



# Québec's History of Québec and Canada Ministerial Examination: A Tool to Promote Historical Thinking or a Hurdle to Hinder Its Inclusion?

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History can stir passions and emotions. In Québec, this holds true when it comes to the teaching of Québec and Canadian history in high school. Any modification to the national history curriculum gives rise to public debates as was the case with the most recent history curriculum reform from 2014 to 2017.<sup>1</sup> Following the Beauchemin and Fahmy-Eid report,<sup>2</sup> the Ministry of Education was mandated with the task of rewriting the Québec and Canadian history (HQC) curriculum for the 3rd and 4th years of secondary school.<sup>3</sup> Among other recommendations, the Beauchemin and Fahmy-Eid report suggests that the curriculum should emphasize a teaching of history based on

<sup>1</sup> Renaud Giraldeau, "Tirer la couverture à soi n'a pas sa place en classe d'histoire," *Le Devoir*, June 19, 2015, <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/443152/tirer-la-couverture-a-soi-n-a-pas-sa-place-en-classe-d-histoire>; Jean-François Cardin, "De la suppose 'denationalisation' des programmes d'histoire," *Le Devoir*, March 11, 2013, <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/372963/contre-la-coalition-pour-l-histoire>

<sup>2</sup> Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation des Loisirs et du Sport, *Le sens de l'histoire: Pour une réforme du programme d'histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté de 3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> secondaire*, Jacques Beauchemin et Nadia Fahmy-Eid [http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/dpse/formation\\_jeunes/sens\\_de\\_histoire\\_s.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/formation_jeunes/sens_de_histoire_s.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Grades 9 and 10 in other Canadian provinces.

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problematization and the use of evidence that would allow students to work with a range of understandings of the past.<sup>4</sup> When a provisional copy of the new curriculum was published, controversy ensued.<sup>5</sup>

While certain historians and teachers welcomed the change on the basis that the new curriculum allowed a teaching of Québec's history that promoted French identity, minority groups, such as the Anglophone community, accused the curriculum of being one-sided. Many history educators such as Marc-André Éthier, David Lefrançois, Stéphanie Demers, and Vincent Boutonnet complained that the new curriculum promotes a nation-building narrative based on a collective memory and a transmissive approach to the discipline instead of fostering historical thinking.<sup>6</sup> In their book, *Quel sens pour l'histoire; Analyse et critique du nouveau programme d'histoire du Québec et du Canada*, Éthier and his collaborators conclude that the HQC curriculum falls short of its mandate of establishing a problem-based approach in history class that reflects the scientific discipline.<sup>7</sup>

Éthier et al.'s opinion on the HQC curriculum is supported by two main arguments. First, they find that there is a lack of coherence between the theoretical framing found at the beginning the HQC curriculum based on historical thinking and the program content that enumerates long lists of declarative knowledge to be presented in class.<sup>8</sup> For example, the HQC curriculum states on page 5 that students must work with evidence and learn to assess its validity. Yet the two competencies at the heart of the program do not mention the use of evidence as an ability that students should learn.<sup>9</sup> Boutonnet contends that: "By wishfully resorting to critical analysis in a general way without specifying the way or the object of this reflection, it seems to us very probable that this analysis would be very variable, if not non-existent."<sup>10</sup>

The second argument is that the curriculum promotes a nation-building narrative that overlooks minority groups and diminishes the importance of citizenship education.<sup>11</sup> Again, citizenship education is mentioned in the scaffolding

<sup>4</sup>Beauchemin et Fahmy-Eid, *Le sens de*, 27; Vincent Boutonnet, "Une analyse du contenu propose par le nouveau programme d'histoire" in *Quel sens pour l'histoire; Analyse et critique du nouveau programme d'histoire du Québec et du Canada*, ed. Marc-André Éthier, Vincent Boutonnet, Stéphanie Demers, David Lefrançois (Montréal: M Éditeur, 2017), 63.

<sup>5</sup>Patricia Cloutier, "Un nouveau cours d'histoire qui divise," *Le Soleil*, August 15, 2016, <https://www.lesoleil.com/actualite/education/un-nouveaucours-dhistoire-qui-divise-6132eb449e1f1098f8597e947b7fb953>

<sup>6</sup>Marc-André Éthier, Vincent Boutonnet, Stéphanie Demers and David Lefrançois, *Quel sens pour l'histoire; Analyse et critique du nouveau programme d'histoire du Québec et du Canada*, (Montréal: M Éditeur, 2017).

<sup>7</sup>Éthier et al. *Quel sens*, 96.

<sup>8</sup>Boutonnet, "Analyse," 69.

<sup>9</sup>Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, *History of Québec and Canada, Secondary III and IV*, 2017, 5, 11, 14. [http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/PFEQ\\_histoire-quebec-canada\\_2017\\_EN.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/PFEQ_histoire-quebec-canada_2017_EN.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>Boutonnet, "Analyse," 69. Our translation.

<sup>11</sup>Stéphanie Demers, "Pourquoi enseigner l'histoire? Pour l'apprendre? Un regard critique sur les visées du nouveau programme d'histoire du Québec et du Canada au secondaire" in *Quel sens*

section of the curriculum but the following sections of the document provide no precision on the manner it should be taught in class.<sup>12</sup> Demers, just as Boutonnet, feels that citizenship education will be set aside and that teachers would rather favor a pedagogy based on the memorization of declarative knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Overall, Éthier and his collaborators are of the opinion that the HQC curriculum does not give itself the means to achieve its ends.

Although the collective work *Quel sens pour l'histoire* provides a thought-provoking analysis of the HQC curriculum, the study is limited to the curriculum per se and the authors did not specifically consider the assessment practices and the ministerial examination that are, in our opinion, integral parts of the whole program. In Québec, the Ministry of Education imposes a ministerial examination in history at the end of secondary IV,<sup>14</sup> which accounts for 50% of the student's final grade. Success or failure at this exam has therefore a direct impact on the possibility of successfully completing the HQC course which is, in turn, mandatory for high school graduation. In other words, students failing to achieve a passing grade in secondary IV history do not receive their high school diploma. Thus, the ministerial examination can be understood as the main outcome of the Québec history curriculum. Is it possible that the lack of coherence within the curriculum as identified by Éthier and his collaborators could be partially resolved by a set of evaluation criteria based on historical thinking? Moreover, is it possible that the ministerial examination is constructed around a form of historical thinking and thus provides the pedagogical guidance that is lacking within the curriculum?

This chapter proposes to examine three complementary governmental publications: the HQC curriculum, the Framework for the Evaluation of Learning (FEL) document, and the Ministerial examination to observe whether they promote the teaching of historical thinking. To do so, this chapter will start by providing a description of each governmental document. Then, the principal models of historical thinking found in the province of Québec will be reviewed and a discussion regarding their assessment will follow. This will allow us to better understand the theoretical framework underlying the HQC curriculum. Then, using Messick's validity of assessment principle<sup>15</sup> and Kane's assessing validity model, the chapter will analyze whether all three documents target the same assessment goals and if the validity of construct, the validity of content, the response process, the internal structure of the test, and the consequence of

*pour l'histoire; Analyse et critique du nouveau programme d'histoire du Québec et du Canada*, ed. Marc-André Éthier, Vincent Boutonnet, Stéphanie Demers, David Lefrançois (Montréal: M Éditeur, 2017), 92.

<sup>12</sup> Québec, *History*, 1–2.

<sup>13</sup> Demers, "Pourquoi," 92.

<sup>14</sup> Grade 10 in most Canadian provinces.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Messick, "Test Validity: A Matter of Consequence," *Social Indicators Research* 45, no. 1–3 (1998): 35–44; Samuel Messick, "Validity of Psychological Assessment: Validation of Inferences from Persons' Responses and Performances as Scientific Inquiry into Score Meaning" *American Psychologist* 50, no. 9 (September 1995): 741–749.

testing are in coherence with the program aims.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the influence of the provincial evaluation on teacher practices and its impact on the teaching of historical thinking in Québec.

### QUÉBEC AND CANADA HISTORY CURRICULUM, THE FRAMEWORK OF EVALUATION DOCUMENT, AND MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION

The lives of history teachers in Québec are influenced by three separate documents. First is the HQC curriculum, which specifies both the theoretical orientations of the program and the content knowledge to be presented in class.<sup>17</sup> The second is the Framework of evaluation document that lays out the different assessment criteria and provides further explanation on their application.<sup>18</sup> The third document is the Ministerial examination that students in secondary IV must complete at the end of the school year.<sup>19</sup> This section of the chapter will describe the content of each document: an unavoidable task before comparing how historical thinking is assessed in each of them.

#### *Québec and Canada History Curriculum*

The HQC curriculum is a mandatory course taught at both secondary III and secondary IV levels in all schools in Québec. One hundred hours per school year are dedicated to the discipline and the course runs from September to June. According to Québec law, the Ministry of Education cannot impose a particular teaching strategy or specific documents to be studied in class as it would interfere with the teachers' professional expertise.<sup>20</sup> Thus, contrary to provinces such as New Brunswick where specific primary sources or activities are imposed by the curriculum, the HQC program can only give general orientations, the content knowledge to be learned, when it should be learned, and how it should be assessed.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Michael T. Kane, "Explicating validity," *Assessment in Education Principles, Policy and Practice* 23, no. 2 (1996): 198–211.

<sup>17</sup>Québec, *History*.

<sup>18</sup>Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, *Framework for the Evaluation of Learning*, 2017. [http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/CE\\_PFEQ\\_histoire-quebec-canada\\_EN.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/CE_PFEQ_histoire-quebec-canada_EN.pdf)

<sup>19</sup>Note that although questions change from one year to the next, the overall structure of the examination remains mostly the same. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, *Épreuve d'appoint, Histoire du Québec et du Canada, document d'information*, 2019, [http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/dpse/evaluation/DI-HQC-4e-sec2019.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/evaluation/DI-HQC-4e-sec2019.pdf)

<sup>20</sup>Article 19 de la Loi sur l'instruction publique, <http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/ShowDoc/cs/I-13.3>

<sup>21</sup>New Brunswick, Ministère de l'Éducation et du Développement de la Petite Enfance, *Programme d'Histoire du Canada 11<sup>e</sup> année 42311–42312*, 2006, 101.

### *The Origin of the New HQC Curriculum*

The HQC curriculum can be understood as the ministerial solution to the rising dissatisfaction with the previous history program named: History and citizenship education (HCE). The HCE program came into effect in 2005 and it did not have a long life span, only ten years, and one might wonder why the Ministry of Education of Québec deemed it was necessary to reform it only a few years after its publication.

The HCE program was the cause of many debates and it was either loved or hated by historians, history educators, and teachers alike.<sup>22</sup> Numerous elements were controversial, and even the name of the program caused tensions. Many teachers felt that citizenship education undermined the discipline of history. Others saw citizenship education as history's natural partner for it allowed them to bridge past events with current concerns.<sup>23</sup> The second controversial element was the prescriptive teaching of historical thinking through the development of three competencies, namely examine social phenomena from a historical perspective, interpret social phenomena using the historical method, and strengthen their exercise of citizenship through the study of history.<sup>24</sup> While most history educators considered the competencies as a move toward a more progressive and active teaching of history, teachers felt at a loss in incorporating them in their pedagogical practices.

Although the Ministry of Education provided teachers with professional development opportunities, it was not sufficient for them to feel comfortable with the new curricular structure. Moreover, following the abysmal results to the first provincial examination, the Ministry backed away and decided to assess a single competency (interpret social phenomena using the historical method) in the provincial examination. This led teachers to abandon the teaching and evaluation of the two other competencies in their own classroom. A third controversy surrounded the repartition of the historical facts and periods to be taught in class. Teachers had advocated for a chronological presentation of the history of Québec where the Rebellion of 1837–1838 would become the turning point

<sup>22</sup> Many historians and history educators and teacher associations have published texts either in support or against the HCE program. We only wish here to give a summary of the many debates. For more information on the topic, please consult Cardin, Jean-François. "Les programmes de sciences sociales: du pourquoi au comment," in *Faire aimer et apprendre l'histoire et la géographie au primaire et au secondaire*, 75–98, ed. Marc-André Éthier, David Lefrançois and Stéphanie Demers, Québec: Éditions Multimonde, 2014; Marc-André Éthier, Jean-François Cardin and David Lefrançois, "Épilogue sur le débat sur l'enseignement de l'histoire au Québec," *Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 26, Spring (2014): 89–96.

<sup>23</sup> Marc-André Éthier and David Lefrançois. "L'histoire et l'éducation à la citoyenneté: quelle citoyenneté est promue par les nouveaux programmes d'histoire," *Formation et profession*, March (2009): 25–28.

<sup>24</sup> Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, des Loisirs et du Sport, *History and Citizenship Education, Cycle 2*, 2005. [http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/PFEQ\\_histoire-education-citoyennete-deuxieme-cycle\\_EN.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/PFEQ_histoire-education-citoyennete-deuxieme-cycle_EN.pdf)

from secondary III to secondary IV.<sup>25</sup> However, the program designers felt this would be unfair for students, who would leave school after secondary III to pursue a professional degree, as they would have been subjected only to a fraction of Québec's history. The workgroup decided, instead, to have a chronological teaching of Québec's history in secondary III and a thematic teaching in secondary IV. This created, in practice, a feeling of redundancy for students, who felt they were studying the same things two years in a row.

To help teachers discriminate between content that should be taught in secondary III from the one that should be seen in secondary IV, the Ministry published a learning progression, which was a precision of the declarative knowledge to be studied during each year. Soon, the learning progression replaced the curriculum and teachers went back to a more transmissive teaching of history.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the historical narrative proposed by the curriculum was also a source for debate. Certain teachers and historians felt that the program was a form of federalist propaganda for the uniqueness of the Québec experience was not central to the taught narrative. They were in favor of a more traditional approach to history education where teachers tell a set narrative and students are tasked with memorizing it.<sup>27</sup> Other teachers and History educators such as Marc-André Éthier and Jean-François Cardin debated that students should be taught to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct narratives so that they could form their own understanding of Québec's history.<sup>28</sup> Throughout the length of its application from fall 2005 to summer 2016, the debates surrounding the HCE program did not stop.

During the provincial elections of 2012, Pauline Marois, the leader of the Parti Québécois, took advantage of the growing frustrations toward the HCE program and promised that if she was elected, she would enact a reform. Once in power, the Marois government mandated Jacques Beauchemin and Nadia Fahmy-Eid to produce a list of recommendations to guide a work group tasked with the rewriting of the curriculum.<sup>29</sup> This was the origin of the HQC curriculum that will now be described in more details. Yet, the reader should keep in mind that the HQC curriculum was written with the clear intention of calming the quarrels that surrounded the HCE program.

### *Goals and Structure of the HQC Curriculum*

The overarching goals of the HQC curriculum are to help students: “acquire knowledge of the history of Québec and Canada; develop the intellectual skills

<sup>25</sup> Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Les états généraux sur l'éducation: rénover notre système d'éducation: dix chantiers prioritaires*. Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 1996, 90. <http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/etat-gen/rapfinal/tmat.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Sabrina Moisan. “Citoyenneté minimale, démocratie et individualism—representations sociales d'enseignants d'histoire au secondaire” *Enseigner et apprendre l'histoire: manuels, enseignants et élèves*, ed. Marc-André Éthier and Jean-François Cardin, Montreal, Éditions Multimondes.

<sup>27</sup> Éthier et al. Épilogue, 93.

<sup>28</sup> Éthier et al. Épilogue, 95.

<sup>29</sup> Québec, *Le sens de l'histoire*.

associated with the study of history and develop critical thinking and discussion skills conducive to social participation.”<sup>30</sup> The program can be divided into three sections; the first section presents the theoretical framework which guides the choice of competencies, content knowledge, and assessment criteria. The section begins by defining the nature of history and explains the usefulness of school history as a discipline that fosters critical thinking and democratic participation. Teachers’ and students’ roles are specified: students having to learn to think historically and build their historical identity and teachers having to transpose into the classroom a form of historical thinking pedagogy. Historical sources and use of evidence are seen as primordial as it is through their studies that the past is characterized and interpreted.<sup>31</sup>

Historical sources should be varied in nature and thus, the curriculum lists possible resources such as libraries, archives, and museums to be consulted by students and teachers alike. Although the curriculum cannot impose specific teaching and learning sequences, it informs the teacher about the types of sequences that are better suited to its aims. In this case, the Ministry suggests that history be taught using an open pedagogy as: “it enables students to explore several avenues rather than only one, involves various tasks, favors the use of several different types of research and communication media, and allows for different types of student work.”<sup>32</sup> Finally, the theoretical framework section concludes by addressing the question of assessment. According to the curriculum: “Evaluation has two purposes: to help students learn, and to recognize the learning.”<sup>33</sup> However, how historical thinking should be assessed is not explained in this section of the curriculum.

The second section of the HQC curriculum presents the two competencies to be developed by the students. The first competency is named: “Characterize a period in the history of Québec and Canada.” Here, students are supposed to establish historical facts, chronology, and consider geographical features of a specific period in the history of Québec.<sup>34</sup> In other words, students must be able to identify and describe the characteristics of a specific period of Québec’s history and see how these elements influence the society of the time. Figure 13.1 presents a diagram of the key features of Competency 1 as it appears in the HQC curriculum.

To identify the characteristics of each period, students are expected to consult historical sources and debate evidence.<sup>35</sup> The competency provides the angle from which students will interrogate the available evidence, thus reducing the scope of the historical study and making it more manageable for the teenagers. Evaluation criteria specific to the first competency are:

<sup>30</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 1.

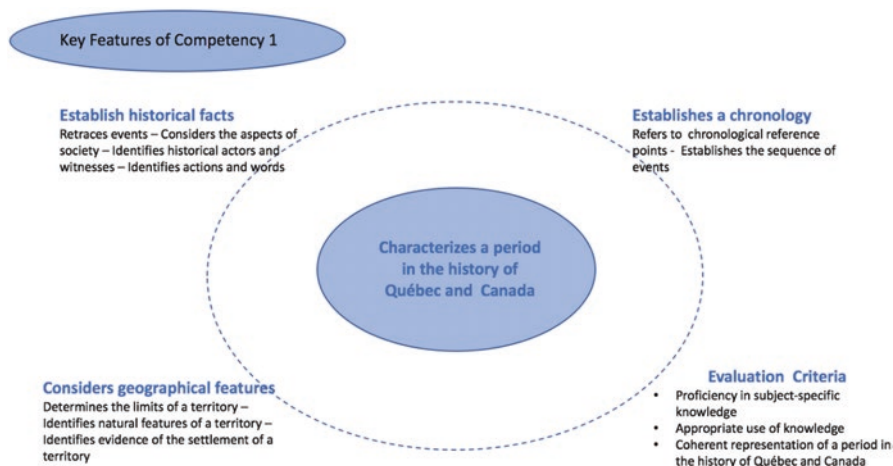
<sup>31</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Québec, *History*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Québec, *History*, 10.



**Fig. 13.1** Key features of Competency 1 as they appear in the HQC curriculum. (Québec, *History*, 11)

- Proficiency in subject-specific knowledge
- Appropriate use of knowledge
- Coherent representation of a period in the history of Canada.<sup>36</sup>

The curriculum does not provide explanations on the choice of the criteria, nor a scoring rubric, it simply names them.

The second competency or Competency 2 is: Interprets a social phenomenon. This competency refers to a research method, based on Robert Martineau's historical method, where students must define the object of interpretation, propose hypotheses, analyze a social phenomenon and ensure the validity of his/her interpretation.<sup>37</sup> "Interpreting a social phenomenon requires the use of sources and contributes to the development of a set of intellectual skills that are associated with the study of history, such as conceptualization, analysis, examination of different interpretations, comparison and synthesis."<sup>38</sup> Students should be able to deconstruct and reconstruct the available narratives through the use of interpretation. To do so, they must be able to define the object of their interpretation, analyze historical phenomena by establishing causes and consequences and continuity and change, and ensure the validity of his/her interpretation by the careful use of available evidence. Figure 13.2 presents the diagram of the key feature of Competency 2 as stated by the curriculum.

<sup>36</sup> Québec, *History*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Martineau, *L'histoire à l'école, matière à penser* (Montréal: l'Harmattan, 1999), 149–151.

<sup>38</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 13.



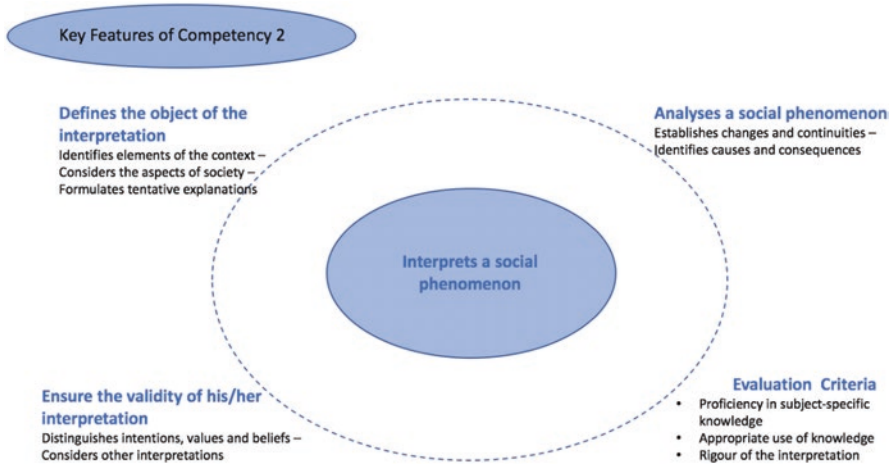


Fig. 13.2 Key features for competency 2

Again, the evaluation criteria specific to the competency are mentioned but the manner in which they must be implemented is not specified in the text. The first two evaluation criteria are identical to the ones found for Competency 1. Only the third criterion is unique to the second competency and asks that students be assessed on the rigor of their interpretation. What is a rigorous interpretation is not clearly stated but it could be assumed that it is an interpretation based on the key features of the competency.

The third section of the HQC curriculum includes a detailed enumeration of the content knowledge to be presented in class. Each school year will study a total of four historical periods. In secondary III, the historical periods are: origins to 1608, 1608–1760, 1760–1791, and 1791–1840; and in secondary IV, they are: 1840–1896, 1896–1945, 1945–1980, and 1980 to present. Each historical period is introduced by a summary of the historical context and a timeline identifying key events. Three specific first-order concepts are associated to each historical period to help organize and orient the study of the declarative knowledge. Events, dates, groups, and individuals associated to each period are specified in a bullet-point list. Table 13.1 proposes a summary of the historical period, their specific associated concepts, and the content knowledge to be acquired for each of them.

As it can be observed, the amount of content knowledge to be acquired by students varies from one historical period to the next. Most striking is the difference between the content knowledge associated with the experience of Indigenous people compared to the content associated with New France. To help teachers better understand the relationship between the competencies and the content knowledge, a diagram was created for each period. Figure 13.3 proposes an example of one of these diagrams.

Table 13.1 Content knowledge divided by year

<b>Secondary III</b>				
<b>Historical period</b>	<b>Origins to 1608</b>	<b>1608–1760</b>	<b>1760–1791</b>	<b>1791–1840</b>
	The experience of the Indigenous people and colonization attempts	The evolution of colonial society under French rule	The conquest and the change of empire	The demands and struggles of nationhood
<b>Specific concepts</b>	Alliance Environment Trade First occupants of the territory Social relationship between Indigenous peoples Decision-making Indigenous trade networks Alliances and rivalries among the First Nations First contacts Exploration and occupation of the territory by the French	Adaptation Evangelization Mercantilism Monopoly of the chartered companies Royal Government French territory in America First Nations warfare and diplomacy Fur trade Catholic Church Population growth Cities in Canada Seigneurial system Economic diversification Adaptation of the colonist Indigenous populations Intercolonial wars War of the Conquest	Allegiance Assimilation Constitution Military regime Royal Proclamation Status of Indians Instructions to Governor Murray Protest movements Québec Act American invasion Loyalists Colonial economy Sociodemographic situation Catholic Church Anglican Church	Bourgeoisie Nationalism Parliamentary government Constitutional Act Parliamentary debates Nationalisms Liberal and republican ideas Population Rebellions of 1837–1838 Capital and infrastructure Agriculture Fur trade Timber trade Migratory movements British-American War of 1812 Anglican Church Durham Report
<b>Secondary IV</b>				
<b>Historical period</b>	<b>1840–1896</b>	<b>1896–1945</b>	<b>1945–1980</b>	<b>From 1980 to our times</b>
	The formation of the Canadian federal system Federalism Industrialization Migration	Nationalisms and the autonomy of Canada Imperialism Liberalism Urbanization	The modernization of Québec and the Quiet Revolution Feminism Secularism Welfare state	Societal choices in contemporary Québec Civil society Neo-liberalism Sovereignism
<b>Main concepts</b>				

Content knowledge	Canada's status in the British Empire	Power relations in the West	Redefinition of the state's role
Act of Union	Empire	Urban agglomeration	Indigenous rights
Colonial economy	Clerico-nationalism	Natural growth	Globalization of the economy
Responsible government	Canada's domestic policy	New arrivals	Québec's political status
Indian Affairs	Second phase of industrialization	Regional development	Sociodemographic change
British North America Act	Urban areas	Canadian federation	Gender equality
Federal-provincial relations	Mass culture	Indian residential schools in Québec	Cultural industry
National Policy	Women's struggles	Consumer society	Language issue
Migrations	Union movement	Duplessis era	Environmental concerns
Role of women	Catholic church	Neo-nationalism	Devitalization of communities
Presence of Catholic Church	Education and technical training	Quiet Revolution	International relations
Socio-cultural expression	Migration flows	Feminism	Information era
First phase of industrialization	First World War	Socio-cultural vitality	
Forestry industry	Great Depression	Self-determination of Indigenous nations	
Farms	Challenging capitalism	Employer-union relations	
	Second World War		

Period: Origins to 1608

**Social phenomenon**  
The experience of the Indigenous peoples  
and the colonization attempts



Fig. 13.3 Diagram for the origin to 1608 period. (Québec, *Histoire*, p. 21)

The manner in which the diagram should be understood is as follows: both competencies frame the study of the content knowledge which is, in turn, organized through the use of the specific concepts. Curiously, this diagram does not specify how each evaluation criteria should be adapted nor does it provide a scoring rubric detailing the awaited student abilities. To have a better sense of how the competencies and content knowledge should be assessed, teachers must turn to a separate document, the Framework for the Evaluation of Learning.

### *Framework for the Evaluation of Learning*

The framework for the evaluation of learning is a separate document complementary to the HQC program that aims at explaining the assessment criteria associated with both competencies. It is rather a short document composed of only three pages. First, the document states that the proficiency in subject-specific knowledge is to be assessed as a separate item. The appropriate use of knowledge, the coherent representation of a period in the history of Québec and Canada, and the rigor of the interpretation all rely on the proficiency in subject-specific knowledge and thus their assessment is dependent on it. For example, a student interpretation is first and foremost assessed on the exactitude of its historical content and secondly on its rigor. The document also notes that the use and creation of technical tools, such as timelines, historical maps, or comparative tables, should not be considered in a student grade.<sup>39</sup>

Each assessment criterion is then associated with a particular action that teachers will be able to observe and evaluate in their students. Proficiency in subject-specific knowledge is assessed by observing the exactitude of the content

<sup>39</sup> Québec, *Framework*, 2.

knowledge. For example, a research paper should be free of conceptual and chronological errors. The appropriate use of knowledge is evaluated through the execution by students of six intellectual operations, which are:

- Situate in time and space
- Establish facts
- Identify differences and similarities
- Determine changes and continuities
- Establish connections between facts
- Establish causal connections

The intellectual operations can be understood as procedural knowledge that allows students to play with the content knowledge and organize it in a manner that makes sense to them. Competency 1 is assessed by having students give a description of the cultural, economic, political, social, and territorial highlights of a period in time, while Competency 2 is evaluated through the: “explanation highlighting major cultural, economic, political, social and territorial changes relating to a social phenomenon.”<sup>40</sup> Although the framework for evaluation contributes to the understanding of the structure of the evaluation, it does not provide the value that should be attributed to each criterion, examples of answers expected of students at the end of secondary IV, and a set of scoring rubrics that takes into account students’ learning progression.

### *Ministerial Examination in History*

Since the early 1970s, Québec’s Ministry of Education has been imposing on all secondary IV students, a ministerial examination in the field of Québec and Canadian history.<sup>41</sup> Great emphasis is placed on the examination as all students must complete it at the same time in June and it is worth 50% of the student overall grade. Since a passing grade in HQC is mandatory to obtain a high school diploma, the provincial examination can have a considerable impact on a student’s possibility to graduate.<sup>42</sup> The examination is divided into three sections that reflect the assessment criteria found in the Framework of evaluation document.<sup>43</sup> All three sections assess students’ proficiency in subject-specific knowledge, which means that the exam’s priority is the recollection and correct

<sup>40</sup> Québec, *Framework*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Jean-Philippe Werren, “Enseignement, mémoire, histoire: Les examens d’histoire de 4e secondaire du secteur de la formation Générale au Québec (1970–2012),” *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d’histoire de l’éducation* 25, no. 1 (Spring, 2013): 31–53.

<sup>42</sup> Québec, *Épreuve*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> To alleviate teachers’ workload during the first years of the new HQC curriculum, the Ministry of Education is not imposing the provincial examination until June 2020. In the meantime, a provisional copy of the examination is provided and its value is decided by the individual School Boards. However, a quick comparison between the old version of ministerial examination and its

use of declarative knowledge. The first section of the examination is composed of 16 short answer questions that assess the appropriate use of knowledge through the work of the six intellectual operations. Each question focuses on a specific intellectual operation as observed in Fig. 13.4.

The number of questions dedicated to a particular intellectual operation appears to be random as it varies from one year to the next. To answer the 16 short answer questions, students must refer to the evidence found in a separate booklet, which provides primary and secondary sources of diverse natures (text, images, graph, maps, etc.) to be used. Texts are usually very succinct and they do not contain a clear cut and paste answer to the question as shown in Fig. 13.5, where we have the document associated with the question presented in Fig. 13.4.

The historical sources provided in the booklet are used in different ways. Some are the answers to a specific question, for example, students must place four documents in chronological order. Some questions will ask students to identify the correct document in the booklet and others will ask students to compare two documents. However, on many occasions, the documents only serve as a reminder of the declarative knowledge necessary to answer the question and the latter can be answered correctly by simply recollecting the correct information.<sup>44</sup> This section of the examination counts for a total of 44 points out of 60.

Document 6 refers to the economic policy France applied with its colonies. What is the name of this economic policy?

Establish Facts	1 point	0 point
	The student correctly the fact	The student does not establishes the fact correctly

**Fig. 13.4** Example of a short answer question assessing a specific intellectual operation. (Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation des Loisirs et du Sport, *Épreuve unique d'histoire questionnaire*, June 2016, 2)

"The production [...] intended uniquely to answer the needs of the [French] metropolis, profits very little the colony [...]. The policy [...] of the metropolis prevents the emergence of small businesses adapted to the needs of the colonies."

Jean-François Cardin and others, *Le Québec: Héritages et projets*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., Laval, Éditions HRW, 1994, p.97.

**Fig. 13.5** Example of written document found in the evidence booklet. (Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation des Loisirs et du Sport, *Épreuve unique d'histoire dossier documentaire*, June 2016, 3)

newest iteration shows very little difference in the overall focus and format of the exam. The only difference is the addition of a new question associated with Competency 1.

<sup>44</sup> Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, *Épreuve d'appoint, Histoire du Québec et du Canada, Document d'information*, June 2019, 8.

Describe the political and territorial aspects of colonial society between 1763 and 1774.

Name the constitution of the time _____		
Central element		
Limits of the territory under this constitution	Name of the colony under this constitution	Group for whom the south-west territory of the colony is reserved
Central element		
A concession made by the government to the Canadians	Name of the first governor of the colony under this constitution	Actions made by English merchants against this governor

**Fig. 13.6** Example of diagram to be completed by student. (Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation des Loisirs et du Sport, *Prototype d'épreuve, cahier de l'élève*, June 2018, 6)

The second section of the ministerial examination is associated with Competency 1 and thus, asks students to characterize a period in the history of Québec and Canada. To do so, students must identify, using the evidence found in the booklet, the cultural, economic, political, or social characteristics that represent Québec society at a given time. Students complete a diagram (Fig. 13.6) provided in their answer sheet.

To make the question more challenging, the evidence provided in the booklet contains lures or, in other words, documents from other historical periods than the one targeted by the question. Students must be able to discern the right documents from the set provided and use them to complete the diagram. This second section is worth 8 points out of 60.

Finally, the third section of the ministerial examination assesses the rigor of the interpretation criteria associated with Competency 2. Students are asked to explain either the causes or consequences of an event or the elements of continuity and change between two events. Contrary to the other sections, students have to write a short text to explain their interpretation. Historical documents are provided in the booklet and all of them can be used in the answer. The third section of the examination is worth 8 points out of 60.

Recent statistics show that the HQC exam has one of the least successful rates of all the provincial examination.<sup>45</sup> For example, the success rate for the

<sup>45</sup> Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, *Tableau 5: Résultats par matière, pour l'ensemble du Québec, de 2011 à 2015*, 2015. <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/eleves/examens-et-epreuves/resultats-aux-epreuves-uniques-de-juin-2015/tableau-5/>

2012 history examination was 68.6%.<sup>46</sup> This is the second lowest pass rate, preceded only by the results obtained in mathematics (61.9%).<sup>47</sup> Considering the impact of the examination on students' ability to graduate, the current situation causes concern. A possible explanation for the poor success rate might be that the aim of the program and what is assessed by the provincial examination are not aligned. To verify this, a better understanding of the models of historical thinking found in the HQC curriculum is necessary.

### HISTORICAL THINKING IN QUÉBEC

While a majority of history educators agree that historical thinking should be the focus of history class, few share the same understanding of what it means to think historically.<sup>48</sup> In this situation, the province of Québec stands at the crossroad of two different traditions. On one side is the French-Canadian tradition with Robert Martineau's model at its core,<sup>49</sup> which is partly based on Christian Laville's approach to history education.<sup>50</sup> Martineau describes historical thinking as: "an attitude and an appropriate language which, in relation to an object (the past) and from specific data (evidence), starts and directs the reasoning necessary to the production of a representation of the past (an interpretation)."<sup>51</sup> Martineau's model divides historical thinking into three elements: a historical attitude, a historical method, and a historical language.<sup>52</sup> Historical attitude includes students' historiographical knowledge, historical consciousness, critical thinking, an understanding of History as a discipline, and an understanding of the social value of school history. The historical method is the ability to problematize the past and following a hypothetico-deductive method, use evidence to answer questions and explain one's reasoning. Finally, historical language is composed of facts, concepts, and theories. Students are thus said to develop their historical thinking when they understand history as a discipline that seeks to better understand the past using a scientific method combined with literacy skills.

<sup>46</sup> Québec, *Tableau 5*. Note that in 2012, the HQC curriculum was not yet implemented or even created. However, the orientation and format of the provincial examination has underwent little to no change from 2012 to 2019, and thus we feel that the success rate of 2012 can serve as an indicator or the possible success rate in June 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Québec, *Tableau 5*.

<sup>48</sup> Stéphane Lévesque, *Thinking Historically, Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Peter Seixas, "What is Historical Consciousness," In *To the Past: History Education, Public Memory and Citizenship in Canada*, ed. Ruth Sandwell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 11–22; Samuel Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and other Unnatural Acts. Changing the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Martineau, *L'histoire*, 154–156.

<sup>50</sup> Christian Laville, "Enseigner de l'histoire qui soit vraiment de l'histoire," *Mélanges René Van Santbergen*. No. special des *Cahiers de Cléo* (Brussels, 1984), 171–177.

<sup>51</sup> *Our translation*, Martineau, "L'histoire," 154.

<sup>52</sup> Martineau, "L'histoire," 155.



The second most commonly found historical thinking model is Peter Seixas' six second-order concepts.<sup>53</sup> Students can be brought to think meaningfully about the past by looking at the evidence, by establishing historical significance, by identifying causes and consequences, by observing the continuities and changes, by taking a historical perspective, and by considering the ethical dimension.<sup>54</sup> For Seixas' second-order concepts: "[...] underlie all or our attempts to come to terms with the past and its implications for decisions in the present. They are not 'all or nothing': students can get better at understanding them, using them and working with them."<sup>55</sup> Historical thinking does not spontaneously develop in students' minds. The model relies on the teachers to ask thought-provoking questions and engage students in a research process that puts all six second-order concepts in context.<sup>56</sup> This, for Seixas, does not imply that content knowledge is unimportant but that the second-order concepts give the students the proper tools to play with the historical knowledge and become more active in their learning of history.<sup>57</sup>

Although both models have their particularities, they both understand history as a scientific discipline that seeks to better comprehend the present by the study of the past. They also rely on inquiry as the pedagogical framework that allows students to use either the historical method or the second-order concepts to deconstruct and reconstruct available narratives. Historical evidence is at the center of both models since without these traces, interpretation of the past is rendered impossible. Finally, both Seixas and Martineau view historical thinking as a form of critical thinking necessary to the development of tomorrow's citizens.

## HISTORICAL THINKING AND THE HQC CURRICULUM

Which historical thinking model is used in the HQC curriculum? Contrarily to the new Ontario History program, which is clearly framed around Seixas' historical thinking model,<sup>58</sup> Québec's curriculum is less clear. Indeed, elements simultaneously found in both models are common in the published text. For example, history is described as a scientific discipline that relies on a set of historical skills and an historical method to make sense of the past.<sup>59</sup> In this brief description, Seixas' model is referred to when it comes to the intellectual skills

<sup>53</sup> Peter Seixas, "Conceptualizing the Growth of Historical Understanding," in *The Handbook of Education and Human Development*, ed. David, R. Olson et Nancy Torrance (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 765–783; Seixas, "What Is," 18, Peter Seixas and Tom Morton, *The Big 6 Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013), 3–4.

<sup>54</sup> Seixas "Conceptualizing," 765–783; Seixas, "What Is," 18; Seixas and Morton, *The Big 6*, 3–4.

<sup>55</sup> Seixas, "What is," 19.

<sup>56</sup> Seixas and Morton, *The Big 6*, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Seixas and Morton, *The Big 6*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Ontario, Ministry of Education, *Canada and World Studies; Geography, History, Civics (politics)*, 2013, 13.

<sup>59</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 1.

akin to the second-order concepts and Martineau's model with the reference to the historical method. Citizenship education is another common theme found in both models and picked up by the curriculum that aims: "to enable students to take part in the democratic life of the classroom or the school and to develop an attitude of openness to the world and respect for diversity."<sup>60</sup> Although Seixas' model sees citizenship education as one possible goal among many, it is at the core of what Martineau calls the historical attitude.<sup>61</sup> Citizenship education is linked, in the HQC curriculum, with the development of students' critical thinking. Interestingly, critical thinking is more closely associated with certain second-order concepts such as cause and consequences, continuity and change, and historical perspective than with Martineau's historical method or historical attitude.<sup>62</sup>

Inquiry and historical evidence play a crucial role in the learning of history, according to the program. Teachers should favor inquiry through the use of an historical method and students are made to question the past before trying to answer these questions through the use of evidence. Teachers have the responsibility to identify which intellectual skill will be predominantly developed by students in a given activity.<sup>63</sup> Students must, on their part, learn to analyze evidence by assessing its validity through the use of criteria and cross-checking the information with other available sources.<sup>64</sup> Diverging interpretations should be debated and students have the responsibility to question their own historical biases.

In this instance, the HQC curriculum seems to be merging Seixas' and Martineau's models as the historical methodology (Martineau) provides the scaffold in which the second-order concepts (Seixas) can be used. This mixed model is also present in the description of both Competency 1 and Competency 2. For example, Competency 1 (Characterizes a period of Québec and Canada's history) focuses on students' work with the available evidence in a fashion akin to what Martineau calls the historical language.<sup>65</sup> In doing this, they establish significance by giving importance to events that can be considered as a turning point in Québec and Canadian history.<sup>66</sup> Competency 2 (Interpret a social phenomenon) is also a good example of the intertwining of both models as it is framed around Martineau's historical method and identifies several second-order concepts to be developed by students. For example, the curriculum states "when students analyse a social phenomenon, they establish changes and continuities related to it, attempt to assign limits to its duration, and identify causes and consequences of these changes and continuities. [...] In addition, for each group studied, students observe that, viewed from different perspectives,

<sup>60</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Martineau, *L'histoire*, 155.

<sup>62</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 5.

<sup>63</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 9. Martineau, *L'histoire*, 155.

<sup>66</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 9.

change may sometimes create advantages and sometimes disadvantages.”<sup>67</sup> Second-order concepts are seen here to work hand in hand with the historical method. Overall, it would appear that the HQC curriculum takes from both Martineau’s and Seixas’ model using Martineau’s model to frame the students’ work and using the second-order concepts as a form of procedural knowledge that allows students to play with the content knowledge in a meaningful manner.

This understanding of historical thinking based on a mixed model is also found in the program’s assessment criteria. The proficiency in subject-specific knowledge is related to Martineau’s historical language as it refers to students’ ability to establish facts, understand overarching concepts and different historical interpretations. The appropriate use of knowledge common to both competencies is composed of the six intellectual operations where four of them (identify differences and similarities, determine changes and continuities, establish connections between facts [perspectives], and establish causal connections) are related in a certain manner to Seixas’ second-order concepts. The characterization of a period of history is based on students’ ability to use historical evidence and make inferences, something which is common to both models.

Finally, the rigor of the interpretation is conditional to students’ capacity to question the past using the second-order concepts and conduct research following the steps of the historical method. The framing of the HQC curriculum, even if it also aims at the building of identity and cultural memory, focuses heavily on the development of historical thinking. However, the evaluation criteria provided by the curriculum remain vague when it comes to describing student awaited abilities or the degree of sophistication their historical thinking skills must reach. The curriculum and associated documents thus leave the teacher with a pressing question: how should historical thinking be assessed?

### HOW SHOULD HISTORICAL THINKING BE ASSESSED?

We have argued that the HQC curriculum aims at developing students’ historical thinking but how should it be assessed? Because the program is elaborated around two competencies, ultimately what should be assessed is the students’ ability to use the competencies’ key criteria in a given situation.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the emphasis given to inquiry based learning makes problem-solving one of the better suited assessment model available.<sup>69</sup> Problem-solving is akin to Martineau’s historical method as the latter is an adaptation of the former for the specific needs of history education.<sup>70</sup> This proximity is not only observed by Martineau, but other authors such as Bruce VanSledright, who proposes an assessment model based on inquiry, problem-solving, and

<sup>67</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Gérald Scallon. *L'évaluation des apprentissages dans une approche par compétences* (Saint-Laurent: Édition du renouveau pédagogique, 2004), 107, 156.

<sup>69</sup> Scallon, *L'évaluation*, 141–142; Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Robert Martineau, *Fondements et pratiques de l'enseignement de l'histoire à l'école: Traité de didactique* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2010), 168–186.

students' ability to use evidence in a critical manner.<sup>71</sup> Seixas and Morton also suggest activities that require from students some problem-solving skills as the pedagogical structure provides a natural environment for the development of the second-order concepts.<sup>72</sup> Problem-solving gives meaning to the use of evidence as students find their answers in the available historical sources and learn a form of historical literacy by assessing the author's intent, by establishing the validity of the source, by corroborating the information with other forms of evidence, and by noting the limits of the available documentation.<sup>73</sup>

What about the memorization of content knowledge? Martineau and Seixas all agree that content knowledge acquisition goes hand in hand with the learning of historical thinking, but they note that its rote memorization is not useful in the long run.<sup>74</sup> The Framework for Evaluation Document specifies that proficiency in the subject-specific knowledge is essential but it does not state that this proficiency equals the memorization of content.<sup>75</sup> Subject-specific knowledge cannot be reduced to facts either. It can include a myriad of declarative knowledge (facts and first-order concepts) and of procedural knowledge (second-order concepts). Thus, proficiency should not be limited to memorization mostly when it comes to procedural knowledge as VanSledright notes: "Being able to simply state a definition of one or more of these concepts can help, but is likely insufficient. It is how students deploy them in practice—perform them as it were—that is of most interest [...]."<sup>76</sup> Thus, assessment of historical thinking should have a double focus, first an interest on how students gain historical knowledge by the use of evidence and second, an interest on student ability to use procedural knowledge such as the second-order concepts in an inquiry-based activity.

Although scoring rubrics for historical thinking are available in the literature, information on what makes a good answer is more difficult to find. Since there is no end point to the development of a competency, what level of sophistication are students supposed to reach? VanSledright proposes a few examples of assessment scoring rubrics for interpreting account-based questions.<sup>77</sup> Although the criteria used in the scoring rubrics provide insight into students' awaited abilities, it is more related to historical literacy than historical thinking. Denos and Case also provide a few scoring rubrics in their teacher-oriented

<sup>71</sup> Bruce A. VanSledright, *Assessing historical thinking & understanding* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 81–93.

<sup>72</sup> Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*, 9.

<sup>73</sup> VanSledright, *Assessing*, 94, Virginie Martel, *Développer des compétences de recherche et de littératie au Primaire et au Secondaire: Former à l'enquête en classe d'histoire* (Montréal: JFD Éditions, 2018), 62–65.

<sup>74</sup> Martineau 2010, 252; Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*, 4.

<sup>75</sup> Québec, *Framework*, 1.

<sup>76</sup> VanSledright, *Assessing*, 82.

<sup>77</sup> VanSledright, *Assessing*, 91.

book, but they do not seem to be assessing historical thinking as much as students' ability to debate.<sup>78</sup> Seixas and Morton's *The Big Six* has guide posts for each of the second-order concepts.<sup>79</sup> For example, historical significance has four guide posts:

1. "Events, people, or developments have historical significance if they resulted in change.
2. Events, people, or developments have historical significance if they are revealing.
3. Historical significance is constructed. That is, events, people, and development meet the criteria for historical significance only when they are shown to occupy a meaningful place in a narrative.
4. Historical significance varies over time and from group to group."<sup>80</sup>

Each guidepost has a demonstration of both limited and powerful understandings. For the first historical significance guidepost, the example of a student with a limited understanding is: "student shows an unexamined faith in the textbook or other authority as a basis for significance, or relies on simple personal preference as the basis for historical significance,"<sup>81</sup> while powerful understanding is described as: "student explains the historical significance of events, people, or development by showing that they resulted in change."<sup>82</sup> If the guideposts allow teachers to assess whether or not their students have reached the level of sophisticated thought associated with the second-order concept, they do not provide criteria to monitor a form of progression. Can students' answers fall in between a limited and a powerful understanding? Moreover, what is to be expected of students in different age groups?

The lack of a model of progression of historical thinking has been voiced since the 1990s and yet, no empirical model has been proposed due, in part, to the complexity of the task.<sup>83</sup> However, in the early 1990s, British scholars Lee, Ashby, and Dickenson have conducted a longitudinal study (the CHATA

<sup>78</sup> Mike Denos and Roland Case. *Teaching about Historical Thinking: A Professional Resource to Help Teach Six Interrelated Concepts Central to Students' Ability to Think Critically about History* (Vancouver: Critical Thinking Consortium, 2006).

<sup>79</sup> Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*, 24.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Pierre-Philippe Bugnard. "En histoire enseignée, l'évaluation des compétences se heurte à l'écueil de la progression," In *Didactiques de l'histoire, de la géographie et de l'éducation à la citoyenneté, recherches et pratiques*, ed. Marc-André Éthier et Éric Mottet (Louvain-la-Neuve: De Boecksupérieur, 2016), 39–54; Peter Seixas, "Assessment of Historical Thinking," In *New Possibilities for the Past; Shaping History Education in Canada*, ed. Penney Clark (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 139–153; Denis Shemilt, "The Validity of Historical Thinking Assessments," In *New Directions in Assessing Historical Thinking*, ed. Kadriye Ercikan and Peter Seixas (New York: Routledge, 2015), 246–256.

project)<sup>84</sup> of school-aged children to establish a progression model of their historical understanding.<sup>85</sup> According to these authors, historical understanding can be measured through the students' understanding of history as a discipline and their ability to make sense of historical sources.<sup>86</sup> Through their results, they have identified six levels of historical understanding where at the lowest level the student considers the traces of the past as a simple story and at the highest level where evidence must be read in the light of a specific question.<sup>87</sup> The authors also note the non-linear nature of historical understanding development where the understanding of a seven-year-old student may exceed that of an older student.<sup>88</sup> However, the CHATA project focused solely on the progression of historical understanding and did not consider the different second-order concepts associated with historical thinking. One could hypothesize that students' ability to think historically develops in a non-linear fashion and that progress might be linked with students' epistemological understanding of the discipline.

In summary, the assessment of historical thinking is not a simple task. Yet, using the available literature, it is possible to circumscribe six general criteria that need to be met for an evaluation to truly assess historical thinking:

1. Assessment should take the form of a problem-based task and focus on students' ability to make sense of the past using the historical method, first and second-order concepts.
2. Assessment should have students performing certain tasks since second-order concepts or, in the case of the HQC curriculum, competencies can be considered to be a form of procedural knowledge.
3. Assessment of students' work with evidence should be based on criteria for historical literacy.
4. Memorization of declarative knowledge should not be assessed as it is not an integral part of historical thinking.
5. Right or wrong questions should be avoided as it is the sophistication of students' thinking that should be at the core of the evaluation.
6. Although a progression model is not available, the structure of an evaluation should enable students to show their level of sophistication of understanding of history as a discipline.

<sup>84</sup> Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby, "Progression in Historical Understanding in Students Ages," 7–14; In *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. Peter Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 199–222.

<sup>85</sup> Historical understanding can be understood as a form of historical consciousness where students realize both the distance that separates them from the past and the influence of the past on their present and future.

<sup>86</sup> Lee and Ashby, "Progression," 203.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

Thus, if the HQC curriculum aims at developing historical thinking, its' assessment should respect these six criteria. To see whether it does or not, we must turn toward the ministerial examination as it is the only complete assessment example provided by the government.

### BREACH IN COHERENCE FOUND BETWEEN THE HQC CURRICULUM AND THE MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION

To assess whether or not the ministerial examination and HQC curriculum are perfectly aligned when it comes to the assessment of historical thinking, both documents were analyzed using Laveault and Grégoire validity of testing model.<sup>89</sup> This model is inspired by Messick's concept of validity,<sup>90</sup> as well as Kane's assessment of validity model,<sup>91</sup> where validity can be understood as: "an overall evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions on the basis of test scores or other modes of assessment."<sup>92</sup> According to Laveault and Grégoire,<sup>93</sup> validity can be measured through test construct, content tested, answering process, internal structure of the test, and consequence of the test. Each aspect mentioned here will be briefly explained before proceeding to the analysis of the quality of the alignment between the HQC curriculum and the ministerial examination.

#### *Validity of Construct*

Validity is derived from the principle of coherence, in that there is a close connection between what is evaluated and what is learned. According to Messick, the proof of validity is that of the "construct."<sup>94</sup> Thus, when elaborating a measuring instrument, here the ministerial examination, it is important to begin by identifying the curriculum theoretical foundations since it is this framework that will orient the structure of the measuring instrument and give it value. It is possible to conduct an analysis of the proof of validity by comparing the theoretical framework found in a curriculum and the one emerging from a particular examination. The theoretical framework on which the HQC curriculum rests is the development of historical thinking through the mobilization of the two competencies (e.g., characterize a period in the history of Québec and Canada and interpret a social phenomenon).

<sup>89</sup> Dany Laveault and Jacques Grégoire. *Introduction aux théories des tests en psychologie et en science de l'éducation* 3rd éd. (Louvain-La-Neuve: De Boeck, 2014).

<sup>90</sup> Messick, "Validity," 741.

<sup>91</sup> Kane, "Explicating," 202–203.

<sup>92</sup> Messick, "Validity," 741.

<sup>93</sup> Laveault and Grégoire. *Introduction aux théories*.

<sup>94</sup> Messick, "Validity," 742.

Thus, the Québec ministerial examination should assess whether students have reached the level of development required for both competencies. As a guide, the curriculum provides evaluation criteria for both competencies and at the surface the provincial examination does seem to be built around these criteria. However, a closer look shows that this might not be the case and that what is assessed is not what is prescribed by the curriculum.

As previously described, the ministerial examination is divided into three parts. The first part aims at assessing the proficiency in subject-specific knowledge and the appropriate use of knowledge, which are the two criteria common to both competencies. Consequently, one could assume that the first section of the provincial examination wishes to assess both competencies at the same time. However, following an analysis of the type of questions found in the first part of the examination, it would appear that they require students to memorize facts rather than examining how students use knowledge in a procedural fashion. This observation is shared by Déry, who argues that most questions do not need students to rely on the provided evidence as they can simply recall the information in order to answer the question correctly.<sup>95</sup> Blouin, in her forthcoming master thesis, has questioned students on the strategies they used when completing the first part of provincial examination and corroborating Déry's conclusions, she has found that students principally rely on memorization skills as they feel it is the most effective strategy.<sup>96</sup>

Moreover, a careful reading of the questions shows that this part of the examination does not target the specific concepts associated to each historical phenomenon studied but rather isolated events and historical figures that might not have been taught in class. It would thus appear that there is a coherence breach between what the HQC curriculum and provincial examination consider to be an appropriate use of knowledge, the former associating it to a form of procedural knowledge and the latter on the memorization of declarative knowledge.

The second part of the examinations is said to focus on the criteria for coherent representation of a period in the history of Québec and Canada and thus be linked to the first competency. According to the program: "Characterizing a period in the history of Québec and Canada requires the use of evidence and contributes to the development of a set of intellectual skills that are associated with the study of history, particularly conceptualization, comparison and synthesis."<sup>97</sup> The ministerial examination does require students to use historical sources and discriminate them to complete the diagram found in this section of the test. However, no marks are attributed to students work with the available

<sup>95</sup> Catherine Déry, "Description et analyse des postures épistémologiques sous-tendues par l'épreuve unique ministérielle de quatrième secondaire en histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté," *McGill Journal of Education* 52, no. 1, (2017). <http://mje.mcgill.ca/article/view/9456/7216> 2008

<sup>96</sup> Lauriane Blouin, *L'influence de la compétence à lire sur la réussite de l'épreuve unique d'histoire nationale des élèves de 4<sup>e</sup> secondaire*, (Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 2019).

<sup>97</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 10.



evidence. Points are only given to the answers found in the diagram on the basis of their accuracy. Students' ability to contextualize, conceptualize, compare, and synthesize information is not directly assessed. Also, by already providing the structure for the diagram, the examination takes away the possibility to observe the mobilization of skills associated with historical thinking. Again, the provincial examination seems to mostly focus on the restitution of declarative knowledge.

The third part of the provincial examination is directed toward the second competency and wishes to assess the rigor of an interpretation. In order to do so, the curriculum states that students must identify elements of the historical context, analyze a social phenomenon by establishing changes and continuities and by identifying causes and consequences, and he or she must ensure the validity of their interpretation by distinguishing between values and beliefs and by considering different interpretations of the past.<sup>98</sup> It appears that the only manner to assess all these elements would be through the completion of a complex problem-solving task based on the interpretation of evidence. The provincial examination does ask students to use the provided historical sources to answer a short essay type question requiring them to identify either the causes or consequences of an event.<sup>99</sup> However, the answer is not assessed on the quality of the students' argument but on the historical plausibility of the identified causes or consequences.<sup>100</sup> For example, a student who would conclude that the direct consequences of a given historical event are difficult to pinpoint because historians hold opposite opinions and proceed to argue this answer using historical evidence would not be given any marks in the Québec provincial examination even though such reasoning is clearly associated with the competency in the curriculum.

Although the Québec ministerial examination is elaborated from all three evaluation criteria found in the HQC curriculum, there is an important variation between the understandings of what they encompass. Both documents seem to rely on two different theoretical frameworks, one aimed at the development of historical thinking and the second at the memorization of content knowledge. This variance affects the validity of the construct of the provincial examination as it does not appear to be constructed with the aim of assessing students' historical thinking.

### *Validity of Content*

Laveault and Grégoire explain that the validity of the content can only be reached if the evaluation is reviewed and formalized by experts of all the characteristics of the items that the test claims to measure.<sup>101</sup> In the case of the ministerial exami-

<sup>98</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 14.

<sup>99</sup> Québec, *Épreuve*, 8.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>101</sup> Laveault and Grégoire, *Introduction aux théories*.

nation, this would mean that all questions should be reviewed by experts in the field of history and history education and by skilled teachers. In addition, once the questions have been formulated, they must be submitted to experts in the field of assessment to ensure that the test actually assesses what it should.

Available information says that the Ministry of Education consults a small group of teachers when elaborating the provincial examination.<sup>102</sup> However, historians and history educators seem to be absent from this group as significant historical inconsistencies are present in the available copies of the ministerial evaluations. Indeed, as we have argued, historical thinking is not evaluated in the provincial examination. Questions are not framed around problem-solving tasks nor do they focus on procedural knowledge. In the curriculum, the intellectual operations are akin to Seixas' second-order concepts and should be: "helping students to think about how historians transform the past into history and to begin constructing history themselves."<sup>103</sup>

The intellectual operations found in the ministerial examination only orient the kind of answer students will have to provide. For example, in the June 2014 iteration, question 3 read: "Find a cause of the rivalry between New France and the British colonies starting in the 17th century."<sup>104</sup> In this case, students do not need to explain the cause or use the cause to build a narrative, they only need to name it, something they might achieve by memorization. Overall, points are given to the correct answer and not the quality or rigor of the interpretation provided by the student. These few points raise questions about who the Ministry consults when preparing an examination. Historians, history educators, skilled teachers and assessment specialists would probably notice the distortion between the aims of the program and what is being assessed in the provincial examination.

### *Answering Processes*

Analyzing the validity of a measuring instrument also involves analyzing student answering processes.<sup>105</sup> To do so, one must verify if the steps taken by the students to produce their answers correspond to what is foreseen in the curriculum. Again, we can identify gaps between the aims of the HQC program and what is asked of the student in the provincial examination. According to the curriculum, students should be sufficiently proficient to use the different intellectual operations associated to each competency in order to characterize and interpret the past.<sup>106</sup> Thus, the focus of the evaluation should be on assessing whether or not students have reached that level of sophistication. However, the fact that most of the examination is constructed around short and closed

<sup>102</sup>This information was shared by M. Pierre Barbe, the person in charge of evaluation for the field of history during a meeting held in Québec, in October 2018.

<sup>103</sup>Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*, 3.

<sup>104</sup>Québec, *Ministerial Examination*, June 2014, question 3.

<sup>105</sup>Laveault and Grégoire, *Introduction*.

<sup>106</sup>Québec, *Histoire*, 8.

questions does not provide the space necessary for students to demonstrate their skills. It leads them to rely on their memory to complete the task as they feel it is the most advantageous strategy for success.<sup>107</sup>

The curriculum mentions at numerous occasions the importance of developing a form of historical literacy by having students work with historical documents in a critical manner.<sup>108</sup> However, the examination does not grant any marks for completing such a task and the question structure does not always make explicit why a document should be used or not. The quality of the iconographic documents can also be questioned as some are difficult to decode and do not allow the pupil to deepen his or her thinking. For example, a painting of Grosse Île found in the June 2015 provincial examination provides no clear information to the student apart from its caption. The poor quality of the impression paired with the non-emblematic landscape makes it a difficult document for students to use in an argument. This type of document does not provide the context necessary to observe a student's answering process and is thus, of little value in an examination.

### *The Internal Structure of the Test*

The analysis of the internal structure consists in verifying that the relationship between the items and between the components of a test is in conformity with what the reference model provides.<sup>109</sup> In the case of the ministerial examination, there are several missing elements to ensure that the internal structure is held. First, the examination aims to certify that students have reached the level of competency in historical thinking required for graduation. Yet, 42 out of 60 points are given to knowledge-based questions as opposed to the 18 points given to skill-related questions. Second, historical sources should be used by students to support their interpretation of the past. However, in the examination, sources often lack legibility (black and white photocopies often of poor quality). They sometimes give the answer to a question in their caption while others have been so condensed that they can hardly be considered a form of evidence. Third, at no moment does the provincial examination assess whether the student has developed the critical thinking skills that allow them to distance themselves from the past, which is an integral goal of the HQC curriculum.<sup>110</sup>

### *The Consequences of Testing*

According to Kane, it is important to consider the purpose of the test and what will be the overall consequences for both students and teachers.<sup>111</sup> In the case of the ministerial examination, its primary function is the certification that

<sup>107</sup> Blouin, *L'influence*, forthcoming.

<sup>108</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 8, 10, 13.

<sup>109</sup> Laveault and Grégoire, *Introduction*.

<sup>110</sup> Québec, *Histoire*, 13.

<sup>111</sup> Kane, "Explicating," 202–203.

students have minimally achieved the expectations of the HQC curriculum. The value of the examination, 50% of the student's overall history grade, and the fact that secondary IV history is mandatory to obtain a high school diploma in Québec increase its influence upon teachers' pedagogical choice and students' understanding of the discipline.

Although teachers know they should not teach to the test, when faced with a provincial examination that has such an influence on students' academic progression, very few do not consider its format in their teaching. The emphasis given on content knowledge by the provincial examination might explain, in part, why Québec teachers are reluctant to move away from a knowledge acquisition pedagogy to a more open classroom and inquiry-based style of teaching.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, this causes an imbalance in the HQC curriculum itself as more importance is given to the list of declarative knowledge thus diminishing the centrality of the two competencies. As result of this, teachers find it difficult to discriminate between important and trivial facts listed in the program.

Every event and every detail listed has to be studied in class in case it appears in the provincial examination. The history course then becomes a yearly marathon where the goal is less the development of students' thinking skills but the checking of all the boxes to make sure no information has been left behind. At the opposite, a teacher who would mainly focus on historical thinking through the development of the two competencies would probably set their students for failure at the provincial examination. Students who are used to inquiry-based learning, critical analysis of available evidence, and master construction and deconstruction of historical narratives would possibly be lost when confronted with the exam as their understanding of history as a discipline would be diametrically in opposition with the type of history that is assessed. Thus, the ministerial examination does not provide any incentive for teachers to "move from the periphery to the core" when it comes to history education and, on the contrary, acts as a hurdle that assures a form of stagnation in teacher practices.<sup>113</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In his analysis of the HQC curriculum, Boutonnet has argued that historical thinking was present but not enough was done to ensure its teaching in the classroom.<sup>114</sup> However, article 13 of the *Loi sur l'instruction publique* prevents the Ministry of Education from imposing a pedagogical structure that would render the teaching of historical thinking mandatory in the classrooms.

<sup>112</sup>Vincent Boutonnet, Vincent. *Les ressources didactiques: typologie d'usages en lien avec la méthode historique et l'intervention éducative d'enseignants d'histoire au secondaire*. Doctorate Thesis, (Montréal: Université de Montréal, 2013).

<sup>113</sup>Alan Sears, "Moving from the Periphery to the Core: The Possibilities for Professional Learning Communities in History Teacher Education," in *Becoming a History Teacher, Sustaining Practices in Historical Thinking and Knowing*, ed. Ruth Sandwell and Amy von Heyking (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 11–29.

<sup>114</sup>Boutonnet, "Une analyse," 69.

Thus, the Ministry does not have many cards up its sleeves when it wishes to promote a pedagogical change. One of these cards is the choice of a competency-based program that focuses on skills mobilization. Because both competencies in the HQC curriculum have strong ties with Seixas' and Martineau's models of historical thinking, by mobilizing the competencies in class, students would be developing their ability to think historically at the same time. The second card is the one of assessment.

This is where, in our opinion, the Ministry has not gone far enough. The HQC curriculum does not provide sufficient information on the evaluation criteria. For example, the term "proficiency in content specific knowledge" can lead to confusion as many teachers believe it relates to the memorization of declarative knowledge. The absence of scoring rubrics and of a progression model signifies that teachers have no means of reassessing their understanding of what should be assessed and how it should be assessed. This confusion is reinforced by the ministerial examination, which seems to assess solely students' ability to recall information. As Kane states: "[...] a state mandated testing program that is used to hold schools accountable for student learning as measured by the test might help to focus attention on particularly valued parts of the curriculum and encourage higher standards of performance (positive consequences), but they might also encourage teaching to the test and contribute to a narrowing of the curriculum (negative consequences)."<sup>115</sup>

Unfortunately, the actual format of the provincial examination does not focus on the overall program objectives but only on a limited section that pertains to the acquisition of declarative knowledge. Something that the curriculum does not place much emphasis on but that is very easy to assess. The ministerial examination thus appears to be an example of intellectual laziness for it does not tackle the difficult task of assessing historical thinking favoring instead the overused and obsolete evaluation of memorized knowledge. Until this is changed, teachers will have little to no incentive to move away from a pedagogy based on the memorization of content and history class may remain the dry and intellectually unchallenging subject that most students abhor.

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<sup>115</sup> Kane, "Explicating," 213.

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