



Consultation For the Reinforcement of the Teaching of Quebec History in Elementary and Secondary School

The **Leadership Committee for English Education in Quebec** (LCEEQ) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the consultation on the teaching of Quebec History. The LCEEQ is a mandated advisory group with a comprehensive understanding of the realities of English schools, colleges and universities thanks to its thirty-one members who represent youth, adult and vocational education in the public and private sectors, post-secondary education, professional associations for teachers, administrators and non-teaching professionals.

LCEEQ recognizes the importance of the consultation, an integral element in the development of a quality educational program. However, the sincerity and reliability of the present process is questionable given the timeline outlined in the letter of invitation to participate. We question the degree to which responses received by mid-December, the onset of a holiday period, can be seriously considered with the view of implementing a pilot project as early as the fall. It is easy to understand how one might believe that the core elements of the program may already be clearly determined. LCEEQ recognizes that this is an important process and we do not believe that this can be rushed. Nonetheless, LCEEQ wishes to have its voice recognized and its concerns noted in the hopes that we can influence the outcome.

Furthermore, it is difficult to ascertain whether the purpose of the consultation is to advance the best classroom practices to ensure student success or to promote a specific ideology. While there is a need for scholarly debate of diverse ideas, the current discussion has very little, if anything, to do with the problems of teaching History in today's elementary and secondary classrooms.

The promotion of a "national framework" is ambiguous. The preamble poses the question, "Within what framework should our history be told..."? Our response is that it is within the framework of the history of Quebec and Canada, and that is how it must be told. Students need

to understand the significance of recognized historical events that have taken place beyond provincial borders. It does not serve anyone well to develop an insular, Quebec-centric program. Quebec students must learn to interpret events in terms of the local, provincial, Canadian, continental, and global contexts.

Furthermore, in a society that is diverse and pluralistic, the historical framework must include references and experiences of all Quebec citizens; the Aboriginals as the first occupants of this land, the French and the English as the founders of our contemporary society, and the many groups, such as immigrants and women, who may have experienced some degree of marginalization in history.

It is unacceptable to contemplate that any proposed changes to the History curriculum are being considered without a single reference to evaluation outside of ministerial exams. Previous experience with the implementation of the *Renouveau pédagogique* has proven that there is an essential interdependence between program development and student evaluation. Prior to the implantation of any program, the norms and procedures to be employed to ensure student success must be established and publicized. The concept of formative evaluation has been proven to have the greatest positive effect on student achievement¹. Therefore, the LCEEQ strongly endorses the concept of, not only the *evaluation of*, but also *evaluation for* learning, neither of which are elaborated upon in this consultation document

The LCEEQ firmly believes that the foundations for understanding and appreciating one's history are established at a young age. Skills acquired in elementary school (e.g. establishing facts, situating in time) are transferable and subsequently applied with age appropriate content. There is a need for a well-designed progression of learning that takes the study of history from early elementary through Cycle II Secondary. In order to ensure this progression, a specific time allocation should be assigned to the teaching of History at the Elementary level. The teaching of History in elementary school should adopt a narrative approach, building to a more critical analysis in Secondary school, which will lead students to understand that history is grounded in both facts and social interpretations.

LCEEQ does not accept the assumption that the present program is too shallow and that our history is subordinate to citizenship education. The current program would benefit from some critical review, but the result would not necessarily be an entirely new course of study. A program that is rushed through without a clear focus and established means of evaluation will not yield better secondary school leaving results and may, in fact, result in lower overall student success. History should be taught to acquire knowledge, apply transferable skills, and to develop an appreciation for our democratic traditions as well as a sense of our civic responsibilities. To avoid making history a tool for indoctrination, it should not have a limited perspective or take a narrow approach.

¹Hattie, John. Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning. Rutledge, 2012.

The consultative document states that the competency-based approach “is paired with a method that promotes project-based learning and tends, once again, to minimize the already collateral role assigned to factual knowledge”. LCEEQ rejects this premise. Knowledge and the History competencies are not mutually exclusive, as outlined in the evaluation frameworks. Competency development enables students to demonstrate their knowledge. In other words, competency development supports the acquisition of knowledge, as well as its application (examples: to interpret information, to synthesize information). This approach is effective provided that the competencies derive from the subject matter, and not vice versa. The competency-based approach allows students to reach a deeper understanding of context and consequences of historical events. It is not a means to an end but a formula to enhance learning and develop abilities side by side.

While the authors of the consultation document make the argument that History is a science and that the current curriculum is deficient in this regard, LCEEQ believes that History is a social science, not a pure science. We have a “shared memory” but there is not necessarily one version of such. Some historical facts can be defined and readily supported while others are not as clear and are open to interpretation. The program must provide students with a solid foundation so as to better understand the issues, while allowing them the opportunity to draw conclusions and support their meaning. We need to develop students who are critical thinkers and are able to support their positions.

History for its own sake does not seem to be defensible; there must be some other purpose for teaching history. By studying the past, History also allows students to encounter people and societies with different ways of thinking than their own and to confront ideas that will enable them to develop empathy for the experience of others, both past and present. As such, History becomes an important vehicle for democratic citizenship.

In conclusion, LCEEQ would like to restate that History is a complex subject matter because it prepares students as responsible citizens. Therefore, this consultation process requires sufficient time and reflection in order to ensure that student success is the focal point of any changes made to the History curriculum.

Recommendations

- The conclusion that “the national framework would seem to be the most obvious framework for the historical narrative” must be clarified to ensure that “nation” includes Quebec’s history in the context of Canada, North America, and the world.
- LCEEQ maintains that there is a need for a comprehensive History program from elementary through the secondary grade levels.
- LCEEQ recommends that History be assigned teaching time in the Basic School Regulations

- LCEEQ recommends that the program be offered over a two-year period in Secondary Cycle II based on a chronological approach.
- It is essential that the criteria and procedures for the evaluation and successful completion of the new program be made clear before implementation.
- LCEEQ recommends that Ministerial assessment be limited to the content found in a given year and that the exam be maintained in Secondary IV, if at all.
- LCEEQ cannot express strongly enough the need to guarantee that all materials; program documents, evaluation criteria, textbooks, and additional support materials, be available in English prior to the implementation of any new program. During the implementation of the *Renouveau pédagogique*, English sector students were at a disadvantage in this regard. It is unacceptable for this to be repeated.
- It is important to note that the introduction of a new program will place severe financial demands on already scarce resources. Schools and School Boards have borne the expense of providing resources for the current History program which has had a short lifespan. Special consideration must be given to providing additional funds to support teacher training and the acquisition of new materials in the event of any program changes.

The **Leadership Committee for English Education in Quebec** (LCEEQ) is comprised of thirty-one members appointed by the organizations which they represent:

- The Directors General of the English School Boards (ADGESBQ/ADGCSAQ)
- Special Status School Board representatives
- Independent School Associations' Table (ISAT)
- School Board Educational Services Representatives
- Administrators of Complementary Educational Services (ACES)
- Provincial Organization of Continuing Education Directors English (PROCEDE)
- Association of Administrators of English Schools of Québec (AAESQ/AAEAQ)
- Québec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT/APEQ)
- Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE)
- English Colleges Steering Committee (Cégep)
- English Universities of Québec
- Representatives from MELS / SSAACC

