According to the UNESCO:

" [...] inclusive education [...] is central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies." In several countries, inclusion is still thought of simply as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2008, p. 5-6).

In fact, the democratization of education and the importance attached to it by modern societies have led to the establishment of a diversified population in our teaching and training institutions. While we emphasize learners with learning challenges or disabilities, we must not forget those with different values and sociocultural references, different school and social experiences and those who take on parental and professional responsibilities as they perform their studies.

In this context, innovations in evaluation practices, the process of accommodation, differentiation, and adaptation of the evaluation as well
as the ongoing revision of the modes, methods, and tools used for measuring and evaluating are at the core of the reflections on the development of an inclusive and equitable education. So, what are the challenges facing evaluation practices as they relate to increased diversity and inequality in the world of education? Where do measuring and evaluating fit in inclusive schools? What are the challenges to implementing innovative evaluation practices within the context of inclusion? How in heterogeneous school contexts do we implement evaluation practices? What are the bases, theories or the empirical studies that could support inclusive evaluation practices? These were some of the questions that fed our discussions. They have highlighted the social, educational, and scientific relevance of organizing a thematic dossier that approaches the issue of learning evaluation and the need to support and promote diversity to include all learners.

The main objective of this proposed thematic dossier is to promote information exchange and foster debate around articles encompassing measurements and evaluation in a context of innovation that favors inclusion, taking into account the cross-sectional nature of this field in several domains of knowledge and training (teaching, measurements and evaluation, school adaptation, university teaching, etc.). To achieve that, specialists from different fields of knowledge introduced new and unpublished articles answering one or another previously asked questions.

In this document, these questions are discussed based on three different angles: learning processes performed by learners, teaching practices used by teachers and future teachers, and basic and continued education of both primary and middle school teachers as well as college professors. As we deal with these issues, we share new knowledge, provided by research done in different contexts, and highlight their contributions and limitations in terms of understanding a key aspect of today’s teaching: evaluation under the lens of inclusive learning.

We are starting this thematic dossier with an article by Marie-Aimée Lamarche, PhD student at the University of Montreal, and Micheline Joanne Durand, a professor at this same university. They present state of the art research regarding evaluation practices aimed at assessing school learning by students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in middle schools. Based on the texts analyzed, the authors identified three main areas of interest: the use of intervention plans, of standardized evaluation tools, and of adapting teaching practices to the characteristics of the learners. These confirmed that there is a lack of empirical knowledge of
concrete evaluation practices implemented for this type of student and to propose a number of recommendations to correct that.

The work done by Carla Barroso da Costa and Anderson Araújo-Oliveira, researchers at the University of Quebec in Montreal and the organizers of this thematic dossier, is at the core of the research done in Quebec in terms of measurements and evaluation. In this second article, an analysis is presented of the self-evaluation done by college students as part of an introductory program in statistics geared to humanities after the students performed a complex task. The results suggest that the students’ cognitive engagement depends on their awareness of as well as active and motivated participation in the learning process. In addition, the authors highlight the importance of implementing evaluative situations that emphasize autonomy, in-depth learning, and an on-going process of making adjustments and promoting inclusion.

In the third article, María Lourdes Lira Gonzales, professor at the University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, presents an empirical study about peers providing corrective feedback by using a blog in English as a second language classes and discusses the results of this study in light of inclusive education. As the author suggests, when feedback is provided to answer to different characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs of the students, blog-based peer-driven feedback can potentially contribute to inclusive education.

With a view focused more specifically on evaluation practices, the contribution made by the team of the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi – Nicole Monney, Catherine Duquette, Christine Couture (teachers) and Hans Boulay (research assistant) – calls on us to review evaluation practices in the fields of natural sciences as well as in humanities and social sciences. This fourth article introduces collaborative research involving four primary school teachers. It allowed to develop a portrait of the evolution of the evaluation practices used by teachers and to identify clues for reflection and to guide towards a more inclusive evaluation. The authors reaffirmed the importance of evaluating learning in order to favor inclusive approaches and insist on the need to consider the specificities of each course to better deal with the objects of learning.

The fifth article focuses more specifically on the issue of large-scale evaluations on reading skills, which are under strong pressure to become more informative about the students’ learning. Based on the premise that it is possible to break reading down into knowledge and abilities that can be diagnosed by psychometric modeling, researchers Dan Thanh Duong
Thi (University of Quebec in Montreal) and Nathalie Loye (University of Montreal) describe how diagnostic reports were developed with a panel of specialists to reflect students’ strengths and weaknesses. The diagnostic reports are based on the data provided by the PIRLS 2011 and report the results of the evaluation made by primary school teachers, teaching coordinators, and psychopedagogy practitioners.

Written by Serigne Ben Moustapha Diedhiou, a professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal, the sixth article deals with communicating the evaluation to the learners’ parents and tutors. By using data from collaborative research involving five teachers graduated from an education system other than Quebec’s, the author analyzes the adjustments to be made to the teachers’ evaluations to adjust them to those commonly used and valued in Montreal schools for communicating results.

The seventh article, by Anick Baribeau, a professor at the University of Sherbrooke, reflects on learning evaluations in the context of the current professional and inclusive training. According to the article, there is a need to implement a new culture in terms of evaluation, one that is considered more inclusive as well as of tools that might facilitate the transition toward this new culture. In particular, the article helps to reflect on the goals of evaluating learning to make democracy a reality (based on the values of justice, equity and equality), an orientation that was affirmed in Quebec early in the 1960’s on the occasion of the publication of the Rapport Parent, reaffirmed through various educational reforms implemented since then.

In the eighth article, María Lourdes Lira Gonzales, Glorya Pellerin (University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue), Anderson Araújo-Oliveira, and Simon Collin (University of Quebec in Montreal) approach the preliminary results of a pilot project that aims at experimenting with an innovative training tool by using reflexive analysis videos (video recordings of oneself) in teacher-training programs. The project involved two Canadian universities and allowed future teachers to reflect on their evaluation practices. The study identifies, on the one hand, the types of feedback provided by a supervisor after listening to the reflexive analyses of future teachers and, on the other hand, the different reflexive processes used by these future teachers.

Last, in the final text, Anderson Araújo-Oliveira and Carla Barroso da Costa (University of Quebec in Montreal), simultaneously provide a general summary of the main elements discussed in this special dossier and propose a critical and cross-sectional analysis of the research pre-
presented here. In particular, the article provides answers, even if in part, to the main questions raised over the presentation of the dossier and, consequently, to re-contextualize the issue of learning evaluation and the need to innovate to better support and promote diversity, as suggested by the title of the dossier. It also highlights a series of challenges emerging from the research presented and raises many clues to reflect upon to benefit future research.

We hope the nine articles will allow readers to deepen their reflections on this field and, when questions are raised about the innovation of evaluation practices, evaluation adaptation, as well as review of the modes, methods and tools to measure and evaluate, that these articles will contribute to the development of an inclusive and diversified education that meets the aspirations of a pluralized and multicultural population that we welcome in our teaching and training institutions.

Reference
