Exploring Progressivism in the Quebec Education Program

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ABSTRACT

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Through the past two decades, Quebecers have borne witness to a ministerial overhaul of their education system that has resulted in the implementation of a new competency-based curriculum – the Quebec Education Program (QEP). This thesis begins with an overview of the historical context of this reform with particular emphasis on the shift from a church-based scholastic system to a largely secular state run model. The progressive foundations of the QEP will be presented through an overview of the historical trends in North American progressivism as well as through a discussion of John Dewey's, William H. Kilpatrick's and Herbert Kohl's educational philosophies in particular. The child-centered, cooperative and interdisciplinary learning environments proposed by these early progressive philosophers and implemented in the QEP will be highlighted with concrete classroom examples. By narrowing the focus of the analysis to the English Language Arts section of the QEP, the progressive elements of curricular implementation as well as the difficulty in incorporating these philosophies within the practice of student evaluation will be discussed. This thesis ends with a call for further research into the effectiveness of the QEP as well as for the formulation of clearly defined evaluation strategies consistent with the principles of progressive education.

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Carlo Rossi, who helped, supported and encouraged me every step of the way.

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Chapter 1

**The Quebec Education Program – A Brief Survey of its History, Philosophical
Underpinnings and Contentious Implementation**

The Quebec Educational system has undergone substantial change over the last
sixty years. Since the mid-twentieth century, Quebecers have witnessed the evolution of
their educational system from church-based traditional to a largely secular state run
progressive-based model. These changes have not occurred in isolation but were the
product of a series of reports and audits that attempted to identify and rectify weaknesses
in the educational system. This introductory chapter will begin by presenting part of this
history of the Quebec Education system, in order to better situate the Quebec Education
Program (QEP) within the context in which it was developed. After exploring the
circumstances that led to this curriculum reform, the basic structure of the Quebec
Education Program will be presented and illustrated with concrete classroom examples.
This first chapter will introduce and discuss, in some depth, examples of key
competencies that provide the framework for the QEP. Having assessed the historical
context of the QEP and explained the competencies that form its basis, the final portion
of this chapter will be dedicated to discussing the controversy that surrounded its
implementation. Several major criticisms will be explored at length including the hotly
contested issues of evaluation reporting, perceived lack of effectiveness, and the alleged
lack of evidence in support of progressive education.

The History of the Quebec Education System

Education in the province of Quebec, from 1875 on, was very much controlled by the church, as the Catholic Church was seen as the "guardian of Quebec's language and culture,"[1] to Francophone Quebecers. The French attended French Catholic schools run by the church, and taught by the clergy, and the English attended English Protestant schools, controlled by Protestant clergy, but taught by lay teachers.[2] Since the majority of Quebecers were Francophone, it was the French Catholic schools that far outnumbered their English Protestant counterparts.[3] By the end of the nineteenth century, the two denominational systems were each governed by their own administrations, and had their own philosophy, each catering to a different clientele.[4] Although religion played a huge role in the French Catholic schools, it did not play such an important role in the English Protestant schools, as its overall "flavour...was interdenominational rather than sectarian."[5] As society became more urban, industrial and modern, the Catholic Church had a harder and harder time controlling education. For instance, the 1900s saw the creation of a few smaller English Catholic schools within the French Catholic system to mainly address the influx of English Irish Catholics in Montreal. By the 1930s, English Catholic schools were emerging as a seemingly separate school system than that of the French Catholic system, and in 1939, the Catholic Committee agreed to separate regulations for both the French and English Catholic schools.[6] The arrival of large numbers of Italian immigrants, right after the Second World War only clarified this

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[1] Roger Magnuson, A Brief History of Quebec Education: From New France to Parti Québécois (Montreal: Harvest House, 1980), 73.
[2] Ibid., 51.
[3] William J. Smith and Helen M. Donahue, The Historical Roots of Quebec Education (Montreal: Office of Research on Educational Policy, McGill University, 1999), 27.
[4] Magnuson, A Brief History of Quebec Education: From New France to Parti Québécois, 49.
[5] Ibid., 49.
[6] Ibid., 82.

need.[7] Magnuson explains that "a strong church meant a weak state and this condition boded ill for a society undergoing the effects of urbanization and industrialization. The clerical forces were capable of serving a rural society whose educational goals were modest and whose clientele was limited; they were less well equipped to meet the demands of a community evolving toward modernity and mass education."[8] As time went on, this became more and more apparent, despite French Canadian opposition to the creation of a Ministry of Education – although every other province already had one.[9] To make matters worse, a government study conducted between 1946 and 1958 showed that French Catholic schools in Quebec had the highest drop-out rate in Canada, compared to their English Protestant counterparts who had the lowest.[10] As well, it was found that the qualifications and salaries of the Protestant elementary and secondary school teachers in Quebec "greatly exceeded" those of Catholic teachers.[11] Much of this was due to the fact that English Protestant Quebecers tended to have smaller families and more money than their French Catholic counterparts, therefore creating important differences in their school systems. With fewer students and more money, the Protestant board was able to better equip their classrooms, start kindergartens, and afford better qualified, higher paid teachers.[12]

In 1953, a royal commission was set up to study constitutional problems in various branches of government, and, interestingly, their report focused primarily on the educational system in place at that time. One of the major issues it identified was that all Quebecers should have the right to attend school according to their aptitudes and talents,

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[7] Ibid., 83.
[8] Ibid., 75.
[9] Ibid., 76.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 77.
[12] Ibid., 79.

no matter what their family's financial situation may be.[13] In the mid-twentieth century

the education system symbolically represented the "two solitudes" in Quebec – French

Catholic and English Protestant – however, it no longer truly represented the evolving

reality of Quebec society.[14] As the church began to be replaced by the media and public

figures as the main influences on the value system of French Canadians, a new value

system began to emerge.

As new attitudes for change began to develop prior to the 1950s, the election of

Jean Lesage's government in 1960 was the perfect starting point for the government-led

reforms that were to come. This ushered in the Quiet Revolution – a revolution of ideas –

that began in the 1960s, as French Canadians declared war on their value system, and set

in motion changes to all parts of society, including education. In the 1960-61 session of

the National Assembly, a series of laws relating to education – known as the Magna Carta

of Education or Grande Charte de l'Éducation - were passed.[15] This set of laws

recognized the right of every child up to the age of eleven to receive free schooling.[16] Of

these laws, two are of importance in this discussion. First, the Act Respecting Free

Education and Compulsory School Attendance provided free public schooling at the

elementary and secondary levels by eliminating fees, providing for free textbooks, and

extending compulsory schooling until the age of 15.[17] A second law, the Act to Establish

a Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education, created the Parent Commission.[18]

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[13] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 28.

[14] Ibid., 32.

[15] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 38; Roger Magnuson, *A Brief History of Quebec Education: From New France to Parti Québécois*, 106.

[16] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 38.

[17] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Education in Québec: A Progress Report* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1989), 2.

[18] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 38-39.

The Parent Commission was named after its chair, Monseigneur Alphonse-Marie Parent, Vice-Rector of the University of Laval, and was set up to look into the problems of Quebec's education system.[19] The Parent Commission believed that in order to bring the province into the 20th century and to prepare it for the 21st century, education would have to address the changing social and economic structures of society.[20] The Parent Commission's report (1963-1966) made many recommendations about education in the province, and many of these were later enacted into legislation.[21] One of the recommendations of Part I of this report was that a Ministry of Education (MEQ) be created (Education Department Act of 1964 – now the Act Respecting the Ministère de l'Éducation). Although this act came under great opposition from the church, it would shape the direction of education in Québec for the next twenty-five years.[22] Henchey explains that "the effects of the law were to centralize responsibility for education in a Minister, to establish a framework for the direction of the coming reform and for the coordination of an expanding and increasingly complex operation, and to reduce the precise limits of the control of the Church in education."[23] This would mean the beginning of state control of education and this office would be the instrument of change for the educational system of Quebec.[24] Overall, there were 576 recommendations made by the Parent Commission's report - it took aim at democratizing education by making it available to every child, and making major changes to the structure of secondary schooling.[25] Its values and vision were what inspired the modernization of the educational system, and they have left a lasting mark on the system of today, as much of

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[19] Ibid., 3.

[20] Stanley M. Cohen, *Fifteen Years of Reform: Education in Quebec since 1960* (Ottawa: The Montreal Star, 1975), 3.

[21] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 35.

[22] Ibid., 41.

[23] Norman Henchey, "Quebec Education: The Unfinished Revolution," *McGill Journal of Education* 7 (1972): 102.

[24] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 35.

[25] Stanley M. Cohen, *Fifteen Years of Reform: Education in Quebec since 1960*, 4.

its structure was the result of changes made because of the Parent Commission's report.[26]

Many of these changes led to better access to secondary education, as regional boards

were established, and given the responsibility to provide a complete secondary education

to all children.[27]

Smith and Donahue explain that "the reforms that occurred during Quebec's

Quiet Revolution were not only revolutionary, but also long-lasting."[28] Some examples

are the increase of accessibility to education at all levels (elementary to university), the

improved pedagogical approaches that encouraged student-centered instruction, the

increase in teaching material made available to students, and the increase in the choices

provided to students – both institutional and program related.[29] In fact, thanks to these

reforms, the rate of school attendence for 15 year olds increased from 74.6% in 1961 to

86% in 1966, and the total student population in secondary schools more than doubled

during the period from 1961-1971.[30]

However, Smith and Donahue quote the preamble of a 1978 MEQ consultative

document that states that "with the passing of time it has become clear that the original

reform [of the Quiet Revolution] was, of necessity, concerned primarily with the physical

problems of the school, the problems of 'brick and mortar'. As a consequence, the

educational aspects did not receive all the attention they required during this period."[31]

They explain that although the document did not initiate a process of reform, it did extend

one that had begun with 'Toward a New Method of Functioning for the Elementary and

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[26] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 37.

[27] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Education in Québec: A Progress Report*, 2.

[28] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 56.

[29] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 56; Stanley M. Cohen, *Fifteen Years of Reform: Education in Quebec since 1960*, 3.

[30] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Education in Québec: A Progress Report*, 2-3.

[31] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 57.

Secondary Education System in Quebec' (a 1975 MEQ policy paper) and continued until the adoption of a new Education Act in 1988 – also known as Bill 107.[32]

Throughout the 1980s many attempts were made at reform, mainly concerned with structural changes to school boards – changing them from confessional school boards to linguistic boards. However, with much controversy from the public, mainly from English Quebecers, and changes in governments, the educational system remained at best only minimally altered until the 1990s.

Smith and Donahue explain that "despite the dramatic progress made since the early 1960s, as the last decade of the century approached, there was increasing criticism of the education system from a number of sources and recognition that despite a multitude of changes, all was not well."[33] In the Superior Council's annual report of 1984-85, they reflected on the state of education and found that the integration of knowledge which leads to the attainment of lasting skills needs to become central to the learning process.[34] They also found that students who have not mastered requirements of a certain level should not be allowed to move onto the next, and that most students believe that schools do not address their full potential and that repetition, abstraction and lack of interest deter them.[35] As result, an annual report of the Superior Council on Education (CSE) from 1987-88 was devoted to examining the Parent Commission report. It found that although the report was indeed responsible for many of the positive changes to education - such as the increased accessibility, greater equality of opportunity and a

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[32] Ibid., 57.
[33] Ibid., 96.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

more democratic system - it recognized that there were problems that remained.[36] In particular, the council concentrated on four main aspects – the insufficient approach to the early identification of the needs of culturally diverse students, the continued lack of an "activist" approach to teaching and learning, the inadequate organization of vocational education and the limited choices in many secondary schools.[37] These four key criticisms combined with a growing popular dissatisfaction with the education system and scepticism about the system's ability to adapt to the increasingly complex and pluralistic society, led the MEQ to decide that they needed to re-examine Quebec's education system.[38]

Smith and Donahue explain that much of the criticism that occurred in the 1980s stemmed from the realization that students who left the education system were not sufficiently prepared for the world around them. The quickly growing technological revolution that was occurring was leaving students behind, ill-prepared. This coupled with a rise in the drop-out rate were creating quite the problem in the education of young Quebecers.[39] In 1988, the Education Act increased the compulsory age for school attendance to the age of 16,[40] potentially keeping more students in school longer, and ushered in a renewed period of educational policy reform in Quebec. In 1991, the MEQ published "Education: Driving our Future", and this, along with several other policy papers including a new Plan of Action, aimed to renew education in the province.[41] The new Plan of Action – Joining Forces – was published in 1992, and differed greatly from its predecessor, the 1972 Plan of Action. This time, instead of the MEQ naming itself as

[36] Ibid., 37 and 96.
[37] Ibid., 96.
[38] Ibid., 97.
[39] Ibid., 100.
[40] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Education in Québec: A Progress Report*, 3.
[41] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 74.

the main effecter of change, it took on the role of facilitator, passing on that role and responsibility to those who worked closely with students.[42] Three themes emerged from this report – "providing help and guidance to students; varying pedagogical practices to meet individual needs, and; revitalizing the school to make schooling more appealing to students."[43]

In 1996, the Commission for the Estates General on Education set out to debate the effectiveness of Quebec's current educational system, allowing them to compare the current system to Quebec's society's expectations of its schools and curriculum.[44] One year later, the projects were completed and the report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform - *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools* - was submitted. One of the social values reiterated throughout the text was the notion that in addition to curriculum changes that would more adequately prepare students for the realities of 21st century society, the upcoming reform should also give young Quebecers the chance to become autonomous citizens, able to "contribute to the emergence of a fairer, more democratic and more egalitarian society, in the name of a greater humanity."[45] This report would lay the foundation for the upcoming educational reform in Quebec. Among the ten priority actions recommended by the Task Force on Curriculum Reform, several incorporated the aforementioned democratic ideals of education by suggesting changes to the overall structure and governance of Quebec's educational system.[46]

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2001), 2.
[45] Ministère de l'Éducation, "A broader, Re-Centered Educational Mission," in *The Estates General on Education 1995-1996* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1996): 1, http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/etat-gen/finalrep/tmat.htm; Ministère de l'Éducation, *The Education Reform: What It's All About* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2000): 3.
[46] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program*, 2.

As we have seen, there has been considerable interest in reforming the education system of the province throughout the 20th century. Before the 1990s, most of the crucial reforms were made during the 1960s, thanks in large part to the Parent Commission's report. The increased amount of compulsory education, the creation of a free system from preschool to Cegep, the creation of a Ministry of Education - which put education in the hands of the state – the creation of more student-centred pedagogical approaches, and the increased choices available to secondary school students, to name a few, changed the face of education in the province. More importantly, they led to what the MEQ likes to call the "democratization of education in Quebec". However, after the major reforms of the 1960s, very little in Education had really changed until the 1990's. Although there was interest in reforms of various types, it was not until the last ten years that real change has come about.

The cumulative result of the reports and recommendations of the 1990s was the Quebec Education Program (QEP), published in 1997, which aimed to address all of the above suggestions, and set forth to define learning targets essential for the educational and social development of Quebec students. Firmly grounded in the foundation of relevant recent educational analysis, the QEP set out to create a new, more comprehensive, and diversified curriculum – one that would prepare students for life in a pluralistic society, where both economic globalization and an evolving knowledge-based job market are significant factors.

The Structure of the QEP

The Quebec Education Program was therefore designed as a program that would focus on the reality of today's world by developing competencies that are central to both academic excellence as well as student's eventual productive role within Quebec society. Since the MEQ saw the importance of students taking an active role in their learning - instead of passively listening to their teachers - they sought to put considerable focus on project work, doing research and solving problems in areas of concern or interest to students.[47] The importance of connecting scholastic endeavour to "real life" problem solving was paramount to academic and social interdisciplinary success.[48] The QEP also mandated that schools prepare students to contribute to the development of a more democratic and just society. In this regard, the reform maintains that although the main responsibility of schools is to ensure that students acquire certain competencies that will allow them to continue on with their education successfully, they also have the responsibility to prepare students to become constructive citizens in society, functioning within the framework of Quebec's social value system.[49] The QEP therefore highlights three aspects of the mission of Quebec schools – to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications.[50] It is important to note that within this structure, it falls upon the schools to decide on their own orientations and measures with which they intend to implement and enrich the Quebec Education Program, taking into consideration the specific needs of its students. As in the 1992 Plan for Action, the emphasis was placed on those closest to the students to effect the greatest amount of change while the MEQ

[47] Ministère de l'Éducation. *The Education Reform: What It's All About*, 5.
[48] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program*, 2.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 3.

maintained itself in the role of facilitator of change.[51] In effect this amounted to a built-in "freedom of implementation" that allowed for curriculum requirements to be met in the most efficient manner possible. This approach recognized that differences in resources and students preclude a regimented top-down approach to legislating instruction. Allowing schools to tailor approaches based on the specific needs of their student populations is one way that the MEQ maintains its role of being a facilitator of curriculum reform.[52]

One of the main features the QEP introduces in an attempt to better integrate academic achievement into the relevant social context is a competency-based approach, instead of the traditional objective-based approach. Since the QEP's framework defines learning as "an active, ongoing process of construction of knowledge", it follows that the reform would attempt to foster an environment where learning is not only more meaningful, but open-ended, in order to encourage a life-long learning process.[53] They offer the following definition of a competency – "a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources."[54] They explain that a competency is "complex and progressive", and offer the explanation that a competency-based approach to learning looks to teach students to use their knowledge to both act and think. Whereas a skill is useful in isolation, a competency incorporates many resources and can be used in a number of very complex situations (i.e. it is not simply an automatic response or reflex). Once again, the reform attempts to dissuade from emphasising the mastering of skills in isolation in favour of an educational approach that encourages

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[51] Smith and Donahue, *Historical Roots of Quebec Education*, 74.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program*, 4.
[54] Ibid., 7.

students to approach problems from a multidisciplinary perspective that more closely approximates the reality of modern Quebec society. The QEP continues by explaining that focussing on competencies means "establishing a different relationship to knowledge and refocusing on training students to think...it implies the development of flexible intellectual tools that can be adjusted to changes and be used in the acquisition of new learnings."[55] It is a concept that does not simply take into consideration what is learned at school, but instead what is learned in all aspects of the lives of each student, as well as something that can be further built on by the shared knowledge of others. In addition, a competency is something that students can continue to develop not only throughout the school curriculum, but also well beyond their time in school.[56] In this respect, the focus on competencies is designed to provide students with the pedagogical foundation to continue learning outside the classroom and the insight to apply this knowledge along with formal academic knowledge in their approach to real life problem-solving.

In this new system, school subjects are meant to blend into each other and provide students with a more natural setting where various subjects can be learned through the exploration of certain topics of interest. For example, if a group is studying the fur trade, then they will need to learn about the history of the fur trade which will require students to read, write and develop their research skills (English Language Arts and Social Studies). They will also have to learn about the various routes that fur traders used, as well as calculate the distances that they and Native Americans had to travel between where they caught their pelts and where they traded them (Social Studies and Math). They may also be required to reproduce some aspect of the process (Drama and/or Art).

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[55] Ibid., 4.
[56] Ibid.

There are infinite possibilities for activities that could be developed about the fur trade, all of them touching on different subjects. This allows lessons to be developed more naturally and have the potential to be more interesting, as subjects are not learned and explored individually as separate entities.

Realizing that the practical application of this emphasis on cross-curricular integration in the academic setting can seem a daunting prospect to teachers, the QEP offers structured insight on each of the competencies. To facilitate the task each competency is described in terms of Focus, Key Features, Evaluation Criteria and End-of-Cycle Outcomes. For the sake of clarity each segment will be described individually. I will use the Social Studies competency 1 – "To understand the organization of a society in its territory to aid in the following explanations" to better explain the each aspect.[57]

The initial brief definition, which is called the "Focus", is broken down into four parts – "Meaning of the Competency" or "Explanation", "Connections to Cross-Curricular Competencies", "Context for Learning", and "Developmental Profile".

The "Meaning of the Competency" or "Explanation" explains what the competency consists of, as well as the place of the competency in the overall program. For this particular competency, this section explains why it is important to understand the organization of a society, and what that understanding involves. It also explains the importance of connecting the present with the past, as well as how understanding the organization of a society in its territory plays a crucial role in the overall citizenship education of students.[58]"Connections to Cross-curricular Competencies" suggests which

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[57] Ibid., 188.
[58] Ibid.

cross-curricular competencies students are more likely to use or develop while practicing a certain competency. For instance, when practicing this competency, students are very likely to draw on all of the intellectual cross-curricular competencies, as they will have to "use information", "solve problems" and "exercise critical judgement". Students are also likely to use creativity while practicing this Social Studies competency, therefore also practicing the "effective work methods" cross-curricular competency.[59]

The "Context for Learning" section explains the best conditions for the development of this competency, and often gives examples of what resources students can use to do so, as well as the constraints that may be imposed by the situation. For example, when developing this Social Science competency, the "context for learning" explains that students should be given the opportunity to deal with the present to begin, and that they should use written, audiovisual or electronic documents as resources. They will also likely need to use atlases, maps, illustrations and models. The use of time lines will also play an important role in the development of this competency.[60]

"Developmental Profile" describes indicators that can be used to evaluate the development of the competency for each cycle. To continue with our example from Social Studies, the developmental profile for Cycle Two explains that students will continue to develop the abilities they acquired in Cycle One, and that they will now be able to make connections between phenomena of the past and those of the present, being able to indicate traces of the past within our present society and territory. Students will also broaden their geographical and historical vocabulary while practicing this competency, and learn to locate societies and their territories. Beginning with observable

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

phenomena, students will discover how societies have been able to adapt to and change their territories, and will be able finally create a production that demonstrates their understanding of the organization of a society within its territory.[61]

The "Key Features" of the Competency breaks it down into smaller processes that must be mastered in order to fully develop the competency. Each process must be individually acquired, but the overall competency is only fully developed when students are able to connect the processes to their knowledge. In keeping with the same above example, the key features for this competency would be "to make connections of continuity with the present", "to situate the society and its territory in space and time", "to make connections between characteristics of the society and the organization of its territory", "to define the influence of people or events on social and territorial organization", and "to make connections between assets and limitations of the territory and the organization of the society".[62]

The "Evaluation Criteria" are standards that are observable, and can be used to both support and judge the development of the competency. Some are more general than others depending on whether they are aimed at only one cycle, or at multiple cycles. Again, for this competency, the evaluation criteria for the second cycle would be "indication of traces by a society on our society and territory", "correct location of the society and its territory", "indication of changes made to the territory by the society", "association of people or events with social and territorial organization".[63]

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 189.
[63] Ibid.

The "End-of-Cycle Outcomes" are the standards that are expected of students by the end of a cycle. They demonstrate the main stages in the process of developing the competency, and look at both the knowledge itself as well as the various situations that this knowledge can be used. For this same competency, the "End-of-Cycle Outcomes" for the end of cycle two explain that students should be able to indicate traces of a past society within their own society and territory. They should also be able to recognize aspects of the organization of that society and its territory, and demonstrate this understanding in a production. As well, students should be able to locate the society and its territory, as well as be able to identify adaptations that the society made to the territory that it occupies, as well as changes that it has made to the territory. Finally, using correct vocabulary, students should be able to associate people or events with the organization of the society and territory.[64]

The illustration below is of all of the components discussed above, and how they are presented within the Quebec Education Program.

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[64] Ibid.

COMPETENCY 1 • TO UNDERSTAND THE ORGANIZATION OF A SOCIETY IN ITS TERRITORY

Focus of the Competency

EXPLANATION

A society consists of organized human groups that occupy a territory to which they adapt but which they also change to meet their needs. Understanding the organization of a society in its territory involves showing the dynamics between the society and the organization of the space it occupies, taking into account the roles played by certain people and the effects of certain events on this organization. Since the present is the heritage of the past, connections should be made between social or territorial phenomena of the present and material or spiritual achievements of societies of the past. This awareness of our heritage contributes to the construction of the concept of continuity and the development of identity.

Understanding the organization of a society in its territory plays an important role in citizenship education. It allows students to become aware of the importance of rules of social conduct and collective interests, because it is the distribution of rights and responsibilities among individuals and groups that makes life in society possible. In addition, awareness of the connections between the satisfaction of needs, the use of resources and the organization of territory enhances students' sense of responsibility for the environment, seen as a collective good.

CONNECTIONS TO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

The development of this competency draws on all the intellectual competencies. The students must use informa-

tion, solve problems and exercise critical judgment. They are also called on to use creativity when they present a production presenting their understanding of the organization of a society in its territory. This contributes to the acquisition of effective work methods and may be enhanced by the use of information and communications technologies.
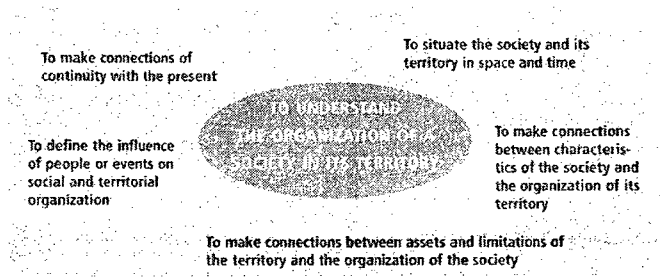
CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

Students are placed in learning situations using phenomena of the present as starters. They must use local resources as well as a variety of written, audiovisual or electronic documents. They use an atlas with simple geographic and historical maps in a variety of scales, as well as other representations of space (maps, illustrations, models). They use time lines divided into decades, centuries and millennia in Cycle Two and into centuries and millennia in Cycle Three.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

In Cycle Two, students use the ability they developed in Cycle One to start from phenomena of the present and gain some perspective on them. They try to make connections between social and territorial phenomena of the present and the past, indicating traces of the past in our society and territory. They gradually broaden their representations of social phenomena in space and time and discover the vocabulary used in geography and history.

They learn to locate societies and their territories. Starting from observable phenomena, they gradually discover how these societies adapt to and change their territories. They learn to associate people and events with social and territorial organization. Finally, they learn to bring together their learnings in a production that presents their understanding of the organization of a society in its territory.

In Cycle Three, students consolidate their ability to start from phenomena of the present and look for traces of past societies. They deepen their representations of the organization of a society in its territory and strengthen their ability to communicate them in a production. They increase the subject-specific vocabulary they acquired in the previous cycles. They go beyond merely locating societies and their territories to learn to list elements of the geographic and historical contexts of the societies they observe. They gradually discover how to make connections between the organization of a society's territory and its actions to adapt to or change that territory. They make connections between the assets and limitations of the territory and the organization of the society. They learn to define the roles certain people have played in the organization of a society and its territory and the effects of certain events on social and territorial organization. They consolidate their ability to make connections between the past and present and try to assess the importance of the traces of past society in our society and territory.

Key Features of the Competency

To make connections of continuity with the present

To situate the society and its territory in space and time

To define the influence of people or events on social and territorial organization

To make connections between characteristics of the society and the organization of its territory

To make connections between assets and limitations of the territory and the organization of the society

Evaluation Criteria

– Indication of traces left by a society on our society and territory ☺
– Correct location of the society and its territory ☺
– Indication of changes made to the territory by the society ☺
– Indication of adaptations to the territory by the society ☺
– Association of people or events with social and territorial organization ☺
– Assessment of traces left by a society on our society and territory ☻
– Establishment of the geographic and historical contexts of the society ☻
– Making of connections between characteristics of the society and the organization of its territory ☻
– Making of connections between assets and limitations of the territory and the organization of the society ☻
– Definition of the influence of people or events on the organization of the society and its territory ☻

Legend.* ☺ Cycle Two ☻ Cycle Three

* This legend also applies to the evaluation criteria for the other competencies and to the sections entitled Essential Knowledges and Techniques Specific to Geography and to History.

End-of-Cycle Outcomes

CYCLE TWO

At the end of Cycle Two, on the basis of phenomena of the present, students indicate traces of a past society in our society and territory. They recognize elements of the organization of that society in its territory. They present their understanding of this organization in a production. They locate the society and its territory, indicate adaptations of the society to the territory it occupies and changes it has made to the territory. They associate people or events with social and territorial organization. In doing so, they use correct vocabulary.

CYCLE THREE

By the end of Cycle Three, still on the basis of present-day phenomena, students indicate traces of a past society in our society and territory. They understand the organization of a society in its territory better. They present their understanding in a production. They establish the geographic and historical contexts of the society, make connections between characteristics of the society and the organization of its territory and between assets and limitations of the territory and the organization of the society, and define the roles of certain people in the organization of the society and its territory and the effects of certain events on the organization of the society and its territory. They assess the contribution of the society to our society and territory. In doing so, they use correct vocabulary.

65 Ibid., 188-189.

With each competency, the QEP also offers suggestions for the use of information and communication technologies, as they have become crucial in today's society. Not only do they provide both teachers and students with useful tools and resources, but they also provide them with an important means of production. These are meant only as suggestions and are not required parts of the curriculum, however, the use of information and communications technology in general is a compulsory aspect of both teaching and learning. This integration of technology plays a key role in preparing students to be autonomous within society as familiarity with information and communication technology in the academic setting lays the foundation for its eventual application in a variety of settings external to the school environment.

The Ministry of Education recognizes that subject-specific competencies alone cannot address all of the skills that students need to use their learnings to understand the world around them and guide their actions. As a result, they have also developed nine Cross-Curricular Competencies that students must develop.[66] These cross-curricular competencies transcend traditional subject areas, and are meant to be developed in various ways throughout all of the subject areas. Instead, they have been divided up into the four following categories - intellectual, methodological, personal and social, and communication-related.[67] There are four Intellectual cross-curricular competencies -"To use information", "To solve problems", "To exercise critical judgement" and "To use creativity".[68] Two of the cross-curricular competencies are Methodological – "To adopt effective work methods" and "To use information and communication technologies

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[66] Ibid., 12.
[67] Ibid., 13.
[68] Ibid., 16-23.

(ICT)".[69] There are two Personal and Social cross-curricular competencies – "To construct his/her identity" and "To cooperate with others".[70] Finally there is one Communication-related competency – "To communicate appropriately".[71] Similarly to the subject-specific competencies, each is broken down into Focus, Key Features, Evaluation Criteria, and Developmental Profile. It is important to note that since these competencies draw upon many different areas of knowledge, students are meant to develop them over long periods of time throughout their education, once again emphasizing life-long learning. It is explained that "they reflect the convergence, integration or synthesis of learnings acquired over a period of time" and that "In this sense, they are valuable tools for people who have to live in a society of complex, unpredictable and continuously changing situations and interactions."[72].

The QEP also presents and addresses a number of "broad areas of learning" that they deem important to the education of students. These broad areas of learning are Health and Well-Being, Citizenship and Community Life, Media Literacy, Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, and Personal and Career Planning. They are meant to deal with various problems that young people are faced with, and are meant to encourage students to make connections between what they learn in school and what they experience in the outside world, as well as to think critically about their environments. They are also meant to integrate various school subjects, much like the cross-curricular competencies discussed above.

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[69] Ibid., 26-29.
[70] Ibid., 32-36.
[71] Ibid., 38-39.
[72] Ibid., 6.

The overarching theme of the QEP's competency-based educational reform can be succinctly described as "integrating learning". Subjects, in the traditional sense, no longer have to be divided into different categories and studied as separate things. Instead, topics can be explored and studied in their context as a mixture of various subjects. For example, if students are studying weather then they may learn about the different kinds of weather and what causes each (Science). They may also be asked to track the temperatures for the month and create various graphs with their findings (Math and Science). Students could also be asked to write poems about their favourite weather phenomena – rain, sun, tornadoes, etc. and present them to the class (English Language Arts). Finally, they may also have to create a skit or piece of art about the weather phenomena that they choose (Art). Essentially, the options are infinite, and can take whatever direction the class and teacher choose. As aspects of the topic – weather – come up, these can be studied and explored without having to worry about what subject area they touch on. As a result, learning will be more natural, and students will likely stay interested in the topic for a longer period of time. This being said however, the QEP does offer five broad subject areas – languages; mathematics, science and technology; social sciences; arts education; and personal development – which aim to point out connections between related subjects, while also demonstrating that connections can be made between different subject areas as well.[73] To further promote this shift from the traditional separation of academic subjects, the aforementioned introduction of "cross-curricular

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[73] Ibid., 5.

competencies" specifically encourages (and requires) students to develop skills which apply to and can be integrated into many different scenarios.[74]

One of the important implications of the competency-based approach is the corresponding change to the structure of the school system. The introduction of "learning cycles" marks the end of the traditional grade levels, and although it does not change the number of years that a student must complete, it does change the way in which their learning takes place, and how their progression is evaluated. Students no longer move through the 6 traditional grades of elementary school, but instead work their way through 3 cycles, each two years long. This change was mandated by the QEP's emphasis on the development of long-term competencies, as well as the development of longer-term goals, the evaluation of which would prove unwieldy within the context of a traditional 1 year grade cycle. It is also said to "correspond better to the students' learning rate and permits more differentiated teaching practices."[75] Based on the stages of child development and the psychology of children, this system also encourages teachers to work in teams, allowing them to stay with their students for more than one year, helping to promote a physical familiarity with settings and teachers that facilitates learning as well as provides the opportunity for long-term individualized assistance to students who require it. The hope here is that the extra time will allow for better classroom dynamics, and therefore enhance both learning and evaluation. An allowance for enrichment or for extra time spent on the basics when the need arises is built into the 2 year cycles, allowing teachers to adapt the curriculum to the specific needs of each student. As a

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

consequence, the QEP maintains that having students repeat their year will become an exceptional circumstance with this system.

The report of the Estates General on Education (1996) expressed the belief that evaluation should not be the goal of the educational process, but instead should be designed to help students progress in addition to measuring student achievement. As such, evaluation is a vital aspect of this reform, and was designed to follow its competency-based approach. The use of formative evaluation aims at supporting students through their learning, as well as giving teachers the chance to change their lessons and activities accordingly.[76] [77] In addition, summative evaluation is used to record students' degree of development of the competencies through various progress reports. The Quebec Education Program emphasises the role of communication between teachers and parents in addition to the formalized comments of report cards as being an invaluable adjunct to the evaluation process. Francois Legault explains that although report cards are still an important aspect of this reform, we now know that students learn better when they are actively involved in their own learning[78] and so the new evaluation system attempts to take advantage of this by trying to incorporate students directly in the evaluation process. Consequently, teaching methods need to focus on creating a desire to learn, instead of fostering the passive exchange of knowledge, so that students may begin and commit to the process of life-long learning.

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Formative evaluation is the continuous monitoring of student progress and the meaningful feedback that is given to students as they work, which allows them to revise and rethink their work. The focus of formative evaluation is put on the process. It may also be used to help teachers adapt their teaching methods to better meet the needs of their students. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, puts focus on the end result, and judges the worth of a piece of work once it is finished. It can also be used to judge the amount of knowledge a student has at the end of a unit, school year or cycle.

[78] Ministère de l'Éducation, *The Education Reform: What It's All About*, 5.

One of the ways that the QEP has promoted student involvement in evaluation is through the use of portfolios – allowing students to play a bigger role in evaluation, while maintaining focus on the learning process and not just the end result. They make decisions about what should be in their portfolios, and are given time to reflect on their work in order to see what they have done well and what can be improved. Self-evaluation and peer evaluation are used in order to develop awareness of their own learning processes, as well as to compare what they think and feel to what teachers, classmates, and parents perceive about their learning and abilities. At the end of each cycle, all of the information that has been collected concerning the learning of each student should serve as an overall assessment as well as point to each student's potential weaknesses in order help provide the guidance to achieve their best throughout the next cycle.

Controversy over the Reform

From the historical perspective presented earlier, the QEP incorporated the findings of many previous government sanctioned reports and studies that identified a clear need to better prepare students for the fast-paced realities of evolving society. Despite the QEP's intentions to reform the Quebec educational system into one which produces students better equipped to deal with reality of change, the introduction of the reform was greeted by considerable controversy. Some of the main targets of the public's criticism that will be addressed in this section include the inconsistency and confusion surrounding report cards, the initial perceived lack of effect of the reform on students,

and the belief that the move toward progressive education was not supported by evidence of its superiority over traditional education methods.

There is clear evidence in the mass media that much criticism of the QEP centered on the inconsistency and confusion surrounding evaluation reporting methods; there was a substantial public outcry surrounding report cards, and "much controversy over the creation of report cards that replaced letter grades with smiley faces."[79] When the QEP began to be implemented in elementary schools across the province, the government's "Learning Evaluation Policy" had not yet been completed, and this caused a great strain on schools and school boards who were left to develop their own reporting system. As a result, there was no common report card for all students. Although many school boards regulated the report cards, numerous schools adopted their own, all attempting to address the new curriculum's focus on progress.[80] However, after the Minister of Education "came under fire for the many 'wishy-washy,' text-based report cards sent out as part of the overhaul," he decided, in 2001, that report cards would become the responsibility of school boards, instead of individual schools.[81]

Nonetheless, many parents continued to question what was actually being evaluated, as well as how their children were progressing relative to the rest of the class (class averages) – something that the more traditional marking schemes were based on.[82] They also continued to express concern and even protest when some school boards, such

[79]"Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards," *CBC News*, June 1, 2007, http://www.cbc.ca/canada/montreal/story/2007/06/01/qc-curriculumreform0601.html.; "Quebec government announces spending to upgrade teachers, schools," *Canada Press Newswire*, January 14, 2003, www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca.
[80] Allison Lampert and Nicolas Van Praet, "Report card fix makes grade," *The Montreal Gazette*, June 20, 2001, www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca.
[81] Ibid.
[82] "Building confidence," *The Montreal Gazette*, December 16, 2001, www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca.

as the Lester B. Pearson school board, sent home new "no-mark report cards".[83] The

school board maintained that the "no-mark" report cards reflect "a growing new

consensus in education that the central mission of elementary school should be to build

confidence in young children."[84] This system - one where a "B" for Beginning, a "D" for

Developing and a "C" for Consolidating were utilized to let parents know how their child

was developing their competencies - was meant to better address each child's

developmental process.[85] Since the focus is on each child's progress, and not how they

compare to the rest of the class or how they do on a test, this system would seem to fit

quite well with the QEP.[86] To attempt to address concerns, some schools sent home

handouts to help parents better understand the new report cards, only to be faced with

even more criticism.[87] Once again, the school board clarified that the report card was not

meant to stand alone, but was meant to be used with a portfolio of the student's work as

well as an interview with the teacher, therefore providing detailed information about the

progress of each student. However, despite much effort, parents continued to make their

opposition known, and report cards were changed to a 1-4 scale, where 1 represented

"outstanding progress" and 4 "additional progress required".[88] Similar systems were used

at other school boards as well, although sometimes reversing the meaning of a "1" and

"4" or using different language ("above expectations" instead of "outstanding progress",

etc).[89]

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Allison Lampert, "Parents to help decide which report cards make the grade," *The Montreal Gazette*, May 25, 2006, http://0-www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca/.
[87] Nelson Wyatt, "Draft report card called vague, causes uproar among Montreal parents," *Canadian Press Newswire*, March 7, 2002, http://0-www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca/.
[88] Karen Seidman, "Board tries again on report cards," *The Montreal Gazette*, May 11, 2002, http://0-www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca/.
[89] "Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards," *CBC News*.

Once again, in the face of criticism of the new report cards, the Chairman at Eastern Townships School Board stated that "times have changed...and the old way of reporting does not fit the aims of the Quebec Education Program."[90] The fact is that the QEP is a competency-based curriculum, and therefore it should follow that report cards, and evaluation in general, be adapted to this new system. However, in a conference of the Quebec English Schools Boards Association, it was made clear that school boards were indeed "struggling to create reporting methods that maintain the philosophy of the new curriculum reform."[91] The lack of an Evaluation Guideline from the Department of Education no doubt amplified the problem.

Finally in 2003, the MEQ released their Policy on the Evaluation of Learning, which discussed the nature of evaluation according to the QEP, and explained that it was important for the elementary school report cards to complement the reform. As a result, the report cards needed to be "descriptive and emphasize qualitative results expressed as ratings."[92] Although this paper reiterated the marking scales already in use by many boards, and complemented the QEP quite well, parent criticism continued. In 2006, when complaints were made that "current report cards inspired by Quebec's curriculum reform are incomprehensible", the Education Minister expressed his desire for parents to have more of a say in how report cards reported progress, and communicated his belief that no one model was applicable everywhere. He also explained that from grade 8 on, report cards had to contain number grades, as they are crucial to the college application process.[93]

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[90] "New report cards are a success," *The Montreal Gazette*, January 20, 2002, http://0-www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca/.
[91] Seidman, "Board tries again on report cards."
[92] Ministère de l'Éducation. *The Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2003): 42, http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/lancement/PEA/13-4602A.pdf.
[93] Lampert, "Parents to help decide which report cards make the grade."

Parents continued to express their desire for "a report card with simpler vocabulary that's easier to understand,"[94] and pushed for percentage grades, finally leading the MEQ to agree to replace the 1-4 scale in 2007.[95] With this decision, they also reintroduced class averages on report cards, as well as the ability to fail students - something that was restricted to only being allowed at the end of cycles.[96] However, Quebec's largest teacher's union warned that this type of report card would lead to "chaos and confusion" in public education, while the Centrale des Syndicats du Québec's president expressed their belief that these report cards were "part of a government's 'variety show' of populist micro-management in public schools."[97] Despite this, the MEQ went through with their decision, and it is as yet unclear how this will impact both students and the success of the QEP itself. However, the fact remains that the QEP, a document that references Paulo Freire, "attempts to abandon marking as a sorting process, a comparative zero-sum game that measures one student's success in accumulating teacher knowledge against another's failure."[98]

These criticisms of the evaluation process were compounded by the initial perceived lack of effect of the reform on students as well as a somewhat inevitable slowness in its implementation resulting in criticisms including a CBC report based on a Leger marketing survey that showed "more than 80 percent of teachers with at least nine years of experience believe that the reform has had either a negative effect or no effect at

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Irwin Block, "Teachers union warns of 'chaos' from new elementary school report cards; Information on evaluation process delayed until last month, president says," *The Montreal Gazette*, November 8, 2007,http://0-www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca/.

[96] "Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards," *CBC News*.

[97] Block, "Teachers Union Warns of 'Chaos' from New Elementary School Report Cards; Information on Evaluation Process Delayed Until Last Month, President Says."

[98] Paul Kettner and Sandra Chang-Kredl, "Quebec curriculum reform is better road to follow," *The Montreal Gazette*, March 25, 2007,http://0-www.proquest.com.mercury.concordia.ca/.

all on performance."[99] Reports like these initially facilitated a view that portrayed the QEP as being less than successful, but rarely endeavoured to provide explanations as to why the program was "ineffective". Although experienced teachers deserve the utmost respect, it is difficult to avoid asking whether the disapproval for the QEP voiced in this CBC report is due to a very real struggle in challenging their perceived teaching comfort zones. Many of them learned to teach within the context of the traditional educational system, and continued to teach that way until the introduction of this reform. After years of teaching the same way, it is conceivable that there would be at least some resistance to a reform that suggests that their established teaching styles are now considered antiquated!

With very little professional development concerning the reform, teachers across the province were asked to drastically change their teaching methods in accordance with the mandate of the QEP. Admittedly, this was a significant issue revolving around the reform but can it be explained, at least in part, to a failure in conceptualizing the reform's implementation rather than a flaw in its philosophical basis. It is also worth asking whether a lack of provincial funding with regard to teacher re-training could have negatively impacted its implementation. Perhaps the Leger marketing study's focus on teachers with over nine years experience is telling of another phenomenon. Teachers with less experience who were trained in Quebec received their teaching degrees after the Quebec Education Program had been published. In this regard, younger teachers as well as new student-teachers at Quebec Universities learn to teach via the reform, and it follows that their pool of lessons and ideas for the classroom are based on reform-based

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[99] "Parents Give New Report Cards Passing Grade," *CBC News*, May 24, 2006, http://www.cbc.ca/canada/montreal/story/2006/05/24/qc-grades20060524.html.

teaching. Having only taught in this manner, they may approach things very differently in the classroom, and as a result their students may have a very different experience than students in other classrooms. As a consequence, it might be possible that younger teachers, who might generally be more familiar with the reform, may also have a different view of how their students are learning in connection to the QEP.

The third major criticism of the QEP identified in mass media is the belief that the shift toward progressive education was not supported by evidence of its superiority over traditional education methods. In an example of this, Gauthier and Mellouki, two professors at the University of Laval, criticised the QEP and its progressive roots by claiming that there is much evidence that shows that when comparing traditional education with progressive education, students in traditional systems perform at least as well if not better when compared to students in progressive systems.[100] The authors maintain that the evidence behind the QEP reform is one of basic philosophy of education rather than comparative studies of traditional education and progressive education. Their argument therefore is that despite any potential philosophical advantage of progressive education is neutralized by the available practical evidence that traditional educational systems fare equally if not better when compared head on.[101] They posit a ranking system of evidence; level 1 being philosophical treatise, level 2 being studies on the implementation of a philosophical belief, and level 3 being head to head comparisons of different educational methodology. The authors claim that the QEP was based on "weaker" level 1 information when "stronger" level 3 evidence was available that traditional methods are at least equal to reformed progressive ones. Gauthier and

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[100] Jacques Desautels et al., "Réformer la réforme?" *Ministère de l'Éducation* (2005). http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/virage/PDF/Reformer_reforme.pdf.
[101] Ibid.

Mellouki continue to use their level 3 evidence to maintain that on practical grounds the QEP's use of projects and group-work would conceivably cause certain subjects, like math, to suffer because of less focus or time allotted to such subjects.[102]

Shortly after the aforementioned article's publication and in response to the above criticisms, Desautels, et al. contested the evidence claimed by Gauthier and Mellouki. Desautels et al. scrutinized the references for the original article and found that Gauthier and Mellouki repeatedly took statements out of context in order to strengthen their claim. For example, one study quoted by Gauthier and Mellouki claimed no difference between traditional and progressive educational systems but neglected to mention that the original authors explained this lack of difference with reference to anomalies in resource allocation as well as other factors. Once again, it appeared that a perceived weakness in the philosophy of progressivism was actually attributable to its implementation and not its foundation.[103] Desautels et al. argue repeatedly that Gauthier and Mellouki make claims without exploring both sides of the problem, aiming to discredit the QEP without any real merit. They found that most of Gauthier and Mellouki's references were from non-peer edited journals, despite claims of the contrary from the authors – thus calling into question the validity of their arguments. In response to the criticisms of group-work and the use of projects, Desautels, et al. questioned whether or not there was actual proof that subjects like math are suffering because of the reform – there was no mention by Gauthier and Mellouki as to how this was determined – and, even if true, this does not necessarily mean that this is a negative effect of progressive education.[104] Even if this were true, there might be other factors at play including variability of student

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[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

populations, variability in expertise among the studies teachers, and variability in resource allocation.

Conclusion

The QEP was born of a lengthy process of Quebec educational policy reform beginning mid-way in the twentieth century. This process lead to drastic changes in the way education and curriculum were provided to Quebecers by moving from a church-centered confessional system to a centralized provincial educational system under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Audits of the educational system during this time of considerable administrative and curricular reform revealed that Quebecers were not being prepared adequately for entry into the modern rapidly changing social reality. The competency-based approach of the QEP was developed in an effort to address these perceived shortfalls in public education by stressing the integration of academic achievement into the relevant social context. The QEP continued the transition of Quebec Education from its roots in religious tradition to one founded on the principles of democracy and progressive education. The shift in the Ministry of Education's role from effecter to facilitator of curricular reform introduced by 1992's Plan of Action – Joining Forces – and solidified in the QEP, helped foster the notion of independence in implementation, allowing teachers to target their curricular goals with specific student-centered locally and socially pertinent lessons. In the period immediately following its introduction, popular and academic criticism of the QEP and its approach to educational reform was prevalent and likely a significant cause for concern to parents of Quebec school goers. Analysis of the major criticisms of the QEP appears to reveal a common

element in that critics deem failures in implementation of the reform to be integral flaws in its foundation in progressivism. Yet even with all this controversy surrounding its implementation there has been little public debate as to what progressivism is exactly, and how the QEP is progressive. Perhaps a better understanding of the progressive roots and underlying philosophy of the reform would make it less likely for its critics to equate failures of implementation with a failure of its philosophical underpinnings.

Chapter 2

What is Progressive Education?

Despite formalizing a link between the Quebec Education Program and progressive

educational philosophy in the previous chapter, it may prove premature to illustrate how

the QEP is progressive without first entertaining the question, "What is progressivism?"

This chapter will thus be dedicated to a brief overview of some of the key historical

trends in North American progressivism. This chapter will begin by looking at the

educational philosophy of John Dewey, who is considered the father of progressive

education. The principles he developed at the turn of the twentieth century and the

implemented curriculum of his pioneering Laboratory School of the University of

Chicago continue to serve as the basis of modern progressivism. The details of his

educational philosophy, with particular emphasis on how Dewey's progressivism departs

from traditional academic systems prevalent at the time, as well as his emphasis on

democratic education, will comprise the bulk of this introduction to progressive

education. Complimenting Dewey's progressivism is the "Project Method" of William

Kilpatrick. This radical modification of traditional curricular format continues to be a

principal element within the progressive education movement. The motivation behind

Kilpatrick's concepts as well as the philosophical grounding of their principles will be

discussed. The introduction of the Project Method will be followed by a discussion of

Herbert Kohl's notion of "Open Education". This child-centered theory focuses on the

abilities of individual students, and aims to allow students to develop at their own pace,

according to their interests, while reinforcing the importance of the larger social reality.

As a whole, the analysis of Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl will provide the necessary

information to understand the historical context of progressive educational philosophy as well as its central themes.

John Dewey

John Dewey was particularly concerned with the state of education in the early 1900s. He strongly cautioned against the traditional schools of America, and spoke for educational reform. He defined education as "the reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience."[105] In other words, he saw education as the way for children to learn to develop and manage their powers of conduct in ways that would not only allow them to better adapt to their social and physical settings, but also to begin to have a greater influence on those settings.[106] He believed that knowledge grew out of experiences, that schools should not simply reflect society, but should be idealized versions of society, and that through schools children should learn to become responsible members of democratic society.[107] Dewey created his Laboratory school at the University of Chicago in order to test his educational philosophies. He sought to create a school where both scientific principles and social material were in direct contact with each other - a school where the child's natural impulses to inquire, to construct, and to express were targeted and developed.[108] Through Dewey, we see the early hallmarks of progressive

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[105] Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 122.
[106] Ibid., 108.
[107] Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago 1896-1903* (New Brunswick, USA: Aldine Transaction, 2007), 5-6.
[108] Ibid., 431.

education: child-centered classrooms, cooperative learning and the importance of a strong connection between school and society.

Dewey believed in child-centered education. He felt that traditional education was "highly specialized, one-sided, and narrow", and that it appealed only to the intellectual desire to gather information.[109] The prevailing belief in Dewey's time was that manual training, art and science had no place in schools because they produced specialists, and steered students away from liberal education.[110] Dewey disagreed with this reasoning. He felt that education should focus on children's natural inclinations to create, make, and produce. He believed that it was most important to take hold of the natural impulses and instincts of children, and then use those to help develop their perception, judgement, and habits – especially in the early grades. Dewey felt this would expand students' consciousness, and allow them more control over their powers of action.[111] It was also his belief that the best way to do this was to introduce active occupations, nature study, elementary science, art, and history to the elementary school. For Dewey, it is through the introduction of more active and expressive factors that students' best develop.[112] By harnessing this action and giving children direction, they can be educated more meaningfully.[113] As a result, he spoke of a great change in education, one where the child would take over as the center of focus, and all aspects of schools would be organized around them.[114] He felt that the "child is the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal."[115] These child-centered notions were

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[109] John Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum* (New York: Dover Publications, 2001), 18-19.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 80.
[112] Ibid., 20.
[113] Ibid., 25.
[114] Ibid., 24.
[115] Ibid., 107-108.

important to Dewey's philosophy of education, and would become a main focus of progressive education.

Dewey believed that intelligent action and growth are what defines education. By intelligent action, he meant the "constant adjustment of an individual to his environment both physical and social as he uses or modifies it to supply his needs or those of his group."[116] Similarly, Dewey emphasized the importance of experience in the educational process, and believed that experiences are only educational insofar as they lead to growth.[117] It was the responsibility of adults to control consciously the environment where children act, think, and feel.[118] He believed that the best experiences arose in classrooms where activities are developed according to the interests of the child. In this context "interests" relate to general concepts like "building" and "discovering" rather than specific ones such as the currently popular toys/games, etc. As a result, Dewey did not mean for teachers to cater to the immediate interests of children, but instead meant for curriculum and classroom-created experiences to echo their natural, more general interests. In this way, teachers would be better able to create learning situations where students would learn more effectively.

These child-centered ideas had considerable influence on Dewey's beliefs about subject matter. He believed that although subject-matter was important, it did not supersede the importance of the child.[119] He believed that traditional schools put too much emphasis on static and pre-set curricula that transferred into a rote and mechanical educational experience. He believed that education must become meaningful by allowing

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[116] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 413.
[117] Ibid., 421.
[118] John Dewey, Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (Stilwell, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2005), 14.
[119] Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum*, 107-108.

curriculum to stem from the experiences and lives of the students.[120] Dewey did not feel

that the child should choose the content of the lessons - he felt, rather, that lessons be

shaped by the psychological tendencies of the students.[121] He explains that teachers

should be concerned "not with the subject-matter as such, but with the subject-matter as a

related factor in a total and growing experience."[122] Dewey cautioned against an over-

dependence on textbooks.[123] He felt that the emphasis on textbooks resulted in a

dependency whereby children often took the textbook to be the only source of

information. This over-reliance on textbooks could often result in the minds of children

becoming passive in nature, rather than being inquisitive.[124]

Dewey was committed to cooperative learning. He felt that education prepared

younger generations for future social life by immersing them in smaller scale cooperative

societies.[125] He strongly believed that "constructive cooperative activity was the

organizing principle that would bring unity, order, and social concern into the chaos of

educational practice."[126] Dewey believed that the school should be a place where even

individual activity could be social in nature, and that classrooms should be structured in a

way that would promote communication amongst students.[127] As children work both on

and in their physical environment, developing individual aptitudes, they would use their

skills for the betterment of the group at large. [128] He cautioned against traditional schools,

where too high a value was placed on competitiveness and self-interest.[129] He believed

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 108-109.
[122] Ibid., 117
[123] Ibid., 23.
[124] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 27.
[125] Ibid., 466.
[126] Ibid., 462.
[127] Ibid., 429.
[128] Ibid., 458.
[129] Ibid., 427-428.

that "the present school cannot organize itself as a natural social unit is because...this element of common and productive activity is absent."[130]

Dewey believed that schools should have a strong relationship with the community/society. He felt that the school should be the liaison between the home and the larger community, and that it was the job of the school to reproduce the activities thought to be central to life as a productive member of society. [131] He wanted "to discover...how a school could become a cooperative community while developing in individuals their own capacities and satisfying their own needs."[132] He established his laboratory school on the belief that a school should be a "social environment that was to set the children free by giving continuity and direction to their activities." [133] In order to maintain a connection that aids in development, the school should aim to bridge the gap between the life of the child before/during his school years with that of the school itself. It was important, therefore, that activities should flow from the previous day's work, and should lead toward those of the following day. He ultimately believed that this connection would introduce the child to the structure, materials and modes of operation of society, and provide the opportunity to appropriately express themselves as an individual within the social framework.[134]

Dewey believed that the school needed to become an "embryonic community", where students are introduced to the occupations of the larger society where the spirits of art, history, and science are embraced and developed.[135] As such, he felt that schools

[130] Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum*, 10.
[131] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 461.
[132] Ibid., xv-xvi.
[133] Ibid., 461.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 118.

should allow students the opportunity to practice various occupations. In this way, students would be able to connect to the world in a meaningful way, while preparing to be active participants of democratic society. This would secure an education that was based in current social reality, something he felt was lacking in traditional schools. [136] It was with these ideals in mind that he created the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. Since "human intelligence developed in connection with the needs and opportunities of action," the main focus of activity at the school would be occupations, instead of the more common studies.[137] Dewey believed that the school had the "chance to affiliate itself with life, to become the child's habitat, where he learns through directed living, instead of being only a place to learn lessons having an abstract and remote reference to some possible living to be done in the future."[138] In this regard, the school would become a small community, where students could practice for their future roles in society, while learning about reading, writing, history, math, science, languages, etc.[139] It is important to note that education through occupations was not meant to push students into certain occupations when they have finished school, but to provide starting points from which students are encouraged to explore various materials/processes, and the history that connects them.[140] This idea addresses both the social and individual needs of children – to act, to express, the desire to do something, to be constructive and creative - instead of being passive and conforming.[141]

Dewey offers an example to clarify this notion – sewing and weaving. Although students can use sewing and weaving skills later on in life, teaching them these skills has

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[136] Ibid.

[137] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 5.

[138] Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum*, 13.

[139] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 5.

[140] Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum*, 14.

[141] Ibid., 49-50.

a greater aim – to provide them with the opportunity to discover the progress of mankind, as well as the materials and machines involved. To begin, children are given raw materials (flax, cotton plants and wool), and are asked to study the materials and their various uses to compare and contrast. For example, if comparing the cotton fibre to that of the wool, students might discover that the cotton is very difficult to separate from the seed by hand, and therefore might look into the different machines that have been invented to do this. This might lead to the conclusion that wool was used to make clothes and various products long before cotton because of this difficulty. Once the students are able to explore the materials, they are given the opportunity to learn the processes of working the fibres up into cloth, reinventing some of the first machines and allowing students to trace these inventions and understand why and how they were made. Although science plays a significant role in this process, so do many other subjects such as history, math, language arts, geography, art, etc. According to Dewey, the main point is that the "occupation supplies the child with a genuine motive; it gives him experience first hand; it brings him into contact with realities. It does all this, but in addition it is liberalized throughout by translation into its historic and social values and scientific equivalencies."[142] Dewey points out that projects like the one explained above, address four broad impulses of children: the social (language) instinct, the making instinct, investigation instinct, and the expressive instinct.[143] Dewey believed that these instincts should be used by educators to better direct students in their educational pursuits, and to

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[142] Ibid., 16.
[143] Ibid., 29.

make school activities more meaningful.[144] He felt that this type of work fully engages both the attention and interest of the child, keeping them active and alert.[145]

Dewey believed that the language instinct was "the simplest form of the social expression of a child...therefore, a great, perhaps the greatest, of all educational resources."[146] He was also a strong believer in the fact that language could not be taught in isolation, but instead should be taught in a natural way, stemming from the child's desire to communicate thoughts, feelings and questions. Since most of one's vocabulary, as well as the fundamental types of speech, are formed in the regular communications of day-to-day life, Dewey believed that they should be taught and developed in this natural way in schools too.[147] Even before attending school, children learn to use language to communicate with others about their interests, and so this should be continued in school.

Dewey also suggested that discipline was context-specific. When the teacher has a classroom full of students learning set lessons and reciting them back to him/her discipline has to focus on ensuring this repetition. When the objective of education is developing social cooperation and community life, discipline grows out of that aim, and results from the experiences of those involved.[148] Dewey believed that traditional schooling had become separate from the experiences of the world, and that it was actually difficult to gain worthwhile experience through it. He felt that true discipline came from taking part in constructive work, and contributing to a social, but obvious and tangible result. It was through these types of experiences that Dewey felt that students would be

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[144] Ibid., 29-30.
[145] Ibid., 9-10.
[146] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 40.
[147] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 13.
[148] Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum*, 12.

required to act responsibly, and use sound judgement.[149] He alleged that true order and discipline stem from the respect a child has for the work that he/she has to do, as well as for his/her mutual respect of the work that others are required to do.[150] Only when what is expected of children is derived from an outside source, instead of from internal motivation, is traditional discipline needed.[151]

Dewey alleged that as society becomes increasingly enlightened, there is a realization that its educational task is not simply to transmit and conserve its existing accomplishments, but instead to carefully choose those elements that will lead to the makings of an even better future society. [152] Most of all, Dewey believed that "when the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership...community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious."[153] His ultimate goal was to continue to improve society, with education as the instrument by which to accomplish this. For Dewey, education, much like growth, is an on-going process that continues throughout the entire life of an individual. [154]

The Project Method - William Kilpatrick

William Kilpatrick worked closely with John Dewey, and was a leading advocate for progressive education throughout his life (1871-1965). Through a discussion of his

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[149] Ibid.
[150] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School,* 32.
[151] Ibid., 33.
[152] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 15.
[153] Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum,* 20.
[154] Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School,* 426.

educational philosophy, and an analysis of his "Project Method", we will see the evolution of several of Dewey's progressive notions, and continue to answer the question "what is progressive education?" Kilpatrick believed that a valuable education is one that creates meaningful and interesting experiences for students. Through these experiences, students are given the chance to develop their sense of responsibility as opposed to more traditional models based on the mastery of remote knowledge from textbooks, where examinations and disconnected lessons take center stage.[155] He began to develop activities that would build on the interests of his students, and therefore be more meaningful to them. He believed in the fact that students and teachers should have a reciprocal relationship, and that students should see teachers as their advocates. Kilpatrick felt that over time this relationship had essentially been lost due to the practice of grading students and the use of report cards.[156] He fought this practice, and refused to do it in his own classrooms. Kilpatrick "expected the best from his students, regarded them as people, recognized their accomplishments, and respected their interests while building on and enlarging their experiences." [157]

Like Dewey, Kilpatrick believed that education was a crucial aspect of any democratic society. He explains that "Democracy wishes all the people to be both able and willing to judge wisely for themselves and for the common good as to the policies to be approved; it will accordingly seek a type of education to build responsible, thinking, public-spirited citizenship in all its people."[158] As a result, most of his school practices and educational notions are based on democratic values and principles, much like Dewey.

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[155] Landon E. Beyer, "William Heard Kilpatrick," *UNESCO: International Bureau of Education* (1999): 3, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/ThinkersPdf/kilpatricke.PDF.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid., 4.
[158] Ibid., 6.

Kilpatrick believed that "wholehearted purposeful activity in a social situation as the typical unit of school procedure is the best guarantee of the utilization of the child's native capacities now too frequently wasted."[159] His "project method" was how he envisioned wholehearted purposeful activity to occur in schools. It is a method that unifies the interests of students with action in the world, and is an excellent example of how 'education' and 'life' – knowing and doing - are continuous.[160]

In Kilpatrick's search for a unifying concept to explain a number of important related aspects of the educative process he settled on the term "project" to serve as a description for a "purposeful act".[161] He offers the example of a girl making a dress, and explains that "if she did in hearty fashion purpose to make the dress, if she planned it, if she made it herself, then I should say the instance is that of a typical project."[162] Kilpatrick also explains that projects need not be individual, and offers other examples of group projects such as a class presenting a play. However, he cautions that not all activities have the same type of purpose, and explains that there exists a scale upon which the purpose for activities can be measured –those that are performed "under dire compulsion" to those that the performer puts their "whole heart". The term 'project' or 'purposeful act' is used only to describe activities that fall into the latter section of this scale.[163] Although there is no actual line that can be drawn, it follows that "psychological value increases with the degree of approximation to 'wholeheartedness'."[164] The more a child is interested in a project, the more likely they are to fully engage themselves towards its expected successful completion.

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[159] William H. Kilpatrick, "The Project Method," *Teachers College Record* 19, no. 4 (1918): 9, http://tcrecord.org.
[160] Beyer, "William Heard Kilpatrick," 8.
[161] Kilpatrick, "The Project Method," 1
[162] Ibid., 2.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.

Kilpatrick believed that since a purposeful act is the unit of the worthy life in a democratic society, then it should also be the unit of school procedure.[165] Much like Dewey, Kilpatrick believed that this would ensure that education itself would be considered life, and not simply the preparation for future living – the latter, he felt, was the basis of traditional education.[166] He felt that there could be no better preparation for the future than by practicing to live now – "learn to do by doing".[167]

In "The Project Method", Kilpatrick argues that the laws of learning are also important reasons for the purposeful act being the unit of instruction. He explains that the response to a situation occurs because of a bond that occurs in the nervous system between the stimulus of the situation and the response. While some of these bonds are natural reflexes, others are learned. He explains that it is the process of acquiring bonds or of changing them that is considered 'learning', and therefore, the laws of learning are the conditions under which bonds are built or changed.[168] He explains the 'Law of Readiness' by saying that if a bond is ready to act, then to act gives satisfaction and not to act gives annoyance.

Kilpatrick offers the example of a boy trying to make a kite that will fly, but who is not having much success. The purpose is the inner urge that drives the boy to succeed despite his difficulty, which brings 'readiness' to the boy's inner resources of knowledge and thought. His purpose drives his thinking, directs his attention to his plan and materials, elicits appropriate suggestions from within, and then tests them according to their significance to the end result. In this example, the purpose itself defines its success –

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., 3.

the kite must fly or he has failed. The purpose supplies the boy with motive power, makes him aware of his inner resources, guides the process to its end, and by this success makes the boy aware of the successful steps that make the successful whole.[169]

Kilpatrick cautions, however, that given a situation where two boys set out to make a kite – one wholeheartedly and one coerced, the end result will be quite different. The boy being coerced will have 2 'sets' working within him – the first set concerned with making the kite and the second with a different end, which would pursue something completely different if the coercion were removed. Both sets can bring satisfaction and learning, but they will likely cause confusion about success. As they fight each other, each will destroy a piece of the other's satisfaction, which will in turn hamper primary learning. In the end, the boy whose purpose is wholehearted will emerge with a higher degree of skill and knowledge, and his learning will stay with him longer than the boy being coerced.[170]

Where accessory responses are concerned, the two boys will respond quite differently as well. The wholehearted boy's set will make available all the needed required inner resources – each step will be connected and will borrow from past experiences. These connections will stay with the boy for future needs, and will reflect satisfaction.[171] For the other boy however, the mere presence of coercion will extinguish thought, and un-readiness will characterize his attitude. He will lack additional responses, and the ones he will have will lack the satisfaction needed to fix them.[172] Where one boy has a wealth of accessory ideas, the other boy has poverty. As a result, the first boy will

[169] Ibid., 4.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

look back on his project with pleasure and confidence, and will look to plan more projects. In contrast, the second boy will reflect upon his project and school itself as being boring and will seek to express himself in other ways.[173] With the help of this example, Kilpatrick cautions us about what we value in our schools – do we exclusively concern ourselves with primary responses or do we consider and value the entire process? How do we define 'getting an education'? How many children leave school hating books or worse yet, hating thinking altogether?

Similar to Dewey, Kilpatrick argues that an activity is educative if it 'leads-on'– modifies a thought process so that the student realizes something that they could not see before, or does something that they could not do before. It is a natural tendency for students to engage in activities that "lead to" other "fruitful activity" as the personal reward to this interval progress is strongly reinforcing.[174] Kilpatrick was concerned that traditional American schools did not emphasize "lead-on" activities, but favoured easily measurable one-time outcomes. If an activity does not "lead-on" to something students can envision, it becomes old and dreary in time. He explains that "any plan of educational procedure which does not aim consciously and insistently at securing and utilizing vigorous purposing on the part of the pupils is founded essentially on an ineffective and unfruitful basis."[175] However, this does not mean that every purpose is good, nor that the teacher should become subordinate to the ideas and desires of students. However, it does mean that it becomes the duty of the teacher to guide students through their present interests and achievements into wider ones demanded by society.

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[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 5.
[175] Ibid., 5.

Kilpatrick also discusses morality, and explains that the project method –

purposeful activity - is a way to build moral character. The classroom that uses the

project method creates a social setting, where, under the teacher's supervision, students

learn to deal with a variety of social situations together. Since students are in pursuit of a

variety of purposes within the classroom – both individually and in groups – they will be

given the chance to develop their sense of what is "right" and "proper", which in turn

leads to the development of finer ideas and judgment. Although at first the teacher will

have to step in and steer the evaluation of situations, eventually it is hoped that a

successful teacher will be able to gradually take him/her-self out of the procedure.[176] This

difficult role for teachers is of great importance, as it is the teacher that guides students

through social encounters that they feel are necessary to help build the ideals required for

social life. Without the teacher playing this pivotal role, students are often left alone to

waste time.[177] The development of 'give and take' is also a part of this process. When the

whole group takes part in deciding what is just then it is less likely that an opposing 'set'

will develop. Instead of feeling coerced, students begin to understand and respect the

points of view of others.[178] He also argues that this method, by encouraging and teaching

moral responsibility, is "the ideal of democratic citizenship."[179]

Kilpatrick's "Project Method" not only builds on some of Dewey's notions of

what education should be, but also elaborates on the importance of "purposeful activity"

and the use of projects. Much like Dewey, he felt that education was key to democratic

society, and that "purposeful activity" was the unit by which to measure a worthy life. As

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[176] Ibid., 5-6.
[177] Ibid., 5.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid., 2.

a result, he believed that "purposeful activity" should also be the unit of school procedure. Kilpatrick also emphasized the notion of "learning by doing", and used the laws of learning to do so. He differentiated between "wholehearted" purposeful activity and "coerced" purposeful activity, and emphasized the former. Finally, he describes how only "lead-on" activities constitute educative activity, since they lead to modification of thoughts/knowledge. Much like Dewey, Kilpatrick believed in cooperative, child-centered classrooms, where the important relationship between school and society is emphasised. These concepts continue to be central to modern progressive education. These topics are taken up once again with Kohl and the Open Classroom in the next section, and although they take on slightly different meanings at times, the basic elements of progressive education continue to shine through.

Open Education - Herbert Kohl

Another major chapter in 20th century progressive education was Open Education or the Open Classroom. This educational philosophy began in England in response to the varying levels of education of students of the same age caused by the disruption of society during WWII. It was brought to the U.S. in the mid to late 1960s by teachers looking to make education more meaningful for students.[180] Open education is a form of education that is child-centered, where students of different skill levels move freely throughout the classroom, learning and exploring topics and ideas that are of interest and importance to them. The open classroom is a place where students often work cooperatively in small groups, and where teachers take on the role of facilitator and/or

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[180] James Rothenburg. "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," *The Elementary School Journal* 90, no. 1 (1989): 70- 71.

instructor. It is an approach that borrows a great deal from both Dewey and Kilpatrick, and is marked by traits such as cooperation, freedom, respect and responsibility. Kohl believed that school should be "a place where young people can come to know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and get themselves ready to change a society which makes so little sense."[181]

One of the major tenets of Open Education is that it is child-centered. It takes into account the natural patterns of cognitive, emotional, and physical development of students, and recognizes that not all students learn and develop in the same way or in the same time frame.[182] Learning, therefore, should not be an orderly or identical process for everyone.[183] Since the open classroom is a place where learning is individualized, students are allowed to move freely through the classroom, but are required to be purposeful. Students do considerable work on their own, but must work in small groups a substantial amount of the time.[184] As a result, the open classroom is a place where students are working on various activities at the same time. This makes it crucial for students to learn to budget time, to make and create choices, and to know when to ask for help and when to work independently.[185]

The child-centered nature of the Open Classroom involves an increased focus on student interests. In the Open Classroom model, curriculum should be based on these interests and learning becomes self-initiated and self-directed as a result. In this respect, Open Classrooms encourage students to have more of a say in what they learn about and

[181] Herbert Kohl, *Open Classroom* (New York: Random House Trade, 1969), 63.
[182] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 71.
[183] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 52.
[184] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 73; Joanna Sullivan, "Open-Traditional – What is the Difference?" *The Elementary School Journal* 74, no. 8 (1974): 494.
[185] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 75.

what they do. Through the exploration and discovery of their own interests, it is hoped

that students will learn to enjoy school, and that they will be more likely to become life-

long learners.[186] It is often through experimenting that students discover basic principles

that they can use and build on throughout their education.[187] This type of learning also

fosters creativity and often trains students in scientific and scholarly methods as well.

Similarly, with greater focus being put on their interests, teachers can encourage students

to learn independently – a skill that is important throughout life. Kohl believed that large

blocks of uninterrupted time need to be given to students so that they can work as long as

they need on their activities and projects. The use of learning centres and educational

games can assist in this method as well. These informal classrooms have often been

found to foster the development of skills that allow students-to "learn how to learn",

encouraging academic independence.[188] This type of self-directed and self-initiated

learning has been found to foster creativity and critical learning patterns.[189] Students also

often adopt problem-solving attitudes toward learning and knowledge through this type

of learning.[190] Although student interest is central to open education, teachers still have

the responsibility to spark interests as well, as it is their responsibility to introduce

students to a variety of ideas, topics and materials.[191] In this way, and in many others,

teachers continue to play a key role in directing students. Although students have more

freedom as to when and for how long they choose to work on certain topics or activities,

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[186] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 71.
[187] Ibid., 72.
[188] Harvey A. Allen, "The Open Classroom: Elements for Successful Implementation in American Schools." *Peabody Journal of Education* 52, no. 2 (1975): 98.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 75.
[191] Ibid., 72.

the teacher has the final say about what needs to be completed and by when.[192]

Essentially, "teachers have to be authorities without being authoritarian."[193]

The child-centered philosophy of the open classroom changes the traditional methods of evaluation. In an open classroom, students' work is measured against what they have completed in the past, and not against some "given standard" or measured against the work of other students.[194] As a result, students learn to achieve for internal rewards, and not external ones like grades. However, this also means that teachers need to be constantly aware of student progress, ensuring that students adjust their activities to their levels of ability. In this scenario, direct and individual feedback takes the place of tests, and observation becomes key. Kohl recommends that not all work be corrected, as students do not necessarily put the same amount of effort into all of their work. He explains that students often seek corrections when they care about their work, and have a desire to make it better. As a result, they should have some say into what is corrected and evaluated in an open classroom.[195] Self-evaluation should also play an important role in this type of classroom, as it allows students to reflect on their own work. Evaluation should look ahead as much as it evaluates what has already been done.[196] This allows students and teachers to make better choices as to future goals. Essentially, these type of classrooms provide students with the opportunity to develop according to who they are, and not according to what they are expected to be.

Echoing Kilpatrick and Dewey, integrated learning is also a key feature of the open classroom. Although this type of education places great emphasis on overall

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[192] Ibid., 80.
[193] Ibid., 83.
[194] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 106; Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 73.
[195] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 111.
[196] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 111; Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 73.

experience and learning, open education does not neglect the basics but instead integrates them into broader activities and projects. It also integrates subject-matters by focussing on specific topics or themes, and exploring all subjects attached to that topic. For instance, studying ancient Egypt will call upon the development of research and social studies skills (searching for information), art skills (making models of the pyramids to scale), math skills (scaling means measurement and working with fractions), and writing skills (taking detailed notes as well as writing descriptions for each of their models).[197] This way subjects are explored and studied in context and not as distinct, boring entities. It is also important to remember that there are many different ways to explore and learn about the same topic. For example, while studying relativity in the context of science, one can also explore the study of the relativity of cultures or through the study of kinship systems (relatives) in addition to its traditional physics milieu.[198]

Much like Dewey and Kilpatrick before him, Kohl was a strong advocate for building a relationship between the school and the community. He believed that "the whole community ought to be the school, and the classroom a home base for the teachers and kids, a place where they can talk and rest and learn together, but not the sole place of learning." [199] As such, he felt by taking learning out of the classroom, it often led to better learning and greater interest by allowing students to connect their knowledge and experiences to what was really happening in their community. Accordingly, students of an open classroom should be given the opportunity to explore various aspects of their community, and be given the chance to develop a sense about what adults in the

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[197] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered." 71.
[198] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 67.
[199] Ibid.. 75.

community do. A great way to do this is by taking learning out of the classroom, or, as Dewey suggests, by bringing the community into the school.

Cooperation and respect play key roles in an open classroom, and in progressive education. Since students in open classrooms are free to work on various topics and assignments throughout the day – both individually and in small groups - a smooth working classroom can only be achieved through cooperation and respect.[200] Everyone must work together to create an environment that is conducive to learning, and where each of them is free to learn about and explore the world around them. It is a classroom where students are trusted and respected, and where they learn to trust and respect others.[201] Any problems that arise are dealt with by all involved – whether that means the entire group or simply the individuals involved. Although teachers should play a role in this process, it should be as a mediator and not as the judge. This does not equate to a laissez-faire attitude as teachers are ultimately responsible and accountable for creating an environment that is conducive to learning.[202] It is also important to note that since evaluation in an open classroom is non-comparative and less public, students are more likely to develop cooperative norms of behaviour instead of competitive ones, and negative labelling is less likely to occur.[203]

Open classrooms require teachers to have and keep an open mind. In order to allow for a classroom to focus on the child, teachers need to play a different role than in traditional models. The teacher must make an effort to begin the school year without any pre-conceived notions or expectations of their students based on information from other

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[200] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 73.
[201] Allen. "The Open Classroom," 102.
[202] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 82.
[203] Ibid., 75.

people. Kohl explains that self-fulfilling prophecies are all too common, and that forming a picture of an individual or a group before meeting them often leads to them becoming what you expected. He argues that teachers should start the year off with a clean slate, and come to their own conclusions about students based on what they experience and learn from them firsthand. It should also follow that all students should be "expected" to succeed. Similarly, it is important for teachers not to have pre-determined rules or routines in the open classroom. These should flow from experiences within the classroom, and should be based on what is needed or what is believed to be important within that group. [204]

The role of the teacher in an open classroom is that of a facilitator. It is quite a different role than that of a traditional teacher. Since the Open Classroom is child-centered, the teacher must organize the classroom environment to meet their needs. Since students have more of a say in what they do throughout the day, teachers have to help students plan their activities, and help them use both materials and resources effectively.[205] As students work independently throughout portions of the day, teachers also have to create learning centres and teach students how to use them. As a result, "lesson planning" in an open classroom is different than in the traditional classroom. Spontaneity is the key to an open classroom, as one must develop the ability of adjusting to whatever occurs in the classroom – both where the curriculum and problems are concerned.[206] Teachers in an open classroom need to focus a great deal on planning, innovation, monitoring student performance, and keeping order, all without being

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[204] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 29.
[205] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 73.
[206] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 30-31.

authoritarian.[207] Kohl explains that in order to develop an open and democratic environment, one simply needs to abandon the authoritarian use of power.[208] He explains that the classroom can only become a free environment where respect and trust reign, when the teacher truly becomes just another person in the classroom. In an open classroom, the teacher is not there to "control" the class, but is meant to guide them and give them the chance to make choices about their own interests.[209] Kohl believes that teachers need to learn how to relinquish some of their power.[210] This does not mean that arguments, disagreements and conflicts are not going to occur; in fact they play a pivotal role in the open classroom, just as they do in society. The important difference between traditional and open classroom models is the students need to learn to deal with conflict without simply following the orders of an absolute authority figure.[211]

As discussed, the "open classroom provide(s) the ideal environment for the student to learn on his own, to learn from other students, and to learn from teachers in an atmosphere of cooperation, freedom, respect, and responsibility."[212] The non-traditional format required for the development of an open classroom is no easy task - especially for those that were raised in authoritarian classrooms. However, its underlying philosophy, much like the philosophy of Dewey and Kilpatrick, is timeless, and is aimed to create the best possible educational experience for students. The bottom line is that research has shown that students who attend open classrooms are more independent, less conforming, more cooperative with their peers, and more able to be self-directed than their traditional

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[207] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 78.
[208] Kohl, *Open Classroom*, 16.
[209] Ibid., 18-19.
[210] Ibid., 78.
[211] Ibid., 24.
[212] Ibid., 16.

classroom counterparts – traits that will better allow them to deal with a rapidly changing world.[213]

Conclusion

These three educational philosophies form a large part of the history of progressive education have allowed us to answer the question "what is progressive education?" Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl highlight common and integral elements of progressivism – child-centered, cooperative, project-based learning. Not only do these provide some of the main aspects of progressive education, but they also demonstrate the evolution of them as well. John Dewey founded the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago on the premise that education should parallel experience and that integrating these experiences into student-centered curriculum ensures engaging lessons that best prepare students for a democratic society. William Kilpatrick continues this child-centered approach by structuring curricular projects around individual interests designed to build on the knowledge and experiences of students and move forward by directing development and creating educative experiences. Herbert Kohl suggests a shift from the traditionally passive role of students as recipients of knowledge to active participants in its acquisition by having the students themselves fashion the curriculum. Each philosophy also seeks to connect the classroom with the reality of society, and puts great importance on the social aspects of learning - cooperation. They also all embrace the "learning by doing" notion, and involve the integration of various school subjects by focussing on certain projects or themes. Dewey in particular was cognisant of the "instinct" of

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[213] Rothenburg, "The Open Classroom Reconsidered," 68-79.

language – what he believed was the greatest of educational resources. Essentially, the educational philosophies of Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl have largely defined what progressive education is. Although each had distinctive differences, their general view and intent were similar. They each aimed to create classrooms that better addressed the needs of students, and agreed that this should take the form of child-centered, cooperative, project-based learning that valued and emphasized the important connection between school and society. Each of the philosophies described in this section support the notion that all subjects should be taught in a natural way, stemming from the student's desire to communicate thoughts, feelings and questions. With these principles of progressive education in mind, the Language Arts component Quebec Education Program reform will be analyzed within the context of progressive education.

Chapter 3

How is the QEP Progressive? The Case of Elementary English Language Arts

The previous chapter's analysis of Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Kohl's philosophies of education has given us a foothold on the central tenets of progressivism – child-centered, cooperative and interdisciplinary learning environments. Projects that directly relate to student interests are of particular importance to progressive education. They can be used as vehicles to explore different subject areas. With a focus on "communication" - speaking, listening, reading and writing – the English Language Arts program (ELA) at the Elementary school level is arguably one of the most important sections of the Quebec Education Program (QEP). An example of the central role of language can be seen in the cycle 1 program where 35% of the program is dedicated to language acquisition and application.[214] This trend continues in cycle 2 and cycle 3 with approximately 25% of the program being dedicated specifically to ELA.[215] In the QEP, language is seen as a gateway to knowledge; an aid in the development of creative, analytical and critical judgment.[216] Since language and communication play pivotal roles within the QEP framework, this chapter will focus on the ELA section of the QEP and how it is progressive in nature.

It will begin with an outline of the basic structure of the ELA program of the QEP. This will be followed by a brief discussion of its connection to society, use of cycles and integrated learning methods. The chapter will explore each of the four ELA

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[214] Norman Henchey, "The new Curriculum Reform: What does it really mean?"*McGill Journal of Education 34. no. 3* (1999): 6. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3965/is_199910/ai_n8869163/.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Quèbec Education Program*, 70.

competencies, and offer an analysis of their progressive nature. The first two competencies – reading and writing - will result in a discussion of the program's child-centered nature and its overall focus on literacy for the development of a more ideal society. The discussion of the media competency will explore how the program connects the life of the child outside of school with their experiences within school. The program's focus on teaching students to think critically in order to better society as a whole will be addressed.

The fourth competency – the language competency – will lend itself to a discussion of how the program aims for students to create meaning from their experiences, and explores the social aspect of language. A brief discussion of the use of portfolios and the focus on self-evaluation will follow. Furthermore, the program's overall focus on the importance of students creating a world-view and connecting what they learn to society as a whole, the implications for participation in democratic Quebec society, and the importance of integrating all of the competencies will be explored. The chapter will close with an example of how the ELA program takes shape in the classroom, along with an examination of this example's specific ties to progressive education.

The English Language Arts Program

In order to explore the progressive nature of the ELA program of the QEP, its basic framework must first be presented. This will enable the reader to have a basic understanding of the program when the analysis of its progressive features begins.

The goal of the ELA program for elementary schools is to be "first and foremost a literacy program".[217] In the tradition of Paulo Freire, the aim of the QEP's language program is an attempt to forge a connection between the world of the learner and words.[218] Echoing Dewey, the authors point out that language is a means by which "active participation in democratic life and a pluralistic culture" is made possible.[219] The program aims to make students understand the importance of literacy—that by developing an assortment of strategies, processes, skills and knowledge, they will be better able to continue to learn throughout their lives.[220] Developing skills that prepare students for a lifetime of learning is a recurrent theme and a key tenet of the entire QEP.[221] The ELA program focuses on developing fluency in oral, written and visual communication. It aims to create situations through which students may "experience the power of language as a way of making sense of his/her experience and of breaking down the barriers that separate individuals."[222] Not only does this program aim to teach skills that will allow students to become "active, critical members of society", but it also seeks to develop an appreciation of "their rich literacy and cultural heritage."[223]

Although the ELA program provides a new conceptual approach to the teaching of language, it incorporates elements of pre-existing curricula that complement its philosophies.[224] These include: writing as a process; responding to and interpreting texts; collaborative learning; storytelling; spelling as a process of constructing patterns, rules and generalizations; written and spoken discourse; student-centered learning that

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[217] Ibid., 72.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.

promotes differentiation in inclusive classrooms; learning-by-doing; the four linguistic

cuing systems; and language used in contexts relevant and familiar to the student.[225] The

ELA program also introduces new elements designed to address the short-comings of

past curricula as well as to incorporate current advances in educational research. These

include: "the notion of text; linguistic structures and features; the media/technology;

developmental drama; and the potential of portfolios in self-evaluation as a means for the

student to reflect about his/her learning and to set future learning goals."[226]

As discussed in chapter 1, one of the fundamental changes to the structure of

education brought in by the QEP is the concept of "cycles". A three cycle model was

introduced to replace the traditional grade 1 to 6 system for elementary school.

Expectations and evaluation criteria are modified as a student moves through each of the

three cycles, but the competencies remain the same. In this way, the QEP aims to provide

students with consistency in learning, as well as providing them with a structure that they

can come to recognize and appreciate as they develop. The two year cycle span is in

keeping with the belief that a long-term approach to developing competencies is best for

students.[227] As such, the curriculum is designed with "end of cycle" outcomes in mind,

allowing teacher teams the freedom to organize activities, and to remain with the same

group of students for the full length of the cycle.[228]

The ELA program is structured along individual competencies that are used as

guidelines for progress and evaluation in the classroom. Each competency addresses an

individual component of language acquisition and the integration of these competencies

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[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Ibid., 5.

[228] Michael Weiner, "Quebec Teachers: Submerged in a sea of reform," *McGill Journal of Education* 34, no. 3 (1999): 4, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3965/is_199910/ai_n8869165/.

is designed to develop and foster strong language skills. The ELA competencies are (1) to read and listen to literary, popular and information-based texts; (2) to write self-expressive, narrative and information-based texts; (3) to represent his/her literacy in different media; and (4) to use language to communicate and learn.[229] The QEP also lists the Cross-Curricular Competencies that relate to the ELA program - (a) to use information; (b) to solve problems; (c) to exercise critical judgment; (d) to use her/his creativity; (e) to use information and communications technologies; (f) to develop her/his personal identity; and (g) to work with others.[230] These should also be addressed in class, as they connect ELA to other subjects and areas of interests, creating a more integrated learning environment where various subjects can be explored and taught at the same time.

The First and Second English Language Arts Competencies

The first two ELA competencies are quite similar: "to read and listen to literacy, popular and information-based texts" and "to write self-expressive, narrative and information-based texts."[231] Essentially, these competencies are meant to provide students with the necessary experiences, strategies, and processes to become lifelong, critical readers and writers. It is these skills that will allow the child to convey their own thoughts, feelings, experiences and information. They will also facilitate their access to society as a whole, since reading/writing will allow them to be active members of a literate community.[232] These skills will allow them to actively participate in the shaping

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[229] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program*, 73.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid., 74 and 82.
[232] Ibid., 82.

of their culture and communities.[233] The QEP explains that although these reading and writing competencies are described separately, they can only truly be developed in tandem.[234]

Although these competencies describe the essential developmental processes which will direct all students, they acknowledge that each child will ultimately follow their own path to becoming a reader/writer.[235] In this way, these two competencies are meant to start with the child, and then move forward at the pace of the child. Through the development of this competency, students should learn: to follow a process when writing or responding to read and listened to literary, popular, and information-based texts; to construct her/his own view of the world through reading/listening/writing a variety of texts; to construct and communicate meaning through the reading/writing process by applying appropriate reading/writing strategies; to gain knowledge from texts read/listened to, and integrate that knowledge into writing to construct a profile of self as reader/writer; to self-evaluate her/his reading/writing development.[236]

Through reading, viewing, and listening to books on a daily basis, the child should begin to construct meaning out of language. The same is said about writing. As the student progresses from writing only about what they feel is important to writing for a specific audience, s/he is better able to construct meaning from writing.[237] It is important to note that as the child is provided with various choices of reading/writing material, they are more likely to be interested and stimulated by this material when compared to being "forced" to read/write specific texts. In addition to this child-centered approach, it is

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[233] Ibid., 74 and 82.
[234] Ibid., 74.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid., 82.
[237] Ibid.

suggested that students should be provided with time for the social aspects of reading/writing - exploratory talk, sharing, collaboration, and discussion with their peers/teacher.[238] The more students talk about what they read/write, the better they come to understand it. Teachers should also spend time reading aloud a rich variety of texts to their students – exposing them to different types of writing. Of great importance is the creation of an environment that is supportive, and that promotes risk-taking and trial-and-error approaches to reading/writing strategies, as well as the interpretation of texts.[239] Considerable emphasis should be placed on student successes.[240] This allows students to feel at ease when trying new techniques, and will allow them to feel more confident about the whole process, and become much more independent.[241] Similarly, the more they read/write about different topics, the more they will begin to see themselves as "real" readers/writers.

Through the development of this competency, the child begins to acquire a collection of favourite texts, text types, and different reading/writing strategies that will help them to build their own reading/writing identity.[242] As students develop this competency, they also begin to gain increasing control over many different reading/writing strategies, and develop a better sense of understanding how, when and why they should use specific strategies. As they strengthen these skills, they are better able to derive meaning from the texts they read through a mixture of trial-and-error, teacher-guidance and self-reflection.[243] Ultimately, the student becomes a more critical reader/writer, as they move from responding only to what is relevant to them, to

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[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid., 74.
[240] Ibid., 82.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid., 74.
[243] Ibid.

eventually becoming more aware of other people's perspectives. As this progression occurs, and they develop a more critical attitude as a reader/writer; they begin to better understand the structures and features of texts, and how these structures shape its meaning. They also begin to be able to reveal the social and cultural values of a text and are able to connect it to the outside world. Finally, by the end of cycle three, the child should start to be able to "construct her/his own personal view of the world by comparing her/his own personal values and beliefs with those of the text."[244]

There is nothing inherently progressive about teaching students how to read and write. It is the way in which these competencies are developed in the classroom that have a number of progressive aspects. For instance, Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl's theories of education all focussed on child-centred classrooms, as they saw the great importance of adapting lessons, projects, and the classroom as a whole to the needs, abilities and interests of students. Similarly, a key aspect of the QEP's English Language Arts program is its child-centeredness. This can be seen by the very fact that they both begin with the individual child and then move forward according to their own abilities, allowing for differences. All four competencies are meant to begin with the child, and move forward at the pace of the child, focussing on their individual needs, as well as those of the group. Nowhere is this more important than in the reading and writing competencies, as not all children learn to read and write the same way, and/or at the same pace.[245] Even though lessons may sometimes be similar for all students within the class, the material that each child is reading/writing will ultimately coincide with and/or be adapted to their own level of literacy at that moment, and not some standardized level.

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[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid., 82.

This is particularly important, as the QEP is being implemented in the inclusive classrooms of Quebec, where students of different ability levels work together. The entire class can read/write biographies, but the books or pieces of writing can all be at different levels. As a result, there can be some cohesion within the group in terms of themes while still addressing the particular needs of each student. Although this differentiation may not always be possible, the teacher can provide various levels of aid in order to allow each student to feel comfortable with what they are being asked to do. Similarly, the fact that students are encouraged to construct their own reading/writing identity through the development of these competencies also points to its child-centered nature. A great deal of choice in reading/writing material is thus offered to the child throughout their elementary school education, allowing them to read/write what they find interesting, something that Kohl found incredibly important. Essentially, each student will have to follow their own path to learn to read/write and become confident, independent readers/writers, and therefore these processes are ultimately about them as individuals.

The actual focus that this program, and in particular these two competencies, put on literacy can also be seen as an important aspect of its progressive nature. Creating an ideal society was a key aspect of Dewey's notion of progressive education. It is no secret that literacy opens many doors for individuals. The reality is that the literacy rate in the province of Quebec is seven percent lower than the national average.[246,247] Would it not make sense for the government to put considerable focus on literacy in order to contribute

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[246] 55% of Quebec adults (16 or older) only scored at a level 1 or 2 for literacy, compared to the National average of 48%. Statistics Canada explains that "individuals who scored at the lowest level, Level 1, have limited abilities to locate, understand and use information, or to do simple, one-step numerical operations." Furthermore, "Level 3 is considered "the desired threshold for coping with the increasing skill demands of a knowledge society." Finally, in order to score at Level 5, the highest level, "respondents would have to understand complex representations, as well as abstract and formal statistical ideas."

[247] Statistics Canada, "International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003," *The Daily*, Wednesday November 9th, 2005, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/051109/dq051109a-eng.htm.

to the creation of what they believe to be an ideal society - one where individuals are all literate, and have the skills to play active roles in their communities? What better way to improve society than to produce active and critical readers and writers. By developing a generation of students to have strong literacy skills, we are ultimately ensuring the creation of a literate society. As a result, we are preparing young people to be able to play active roles in society - by helping to shape both their community and culture. Would this not help the entire province in the long run? Might this not suggest that the government is seeking to develop certain skills that will help create a more ideal society?

The Third English Language Arts Competency

The third ELA competency is: "to represent her/his literacy in different media".[248] Different media play a crucial role in the ELA program, as they provide an important opportunity for students to explore language across several types of modes of expression in addition to the traditional text media used in classrooms.[249] Similar to the reading/writing competencies, students are meant to learn how to follow a process to respond to media texts; construct her/his own view of the world through the media; apply appropriate strategies for constructing meaning; and self-evaluate her/his development as a viewer and producer of media texts. They are also supposed to learn to follow a production process in order to communicate for specific purposes to a specified audience.[250]

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[248] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program*, 91.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.

Various combinations of signs, logos, visuals, images and/or print are used to convey a message via media, and students must learn how and why these are used. These symbols, manifest as a speech bubble in a comic book or scary music in a television mystery, can create a language of their own.[251] As a result, this competency puts considerable focus on the "power of the communication process when it involves not only words, but also the language of visual communication or discourse."[252] It aims to teach students not only that these media have structure, but that different forms of media have specific qualities which can be used to identify them.[253] As the student begins to understand these structures and qualities better, they begin to appreciate why and how they are used, and in turn become better able to read and produce them themselves – a process called decoding and encoding.[254]

The QEP takes note that students enter the classroom with vast prior exposure to a variety of media. Much like the previous two competencies, the students themselves should therefore be the starting point from which to dive into this competency. The role of the teacher is to act as a guide, to help students build on their previous experience of the media, and to continue to broaden that experience throughout each of the three cycles.[255] As with reading and writing, the student begins by understanding the way they respond to various media, and then moves toward creating media texts based on their communication with their peers, family and teachers.[256] One of the important aspects of this competency is that students continuously produce and respond to media in collaboration with their classmates (using collaborative learning strategies). This allows

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[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid.

them to develop better understanding of how media works over time, encouraging them to adapt and manipulate the important structures and features of media to better convey their message.[257] It is hoped that by the third cycle, the student is able to begin creating media texts with a wider focus, where both interest and audience is concerned.[258]

Like the previous two, this competency also incorporates a child-centered approach to the importance of developing literate students for the greater social good. Interestingly, it does so by taking the focus off of the written word. It acknowledges that modern students spend much of their time outside of school playing video games, surfing the internet, watching television, reading comic books/magazines, playing with digital cameras, etc. This competency encourages teachers to incorporate the reality of the outside world within the curriculum. Students are able to connect their school lives with what they do outside of school. As alluded to in the previous chapter concerning Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl, this kind of horizontal integration of extra-scholastic and scholastic activities creates an important connection between what is learned in school with what is experienced in the life of the student. For instance, while learning about history or science, students can be encouraged to demonstrate their learning through different media. For example, they can create a short film about the history of their community; a webpage can be created to convey historical information about their school, picture books can be made to illustrate the lifecycle of a pumpkin for younger students, etc. The options are limitless.

By activities like the deconstruction of advertisements, students are guided through a process that encourages critical thinking. Fostering the ability to "dig deeper"

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[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid.

encourages and strengthens students understanding of the many influences of mass media on society at large. Acknowledging the importance of being media savvy is one way this ELA competency helps develop skills and attributes associated with the progressive goal of social responsibility.

The Fourth English Language Arts Competency

The fourth and final ELA competency is: "to use language to communicate and learn".[259] This competency is concerned with the manner in which language is used to make sense of our experiences. Through what we hear, read, view, talk about and think about, language is used to construct and convey meaning for all things encountered, helping to formulate our world view and define our place within it. Language is also the vehicle through which we explore our social roles within the larger community.[260] While developing this competency, students should learn to: use language (talk) for learning, thinking and communication; apply her/his knowledge of linguistic structures and features; interact in collaborative group activities in a variety of roles; and self-evaluate her/his language development.[261] Both social interaction and collaboration are seen as central tenets of language development and learning. It is explained that "learning is seen as essentially social: the student is guided into the language community and culture of her/his society through the social institutions established for this purpose, the school being the principal one for learning."[262]

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[259] Ibid., 99.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid., 100.
[262] Ibid., 99.

As a student works on developing this language competency, they will develop the Cross-Curricular competencies of "to cooperate with others", as teamwork is developed through collaborative work, and is essential to the language competency, as well as to the outside world.[263] In doing so, students learn to rise above differences in gender, culture and perceived social status by showing interest in and respecting other points of view, no matter how they may differ from their own.[264] The focus on language, communication and teamwork provides students with the skills and knowledge they need to begin to develop into lifelong learners – a fundamental aspect of the QEP.[265]

This competency explains that "audience" plays an important role in the development of all communication.[266] As students develop communication skills, they become increasingly aware of their audience, and how to produce texts of all sorts accordingly. By beginning with an audience made up of supportive and helpful peers, family and teachers, students are able to feel more confident about their work. The classroom that fosters language learning should be a place where everyone works collaboratively, under the guidance and support of the teacher. They explain that it should also be a place "where the student engages in a wide variety and range of learning situations which demand different uses of oral discourse; where the student experiences a wide range of text types: read, written, listened to, spoken, viewed, represented visually, and produced for specific audiences; and where written and visual discourses, e.g. stories, posters, are integral features of learning."[267]

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[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid.

Students use largely informal/unstructured language (talk) to communicate in and out of the classroom, they also explore new ways of expressing themselves. It is ultimately through this expression that they are able to derive meaning from their experiences. The strategies that they accumulate in this process allow them to take a more active role in group discussions, problem-solving activities and classroom drama activities, as they begin to use these strategies in an effective and purposeful manner.[268] While developing this competency, the student should begin to communicate clearly and appropriately, as well as begin to respond and support what others try to communicate. Through reading, writing, listening to, talking about, viewing and visually representing various texts, the student should be able to explore issues and topics that are significant to him/her.[269] As the student navigates through the three cycles of elementary school, they are confronted with increasingly more complex collaborative activities for which they need greater control of language processes and strategies. Through these situations, they should gain greater respect for the points of view of their peers, and even begin to adapt their own world view accordingly.[270]

Although the construction of meaning is an important aspect of each of the reading, writing and media literacy competencies, this fourth competency is the one that focuses the most on the process of constructing meaning. It is through use of language that students will be able to construct meaning from their experiences in and out of school. The construction of meaning is a crucial aspect of this competency, just as it was for the educational theories of Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Kohl. Dewey, specifically, felt strongly about the role of experience in education. What better way to make sense of all

[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.

of these experiences, than for the student to be able to express their own thoughts, ideas, views, feelings, etc. through language? As students develop these skills on both a personal and social level, they will be better prepared to begin to make sense of the larger world around them, ultimately contributing to the development of their own personal view of the world.

The fact that this competency focuses specifically on the social aspect of language is important. It is through the school that children are guided into the language community / culture of their society - a community of social and collaborative learning. Much like the ideas of Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl, there is great emphasis put on group work throughout the ELA program and especially in this particular competency. Mirroring society, collaborative learning enables and encourages talk, discussion and debate - it is a great method by which to develop language skills. Not only does this allow students to further develop their language and literacy skills, it teaches them valuable "teamwork" skills that are essential in today's job market. It provides teachers with the opportunity to make their classrooms "more responsive to the full range of learners,"[271] which complements the QEP's position on inclusive classrooms. This cooperative environment is important because it allows everyone in the class to "teach" in some manner. This mutually supportive learning environment provides an ideal classroom for students to build increased confidence in their knowledge and skills. The emphasis on group dynamics empowers students as they transition from the individualistic tendencies of early childhood to the collaborative reality of modern society. In this way, the ELA

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[271] Treasa Kirk, "Cooperative Learning: The Building Blocks," *Improving Schools* 4, no. 2 (2001): 28.

follows in the tradition of Dewey in using education as a way to model behaviours that are desired within the "ideal" society.[272]

Unifying Aspects of the English Language Arts Program

Now that we have explored the progressive aspects of each of the ELA competencies, there are several overarching aspects seen throughout the overall ELA program. These include, but are not limited to, the creation of a world-view, the connection between school and society, the de-emphasization of textbooks, the interdisciplinary approach to learning, and the use of portfolios.

The emphasis placed throughout the ELA section on the creation of a world-view and building a connection with society as a whole, echoes the notions of Dewey, Kilpatrick, Kohl, and many other progressives. The ELA program suggests that "it is through language that we develop our view of the world since words, beyond codes and rules, convey the singular nature of thought."[273] Language is the vehicle through which students can create meaning, and the primary way of exercising their voices as members of society. [274] Teachers are encouraged to use projects as a way to connect their students to both current events, and life around the world. For instance, projects like "Project Love", where students fund-raise, purchase school supplies, assemble kits, and write letters to children in developing countries in Africa and the Caribbean, are great ways of encouraging students to learn about the world, and feel that they can contribute and make

[272] Ibid.
[273] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program*. 70.
[274] Ibid.

a difference in the lives of other children.[275] These types of projects are similar to those Kilpatrick envisioned, as they lead to "purposeful activity", and encourage critical thinking. They also provide students the opportunity to translate academic knowledge (geography, history, mathematics, etc.) into positive social action (fundraising, building connections with students around the world, etc.).

As discussed in the previous chapter, Dewey discouraged teachers from putting too much emphasis on the use of textbooks. Although the ELA program does not specifically discuss the use of textbooks, its structure encourages teachers and students to use a variety of different materials. In fact, the traditional use of a single textbook would likely undermine the philosophy of the program, and make attainment of the individual competencies quite difficult.

A crucial aspect of this program is that all four competencies are meant to be developed together. They are all intertwined, and work best when addressed in that manner. In fact, the entire QEP is set up to be like that. Much like Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl envisioned, topics or themes are meant to be explored in a natural manner, and therefore address a variety of different subject areas. Without this natural integration, students are left with mere pieces that do not mean very much alone, and cannot be readily connected to the outside world. It is only when they are explored and studied in a natural, integrated way that they can become truly significant. In this way, this exploration becomes actual experiences, and not simply mere lessons. It is ultimately these experiences that contribute to the actual growth of the student.

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[275] "Project Love," *Code*, http://codecan.org/en/get-involved/project-love.

The use of a portfolio for each student throughout the three elementary school cycles is an integral part of the ELA program. These portfolios are for both assessment and evaluation purposes, and should contain various samples of the student's work that demonstrate the development of each of the competencies.[276] These might include: reading/writing/media samples, responses, drawings, presentations of group work or role-plays, notes on group discussions and/or problem solving, samples of classroom drama activities, notes on effective reading/writing strategies, preferences, self-evaluations, reflections, personal and group goals, etc. [277] In keeping with the tradition of progressive education, portfolios are meant to allow the student to track their own development in each of the ELA competencies, throughout each of the cycles. This provides students with more control over their learning process and the ability to set appropriate goals for themselves.[278] Portfolios are also a great tool for self-evaluation, and encourage considerable reflection, not only on the part of the student, but also the teacher.

The use of portfolios as a tool for evaluation, self-evaluation and goal setting, provides the student with additional autonomy, and allows them to take increased control over their learning. Through the use of portfolios, students are able to make valuable decisions about what pieces of work should be included, and as a result evaluated. They know more than anyone what work they put their hearts into, and are proud of. They are also well aware of what they need to improve on, and tend to be quite honest about it. By playing a key role in their own evaluation, students are better able to set new, realistic goals for themselves as well. Reflection plays an important role in this process, and is a

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[276] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program*, 74.
[277] Ibid., 74, 91 and 99.
[278] Ibid., 91 and 99.

great skill to learn. In fact, Kohl strongly believed in self-evaluation mainly because it not only allows, but also encourages students to reflect on their own work.

Classroom Example: An Olympic Effort

Now that the basics of the English Language Arts program have been laid out, and each of the competencies has been clarified, it is important to explore to how all of this plays out in an actual classroom. Consider the following example – used in a cycle two homeroom during the 2006 winter Olympics - which depicts one way that the four ELA competencies can be developed within the classroom.

This lesson began with a discussion about the events and countries that are involved in the Olympics. Following this, the class completed a "K-W-L" chart together. A "K-W-L" chart allows a group of people to chart what they already know (K), what they want to learn (W), and then at the end, what they have learned (L). Some students wanted to learn more about the history of the Olympics, and why and how it started; others wanted to discover more about the different events and how athletes train for their sports. Once they had collected a sizable amount of questions and topics for further inquiry and research, the teacher broke the students up into groups, allowing each group to choose a different question/topic that they would research. The students were expected to present to the class towards the end of the unit.

Since these projects were done in groups, students continuously developed their teamwork skills, and were encouraged to work on the projects both inside and outside of school. Through this portion of the project, students successfully developed several ELA

competencies. They developed their writing and reading skills, and strengthened their communication skills. Students used a variety of types of media in order to complete these projects – computers, books, the internet, magazines, newspaper articles, television, radio, etc. The projects also allowed for considerable integration of various other school subjects, as students researched historical facts, used mathematics for dates and figures, explored geography as they researched different countries, as well as various cities and areas within Canada.

The students also wrote letters to some of the Canadian athletes after the teacher had set aside some class time to teach the specifics of letter writing (structure, language, audience, etc). This activity provided students with the opportunity to learn how to write a proper letter, as well as to edit each other's letters, allowing them to work collaboratively towards a common goal. This activity gave students the opportunity to develop their writing competency, as well as their communication competency. The students soon developed interest in some of the countries represented at the Olympic Games. They worked in pairs, to choose a country, locate it on a map of the world, do some basic research on the country, and compile a list of some of the athletes that were taking part in the Games from that country. They were asked to re-create the flag of that country, and all the flags were displayed in the foyer of the school. This allowed students to explore aspects of geography, history, art, and math, while still developing their reading, writing and communication competencies.

Students were asked to bring in an advertisement about the Olympics. Advertisements in hand, they broke off into groups, and were asked to critically analyze/dissect them. They reported on the colors, words/sayings, pictures, etc being used

by their advertisements, and brainstormed about why all of these aspects were used and what effect they might have on the intended audience. They were then tasked with creating their own advertisement for the Olympics, employing some of the techniques that had been discussed. They were allowed to use any type of media, and were encouraged to be creative. The advertisements were presented to the class, and then displayed on parent's night. This activity addressed the media competency of the ELA program, as well as requiring students to think critically about the different aspects of the advertisement. By having student create their own advertisement, they were required to continue to think critically, and actually employ the techniques that they learned about.

After this lesson, the teacher read students the biography of Sylvie Fréchette, an Olympic synchronized swimmer from Montreal, Qc. They discussed the story as a class, and then were each given one of 7 biographies on other Canadian athletes and were asked to read their biography and write down 5 points about the athlete that they felt were important. They informally presented these character traits to the class. Various other biographies were also put into the class library, and students were encouraged to read them during "free-read" time. This activity addressed the reading competency of the ELA program, and continued to develop the writing and communicating competencies.

Finally, students were asked to invent a new Olympic sport in small groups. Gym time was allocated in order for them to work out the details of their sports, and the class voted on their top 3. With the help of the gym teacher, and if feasible, some of the winning sports were attempted by the class as a whole later that week. This activity encouraged students to use their imagination, and provided practice in expressing their ideas both in writing and orally to the class. Not only was the gym component a great

reward for all of their hard work, but it also allowed students to think through their ideas, and ensure that they were practical.

To end the unit, students got the chance to present their projects to their classmates, as well as some special guests (the principal, secretary, and some parents and teachers). They set up their projects, and were given the opportunity to discuss what they researched and learned about with those present. The initial K-W-L chart was revisited and the students were able to self-evaluate whether they had attained their self-set learning goals. Even though most parts began with a short "whole class" discussion, they allowed for students to work on them at different times throughout the unit. The teacher posted deadlines and requirements for each of them, and students were free to work on them with their groups/partners as needed. In this way, much time was spent with different students working on different components all at once. Students, therefore, had a great degree of freedom as to what they wanted to work on and when.

This example demonstrates how the manifestation of the ELA program can take shape in the classroom. This example demonstrates many progressive notions previously mentioned and serves as an illustration of Kilpatrick's "wholehearted purposeful activity" as students are free to choose their own topics, and explore aspects of the theme that they find to be compelling. Although some aspects of this unit are meant to be individual, others are meant to be completed in small groups, and others still are to be done as a class. This allows for a variety of experiences, and is a little more realistic given present class sizes. Furthermore, in the tradition of Dewey and Kilpatrick, this program aims to provide students with considerable opportunity to combine thinking and doing. In essence, much of the time is spent by students "learning through doing". Whether

students are learning to write a letter through the process of writing a letter or they are learning to think critically about advertisements through the creation of an ad, students are learning through doing.

By beginning the project with the K-W-L chart, students are able to reflect on what they already know, and are able to set goals for what they hope to learn and achieve through this unit. This allows them to play a more central role in the learning process, while still remaining under the guidance of the teacher. This unit also demonstrates the development and incorporation of basic skills through larger projects, something that Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl felt was imperative. This allows for learning to occur more naturally, and to flow from large themes or questions, rather than just from isolated topics. Finally, the project provides a "flow" between lessons and activities, and allows language to be taught in a very natural manner, encouraging the child's desire to communicate, a feature of progressive education that Dewey emphasized.

Conclusion

There are multiple subjects (mathematics, languages, science and technology, social sciences, arts education and personal development) addressed in detail by the QEP. In this chapter, the ELA section of the Language subject was analyzed through a discussion of the concept of competencies central to this reform. Though a global child-centered and interdisciplinary approach is key to the ELA curriculum, the focus on individual competencies provides operational guidelines on how best to fulfill these goals. The four major competencies explored in this chapter are (a) to read and listen to a

variety of texts, (b) to write self-expressive / narrative / information-based texts, (c) to represent literacy in different media, and (d) to use language to communicate and learn. Each competency overlaps and is interconnected within the ELA section and across the QEP in general. In this chapter, a detailed discussion of each competency, its structure and potential implementation through the use of classroom examples was undertaken. The relationship between these competencies and the theories of progressive education advanced by Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Kohl was also addressed. The themes of child-centeredness and democratic education were particularly emphasized in the ELA section and highlighted in this chapter. Although this program is not quite the vision that Dewey had for progressive education, it does address a number of the issues that he raised about education. It borrows a number of ideas from Dewey, as well as Kilpatrick and Kohl, adds to them notions from modern educational research, and applies them accordingly in the classroom.

There is no doubt that a number of progressive notions run throughout this program. The nature of educational progressivism is that it adapts curricula to the students, as opposed to following a predetermined formula and adapting students to the curricula. This makes it less likely for education to be stagnant, as being child-centered forces the incorporation of current realities into the classroom. This ensures that formal education remains current with the difficult to foresee shifts in social norms and expectations. One of the progressive strengths of the QEP is that it focuses on these child-centered approaches, ensuring that the scholastic experience remains pertinent to students and society. Another progressive strength is that the QEP emphasizes the social aspects of learning (collaborative work) that provides students with tangible skill sets regardless

of changing social expectations. The QEP supports the growth of "intrinsic faculties": the ability to self-evaluate, the ability to think critically, the self-discipline to work in groups, etc. These differ from traditional curricula that measure success through extrinsic markers such as repetition and reproduction. The QEP is progressive because it focuses on personal and interpersonal development in an effort to foster active citizens. The QEP is progressive because it heralds a paradigm shift from rewarding individual excellence at the expense of collaborative work toward nurturing the skills required for substantive individual and social progress. In this sense, the QEP does in fact live up to the "dream" Dewey had for progressive education, and perhaps even goes a step farther. Not only does the QEP ensure that students learn the skills they will need to change society, it ensures the development of skills needed to determine what needs to-be changed in order to positively reform society. In this way, students themselves can take on the responsibility of creating their "ideal" society. Since the ELA program constitutes up to 35% of the entire curriculum in English elementary schools, and also provides students with a language base to be able to study other subjects, it can be argued that it is indeed one of the most important school subjects for students of English Elementary schools.[279] As such, the progressive methods that have been employed to teach students how to use language, with their main focus on the process of learning, and not the end result, are of great importance. It is hoped that students will not only learn a language but become lifelong learners who will be more able to adapt to an ever-changing world.

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[279] Henchey, "The new Curriculum Reform: What does it really mean?" 3.

Now that we have seen that the ELA program of the QEP is firmly rooted in the philosophies of progressive education, we now turn our attention to the controversial evaluation and reporting processes set out by the Ministry of Education. This upcoming discussion will explore whether or not the evaluation techniques of the QEP are in accordance with its otherwise progressive nature.

Chapter 4

Is the QEP Consistently Progressive? The Case of Evaluation

The preceding chapters have outlined the principles of progressive education and established how the QEP – and the ELA program in particular – is firmly rooted within the context of progressive education. The majority of this discussion, however, has centered on how the themes of progressivism have impacted the restructuring and implementation of curricular reform in Quebec. This chapter's goal will be to continue to address how the QEP is progressive by analyzing whether or not its evaluation methodology is consistent with progressive ideology. Once again, the English Language Arts program of the QEP will be used to illustrate the majority of these principles. The chapter begins with an explanation of the specific evaluation criteria for each competency within the ELA program as well as the expectation to use these criteria to evaluate students across their cycles. Emphasis will be placed on the use of portfolios as a means of assessment within the QEP and the active role of students in their own evaluation will be highlighted.

The chapter will then move on to a discussion about "end-of-cycle" exams, and how they are not as consistent with the principles of progressive education as portfolios are. This departure from progressivism is most easily evidenced when comparing exams between easily standardizable subjects such as mathematics and traditionally subjective disciplines such as the language arts. As a result, these two examples – mathematics and language arts – will be used to illustrate how the QEP succeeds in reinforcing a student-centered interest-oriented approach to language arts but falls short of this ideal within the

realm of mathematics. The QEP's self-progress oriented Language Arts exam supports the progressive philosophy of education, while the standardized goal-oriented mathematics exam does not accomplish this.

Finally, this chapter will address the report cards, and their deviation from the progressive nature of the Quebec Education Program. This section will discuss what the report card was meant to look like, as well as the changes that have occurred. It will also explore why this "official" reporting system does not coincide with progressivism.

What is Being Evaluated

Before delving into the mechanics of how evaluation takes place, it is important to discuss what is supposed to be evaluated according to the QEP. For each competency of the QEP – regardless of the subject - there is a corresponding section dedicated to its evaluation. This is where the criteria that are to be evaluated according to each cycle are provided. First, the "evaluation criteria" for each competency are presented. These state what students should be doing by the end of any given cycle. The "End-of-Cycle Outcomes" explain the context within which students should be able to do each of the elements of the criteria being evaluated. As a result, the evaluation of each of the four ELA competencies echoes the basic aim of that competency. In the ELA section of the QEP, there is an extra component – the "Essential Knowledges" – where the processes, strategies, skills and understandings that are fundamental to literacy development are listed. These are aspects that each student should have developed by the end of each cycle, and read almost like a checklist that teachers can use to evaluate the overall

development of each student, as well as a guide to what skills need to be developed along the way.

If we use ELA competency #1 as an example – "To read and listen to literary, popular and information-based texts" – then by the end of cycle one, students should have "develop[ed] a range of favourite text types from which s/he constructs meaning", "develop[ed] and use[d] a repertoire of meaning-making strategies", "[began] to acknowledge and support different interpretations of the same text", "[began] to identify some structures and features of text type", "talk[ed] about self as reader", and "[began] to discuss own progress in reading with reference to work selected from ELA integrated portfolio".[280] Accordingly, these build and become more complex as the student moves through each of the three cycles of elementary school. The "End-of-Cycle Outcomes" for this competency describes how each of these should be taking place, and to some extent the role that the student should be playing in their own assessment.

The Evaluation Process

In light of the multiple changes to elementary school curricula, one might suspect there to have been serious changes to the process of evaluation as well. Indeed, there has been a so-called overall change in mind-set from "learning in order to be evaluated" to being evaluated in order to learn more effectively. The QEP also attempts to integrate research identifying the limitations of traditional evaluation models within the reform. A potential shortcoming is that the reform's new philosophy of evaluation is not met with a

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[280] Ibid., 75.

concrete change in evaluation methodology.[281] Apart from some direction surrounding

the use of integrated ELA portfolios and the role that the student should be playing in

their own evaluation, the QEP itself does not touch on how students should be evaluated.

The QEP simply states the criteria that students should have mastered by the end of each

cycle, and in what context it should have happened. In 2003, however, the Ministry of

Education produced the "Policy on the Evaluation of Learning", to address the process of

evaluation of students. In that document, the Ministry presents a unified vision of

evaluation. The need for updating of evaluation through "greater integration of evaluation

into educational activities" is advanced.[282] It is believed that this new vision of evaluation

will help students learn more effectively, as it provides students with support for

learning.[283] As well, since the new curriculum views learning as the development of

competencies, evaluation should now also be based on these competencies.[284] As a result,

"evaluation situations must help to verify to what extent students can effectively mobilize

the resources required to apply the competencies in a variety of situations."[285] Despite

providing a vision for the evaluation of students, this document also fails to concretely

explain how evaluation should take place in the actual classroom, leaving it up to

teachers and administrators to make these decisions. The latitude in assessment and

evaluation processes puts the onus on teachers to develop appropriate evaluation systems.

Though the goal is likely to have teachers formulate systems based on the needs of their

students, there are no safeguards limiting the use of traditional methods of evaluation. As

a result, the door is left open for teachers to continue with methods that they may feel

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[281] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*, 11-12.

[282] Ibid., introduction.
[283] Ibid., 12 and 27.
[284] Ibid., 33.
[285] Ibid., 35.

more comfortable with, having used them for many years. Tests, for instance, require a lot less time and effort than do more progressive, on-going evaluation techniques. The danger is that by focusing strongly on the end result rather than on the progress a student is making, traditional methods often do not properly evaluate students according to the new curriculum. The QEP does, however, advance the idea of portfolios as an assessment and evaluation tool consistent with the progressive principles of the reform and the following section will elaborate on the use of portfolios within this context.

Portfolios

Part of the new vision addressed by the Ministry of Education's "Policy on the Evaluation of Learning" is that students should become more involved in the evaluation process, allowing them to become more autonomous and accountable.[286] Portfolios are one of the ways in which students are able to take on this more active role. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ELA program encourages teachers and students to use portfolios as a form of evaluation. A portfolio is basically "a record of the child's process of learning: what the child has learned and how she has gone about learning; how she thinks, questions, analyzes, synthesizes, produces, creates; and how she interacts – intellectually, emotionally and socially – with others."[287] Through the use of portfolios, students begin to better understand their learning, as they play direct and meaningful roles in their own evaluations. An important aspect of portfolio assessment is that the focus is on the child's success, not their failures. Furthermore, not only does this

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[286] Ibid., 16.
[287] Cathy Grace, "The Portfolio and Its Use: Developmentally Appropriate Assessment of Young Children." *ERIC Digest*, 1992, http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-1/use.htm.

formative and authentic assessment tool respect individuality and diversity, but it also avoids negative labelling by focussing on what the child can accomplish and not on their shortcomings. It is also easily applicable to the integration of students with special needs.[288] Portfolios value reflective processes as well as critical thinking and are consistent with the values of progressive education. Similarly, they also put emphasis on the process of learning, not just the products of learning.[289] Throughout each cycle, students are expected to collect their work, select the pieces they are most proud of to add to their portfolio, and reflect on those pieces. This gives students the opportunity to think critically about the work they have done and the progress they have made throughout each term. Then, along with the teacher, students are able to discuss both their work and their progress. It is through these discussions between student and teacher that another important feature of evaluation through the use of portfolios comes to light – goal setting.

With guidance provided by the teacher via these student-teacher conferences, students are given the opportunity to discuss and set appropriate goals for themselves. Each term, as students reflect on their work, they are expected to set goals based upon the interval progress they have achieved. This allows students to take charge of their own learning, and engages students by encouraging them to challenge themselves along the way. Once all of these components have been completed and recorded, teachers are ultimately responsible to evaluate the portfolios. The focus during this process is always to compare the student's most recent works to their earlier work, and to resist the traditional temptation to compare it to other students' accomplishments. Grace notes that

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[288] Sue Martin, "Portfolios: Philosophy, Problems and Practice," *LEARN*, http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/pedagogy/portfolio/general/theory.html.
[289] Ibid.

"evaluation should indicate the child's progress toward a standard of performance that is consistent with the teacher's curriculum and appropriate developmental expectations."[290]

As we have seen, the ELA program incorporates the use of an "integrated ELA portfolio" into the actual description of each competency. However, it is the only subject that does so. Although the use of portfolios may be encouraged by administrators and school board consultants, the QEP document does not make mention of portfolios for any other subjects. As a result, it is left to the teacher to decide to use them for other subjects, or simply use them for the ELA program. Despite the portfolio being a novel assessment and evaluation tool that coincides with many of the progressive ideals discussed in the previous chapters, the fact that their use is not advocated elsewhere is questionable. Since portfolios are a great way for both students and teachers to concretely track student progress throughout each cycle, they would likely be of great value for each and every subject. Furthermore, portfolios provide a potentially more accurate indication of competency development than would traditional examination-based evaluation, as they document the progress of a student's development rather than a single point-in-time evaluation.

Provincial "End of Cycle" Exams

The use of portfolios for assessment clearly echoes some of the important elements of progressive education - learner-centered approach, use of self-evaluation, reflection and goal-setting, etc. The progressive characteristics of "End of Cycle" exams

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[290] Grace, "The Portfolio and Its Use," 1.

mandated by the Ministry of Education, however, are not so clear cut. At the end of cycle three, all students in English Elementary schools are required to sit the English Language Arts and Mathematics exams, which are designed to "assess the extent to which students across Quebec have acquired the expected knowledge and competencies stated in the Quebec Education Program."[291] The ELA exam is considered to be a "LES" or "Learning and Evaluation Situation" and is said to not be "an examination in the traditional sense of the word."[292] The Ministry explains that "it should be clear that the purpose of this LES is to evaluate English Language Arts competencies and not to evaluate knowledge."[293] It is designed to "verify the level at which students have developed the competencies according to the outcomes prescribed by the education program...They make it possible to verify to what extent students are able to mobilize the resources, including knowledge, that the competency requires."[294] The Ministry of Education has made considerable effort to make these ELA exams consistent with the principles of the QEP by introducing multi-dimensional aspects including collaborative group work and classroom discussion into these assessments. For instance, in the June 2009 Cycle three ELA exam, there are several activities that call for group work. One of these group activities – "First Impressions" - requires groups of four students to look at a photograph and discuss their first impressions of the character in their photo (who they might be, what they might be like, what they might be saying, etc.). Once they have discussed amongst themselves and recorded their thoughts, each group is asked to present their recorded responses to the

[291] Ministère de l'Éducation, *The Quebec Education Program: Elementary Cycle One: Information for Parents* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2001): 12.
[292] Ministère de l'Éducation, *English Language Arts Cycle 3 - Compulsory Examination* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2009): 3.
[293] Ibid., 1.
[294] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Policy of the Evaluation of Learning*, 38-39.

class. Later on in the exam, students are asked to choose one of these photos to use as inspiration for a piece of writing (see appendix).

The End of Cycle Mathematics exam differs from the ELA end of cycle exam in that it is structured similarly to traditional standardized assessment tools. This type of examination, where students' knowledge bases are compared to a preset standard, is at odds with the progressive nature of the ELA exam and the QEP in general. Despite an effort to embrace progressive ideals through the use of "real-life" situational problems which require students to have attained cycle-appropriate language comprehension and arrive at often multi-step solutions instead of simply computing an answer, the bottom line is that only the "correct" answer can get full marks. The end of cycle mathematics exam focuses on the evaluation of an end point result and does little to acknowledge the potential progress achieved by students throughout the cycle. This exam does not compare a student's achievement over the continuum of their cycle but rather compares their current level of achievement to a standard goal. In this way, this exam seems to herald back to the principles of traditional education where-by all students are expected to produce the same work at the same rate.

What is important to note is that at the present time these elementary school "end of cycle" exams are not used to decide whether a student passes or fails the cycle. Instead they are used by teachers as one element to consider in the final mark the student is awarded for that subject. The use of standardized testing raises several concerns, including the possibility of teachers "teaching to the test" which might compromise the overall learning of students. Some may argue whether or not these examinations accurately assess the knowledge and abilities of our students. When students are expected

to spend 10 or more hours taking these exams, might "testing anxiety" or lack of test-taking skills interfere with what these exams are designed to measure? Do they accurately measure a student's mastery of the competencies for that given subject? More importantly, are these exams really the best way to assess student knowledge or student learning?

Report Cards

Perhaps another departure from the progressive nature of the QEP is the often contentious issue of reporting evaluation results through report cards. Not only do more "traditional" reporting methods - like report cards - continue to persist, they also continue to be regarded as the "official" statement of academic achievement.[295] According to the Ministry of Education, evaluation has two main purposes – support for learning and recognition of competencies.[296] They also explain that the evaluation to recognize competencies "cannot be qualified as summative given that it does not relate to the sum of evaluation results accumulated during a given period...the goal of evaluation with a view of recognizing competencies is to verify whether the expected level of competency development has been attained."[297] Furthermore, the Ministry of Education suggested that, "in order to be consistent with the orientations of the reform, the report card must be descriptive and emphasize qualitative results expressed as ratings (e.g. A, B, C, D). Depending on the needs of the school's community, results may also be expressed as

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[295] Ministère de l'Éducation. *The Quebec Education Program: Elementary Cycle One: Information for Parents*, 11.
[296] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Policy of the Evaluation of Learning*, 11.
[297] Ibid.

grades at the end of a cycle."[298] As a result, in 2000, the government moved to make report cards better reflect the new curriculum, and replaced percentage grades with a 1-4 scale, where 4 indicated "above expectation".[299]

However, as discussed in chapter one, pressure from the public, has since led to changes in the way that evaluation data is conveyed via report cards which has indirectly translated into a weaker overall implementation of the progressive ideals of the reform.[300] Parents complained that report cards were confusing, should contain "simpler vocabulary", and should return to the use of percentage grades.[301] As a result, "after years of complaints...Quebec has backed away from an unpopular curriculum reform and will reintroduce percentage grades for students."[302]

Since 2007 as a result of this pressure, teachers are required to enter a percentage grade for each of the competencies, for each term, and not only at the end of the cycle.[303] The report card also provides a "subject result" (ex. ELA or Mathematics) for each term, which is which is a composite percentage score calculated according to the weight that each competency holds within that subject.[304] The inclusion of "class averages" in report cards suggests that despite claims to the contrary, teachers and administrators are in fact comparing one student to the next and basing their performance on the success or failure of other students. The Ministry of Education notes, "comparing results of a student to those of other students in his or her class does not have an important role in evaluation that aims primarily to support learning by providing information on student progress,

[298] Ibid., 41.
[299] "Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards," *CBC News.*
[300] "Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards," *CBC News.*
[301] Ibid.
[302] "Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards," *CBC News.*
[303] Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers, "Modifications to Report Cards and Competency Reports: September 2007," *QPAT,* http://qpat-apeq.qc.ca/corporatif/english/common/English%20Publications%202007/Modifications%20to%20Report%20Cards.pdf.
[304] Ibid.

achievements and difficulties, so that students can adjust their learning process."[305]

Contrary to the QEP's student-centered approach, where by each student is working at their own pace to develop the set competencies, these class averages ignore the progress made by students as they simply report their academic standing as a function of their classmates achievements. Given this fact, are we really measuring their level of competency development or have we reverted back to more traditional ways of evaluating in order to better meet the public's requirements of the reporting system? Since a competency is "the capacity to carry out activities or tasks by drawing on a variety of resources, including knowledge, skills, strategies, techniques, attitudes and perceptions,"[306] can these really translate into a specific percentage that actually expresses student learning or achievement? —

Conclusion

This chapter has continued to address how the QEP is progressive by analyzing its evaluation methodology in an effort to ascertain whether it is consistent with progressive ideology. Once again using the English Language Arts program of the QEP, the chapter began by explaining the specific evaluation criteria for each competency. Next, the use of portfolios as a means of assessment within the QEP was discussed with emphasis placed on how they require students to play an active role in their own evaluation. Subsequently, "end-of-cycle" exams and how they are not as consistent with the principles of progressive education as assessment and evaluation via portfolios was discussed. By

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[305] Ministère de l'Éducation, *Policy of the Evaluation of Learning*, 29.
[306] Ibid., 3.

comparing English Language Arts with Mathematics – an easily standardizable subject –
this chapter attempted to illustrate the self-progress oriented language arts exam supports
the progressive philosophy of education, while the standardized goal-oriented
mathematics exam falls short of this goal. Finally, this chapter addressed the report cards,
and their deviation from the progressive nature of the Quebec Education Program.
Through a discussion of the vision of this reporting device as well as the public pressure
induced changes that occurred, this chapter explored the current reality of report cards,
and their lack of cohesion with the vision of the QEP.

In the end, although some steps have been taken to make the processes of evaluation
and reporting coincide with the values of the QEP, there remain considerable points of
contention. Until all aspects of evaluation and the "official" reporting tools convey the
same values as the curriculum does, they will continue to fall short, and will ultimately
not truly reflect student progress and achievement. As long as percentage grades are part
of the report cards, they will become the focus of achievement in lieu of the individual
progress being made. Teachers will likely turn to easier, less time-consuming methods of
evaluation which include traditional testing methods that stress numerical results rather
than qualitative ones. With a cynical mindset, it is difficult to imagine any added value to
spending hours evaluating a student's progress throughout the term, when the student's
achievement will eventually be reduced to a percentage grade. It would be a lot easier
simply to test them, and add up all of their tests for their end result. However, this does
not convey the progress made by the student throughout the term, and downplays the
learning process in favour of the end result. Similarly, students themselves will
eventually place more emphasis on grade-point achievement in favour of what they are

actually learning. This inevitably leads to student's measuring their academic abilities by comparing their grades to those of the rest of the class. As the entire process of development is narrowed down to one numerical grade, the overall process of learning is no longer taken into account. Furthermore, this focus on the end result seems rather counter-intuitive for a curriculum that focuses on the development of competencies, as well as the development of lifelong learners.

Chapter 5

Concluding Statements

This paper has attempted to explore the progressive elements of the QEP and answer the question, "is the QEP progressive?" The first chapter, "The Quebec Education Program – A Brief Survey of its History, Philosophical Underpinnings and Contentious Implementation", addressed the historical context of the reform and the shift in Quebec's educational system from a church-centered confessional system to a secular, state-run institution. It began with a brief overview of religious education in Quebec from its nineteenth century faith-based origins to its eventual fracture along linguistic lines into English and French systems in 1939. The disparities between these two educational systems were identified through the Royal Commission of 1953 and resulted in the creation of the 'Grande Charte de l'Éducation' – recognizing the intrinsic right to free education for every child. It also mandated the creation of the Parent Commission that established a secular and state-sanctioned Ministry of Education (MEQ) to govern Quebec's school systems.

The result of these mid-twentieth century actions was the modernization and steps toward the democraticization of Quebec's educational system. Increasing enrolment in schools and a shift toward more student-centered pedagogical approaches were clear indicators of the Parent Commission's early success. Despite these positive changes, it was also evident that curricular reform lagged behind this institutional reform. The first chapter discusses the MEQ's response to these criticisms in the form of the 1988 Education Act as well as the incremental policy changes advanced by a series of

reforms/committees including 1991's "Education: Driving our Future", 1992's "Plan of action – Joining Forces", and 1997's "Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools". These documents suggest that Quebec's education system was not adequately preparing students for entry into the reality of a rapidly changing world. A discussion of these documents throughout the first chapter firmly establishes the historical context in which the 1997 Quebec Education Plan (QEP) was developed.

The basic structure of the new program was also introduced in the first chapter. The new competency based approach to learning/teaching as well as the introduction of cycles and the integration of academic and social contexts within the classroom were presented. A practical example was provided to illustrate the QEP and the "freedom of implementation" within the classroom as well as the importance of academic and social interdisciplinary success. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the controversy that surrounded the implementation of the QEP. By focussing on some of the main criticisms of the program some of the key departures from existing curricula were identified.

Chapter Two, "What is Progressive Education?" begins with a brief overview of the main historical trends in North American progressive education. Three main educational philosophers were presented in this overview; John Dewey, William Kilpatrick and Herbert Kohl. The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, John Dewey's pilot school for the practical assessment of curricular reform, is referenced in this section. Focussing on the role of experience within education, student-centered curriculum and preparation for democratic life, his school continues to serve as the foundation of modern progressivism. Similarly, this chapter explored Dewey's belief that intelligent action and

growth define education, and felt that cooperative learning was important. It also

addressed his feeling that static and pre-set curricula plagued traditional education.

After an in-depth analysis of Dewey's principles of progressivism, the "Project

Method" of William Kilpatrick, was introduced. His child-centered approaches to

learning through projects that are based on individual interests were designed to build on

the knowledge and experiences of students by directing development and creating

educative experiences. This element of building upon student centered experiences

continues to be an important element of progressivism. The latter part of the chapter was

dedicated to Herbert Kohl's theory of "Open Education". Again, emphasis was placed on

its child-centered theory whereby students play active roles within their educational

process. Kohl's theory focuses on the individual abilities of students, and allows them to

work at their own pace and according to their own interests. Important aspects of

progressivism such as the connection between the classroom and social reality, and

"learning by doing" are also explored throughout this chapter. Overall, this chapter aimed

to acknowledge the unifying theme for these three pivotal educational philosophers – to

create classrooms that better addressed the needs of students. All three supported the

notion of "learning by doing" and the integration of various school subjects by focussing

on certain projects or themes. Although different, they all agreed that child-centered,

cooperative, interdisciplinary learning that not only valued, but also emphasized the

connection between school and society, was the way to accomplish this goal.

With the central tenets of progressivism - child-centered and cooperative

interdisciplinary learning environments – firmly established, Chapter Three, "How is the

QEP progressive? The case of Elementary English", was dedicated to the exploration of

the English Language Arts program within the QEP. This chapter began with a discussion about the basic structure of the ELA program, focussing on each of the four competencies - (a) to read and listen to a variety of texts, (b) to write self-expressive / narrative / information-based texts, (c) to represent literacy in different media, and (d) to use language to communicate and learn. A large portion of the discussion of these competencies was centered on the role of media competency was a way of connecting the lives of students outside of school with their experiences within school. In a reflection of Dewey's principles, the QEP's focus on teaching students to think critically in order to better society as a whole is also addressed.

Chapter three also discussed the use of cycles, integrated learning methods, and its connection to society. The inclusion of a practical classroom example (Winter Olympics) occupied a substantial portion of this chapter. It reinforced several of the key progressive concepts of the ELA portion of the QEP. The emphasis on "non-linear" project progression (i.e. having multiple segments of the project running concurrently) emphasized the connection to fast-paced real-life problem solving situations. The heavy reliance on cooperative work including group and peer editing underlined the importance of continuously developing teamwork skills. Perhaps most importantly, the interdisciplinary scope of this example project clearly supports the QEP and the progressive goals of developing cross-curricular competencies.

In addition to providing a real life example of its implementation, the goal of this chapter was to establish strong links between the ideals of progressive education and the use of these ELA competencies through various classroom examples. The chapter focussed on themes such as integration, child-centeredness, the social aspects of learning,

critical thinking, connection to society and democratic education. Furthermore, these themes were used to relate the overall program to the theories of progressive education advanced by Dewey, Kilpatrick and Kohl. Although the ELA program is not exactly what Dewey had in mind for progressive education, it does address a number of his concerns. In addition, it borrows a number of notions from him, as well as Kilpatrick and Kohl, and adds to them current educational research.

The fourth chapter, "Is the QEP Consistently Progressive? The Case of Evaluation," continues to evaluate the progressiveness of the QEP, by exploring some of the important elements of the evaluation system. This chapter was aimed at investigating whether or not the evaluation and reporting methods of the reform were consistent with the progressive aspirations of the program itself. Paralleling the structure of the previous chapter, this one began by exploring the evaluation criteria of each of the competencies of the ELA program. The focuses then shifted to the use of portfolios in assessment and evaluation, and in particular on how these portfolios allow students to play active roles in their own evaluation and education.

The progressive background of portfolio-based assessment and evaluation was then contrasted with the compulsory "end of cycle" ELA and Mathematics exams. Despite intentions to align these examinations with the overarching principles of the QEP, they remain inconsistent with the progressive ideas of the reform. This discussion looked at the differences between the ELA and Mathematics exams, and how the ELA exam seems to succeed in reinforcing at least some of the progressive principles of the QEP, while the Mathematics exam does not. Finally, this chapter addressed the contentious issue of report cards, and how they deviate from the progressive nature of the QEP. Through the

exploration of this reporting device, as well as the changes in the reporting process implemented by the MEQ, this section's goal was to demonstrate how the "official" report system does not accurately communicate the progressive values of the QEP, and falls short of accurately reflecting student progress and achievement.

Further Research

Although this paper has attempted to draw conclusions about the progressive nature of the Quebec Education Program, it is an overview of only a small segment of the research surrounding the reform. The goal remains that with a stronger grasp on the underlying educational philosophies of this reform; perhaps we as educators may move forward and fully embrace this program. There is significant research that remains to be done in the area.

For instance, to what extent has lack of funding and education played a role in impairing the implementation of the Quebec Education Program? It would be pertinent to know how whether there was enough funding and education made available for the implementation of this program. If more funding were available, then perhaps more training may have been offered to teachers, allowing them to be better prepared to change their teaching and evaluation methods. By looking into various education reforms across Canada, it would be interesting to study the relationship between funding for implementation and success in implementation. Intuitively, it seems to follow that a lack of funding dedicated to implementation would negatively impact any reform, but the degree of reform failure attributable to logistic considerations remains unknown.

Research into developing reliable end-points in order to evaluate the short and long-term outcomes of curricular reform is also needed to propel this discussion from theoretical considerations to practical implications. Furthermore, perhaps class sizes could have been reduced – something that would not only benefit all students, but also help teachers deal with the increasingly more complex and involved evaluation processes that better suit this program. In addition, if teachers were properly educated about the theories behind this reform, how the subjects were to be taught according to the QEP, what the evaluation process should now look like, and how to make this possible within the realities of their own classrooms, the implementation of the reform may have gone more smoothly. It would also seem prudent to determine whether (or not) teachers and administrators *believe* in the vision that the QEP holds for education before claiming implementation issues to be largely related to financial considerations. It is likely that teacher and administrator support of the reform directly impacts the way in which parents perceive the reforms.

It may also be valuable to ascertain whether or not teachers are actually teaching according to the QEP, as well as what methods they are actually using to evaluate their students. Although administrators are free to "drop in" on classes, and discuss and encourage certain teaching strategies, most teachers are left alone within their classroom. This relative lack of first-hand observation results in little available concrete evidence that changes to the curriculum are being applied or that new evaluation modalities are indeed being implemented. Traditionally, the most common way of finding out this information is by teacher-surveys. Admittedly, despite being anonymous, this type of performance review likely suffers from enough reporter bias and recall bias to make any

potential significant results questionable. Without the development of new teacher performance indicators it will continue to be difficult to determine actual teacher compliance rates with the reform. In the absence of this information, one might assume that if there are a significant number of teachers who are not currently following the recommendations of the QEP, this is likely to have a significant effect on the global effectiveness of the reform. As is the case with other large scale policy changes, in the absence of full cooperation, this reform cannot be expected to be successful.

Continuing within the realm of evaluation and performance indicators, it is also imperative that measures be developed in an effort to address whether or not the QEP is effecting a positive outcome on Quebec students. As previously discussed, one of the key progressive elements of the QEP is the establishment and maintenance of a continuum between the academic environment and the home environment. The move from the traditional dichotomy of school versus home life has been facilitated by the introduction of novel and non- traditional media into the everyday classroom. The hope is that the horizontal integration of these technologies continues to weaken the divide between home and school providing an inclusive environment for students, while developing life-skills that will better prepare them for the current social reality. Does the QEP's reliance on technology and inclusion of non-traditional academic methods translate to a measurable change in literacy levels for Quebecers? To this effect, a recent publication through the University of Quebec at Trois Rivières has examined the regular use of newspaper reading in place of more traditional sources within the cycle 2 classrooms.[307]

[307] Nicole Ouellet, "L'impact de la lecture quotidienne du journal sur la comprehension en lecture et la motivation a lire aupres d'eleves du 2e cycle du primaire ayant ou non des difficultes d'apprentissage" (master's thesis, Universite du Quebec a Trois-Rivieres, 2009).

Among other things, Ouellet concludes that the regular reading of newspapers does translate into student's having a broader understanding of the world, facilitates the learning and exchange of culture and prepares students for a future of continued learning. Although these results are promising, they were limited by small sample sizes and based largely on data collected by student and parent surveys. Further research into the effectiveness of the non-traditional academic methodology supported by the principles of progressive education and advocated within the QEP will be needed before its impact on Quebecers can be adequately characterized.

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Appendix

4 PART ONE: ACTIVATION

REQUIRED MATERIALS		
Provided by MELS		Provided by School
8 Photographs	Processfolio	Dictionaries
Speech/Thought bubbles (handout)	Consent Forms	
Character Wheel (handout)		

Note: This activity will later serve as a springboard to the writing task.
The activities are organized sequentially. You may want to set a pace by selecting appropriate places to stop. Collect all materials at the end of the activities.

4.3 Activation: First Impressions

Purpose: To view photographs to consider character (personality) traits and create a profile of the character(s) in the photographs.

Group Activity

Tell students they will be looking at photographs of various characters. They are asked to create a character profile for a character in a photograph (as they did with their personal wheels in the initiation activity). Again, they may choose traits from the list on p. 2 in the Processfolio or add their own. Each group should complete a Character Profile Wheel for the character in the photograph, and decide what their particular character might be thinking and saying. (See handout of speech and thought bubble provided).

- Divide the class into groups of four.
- Provide one photograph, a Character Profile Wheel handout, and one speech and thought bubble handout to each group. (Small class sizes might use fewer photos, or students could work in pairs).
- Ask each group to look carefully at the photograph and to discuss their first impressions regarding the character in the photo.
- Tell them to imagine who this character might be; what this character might be like; what he/she may be saying or thinking etc.
- Remind them to record their ideas on the Character Profile Wheel and on the speech and thought bubbles provided.
- Allow sufficient time to complete the task.
- Collect and post each of the photographs (allow space for profile sheets).
- Starting with one photograph at a time, ask each group to post their speech/thought bubble and Character Profile Wheel around the photograph with which they worked.
- Invite groups to share their profiles of the characters and explain their choices.
- Students may do a "Gallery Walk" around the classroom (or wherever the photos are posted) in order to view the character profiles. Ask students if there was one photo that interested them or caught their attention.
- Invite them to share their ideas.

Reminder: Students will later choose from these photos as a springboard to writing.

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308 Ministère de l'Éducation, *English Language Arts Cycle 3 - Compulsory Examination*, 8.