to strengthen their resolve and capacity to act as responsible citizens and contribute to the construction of a better world for themselves, their community, and the planet as a whole. (Desroches, 1997, p. 178)

¹ At collegial level, this project was directed by Cégep international, an organization that offers strategies to its members relating to the internationalization of training. The project is associated with the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada (RCCFC), therefore allowing for the realization of specific cross-Canada networking activities (seminars and conferences on EPMC in Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton and Ottawa).

▶ A PROJECT FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

The objective of the project is to develop a sense of citizenship in students. However, given teacher involvement and the fact that their values and attitudes can help foster the development of a civic identity in students, the project calls upon the participation of both students and teachers. Its goal is:

- To sensitize college professors and make them aware of the global aspect of education; to provide the tools to introduce this dimension into their teaching practices;
- to integrate all required components into collegial study programs that are specific to the development of responsible citizens who successfully participate in a world of ever-increasing interdependence;
- to train a target-group of professors on educational concepts from a planetary and citizenship perspective (*Éducation dans une perspective planétaire — EPP*) and provide them with tools to integrate these concepts into their teaching;
- to train a target-group of professors on a project to foster the inclusion of EPCP in education and provide them with tools to integrate these concepts into teaching and student activities.

▶ A SENSITIZATION PROJECT

Sensitizing professors is undoubtedly the one aspect of the project that necessitated the highest level of intervention. In fact,



most activities were specifically designed to sensitize and increase their awareness.

Whether the activity included advocacy, organizing seminars, participating in public events, conventions, Performa courses or projects realized by colleges, sensitization was on every agenda.

Instilling EPMC concepts in student training at collegial level takes time and professors must be motivated to sustain the efforts needed to succeed. For this reason, we chose to introduce informational components and specific values linked to a global perspective in a progressive and continuous manner, and within several pedagogical training and proficiency activities.

[...] the inclusion of an international and citizenship dimension in education calls for the cooperation and active participation of students.

▶ AN ENRICHMENT PROJECT FOR COLLEGIAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

One project objective was to integrate relevant contents into all collegial study programs so as to develop responsible citizens likely to participate successfully in a world where inter-dependence is growing rapidly.

The integration of specific content to study programs was particularly successful in Humanities. The identification of courses within the program that could include *education from a planetary and citizenship perspective* was done for three colleges: Ahuntsic, Bois-de-Boulogne, and Saint-Hyacinthe. It was a great success according to project organizers thanks to the introduction of specific components of this dimension within general goals of the new Humanities program. In October 1999, the program's

National Committee introduced one general objective for EPCP, defined as: *The positioning of diverse actions and ideologies relative to citizenship within a global context.*

Work of a similar nature also took place at Cégep de Jonquière in Techniques de travail social. Professors in Nursing at Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe and in Computer sciences at Cégep de Shawinigan introduced EPCP concepts within their new program and a study is underway at Cégep de Saint-Jérôme in Techniques de l'éducation à l'enfance. To date, almost half the public colleges in Québec, about 24 cégeps to date, have initiated EPCP projects. The project is starting to bear fruit.

▶ HELPING PROFESSORS WITH THEIR EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

To foster the inclusion of an *international and citizenship dimension in education* calls for the cooperation and active participation of students. To help college professors develop active educational strategies, training in cooperation and reflexive analysis was proposed. Through the Master Teaching Program at Université de Sherbrooke², an accredited EPCP course within the Performa program was also offered to professors from several colleges. Approximately one hundred professors participated actively.

▶ A PROJECT WITH A DEFINITE IMPACT

Subsequent to an internal evaluation of the project in 2001, participating professors described the project as a means of integration that led to greater cooperation between professors from varied disciplines, gave renewed meaning to their teaching practices, and identified what was already present at various levels. More specifically, several educational tools were developed: Pedagogical guides, a series of documents on the elements of the concept itself, bibliographies, conferences, and videos, not to mention two university publications³.

Additionally, many advocacy activities here and abroad took place with non-governmental organizations such as the CBIE (Canadian bureau for international Education), the AUCC (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada), the ACCC (Association of Canadian community colleges), UNESCO, and various government agencies in Québec. Two seminars were also organized, one in Vancouver and the other in Toronto.

In the same vein, training spread over several days was offered to all French-speaking regions in Canada. Approximately 300 professors and 1,000 students benefited directly from the project thanks to local activities related to the project. On a global scale, it is estimated that half of all cégeps and French-speaking universities in Canada were influenced by the project and considered it a positive experience on a number of levels.

² The Faculty of Education at Université de Moncton has also introduced a course on *Education from a planetary and citizenship perspective* for its students

³ This refers to *L'éducation dans une perspective planétaire* (*Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, vol. XXIII, n° 1, 1997) and *Défis et enjeux de l'éducation dans une perspective planétaire* (Sherbrooke, Éd. du CRP, Université de Sherbrooke, under the guidance of Mohamed Himech and France Jutras, 1997)



Professors, the principal players in the project, readily acknowledge its value in facilitating cooperation among colleagues, in reaffirming values that are sometimes forgotten, and in creating a common thread that adds value to the overall meaning of their work. Students are also beginning to benefit from this renewal, particularly in Humanities. The new approach has also resulted in greater receptivity to communities, minorities, and aboriginal peoples. Several paths and tools were proposed to promote responsible citizenship from a global perspective among students. In summary, this project has fostered an environment favourable to reflection and debates on the internationalization of citizenship training and development at collegial level.

From sensitization to the development of pedagogical tools, the EPCP project while introducing specific components within pre-university and technical training programs, brought about captivating consequences that attest to the importance of Education from a Planetary and Citizenship Perspective within colleges. ●

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

DESROCHES, F., *Défis et enjeux de l'éducation dans une perspective planétaire*, Sherbrooke, Éd. du CRP, Université de Sherbrooke, under the direction of Mohamed Hrimech and France Jutras, 1997.

Fabienne DESROCHES, director general at Cégep de Sorel-Tracy, launched the EPCP Project in 1995 at five French-speaking universities in Eastern Canada within the Master Training Program; the project became available to all French-speaking colleges in Canada. She then championed a project at collegial level initiated by Cégep international, an organization that recommends strategies on the internationalization of training. The project then became associated with Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada (RCCFC). This enabled the realization of specific cross-Canada networking activities. Fabienne Desroches received the Internationalization Leadership Award presented by the Canadian Bureau of International Education in recognition for her exceptional contribution to the internationalization of education.

fabienne.desroches@cegep-sorel-tracy.qc.ca