

Facing “*Creationist offensive*” against Evolution in French schools: What could we do to promote scientific education?

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Considering the origin question as a socioscientific issue (SSI), I will discuss here French political reactions facing the mediated “creationist offensive” in 2007 led by Harun Yahya, *an outspoken Turkish-born Muslim advocate of creationism who is considered widely controversial within the Islamic world (Time, 02 June 2011)*. His *Atlas of Creation* judged to be of “*pathetically poor quality*” by French academics has been excluded from schools by the Education Ministry. This reaction could be interpreted as a radical application of the *Non-Overlapping Magisteria* (Gould, 2000), in order to protect students from indoctrination risks. However, considering students as lay and naive public, highly indoctrinated and censoring creationists’ argumentations in science lessons could be related to another risk: students’ temptations to find answers alone, somewhere else and without opportunity for debate, to consider science as a dogmatic argumentation, opposed to other ones. Even if I consider that a balanced approach in science courses, as proposed in some American states, is not adapted to this socioscientific issue, I am convinced that exclusions of creationist argumentations from science courses were no more adapted. To promote a scientific education for citizenship, the international SSI movement asked for an impartial but involved treatment, discussing the role and the place of sciences facing socially and controversial accurate questions. Supposing a socio-epistemological approach in science courses, implications are that a breakdown is necessary, using teachers’ expertise, because *we can no longer accept that science education is treated as if it is only a body of facts or formulae to be delivered, or even artificially discovered through laboratory-based practical experiments and experiences* (Gray and Bryce, 2006).