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Marjolein Wilke*, Fien Depaepe
and Karel Van Nieuwenhuysse

Exploring the possibility of skills transfer from historical to contemporary inquiry tasks. A qualitative analysis of the effects of an intervention in 12th-grade history education

Abstract

Some history education scholars believe that fostering students' historical inquiry skills, as part of historical thinking, will improve their ability to critically evaluate contemporary sources, weigh evidence, and substantiate a position on various public debates. This entails students' spontaneously transferring the skills and procedural strategies acquired via historical inquiry to contemporary contexts. However, there is little research examining whether such a transfer is possible. This study builds on a previous intervention study examining the effects of a lesson series specifically aimed at improving students' competence in historical inquiry on (a) those students' historical inquiry skills and (b) their democratic skills. It relies on historical and topical essays produced by students before and after the lesson series in response to multiple-document-based tasks, qualitatively exploring changes in these essays to examine whether and in which aspects they show signs of a transfer from historical to democratic skills. To this end, a purposeful sample of students was selected from the original study who had progressed substantially on both tasks. The study shows limited evidence for a transfer from historical to democratic skills. It discusses how this limited transfer manifested itself in students' essays and reflects on the implications for our understanding of the relationship between historical thinking and democratic citizenship.

Keywords: *history education, historical thinking, historical inquiry, democratic skills, qualitative analysis, transfer of learning*

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Résumé

Plusieurs experts de didactique de l'histoire sont convaincus que développer les compétences des élèves en matière d'enquête historique, vue comme une contribution au développement de la pensée historique, améliorera leur capacité à évaluer de manière critique les sources et les arguments contemporaines et à prendre position dans les débats publics. Ils présument que les élèves transféreront spontanément à des contextes contemporains les compétences et les stratégies procédurales acquises dans le cadre d'enquêtes historiques. Cependant, il existe peu de recherches sur la possibilité d'un tel transfert des compétences d'enquête historique aux compétences démocratiques. Cette étude s'appuie sur des données issues d'une étude expérimentale examinant les effets d'une série de leçons spécialement créées pour développer les compétences des élèves en matière d'enquête historique sur (a) les compétences en matière d'enquête historique et (b) les compétences démocratiques, en produisant des essais qui répondent à des questions historiques et des questions actuelles à partir de tâches portant sur des ensembles de documents. L'étude explore qualitativement les changements dans les essais des élèves afin d'examiner si et sur quels aspects particuliers ces tâches montrent potentiellement des signes de transfert. À cette fin, un groupe d'élèves a été sélectionné: ce sont ceux qui ont fait des progrès substantiels dans les deux tâches. L'étude présente des indices limités d'un transfert des compétences historiques vers les compétences démocratiques. Elle examine comment ce transfert se manifeste et réfléchit aux implications pour notre compréhension de la relation entre la pensée historique et la citoyenneté démocratique.

Mots clés: *enseignement de l'histoire, pensée historique, recherche historique, compétences démocratiques, analyse qualitative, transfert de l'apprentissage*

1. Introduction

With the introduction of historical thinking as its primary goal, history education has moved closer to history as an academic discipline. Such thinking provides students not only with knowledge about the past but also with insight into the methods that historians use to acquire such knowledge (Lee & Ashby, 2000). While historical thinking is primarily a way to meet history education's disciplinary goal of introducing students to the practices of historians, some scholars believe that it may also contribute to meeting civic goals. This claim is particularly prominent with regard to the practice of historical inquiry: Scholars argue that historical inquiries foster certain skills that may be spontaneously transferred to contemporary settings and thus contribute to the development of skills relevant to democratic citizenship, that is, democratic skills (e.g., Lee & Shemilt,

2007; Lévesque, 2009; McCully, 2012; Monte-Sano, 2016; Nokes, 2013; Reisman, 2012; Stearns, 1998; Wineburg & Reisman, 2015).

This assumption may, however, be questioned from a general educational perspective, as the proposed contribution of historical thinking to democratic citizenship behaviors would require students to apply skills acquired in the initial (historical) context to another (contemporary) context. Such a “far transfer” from one context to another is not easily achieved (Perkins & Salomon, 1994). Nonetheless, to date, research examining the possibility of skills transfer from historical thinking to democratic citizenship behaviors has been scarce.

Rather, research has focused predominantly on how to foster historical thinking among students, as this in itself is a challenging task. Historical thinking is considered an “unnatural act” (Wineburg, 2001) that runs counter to the way in which students spontaneously approach history. Instead of looking at the past from a contemporary perspective and considering sources as direct reflections of that past, historical thinking requires students to examine the past in its own right and understand how historians construct it by interpreting and analyzing sources (Wineburg, 2001). While several studies have succeeded in improving aspects of students’ historical thinking (e.g., De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & Felton, 2010; De La Paz et al., 2016; Huijgen et al., 2018; Nokes et al., 2007; Reisman, 2012; Stoel, van Drie, & van Boxtel, 2017), very few have examined whether these skills are indeed transferred to contemporary settings and hence contribute to democratic citizenship. Consequently, little is known about whether such a transfer is possible and what it may look like.

In a previous study (Wilke et al., 2022), we set up a cluster randomized controlled trial to examine the disciplinary effects of a lesson series aimed at developing students’ historical thinking and establish whether the acquired skills would indeed be spontaneously transferred to contemporary contexts. We examined the effects of a history lesson series spanning 12–14 sessions on students’ historical inquiry skills via a historical essay task. In line with previous intervention studies (e.g., De La Paz et al., 2016; Reisman, 2012), we adopted principles from the model of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1991), including modeling, scaffolding, coaching, and interaction, to encourage students’ development of historical inquiry skills. The lesson series included several essay tasks in which students critically analyzed multiple historical documents to provide a substantiated answer to a historical question. The potential transfer of historical skills to a contemporary context was examined via topical essay tasks at pretest and posttest, designed in parallel with the historical tasks. Specifically, these tasks examined whether students improved their ability to take up a reasoned position on a public

debate based on the critical evaluation of contemporary sources, weighing of the available evidence, and consideration of different perspectives. The intervention proved successful in improving students' historical inquiry skills but did not significantly predict their performance on the topical essay task. It became clear, however, that students' performance on the historical and topical essay tasks covaried and that in some cases, their performance on both tasks improved simultaneously after the intervention. This result may indicate that some degree of transfer occurred, but it does not offer a clear-cut answer as to the direction of the relationship between students' historical inquiry skills and democratic skills.

The results of this earlier study raise questions regarding precisely what students' progress on the historical and topical essay tasks looked like and whether changes in their performance showed signs of a transfer from historical to democratic skills. Analyzing these performances in more detail may provide greater insight into whether and how such a transfer can occur and exactly which aspects of historical inquiry may or may not be spontaneously transferrable to contemporary contexts. To this end, this study presents a qualitative analysis of the essay task responses of a purposefully selected group of students from the intervention group. The students selected were those who progressed substantially on both the historical and topical essay tasks and thereby showed the most promising signs of a potential transfer.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 *Historical thinking and democratic citizenship*

The idea that history education has a role to play in shaping future citizens has existed since the adoption of history as a school subject. With the introduction of historical thinking into history curricula, moreover, new ways of thinking about the connection between history education and democratic citizenship have emerged. Without instrumentalizing historical thinking specifically for the purpose of citizenship education, a number of scholars have argued that certain knowledge, skills, and dispositions inherent to historical thinking will also benefit students' participation in society (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2004; Cinnamon et al., 2021; Lee & Shemilt, 2007; McCully, 2012; Monte-Sano, 2016; Nokes, 2013; Slater, 1995; Stearns, 1998; Wineburg & Reisman, 2015). This potential contribution is connected to various aspects of historical thinking. For instance, analyzing agency ("the ability to act on decisions in order to bring about desired goals"; Barton, 2012, p. 131) is expected to help stu-

dents understand their own roles in generating change in society and shape their civic attitudes (Barton, 2012; Seixas, 2012). Similarly, developing students' historical empathy, that is, their ability to understand and connect to the perspectives of people in the past, is thought to stimulate those students to recognize and value the existence of different modern perspectives, to foster in them a willingness to change their own values, attitudes, and/or behaviors, and even to inspire them to prevent wrongdoing or inequity in present-day society (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Endacott & Brooks, 2013).

Another way in which history education is expected to contribute to democratic citizenship is through the promotion of historical inquiry skills. In particular, some scholars have argued that through engagement in historical inquiries, students will become better at making reasoned judgments about public debates on societal issues based on the critical evaluation of contemporary sources (evidence) and arguments and the evaluation of different perspectives on the issue (e.g., Lee & Shemilt, 2007; Lévesque, 2009; McCully, 2012; Monte-Sano, 2016; Nokes, 2013; Reisman, 2012; Stearns, 1998; Wineburg & Reisman, 2015).

2.2 Historical inquiry skills and democratic skills

Several frameworks for historical thinking have been developed to describe what it means to introduce students to the practices of historians (e.g., Seixas, 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008; Wineburg, 2001; Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2020). These frameworks, although differing in their concrete operationalizations, often include the requirement for students to generate their own historical representations based on a critical analysis of historical sources.

Multiple-document-based or inquiry tasks (the terms are used interchangeably; see van Boxtel et al., 2021) are often used to foster and evaluate these skills among students. These tasks are based on a historical question and a number of (conflicting) historical documents that students must critically analyze and corroborate to provide a substantiated answer to the question (van Boxtel et al., 2021; Voet & De Wever, 2017). Such tasks cultivate students' mastery of discipline-specific procedures in source analysis and the construction of substantiated answers. These procedures include comparing (conflicting) accounts in sources (source corroboration) and evaluating their reliability by taking into account considerations such as the author's background and motivations, and its representativeness (sourcing; De La Paz & Felton, 2010; Hicks et al., 2004; Wineburg, 1991). Students should also consider the time and place in which a source was created (contextualization) and pay close attention to the author's word choice and language (close reading;

Reisman, 2012; Wineburg, 1991). In substantiating their answers, students must provide arguments, use evidence, and rebut counterarguments and conflicting evidence (De La Paz & Felton, 2010; Monte-Sano, 2012, 2016; Nokes & De La Paz, 2018; Reisman, 2012; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008; Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2020; Voet & De Wever, 2017; Wineburg, 1991). These multiple-document inquiry tasks touch upon the very core of the historical discipline, bringing together various aspects of historical thinking.

The historical inquiry skills promoted through these tasks are not only considered essential for achieving the disciplinary goals of history education but are also expected by certain scholars to be beneficial for democratic citizenship. In particular, they are presumed to positively influence students' critical engagement with contemporary sources of information and societal debates. Monte-Sano (2016), for instance, has argued that students develop citizenship skills by learning to construct and critique historical arguments, as "attending to evidence that supports an argument is key to understanding public issues," and "thinking about the credibility of evidence and where evidence comes from can help citizens make stronger arguments" (pp. 316–317). Barton and Levstik (2004) have similarly argued that engaging students in historical inquiries (including the examination of evidence) can prepare them to make reasoned judgments, move beyond their own perspectives, and participate in collaborative discourses about public issues. The claim that historical inquiry skills are connected to skills useful for democratic citizenship is supported by various other scholars (e.g., Cinnamon et al., 2021; McCully, 2012; Nokes, 2013; Slater, 1995; Stearns, 1998; Wineburg & Reisman, 2015). In short, these scholars argue that developing students' ability to provide a substantiated answer to a historical question based on a critical analysis of sources will also improve capacities such as their ability to make reasoned judgments about public issues, critically evaluate contemporary sources, and provide substantiated arguments regarding current issues, a set of skills we henceforth refer to as "democratic skills." Figure 1 summarizes this presumed relationship based on the aforementioned literature.

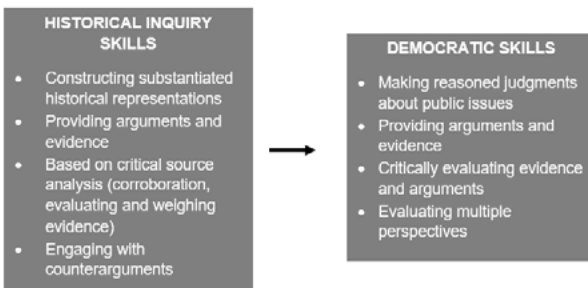


Figure 1: The Presumed Contribution of Historical Inquiry Skills to Democratic Skills

Research on civic reasoning indeed presents some clear similarities between such reasoning and historical inquiry skills. For instance, in order to effectively evaluate (online) sources, students should examine the author of the source, the author's motivations, the evidence presented, and should compare the source's content to that found in other sources (McGrew et al., 2018; Wineburg & McGrew, 2019). These aspects overlap significantly with discipline-specific heuristics applied to historical sources (e.g., Wineburg, 1991).

This potential contribution of historical thinking to democratic citizenship behaviors is based on the idea that students will spontaneously transfer skills and knowledge acquired through historical inquiry and apply them to contemporary sources and topics. If students are thus expected to apply skills and procedures acquired in a historical context to a novel, contemporary context, this entails a "far transfer" (Perkins & Salomon, 1994). Such a transfer, however, is not easily achieved and is unlikely to occur spontaneously, as it requires specific instructional practices that trigger active, deep processing. A transfer of learning can only take place if students recognize that certain previously acquired knowledge is relevant in a new context (for instance, because they see similarities between the tasks involved), if they are able to recall the relevant knowledge, and if they are able to apply it to the new context (Barnett & Ceci, 2002; van Peppen et al., 2021). Scholars arguing for the transfer of skills from the historical to the democratic context rarely acknowledge this need for specific (instructional) conditions. Another reason to question whether such a transfer can indeed be expected stems from the research of Wineburg and McGrew (2019). In comparing historians' and professional fact-checkers' strategies for evaluating online information, these authors established that the former used different, less effective strategies than the latter, often being led astray by features such as official-looking logos or domain names. Historians also tended to stay within a given website's pages when judging its reliability, whereas fact-checkers visited additional websites to gather more information to assess the initial site's credibility (lateral reading). Although this study concerned only online sources, it does raise the question of whether heuristics applied to historical sources can be straightforwardly applied to contemporary contexts. Nonetheless, despite these difficulties and the scarcity of research on the potential relationship between historical thinking and democratic citizenship behaviors, there is also some evidence to suggest that a transfer of skills from a historical to a contemporary context may indeed be possible.

2.3 Research on historical inquiry skills and on their potential transfer to democratic skills

Several studies have examined how students engage with (multiple) historical sources. These have shown that students tend to experience great difficulty with the application of discipline-specific procedures related to analyzing sources and constructing historical representations. Spontaneously, they are more likely to summarize than evaluate sources, as they tend to take them at face value. When they do assess the value of sources, they often employ superficial or inaccurate reasoning (e.g., Britt & Aglinskias, 2002; Harris et al., 2016; Nokes, 2017; Rouet et al., 1996; Stahl et al., 1996; van der Eem et al., 2022; Wineburg, 1991; Young & Leinhardt, 1998). For instance, Britt and Aglinskias (2002) found that high school and college students spontaneously paid little attention to information about the source but rather focused on sources' content. Nokes' (2017) large-scale study of eighth-graders' historical writing based on multiple historical documents showed vast differences in students' levels of attention to sourcing, with over 40% of students paying no attention to the reliability of sources, even when prompted to do so. Students also struggled to reason accurately about the reliability of sources, judging documents based on their attention to detail, their clarity, or the amount of information present and dismissing sources based on potential biases or authors' expressions of uncertainty. Similarly, Harris and colleagues (2016) found that high school students struggled to evaluate the reliability of sources. Alongside information about the source, the students also assessed the reliability of sources based on their content (including such aspects as whether that content connected to students' prior knowledge or what types of details were present in the document) or even on emotional responses.

In exploring how students engage with multiple-document (inquiry) tasks, scholars have described how students create task and activity models that contain representations of both the end goal of a task and the activities needed to achieve it (Britt & Rouet, 2012; Rouet et al., 2017; Wiley et al., 2020). These representations influence how students approach the task and which activities they conduct. For students to engage in historical inquiry tasks in an advanced way, they must thus be aware of what such tasks require, that is, the application of discipline-specific procedures such as sourcing, contextualizing, and corroboration to analyze and compare sources and generate a substantiated answer.

Intervention studies using multiple-document-based inquiry tasks have yielded positive results through applying design principles that make these necessary activities explicit to students and provide

them with support in conducting them. In particular, instructional strategies drawn from the model of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1991) have proven their effectiveness. These include explicit teaching on discipline-specific procedures; guided practice, supported by coaching and scaffolds; and interaction in the form of group work and whole-class discussions (e.g., De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz & Felton, 2010; De La Paz et al., 2016; Freedman, 2015; Huijgen et al., 2018; Nokes et al., 2007; Reisman, 2012; Sendur et al., 2021; Stoel, van Drie, & van Boxtel, 2017).

Currently, research examining whether improving students' historical inquiry skills might foster a transfer to democratic skills is very limited. One exception is a study by Reisman (2012), who examined the effects of an intervention using document-based lessons and design principles derived from cognitive apprenticeship, including explicit instruction on historical reading strategies. This study also included a measure for transfer of historical thinking to assess whether students transferred the discipline-specific reading strategies to contemporary topics. The intervention found significant effects on historical thinking and transfer for two strategies: sourcing and close reading. No effect was found, however, for intertextual strategies, such as corroboration. Thus, although this study provides some evidence that students may become more critical of contemporary sources after receiving instruction in the critical analysis of historical sources, it only found a transfer effect for some aspects and does not provide insight into how students might use sources when taking up a reasoned position on a public debate.

Another study examined the potential transfer of historical thinking to real-life, out-of-school contexts among students at the end of primary education (Déry, 2008). Individual telephone interviews were conducted with students to assess whether they used historical thinking skills acquired in the classroom to explain social realities outside the classroom: The findings showed that such a transfer was, indeed, possible but remained rare. Transfer occurred more easily in tasks where students were asked to reflect on change and continuity. It was also established that certain teaching practices could facilitate the process of transfer, such as when teachers made explicit connections between the content discussed in classes and external current events (Déry, 2008).

Our own intervention study (Wilke et al., 2022) examined the disciplinary effects of a lesson series aimed at improving students' historical inquiry skills, as well as the possible transfer to democratic skills (see Figure 1). This lesson series made use of multiple-document inquiry tasks and design principles drawn from the model of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1991) to foster these skills

among students. In the pretest and posttest, students' historical inquiry skills were measured using a historical inquiry task; democratic skills, particularly students' ability to analyze and use contemporary sources in light of public debates, were assessed using a similar task based on contemporary sources. In both tasks, students were instructed to critically analyze a set of sources so as to take up a reasoned position on a historical and a societal issue, respectively (see further below). Although the intervention successfully improved students' historical inquiry skills, we found no evidence for a direct effect on students' democratic skills. Students did not score significantly higher on democratic skills after the intervention, so a causal relationship could not be established. However, the data did show a correlation between students' progress on the historical task between pretest and posttest and their performance on the contemporary task at posttest: Changes in students' historical inquiry skills corresponded, to a limited degree, with higher democratic skills at posttest ($B = 0.16$; $p < .001$), meaning that students who made greater progress on the historical essay task also scored significantly higher on the topical essay task at posttest. Moreover, a significant interaction effect was established between students' progress in historical inquiry skills and intervention condition, with the influence of changes in students' historical inquiry skills on their democratic skills being slightly larger in the intervention group than in the control group ($B = -0.14$, $p = .005$). By itself, this result only provides evidence of a correlation between the two sets of skills, rather than a direct (transfer) effect (for a more detailed discussion, see Wilke et al., 2022). Considering the study's design, however, which was aimed specifically at developing students' historical inquiry skills, it appears possible that the changes in students' democratic skills were due to their progress in historical inquiry skills. Nonetheless, this finding requires further exploration to establish whether students' essays indeed show signs of a transfer and in which aspects this transfer may have occurred.

2.4 *The current study*

The current study builds on the previous intervention study to examine whether and, if so, how a transfer from historical to democratic skills occurred, focusing on those students who progressed substantially on both the historical and topical essay tasks after the intervention. To this end, a purposeful sample of students was selected and those students' essay tasks analyzed to answer the following research questions: (a) How does the progress made by these students on the historical and topical essay tasks following the inter-

vention manifest itself and (b) does this progression show signs of a transfer from historical inquiry skills to democratic skills?

3. Method¹

3.1 *Research context*

The original study took place among 12th-grade students (aged 17 to 18) of secondary history education in Flanders (Belgium). History education in Flanders is an autonomous school subject that takes up two hours a week in general education. The Flemish school curriculum does not include social studies or a similar subject discussing societal issues: Educational goals related to citizenship thus do not have a formal place in a subject-specific curriculum (such as “civic education”); they are rather meant to be achieved in a cross-curricular manner.

At the time of the study, a curriculum reform was underway in Flemish history education, firmly establishing historical thinking as a central goal for such education and thus requiring a significant change in teachers’ educational practices. Before this reform, teachers’ practices with regard to historical thinking and the use of multiple-document-based (inquiry) tasks varied considerably, with most teachers tending to focus predominantly on the acquisition of substantive knowledge about the past and less on introducing students to the methods of historians (Van Nieuwenhuysse et al., 2017; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Wilke & Depaepe, 2019). At the time of the study, however, this reform had only been implemented in the seventh and eighth grades of secondary education. Considerable diversity was, therefore, still present in 12th-grade teachers’ practices.

3.2 *Procedure and participants*

The intervention study took place between January and April 2021 in 17 schools, which were each randomly assigned to a control or intervention group. Students in the intervention group completed a 50-minute pretest, participated in a series of 12–14 lessons of 50 minutes each, and finally completed a 50-minute posttest. To ensure treatment fidelity, teachers in the intervention group participated in training before lessons commenced and filled out an online questionnaire after each lesson. This was complemented by

¹ This section is based strongly on the method section described in a previous article (Wilke et al., 2023) as both articles build further on data gathered during the intervention study (Wilke et al., 2022).

two interviews conducted with each participating teacher to discuss their experiences with the materials and establish whether they had deviated from the scripted lesson plans. Schools in which an inquiry lesson was missed or the posttest was delayed (due to COVID-19 measures then in place in Flemish education) were excluded from the sample, as were students who missed more than two lessons.² The final sample consisted of 226 students (6 schools) in the control group and 402 students (11 schools) in the intervention group. In the intervention group, which provided the basis for the present study, students' mean age was 17.04 ($SD = 0.39$), and 38.2% of students identified as male, 61.6% as female, and 0.2% as other.

3.3 *Design of the experimental condition*

The lesson series implemented in the intervention group covered 12–14 history lessons and was designed around the theme of decolonization after 1945. The series' aim was to improve students' historical inquiry skills: To this end, it included four historical inquiry tasks, each designed around an evaluative historical question (van Drie et al., 2006) and a number of conflicting sources, offering different perspectives and varying in terms of their reliability. Students were instructed to generate a substantiated answer to the historical question by critically evaluating the available sources.

Throughout the various lessons, principles drawn from the model of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1991) and recommendations based on previous intervention studies in history education (e.g., De La Paz & Felton, 2010; De La Paz et al., 2016; Nokes, 2017; Reisman, 2012; Stoel et al., 2015) were adopted to familiarize students with the discipline-specific procedures required for such historical inquiries. This included explicit teaching about how to evaluate and compare sources and how to construct a substantiated answer. Students were taught that such an answer should include the following elements: an explicit response to the historical question (claim); arguments, based on the sources, in support of the claim; references to the sources to substantiate the claim; and an evaluation of the sources to demonstrate why the student deemed the supporting sources valuable and rebut counterarguments stemming from less valuable sources.

How to approach inquiry tasks was taught via a process of modeling, scaffolding, and coaching. Teachers modeled the first inquiry task by explaining the various steps and reasoning processes needed to critically evaluate and compare the various sources and construct a substantiated answer in writing. Students were subsequently supported by

² For a more detailed discussion, see Wilke et al. (2022).

(gradually fading) scaffolds. These scaffolds, modeled after those of the University of Michigan (2021) and Monte-Sano and colleagues (2014), supported students in every aspect of the inquiry tasks: comparing and evaluating sources, weighing evidence and arguments, and writing a substantiated answer. Teachers provided feedback and coaching and adjusted the level of scaffolding according to students' needs.

In line with recommendations from earlier studies on fostering historical thinking, interaction was included in the lesson series via group work and whole-class discussions, which were used as an opportunity for feedback and development of students' reasoning (Reisman, 2012; Stoel et al., 2017; van Boxtel & van Drie, 2013, 2017).

Because the study was set up to examine the possibility of a spontaneous transfer of skills from historical to contemporary contexts, the lesson series did not include any explicit attention to evaluating contemporary sources or engaging in current societal debates.

3.4 Measurement instrument

The pretest and posttest each contained one historical and one topical essay task to measure students' historical inquiry and democratic skills (see Figure 1). Each of these tasks included a brief introduction followed by a historical or topical question and a set of sources that contained different viewpoints and arguments with regard to the question. The sources varied in terms of perspective and value. Students were required to write an essay of 15–20 sentences that provided a substantiated answer to the historical or topical question based on a critical analysis of the provided sources.

For each essay task, a set of excerpts from five sources, similar in terms of the ratio of primary to secondary and textual to visual sources and their difficulty level, was provided. Contextual information was provided for each source, elaborating, for instance, on the background of the author (also shedding light on the aims that author pursued) and the origins of the source. This information could be used to evaluate the sources' respective value. Topics for the historical essay tasks were (1) whether the police had a legitimate reason to use violence at the Sharpeville demonstration (1960) and (2) whether Dutch violence during the Indonesian Independence War (1945–1949) was structural or incidental. Topics for the topical essay tasks were connected to two debates under active discussion in Flanders at the time of the study, that is, (1) whether the voting age should be lowered to 16 and (2) whether mandatory positioning tests should be introduced in higher education. An overview of the sources provided for each essay task is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of sources in the historical and topical essay tasks at pretest and posttest

Historical essay task	
Pretest: Police violence at the "Sharpeville massacre"	Posttest: Excessive violence during the Indonesian Independence War
<p>Sources</p> <p>A. Anti-apartheid journalist's report on the events at Sharpeville (1960). B. Picture taken at the Sharpeville demonstration by an anti-apartheid photographer (1960). C. Excerpt from the court trial interrogating the commanding officer about the events at the demonstration (1960). D. Official statement issued by the South African High Commissioner in London shortly after the events and following strong criticism from the international community (1960). E. Excerpt from a historian's book on the events at Sharpeville (2011).</p>	<p>Sources</p> <p>A. Excerpt from a television interview with a soldier claiming that excessive violence was used structurally during the war (1969). B. Picture of Dutch soldiers who had taken Indonesian soldiers captive (1947). C. Letter from a veteran corporal who served during the war in response to the television interview (source A). D. Excerpt from a government report investigating the nature of the violence during the war (1969). The report was to be completed within three months. E. Statement from the Dutch government declaring the opening of a new investigation into the presence and nature of excessive violence (2016).</p>
<p>Content</p> <p>A. The police started shooting without any warning and without any provocation. Only three policemen were injured, while 200 native people were hurt by police violence. The journalist claims not to have seen any weapons among the demonstrators running away. B. Picture showing demonstrators running away (unarmed) from the police. C. The commanding officer reports that the demonstrators were hostile and that he was expecting an assault. After a gunshot was heard, the police started shooting. He suggests that demonstrators were hurt by ricocheting bullets. D. The police were attacked by the demonstrators and acted in self-defense. E. Only a few of the demonstrators were armed, and when a shot was fired from the crowd, the police started shooting. They fired in two rounds, including one that affected the demonstrators running away from the field.</p>	<p>Content</p> <p>A. Excessive violence was conducted structurally. The soldier had unsuccessfully approached various media outlets immediately after the war to tell his story. B. The picture was deliberately kept from the Dutch general public during the war in an attempt to shape their perception of it. C. The television interview was a lie. Violence is part of any war, but there was no excessive violence during this war. D. Dutch soldiers behaved correctly during the war; there was no cover-up of excessive violence, and there even exist accounts of positive acts committed by Dutch soldiers in Indonesia. E. After the publication of new historical research about excessive violence during the war, the government opens a new investigation.</p>
Topical essay task	
Pretest: Lowering of the voting age to 16	Posttest: Mandatory positioning tests in higher education
<p>Sources</p> <p>A. Advisory note from the Flemish Youth Council, the official advisory board of the Flemish government on all issues related to children and youth. B. Opinion piece by the chair of the youth section of a Flemish nationalist party. C. Opinion piece by a professor specializing in youth democratic participation, based on existing research. D. Opinion piece by a professor specializing in voting behavior and political interest among young people. E. Results from a large-scale survey conducted by several universities about 14- to 25-year-olds' views on lowering the voting age.</p>	<p>Sources</p> <p>A. Opinion piece by a student representative and member of a left-wing party. B. Opinion piece by a lecturer and director of a university college. C. Opinion piece by a professor in cognitive psychology in response to opinion piece B. D. Opinion piece by a lecturer at a university college. E. Research report written by several university professors about the effects of positioning tests in STEM courses.</p>
<p>Content</p> <p>A. The voting age should be lowered, as young people are inherently part of society and are able to make an informed decision. B. The voting age should not be lowered, as young people do not want it and are too young and inexperienced to know their ideological preferences. As the beginning of adulthood, 18 is a more logical voting age. C. International research demonstrates young people's willingness to be politically active. D. At 16, individuals are able to choose political parties that align with their ideological preferences but are more likely to have extreme ideologies. The impact of lowering the voting age on electoral results would be small. E. Of all respondents, 52.3% voted against lowering the voting age; 46% were in favor only if voting would not be mandatory.</p>	<p>Content</p> <p>A. Research demonstrates the negative impact of positioning tests on students' motivation. Students should be allowed to "fail" in education. B. Positioning tests would restrict access to higher education for a lot of students. Research shows that these tests are unrelatable and do not generate higher success rates. Moreover, they cannot be applied to all fields of study. C. Positioning tests only measure basic minimal competencies required for higher education. The author refers to a specific study demonstrating that positioning tests accurately identify those students who will not pass their first year. D. Positioning tests are only snapshots of students' abilities. They cannot measure maturity, interest, or motivation. These tests could demotivate potentially talented students. E. Positioning tests only have a very limited impact on students' enrollment choices. Existing positioning tests for STEM are accurate predictors of students' study achievements.</p>

Note. The first part of this table (historical essay tasks) is based on Wilke et al., 2023.

Students' essays were evaluated using a rubric initially based on the work of Monte-Sano (2012), Monte-Sano and De La Paz (2012), and Monte-Sano, De La Paz, and Felton (2014). It was adjusted after a pilot study conducted with 36 students, and modifications were made to better fit the explicit teaching performed during the lesson series. The pilot study was also used to evaluate the difficulty level of the essay tasks. The rubric consisted of six criteria: (1) making a (historical or topical) claim in response to the historical or topical question; (2) argumentation in support of the claim (judged on the number of arguments used to support the essay's claim); (3) quality of the argumentation; (4) use of sources as supporting evidence (judged on the extent to which the student's choice of sources supported the essay's claim); (5) evaluation of the value of the supporting sources (judged on the extent to which the student demonstrated that they had evaluated the reliability and/or representativeness of the arguments used in support of their claim); and (6) engagement with counterarguments and evidence (judged on whether the student acknowledged the existence of arguments and evidence that opposed their claim and whether they had included rebuttals).

Each criterion was graded on a four-point scale, yielding a total potential essay score of 24. To establish interrater reliability, intraclass correlation (two-way, absolute agreement, single measures) was calculated for 10% of the historical and topical pretest essays based on two raters. At least a good level of agreement ($>.6$) was established for each separate criterion (ICC: $M = .82$, $SD = .12$ for the historical task; $M = .75$, $SD = .08$ for the topical task), and excellent agreement ($>.75$) was obtained for the total scores ($M = .87$, $SD = .08$ for the historical task; ICC = $.87$ for the topical task; Cicchetti, 1994; Hallgren, 2012).

3.5 Data sampling

Building on the essay data collected in the intervention study, we used critical case purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015) to select students for the present study. In light of the stated research questions, we were particularly interested in those students in the intervention group who had made substantial progress on both the historical essay task and the topical essay task, as these students' essays were most likely to show signs of a potential transfer of skills from the former to the latter. Table 2 shows the average scores of all students in the intervention group on the two essay tasks at pretest and posttest, demonstrating the great degree of variation in students' progress on both tasks.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for students’ results on historical and topical essays at pre- and posttest in the Intervention Group (N = 402)

Historical essay task (on 24)			Topical essay task (on 24)		
Pretest <i>M (SD)</i>	Posttest <i>M (SD)</i>	Change <i>M (SD)</i>	Pretest <i>M (SD)</i>	Posttest <i>M (SD)</i>	Change <i>M (SD)</i>
15.20 (3.58)	18.14 (4.45)	2.95 (4.93)	14.75 (3.44)	16.49 (3.91)	1.74 (3.96)

To determine the present sample, substantial progress on the historical and topical essay tasks was operationalized as an increase in score on both tasks of at least 6 points (out of 24). Such an increase meant that a student could have progressed on all six criteria of the evaluation rubric and had progressed by considerably more than the average student (two to three times more; see Table 2). Students with a pretest score of 19 points or more on either or both tasks were excluded, as they would be unable to progress by at least 6 points ($n = 108$). This yielded a sample of 23 students across eight intervention schools whose essays were selected for further analysis.

3.6 Data analysis

First, general patterns in students’ pretest and posttest essays were explored based on quantitative descriptive analysis of the students’ scores. A qualitative analysis using NVivo software was then conducted to explore the essays in depth. This qualitative analysis was an iterative process including both data-driven and theory-driven codes (Fereday & Cochrane, 2006). The coding process began with an a priori set of main coding themes in line with the evaluation rubric. One main coding theme was established for each of the rubric’s criteria except for “argumentation” and “quality of argumentation,” which were merged into one main coding theme, “argumentation.” One further main coding theme, “essay type,” was added during the coding process as it became clear that students’ essays adopted a particular range of structures. The final coding scheme thus consisted of six main coding themes: claim, argumentation, use of sources as evidence, evaluation of sources’ value (i.e., reliability and/or representativeness), rebuttal of counterarguments and opposing evidence, and essay type. For each main coding theme, subcodes were defined that allowed for a more detailed analysis of students’ essays. These subcodes began as an a priori set of codes; new (additional) subcodes were added during the coding process.³ The subcodes in each of the main coding themes

³ Regarding the criteria students used to evaluate a source’s value, for instance, the initial coding scheme included six subcodes based on the literature and the explicit teaching provided in the lesson series. A new subcode, “medium,” was subsequently created, as students’ responses to the topical essay tasks occasionally referred to the medium

are briefly discussed below. Table 3 provides an overview of the coding scheme. A detailed description for each subcode, as well as examples from students' essays, can be found in Appendix.

Table 3: Overview of the main coding themes and related subcodes

Main coding theme	Subcodes
Claim	No statement Explicit statement Implicit statement Partial statement
Argumentation in support of the claim	Own argumentation Argument derived from the sources _Form: Implicit _Form: Explicit _Quality: High _Quality: Mediocre _Quality: Low
Use of sources	Source reference Source reference in support of the claim Vague source reference
Evaluation of sources' value	No evaluation of a source's value Superficial evaluation of a source's value Evaluation of a source's value _Form: Implicit _Form: Explicit _Quality: High _Quality: Mediocre _Quality: Low _Quality: Nuanced (additional/double coding) _Criterion: Author _Criterion: Goal _Criterion: Audience _Criterion: Societal context _Criterion: Information _Criterion: Time/place
Rebuttal of counter arguments and evidence	Mentioned without dialogue Superficial dialogue Rebuttal _Form: Implicit _Form: Explicit _Quality: High _Quality: Mediocre _Quality: Low _Quality: Nuanced (additional/double coding) _Criterion: Author _Criterion: Goal _Criterion: Audience _Criterion: Societal context _Criterion: Information _Criterion: Time/place _Criterion: Representativeness _Criterion: Medium
Essay type	Descriptive Argumentative Evaluative Argumentative-evaluative

in which an opinion piece was published when evaluating its value as a source. Another subcode that emerged from the data was “nuanced evaluation,” used to identify instances where a student had evaluated a source's value in a nuanced way, discussing both aspects that might increase the value of the source and aspects that might decrease it.

The coding theme “claim” included subcodes indicating whether the essay contained an answer to the historical or topical question, whether this answer fully addressed the question, and whether the claim was explicitly or implicitly made.

“Argumentation” included subcodes to identify students’ use of their own arguments and those derived from the sources. For arguments derived from the sources, further subcodes specified whether these arguments were used implicitly or explicitly and distinguished their quality (high–mediocre–low). A high-quality argument was one that correctly reflected the content of the source, was accurately presented, and supported the essay’s claim. A mediocre-quality argument reflected the content of a source and supported the essay’s claim but was not presented clearly or accurately. A low-quality argument was one in which the student had misunderstood the content of a source or where the argument did not support the essay’s claim.

For the coding theme “use of sources as evidence,” subcodes were created to evaluate whether the essay contained references to specific sources and whether they were used explicitly in support of the essay’s claim.

The coding theme “evaluation of sources’ value” included subcodes to establish whether students evaluated the sources’ value and whether this was done in a superficial or more profound way. If a student merely mentioned information about the source, such as who the author was, this was considered superficial. If a student evaluated the value of a source, further subcodes signaled whether they had done so implicitly or explicitly (by directly mentioning reliability, value, representativeness, etc.). The quality of the evaluation (high–mediocre–low) was also coded, as were the criteria applied (e.g., author, date, goal). The quality of the evaluation was coded based on the accuracy and clarity of the student’s reasoning. For instance, if a student stated that a source was completely reliable because it stemmed from an eyewitness, this was coded as mediocre because the student’s reasoning was based on a relevant aspect of the source but was oversimplified.

Subcodes under the coding theme “rebuttal of counterarguments and opposing evidence” specified whether students addressed the existence of counterarguments or opposing evidence, whether they engaged with them, and how this was done (superficially or by evaluating the sources’ value). When the engagement with counterargumentation included an evaluation of the sources’ value, subcodes indicated whether this was done implicitly or explicitly, the quality of the evaluation (high–mediocre–low), and which criteria were used.

The coding theme “essay type” described particular structures that became evident in students’ essays and changed between pretest and posttest. Research on students’ causal historical writing has similarly found that students’ essays tend to take on distinct forms (Coffin, 2004, 2006; Stoel, 2017). Four subcodes were created that referred to the main focuses of students’ writing: descriptive, evaluative, argumentative, and argumentative–evaluative. In descriptive essays, students were mainly occupied with describing the events discussed in the sources and giving an overview of what each source had to say about them. Argumentative essays were focused on arguing for the given claim by providing arguments and/or evidence (sources) but without devoting any attention to the value of those sources. In evaluative essays, students’ main focus was the evaluation of the various sources, but these essays did not establish a connection between the discussion of the sources and the central claim. Lastly, argumentative–evaluative essays combined the latter two focuses, arguing for a stated claim and substantiating it with arguments and evidence (sources) while also paying attention to the value of the sources.

For the coding theme “essay type,” the initial coding conducted by the first author was reviewed and discussed with the third author to reach a consensus. For the five main coding themes based on the evaluation rubric, we did not include additional measures for interrater agreement, as this coding remained close to the initial rubric, for which an acceptable degree of interrater agreement had already been established.

In what follows, the quantitative results based on the evaluation rubric are discussed, and the results of the qualitative analysis are presented for each of the main coding themes. In search of changes between pretest and posttest, general patterns in students’ historical and topical pretest essays are explored first in each case to provide a baseline against which the posttest essays can be compared.

4. Results

Table 4 shows the mean scores on each of the criteria of the evaluation rubric as well as the total scores on the historical and topical essay task at pretest and posttest.

A discussion of the descriptive results in Table 4 allows for an exploration of general trends in students’ pretest essays and in the progress made by students on the historical and topical essays between pretest and posttest. This will provide a first, tentative impression of how students progressed on both tasks and whether their essays show signs of a transfer of skills.

Table 4: Mean scores on historical and topical essay tasks at pretest and posttest by criterion of the evaluation rubric (n = 23)

Historical essay task	Pretest <i>M (SD)</i>	Posttest <i>M (SD)</i>	Change <i>M (SD)</i>
Claim	3.00 (1.09)	3.83(0.49)	0.83 (1.27)
Argumentation	2.39 (0.84)	3.30 (0.70)	0.91 (0.79)
Quality of argumentation	2.39 (1.16)	3.35 (0.78)	0.96 (0.88)
Use of sources as evidence	1.91 (1.13)	4.00 (0.00)	2.09 (1.12)
Evaluation of sources' values	1.57 (0.51)	3.22 (0.90)	1.65 (0.88)
Engagement with counterarguments and opposing evidence	1.30 (0.47)	3.04 (0.88)	1.74 (0.92)
<i>Total score</i>	12.57 (3.27)	20.74 (2.42)	8.17 (2.27)
Topical essay task	Pretest <i>M (SD)</i>	Posttest <i>M (SD)</i>	Change <i>M (SD)</i>
Claim	3.26 (0.86)	3.91 (0.29)	0.65 (0.83)
Argumentation	2.43 (0.95)	3.74 (0.45)	1.30 (0.76)
Quality of argumentation	2.26 (0.92)	3.83 (0.39)	1.57 (0.90)
Use of sources as evidence	1.65 (0.88)	3.83 (0.58)	2.17 (0.94)
Evaluation of sources' values	1.13 (0.46)	1.87 (0.87)	0.74 (0.75)
Engagement with counterarguments and opposing evidence	1.17 (0.49)	1.78 (0.67)	0.61 (0.58)
<i>Total score</i>	11.91 (2.31)	18.96 (2.12)	7.04 (1.33)

Table 4 demonstrates that at pretest, students obtained, on both the historical and topical essay tasks, higher average scores on the first three criteria (claim, argumentation, and quality of argumentation) than on the other three (using sources as evidence, evaluating the value of sources, and engaging with counterarguments and opposing evidence). Between pretest and posttest, students progressed, on average, on all criteria in both essay tasks, but progress was distributed differently between the topical and historical tasks. On the historical essay task, students progressed most on those criteria for which the initial (pretest) average scores were the lowest (using sources as evidence, evaluating the value of sources, and engaging with counterarguments and opposing evidence), thereby closing the gap with the first three criteria. On the topical essay task, progress was concentrated largely on other criteria, namely argumentation and quality of argumentation. For these criteria, the pretest scores were already relatively high compared to other criteria. In line with the progress made in the historical task, students' topical essay tasks also improved with regard to using sources as evidence, which saw low pretest scores in both the historical and topical essay tasks. Students progressed remarkably little on two criteria: For the criterion "claim," students' pretest scores were already high, while for the criterion "engagement with counterarguments and opposing evidence," students' low pretest scores improved only slightly at posttest.

Standard deviations across the essay tasks were relatively high, indicating large differences between individual students’ scores. Qualitative analysis allows for a more in-depth exploration of these differences. Table 5 shows the frequency of each code at pretest and posttest in the historical and topical essay tasks, including the number of files (individual essays) within which each code occurred. The results are discussed below for each of the main coding themes. To establish how changes in students’ historical and topical essay performances manifested themselves, the qualitative analysis will first examine general patterns in students’ pretest essays.

Table 5: Frequency of codes in historical and topical essays at pretest and posttest (number of essay files and total frequency; n = 23)

Code	Historical essay				Topical essay			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	Files	Frequency	Files	Frequency	Files	Frequency	Files	Frequency
Claim								
None	5		0		0		0	
Explicit	13		21		19		21	
Implicit	4		1		3		2	
Partial	1		1		1		0	
Argumentation								
Own argument	4	5	0	0	18	28	7	9
Explicit argument derived from sources	11	18	18	39	17	22	21	44
Implicit argument derived from sources	7	11	7	10	4	4	9	11
Quality								
High	12	21	21	38	14	17	23	48
Mediocre	4	5	8	8	3	3	4	5
Low	2	3	3	3	6	6	2	2
Use of sources as evidence								
Vague source reference	4	6	0	0	2	3	0	0
Source reference	12	24	10	10	3	3	7	12
Source reference in support of the claim	8	13	21	43	13	17	21	48
Evaluation of sources’ value								
No evaluation	10	18	11	13	14	16	15	32
Superficial evaluation	7	11	8	9	3	4	6	11
Evaluation of a source’s value								
Form								
Explicit evaluation	3	4	15	27	0	0	8	12
Implicit evaluation	1	2	4	4	0	0	2	2
Quality								

High	1	1	10	14	0	0	5	6
Mediocre	3	3	14	14	0	0	5	8
Low	2	2	3	3	0	0	0	0
Nuance	0	0	8	9	0	0	1	1
Criterion								
Author	4	5	9	9	0	0	4	6
Societal context	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0
Goal and audience	0	0	5	5	0	0	2	2
Information	2	3	12	16	0	0	7	8
Representativeness	0	0	5	8	0	0	3	3
Time and place	2	2	8	9	0	0	0	0
Medium	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
None	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
<hr/>								
Rebuttal of counterarguments and evidence								
<hr/>								
Mentioned without dialogue	10	10	3	3	11	13	9	10
Superficial dialogue	6	6	4	4	1	1	4	4
Rebuttal								
Form								
Explicit evaluation	0	0	17	27	2	2	5	6
Implicit evaluation	0	0	9	9	0	0	3	5
Quality								
High	0	0	15	20	2	2	2	4
Mediocre	0	0	13	14	0	0	4	4
Low	0	0	2	2	0	0	3	3
Criterion								
Author	0	0	12	16	0	0	0	0
Goal and audience	0	0	6	7	0	0	0	0
Information	0	0	19	21	0	0	5	7
Representativeness	0	0	4	4	2	2	1	1
Time and place	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Societal context	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
None	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<hr/>								
Essay type								
<hr/>								
Descriptive	9		0		0		1	
Evaluative	2		5		0		0	
Argumentative	12		2		23		15	
Argumentative-evaluative	0		16		0		7	
<hr/>								

4.1. *Claim*

At pretest, students' topical essay tasks were more likely to include an explicit answer to the question than the historical essay tasks. Out of 23 topical essays, 19 already contained an explicit answer to the question, whereas only 13 historical essays did so. Hence, it appears that students took up a position on the topical question more easily than on the historical question.

Between pretest and posttest, students' historical essays increasingly took on an explicit stance. At posttest, almost all historical essays (21 out of 23) contained an explicit answer to the historical question, similar to the topical essays at posttest.

4.2 *Argumentation*

Students' historical and topical pretest essays differed strongly in argumentation in three respects. First, students' topical essays contained far more arguments than their historical essays (a total of 34 for the historical task vs. 54 for the topical task). Second, argumentation in the topical essays was far more likely to be based on students' own views rather than the sources: In total, 28 out of 54 arguments were not derived from the sources, and a majority of students (18 out of 23) included their own arguments in the essays, most often based on their own experiences or beliefs. Student 7, for example, explained why he opposed the lowering of the voting age based entirely on his own views, as none of his arguments were mentioned in the sources (see Table 1):

By lowering the age limit, I think we will create too much discussion: young people will get into arguments with their parents because they have a different opinion and views and they themselves are not even sure what those views are. (...) I also believe that young people at the age of 16 are still too much influenced by their parents. They have been spoon-fed their political views and may not have had time to do their own research.

Conversely, Student 15 argued, again based on her own experiences, in favor of lowering the voting age to 16, stating that "From my own experience I know that at that age I was already following current affairs closely." On the historical task, only four students used their own arguments to support their claim; most arguments (29 out of 34) were based on the provided sources. A third difference concerned the way in which these arguments were used. Arguments derived from the sources were more likely to be connected explicitly to the essay's claim in the topical essay task (22 out of 26) than in the historical task (18 out of 29).

Between pretest and posttest, similar changes were observed in the historical and topical essays. The number of arguments increased strongly, and at posttest, the great majority of these arguments were used explicitly in support of students' stances. Moreover, at posttest, students' argumentation was based almost exclusively on the sources rather than their own arguments. Student 7, for instance, whose topical pretest essay was based solely on his own views and experiences, substantiated his posttest essay on positioning tests with arguments derived from the sources. None of the historical posttest essays contained references to students' own arguments, and only 7 topical essays did so (compared to 18 at pretest). Students' historical and topical essays thus demonstrated similar progress toward more, higher-quality, and more explicit argumentation based on the provided sources rather than students' own views.

4.2 *Use of sources as evidence*

At pretest, most students' historical and topical essay tasks contained references to sources, although these were not always explicitly used in support of the essay's claim. Particularly in the historical essay task, some students tended to summarize the sources rather than use them to support their answer to the historical question. This was most often the case in essays that did not contain a clear answer to the question. Students did, however, include more specific source references in their historical essays than in their topical essays (37 vs. 20), as students were more likely to substantiate their answers to the topical question with their own views rather than the provided sources.

Between pretest and posttest, there was an increase in the number of sources referenced. This occurred in both the topical and historical essays but was most striking in the former (from 20 to 60 specific source references). In the vast majority of posttest cases, sources were used explicitly to support the essay's claim, and vague references to sources disappeared entirely. Student 12's historical pretest essay, for instance, was well supported by sources, but his topical pretest essay did not contain a single reference to a source. At posttest, however, this student explicitly referred to several sources in support of his topical essay's claim, writing, for example, the following:

I agree with the opinion piece by Johan De Wilde and Ann Martin in *De Standaard*. "Research by the University of Hasselt and the VUB has shown that positioning tests at the start are unreliable and thus not useful in practice". This further demonstrates that the tests are irrelevant and cannot predict success rates. (...) As Beno Schraepen mentioned in source 3, a positioning test can only assess basic knowledge.

Overall, both essay types thus demonstrated a(n even) better use of sources in support of students' claim.

4.3 *Evaluating the sources' value*

Historical and topical pretest essays differed in the attention paid to the value of sources. While students paid almost no attention to this issue in topical pretest essays (only three essays superficially addressed it), the historical pretest essays did demonstrate some attention to the matter. In seven essays, students paid at least superficial attention to the value of sources, meaning that they mentioned an aspect of the source that was relevant for assessing its value (such as the author's background) but did not connect this to the value of the source. In a further six cases, students not only mentioned a relevant aspect of one of the sources but also connected this to an evaluation of the source's value. The extent of this, however, remained limited, and students' reasoning in this regard was mostly of mediocre quality, as they tended to assess the value of sources in a simplified or unsubstantiated way, stating, for instance, that they considered one of the sources "more neutral" (Student 17) without further clarification.

The historical essays demonstrated remarkable progress from pre- to posttest in terms of students' attention to the value of sources. In 31 posttest cases (vs. 6 at pretest), a student evaluated the value of a source beyond a superficial evaluation. Moreover, they predominantly did so explicitly (27 out of 31). Most reasoning in this regard was of high (14 out of 31) or mediocre (14 out of 31) quality, and in nine instances, students included a nuanced evaluation.

Similar progress was observed in students' topical essays, where there was an increase in instances in which a student evaluated the value of a source in a superficial (from 4 to 11) or more profound way (from 0 to 14). Again, this was mostly done explicitly (12 out of 14 instances). To evaluate contemporary sources, students referred most frequently to information about the author of a source or information on which the source was based. Student 20, for instance, argued that the research report about the effects of positioning tests in STEM courses (Source E) was reliable based on the following reasoning:

In fact, the result of one's positioning test is strongly related to one's study success in the first year, as can be read in the research report on the usefulness of positioning tests. This report is based on a study by a group of authors from different universities. Thus, it is representative of a larger group. Also, it contains specific data showing that only for 12.1% of students the result [of the test] played a role in their enrollment.

However, this progress was less pronounced than that seen in the historical essays. Students' attention to the value of topical sources was less consistent, and their reasoning did not always achieve the same quality. Although some students successfully evaluated the value of contemporary sources, others failed to accurately argue why they considered a source more or less valuable. In her posttest essay on positioning tests, Student 10 wrote the following:

Beno Schraepen is a remedial educationalist and a lecturer at the AP University College so he does not strike me as someone who does not know what he is writing about. In addition, his opinion was published in the newspaper "De Standaard", which is regarded as a high quality newspaper. So, normally, no unprofessional opinions will be featured here. I therefore consider this source to be rather reliable.

Later, this student explained why she considered an opinion piece by a student representative to be a reliable source, stating, "I consider this source rather reliable since she is a student representative for language and linguistics students at UGent and is active in Comac (the student movement of the [far-left party] PVDA)." Although the value of the source is explicitly evaluated, it is not entirely clear why the fact that it was written by a student representative renders it reliable, as the student does not elaborate on her reasoning in this regard. Another student (18) argued that "The articles that appear in TH&MA can absolutely be considered truthful, as this is a magazine for executives of universities and university colleges." While the audience of the magazine is, of course, not entirely irrelevant, the fact that the article is based on extensive research conducted by specialists in the field would constitute a better reason to argue for its reliability.

On a few occasions, students used different criteria from those taught with regard to historical sources. The medium in which a source was published, for instance, was mentioned by three students as an aspect impacting its value, as illustrated in the excerpt from Student 10's essay.

Despite some shortcomings, students thus exhibited in both essay tasks an increased awareness of the need to (explicitly) evaluate the value of the sources used to support their claims.

4.4. *Rebuttal of counter arguments and evidence*

At pretest, most students' essays paid no attention to the existence of arguments or evidence that might counter their stance. Students arguing against the lowering of the voting age, for instance, argued that "A large number of young people do not or cannot have

an opinion about politics at the age of 16. When I was 16, I wasn't concerned with this at all" (Student 12), even though the available source material clearly contradicted this position. This student (as well as several others putting forward similar arguments) valued their own experience above the evidence provided in the sources (e.g., Source D, which clearly states that research shows that 16-year-olds are able to choose a political party that aligns with their personal views). In the historical essays, students were equally unlikely to engage in dialogue with arguments and evidence that contradicted their claims, although some essays did grant limited attention to counterevidence or opposing sources.

Students' historical and topical essays exhibited similar progress between pretest and posttest. At posttest, students' essays contained more (explicit) attention to counterarguments, often including an evaluation of the value of the sources. Student 10, for instance, referred to both the reliability and the representativeness of a source to rebut its content. In her historical essay, she wrote the following:

The 1969 *excessennota* [government report on Dutch violence] shows us the conclusion of an investigation into the acts of violence committed by the Dutch military, commissioned by the Dutch government. This source is, in my opinion, not reliable at all since it does not constitute a thorough investigation. The report had to be ready within three months. Also, an investigation would never have been initiated if Hueting had not spoken about the violence. This source also mentions that a lot of good deeds were done by the Netherlands in that context, but there is no evidence recorded of this. So in my opinion this is a big lie. So it seems very clear to me that the Dutch government wants to condone the violence. This source is also certainly not representative, because it concerns the position of the Dutch government.

In her topical essay, this student similarly included a rebuttal of counterevidence by arguing for the unreliability of a given source:

Source 4 "Research report on the usefulness of positioning tests in TH&MA (2020)" contradicts De Cooman. The research shows that such a positioning test does not stop most [students] from enrolling and so it would not affect their self-confidence as much as De Cooman describes. I have no doubt that the authors conducted their research well, but the research was only carried out in STEM-disciplines. In many of these fields of study, positioning tests are already mandatory and I agree that in these fields of study, they are indeed necessary. What about all the other fields of study? No research has been conducted on this and so I consider this source to be rather unreliable and unrepresentative in answering the historical [*sic*] question.

As was the case for evaluation of the value of sources, on average, students advanced more in the historical than the topical essay task. Their historical essays contained more rebuttals, and these rebuttals were more explicit. Moreover, the quality of students' rebuttals was higher in their historical essays. In this respect, the same difficulties could be discerned as described for evaluating the value of sources. For instance, Student 9 clearly tried to argue why some of the sources were more reliable than others but, in doing so, put forward some questionable reasoning. Specifically, she argued that sources based on opinion were written "voluntarily" and were, therefore, more reliable than the research article, which was, by her reckoning, a "commercial piece":

The sources that support my position are all individuals who are in or related to education. These are the closest to students and have written their [opinion] pieces voluntarily. The first opposing source comes from a cognitive psychology professor who talks about the success of a test that should help with study choices and relates it to the [positioning] tests. He talks about the usefulness of these [positioning tests] and not about the impact on the students themselves. The last source mentioned also stems from individuals close to the students but it is a commercial piece that only talks about STEM-fields.

In line with the findings for the previous coding theme, students' essays demonstrate an increased consideration from pretest to posttest of the need to include rebuttals, but they also show that, particularly in the topical essay task, students struggled to do so adequately.

4.5 *Essay structure*

The structures used in the historical and topical essays differed strongly at pretest. All topical essays were argumentative in nature, whereas historical essays were largely either descriptive (9 essays) or argumentative (12 essays).

At posttest, the historical essays demonstrated a strong shift toward structures that devoted greater attention to the value of sources, with the majority (16 out of 23) taking an argumentative–evaluative stance. This shift also occurred in the topical essays, although it was less prominent. Most topical essays (15 out of 23) remained argumentative in nature, implying that students still paid little attention to the value of sources, although 7 did shift to an argumentative–evaluative structure. These changes reflect increased attention to the value of sources similar to that seen in the historical essays, but

they also show that this change was not as common in the topical as in the historical essays.

5. Conclusion and discussion

This study explored changes in a purposefully selected group of students' historical and topical essay task responses to explore whether and in which aspects these students' essays showed signs of a transfer from historical inquiry skills to democratic skills. In particular, it explored whether students' progress in responding to a historical inquiry task improved their ability to make reasoned and rational judgments on public debates concerning societal issues based on the critical evaluation of contemporary sources (evidence) and arguments and the evaluation of different perspectives. It did this by qualitatively analyzing the historical and topical essays of a purposefully chosen group of students within a previously conducted intervention study that found a connection between students' progress on the two types of essay tasks. Although the student essays considered in the earlier study and the specific group included in the present sample may indeed have suggested that a limited transfer of learning from the historical to the contemporary context occurred, we could not be sure whether students' progress in their topical essays was due to their progress in their historical essays or vice versa. However, given the character of the intervention and the nature of the changes observed in the present sample, it seems likely that a transfer of skills did indeed occur—to a limited extent—from the historical to the topical essays. Moreover, as the students selected as part of the present sample belonged to eight different intervention schools, the likelihood that their progress on the topical essays was caused by factors outside of the intervention is minimal.

The analysis of students' essays revealed strong differences at pretest between historical and topical essays with regard to claims, argumentation, and references to sources, an observation confirmed by differences in pretest essay structures. In their topical essays, students were more likely to explicitly provide an answer to the question and substantiate this answer with arguments, which were most often based on their own views rather than the sources. Historical essays, on the other hand, did not always contain a clear answer but were more likely to reference and describe the available sources, whether or not these were used in support of the essay's claim. This was evident in the predominance of the descriptive essay type in the historical essays at pretest.

It thus appears that at pretest, students were more comfortable taking up and arguing for a certain position in response to a societal debate (i.e., the topical essay question) than they were in response to a historical question. This may not seem particularly surprising, considering that students are more likely to spontaneously have opinions on societal issues than on historical issues. These differences, however, could also point to variations in students' task and activity models (see Britt & Rouet, 2012; Rouet et al., 2017; Wiley et al., 2020). It is possible that, based on students' prior experiences with similar tasks, they had different ideas about what was expected of them in each case and which activities were needed to achieve it. This would also explain the considerable variation in students' historical essay types: Considering the broad diversity present in teachers' current practices regarding historical thinking and historical inquiry, it is likely that students started these tasks with very different initial views.

It thus appeared that students were more comfortable taking up and arguing for a certain position in response to a societal debate (i.e. the topical essay question) than they were in response to a historical question. This may not seem all that surprising considering that students are more likely to spontaneously have an opinion on societal issues, rather than on historical issues. These differences, however, can also point to variations in students' task and activity models (see Britt & Rouet, 2012; Rouet et al., 2017; Wiley et al., 2020). It is possible that, based on students' experiences with similar tasks in the pasts, students had different ideas about what was expected of them and which activities were needed to achieve that. This would also explain the large variation in students' historical essay types. Considering the large diversity in teachers' current practices regarding historical thinking and historical inquiry, it is likely that students started these tasks with very different initial views.

Alongside the differences identified at pretest, the two essay types demonstrated, to a certain extent, a similar evolution between pretest and posttest, as at posttest, in both cases, students relied more heavily on the sources to substantiate their claims and develop their arguments and did so more explicitly. Given that some of these elements were already present in students' topical essays at pretest, we should be wary of assuming that this necessarily indicates a transfer of skills from the historical to the topical essay task. Nevertheless, students' historical and topical essays at posttest clearly reflected an increased reliance on and use of the provided sources. The finding that the two types of essays became more similar at posttest indicates that students were at least able to recognize the similarities between the historical and topical essay tasks. This is a neces-

sary step to allow for the transfer of learning (Barnett & Ceci, 2002; Van Peppen et al., 2021).

It should be noted, however, that these forms of progress, though frequently observed in students' historical essays, only occurred in their topical essays in a relatively limited way. The discussion of the relevant coding themes above makes clear that increased attention to the value of sources and rebutting potential counterarguments was less prominent in the latter context. Shifts in students' topical essay structures also saw only seven students move to an argumentative–evaluative structure that focused on both substantiating a claim and evaluating the value of the sources. Students' pretest scores may provide an explanation in this regard, as these varied strongly among students in the sample (as evidenced by the relatively large standard deviations in Table 4). When we consider those students whose essays showed the most obvious signs of a skills transfer, it seems that they were predominantly those whose pretest essays already obtained relatively high scores. This may indicate that evaluating a source's value and rebutting potential counterarguments require relatively advanced abilities.

An in-depth analysis of how this increased attention to the value of sources and to counterarguments and opposing evidence was manifested in the topical essays highlights an important issue. Although students exhibited greater attention to these aspects at posttest, this did not necessarily result in higher-quality essays. In particular, the quality of students' reasoning about the value of contemporary sources and of their rebuttals of counterarguments and opposing evidence was not equal to that exercised with regard to historical sources. This shows that even if history education is able to increase students' willingness to evaluate the value of sources, the criteria that they learn to apply to historical sources are not necessarily straightforwardly applicable to contemporary sources. Consequently, it seems that students must be explicitly taught how to assess the value not only of historical sources but also of various types of contemporary sources.

Although the essay data used in this study allowed for a detailed analysis of students' writing, they offer little insight into students' underlying reasoning processes. Ideally, students' responses to both topical and historical essay tasks would be shaped through their weighing of the available evidence and sources rather than their personal opinions or preconceptions. This was not, however, necessarily the case, and we cannot be sure whether changes observed in students' essays truly reflect changes in their reasoning processes. This is of particular importance for the topical essays, which centered around topics that were relevant to the students' personal lives

and on which they could be expected to already have a determined point of view. Thus, when students' topical essays show an increase in attention to the value of sources and counter-sources, we cannot be sure to what extent this consideration of the source material truly shaped their point of view and compelled them to (re)evaluate their initial position. At the same time, it is possible that a lack of attention to the value of sources and counterarguments and opposing evidence in a student's posttest essay does not indicate that these skills were not transferred but rather that the student chose only to consider and refer to sources that supported their initial position. To fully determine why a transfer effect was not always observed in these aspects, we would need to gather data on students' underlying reasoning processes in completing these multiple-document inquiry tasks. This could be achieved in follow-up research, for instance, via interviews or think-aloud methods.

This study allows us to further reflect on the possible relationship between historical thinking and democratic citizenship. It provides evidence that fostering students' historical inquiry skills may indeed affect, to a small degree, how students approach and use contemporary sources to argue their position on contemporary debates, but it mainly highlights that such a transfer is difficult to achieve and, in the few cases where it does occur, remains very limited in scope. This is particularly relevant when we take into account the fact that this study is based on a small, purposeful sample of only those students whose essay scores indicated that a transfer may, in fact, have occurred. When we consider general educational literature on the conditions needed for a transfer of learning, it appears that fostering a substantial transfer among a general population of students will only be possible if explicit attention is dedicated to the development of these democratic skills. Such work, however, takes time, a point that urges us to (re)consider what role is expected of history education in this regard. Can historical thinking, which is complex and difficult to develop, be considered sufficiently valuable as an educational goal in itself, or must history education also contribute directly to democratic citizenship?

The observations in this study encourage broader reflection on the place of democratic or citizenship education in the curriculum. While we must take care not to unfairly extrapolate the findings of this study to other subjects, it does seem reasonable to assume that the same mechanisms will operate in other subjects that are regularly associated with the development of democratic citizenship, such as literature in the first-language or geography. This study suggests that we should not be overly optimistic about the extent to which skills related to democratic citizenship will develop "naturally" as a

result of a transfer that occurs spontaneously among students: Rather, developing these skills requires explicit attention and dedicated time. Subjects such as history or geography can take up a supportive role in students' development of such skills, for instance, by including explicit mention of the similarities between the skills used in class and more general democratic skills. Considering the importance of developing these democratic skills, however, it may perhaps be more worthwhile to grant them a designated space within the educational curriculum. This might guarantee more explicit attention to their development than can be achieved simply by expecting that development via a transfer from other subjects.

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Appendix

Coding scheme with descriptions and examples

Main coding themes and related subcodes	Description	Example
CLAIM (POSITION STATEMENT)		
No statement	The essay does not contain a statement or claim in response to the historical/topical question	There has never been any clarity on who shot first and whether this was a matter of police brutality or pure self-defense. The police violence was both legitimate and illegitimate.
Explicit statement	The essay explicitly puts forward a clear statement or claim in response to the historical/topical question	Based on the analysis of these sources, I conclude that the acts of violence committed by Dutch troops in Indonesia were structural acts. Thus, in my opinion it is not a good idea to lower the voting age.
Implicit statement	The essay contains a statement or claim in response to the historical/topical question, but is not explicitly stated as such.	In my opinion, this was a misunderstanding where there were bad apples in both groups. However, the police should have given a warning and stopped shooting once the crowd fled. I can well imagine that the police panicked because of this attack. But shooting at innocent people is never the solution, I think.
Partial statement	The essay contains a statement or claim that is only partly in response to the historical/topical question (e.g. not entirely in line with the question)	What exactly do I think about it? Well, I haven't been able to do enough research yet, but I think it's easy to conclude that killing people, for whatever cause and certainly in their backs, is something terrible and you should be punished for it.
ARGUMENTATION IN SUPPORT OF THE CLAIM		
Own argumentation	The students provides an argument in support of their answer to the historical question but this is not based on the sources	I think the police felt threatened by the large crowd, so they reacted in an extreme way. They killed everyone because they were afraid. A lot of 16-year-olds are too immature to take this seriously. If they are required to vote, a lot of votes would be cast randomly or as a joke.
Argument derived from the sources		

Form_implicit
Form_explicit

Implicit: the argument is mentioned, but not clearly presented in support of the claim
Explicit: the argument is clearly put forward in support of the claim (e.g. by use of phrases such as 'a first reason is that' or 'therefore')

Implicit

One may ask: being pelted with some stones and one protester drawing a weapon, is this a good reason to start shooting at the protesters?

Looking at the interview with the war veteran Joop Hueting in 1969, this man talks about the atrocities that he has seen happen. Namely: villages that were ruined, horrible interrogations that took place without military necessity.

Explicit

Another argument for systematic violence is the interview with Joop Hueting in 1969. In it he describes that that he and his fellow soldiers did many horrible things. It was normal, he says.

Moreover, no warning shots were given and the police were pelted with stones (see sources 1 and 3). I derived a very important argument from source 5. Namely, when students fail a positioning test, it can have a very negative impact on their motivation at the beginning of the academic year.

Quality_high
Quality_medioocre
Quality_low

High: the argument is derived from the sources, based on an accurate understanding of the source(s), supports the claim and is accurately/clearly presented/explained
Mediocre: the argument is derived from the sources and supports the claim but is not clearly presented/accurately explained
Low: the argument is derived from the sources but based on an inaccurate understanding of the source and/or does not support the claim

Higb

According to journalist Humprey Tyler, the crowd was not warned to disperse. The police accused the crowd of being heavily armed, however, the journalist claims that he did not see these heavy weapons.

Looking at source 3 (results from large scale survey in August 2018) it appears that 52.3% of 14 to 25-year-olds who participated in this survey do not think that the 16-year-olds should be required to vote (...) about half of them prefers the right to vote, without obligation.

Mediocre

I think the biggest problem here is with the mentality of the police before the demonstration and the violence. The police were not only prepared for violence, they expected violence (source 3).

Low

It is noteworthy, that source 5 also came about after an accusation towards the Dutch. A comprehensive investigation, conducted by Limpach, once again states that the Dutch violence was of a structural nature. In 2016, the Dutch government insists on conducting a second investigation, in order to prove their innocence after all. (*Student misinterpreted the source*).

USE OF SOURCES		
Source reference	A specific source is mentioned (e.g. by referencing the source's number or author), but not connected to the claim	Historian Tom Lodge describes the situation from a historical perspective. He states that the police shot at fleeing people, which can also be proven by the many bullet wounds in the back.
Source reference in support of the claim	A specific source is mentioned (e.g. by referencing the source's number or author), and presented in support of the claim	A first reason is that extreme violence was the normal course of events and was therefore a structural fact. This is said in the television interview with Joop Hueting (source 1). Moreover, research from the University of Hasselt in source 1 mentions that the positioning tests are unreliable and therefore not useful in practice.
Vague source reference	Sources are mentioned in general, without reference to one or more specific sources.	Several sources indicate that the violence was illegitimate and that the police abused their power.
EVALUATION OF THE SUPPORTING SOURCES' VALUE, IN TERMS OF THEIR RELIABILITY AND/OR REPRESENTATIVENESS		
No evaluation of a source's value	No mention of any element or aspect of the source which may influence its value	The picture of Ian Berry confirms this, we see the crowd running away. Also we see none of the so-called heavy weapons. Source 1 and 4 clearly show that a positioning test cannot predict how well a student will perform in higher education.
Superficial evaluation of a source's value	One or more relevant aspects of a source is mentioned (e.g. author, date, goal etc. of the source) but this is not connected to an evaluation of its value.	Humphrey Tyler, a reporter, and Ian Berry, a photographer, both worked for Drum Magazine. This magazine expressed their support for the anti-Apartheid movement. The two men were present at the Sharpeville demonstration. Johan De Wilde, lecturer and researcher at Odisee University College and Ann Martin, director of Education at Odisee University College consider this test to provide little information.
Evaluation of a source's value	The student evaluates the value of a source/explains why they consider the source to be valuable	
Form_implicit	Implicit: the student evaluates the source's value but does not explicitly mention this by referring to notions such as reliability, value, representativeness, neutrality, objectivity, etc.	<i>Implicit</i> Joop Hueting talked about the war crimes in an interview and indicated that these were not just a few incidents but were daily occurrences. He was a veteran of the war so an eyewitness.
Form_explicit	Explicit: the student makes explicit that they are evaluating the source's value, (e.g. by referring to reliability, representativeness, neutrality or subjectivity of the source)	<i>Explicit</i> We can assume that Joop Hueting is a reliable source as the man was an eyewitness during the war. Source 3, 'opinion piece of Beno Schraepen' mainly states that positioning tests do not provide insight into the talent or potential of a student. Considering that this is merely an opinion piece and there is no information about who shares this opinion, I consider this source to be unrepresentative.

Quality_high
 Quality_mediocre
 Quality_low
 Quality_nuance (additional/double coding)

High: Reasoning regarding a source's value makes sense/is accurate and clear
 Mediocre: Reasoning regarding a source's value touches upon a relevant aspects but is not entirely clear or accurate, for instance in the case of oversimplification
 Low: Reasoning regarding a source's value is missing or completely inaccurate.
 Nuance: Reasoning is presented both in favour of the source's value, but also against.

High
 A study by Dr. Limpach shows that the violence was indeed structural in nature. Dr. Limpach is himself a historian and has done extensive research to reach this conclusion, which leads me to believe that this source is reliable.
 An article in the journal 'TH&MA' mentions that positioning tests currently only have a limited effect on students' enrollment. This conclusion is based on extensive research which makes this a reliable source.

Mediocre
 One can assume that the statement of the South Africa High Commissioner is subjective. The people in this commission were white and therefore had no idea what it is like to be black, in 1960 there was also very much racism. Because Joop was an eyewitness we can conclude that the source is reliable.

Low
 Source 4 shows a photo of Dutch soldiers standing next to wounded and deceased Indonesian soldiers. This is a reliable source because photoshop did not exist at that time and it reflects reality very well.

Nuance
 In my opinion, this source is a reliable source to answer this question because his goal is to talk about his experiences, he also tried to tell his story in the 1950s but was always rejected. However, we do not know whether Hueting's experiences are representative of all the other soldiers since no other accounts were given.

Criterion_author
 Criterion_goal
 Criterion_audience
 Criterion_societal context
 Criterion_information
 Criterion_time/place
 Criterion_representativeness

Specification of which aspect of the source is mentioned in relation to its value

Time, information, goal:
 Hueting's testimony is indeed reliable. He was present at the moment itself (although this was 20 years ago, so this is not a sufficient condition). In addition, his goal appears to be simply to tell the truth to the Dutch population. He has nothing to gain from this interview, does not defend himself and only tells what he saw.

REBUTTAL OF COUNTER ARGUMENTS AND OPPOSING EVIDENCE

Mentioned without dialogue	The essay contains a possible counterargument or source, but this is not presented as such (no confrontation with other sources or arguments), or the student only refutes it based on their own input.	Investigations have shown that a large number of people were shot in the back. According to Pienaar, this had two reasons: ricocheting bullets may have hit the protesters in the back. Also, some of them may have been hit in the back while fleeing. I find the first reason a bit unlikely. Matilde De Cooman claims that a positioning test can negatively impact a student's motivation. I think the opposite is true: (...) you know where you stand and are offered additional support which in my opinion can only be helpful.
Superficial dialogue	The existence of counterarguments or sources is mentioned, but they are not refuted.	According to the police, their unit was pelted by a large number of stones, and the crowd of protesters was also armed with heavy weapons. Humphrey on the other hand had not seen any weapons himself. Sources 2 and 3 contradict my position and thus state that everything was done correctly and the Dutch are not to blame.
Rebuttal	The existence of a counterargument or source is mentioned and refuted by comparing the sources' value	
Form_implicit Form_explicit	Implicit: the student evaluates the source's value to rebut the counterargument but does not explicitly mention this by referring to notions such as reliability, value, representativeness, neutrality, objectivity, etc. Explicit: the student makes explicit that they are evaluating the source's value to rebut the counterargument, (e.g. by referring to reliability, representativeness, neutrality or subjectivity of the source)	<p><i>Implicit</i></p> <p>A possible counter-argument could be that a study was already issued by the Dutch government in 1969. However, this study was only allowed to last three months (which is not enough time to comprehensively investigate everything). In addition, it came from the government itself. They could present the facts in a more positive way in order to present themselves in a more favorable way. A final source that opposes my statement is the research report in the journal 'TH&MA' (...) which stated that the positioning tests only had a very limited effect on students' enrollment (...) However, this study only applies to STEM-studies (...), thus it is not applicable to a whole range of other fields of study.</p> <p><i>Explicit</i></p> <p>J.G. Schuitema, a corporal from 1946 to 1948 in Central Java, issued a reader's letter eight days after the television interview, in which he writes that what Joop Huetting said is a big lie. Personally, I think this is a less reliable source, since he was a corporal and thus in charge of several soldiers. I think that with this letter he mainly wanted to save his own skin.</p>

Quality_high
 Quality_mediocre
 Quality_low

High: Reasoning regarding differences between the sources' value makes sense/is accurate and clear
 Mediocre: Reasoning regarding differences between the sources' value touches upon a relevant aspects but is not entirely clear or accurate, for instance in the case of oversimplification
 Low: Reasoning regarding differences between the sources' value is missing or completely inaccurate.

High
 In the reader's letter from a former veteran we can read that he accuses Hueting of telling incorrect facts. To his knowledge no prisoners of war were ever killed, they were always released. At first sight this seems to be a reliable source, he has seen the facts happening just like Hueting and is therefore an eyewitness. But we may assume that after the television interview with Hueting, the authorities from this period will have received much criticism. So there is a possibility that this Corporal just wanted to clear his name. It is also possible that both Hueting and the Corporal were active in a different area. And thus that they did not witness the same acts of violence. A final source that opposes my statement is the research report in the journal 'TH&MA' (...) which stated that the positioning tests only had a very limited effect on students' enrollment (...) However, this study only applies to STEM-studies (...), thus it is not applicable to a whole range of other fields of studies.
Mediocre
 Another source on this subject is the 1969 government report. However, I do not find this reliable (...) They did not have the time to properly investigate both sides of the story and therefore I do not find the source representative.
Low
 Source 3 is a reader's letter. This is probably just an old man wanting to clear his conscience. Thus, not so reliable.

Criterion_author
 Criterion_goal
 Criterion_audience
 Criterion_societal context
 Criterion_information
 Criterion_time/place
 Criterion_representativeness
 Criterion_medium

Specification of which aspect of the source is mentioned in relation to its value

ESSAY TYPE

Descriptive	The essay's main focus is on describing what happened or summarising the content of the various sources. The essay provides a report of the events, as described in the sources. The essay may contain a claim in response to the historical question but no arguments or sources are clearly put forward to support the claim.
Argumentative	The essay's main focus is on arguing why a certain claim has been made. The essays provides a claim and substantiates it by providing arguments and/or by referring to sources that support the claim. Arguments may be derived from the sources, but can also be based on students' own ideas. There is no attention for the value of sources.

Evaluative	The essay's main focus is on (systematically) evaluating the different sources that were provided. Although the essay may include a claim, there is no/very little attention to (explicitly) substantiating the claim with arguments or sources (lack of connection between the claim and the sources).
Argumentative-evaluative	The essay both substantiates a claim with arguments and sources <i>and</i> demonstrates attention to the value of sources. The essay contains arguments and source references in support of a claim <i>and</i> argues why certain sources may be considered more/less valuable in light of the historical/topical question.

Note: Parts of this coding scheme are based on Wilke et al., 2023.

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Bastien Sasseville, Félix Bouvier et Liliane Portelance

L'enseignement des concepts de l'histoire du Québec et du Canada par des stagiaires en formation des maîtres

Résumé

Cette communication présente les résultats d'une recherche portant sur les pratiques d'enseignement déclarées des concepts prévus au programme d'histoire nationale au Québec par des enseignants stagiaires en formation des maîtres. Basée sur une approche qualitative exploratoire, la recherche révèle des stratégies d'enseignement visant l'appropriation des concepts par les élèves par une construction progressive de la compréhension. Mais les exposés magistraux, stratégies d'enseignement plutôt transmissives, semblent s'opposer au développement approprié et maximal de la pensée critique et de la capacité de compréhension chez les élèves. Cependant, les participants à la recherche s'interrogent tout de même sur leurs pratiques d'enseignement et, en particulier, sur l'appropriation conceptuelle de leurs élèves.

Mots clés: *enseignement de l'histoire, concept, curriculum, recherche qualitative, recherche exploratoire, enseignants stagiaires*

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study investigating the teaching methods employed by teacher training students in Quebec, Canada, to convey the concepts set out in the national history curriculum. Adopting an exploratory qualitative approach, the research reveals teaching strategies that aim to help students develop an understanding of concepts by gradually building their knowledge of them. However, the transmissive nature of lectures appears to hinder the optimal development of students' critical thinking and comprehension skills. Nevertheless, the research participants continue to question their teaching practices, particularly with regard to their students' conceptual understanding.

Keywords: *history teaching, concept, curriculum, qualitative research, exploratory research, teacher trainees*

1. Enseigner l'histoire : conceptualisation et pédagogie active

L'enseignement de l'histoire demande aux enseignants de revoir leur manière d'enseigner, de s'éloigner d'un enseignement purement transmissif et d'opter pour une pédagogie active de la discipline. En effet, puisque les élèves sont appelés à conceptualiser les réalités historiques, l'enseignant doit opter pour des pratiques qui sollicitent l'implication cognitive active de chacun et leur engagement dans un processus de construction de sens (MEES, 2017). À cette fin, il doit favoriser en classe le développement de la pensée critique, basée entre autres sur l'analyse, la discussion, l'échange et la confrontation des points de vue. Or, des résultats de recherches montrent que les enseignants d'histoire au secondaire privilégient plutôt une approche transmissive, et ce, peu importe leur expérience professionnelle.

Devant les faits révélés par la recherche portant sur les pratiques d'enseignement et de l'apprentissage des concepts de l'histoire au secondaire (Bouvier, 2008, 2010, 2012; Bouvier et Chiasson-Desjardins, 2013, 2015), notamment ceux qui concernent les modes d'enseignement privilégiés par les enseignants, et considérant le cursus universitaire de la formation initiale en enseignement de l'histoire du Québec et du Canada, nous avons cru nécessaire de nous pencher sur les pratiques d'enseignement des futurs enseignants en contexte de stage afin de connaître et comprendre les approches didactico-pédagogiques des stagiaires dans l'enseignement des concepts prescrits et de voir si ces approches respectaient celles préconisées pour l'apprentissage des concepts prescrits dans le programme ministériel.¹

2. Le programme d'histoire nationale tel que prescrit dans le Programme de formation de l'école québécoise (PFÉQ)

Le programme ministériel a pour visées de formation de favoriser l'acquisition de connaissances historiques par les élèves, par le biais du développement de deux compétences disciplinaires : 1) caractériser une période de l'histoire du Québec et du Canada et 2) interpréter une réalité sociale (*Ibid.*, p. 10 à 15), afin que l'élève

¹ Ce texte découle d'une communication scientifique effectuée par les auteurs le 23 septembre 2022 à Trois-Rivières, au Québec, dans le cadre de la sixième Conférence de l'Association internationale de recherche en didactique de l'histoire et des sciences sociales (AIRDHSS/IRAHSSE). Cette présentation rendait compte de prestations d'enseignement de stagiaires finissants du programme de formation des maîtres quant à l'enseignement des concepts prescrits dans le programme d'histoire nationale (Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2017).

puisse développer des aptitudes critiques puis délibératives favorables à la participation sociale. Pour y arriver, sur le plan cognitif, l'apprentissage de l'histoire nationale est l'occasion pour l'élève de s'approprier graduellement un réseau de concepts pour comprendre les différentes réalités sociales du passé.

En annexes 1 et 2, deux tableaux provenant du programme d'*Histoire du Québec et du Canada* (MEES, 2017) exposent le cadre à l'intérieur duquel s'inscrit la recherche. Ces tableaux orientent, sur le plan disciplinaire et conceptuel, l'enseignement-apprentissage des concepts prescrits en 3^e et 4^e année du secondaire. Le premier tableau présente les périodes historiques allant des Autochtones (vers 10 000 avant J.C.) à 1840. Le deuxième illustre celles portant sur les années suivantes, de 1840 jusqu'à nos jours.

Plus spécifiquement, le changement d'empire concerne la période historique débutant par la Conquête anglo-britannique de 1760 sur ce qui se nommait jusqu'alors la Nouvelle-France et qui devient en 1763 la *Province of Quebec*. Les concepts prescrits dans le programme sont l'allégeance, l'assimilation et la constitution (*Ibid.*, p. 32). Pour ce qui est de la période portant sur la formation du régime fédéral canadien, les concepts sur lesquels porte notre étude sont le fédéralisme, l'industrialisation et la migration. Un résumé du contenu historique relativement à ces périodes se retrouve en annexe 3, ainsi que des cartes précisant les repères géographiques en annexes 4 et 5.

En 2019-2020, deux stagiaires ont participé à la recherche. Ils enseignaient à des élèves de troisième secondaire la réalité sociale allant de 1760 à 1791 et s'intitulant « Expliquer comment le changement d'empire a marqué la société coloniale ». En 2020-2021, nous avons recruté deux autres stagiaires. Ils avaient pour tâche d'enseigner à des élèves de 4^e secondaire la réalité sociale se déroulant de 1840 à 1896 et dont le titre est : « Expliquer la mise en place d'un cadre politique dans une période de bouleversements sociodémographiques et économiques » (*Ibid.*, p. 45).

La recherche a permis de rendre compte de leurs perceptions et expériences quant aux tenants et aboutissants de l'enseignement des concepts dans le cours d'*Histoire du Québec et du Canada*.

3. Éléments de problématique

Comme souligné en introduction, afin d'amener les élèves à conceptualiser les réalités historiques, l'enseignant doit opter pour des pratiques qui sollicitent l'implication cognitive active de chacun et leur engagement dans un processus de construction de sens. Les résultats de récentes recherches montrent cependant que les ensei-

gnants d'histoire au secondaire privilégient plutôt une approche transmissive.

Selon 18 entretiens individuels menés par Moisan (2010), ils adoptent une approche centrée sur la transmission de savoirs, principalement déclaratifs, et de connaissances de base, croyant que la pensée critique ou historique n'est pas accessible aux élèves du secondaire. Boutonnet (2015) corrobore cette affirmation après avoir analysé les résultats d'un sondage auprès de 81 enseignants d'histoire au secondaire. Ce chercheur observe la prédominance d'un enseignement transmissif et illustratif sur un mode critique et interprétatif. Ainsi, l'enseignement des réalités sociales qui ont ponctué l'histoire du Québec et du Canada ne semble pas viser leur interprétation par les élèves à la lumière de référents conceptuels introduits et explorés en classe.

Pour ce qui est de la formation initiale en enseignement, celle-ci doit favoriser un enseignement approprié des concepts en classe d'histoire au secondaire. Dans ce but, les universités sont invitées par les instances ministérielles à offrir une formation répondant à ce besoin (CAPFE, 2015). Les étudiants de la formation initiale sont ainsi préparés à planifier et mettre en œuvre, à l'occasion de leurs stages, des situations d'enseignement-apprentissage qui donnent lieu à l'appropriation des concepts prescrits dans le programme d'histoire nationale de l'école québécoise.

L'enseignement des concepts exige une démarche pédagogique basée sur une planification comprenant, entre autres, la détermination des objectifs d'apprentissage et des stratégies d'enseignement adéquates (Desrosiers-Sabbath, 1984). Il s'appuie sur des intentions didactiques et pédagogiques : rendre les apprenants aptes à établir des liens entre les concepts et à mobiliser ceux-ci dans différents environnements et contextes.

4. Concept, apprentissage et enseignement des concepts

Pour mieux comprendre l'enseignement des concepts, il y a lieu d'approfondir le sens accordé au vocable concept. Il importe également de s'intéresser à l'apprentissage et l'enseignement des concepts.

4.1. *Concept*

Plusieurs auteurs permettent de circonscrire ce qu'est un concept, de le définir et de le comprendre. C'est avant tout un construit, un symbole qui désigne ou représente une réalité, un moyen d'accéder au réel (Marrou, 1959; Desrosiers-Sabbath, 1984,

1993). Il est aussi la pierre angulaire de la pensée structurée. Ainsi, le maniement des concepts permet d'exprimer les nuances et les multiples facettes que comporte le réel, de raisonner et de défendre logiquement des idées ou des opinions.

Un concept est pluridimensionnel (Veyne, 1971; Baraké, 2008), pouvant ainsi être défini selon ses différentes dimensions et ses caractères propres. Ceux-ci étant changeants, le concept exprime une unité de connaissance évolutive, jamais statique. Il est possible de se le représenter comme un outil servant à la compréhension du monde (Wells, 2008) et, malgré qu'il soit abstrait, il est envisageable de le cerner à partir de ses attributs (Chiasson-Desjardins, 2013).

En histoire, le concept permet d'ordonner un ensemble de données brutes en un tout cohérent, une forme d'intelligibilité fruit du travail de l'historien (Veyne, 1971; De Certeau, 1975). Il est cependant réducteur, ne pouvant traduire complètement la complexité d'un phénomène ou d'une époque et demeure toujours sujet à réinterprétation. Il ne peut prétendre à l'universalité. Pour ce qui est de la synthèse historique proposée en classe, c'est une convention visant à ordonner le passé, à produire des généralisations, permettant un travail de la pensée. Le concept, unité de base essentiel à la généralisation, permet ainsi ce travail.

4.2. *Apprentissage des concepts*

L'apprentissage des concepts exige de l'élève une capacité d'abstraction (Szabo et al., 1985), une aptitude à la conceptualisation. Or, la conceptualisation représente une forme supérieure d'apprentissage. Définie par D'Hainaut (1980) comme un processus visant à identifier ou à définir des objets, des personnes ou des phénomènes, elle permet le passage du particulier à la généralité (Deleplace et Niclot, 2005). Apprendre les concepts apparaît ainsi comme une démarche du développement de la pensée et particulièrement de l'autonomie cognitive (Desrosiers-Sabbath, 1984).

L'apprentissage des concepts en classe d'histoire se conjugue avec les compétences intellectuelles qui aident les élèves à développer une pensée historienne pour mieux comprendre, à l'instar des historiens, les événements du passé et les récits de l'histoire, compétences intellectuelles exposées dans les travaux de Seixas et Morton (2013). Ces compétences touchent à diverses dimensions du travail de l'historien, telles que la détermination de la pertinence historique, la sélection et la critique des sources, la capacité à distinguer la continuité et le changement ainsi que les causes et les conséquences des changements, la prise en compte de la perspective historique et la dimension éthique. Celles-ci – les heuristiques de l'histoire –

constituent la base de la démarche d'investigation historique et permettent à l'élève de développer sa pensée critique et sa capacité à débattre de manière raisonnée. Cependant, pour ce faire, le développement de ces heuristiques chez l'élève doit passer par une pédagogie active, une mise en pratique à partir de faits historiques significatifs sur lesquels l'élève peut travailler, réfléchir et débattre pour confronter les perspectives face au passé. Ceci demande une approche basée sur la résolution de problème, donc un choix pédagogique et didactique planifié en amont de la situation d'apprentissage par l'enseignant.

Par ailleurs, les élèves peuvent mieux s'appropriier un concept historique s'il est associé à des situations et à des personnages concrets, ce que Cariou (2004) nomme la généralisation par individualisation. De plus, il importe de prendre en compte que l'apprentissage de concepts ne peut être considéré isolément. À cet égard, l'apprentissage de tout concept implique et supporte l'acquisition d'autres concepts (Ramos, Sarreira et Correia Ramos, 2010). Dès lors, l'enseignant doit se préoccuper, dans la mise en action de l'élève, de l'organisation mentale des concepts.

4.3. *Enseignement des concepts*

L'enseignement de concepts ne se satisfait pas d'une approche qui interpelle la mémorisation de faits et de définitions par les élèves. Selon Case (2008), un tel mode d'enseignement ne porte pas suffisamment attention au développement de la pensée, se réduisant principalement à une transmission de connaissances. Une approche suggérée en psychologie cognitive consiste à construire avec les élèves une définition du concept par la présentation d'exemples correspondant à ses différentes caractéristiques (Hodges, 1981) et, de préférence, en lien avec leur application dans des situations de la vie courante (Rawson, Thomas et Jacoby, 2015). Le traitement des informations composées d'exemples et de situations quotidiennes peut favoriser la conceptualisation et aider les apprenants à comprendre le sens d'un concept, considérant que les concepts restent associés à l'expérience qui a permis de les constituer (Pastré, 2011). En classe d'histoire, Twyman, McCleery et Tindal (2006) suggèrent l'enseignement des concepts pour encadrer une période historique. Or, comme le signalent Jadoulle et al. (2004), la conceptualisation du passé peut devenir une entreprise complexe pour des élèves qui disposent mentalement de peu de référents préalables.

À la lumière du cadre conceptuel de notre recherche et en fonction de son objectif général, nous avons souhaité atteindre des objectifs spécifiques. Ainsi, notre collecte de données auprès des sta-

giaires, en ce qui a trait à l'enseignement des concepts, ambitionnait d'identifier les concepts enseignés par les stagiaires; de connaître leurs conceptions; de décrire leurs approches et leurs stratégies d'enseignement ainsi que les intentions qui les sous-tendent et enfin de caractériser les principales difficultés et les éléments facilitateurs pour faire accéder les élèves à la conceptualisation visée.

5. Méthodologie

Une recherche qualitative compréhensive (Dumez, 2011) descriptive (Dumez, 2010) a permis d'atteindre les objectifs de la recherche. L'étude revêt un caractère exploratoire, visant à fournir quelques repères pour de futures recherches (Trudel, Simard et Vonarx, 2007).

Les participants ont été sollicités par l'intermédiaire des responsables universitaires de stage en enseignement secondaire. Ces derniers se sont adressés aux superviseurs de stage susceptibles de recruter des volontaires parmi les stagiaires finissants qui enseignaient, pendant leur stage, l'histoire du Québec et du Canada en 3^e ou 4^e secondaire. Cet ensemble de stagiaires est généralement peu étendu puisque les étudiants du baccalauréat en enseignement de l'univers social² sont appelés à enseigner plusieurs autres disciplines. Qui plus est, la collecte des données dont l'analyse est partiellement présentée dans ce texte a eu lieu pendant deux trimestres, hiver et automne 2020, alors que les écoles secondaires étaient frappées par le virus COVID 19. Cette situation sanitaire a rendu le recrutement passablement difficile. Les quatre stagiaires participants³ ont signé le formulaire de consentement approuvé par le comité d'éthique de la recherche de l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.

Les participants étaient alors en quatrième année de formation et effectuaient à ce moment un stage qui comporte une prise en charge complète de la tâche de l'enseignant associé⁴, le tout s'étendant sur douze semaines.

La collecte des données a été réalisée en deux temps, trimestres d'hiver et d'automne 2020, au moyen d'entrevues individuels semi-dirigés, de captations filmées de prestations d'enseignement et d'en-

² Ce programme de formation correspond en quelque sorte à un baccalauréat en enseignement des sciences humaines ou sciences sociales.

³ Une stagiaire de l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières et une de l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi ont participé pendant leur stage de l'hiver 2020. Deux stagiaires masculins de l'Université du Québec à Rimouski ont participé pendant leur stage de l'automne 2020.

⁴ L'enseignant associé est la personne nommée maître de stage dans d'autres pays.

tretiens d'autoconfrontation simple qui replaçaient le stagiaire devant ses actions d'enseignant et visaient l'explicitation du contexte pédagogique et des choix didactiques des participants.

Les données ont été collectées au moyen de deux entretiens individuels semi-dirigés et d'une captation vidéo. Le premier entretien touchait les conceptions, les approches et stratégies d'enseignement déclarées, les intentions d'enseignement, les éléments facilitateurs et les obstacles perçus. Suivait la captation vidéo pendant une période d'enseignement en l'absence des chercheurs. La caméra filmait la ou le stagiaire. Le plus rapidement possible après l'enregistrement vidéo avait lieu un entretien d'autoconfrontation simple. Les séquences vidéo étaient sélectionnées par les chercheurs avant d'être présentées au stagiaire. Le stagiaire devait décrire son action, celle qui était projetée, et mentionner les intentions d'enseignement qui sous-tendaient son intervention à ce moment. Précisons que la rétroaction vidéo permet au participant de se revoir en action et au chercheur d'accéder à ses pensées en cours d'action (Tochon, 1996). L'entretien d'autoconfrontation représente une méthode utilisée pour soutenir l'analyse de l'activité humaine (Clot, 1999), accéder à la dynamique interne de l'acteur et la comprendre (Theureau, 2000) et éviter ainsi une simple reconstitution chronologique de l'action.

Tous les entretiens ont été enregistrés sur bande sonore et transcrits intégralement. Les propos des stagiaires ont été analysés. L'utilisation du logiciel NVivo a soutenu la définition d'unités de sens et la catégorisation des données. L'analyse inductive délibératoire, basée sur un cadre établi tout en étant ouverte à des dimensions émergentes (Savoie-Zajc, 2011), a prédominé. Elle a été réalisée en tenant compte des objectifs spécifiques de la recherche et du cadre conceptuel.

6. Résultats obtenus

L'analyse des données est présentée ici en fonction des objectifs cités plus haut. Les sous-catégories ont émergé au cours du processus d'analyse.

6.1. *Concepts abordés en classe*

Tous les stagiaires rencontrés réalisaient le stage au second cycle du secondaire, dans le cadre de l'enseignement de l'histoire nationale. Toutefois, ils n'enseignaient pas la même partie du programme pendant les années 2019-2020 et 2020-2021. Ainsi, pour

Léonie et Myriam⁵, les concepts abordés pendant l'hiver 2020 étaient ceux de pouvoir, territoire, politique, constitution, allégeance, assimilation, colonisation, colonie, autochtone, capitalisme. Ces concepts font partie du programme qui couvre les années 1760 à 1791 et porte sur le changement d'empire, passant du régime français au régime britannique (voir annexe 3).

Claude et Simon, quant à eux, ont abordé à l'automne 2020 les concepts de politique nationale, libéralisme économique, industrialisation, capitalisme industriel, ultramontanisme, anticléricalisme, autochtone et interventionnisme. Leur enseignement portait sur les années 1840 à 1896 et donc sur la mise en place d'un cadre politique dans une période d'évolutions sociodémographiques et économiques (annexe 3).

Selon les stagiaires, certains concepts s'avéraient plus difficiles à comprendre par les élèves. Pour Léonie et Myriam, ce sont les concepts d'assimilation, de constitution, d'allégeance et d'économie. Selon Claude et Simon, c'étaient surtout les concepts d'anticléricalisme, d'ultramontanisme, d'interventionnisme et de capitalisme qui posaient problème.

6.2. *Conceptions de l'enseignement des concepts*

Pour les stagiaires interrogés, le concept sert de base à leur enseignement. Il sert de point de départ pour aller vers la connaissance des faits historiques :

Dans le cadre de l'enseignement de l'histoire, on est pas mal tout le temps dans des concepts... c'est la structure de base, c'est comme le squelette qui nous permet d'amener le reste. [L'enseignement des concepts], c'est de faire une petite gymnastique mentale pour simplifier les choses [...], les ancrer dans le passé et dans les réalités d'aujourd'hui (Claude).

Le concept s'intègre dans une approche chronologique permettant la construction progressive de la compréhension. De plus, les concepts s'imbriquent ou s'enchaînent les uns aux autres. Le stagiaire se sert d'un concept pour en expliquer un autre :

L'enseignement par concepts, c'est pour aider les élèves à faire des boîtes, à classer des informations, à organiser les idées [...], à aller chercher tous les petits côtés d'une réalité (Myriam). C'est [pour amener] à comprendre un élément qui est relativement général, dont les élèves entendent régulièrement parler, mais qui est

⁵ Les prénoms des stagiaires sont fictifs.

très abstrait. Par exemple, en ce moment, je travaille le concept de constitution... [...]. Pour eux, c'est vague. Constitution, ils mélangent ça avec traité, avec toutes sortes de choses. Donc c'est vraiment de débroussailler leurs idées (Léonie).

J'essaie de les amener à ce qu'ils comprennent. Pour avoir du pouvoir, le roi a besoin de l'allégeance des sujets et c'est la raison de l'Acte de Québec [de 1774]. Puis l'Acte de Québec est tellement important. On va voir que les Canadiens sont restés loyaux envers l'Angleterre à cause de l'Acte de Québec. Puis le roi d'Angleterre a fait ça pour donner un bonbon, pour avoir l'allégeance (Myriam).

L'organisation de l'enseignement se fait donc à partir des concepts, généraux et spécifiques, proposés dans le programme. Le concept devient un élément déclencheur de la démarche vers la connaissance par l'établissement de liens ou de distinctions :

C'est comme un grand thème qui pourrait englober plusieurs sous-thèmes et que t'essaies de transmettre à tes élèves. Mettons un thème économique qui a beaucoup de retombées, qui va avoir beaucoup de conséquences sur l'immigration et sur plein d'autres thèmes qui peuvent avoir plusieurs sous-thèmes rattachés (Simon).

6.3. *Approches et stratégies d'enseignement*

Les stagiaires peuvent choisir les approches et les stratégies d'enseignement qu'ils jugent appropriées. Leurs choix à ce sujet se manifestent dans une démarche chronologique, l'utilisation d'exemples concrets et de supports visuels, la transmission de connaissances et le questionnement des élèves.

6.3.1. *Présentation chronologique des faits*

La démarche chronologique propre à l'histoire demeure centrale, mais s'appuie sur la capacité de l'élève à relier le passé et le présent, l'abstrait et le concret, donc une capacité de l'enseignant d'introduire et expliquer le concept et d'amener progressivement l'élève vers la connaissance. L'approche en classe est ici transmissive :

... on a vu le chapitre un, on a fait l'examen, mais ce n'est pas fini. Je veux dire on ne recommence pas à zéro. Même si c'est de la matière qu'on a vue avant, c'est important parce que ça a des conséquences dans un futur assez proche (Simon).

Oui, c'est un concept [constitution] que j'ai abordé, mais sous la Proclamation royale. Je fais une transition entre la Proclamation royale et je m'en vais vers l'Acte de Québec et la Révolution américaine (Myriam).

6.3.2. *Utilisation d'exemples concrets pour soutenir l'apprentissage*

Pour les stagiaires, les concepts sont abstraits, difficiles à illustrer ou à appréhender, et il est important de les rendre tangibles au moyen d'exemples, tirés du vécu de l'élève ou de l'actualité :

C'est surtout au niveau des pensionnats [pour Autochtones]. Je sais que ça commencé dans ces alentours-là, puis les élèves ont vu ça beaucoup cet été [dans les médias] à cause des découvertes qui se sont passée (Simon).

Au début je pars du concept, ensuite de ça je vais relier des exemples. Mais à la fin du cours ou à la fin du chapitre, là je vais faire le contraire (Léonie).

On a fait une boîte « constitution », parce que la province de Québec est régie par une constitution. [...] Le premier exemple qu'on a vu, c'est la Proclamation Royale. Mais l'objectif c'est que, lorsqu'on va être rendu à l'Acte de Québec, ils comprennent que c'est au même niveau que la Proclamation Royale (Léonie).

...puis mes exemples, j'essaie de prendre les plus banals, les plus simples possible, pour qu'ils comprennent, pour ne pas compliquer la chose non plus (Simon).

Souvent, c'étaient des exemples anodins qui leur faisaient comprendre le concept (Simon).

6.3.3. *Appui sur des supports visuels*

Avec la présentation d'exemples, l'utilisation de supports visuels reste un moyen privilégié pour aborder et décortiquer un concept :

J'ai intégré beaucoup de vidéos explicatives, parce que je considère que l'image a un pouvoir vraiment important et les élèves en mangent... Pour parler de nation, je montrais une belle médaille d'Inuit. J'ai amené le livre de Serge Bouchard⁶, parce que dans la vidéo, on voyait des Innus qui souriaient tout le temps puis qui riaient (Claude).

Je me souviens quand je les ai abordés [industrialisation, immigration, chemin de fer], surtout avec la politique nationale de John Macdonald⁷. Lui, il faisait des affiches. [Ce qui fait que] je l'ai abordé avec les affiches (Simon).

⁶ Serge Bouchard est un anthropologue québécois de renommée internationale qui s'intéresse aux peuples et communautés autochtones. Il a écrit *Le peuple rieur. Hommage à mes amis Innus*.

⁷ John Alexander Macdonald (1815 – 1891) fut le 1^{er} premier ministre du Canada, de 1867 à 1873, puis de 1878 à 1891. Il est considéré comme le plus ardent promoteur de

6.3.4. *Approche transmissive des connaissances*

L'exposé magistral conserve une place importante dans les méthodes d'enseignement utilisées. Il permet de rendre compte de la nécessité de fournir à l'élève, d'emblée, les bases théoriques de la matière. Aussi, la mise en récit est utilisée afin de rendre cohérente la discipline à l'étude, de capter l'attention de l'élève et de présenter le contenu disciplinaire de façon attrayante, à la manière d'un conte :

Je leur explique ce que c'est par exemple la constitution. J'essaye de donner une petite définition, puis moi je vais leur donner des mots (Myriam).

Je donne la matière pendant le tiers, la moitié du cours (Léonie).

C'est sûr qu'il va y avoir de la théorie, moi je suis une raconteuse (Léonie).

Pour l'élève que ça n'intéresse pas du tout, je raconte une histoire. Ça fait du sens, puis que ça lui permet de comprendre. Si je ne l'ai pas accroché, au moins il va savoir ce que je lui ai conté (Claude).

Il apparaît que l'approche transmissive demeure prépondérante et ne semble pas permettre un travail intellectuel très développé chez l'élève à partir des concepts abordés. Il semble aussi qu'il existe ici une certaine confusion entre faits historiques au centre de l'exposé (raconter les faits) et concepts dans l'esprit des stagiaires, les deux ayant un statut équivalent.

6.3.5. *Questionnement oral*

Une autre approche permet d'inclure le questionnement oral afin de prendre appui sur les connaissances acquises, de vérifier la compréhension mais aussi de susciter l'argumentation :

... nations autochtones, je les abordais surtout en les questionnant, parce que je sais justement qu'ils ont vu beaucoup d'affaires en lien avec ça (Simon).

J'ai beaucoup travaillé sur le concept d'État. Qu'est-ce que c'est ? Il y a plusieurs définitions. Là je te parle du gouvernement (Léonie).

... qu'on se pose un peu ces questions-là. Pourquoi on les laisse décider ? Pourquoi les gens [des 13 colonies Anglo-américaines] se sont révoltés ? Pourquoi on se laisse gérer par le roi d'Angleterre ? Qui a vraiment la légitimité de diriger ? (Myriam).

la Confédération *canadienne* (1867).

Il ne semble pas cependant que le questionnement débouche sur un débat ou sur un échange raisonné sur la période ou le concept abordé. Le questionnement sert surtout à vérifier la compréhension pour permettre d'aller plus loin dans l'exposé.

6.4. *Intentions sous-jacentes à l'enseignement des concepts*

L'enseignement des concepts repose sur des raisons d'agir. Chez les stagiaires, les intentions sous-jacentes à l'enseignement des concepts sont relativement variées. Formant un tout cohérent, elles peuvent être énoncées comme suit : favoriser la compréhension, développer des capacités intellectuelles, aider à établir des liens cohérents et susciter l'appréhension du présent à la lumière du passé.

6.4.1. *Favoriser la compréhension*

L'intention prédominante de l'enseignement des concepts selon les stagiaires est de favoriser la compréhension :

... j'essaie de faire ma mise en récit, de manière à ce que ça s'imbrique puis que ça arrive logiquement, parce que j'essaie d'enlever l'aspect apprentissage par cœur, pour avoir la compréhension générale de ce qui s'est passé... (Claude).

... cette année, on visait plus la compréhension que des connaissances pures et dures (Claude).

Une fois qu'ils ont compris ce qu'était la constitution, c'est beaucoup plus facile d'aller... de comprendre ce que c'est la Proclamation Royale et de ne plus penser que la Proclamation Royale c'est le Traité de Paris⁸, de comprendre que ce sont deux choses totalement différentes (Léonie).

Je pense que ça [les concepts] leur permet, justement, de savoir l'entièreté d'un sujet comme il le faut avant d'en commencer un autre. On se concentre sur une chose en particulier. Si on parle d'un grand évènement [1867]⁹, puis après ça qu'on va à gauche et à droite, puis on l'aborde tout croche [tout de travers], c'est sûr que c'est plus compliqué pour eux (Simon).

⁸ Le traité de Paris, signé le 10 février 1763, met fin à la guerre de Sept Ans et marque la fin du conflit en Amérique du Nord. Par ce traité, la France cède officiellement la Nouvelle-France aux Britanniques.

⁹ La Loi constitutionnelle de 1867, anciennement appelée l'Acte de l'Amérique du Nord britannique, crée le Dominion du Canada et définit son fonctionnement, notamment le fédéralisme, en édictant un partage des compétences législatives entre les deux ordres de gouvernement (central fédéral et provinces).

6.4.2. *Développer des capacités intellectuelles*

Par l'enseignement des concepts, les stagiaires cherchent également à soutenir le développement des capacités cognitives telles que la capacité de réflexion, la pensée historique et critique, de même que la conscience citoyenne.

Je ne veux pas en faire un gang de robots qui pensent comme moi, mais je veux ajouter... une réflexion. Je veux ajouter un autre paramètre à l'équation, pour dire : « attends un peu là, il n'y a pas seulement ce que tu penses qui est vrai. Il y a d'autres possibilités, il y a d'autres façons de penser. » (Myriam)

À part ça, ils sont capables de développer leur propre idée critique (Simon).

Quand ils me demandent : « Ouais, mais à quoi ça sert l'histoire ? » À ce que tu comprends ton monde. « De quelle façon ? » Quand tu apprends des notions comme la constitution (Léonie).

..., il n'y a pas juste l'éducation de l'histoire que je dois faire. Pour moi, il y a aussi un peu d'éducation à la citoyenneté, un peu d'éducation populaire (Myriam).

Il demeure cependant encore une fois que l'approche en classe reste très magistrale, centrée sur le dire, l'explication de l'enseignante ou de l'enseignant. Une approche active, permettant le développement de capacités intellectuelles complexes, n'est pas véritablement explicitée.

6.4.3. *Aider à établir des liens cohérents*

En pratique, aborder les concepts en classe est soutenu par l'intention d'aider l'élève à faire des liens et à organiser ses idées :

... ce n'est pas juste de l'apprentissage par cœur, il faut qu'ils s'impliquent, qu'ils écoutent, puis qu'ils fassent des références¹⁰. Le concept est un peu le noyau de cet apprentissage-là puis, ensuite de ça, on part puis on fait des liens avec la matière que je donne en histoire (Léonie).

Aujourd'hui j'ai fait un peu de concepts avec « allégeance » puis avec les « Premières Nations », puis, tu sais, ça en surprend plus d'un [...] prendre le temps de voir [que] c'est important d'avoir l'allégeance des Premières Nations si on veut contrôler le territoire, si on veut faire de la traite des fourrures ... (Myriam).

¹⁰ Pour les stagiaires, faire des références signifie se référer à des apprentissages antérieurs, des connaissances acquises.

Je vais commencer par des affaires qu'ils connaissent, pour approfondir ces connaissances-là, puis plus tard je vais pouvoir chercher d'autres sujets qu'ils connaissent encore plus (Simon).

6.4.4. *Susciter l'appréhension du présent à la lumière du passé*

L'enseignement des concepts permet aussi de comparer les sociétés et les époques pour mieux comprendre la société actuelle. Les stagiaires Léonie et Myriam traitent de la période 1760 à 1791 et le stagiaire Claude couvre la période allant de 1840 à 1896, tel que mentionné plus haut (voir annexe 3). Peu importe la période historique, ils visent à susciter l'appréhension du présent à la lumière du passé :

... ça me permet aussi de me promener comme ça et de faire des liens entre le passé et puis aujourd'hui. Ça leur allume des lumières (Léonie).

... aujourd'hui c'est inacceptable de parler de race. [...] Avant, c'était le choc des rencontres...ça fait qu'encore là ça me permet de travailler la perspective historique (Myriam).

Je prends l'exemple du capitalisme des monopoles. Le capitalisme des monopoles, je le présente et je n'ai pas le choix de le confronter à la réalité d'aujourd'hui, qui est que, théoriquement, le monopole est illégal, il est interdit. À l'époque, on a moins de législation à ce niveau-là, c'est des choses qui sont totalement nouvelles. Il n'y a pas de contre-mesure contre ça. Nécessairement il faut toujours que j'aie un élément présent pour venir coller mon élément passé (Claude).

... donc d'y aller par l'enseignement de causes et de conséquences, d'expliquer que les choses qu'on voit dans le passé sont les causes de ce que l'on vit aujourd'hui (Claude).

Dans ce dernier cas, bien que le stagiaire reconnaisse l'importance des heuristiques de l'histoire, il demeure dans le registre de l'explication magistrale. Il ne semble pas proposer d'activité spécifique aux élèves visant à mettre en pratique ces heuristiques et à construire leur compréhension à partir de l'expérimentation.

6.5. *Effets sur l'apprentissage*

Selon les stagiaires, l'enseignement des concepts a des effets positifs et importants sur les apprentissages. En plus d'offrir une meilleure compréhension du contenu enseigné, il amène à une meilleure organisation des connaissances, ce qui correspond aux intentions des stagiaires mentionnées précédemment :

L'enseignement par concepts, pour l'élève, ça lui permet vraiment de faire des boîtes, puis de classer des informations par des concepts. Passer par les concepts, je trouve que ça fait vraiment une bonne organisation des idées pour les élèves (Myriam).

Ça leur donne un paysage beaucoup plus développé d'une chronologie, que si je vois seulement les événements en ordre chronologique (Myriam).

Ça aide au niveau des causes et conséquences, des changements et continuités parce qu'ils peuvent faire référence, d'une certaine façon, à une définition générale (Léonie).

... ils sont capables de cibler certains éléments qu'on a vus par rapport à plusieurs concepts. Justement, ils ont une idée de la matière en lien avec le concept... (Simon).

L'effet positif sur la motivation est également mentionné :

C'est [enseigner les concepts] surtout susciter la motivation, je crois (Claude).

Quand on touche à des controverses un peu plus, ça vient les chercher, ça les réveille... Les minorités c'est toujours un sujet chaud. Ça amène la motivation, [ça amène] l'élève à réfléchir vraiment (Myriam).

Une stagiaire affirme qu'il y a un effet sur la capacité de réflexion :

Ça les amène à réfléchir, puis à déconstruire des idées reçues (Myriam).

6.6. *Éléments facilitateurs de l'enseignement des concepts*

Outre la référence à l'actualité, certains facteurs sont mentionnés par les stagiaires comme étant des éléments facilitateurs quant à la compréhension des concepts, notamment les connaissances déjà acquises, aussi bien personnelles que scolaires :

Aussi, dans les concepts à apprendre, celui-là était plus facile à apprendre parce qu'on avait vu le Serment du test dès le début. On avait dit ce que c'était prêter allégeance au roi. Puis aussi, j'en ai [des élèves] quand même qui jouent à des jeux vidéo [qui portent sur des faits historiques] (Léonie).

... je suis chanceux, j'ai beaucoup d'éléments de la culture des années 90, les événements avec lesquels j'ai grandi qui sont revenus à la

mode, qui sont super populaires. Ça fait que j'ai des portes d'entrée faciles (Claude).

Je ne voulais pas entrer dans la grosse controverse. Mais je pense que c'est une source de motivation, la controverse (Myriam).

Certains outils didactiques peuvent aussi faciliter l'enseignement des concepts :

Il y a beaucoup de caricatures dans le nouveau manuel. Je les questionne : « pourquoi les artistes ont mis ça dans la caricature ? », Là, ils participent, ils aiment ça. Ils s'en rendent pas compte, mais ils font des liens avec la matière en même temps (Simon).

Le bagage expérientiel du stagiaire permet d'établir un climat d'apprentissage :

Toutes mes expériences m'aident. Je suis capable de dépasser ce qui est dans le manuel. Ça fonctionne bien [...] Si c'est juste les choses qui sont dans le livre, si je fais juste une lecture, ça [ne] fonctionnera pas (Claude).

6.7. *Obstacles à l'enseignement des concepts*

Le principal obstacle mentionné par les stagiaires demeure le fait que les concepts sont des construits abstraits, dont le sens varie selon le contexte. Dans le cadre de cette recherche et sous cet aspect, la période historique couverte n'importe pas :

Tu sais, territoire c'est facile à comprendre. Mais culture, c'est assez abstrait ... (Myriam).

... c'est très abstrait... pour l'instant encore, j'ai l'impression qu'ils sont beaucoup, beaucoup dans le concret peu importe ce que c'est. Par exemple, [...] le serment d'allégeance, « allégeance » ... ce concept-là, c'est vide pour eux (Léonie).

Un autre obstacle mentionné est le manque d'expérience scolaire de l'élève, ainsi que le manque de connaissances préalables :

Ils sont habitués de seulement prendre des notes, de les retranscrire dans leur cahier et de les réappliquer dans un examen. Moi j'arrive avec mes grands chevaux, avec mon idée... je suis une nouvelle enseignante aussi, ça rajoute énormément. Ce n'est pas du tout le même modèle (Léonie).

C'est la première fois qu'ils entendent parler d'une constitution... Ils n'ont rien sur quoi se baser. Ils ne suivent pas les [bulletins de] nouvelles. Une loi anticonstitutionnelle, ils ne savent pas ce que c'est (Léonie).

Ils n'ont pas leur propre idée avant de commencer. Comment bien commencer la matière avec eux, comment développer leurs connaissances ? (Simon).

Globalement, tous les stagiaires sont unanimes pour affirmer que l'enseignement des concepts s'avère difficile pour tous les élèves :

Même si les concepts sont ciblés par le ministère, c'est hyper abstrait. C'est hyper difficile pour eux. (Myriam)

... capitalisme de monopole, capitalisme industriel. Connaître un peu les deux, les différencier, ça peut devenir assez difficile (Claude).

Ces difficultés sont particulièrement présentes chez les élèves en difficultés d'apprentissage :

Ils sont désorganisés... ils sont sur le mode panique parce que c'est des élèves qui sont très, très, très anxieux. Puis c'est des élèves qui, encore plus que mes groupes réguliers, sont dans le concret : « Oui, mais, ça sert à quoi ? Qu'est-ce... ». Il faut être très concret, pas parce qu'ils ne sont pas intelligents, mais parce que la capacité d'abstraction, la capacité de... c'est ça, d'abstraction, est très, très, très difficile (Léonie).

J'essaie d'enseigner le concept d'allégeance, plus difficile à comprendre pour eux, parce que c'est pas un mot qu'ils entendent souvent. C'est comme assimilation (Myriam).

7. Interprétation des résultats

Comme nous pouvons le constater à la lumière de ce qui précède, les stagiaires-enseignants au cœur de cette recherche mettent généralement de l'avant des pratiques où ils tentent d'arrimer leurs intentions d'enseignement (favoriser la compréhension, développer certaines capacités intellectuelles) à des moyens qui leur semblent les plus à même de les satisfaire (questionnement oral, exemples tirés de l'actualité). Nous percevons des stratégies d'enseignement visant l'appropriation des concepts par les élèves par une construction progressive de la compréhension. Ces stratégies comportent

l'exposition de supports favorisant une certaine visualisation et de la réflexion chez les élèves. Toutefois, il est permis de s'interroger sur un apparent manque de cohérence quant à des exposés magistraux bien fréquents, selon l'enregistrement des séquences d'enseignement, qui sont des stratégies d'enseignement plutôt transmissives, ce qui peut sembler s'opposer au développement approprié et maximal des capacités de compréhension chez les élèves.

En pratique, les heuristiques de l'histoire sont absentes, de même que l'approche par problème, qui permettraient de mettre en action chez l'élève la démarche historienne et la pensée critique face au passé, tel que préconisé par Seixas et Morton (2013). Cependant, la généralisation par l'individualisation (Cariou, 2004) semble s'opérer alors que les stagiaires associent les concepts prescrits dans le programme à des situations ou personnages concrets, souvent tirés de la culture immédiate de l'élève ou des médias.

Si les approches propices à l'apprentissage des concepts semblent limitées, il s'agit possiblement d'un choix imposé par le contexte de pratique. En effet, la préoccupation première des stagiaires demeure la compréhension des concepts proposés par le programme, compréhension jugée essentielle et perçue comme une base incontournable afin de bien saisir les faits historiques. Le concept devient un élément organisateur sur lequel s'appuie la compréhension du passé (Veyne, 1971; De Certeau, 1975).

Ainsi, si l'on pousse plus loin l'interprétation de nos résultats, nous observons que l'abstraction (Chiasson-Desjardins, 2013) est perçue comme le principal obstacle à la conceptualisation. Nous pouvons ajouter que des référents culturels appropriés (connaissances personnelles et scolaires) des élèves peuvent faciliter l'apprentissage des concepts à l'étude, mais que leur absence constitue un obstacle (Desrosiers-Sabath, 1984). À cet égard, il est possible d'inférer que la présence, ou l'absence, de livres à la maison peut faire et fait souvent, fort probablement, une grande différence en ce qui concerne le bagage culturel de ces élèves, ce qui découle évidemment du niveau de sensibilisation de la part du milieu familial à la culture scolaire et générale. Cela peut amener des nuances significatives quant à la qualité de l'appropriation cognitive et conceptuelle d'une culture historique pour la grande majorité d'entre eux, pensons-nous.

Les stagiaires observés et interrogés soulignent tous l'utilité de l'enseignement des concepts pour favoriser la compréhension et le développement d'habiletés intellectuelles (Delaplace et Niclot, 2005). En ce sens, ils considèrent que l'enseignement des concepts favorise l'organisation mentale des connaissances (*Ibid*). Ils semblent donc bien adhérer aux bienfaits de l'enseignement des concepts, mais ils ne l'intègrent pas nécessairement de plain-pied dans leur pratique,

tel que mentionné. Ainsi, nous notons que ces stagiaires ont bel et bien l'intention louable d'enseigner les concepts pour qu'ils soient compris et assimilés par les élèves. Toutefois, cette intention didactique se bute à la réalité de la classe et aux réalités pédagogiques dont ils doivent tenir compte.

8. Conclusion

Une quantité intéressante de renseignements résulte donc de cette recherche. Nous pouvons conclure que les quatre stagiaires adhèrent en théorie aux bienfaits de l'enseignement-apprentissage par concepts, et ce, à partir d'un bon nombre de données éclairantes. Parmi elles, une observation fine de ce qu'ils disent pendant les entretiens et lors des séquences d'enseignement filmées nous permet de noter qu'ils n'ont pas encore pu développer une pratique où l'utilisation de documents historiques en classe, par exemple, permettrait une appropriation conceptuelle mieux affirmée chez les élèves. En somme, ces stagiaires adhèrent bien à l'idée des bienfaits pédagogiques de l'enseignement par concepts, mais ils ne l'intègrent toutefois pas nécessairement dans leur pratique de façon complète.

L'analyse que nous faisons des propos de ces étudiants praticiens nous permet de plus de nous demander si leur inexpérience ne constitue pas un frein à la clarté de certaines explications historiques. Dans ce contexte, cela peut sans doute contribuer à ce que les apprentissages soient parfois quelque peu nébuleux ou embrouillés historiquement, entre autres pour ce qui est de l'appropriation des concepts ministériels prescrits.

Cependant, le bilan est positif car les étudiants qui ont participé à la recherche s'interrogent sainement sur leurs pratiques d'enseignement et, en particulier, sur l'appropriation conceptuelle de leurs élèves. Dans cette optique, cela nous semble prometteur pour ce qui touche l'efficacité didactique de l'enseignement-apprentissage par concepts, ici en *Histoire du Québec et du Canada* aux adolescents. Ceci soulève également des pistes intéressantes pour de futures recherches. Par exemple, il serait important de savoir si les moyens et les outils favorisant l'enseignement-apprentissage par concepts sont bien proposés en formation des maîtres et, dans un élargissement de la présente recherche, si nos constats sont généralisables à l'ensemble des stagiaires.

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Annexes

Annexe 1

Synthèse du contenu de formation 3e secondaire Programme de formation de l'école québécoise (PFEQ, 2017)

LES PÉRIODES DE L'HISTOIRE DU QUÉBEC ET DU CANADA			
Des origines à 1608	1608-1760	1760-1791	1791-1840
LES RÉALITÉS SOCIALES			
L'expérience des Autochtones et le projet de colonie	L'évolution de la société coloniale sous l'autorité de la métropole	La Conquête et le changement d'empire	Les revendications et les luttes nationales
Les problématiques que suggèrent les réalités sociales			
Expliquer comment les relations entre les peuples autochtones et leur connaissance du territoire ont contribué à l'exploitation de ses ressources par les Français ainsi qu'à leurs tentatives d'établissement.	Expliquer les relations entre la société coloniale et la France.	Expliquer comment le changement d'empire a marqué la société coloniale.	Expliquer la montée du nationalisme dans une colonie en quête d'autonomie politique.
LES CONNAISSANCES HISTORIQUES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premiers occupants du territoire • Rapports sociaux chez les Autochtones • Prise de décision chez les Autochtones • Réseaux d'échange autochtones • Alliances et rivalités au sein des Premières Nations • Premiers contacts • Exploration et occupation du territoire par les Français 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monopole des compagnies • Gouvernement royal • Territoire français en Amérique • Guerre et diplomatie chez les Premières Nations • Commerce des fourrures • Église catholique • Croissance de la population • Villes du Canada • Régime seigneurial • Diversification économique • Adaptation des colons • Populations autochtones • Guerres intercoloniales et Conquête 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Régime militaire • Proclamation royale • Statut des Indiens • Instructions au gouverneur Murray • Mouvements de revendication • Acte de Québec • Invasion américaine • Loyalistes • Économie coloniale • Situation sociodémographique • Église catholique • Église anglicane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acte constitutionnel • Débats parlementaires • Nationalismes • Idées libérales et républicaines Population de 1837-1838 • Capitaux et infrastructures • Agriculture • Commerce des fourrures • Commerce du bois • Mouvements migratoires • Guerre anglo-américaine de 1812 • Église anglicane • Rapport Durham
LES CONCEPTS PARTICULIERS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance • Échange • Environnement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation • Mercantilisme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allégeance • Assimilation • Constitution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bourgeoisie • Nationalisme • Parlementarisme
LES CONCEPTS COMMUNS			
Culture • Économie • Pouvoir • Société • Territoire			

Annexe 2

**Synthèse du contenu de formation 4e secondaire
Programme de formation de l'école québécoise (PFEQ, 2017)**

LES PÉRIODES DE L'HISTOIRE DU QUÉBEC ET DU CANADA			
1840-1896	1896-1945	1945-1980	De 1980 à nos jours
LES RÉALITÉS SOCIALES			
La formation du régime fédéral canadien	Les nationalismes et l'autonomie du Canada	La modernisation du Québec et la Révolution tranquille	Les choix de société dans le Québec contemporain
Les problématiques que suggèrent les réalités sociales			
Expliquer la mise en place d'un cadre politique dans une période de bouleversements sociodémographiques et économiques.	Expliquer le maintien des particularités linguistiques et culturelles du Québec alors que se redéfinit l'autonomie politique, économique et socioculturelle du Canada.	Expliquer l'évolution des mœurs des Québécois au rythme de la transformation des institutions du Québec et du rôle de l'État.	Expliquer les circonstances culturelles, économiques, politiques, sociales et territoriales qui ont amené, qui amènent ou qui amèneront les Québécois à faire d'importants choix démographiques, environnementaux, technologiques, etc.
LES CONNAISSANCES HISTORIQUES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acte d'Union • Économie coloniale • Gouvernement responsable • Affaires indiennes • Acte de l'Amérique du Nord britannique • Relations fédérales-provinciales • Politique nationale • Migrations • Rôle des femmes • Présence de l'Église catholique • Manifestations socio-culturelles • Première phase d'industrialisation • Industrie forestière • Exploitations agricoles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statut du Canada dans l'Empire • Clérico-nationalisme • Politique intérieure canadienne • Deuxième phase d'industrialisation • Milieux urbains • Culture de masse • Luittes des femmes • Mouvement syndical • Église catholique • Éducation et formation technique • Flux migratoires • Première Guerre mondiale • Grande dépression • Remise en question du capitalisme • Seconde Guerre mondiale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapports de force en Occident • Agglomération urbaine • Accroissement naturel • Nouveaux arrivants • Développement régional • Fédération canadienne • Pensionnats indiens au Québec • Société de consommation • Période duplessiste • Néonationalisme • Révolution tranquille • Féminisme • Effervescence socio-culturelle • Affirmation des nations autochtones • Relations patronales-syndicales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redéfinition du rôle de l'État • Droits des Autochtones • Mondialisation de l'économie • Statut politique du Québec • Évolution sociodémographique • Égalité hommes-femmes • Industrie culturelle • Question linguistique • Préoccupations environnementales • Dévitalisation de localités • Relations internationales • Ère de l'information
LES CONCEPTS PARTICULIERS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fédéralisme • Industrialisation • Migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impérialisme • Libéralisme • Urbanisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • État-providence • Féminisme • Laïcisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Néolibéralisme • Société civile • Souverainisme
LES CONCEPTS COMMUNS			
Culture • Économie • Pouvoir • Société • Territoire			

Annexe 3

1760-1791

Dès le départ, le conquérant anglo-britannique cherche à stimuler l'allégeance des Canadiens vaincus (francophones et catholiques) en les soumettant à un « Serment du Test » qui constituait en quelque sorte une soumission à la couronne britannique, avec entre autres à la clé une renonciation à la foi catholique. Cela visait l'assimilation des Canadiens récemment conquis et s'inscrivait à même la première constitution sous le régime britannique, la Proclamation royale, celle-ci imposant les lois civiles et criminelles anglaises. Cette constitution se révèle bientôt inapplicable, étant donné surtout la faible immigration britannique et anglophone des années 1763 à 1773.

En 1774, devant l'agitation croissante des treize colonies anglo-britanniques qui allaient bientôt devenir les États-Unis d'Amérique, le parlement de Londres adopte une nouvelle constitution intitulée l'Acte de Québec, celui-ci triplant le territoire de la Province de Québec en lui octroyant le code civil français et en reconnaissant l'institutionnalisation du clergé et de l'Église catholique. Il s'agissait d'un pari britannique pour conserver la fidélité ou la neutralité des Canadiens dans la guerre d'indépendance devenue inévitable avec les colonies anglo-américaines, guerre perdue par la Grande-Bretagne. Ce conflit valut au Québec sa première vague d'immigration anglophone, avec l'arrivée de 6000 Loyalistes (envers la couronne britannique), entre 1775 et 1783. Ceux-ci réclamèrent alors un nouveau territoire, ce qui se concrétisa en 1791 par l'Acte constitutionnel, la troisième constitution anglaise où la province de Québec fut scindée en deux à la rivière Outaouais, entre le Haut-Canada (l'Ontario actuelle) et le Bas-Canada (le Québec), territoires où des assemblées législatives avec des députés élus apparurent, le Haut-Canada bénéficiant alors des lois civiles britanniques.

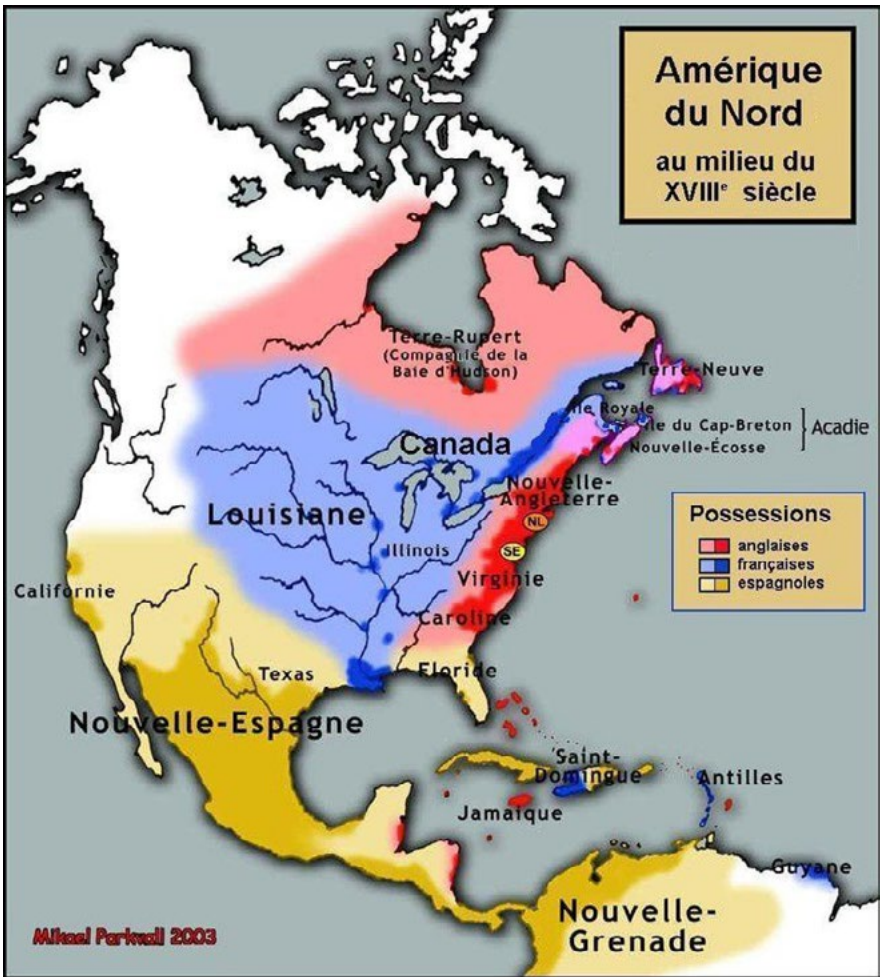
1840-1896

En 1840, la Grande-Bretagne imposa à ses deux principales colonies d'Amérique du Nord une nouvelle constitution, l'Acte d'Union, où le Bas et le Haut-Canada furent réunis à l'intérieur d'une même assemblée législative qui mettait les Canadiens (devenant alors Canadiens français) franco-catholiques du Bas-Canada en minorité, une confirmation politique définitive de la défaite fondamentale de la Nouvelle-France de 1760 aux mains des Anglo-britanniques.

Les vingt-sept années suivantes seront marquées par un certain redressement du Bas-Canada, devenu le Canada-Est, le tout caractérisé par un échafaudage du système fédéral canadien, ce qui mena à la Confédération canadienne de 1867, une union délimitant les

pouvoirs des gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux, avec des pouvoirs mixtes (agriculture, immigration et culture) où le Québec et les autres provinces auront le contrôle de leur système d'éducation. Cette constitution (1867-1982) fut souvent présentée aux Québécois comme étant un pacte entre les deux peuples fondateurs du Canada contemporain. Il s'agit des Canadiens français, très principalement catholiques, et des Canadiens anglais, surtout protestants ou anglicans. Il faut savoir aussi que la période 1840-1867 est celle où l'industrialisation s'amorce et devient structurante, tant au Québec que dans le reste du Canada. Aussi, cette industrialisation accusant néanmoins du retard sur celle du Nord-Est des États-Unis, occasionna entre 1840 et 1930 une émigration du tiers environ de la population québécoise, une saignée d'environ 900 000 habitants (Lavoie, 1978).

Annexe 4



Source :
Études coloniales. Revue en ligne
<http://etudescoloniales.canalblog.com/archives/2007/02/24/4119511.html>

Annexe 5



Source :

Pouvoir et pouvoirs. 400 de politique et de changements constitutionnels. Le Régime britannique, 1760-1774. <https://400anspolitique.wordpress.com/regime-britannique/>

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Fostering postcolonial historical thinking through museum education: exploring prospective teachers' design practices

Abstract

In recent years, fierce postcolonial debates have emerged in academia, museums, and wider society concerning the legacy of colonialism in the postcolonial present. Drawing on insights from postcolonial and history education scholars, and in response to the need to challenge colonial master narratives, this study examines educational activities about the Belgian colonial past designed by prospective secondary school history teachers in two Belgian museums: the AfricaMuseum and the Royal Military Museum. The study has therefore developed and applied a framework of 'postcolonial historical thinking' to analyse the educational activities designed by participants through a performance task. A qualitative analysis of these designs revealed that all participants aimed to broaden students' historical perspective beyond occidentocentric views and deconstruct existing master narratives in both museums. However, participants' critical engagement with objects and the incorporation of socio-cultural dimensions in past-present reflections varied: few participants provided thorough critical reflections on objects as historical sources containing multiple perspectives, or on how students' positionality in the present affects their understanding of the past. More broadly, this research sheds light on the challenges and opportunities involved in incorporating postcolonial perspectives into museum education practices concerning the colonial past. It also promotes nuanced historical thinking and critical engagement the legacy of colonialism in the present day.

Keywords: *museum education, history education, Belgian colonial history, historical thinking, postcolonialism, teacher education*

Résumé

Ces dernières années, des débats postcoloniaux passionnés ont eu lieu dans le milieu universitaire, les musées, et la société sur les héritages coloniaux dans le contexte postcolonial. S'appuyant sur les idées d'experts en études postcoloniales et en didactique de l'histoire, ainsi que sur la nécessité de remettre en question les grands récits dominants, cette étude examine les

activités éducatives des musées liées au passé colonial belge, conçues par des futurs enseignants d'histoire du secondaire pour être utilisées dans deux musées belges, l'AfricaMuseum et le Musée royal de l'Armée. Un cadre de 'pensée historique postcoloniale' a ainsi été élaboré et appliqué pour analyser les activités éducatives conçues par les participants dans le cadre d'une tâche de performance. Une analyse qualitative de ces conceptions a révélé que tous les participants visaient fortement à élargir le cadre de référence historique des élèves au-delà des perspectives occidentocentriques et à déconstruire les grands récits existants dans les deux musées. Cependant, des variations sont apparues dans l'engagement critique des participants envers les objets et dans l'intégration des dimensions socio-culturelles dans les réflexions passé-présent : peu d'entre eux ont intégré une réflexion critique approfondie sur les objets en tant que sources historiques contenant des perspectives multiples ou sur la manière dont la position des élèves dans le présent influence leur compréhension du passé. Nos conclusions suggèrent également la valeur de la corroboration des représentations historiques plus traditionnelles avec des représentations plus récentes pour stimuler la pensée critique. De manière plus générale, cette recherche permet de mieux comprendre les défis et les opportunités liés à l'intégration des perspectives postcoloniales dans les pratiques éducatives des musées concernant le passé colonial, tout en favorisant une pensée historique nuancée et un engagement critique avec les héritages coloniaux dans le présent.

Mots-clés : *éducation muséale, enseignement de l'histoire, histoire coloniale belge, pensée historique, postcolonialisme, formation des enseignants*

1. Introduction

In recent years, strong postcolonial debates have emerged within Western academia, museums and wider society. These debates aim to raise awareness of the multiple legacies of the colonial past in the postcolonial present. Inspired by the work of postcolonial scholars, these debates reflect long-standing historiographical insights and take a critical approach to the colonial past. Their fierce contestation of triumphalist master narratives about the European colonial past involves dismantling and decentring such narratives in order to gain a better understanding of this period. Such narratives falsely portray the coloniser as superior to the 'inferior' colonised, depicting the latter as 'uncivilised'. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, many Western museums presented such narratives in their exhibitions, and many continue to do so to this day (Aldrich, 2009; Porciani, 2018). In the Belgian context, two museums played a significant role in disseminating colonial master narratives to their numerous visitors, including school students (Hassett, 2022; Stanard, 2019). The AfricaMuseum in Tervuren was founded by King Leopold

II to serve as the main propaganda tool for his colonial enterprise in Central Africa. Its exhibitions, consisting of a mixture of art, ethnography, military history and natural history, portrayed Congolese peoples and nature in a highly selective manner from a colonial perspective (Couttenier, 2019). The Royal Museum of the Army and Military History (hereafter referred to as the Royal Military Museum) evolved from a section on Belgian military history at the 1910 Brussels International Exposition. The Royal Military Museum integrated objects related to the early Belgian colonial past into an overarching narrative glorifying the nation's military history since independence in 1830 (Devos, 2018).

In addition to the aforementioned museums, Belgian history education curricula and textbooks played a significant role in disseminating colonial master narratives throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These sources portrayed the colonial past from a white perspective, ignoring Congolese agency and reciprocity in intercultural encounters between colonisers and colonised peoples. This representation persisted well into the twenty-first century. However, educational practices have been little influenced by new imperial history writing, which focuses on reciprocity in social and cultural encounters, or on the relationships between colonies and metropolises (Bentrovato & Van Nieuwenhuyse, 2019). This was largely due to the absence of any critical postcolonial debate at the turn of the twenty-first century, as well as the dominance of a nostalgic and white-minded colonial memory within Belgian society. However, over the past decade, there has been a change, with the colonial past being discussed widely in various ways, ranging from TV series to public spaces and debates about restitution. Black voices have been included in these debates, shedding new light on Belgium's colonial past (Goddeeris, 2023; Lewis, 2022). As Goddeeris et al. (2024) demonstrate in a recent volume of historiographical essays, Belgian colonialism essentially consisted of extreme violence, racism, the pursuit of substantial profits, and the intention to transform indigenous societies on a large scale.

As history education researchers, we believe that old colonial master narratives no longer have a place in history museums or education. This is the focus of our contribution. Achieving a solid and nuanced understanding of the historiography of the colonial past requires educators' and students' historical thinking on the subject to be decolonised through the addition of postcolonial perspectives. But what does this mean in practice? Since the late 1970s, postcolonial scholars have greatly influenced the writing of colonial history (e.g. Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1994). By studying the various responses to colonialism in modern and contemporary socie-

ties, they have moved beyond one-sided colonial perspectives and given a voice to those who were marginalised during the colonial era (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Loomba, 1998; Young, 2016). They have provided concepts and methodologies that historians have since used to gain insights to incorporate postcolonial perspectives into historical thinking. ‘Historical thinking’ is a widely used term in the field of history education research. It describes how students and teachers can learn and teach history from a disciplinary point of view. It encompasses knowledge of past events, as well as an understanding of how historians are ‘doing history’ in the present by means of their disciplinary practices (Seixas & Morton, 2013; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). A recent educational reform in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking northern region of Belgium) has placed historical thinking at the centre of the history curriculum (Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2020). However, previous research has shown that the rather occidentocentric nature of current Flemish history education hinders the effective development of students’ historical thinking skills. Colonial history is often presented from a Western, white perspective that does not explicitly acknowledge reciprocity or the agency of colonised peoples. This approach prioritises written sources over other types of sources, such as oral and material sources, despite the fact that the latter are central to Africanist historiography (Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2022). In short, it seems that the call to *decolonise the mind* (Wa Thiong’o, 1986) has not yet had a significant impact on history education practices.

The way in which Belgian museums addressed their colonial past varied when responding to these calls. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the AfricaMuseum was considered “Europe’s last unreconstructed museum of the colonial era” (Marshall, 2018). Seizing the opportunity presented by a major renovation project between 2013 and 2018, however, the museum gradually transformed into a postcolonial institution. This involved integrating artistic interventions by Congolese diaspora artists, adopting a broader sense of critical self-reflection, and showcasing a more diverse range of voices and narratives in an attempt to counter the heavily colonial narratives that had been present in the museum since its inception (Bevernage & Mestdagh, 2019; Hassett, 2022). The Royal Military Museum has not implemented any decolonising initiatives with regard to the museology of the ‘history room’, which covers 19th-century Belgian military campaigns abroad, including colonial campaigns. The display cases in this room remain frozen in time, showcasing 19th-century nationalist approaches to exhibiting (colonial) war heritage (Berger, 2022). Visitors, including school students, are not encouraged to question the prevalent nationalist and colonial narratives (Devos, 2018; Lewis, 2022). This is not an easy task, as visitors often

do not spontaneously reflect on the underlying narratives of exhibitions. Instead, they assume that museums have an authoritative voice (Boix-Mansilla, 2012; Trofanenko, 2006). Engaging effectively in the deconstruction of colonial master narratives requires visitors to engage in historical thinking and adopt a postcolonial perspective. In museum settings, combining historical thinking with postcolonial theory is necessary to achieve a nuanced understanding of the colonial past and its relationship with the postcolonial present. However, if museums and their exhibitions do not always stimulate such thinking, how can it be fostered? One possible solution would be to engage visitors, particularly school students, in educational activities that are designed and/or facilitated by history teachers, museum guides or educators.

This article examines whether prospective history teachers, who were trained as historians and taking part in an academic history teacher training programme at the time of this research, can design educational activities that trigger historical thinking informed by postcolonial theory. To address this research question, we developed a 'postcolonial historical thinking' framework to serve as an analytical tool. The central research question is: to what extent do Flemish prospective secondary school history teachers design museum educational activities aimed at fostering postcolonial historical thinking about the Belgian colonial past among students? This research was conducted within the contexts of the AfricaMuseum and the Royal Military Museum. The first section reviews previous research on the relationship between history museums and historical thinking, and discusses the role of educational practice design for young people. The second section elaborates on the postcolonial historical thinking framework established by integrating postcolonial theory with historical thinking as operationalised in Flemish history education. This model is then applied to the context of a (colonial) history museum. The third section explains the research design of the empirical study. The fourth section provides an in-depth analysis of the educational activities designed and/or facilitated by history teachers, museum guides or educators. The fifth and last section confronts the most significant findings with recent research literature.

2. Previous research: history museums, historical thinking and the design of educational practices

Over the last few decades, the educational role of museums has shifted. Rather than acting as authoritative knowledge providers, museums have increasingly seen themselves as facilitators of diverse

learning experiences (Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). This has had repercussions for the historical narratives communicated in history museums. Previously, exhibitions were framed within triumphalist national and colonial master narratives that aimed to convey the story of the past in an authoritative manner. However, the growing reliance on critical and inclusive approaches has led to various underrepresented voices and perspectives being incorporated. These are intended to counter traditional master narratives, break down the presumed authority of the museum, and highlight the constructed nature of history. Nevertheless, this constructed nature is not always clearly visible within the exhibitions themselves. Often, the reasoning behind curatorial choices, such as the selection of artefacts or the main storyline, is not made explicit. This prevents many visitors from fully grasping the constructed nature of historical exhibitions and may not stimulate their historical thinking (Gosselin, 2011; Gilbert, 2016).

Conversely, many recently developed primary and secondary school programmes in history museums prioritise discipline-based enquiry practices in line with the history curriculum, encouraging students to explicitly link exhibitions to historical thinking concepts (Geerts et al., 2024). Over the past few decades, historical thinking has gradually become a key focus of history education curricula in primary and secondary schools around the world (Lévesque & Clark, 2018; Seixas, 2017). A great deal of research in the field of history education has examined the processes of learning and instruction relating to historical thinking in history classrooms. These studies have concluded that young people can learn to think historically, but this does not happen spontaneously. They require specific instruction and careful scaffolding to enable them to “speak and write the language that we historians call history” (Levisohn, 2017, p. 629). Research into the teaching of historical thinking in history museums has increased significantly over the past decade, primarily focusing on the learning processes and meaning-making of primary and secondary school students when engaging with historical exhibitions (Marcus et al., 2017; van Boxtel et al., 2016). There is far less scholarly insight, however, into instructional practices within history museums themselves. Much of the existing research, particularly that conducted in the past five years, has focused on instructional beliefs and the implementation of instruction by agents such as experienced history teachers and museum educators. It has also examined the resulting learning outcomes among students. Analysis of design practices is often lacking. How exactly do instructional agents design and develop educational activities that support students’ learning processes when they engage with exhibitions about the past? (Geerts et al., 2024).

In this respect, prospective secondary school teachers and their design practices are an interesting group to study, as their teacher training programme aims to combine mastery of a specific discipline with its integration and translation into educational practices for secondary school students.

Existing research with prospective art history and science education teachers has examined the design process for educational practices to be used in art and natural history museums (Domenici, 2022; McClure, 2016). However, in the context of history museums, earlier research has focused solely on prospective history teachers' educational beliefs regarding visits to history museums with students. While this research revealed that many clearly valued museums as an educational context, they often stated that they lacked the specific tools, knowledge, and resources necessary for developing effective educational practices (Geerts et al., 2024). However, as no empirical research has yet studied their designs, it would be valuable to explore how they would apply the knowledge, skills and insights acquired during their academic (teacher- and discipline-specific) training when designing educational practices.

Previous studies in various countries have found that teacher training courses focusing on historical thinking — integrating knowledge of the past and disciplinary practices — successfully influence the incorporation of historical thinking into the design of educational practices. However, these courses do not always seem to be effective for all participants, and the extent to which effective changes take place in their everyday educational practices is often unclear. Therefore, immersion in and understanding of historical thinking does not automatically lead to its continuous integration into practice (Gibson & Peck, 2020; Monte-Sano, 2011). Earlier research in the Flemish context confirmed these findings for both prospective and experienced history teachers (Voet & De Wever, 2017; Wilke & Depaepe, 2019). One possible explanation for this is the 'certainty paradox' characterising prospective history teachers' reasoning, as identified by Dutch history education researchers. These teachers often feel uncertain about teaching history as an interpretation, i.e. paying attention to the constructive nature of history and the research methods employed by historians. Instead, they rely on teaching historical facts to provide students with 'factual certainty'. In doing so, prospective teachers convey their own need for certainty to their students (Wansink et al., 2016). The same may be true of more experienced history teachers. According to several researchers, their beliefs about the importance of factual knowledge and of providing a complete chronological historical overview take precedence over considering an enquiry-based

approach, which is grounded in the idea of multiple perspectives and uncertainty (“we don’t know”), as a starting point for shaping their educational practices (Kropman et al., 2021; Voet & De Wever, 2016; Wilke & Depaepe, 2019).

The aforementioned studies have also examined the approaches to learning and instruction adopted by prospective and experienced teachers to promote historical thinking in their teaching. The approach chosen influences the extent to which historical thinking is promoted. Previous research with prospective history teachers has shown that they tend to hold teacher-centred beliefs about history education in classrooms and history museums alike. For instance, they tend to associate museum visits with teacher-centred activities such as guided tours and consequently favour these themselves (Geerts et al., 2024). These beliefs stem from their own educational experiences as secondary school and university students, as well as the context of their teaching internships (Voet & De Wever, 2016; Wansink et al., 2016). However, these beliefs contrast sharply with the recommendations of various scholars, who argue that encouraging interpretative historical thinking in students requires more specific, student-centred approaches to learning and instruction (Martell, 2013; Wansink et al., 2016).

3. Theoretical framework: ‘postcolonial historical thinking’ in history museums

Nowadays, most academic historians incorporate postcolonial theory into their writing about the colonial past. However, this is not common practice in secondary school history education (Mycock, 2017; Bentrovato & Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2019). Therefore, in light of our focus on secondary history education, it would be useful to clarify what it means to incorporate postcolonial insights into historical thinking concepts, as outlined in the literature on international history education. This approach provides a means of engaging critically with national and colonial master narratives about the colonial past and moving beyond occidentocentric perspectives. Firstly, we will elaborate on how historical thinking is operationalised in the Flemish history curriculum (Figure 1) (Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2020). We will then explain how these building blocks can be applied in historical museums, and explain how incorporating postcolonial theory can encourage ‘postcolonial historical thinking’ in these settings. (Figure 2).

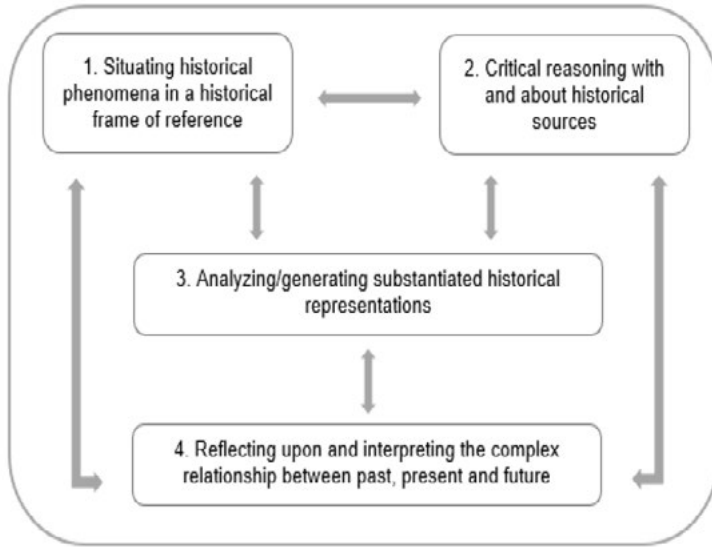


Figure 1. Operationalisation of historical thinking in the Flemish history curriculum (Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2020)

Firstly, historical thinking involves students gaining knowledge about what happened in the past. This requires substantive knowledge of historical events and the development of a broad frame of reference. This enables students to contextualise historical agents, events and developments in time and space (building block 1). Secondly, historical thinking involves understanding how history is constructed by historians through an understanding of their disciplinary practices. Students therefore need to critically assess information within and about various historical sources (building block 2) and gain insight into the constructive nature of historical narratives (building block 3). Reasoning with historical sources involves selecting information to support claims about the past, while reasoning about sources requires skills such as critically evaluating their value, considering their authors' positionality, corroborating information from other sources and taking the historical context into account (Rouet et al., 1996). Reasoning with and about sources enables students to recognise how evidence from various historical sources is used to construct a historical narrative from one or multiple perspectives, and to subsequently deconstruct existing narratives. The final dimension of historical thinking involves critically reflecting on the relationship between the past and the present (building block 4). This dimension aims to make students aware that historical narratives, produced by disciplinary practices and integrating historical knowledge, are shaped by changing political, social and cultural

contexts. They are also used as cultural tools in present-day public discourse, identity formation and collective remembrance practices, enabling students to develop their own well-informed understanding of the past. This requires both a cognitive approach to the relationship between the past and the present and a socio-cultural approach to students' own positionality, since the latter strongly influences their understanding of the past–present relationship. Socio-cultural approaches connect students' emotional and affective responses, ethical judgements, attitudes, identifications, and opinions to their cognitive learning process (Epstein & Peck, 2018).

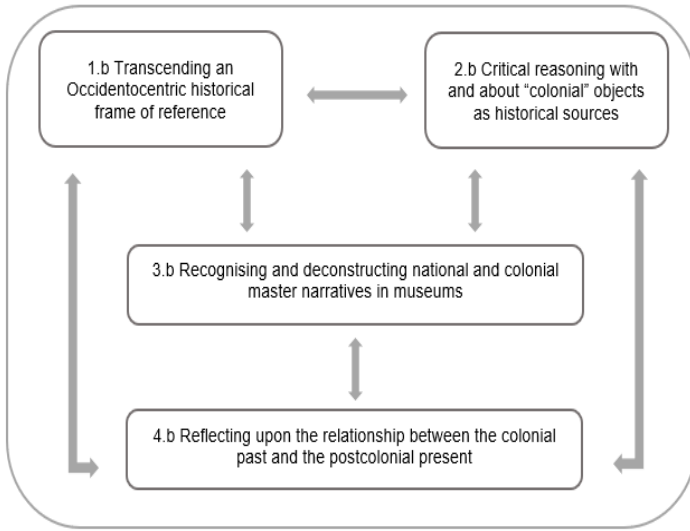


Figure 2. Operationalisation of a framework for ‘postcolonial historical thinking’ in history museums

The definition of these four building blocks becomes clearer in the context of historical exhibitions about colonialism and postcolonial theory. Western museum exhibitions and educational resources on colonial history that transcend occidentocentric perspectives can provide students with a broader understanding of the colonial past. They can also equip students with the knowledge necessary to deconstruct master narratives that generally focus on Western knowledge and epistemology, as well as on colonial agency. Postcolonial scholars have consistently emphasised the importance of paying attention to colonised and indigenous individuals, groups and peoples when studying colonial history. These individuals cannot be considered merely passive victims of colonialism; they must also be recognised as historical agents with the ability to actively influ-

ence the course of history. In order to integrate these insights into students' understanding of history, it is necessary for their frame of reference to transcend purely occidentocentric perspectives by including agents, events and developments from non-Western societies (building block 1.b). As Nordgren and Johansson (2015) advocate, an enriched historical frame of reference enables intercultural historical learning. Studying the varied, reciprocal influences of past intercultural encounters on both Western and colonised societies leads to a better understanding of the past. Recognising the long and rich history of colonised societies prior to colonisation is a crucial final step in developing a historical framework that facilitates post-colonial historical thinking. Western museums have long neglected the history of Africa prior to European colonisation in their research and exhibitions. They considered oral histories to be mythical legends that did not concern 'real history', which they believed could only be uncovered by studying written documents (Couttenier, 2010). Therefore, integrating precolonial perspectives prevents the impression being given that the history of colonised societies only began when Europeans set foot in their territories.

Western history museums that focus on colonialism primarily present the colonial past by showcasing material heritage objects. Most of these objects were acquired in a colonial context and are referenced in colonial sources written by colonisers. They have therefore been labelled as 'colonial' heritage. However, as Legêne (2016) argues, this label tends to prioritise the agency of the coloniser, who often not only legally acquired the object, but also looted or took it. Nevertheless, 'colonial' heritage was largely created outside of Western museums and before the colonial period. So-called colonial artefacts thus have more complex histories and embody a wider range of perspectives than are recorded on museum labels or in colonial written sources. This reveals the different meanings and values of these artefacts in other cultural contexts (Adams, 2015). Including critically reasoning with and about these objects in colonial history museums as historical sources, inspired by postcolonial source critiques (building block 2.b), asks students to consider them in this way. Reasoning *with* objects involves the ability to derive historical information by visually analysing objects and critically reading accompanying labels or museum texts. Reasoning *about* objects concerns students' ability to critically analyse objects, including assessing their meaning, representativeness, provenance and the intentions behind their creation or display (Marcus & Kowitt, 2016). Including postcolonial critiques of sources in both processes means incorporating oral histories as valuable primary sources, revealing the perspectives of those colonised. Furthermore, it involves reading historical

sources along, and against ‘the archival grain’ to understand the power dynamics at play in the creation of historical narratives, and to highlight silences, gaps and euphemisms in order to provide an alternative interpretation of sources that are often written from a colonial perspective (Guha, 1988; Stoler, 2009). Together, these elements of postcolonial historical thinking allow us to focus on the social biographies of historical objects in museums, many of which were looted during the colonial era, and to centre marginalised or previously silenced perspectives. Object-based learning processes interpret these objects from multiple perspectives, revealing what object labels do and do not convey (Endter & Schultz, 2018).

Critiques of Western history museums, in line with the core principles of postcolonial thought, suggest that they have perpetuated one-sided national and colonial narratives (Boix-Mansilla, 2012). Postcolonial historical thinking therefore encompasses the disciplinary practice of detecting, recognising, and deconstructing these narratives (building block 3.b). Curators of museum exhibitions continuously engage in narrative construction to create a ‘meaning-making environment’, as Gosselin (2011) terms it, that stimulates visitors’ historical thinking. In doing so, curators select the story to be told, the objects to be used and the message to be communicated about the objects in relation to the story. However, they will not always make these choices explicit. As earlier research has confirmed, people generally trust museums more than any other source of historical information, granting them the status of objective institutions (Gilbert, 2016). Therefore, students need to understand the nature of historical representations in museums in order to deconstruct them. As Husbands (1996) suggested, comparing students’ interpretations of exhibition objects with the curator’s interpretation is essential for historical thinking in museums. This may subsequently enable students to deconstruct the museum as a whole and question its authority in communicating historical narratives (Trofanenko, 2006). Landkammer (2018) argues that postcolonial critiques specifically interrogate the power of interpretation often ascribed to museums. Nordgren and Johansson (2015) also state that questioning and de-centring this power of interpretation — which is rooted in the colonial context in which many museums originated — exposes the voices excluded within the museums themselves. Asking students questions such as “Who produces knowledge about whom?”, “What is a museum’s scope, mission or financing?”, and “What role do political and societal debates play in shaping exhibitions?” enables this exposure (Gilbert, 2016; Landkammer, 2018).

Postcolonial scholars have widely reflected on the ways in which the colonial past continues to influence the postcolonial

present. Given the deep roots of Western museums in the colonial past, it is crucial to recognise and acknowledge the various ways in which they are attempting to “unlearn this legacy” (Landkammer, 2018, p. 14). The restitution debate is a good example of this legacy: the return of artefacts to former colonies was long rejected in Belgian museum and government policies, but has recently become a key issue. Such debates often involve emotional discussions in which moral and ethical arguments, as well as historical ones, play central roles (Eyssette, 2023; Hicks, 2020). In order to understand such debates, students must reflect thoroughly on the relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial present (building block 4.b). Students’ cognitive learning about colonialism is greatly influenced by their position in current postcolonial debates and by how they identify themselves in social, political or ethno-cultural terms (Gibson, 2020; Savenije et al., 2014; Watson, 2016). Concepts from history education research can be used to facilitate both the cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions effectively, balancing historical contextualisation with present-day perspectives when learning about historical legacies that are heavily contested today (Robinson, 2022). One example is encouraging historical empathy among students. Museum exhibitions often present personal stories about historical figures that can evoke empathy and an emotional response, but such a response can hinder historical contextualisation if it is not connected to a cognitive approach. This approach enables students to understand the perspectives, experiences and choices of historical figures. Only through this combination can students balance personal engagement with the foreignness of the past (Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Savenije & de Bruijn, 2017). Another example is reflecting on historical significance. This enables students to consider why museums attach significance to certain stories about the colonial past, and what this reveals about present-day colonial memory. They can also consider whether they would attribute similar significance to stories about historical figures or events, given their own positionality (Cercadillo, 2001; Savenije et al., 2014).

4. Research design

4.1 *Research questions*

The following research question guided our inquiry: To what extent do Flemish prospective secondary school history teachers design museum educational activities aimed at fostering postcolonial historical thinking about the Belgian colonial past among students?

By ‘museum educational activities’, we refer to all prepared learning and instructional activities used to engage visitors (in this case, secondary school students) in an educational experience in a museum. In line with the aspects of postcolonial historical thinking elaborated on above, we identified four closely related sub-questions: (1) To what extent is an occidentocentric frame of reference transcended? (2) To what extent and in what ways are ‘colonial’ objects used as historical sources to foster postcolonial historical thinking? (3) To what extent are existing colonial and national narratives in museums deconstructed? And (4) To what extent is critical reflection on the relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial present incorporated? To explicitly link the aspects of postcolonial historical thinking that have been incorporated to the learning and instruction approaches adopted by prospective teachers, we formulated a fifth sub-question: (5) Which learning and instructional approaches have been adopted to engage students in postcolonial historical thinking?

4.2. Thematic focus: Swahili-Arab heritage in the Africa Museum and the Royal Military Museum

This study focused on cultural heritage objects in the exhibitions of both museums related to the late nineteenth-century history of intercultural contact between Swahili-Arabs, local Congolese communities, and white colonialists. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Swahili-Arab traders from Zanzibar established international economic networks in eastern Congo, linking Central Africa with India and China. They established large networks, primarily involved in the trade of ivory and other products, as well as the enslavement of people (Northrup, 2007). From the 1870s onwards, European travellers and colonialists came into contact with Swahili-Arabs during ‘explorations’ of Western and Eastern Congolese territories commissioned by King Leopold II. ‘Explorations’ to the east were undertaken by the *Association Internationale Africaine*, which relied heavily on the knowledge and expertise of Swahili-Arabs and local Congolese people, making use of existing trade routes. Through political manoeuvring in 1884–1885, Leopold II claimed sovereignty over large territories in Central Africa, resulting in the establishment of the Congo Free State (Couttenier, 2019). However, in Eastern Congo, the political and economic influence of the new colonial state was rather limited (Northrup, 2007). One of the Swahili-Arab chiefs, Hamed bin Mohammed el-Murjebi, known as Tippu Tip, was initially incorporated into the government of the Congo Free State. From the early 1890s onwards, however, the hegemony of the Swahili-Arabs in eastern Congo began to be challenged by Belgian colonisers. Under the prop-

agandistic guise of ‘a crusade against Arab slavery’, these challenges led to armed conflicts that would later become known as the ‘Arab Campaign’ (Arazi et al., 2020). During these conflicts, colonial officers enlisted the support of Congolese *chefs de guerre* (warlords), some of whom had previously been enslaved by Swahili-Arabs, in order to form alliances against them (Gordon, 2014).

Recent historiography has revealed that the 1890s were a turbulent and violent period in the history of the Eastern Congo Free State. This era was characterised by shifting and opportunistic alliances between Congolese warlords, Congo Free State officers and Swahili-Arabs, which resulted in the collapse of existing hierarchical structures. The Belgian colonisers broke the Swahili-Arab hegemony and secured the eastern border of the colonial state (Gordon, 2017). This conflict was promoted in Belgium as a humanitarian action, thereby contributing to the legitimisation of the Congo Free State (Viaene, 2008). Swahili-Arab cultural heritage objects, taken as war trophies, ended up in the newly established colonial museum in Tervuren and the Royal Military Museum in Brussels (Arzel & Foliard, 2020). Depictions of this episode and of the Swahili-Arab people were used as major colonial propaganda tools by Leopold II to justify his policies as an abolitionist movement. The portrayal of ‘the Arab’ as a cruel, aggressive slaveholder aimed to suggest that the violence in the Congo Free State was the result of foreign, Muslim oppressors.

In practice, violence was primarily caused by the growing European presence. Large-scale national and international criticism of Leopold II’s violent, disruptive and exploitative colonial policy in the Congo Free State ultimately forced him to hand over the colony to the Belgian state in 1908 (Couttenier, 2019). Nevertheless, the propagandistic imagery of ‘the Arab’ became even more prevalent after this handover, for example in statues and monuments in public spaces and in and around museums. This was an attempt to deflect attention away from the Congo Free State’s atrocities and reinstate the myth that Belgian colonialism was founded on abolitionism and the ‘liberation’ of the Congolese people from ‘oppressive Arab slaveholders’ in order ‘to bring civilisation’ (Stanard, 2020).

Objects related to this historical episode form a small part of the AfricaMuseum’s larger ‘colonial’ collections. Swahili-Arab cultural heritage objects can be found in various rooms, including those dedicated to languages and music (e.g. Kiswahili letters) and colonial history (e.g. Tippu Tip’s necklace and his son Sefu’s dagger). Two rooms aim to challenge colonial representations of ‘Arabs’ through sculptures, encouraging visitors to reflect on these portrayals. The Royal Military Museum’s collection of objects relating to the ‘Arab Campaign’ (including weapons, uniforms, flags, a Koran, and photographs) is the only

one that directly addresses the Belgian colonial past (see Figure 3). First, focusing on the heritage of this specific historical episode enabled us to present prospective teachers with an interesting case study of intercultural contact between white colonialists, local Congolese people, and Swahili-Arab traders. Secondly, it allowed us to incorporate both museums into a single research design. The museums' radically different approaches to contextualisation enabled us to adopt a comparative perspective. While the AfricaMuseum contextualises the exhibited objects and the people they belonged to (e.g. Tippu Tip) within a broader historical context, the Royal Military Museum does not contextualise its collection at all. Small labels mentioning the officer, the battle and the date, and providing information on who took the objects and where and when, constitute the only factual and limited contextualisation (Wastiau, 2017).



Figure 3. Exhibition and display cases related to the 'Arab Campaign' in the history room of the Royal Military Museum (Photo by Brent Geerts). © Brent Geerts.

4.3 Methodology

Fourteen prospective secondary school history teachers took part in our research. Prior to participation, they agreed to take part in the study by signing an informed consent form, which also ensured that their names would be pseudonymised throughout the data collection process. The entire research procedure was approved by the university's ethical committee. As shown in Table 1, all participants were white, Flemish, middle-class students on the academic history teacher training programme at KU Leuven. At the time of participat-

ing, eleven of the participants had at least a Bachelor's or Master's degree in History or Archaeology and were in the midst of their teacher training programme. They had therefore already received extensive training in implementing historical thinking in teaching practices, as well as gaining some practical teaching experience in classrooms during their internships. Three participants had less experience in both theory and practice. This was due to them starting the teacher training programme late, or because they only took preparatory theoretical teacher training courses during their Bachelor's programme in History which did not include any practical training. All participants had one thing in common: that in the semester following their participation in the research they would follow an obligatory course on history museum education. Consequently, none of them had any prior experience of facilitating learning and instruction in the context of history museums when they participated.

Table 1. Participating prospective secondary school history teachers (n = 14) (Note: all names are pseudonymised in order to guarantee the participants' anonymity)

Name	Gender	Age	Degree	Progress in teacher training program
Anna	F	21	BA (History)	Halfway
Axel	M	21	BA (History)	Halfway
Boris	M	25	BA (History)	Halfway
Charlotte	F	27	MA (Archaeology)	Halfway
Christine	F	23	MA (History)	Halfway
Elizabeth	F	25	BA (History)	Halfway
Gilles	M	25	MA (Criminology), BA (History)	Halfway
Helena	F	23	MA (History)	Halfway
Liam	M	47	MA (Archaeology)	Halfway
Lucas	M	23	MA (History and European Studies)	Just started
Lynn	F	22	MA (History)	Halfway
Noah	M	20	Secondary education	Not yet started
Tom	M	44	MA (History)	Halfway
Yusuf	M	21	Secondary education	Not yet started

In order to answer our research questions, we asked the participants to complete a performance task (Wilson & Wineburg, 1993). They were asked to visit the AfricaMuseum and the Royal Military Museum, focusing on the Swahili-Arab heritage on display. Afterwards, they had to design one educational activity per museum to be carried out with a fictitious ethnically and culturally diverse group of 11th grade students (as nineteenth-century colonialism is often addressed in this year group in Flemish secondary education). The activity had to be designed to last a specified amount of time, and the format was

left to the participants' discretion. Participants had to imagine that they had already delivered two lessons contextualising the colonisation of the Congo by King Leopold II, and subsequently by the Belgian state, within the broader context of 19th- and early 20th-century European colonialism. They would then visit the two museums during a day-long trip to Brussels. They could choose the order in which to visit the museums. The performance task required participants to design a visit to each museum consisting of three distinct 40-minute phases through a written document, according to the following guidelines. The first phase was an introductory tour led by the teacher, for which they had to provide a one-page outline of the learning content and instructional activities they would cover. Secondly, there was a main phase involving a specific educational activity related to the exhibited Swahili–Arab heritage. For this phase, they had to provide a detailed plan including the expected learning outcomes, the objects and rooms to be used and the main learning and instructional activities.

This included the questions they would ask the students, the expected answers and the insights they intended to provide. They also had to indicate the roles they had assigned themselves as teachers. A final free-choice learning phase was also included, during which students could independently explore any part of the museum (Dierking & Falk, 2013). Therefore, the participants did not need to design this phase further. Designing the performance task in three phases was intended to give participants an idea of how museum visits could be structured in line with museum education research, making use of phases that support different types of learning and instruction. However, participants were given full freedom to elaborate on the content, activities and teacher and student roles. Table 2 summarises the contents of the performance task.

Table 2. Summary of the guidelines of the performance task, for each of the two museums included in this study

Phase of museum visit	What participants were asked to elaborate
1. Introductory phase (40 minutes)	A general outline on one page, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The learning content being offered (rooms in the museum and objects discussed) · The instructional and learning activities (respective roles of teacher and students)
2. Main phase on Swahili-Arab heritage (40 minutes)	A detailed description of the educational activities used in this phase, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The learning goals (expected learning outcomes) · Learning content (which rooms in the museums and objects will be used, which questions will be asked and what are expected answers) · Instructional and learning activities (respective roles of teacher and students)
3. Free-choice learning phase	No elaboration required (as students walk free, on their own)

Participants' engagement in the performance task resulted in the collection of 28 documents (one activity per participant for each of the two museums). Each document consisted of a description of all the educational activities that the participants foresaw for both the Royal Military Museum and the AfricaMuseum. In line with the above scenario, each document contained a description of the introductory phase, as well as a detailed plan of the activities for the second 40-minute phase. This dataset was analysed using NVivo coding software. After closely reading all performance tasks, we coded relevant parts at the level of the smallest coherent unit. Coding was an iterative process involving going back and forth between an a priori established coding scheme based on our theoretical framework of postcolonial historical thinking and a grounded approach, which enabled us to add new codes that emerged from the data itself (Weston et al., 2001). The a priori determined coding scheme consisted of five categories corresponding with the theoretical framework and our research questions. The five key aspects are: (1) transcending an occidentocentric frame of reference, (2) using 'colonial' objects as historical sources, (3) deconstructing existing colonial and national master narratives, (4) critically reflecting on and engaging with the relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial present, and (5) the learning and instructional activities employed. Refining these codes based on data analysis resulted in the creation of subcategories, listed in Table 3.

The coding process was discussed and reviewed by the first and last authors, resulting in a refined codebook and consensus. After all the collected data had been coded, the performance tasks were analysed qualitatively at three levels (Miles et al., 2014). Each participant was considered a separate case. First, a cross-case analysis was performed on all participants to identify analogies, patterns, and contradictions. This resulted in general conclusions for the entire sample. Secondly, a within-case analysis was conducted to provide a detailed view of each participant and their educational activities for each museum. Finally, possible differences between the activities designed for the two museums were identified.

Table 3. Analytical coding scheme used for the analysis of the designed educational activities.

Code	Subcodes
Transcendence of an occidentocentric frame of reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency for non-Western actors - Precolonial perspective - Reciprocity - ...
Use of “colonial” objects as historical sources containing multiple perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reasoning with objects - Reasoning about objects - Reasoning with and about objects - Confrontation of multiple objects - ...
(De)construction of national and colonial master narratives in museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attention to the constructive nature of historical narratives in museums - Deconstruction of colonial narratives - Deconstruction of national narratives - Linked deconstruction of colonial and national narratives - Deconstruction of the museum’s authority - ...
Critical reflection of the relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical significance - Collective memory - Emotional-affective perspectives - Historical empathy - Fostering a certain attitude - Fostering opinion-making - Ethical judgment - Touching upon students’ identification - Touching upon students’ positionality - ...
Learning and instructional activities to foster postcolonial historical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher-centred <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Socratic dialogue b. direct instruction - Student-centred <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. individual work b. group work c. supervised work d. non-supervised work - ...

5. Analysis of the educational activities

5.1. *Transcendence of an occidentocentric frame of reference*

Analysing the historical content included by participants in their educational activities reveals that none of them adopted a purely occidentocentric frame of reference. Most incorporated the roles of the various agents involved in the Congo-Arab past, such as white colonialists, Swahili-Arabs and local Congolese people. While half of the participants mentioned these groups rather superficially, the other half focused more deeply on the cultural influences and reciprocity of intercultural encounters between them. For instance,

two participants used submission letters written in the Kiswahili language to illustrate the use of Kiswahili in the colonial subjugation of local people. Another participant posed a central question to the AfricaMuseum: “Which cultures have influenced Congolese society? Explain by referring to objects and information found in the museum” (Christine). Four participants emphasised the opportunistic relationship between the Belgian colonisers and Tippu Tip, asking students why the colonisers first “made use of him” and then “battled against him”. This was intended to help students understand that, under the influence of the growing anti-slavery discourse from the 1890s onwards, the Swahili-Arabs and their allies were portrayed as the enemy in order to justify Leopold’s claims to the eastern part of the Congo.

Six participants explicitly adopted a precolonial perspective when discussing the history of Belgian colonisation of the Congo. They did this by asking questions that challenged the popular image of Africa as a ‘dark continent’ opened up to ‘civilisation’ by European colonialism. The following quotation, included by participant Alex in his design to explain his intentions for the guided tour he was going to give, illustrates the reasoning behind adopting such a perspective:

Africa receives little attention in secondary history education, which can create the impression that time stood still on that continent or that nothing existed before the arrival of the Europeans. In reality, of course, Africans also had a culture and history, and interacted with Europe and the Middle East. I would like to discuss this with the students in this room [the Long History Room]. Specifically, I will give them an explanation of African history and discuss some African artefacts (Alex).

The other five participants adopted a similar line of reasoning to Alex. For instance, they stressed that Congolese culture as a whole had never existed, and that the Congolese territories prior to European colonisation were home to various cultures, each with their own dynamics, people, customs, and habits. This demonstrates that, by adopting a non-occidentocentric perspective, the participants automatically challenged the dominant stereotypical colonial narrative in popular representations of the colonial past, which has been in place for more than a century.

5.2. Use of ‘colonial’ objects as historical sources containing multiple perspectives

Analysis of how objects were used in educational activities revealed that most participants used objects primarily for reasoning with them: extracting information via accompanying labels and

texts about what or who they represent, how they were used in the past and their visual appearance. Examples of this include questions asking participants to describe who and how is depicted in several sculptures (e.g. Figure 4), such as: “Who do these three people represent?”, “What is the man with the cap’s (sic) position towards the other two?” (Gilles), and “How are the Swahili-Arab people depicted in Matton’s sculptures?” (Anna). However, almost half of the reasoning-based questions did not require participants to observe the objects. Students were only asked to read object labels or accompanying museum texts and copy information about the objects or the past written in these texts. For example: “To which “persistent clichés” does the accompanying text of the sculpture refer?” (Lynn), or “Demonstrate, using museum texts that provide information about objects, events and history, that some Belgian actions had intentions other than those initially proclaimed” (Helena). The accompanying labels and texts were in these cases used to broaden students’ historical frame of reference, but were not really approached critically.

Four participants focused primarily on reasoning with objects, complementing this with reasoning about objects. Rather than simply asking what a label says about an object or questioning who or what is depicted and how, they considered why something is portrayed in a certain way, why these objects are present and how they are (or are not) contextualised in museums. Such questions prompt a post-colonial approach to ‘colonial’ artefacts as historical sources. Three such approaches emerged in the educational activities designed by the participants.

1. Three participants encouraged students to consider the provenance of various objects. In doing so, they emphasised that students could not take for granted the presence in Western museums of objects initially belonging to non-Western cultures. The following two questions and their expected answers, designed by two of the participants, illustrate this point clearly:

Q: What is lying here? A: A necklace and a dagger. Q: Yes, the necklace belonged to Tippu-Tip and the dagger belonged to his son, Sefu, who died in the war. Why are these objects here? How did they get here? A: The Belgians took them. Q: And why? A: Because they had won, so they were war booty. Or to display them in Belgium to show what they had done (Alex).

Q: The museum itself does not contain much information about the ‘Arab Campaign’. Yet, you might be able to deduce some things from the labels. Who won the Arab Campaign, and how did you deduce this? A: The Belgians won this campaign. Many labels state that the objects were looted and use words such as conquered and deprived (Boris).

2. All four participants focused on the intentions of the creator of an object. They questioned sculptures such as those in Figure 4 in more detail than they did in the examples used to reason with them. The following questions from one participant illustrate this: “Who made this sculpture? For whom? Has Matton ever been to Africa or seen a slave trader? If not, where did he get his inspiration from?” (Liam). These questions reveal that sculptors such as Arsène Matton contributed to the widespread circulation of propagandist images depicting Arabs as cruel slave traders and show how these images fitted within the broader legitimisation of the Belgian colonial project.

3. Three of the four participants emphasised how and why museums present objects in a certain way and what the implications of this are. For instance, they asked: “How are the artefacts arranged[in the history room]? Compare this with the AfricaMuseum. What does this reveal about the museum’s objectives and what they want visitors to learn?” (Lynn), or by telling students that “not everything you see is true; objects can lose meaning in museums because they are taken out of context. Be aware of that!” (Alex). Two participants explicitly asked the students whether the museum contextualised the exhibited objects, and whether they thought this was problematic. Despite the lack of context often found in the Royal Military Museum, the participants expected the students to realise that they could still analyse the objects based on their appearance, their position in the display cases, and their overall placement within the exhibition space. For example, Helena asked students to compare photographs of Swahili-Arab with photographs of white colonialists. This led the students to conclude that the colonialists were omnipresent, occupying a separate display case, compared to Tippu Tip, who was represented by a single photograph in the corner of another display case.

One of the four participants incorporated three different ways of reasoning about objects into an activity involving mannequins at the Royal Military Museum, which depicted Swahili-Arab, Congolese and white people. The activity consisted of a list of questions, starting with some that allowed students to reason with these objects. The participant then gradually built towards the following ones:

Do you think the mannequin was made by someone from Europe or Africa? Why do you think that? Was it made to look like a real person? Do you have an image of what the persons looked like when they were alive? If so, what does he look like? If not, why not? There are some objects around the mannequins that are not clearly linked to them. Why are they there? How do you think the museum came to possess these items? (Liam).

These examples of reasoning about objects encourage postcolonial thinking among students. They are encouraged to reflect on why Swahili-Arab and Congolese heritage and people are exhibited in Western museums, and to consider what this reveals about the historical narratives that sculptors aimed to support, and how exhibition makers use objects to present particular stories to visitors. Interestingly, the educational activities designed for the Royal Military Museum contained twice as many examples of reasoning about objects as those designed for the AfricaMuseum. The Royal Military Museum's lack of critical contextualisation of its collection seems to have prompted participants to question the exhibited objects more critically and use them to encourage a more in-depth analysis with students. In contrast, the presence of labels and texts providing broader historical context for the objects at the AfricaMuseum led participants to use these to help students develop their frame of reference, rather than using them to encourage critical reasoning about the objects themselves.



Figure 4. Sculpture by Arsène Matton, 'L'esclavage' (1929) in the Great Rotunda of the AfricaMuseum (Photo by Brent Geerts). © Brent Geerts.



Figure 5. Artistic intervention by Jean Pierre Müller and Aimé Mpane, 'Le viol' (2019) (Photo by Brent Geerts). © Brent Geerts

5.3. *(De)construction of national and colonial master narratives in museums*

All of the participants, except for two, encouraged the students to engage with the constructed national and colonial master narratives in both museums in a critical manner. In doing so, they also guided students towards deconstructing these narratives. At the Royal

Military Museum, for instance, they encouraged students to recognise the occidentocentric approach underlying the exhibition of Swahili-Arab heritage in the history room. One participant designed the following assignment, for example: “Compare the two display cases on the Arab campaign, choose a theme for comparison (e.g. clothing or weaponry) and demonstrate how the West is depicted as superior” (Yusuf). Three participants formulated similar questions, clearly connecting them to the national narrative adopted in the history room. The following two examples, consisting of questions and expected answers formulated by participants, demonstrate this:

Q: What perspective does the museum take in its portrayal of the campaign against the Swahili-Arabs? A: It portrays the campaign as a glorious military victory in which ‘our’ Belgian officers had a great time. Arabs and Congolese people are depicted as inferior and are barely mentioned in this campaign (Noah).

Q: We analysed several objects related to the war against the Swahili-Arabs. What is the dominant image that these displays support? A: They mainly support the Belgian perspective. They honour the Belgian victory and portray the Belgians in a positive light, showing their superiority over the Swahili-Arabs. Q: So, is this museum exhibition mainly Eurocentric? A: Yes, mostly. It focuses on the Belgians and shows more objects relating to them. It also presents a stereotypical image of the Swahili-Arabs that does not fully correspond to reality (Alex).

At the AfricaMuseum, students were encouraged to deconstruct existing colonial narratives. One way they could do this was by discussing the quotes and decorations on the original museum walls, which convey a colonial discourse to visitors. One such quote is the following, delivered by Leopold II at the Geographical Conference in Brussels in 1876: “Opening up to civilisation the only part of our globe where it hasn’t penetrated yet, breaking through the darkness that envelops entire populations — I dare say this is a worthy crusade for this progressive century” (Couttenier, 2019, p. 334). A participant prompted students to consider this quotation in relation to the three main groups involved in the early colonial period: “What does this quotation reveal about (a) the colonisers, (b) the Bantu-Congolese, and (c) the Swahili-Arabs? Which perspective does this vision testify to?” (Liam). In doing so, he helped students recognise the colonial perspective adopted here and relate it to the other groups’ imagery. The participant also mentioned his intention to discuss the quotation in more depth with the students by performing a thorough discourse analysis focusing on the implications of the use of the word “crusade”. Three participants used artistic interven-

tions (e.g. Figure 5), which were added to the exhibition, to counter Matton's stereotypical colonial sculptures in the Grand Rotunda room, which was erected as a tribute to Leopold II (Arnoldi, 2022). One participant elaborated on these interventions during her instruction:

In this room, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that these colonial sculptures are protected heritage. However, I would emphasise that this protected status does not justify the representations, a point that the museum highlights very effectively by covering the sculptures with slightly translucent banners designed by a Congolese artist to hide them from view (Helena).

Two participants adopted a more critical stance, linking the challenge of existing historical narratives to a broader deconstruction of the museum itself, calling into question its authority. One of them drew students' attention to the influence of the Royal Military Museum's financiers: "Why wouldn't the Ministry of Defence, which finances the museum, want to address the appearance of this room, i.e. the history room?" (Lynn). This participant also discussed how the AfricaMuseum's mission defines the scope of its exhibitions: "What does it mean to be 'a museum in motion'? What does that tell us about the museum's approach? What can visitors expect to gain from a visit to the AfricaMuseum?". Another participant explained to students how to understand and interpret a museum using the metaphor of a palimpsest in a Socratic dialogue:

We engage the group in a dialogue about how museums evolve and how they regularly change their selection of ideas in response to current thinking. Just as an author, an artist or a journalist does, the museum can adopt, confirm, illustrate, comment on or contradict these ideas, or attempt to disprove them. Therefore, you can approach a museum in the same way as any other source and apply the same methodologies. In a museum, you can experience the different stages of this process, much like comparing two books from different periods (Liam).

5.4. Critical reflection on the relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial present

Overall, ten participants clearly demonstrated critical reflection on the relationship between the past and the present. This aspect was considered less frequently than the others in the educational activities. Most participants addressed this relationship by asking questions about historical significance and collective remembrance. Six participants asked questions about the influence of historical

events on the present. For example, Lucas asked, “How do you see the influence of the Swahili-Arab presence in nineteenth-century Central Africa on the present day?” Instruction stressing the influence of colonial imagery on present-day societal issues was also included, for example: “These statues have given a false image of Congolese people, which has gone hand in hand with racism in the past and present. As a teacher, I personally think that the statues provide a good starting point for our visit, as they demonstrate to students that stereotypes are fictitious images that can have a strong influence on societal groups in the past and present” (Yusuf). Six participants referenced collective remembrance, noting that debates on the colonial past have received much more attention in recent years and considering the role of museums in these debates. Lynn, for example, linked this to the museum’s renovation, emphasising that students should realise during her introductory tour that the sensitivity of the colonial past in contemporary debates and the evolving collective memory of that past had greatly influenced the renovation.

As we asked the participants to design educational activities for ethnically and culturally diverse groups of students, it is notable that critical reflections on the relationship between the past and the present, as seen from the students’ unique perspectives, were generally absent. Three participants implicitly included possible emotional and affective reactions rather vaguely, for example by asking students how they felt or what they experienced when looking at something without elaborating on the insights that such questions were intended to elicit. Historical empathy, for example, was only approached cognitively, without considering possible emotional or affective dimensions. The following example illustrates this: “How do you think the Congo Free State would have dealt with these traders? Consider the motives of the colonialists”. (Alex). Three participants triggered personal opinions, for instance on how successful students thought artistic interventions by diaspora artists were. Two participants were an exception to these findings, explicitly incorporating students’ identifications and emotional reactions into their designs. For example, one of them explicitly related his desire to teach African history to the ethno-cultural aspects of students’ identity, stating that “some students, especially those with roots in African migration, will certainly be happy to learn about African history. They will be able to recognise themselves in history, which could provide some relief. In contrast, they do not recognise themselves as strongly in European history” (Alex). Anna, on the other hand, achieved this by directly integrating these aspects into a specific learning objective (“Students can explain why they identify with or reject the past”) and a question linked to specific objects:

Which feeling does this room [the history room] excite for you? Do you feel more connected to Belgium, or do you get an aversion towards the Kingdom of Belgium? Search for objects that excite a feeling within you and explain why they do so (Anna).

Anna took a similar approach when she confronted students with another artistic intervention at the AfricaMuseum. Through this intervention, the museum intends to challenge its very colonial approach to remembering the colonial past. She showed the students the intervention and asked them to describe how they felt. The walls of the Memorial Room contain an engraved commemorative plaque bearing the names of 1,508 Belgians who died in Congo between 1876 and 1908 “in honour of their country”. An artistic projection (Figure 6) contrasts this plaque with images of Congolese people who died when they were exhibited in the human zoo at the colonial section of the 1897 World Exhibition in Tervuren Park (Blanchard et al., 2022; Etambala, 2021).



Figure 6. Commemoration plaque in the ‘memorial room’ and the artistic projection ‘Ombres’ by Freddy Tsimba (2016). (Photo by Jo Van de Vijver). © KMMA Tervuren.

When comparing the educational activities between the two museums, a notable difference was observed regarding critical reflection on the relationship between past and present. The AfricaMuseum’s visit programmes touched upon this relationship much more. One possible explanation is that the AfricaMuseum is seen as embodying Belgium’s evolving stance on its colonial past, a topic that has sparked significant debate on ‘decolonising the mind’

in recent years (Bluard, 2021). In contrast, the Royal Military Museum is primarily viewed as a military institution. Participants encouraged students to consider the role of the AfricaMuseum in shaping narratives that influence collective memory much more. This may be because the museum has acknowledged this more strongly since its renovation, whereas the Royal Military Museum does not refer to it at all. Interestingly, this led two participants to state that, in contrast to the Royal Military Museum, they would not need to encourage students to have “a critical mind” at the AfricaMuseum because “the museum itself very strong in critically approaching this difficult past” (Helena). According to another participant, students can only visit the Royal Military “after having the critical point of view of the AfricaMuseum in mind”. (Lucas).

5.5. Approaches towards learning and instruction to foster postcolonial historical thinking

The final aspect of the analysis concerns the approaches to learning and instruction adopted by participants to encourage post-colonial historical thinking. During the initial 40-minute phase, which involved leading students on a self-designed tour of the museum, all participants opted for a combination of direct instruction and Socratic dialogue. For the second 40-minute phase, for which the performance task guidelines offered more freedom, the learning and instructional activities varied. Twelve participants took a very student-centred approach, meaning that students were predominantly invited to work independently. These activities included filling out a list of questions, competitive quests involving games (e.g. searching for as many stereotypes as possible or finding and photographing all depictions of Swahili-Arab as quickly as possible), and students guiding each other around while presenting the results of small-group work. Most participants did not take an active role in these activities, indicating that they would provide optional scaffolding if needed. In contrast, three participants provided explicit scaffolding, for example engaging in dialogue with students and challenging their answers to a research question that they had to solve in a group. During the second phase, two participants relied mainly on teacher-centred approaches, such as direct instruction or Socratic dialogue. However, they interspersed their guided instruction with minor group tasks and thus did not rely solely on teacher-centred approaches. The choice of teacher- or student-centred approach influenced how participants intended to foster postcolonial insights among learners. In terms of deconstructing existing narratives, some participants did this themselves by explicitly instructing students to recognise stereotypes in

objects or exhibitions. Others encouraged students to identify stereotypes independently, for example by asking them to select ten stereotypes from the Royal Military Museum displays and explain their choices. Some used an extensive Socratic dialogue to explore the perspectives of the colonised, while others organised a debate to encourage students to discuss multiple perspectives:

After completing the assignments, students debate with each other to offer a contemporary perspective on the Belgo-Arab War, as it is rarely discussed in history lessons. As many students have an Arab background, it is important to make it clear that such stereotypical representations are no longer the norm. This is especially important since this assignment (i.e. in the Royal Military Museum) comes after the one at the AfricaMuseum, and it is necessary to acquaint students with this past in an appropriate way (Anna).

In addition, this participant explicitly stated that it was crucial to provide explicit scaffolding during the activity at the Royal Military Museum, “because the museum does not provide background information, which could lead to frustration and concern”. This also explains why two other participants adopted a more teacher-centred approach at the Royal Military Museum than at the AfricaMuseum. According to these participants, this approach allowed them to provide more direct contextualisation of the exhibition, since the museum itself does not do so. However, unlike participant Anna, they did not link their role to channelling possible personal frustrations or concerns that students could experience due to their ethno-cultural background. These examples illustrate how three participants differentiated their approach to learning and instruction according to the museology of the two museums, primarily in terms of the contextualisation they provide. The majority of participants did not differentiate in this way.

6. Conclusion and discussion

This article examined how prospective secondary school history teachers integrated postcolonial historical thinking into educational activities about the Belgian colonial past for fictitious, ethnically diverse 11th-grade classes, to be used in two Belgian museums: the AfricaMuseum and the Royal Military Museum. Previous research with prospective secondary school history teachers had shown that they often lacked the knowledge and skills to develop museum educational activities themselves. Furthermore, earlier findings revealed that mastering historical thinking skills does not necessarily result

in their integration into educational practices. This has only been studied in formal classroom contexts, however, and not in relation to postcolonial historical thinking.

This study showed that the participants designed museum educational activities that incorporated postcolonial historical thinking to a considerable extent. In terms of the historical content they included, all participants recognised the importance of moving beyond occidentocentric perspectives. They aimed to achieve this by broadening and enriching students' historical frame of reference. However, the extent to which they achieved this varied. Those who explicitly focused on reciprocity in intercultural contact and pre-colonial perspectives did so more in-depth. More differences were observed in critical disciplinary practices relating to postcolonial historical thinking, such as source analysis and deconstructing existing narratives. Almost all participants deconstructed existing national or colonial master narratives consistently. While two participants primarily concentrated on developing a historical frame of reference in their designs and paid little attention to disciplinary practices, the remaining twelve did not. These participants paid close attention to the underlying narratives present in museum exhibitions, applying postcolonial and historical thinking to deconstruct them. However, most participants incorporated the disciplinary practice of reasoning about objects much less frequently. Most participants primarily used objects and their accompanying labels and texts for this purpose. Only four participants went on to add postcolonial critiques of sources that questioned object labels, sparked an understanding of the provenance and ownership of objects, and revealed the intentions behind displaying an object in a Western museum. Such critiques are, however, necessary to foster historical and postcolonial thinking among students, as previous research has shown that students do not naturally approach objects as historical sources (Peloquin, 2022). Furthermore, if museum educational activities do not encourage students to engage critically with objects, there is a risk that these objects will be presented as neutral and objective, which hinders historical contextualisation (Savenije & de Bruijn, 2017, p. 842). Prospective teachers also find it difficult to adopt a critical approach to sources and objects. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that reasoning about sources, including in classroom settings and with regard to other types of historical sources, such as textual ones, is a challenging skill for prospective and experienced history teachers alike to develop (Nokes, 2010; McCrum, 2013; Van Nieuwenhuysen et al., 2017).

This finding also highlights the importance of developing prospective teachers' 'museum literacy' skills (Stapp, 1984). Thoroughly

integrating museological language into teacher training programmes and providing tools for critically assessing and deconstructing exhibitions could help teachers to consider museum objects as layered, multimodal historical sources. Various scholars have already suggested this approach (Donnelly, 2018; Gilbert, 2016; Schwartz, 2008).

In terms of critical reflections on the relationship between the past and the present, we observed that participants primarily approached this topic from a cognitive perspective. Socio-cultural perspectives, starting from students' various positionalities, were not explicitly integrated, with only two participants' designs making an exception. It seems that the majority of participants did not consider combining cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions when encouraging students to think about the relationship between the past and the present. This is surprising given the sensitivity of the colonial past in the postcolonial present, and the fact that students approach the past cognitively and emotionally (in terms of identity formation or ethical judgements, for example). Remarkably, none of the participants mentioned the restitution of 'colonial' objects in their designs, despite this being a prevalent societal debate evoking strong emotional reactions related to ongoing stereotypes, discrimination and racism in contemporary society. Some students in ethnically diverse class groups have undoubtedly encountered these issues in their daily lives, which have shaped their attitudes towards the (colonial) past. (Savenije et al., 2014; McCully et al., 2021). One possible reason for not addressing these issues is that prospective history teachers often hesitate to raise emotional and potentially sensitive topics because they do not feel competent, safe or comfortable enough to do so (Kello, 2016; Zembylas & Kambani, 2012). Another reason for avoiding controversial issues is the desire of (prospective) history teachers to detach themselves emotionally from the past while teaching history, as various studies show. They believe that, in order to be neutral while teaching students about the past, they must either deny or conceal their own positionality (including personal emotions, opinions, and identifications) (Bentrovato & Buhigiro, 2021; Savenije & Goldberg, 2019).

Upon examining the instructional methods employed by prospective teachers, it was initially surprising to find that participants primarily used a variety of learning and instructional activities to promote postcolonial historical thinking. In these activities, students worked independently and were encouraged to adopt an active, enquiring approach. This contradicts previous research on prospective teachers' beliefs, which shows that they mostly associate museum visits with teacher-centred methods and consequently prefer these themselves (Geerts et al., 2024). However, our results

show the opposite: the academic history teacher training programme combined with prospective secondary school history teachers feeling comfortable with postcolonial historical thinking appears to be effective.

Apparently, the different contextualisation approaches and the extent to which the AfricaMuseum and the Royal Military Museum challenge colonial and national narratives influenced the participants' design practices. Several participants differentiated between the two museums in terms of their approach to learning and instruction, emphasising the need for scaffolding and contextualisation, particularly at the Royal Military Museum. The absence of critical self-reflection and contextualisation accompanying the 'frozen' displays in the Royal Military Museum prompted participants to provide more direct, critical instruction in this respect. Questions and Socratic dialogues about the objects encouraged students to think critically about them. This occurred in the absence of accompanying labels or museum texts providing rich contextual information. At the AfricaMuseum, such labels and texts are present and often provide the answers that participants expected their students to give. While these were used to enrich students' historical frame of reference and go beyond colonial perspectives, the perspectives revealed by these labels and texts on the actual objects were not questioned. Failing to encourage students to think critically about the relationship between objects and their labels and texts may reinforce the authority of the museum or exhibition curator, preventing students from questioning their place within a constructed narrative. This less critical attitude could be reinforced at the AfricaMuseum. For example, two participants stated that students would not need to be overly critical, as the museum itself is "very strong on it". In fact, the museum has become far more self-critical since the renovation. However, while the process of decolonisation is ongoing, it is also being strongly contested, with a great deal of criticism emerging from both academia and diaspora communities regarding the renovation. It has been argued that the museum has not fully "shed its colonial curse" and that the renovation failed to address "the broader and enduring coloniality that defined the institution and would hinder efforts to effect radical change" (Hassett, 2022; Bevernage & Mestdagh, 2022; Bluard, 2021).

This final finding — that the Royal Military Museum's exhibition of 'colonial' artefacts prompted a more critical response from participants than the AfricaMuseum's exhibitions did — echoes earlier research findings concerning popular representations of the past. In his study, Canadian history education scholar Peter Seixas showed young people two films about Native American–White relations: a traditional Western film from a dominant White perspective

and a contemporary film offering a different interpretation that gives Native Americans more agency. The students engaged critically with the 'outdated' film, considering it to be a cultural construct of the 1950s. By contrast, they viewed the contemporary film as an unfiltered depiction of 19th-century history, aligning closely with contemporary historical narratives and challenging the dominant white settler perspective. However, when asked to compare the two films, the students also began to challenge the more recent film based on their earlier critique of the older one (Seixas, 1993; Seixas, 1994). Our findings echo Seixas': 'Outdated' historical representations that barely consider Indigenous perspectives may provoke a more direct critical response than more recent, postcolonial-inspired portrayals. Our findings suggest incorporating colonial popular historical representations alongside more recent ones that trigger postcolonial perspectives in museums.

When considering our main findings, three limitations of this study must be taken into account. Firstly, we did not analyse how participants' existing beliefs and experiences may have affected their design practices. Secondly, most participants held a bachelor's or master's degree in history or archaeology and were enrolled on an academic teacher training programme. Consequently, our research did not involve non-historians or prospective history teachers on professional bachelor's programmes. Thirdly, as we did not ask participants to implement the designed educational activities, we cannot address the actual learning outcomes in a culturally diverse class. Therefore, our findings are limited to our participants' intentions and are mainly derived from their expected student outcomes. While some participants provided some insight into the motivations behind their design choices, further research could involve comparing our findings with an analysis of questionnaires and interviews in which participants explain their design choices. This would enable us to adequately capture their beliefs and the role these played in shaping museum educational practices. Furthermore, incorporating prospective history teachers and students from other institutions into future research could enrich our understanding of how to effectively integrate and promote postcolonial historical thinking. Despite these limitations, our findings have useful implications for teacher training practices. They highlight the ongoing need to provide prospective history teachers with in-depth, non-occidentocentric knowledge, enabling them to move beyond a purely occidentocentric historical frame of reference. Our results suggest that careful modelling of ways to encourage reasoning about artefacts is needed to improve postcolonial source critique, as prospective teachers clearly struggle to apply reasoning strategies to artefacts. Training them to do so

could benefit learning and instruction not only in history museums, but also in history classrooms. Similarly, prospective teachers require additional training in engaging with the socio-cultural dimensions of historical thinking when visiting museums focusing on sensitive topics, such as the colonial past. This is because secondary school students engage with the past in more than just a cognitive way. Therefore, it is necessary to equip prospective teachers with the competencies required to engage with the various dimensions and their interconnections. Lastly, encouraging prospective history teachers to compare ‘older’, more ‘outdated’ popular representations with more recent ones could sharpen their critical thinking about these constructed accounts of the past.

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Books reviews / Comptes rendus

Alfred J. Andrea and Andrew Holt, *Sanctified violence. Holy War in World History*, Indianapolis – Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 2021, xxxi + 169 pp.

World History plays a peculiar and unique role in US secondary education alongside the other two history programmes, US History and European History. It has become increasingly popular especially after the publication of the national standards for world history in 1996 (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996). This is evidenced by its increasing success in the Advanced Placement, a federal programme that provides high school students with coursework in a given subject, generally equivalent to a first-year college course, followed by a central examination. Many universities allow students who receive qualifying scores to skip the corresponding course in their first year of college. From 2002, when the first exam was introduced, to 2022, the number of students taking the exam grew steadily, increasing fifteenfold from 20,955 to 314,716 and approaching the number of students taking the US History exam, that, in the same timeframe, rose from 227,757 to 456,520. Conversely, European history seems to be in crisis, with the number of students taking the exam falling from a peak of 110,297 in 2014 to 80,152 in 2022¹ (Dunn, Mitchell, & Ward, 2016).

A large number of textbooks and teaching aids have been developed for world history courses. These include the *Critical Themes in World History* series, edited by Alfred J. Andrea, a medievalist and former president of the World History Association. The series is published by the Hackett Publishing Company. The volumes have a didactic structure: each chapter concludes with source texts accompanied by “questions for reflection”. Published volumes include *Protests in the Streets: 1968 Across the Globe*, edited by Elaine Carey (2016) and *Shackles of Iron: Slavery Beyond the Atlantic*, by Stewart Gordon (2016). I examine here the last book in the series, written by Andrea herself and Andrew Holt, a specialist in crusades, jihads and the use of social media by contemporary jihadists, which touches on a subject that is not only historically relevant but also highly topical.

¹ Source: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/>

The authors adopt a rigorous taxonomic approach to presenting the various types of holy wars that have occurred throughout history and around the world, by testing the applicability of their fundamental definition of holy war: “Holy war is sanctified violence in service of a deity or a religious ideology” (p. x). They then draw distinctions and overlaps between holy wars and just wars declared for political reasons. They demonstrate that while every holy war is just, not every just war is holy, providing various examples of the latter in India, in Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity and Judaism, as well as among the ancient Greeks, Romans and Aztecs. The authors illustrate the theoretical framework for understanding the complex relationship between the two types of war, providing examples of references to religion that emerged during wars initiated for purely secular reasons, such as the American Civil War and the First World War. They also demonstrate the presence of clerics among the military during both wars, in roles ranging from spiritual assistants to combatants: examples include the Templars and Buddhist monks in Korea, Japan and China. Finally, they discuss terrorists, such as the Assassins in the medieval Near East.

This introduction is followed by four chapters, which group the various case studies into general categories. The first category covers holy wars in mythical times and includes two subcategories: wars fought by gods and wars fought by humans as rituals. Divine wars generally represent the clash of good and evil, and they are somewhat unexpectedly placed first because, as the authors point out, they served as a model and stimulus for real wars fought by human beings. Alongside these wars, the authors also place wars that have a fundamentally religious or ritual significance. Examples include the Aztecs’ Flower War, which was fought to capture enemies for sacrifice to the gods, and the Asmat people’s headhunting practices in West Papua, which form part of specific funeral rituals. The second chapter covers holy wars of conquest that were fought in the name of a deity. Examples are taken from ancient Egypt, Sumer, ancient Israel, the Islamic jihad, the Inca empire, and the various European crusades. The third chapter deals with holy wars fought in defence of the sacred, such as the Maccabean Revolt and the Native American wars of defence, which culminated in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. Here, the authors pay special attention to the wars fought by the Byzantine Empire. They discuss the thesis advanced by some historians who argue that these wars cannot be considered holy wars, since they were not declared by a religious authority and did not grant spiritual benefits to combatants. In reply, the authors argue that the definition of a holy war is applicable in this case, by pointing out that the Byzantine emperor was the head of both the state and the

church — a priest-king at the helm of a God-given empire, often likened to the Israelite King David.

In the epilogue the authors discuss contemporary holy wars and include holy violence, showing how vast, pervasive and diverse the phenomenon is: “Religious believers willing to use violence include fundamentalist Hindus who view their Muslim neighbors as a threat to their religious traditions; advocates of jihad in the Middle East, Africa, South, Southeast, and Central Asia, and even Western Europe and the United States; militant Buddhist monks willing to use violence to establish the superiority of their sacred beliefs over non-Buddhist in Sri Lanka and Myanmar; and Jews who justify their expansion of the nation of Israel as a continuation of the people of Israel’s commitment to divine mandates given over three thousand years ago” (p. 143). The list of case studies is extensive and ranges from large-scale actions by ISIS and al-Qaeda to more limited acts of religiously inspired violence. Examples of the latter include the terrorist attack carried out by the Aum Shinrikyo sect on the Tokyo subway in 1995 and the violent ideology of the white nationalist group Christian Identity in the United States. The authors conclude therefore that “holy war will be part of the human condition well into the future” (p. 157).

In conclusion, this is a thought-provoking book that successfully combines history and anthropology. Its interesting sources are relevant not only in an educational context, but also for an initial scientific approach to the subject.

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