SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL IN QUÉBEC SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE RAPPORT PARENT IN 1964: Foundations, Perspectives, and Conceptual Framework

Fundamentos, perspectivas y trama conceptual que caracterizan el área de la didáctica de las ciencias humanas en la primaria en Quebec a raíz de la publicación del "Informe Parent" en 1964

Fundamentos, perspectivas e estrutura conceitual que caracterizam o campo da didática das ciências humanas no primário no Quebec após a publicação do Rapport Parent em 1964

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ABSTRACT

This paper, presents a critical analysis of the scientific professional documentation regarding the teaching of social and human sciences at the

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elementary level in Québec, published after the release of the *Rapport de la commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Québec*, in 1964, better known under the name of *Rapport Parent*. The purpose of this article is to highlight a number of tensions and ruptures from foundation, the perspectives and the conceptual framework that characterizes the field of social studies education at the elementary level in Québec during a fifty-year period. We refer to the existence of tension between the purposes of emancipation and socialisation; tension between subjects who know how to adapt themselves and have the capacity to think; tension between a constructed knowledge and reified knowledge; and, tension between natural approaches and scientific approaches. The tensions identified in the literature illustrate the wide range of concepts and points of view that are directly linked to the underlying foundation of the thought process of those who collectively implement the teaching of social studies into the education system, sometimes influenced by the so-called personalist theories, other times by technologic theories, and even by constructivist theories (Bertrand, 1993).

KEYWORDS: Teaching, human sciences, elementary level, characteristics.

RESUMEN

El artículo presenta un análisis crítico de la documentación científica y profesional quebequense acerca de la enseñanza de las ciencias humanas y sociales publicada a raíz del Informe de la Comisión Real de encuesta sobre la enseñanza (*Rapport de la Commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement*) en 1964. Pone de relieve algunas tensiones y rupturas con respecto a los fundamentos, las perspectivas y la trama conceptual propios de la didáctica de las ciencias humanas en la primaria en Quebec durante unos cincuenta años: tensiones entre la finalidad de socialización y la finalidad de emancipación, entre una concepción del alumno como sujeto que sabe adaptarse y sujeto que sabe reflexionar, entre una visión del saber cosificado y una visión del saber construido, entre un proceso natural y un proceso de carácter científico. Influenciadas a veces por teorías llamadas personalistas y algunas tecnológicas,

a veces por teorías llamadas constructivistas (Bertrand, 1993), las tensiones identificadas ponen de manifiesto una diversidad de concepciones y de puntos de vista directamente vinculados con los fundamentos subyacentes al pensamiento de los que, colectivamente, se lo plantean.

PALABRAS CLAVES: didáctica, ciencias humanas, primaria, características.

RESUMO
O artigo apresenta uma análise crítica da literatura científica e profissional sobre o ensino das ciências humanas e sociais no primário publicada no Québec após a divulgação do Relatório da Comissão Real de Inquérito sobre Ensino, em 1964. Il destaca algumas tensões e rupturas referentes aos fundamentos, às perspectivas e ao marco conceitual peculiar ao campo da didática das ciências humanas e sociais no Québec durante cerca de cinquenta anos: tensões entre a finalidade de socialização e a finalidade de emancipação, entre um aluno que sabe se adaptar e um aluno que sabe pensar, entre um conhecimento reificado e um conhecimento construído, entre abordagens naturais e abordagens científicas. Influenciadas às vezes pelas teorias ditas personalistas e tecnológicas, às vezes pelas teorias ditas construtivistas (Bertrand, 1993), as tensões identificadas atestam uma diversidade de concepções e pontos de vista diretamente relacionadas aos fundamentos subjacentes ao pensamento daqueles que coletivamente a implementam.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: didática, ciências humanas, primário, características.

Introduction

In Québec, before the 1960s, the teaching of human sciences at the elementary level was primarily designed to ensure the formation of individuals who would be first and foremost Christians and patriots. This teaching was done by inculcating in these individuals pre-identified knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and values (Dupuis, 1977, 1979; Dupuis, & Laforest, 1983; Laforest, 1989). Orthodoxy was the norm, and an ideology of conservatism was used as a point of reference (Rioux, 1968). With the publication of the *Rapport de la commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Québec*, better known as *Rapport Parent* [3] (Gouvernement du Québec, 1964), orthodoxy, which constitutes the norm in the teaching of human sciences, suffered a serious blow. In fact, before the 1960s, the teaching of human sciences in Québec was taken for granted and was difficult to challenge, but the critical views expressed in the *Rapport Parent* gave a new life to the reflection on education. Therefore, since that report was made public, many publications (articles, books, etc.) have questioned the traditional way of thinking about the teaching of human sciences and offered new perspectives regarding the conditions of teaching/learning human sciences at the elementary level in Québec (Dupuis, & Laforest, 1983; Laforest, 1989).

In this context, it is important to raise questions about the foundations, the perspectives and the conceptual framework that characterizes the field of

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[3] The mandate of the *Commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Québec* was to report on the organization and financing of the education system in Québec and to issue recommendations on these matters.

teaching of social studies[4] at the elementary level in Québec since the publication of that report. To this end, we carried out a critical analysis of the scientific and professional references on social and social studies education at the elementary level published in Québec to document some of its specific concepts: teaching, educational purposes associated with human sciences, the relationship with knowledge, learning object, the teaching/learning approach, and the respective role of the teacher and the student. We compiled these concepts indicating the corresponding year of the publication for all the different training curriculums implemented in Québec (Table 1). This exercise allowed us to identify a number of important tensions, ruptures, tendencies, and perspectives in social studies education.

The body of data that we analyzed in this research contains 83 documents (50 articles, 19 book chapters, six books, three doctoral thesis, one master's dissertation, one research report, and three texts from conference proceedings) published over a period of almost fifty years. A total of 42 documents (framework programmes) were published between 1964 and 1980, 11 documents (approaches by objectives) between 1981 and 1990, and 30 documents (competencies-based approaches) after 1991. Given that no database covers the period that we choose to study, we proceeded directly to conducting a review of the scientific literature in major scholarly journals based on the main authors we have identified.

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[4]   In this article, the expression "field of social studies education" refers to any kind of reflection or research on the conditions of teaching/learning from a disciplinary specificity standpoint.

This paper is divided into two sections. From a descriptive standpoint, the first section lists in a systematic way the most significant elements for each of the dimensions we choose to analyze. This section is illustrated mainly by means of numerous quotations that, in our opinion, are relevant to understand the thought process of the different authors. From an interpretative standpoint, the second section highlights the most significant tensions and ruptures that can be found in the relevant scientific literature. Each subtitle below emphasizes one or more of the aspects studied.

1. Descriptive analysis of the scientific and professional documentation

The table below presents an overview on the numerical compilation and emphasizes the most significant elements for each of the dimensions we have analyzed. These elements will be described in detail in the following pages.

Table 1

Synthesis of the analyzed elements according to the year of publication

Aspects	1964-1979	1980-1990	1991-2015
Socio-educational purposes	- Adaptive purposes (11) - Utilitarian purposes (2) - Cognitive purposes (1)	- Utilitarian purposes (6) - Adaptive purposes (3)	- Cognitive purposes (11) - Adaptive purposes (6) - Utilitarian purposes (1)
Learning objects	- Framework (13) - Technical abilities (1)	- Technical abilities (5) - Framework (2) - Factual data (1)	- Intellectual abilities (7) - Concepts and conceptual framework (5) - Scientific approach (4) - Factual data (2)
Definitions of knowledge	- Pre-existing knowledge (12)	- Pre-existing knowledge (3)	- Human construct (10) - Pre-existing knowledge (1)
Modalities of access to knowledge	- Personal discovery (17) - Gradual unveiling (2)	- Gradual unveiling(3) - Personal discovery (1)	- Construction activity (10) - Personal discovery (1)
Role of the teacher	- Facilitator (6) - Programmer (1)	- Programmer (2) - Facilitator (1)	- Mediator (3)
Role of the student	- The subject is active and responsible for exploring and discovering knowledge (8)	- The subject is active and must traverse a predetermined path (1)	- With the guidance and support of an external mediation process, the subject is active in the construction of reality (1)
Learning approaches	- Inductive approach (10)	- Inductive approach (1) - Hypothetical-deductive approach (1) - Conceptualisation approach (1)	- Conceptualisation approach (8) - Hypothetical-deductive approach (2) - Inductive approach (1)

1.1 Socio-educational purposes

Regarding the different purposes associated with the teaching of human sciences, one can observe a structure organized around three main purposes, namely adaptive purposes (the development of acceptable attitudes and values in order to adapt to society), cognitive purposes (conceptual development, intellectual abilities and attitudes, critical thinking) and utilitarian purposes (the acquisition of useful abilities needed in everyday life).

In terms of importance, adaptive purposes rank first. This category includes twenty documents, according to which human sciences, by educating the person and promoting the skills for living in society (Laurin, 1998), must allow the student to acquire specific attitudes and values rather than knowledge (Dupuis, & Laforest, 1972). Human sciences must also encourage students to become aware of their realities in their immediate surroundings (Boisseau, 1977; Picard, 1977) and, consequently, to better adapt to society and its continuous changes (Gélinas, 1976), to open themselves up to the world and to diverse cultures; to develop a spirit of democracy (Lebrun, 1993), and so on. Robert (1983) concluded that the knowledge acquired in human sciences should not be dissociated from the expression of individual and collective values.

Cognitive purposes rank second. The different types of references belonging to this category (n=12) contend that the main rationale behind the teaching of human sciences is to allow students to conceptualize and organize their representation of the world by learning different concepts and conceptual frameworks (Lebrun, 1993; Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001; Lenoir, 1989), and, therefore,

to develop their ability to think reflectively and critically (Dupuis, & Laforest, 1983; Laurin, 1999; Laville, 1991; Lebrun, 1993).

Utilitarian purposes rank third. The various references entered in this category (n=9) consider that the primary purpose of the teaching of human sciences is to encourage students to develop several abilities that are useful for them (Choquette, 1980; Martineau, 1988; Picard, 1977; Robert, 1983), that is to say, abilities they will have to use regularly in their everyday life (for example, using maps, interpreting graphs, reading a time line, etc.).

1.2 Learning objects

In terms of the different purposes mentioned earlier, we were able to identify six elements at the core of the learning process in human sciences. First, in order of importance, 15 references consider that, when it comes to human sciences, the learning object must be a framework that is exclusive to human sciences, refusing categorically any prescribed content given that "one has to get rid of the programmes such as the Tables of the Law" (Lefebvre, 1978, p. 126). In fact, this framework should encourage the development of attitudes and values rather than knowledge (Dupuis, & Laforest, 1972), given that, according to Gingras (1973), knowledge is of relatively little importance. In fact, for the student, the most important point is certainly not to accumulate knowledge, but rather to be introduced to the scientific method and acquire the skills that are inherent to science. Lefebvre (1976) and Johnson (1974a) go along similar lines by noting that it is important to put emphasis more on the method that on the content, because according to Lefebvre (1976, p. 104), "knowing how to construct a science is more important than knowing the science."

In addition, together (12 references), the category intellectual abilities (7 references) as well as concepts and conceptual frameworks (5 references) finished second. In that respect, embracing the idea that the production of the human and social reality represents the backdrop of the teaching of human sciences, a great number of authors in the field of didactics (Laurin, 1998; Lebrun, 1993; Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001; Lenoir, 1989; Lenoir, 2002) consider that the notion of conceptual development, being the source behind the production of the reality, lies at the heart of the didactics for social studies. For Lebrun (1993), the conceptual development encourages not only the understanding of various concepts, but also the comprehension of the relationships between these concepts. From another perspective, Tremblay-Desrochers (1991) considers that the development of intellectual abilities (reasoning, understanding, and arguing) "constitutes the cornerstone of the most important concerns in the teaching of human sciences" (p. 111). The same goes with Laurin and Martineau (1999), who claim that "the teaching of history and geography must lead to the development of competencies to reason about the world in space and time rather than the memorization of facts and events" (p. 23). According to Dupuis and Laforest (1983), there is no doubt that this is the main objective pursued in the teaching of human sciences.

In parallel with the categories of intellectual abilities and concepts as well as conceptual frameworks, the acquisition of technical abilities by the student (for example, the use of maps, the interpretation of graphics, the reading of a time line, etc.), which is mentioned by six references, represents a slightly smaller but relevant proportion of the documents in the database and is in third place in order of importance. In human sciences, the learning approach is

nothing but the learning of knowledge that is applicable to common situations in everyday life (Choquette, 1970; Robert, 1983). The category scientific approach (four documents) and the category factual data (three documents) rank fourth and fifth, respectively, in order of importance. However, it should be pointed out that these two elements are necessarily linked to the notions of conceptual development and intellectual abilities.

On the one hand, conceptual development requires the adoption of a learning approach that is unnatural, and that must also be learned by the student (Lenoir, & Laforest, 1994). According to Lebrun *et al.* (2008), the capacity to put things into perspective and to reason rigorously and systematically, in other words, the ability to think critically is at the core of the teaching/learning process in human sciences (Laurin, 1999). On the other hand, conceptual development cannot be effective by leaving aside factual data, which are key benchmarks for the orientation of the individual in time and space (Lebrun, 1993; Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001).

1.3 Relationships with knowledge (conceptions, access modalities)

With respect to the relationship with knowledge, we have identified the conceptions of knowledge and of access to this knowledge. The first conception of knowledge, which was identified in the scientific literature published before the 1980s, refers to the idea that knowledge constitutes a phenomenon that pre-exists the human subject and is independent from their existence and activity. This representation of knowledge is found in 16 references in the database.

Gélinas (1976) writes "in order to see well, one simply has to take off the blinkers, raise the blinds, and look. Because it is with an attentive look that questions arise quickly and that one becomes aware that we are living in a world full of realities that only ask to be known" (p. 36). The idea behind this point of view is the existence of an *a priori* knowledge that has to be apprehended by direct contact with the reality. This way, "the child, on the basis of their own experience—an experience that is continually enriched and controlled by observation—will apply themselves to penetrate the complexity of man and society" (Lefebvre, 1964, p. 68). Consequently, it is by being in direct contact with reality that the student will be able to get "an idea as accurate as possible about mankind" (Lefebvre, 1964, p. 68) and about the relationships between the individual and the society and about the between different societies. However, this point of view is far from being shared unanimously by the authors that are mentioned in the scientific references we have analyzed. For Lebrun and Lenoir (2001) and for Spallanzani *et al.* (2001), reality is the product of human action, which is socially constructed and determined in time and space, and does not derive from a pre-existing knowledge. In that sense, Lefebvre (1964) says that knowledge "constitutes a specific response given to a specific questioning and a mental elaboration which largely depends on the personal and social experience of each individual" (p. 99). Along the same lines, Laville (1993) and Laurin (1993) categorically reject such a conception of a pre-existing knowledge. According to Laurin (1993), the idea that a hard core and unchanging body of knowledge can exist objectively and independently of those who construct the knowledge is false and even ultimately senseless; however that perception is quite persistent.

Furthermore, the concepts of knowledge are determined by the concepts of the modalities of access to this knowledge. If we talk about *a priori* knowledge, there are two possible ways of accessing it. One the one hand, what might be called truth-knowledge can be apprehended by the student through the discovery of the reality via either direct or indirect systematic observation (19 references). Let us take the case of teaching history. Having been very critical of the mythological dimension (focused on events and heroes of the past) that characterizes history classes at the elementary level, experts within the field of didactics insist on the need to contextualize and situate the study of history in the immediate reality of the child (here and now). According to Lachance (1969), the teaching of history must start with the life story (what is known) of the students and include their experiences, interests and needs. The teaching of history must also be centered on the discovery of knowledge by the students (Dumont, 1983; Johnson, 1973), their perceptions and sensations as well as systematic observations of the world around them (Allard, 1972). On the other hand, from a more orthodox point of view, but one that does not lead to a return to the transmission/assimilation approach (5 references), it is possible for students to have access to knowledge through the utilization of a gradual unveiling process by those who have mastered this knowledge through an inductive approach (stimuli and response). According to Lapointe-Aubin (1978), one must first provide external information (*stimuli*) to students to get them to learn a new knowledge, and then, if students acquire this knowledge, they will show it by adopting an appropriate behavior. For example, if students learn a new rule, they will be able to apply this new rule.

Furthermore, from another perspective (10 references), a number of authors consider that knowledge represents a human product that is socially constructed and determined in time and space, and that access to this knowledge is possible only through a construction activity, that is to say, by a process of objectification of the reality that implies necessarily a rupture with this reality. Consequently, far from being a natural process of discovery (by using either the trial and error technique, or an empirical method, or the inductive approach), access to knowledge hinges first and foremost on a relationship of objectification in which the subject relies upon cognitive structures that are representative of the reality (Lenoir, 1992). For Lebrun *et al.* (2008), this relationship between the subject and the knowledge is never direct and immediate, but always mediated.

1.4 Role of the teacher and role of the student

In the database, 13 references relate to the role of the teacher while 10 references mentioned the role of the student. From an initial perspective, the role performed by the teacher is similar to the role of a baseball manager (Allard, 1971). The role of the teacher is not that of being a player instead of the student, but rather to get the student to play. He is the one who should spark the motivation and interest of the student in the exploration and discovery or the world (Lauzon, 1965). Here, we talk about the teacher as an animator, a facilitator, or a guide whose function is to foster an environment or state of mind that is favourable to the development of the child (Gélinas, 1976; Johnson, 1973; Lamarche, 1980; Lefebvre, 1976, 1978). Therefore, when it comes to this teacher acting as "witness" to the discoveries made by the students, the role of

the students can only be conceived in terms of subjects who are active and responsible for their discoveries. Students become the center of the learning process (Allard, 1971; Johnson, 1976b), of which they are solely responsible by becoming their own teachers (Johnson, 1974b).

From a second perspective, the teacher departs from his function of animator and adopts the role of an actor, who must have a more active involvement in the learning process in which the student is engaged (Dussault-Dumas, & Laville, 1973). According to Choquette (1983), the role of the teacher is to organize the information so that the student is able to acquire that information. The teacher uses a logical and gradual approach to trace the path that the student must follow in order to acquire that information, instead of simply giving the information straight away to the student (Lapointe-Aubin, 1980). This teacher plays the role of a programmer, is more active than a teacher acting as an animator, and is associated with a student who is also active. Lapointe-Aubin (1980) emphasizes that programmed learning is based first and foremost on the respect for the pace of learning and on the active participation of the student.

From a third perspective, the teacher assumes the role of an external mediator, that is to say, of the creator and stage director who wants to implement the best conditions possible to encourage the process of objectification (internal mediation) that takes place between the student and the learning object (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001). According to Lenoir (1989), the role of the teacher "is to promote the interaction between the subject and the object, to intervene in the learning process itself regarding its planning, orientation, support, and

learning evaluation, and not to replace the subject with a perspective of revelation of the truth-knowledge" (p. 684).

In direct relation with a teacher who acts as a mediator in the process of production of reality, the student can only be viewed as a subject who is actively and personally responsible for the production of that reality, but who is at the same time necessarily supported and guided by the external mediator par excellence, namely the teacher (Lenoir, 2002).

1.5 Learning approaches

Under this heading, we have compiled the different learning approaches that are considered in the documentation we have analyzed. Many authors have noted that the understanding of human realities, which are characterized by their diversity and complexity, appears to be a quite difficult task if one relies only on the factual information presented in education programs and school textbooks (Boisseau, 1977; Lefebvre, 1976, 1978). With the aim of going beyond this traditional and somewhat bookish approach to teaching, a number of authors have proposed the adoption of a teaching/learning approach that is centered on the direct observation of the environment. According to Choquette (1970) and to Allard (1972), from a methodological point of view, the teaching of human sciences must focalize on the exploration of the environment by the student through personal perceptions and sensations and direct observations of the world around them.

For example, in the teaching of geography, Choquette (1970) mentions that "the approach based on observation corresponds in a more relevant way to

the pedagogical approach that is needed in geography because the student participates actively and develops their own learning process" (p. 148). Gélinas (1976) says that observation "is a scientific method of knowledge that allows us to discover, understand and explain the reality that surrounds us" (p. 36). For Johnson, the observation method has the advantage "of starting with the child in their environment and with their interests to bring that child to open up progressively and discover the world" (1976a, p. 32) and "replaces the mechanical memorization of inconsistent and confused notions in history and geography by a personal and dynamic method of learning and discovering the environment (1976b, p. 87). According to Tremblay-Desrochers (1991), this learning process, represents the natural progression that the human spirit must follow in order to apprehend the social and human realities, implies that the child visits their environment, observes this milieu carefully, and makes an inventory of their discoveries afterwards. In that respect, Choquette (1970) mentions that "an on-site visit encourages the student to observe and tell spontaneously about what he sees and what looks interesting to him" (p. 142).

Furthermore, some authors argue for the utilization of a hypothetical-deductive approach in the teaching/learning process with the student. Modeled after the systemic approach (Allard, 1976), this method proposes a procedure for the study of the environment that consists of the formulation of a hypothesis or question and confrontation of this hypothesis or question to the reality that can be observed (Allard, 1976; Choquette, 1983). At this moment, according to Laville (1993), the student "becomes increasingly aware of a problem on the basis of punctual information, which leads to put into question a situation or some aspects of that situation; the mind contemplates an

explanation -- presumably a hypothesis -- from the available information; following the examination of that information, the hypothesis is confronted with other existing information that appear to be necessary to propose an explanation, a more general knowledge" (p. 17).

Finally, authors such as Laurin (1998), Lebrun (1993), Lebrun and Lenoir (2001), Lenoir (1989) and Spallanzani *et al.* (2001) mention that the rupture occurring between the student and the reality in the process of production of knowledge must necessarily be founded on the development and implementation of a systematic, structured and rigorous approach that can assure the mediating function of the teaching intervention. This course of action, which can be called a conceptualization approach, consists in "the implementation of processes of abstraction that are applied to a segment of the human reality in order to produce a symbolic representation of that reality" (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001, p. 579). This approach requires that the student takes charge of an ensemble of procedures (Lenoir, 2002). In fact, in contrast to its two previous counterparts, the conceptualization approach utilizes a reasoning method that is divided in three phases that are at the same time complementary and interrelated (Lebrun, 2009; Lebrun *et al.*, 2008; Spallanzani *et al.*, 2001). Firstly, in the phase of spontaneous investigation, a problematic situation anchored in the social or personal reality of the child contributes to raise questions that bring the child to explore that situation and express their initial perceptions and to formulate research questions. Secondly, in the phase of structured investigation, the child, who is supported, guided and supervised by the teacher, constructs a research plan which includes the identification of the information to obtain, the elaboration of the data collection instrument, and

the choice of the data collection method. Thirdly, in the phase of regulated structuring, the information collected by the student will be organized, classified, linked to other existing information and synthesized in order to allow for the (re)structure of the interpretative system that defines the reality. Ultimately, this new understanding of the world is objectified against the initial perceptions expressed at the beginning of the process and against the approach that was utilized in that process.

2. Interpretation of the major tensions and ruptures appearing in the documentation

2.1 Tension between an identity perspective rooted in a descriptive and utilitarian vision and a critical and reflective perspective anchored in the development of critical thinking

With regards to social studies education, the first element that emerged in the documentation concerns the tension between an identity perspective that is rooted in a descriptive and utilitarian vision on one hand and a reflective perspective that is anchored in the development of critical and reflexive thinking on the other hand. Before the 1980s, in the field of didactics, the contribution made by the teaching of human sciences was closely associated with the cultural transmission of a common vision of the world, with socialization in terms of adhesion and with the acquisition of social behaviours

and values that are judged to be acceptable by society, which refers to patrimonial and cultural purposes (Audigier, 1993; Lebrun, 2002; Le Roux, 2005). In the 1980s, after having been assimilated into a utilitarian perspective under the influence of behaviourist theories, the contribution of social studies education was seen primarily in relation to the cognitive development of the student and referred to scientific, intellectual and critical purposes. In the 1990s, that contribution has changed significantly.

The conceptual development and the development of intellectual abilities were strongly encouraged, while the emphasis was put on the interpretation and understanding of a phenomenon rather than on the description of that phenomenon (Laville, 1993; Lebrun, 1993; Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001). In that respect, Audigier (1993), Bailly, & Beguin (2001) and Merenne-Schoumaker (2006) underscored that the centration of social studies education on the description of the reality from an identity perspective runs the risk of neglecting any form of tension or conflict that may arise in the appropriation of space by man. In particular, Merenne-Schoumaker (2006) has clearly demonstrated that, regardless of the conditions in which they live (grouped in a specific territory, scattered in a diaspora, living as nomads in the desert, etc.), human beings act in their space. They take possession of their space, they exploit it, they inhabit it and they rule it, "they made and remade the space continuously: territories, boundaries, passages", and so on (p. 50), which frequently leads to disagreements and conflicts at different spatial levels, but mainly between individual interests and collective interests. In summary, space is a human construction that is historically determined, the product of different social groups which, through various means, occupy the space, develop it, adapt

themselves to its constraints, and use it in many ways, as history has clearly shown.

In this sense, history cannot have as its sole objective the relation of past events under the form of a historical narrative (Laville, 1991; Moniot, 1993), while geography cannot focus exclusively on the description of immutable spaces (Bailly, & Ferras, 1997). According to Laurin (1998), this situation shows that these two disciplines need to reconsider the identity function which was traditionally attributed to them. For the same author (Laurin, 1998), the study of history and geography requires much more than the ability to memorize, observe and describe; it demands the capacity to question, reason, analyze, synthesize and critically judge, that is to say the development of critical thinking (Dupuis, & Laforest, 1983) and intellectual autonomy (Laville, 1991). In this critical and reflexive perspective on the teaching of human sciences, we must "bring the student to ask questions, to develop their critical judgment in order to be able to judge for himself the information presented to him" (Lebrun, 1993, p. 21), that is, "to better interpret the world in which he lives and to be prepared to fully assume his role of good citizen" (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001). In that sense, it is important to consider with Lenoir (1989) that the main rationale behind the teaching of human sciences cannot be instrumental (for example, the student must learn to identify the physical characteristics of a landscape, to draw the boundaries of Québec, to use a map, etc. (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (1981)) and even less informative (for example, the student must learn that the Amerindians lived by hunting and fishing and that they did not know God, that Canada became a British colony in 1763, etc. (Gouvernement du Québec, 1959)). Human sciences are rather praxeological in the sense that they allow the

student to develop creative and critical thinking skills, which can help them to understand and explain the world and act in their reality in a more deliberate and reflective way (Laurin, 1999; Laville, 1991; Lenoir, 1989).

Similarly, socialization and emancipation are two purposes which are in tension in social studies education. That being said, the opposition between these two notions also takes place in a larger perspective. Effectively, Lenoir (to be published) underlined that these two purposes are also in tension at the level of the democratic nation state. According to this author, the primary purpose of any education system that was conceived in the context of the emergence of a nation state is "to educate free, emancipated and equal human beings" (Lenoir, to be published, p. 2). To this desire for emancipation is associated the feeling of national belonging, which has generated this irreducible tension between "the fundamental principle of emancipation and the necessity of social integration which would interfere with it (Lenoir, to be published, p. 3). However, this tension raises a number of questions. Which purpose is preferred by the education system and its education programs? Which purposes are put forward by the actors who have to operationalize these programs in extremely complex environments? Do these actors manage to overcome the existing opposition between conflicting points of view or do they remain overwhelmed by this task?

2.2 A didactics that is torn between its psychological and instrumental orientation and its praxeological orientation

The second element that we identified in the documentation consists of the tension between the psychological and instrumental orientation of a form of didactics that describes itself as a part of pedagogy and the praxeological (practice-based) orientation of a form didactics that distinguishes clearly the characteristics of each of the disciplines taught in class. This first conception of didactics refers to the psychological orientation that focuses on the learning subject and their individual characteristics (desires, needs, level of maturity). On the one hand, this vision of didactics is centered on the individual and opposed to any type of teaching that is oriented to the content and uses more often than not traditional modes of transmission of knowledge. On the other hand, this concept of didactics concentrates on the teaching methods and teaching approaches which are pertinent for the learning of specific content. This form of didactics navigates between a psychological orientation (Halté, 1992) and an instrumental orientation (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2004).

In this regard, many studies emphasize that didactics cannot be limited to its utilitarian and psychological aspect (Jonnaert, & Laurin, 2001; Laurin, 1999). Similarly didactics cannot be assimilated to the search for those laws that teachers can use to ensure quality education in the classroom. To the contrary, didactics must become alive in order to be apprehended and transformed by the teacher, which requires the utilization of a more praxeological approach. That leads us to a reflection regarding educative intervention in all its dimensions (Halté, 1992). Besides, this is the trend that we have observed in the

analysis of the documentation that was produced in Québec in the field of didactics. The existence of this praxeological trend in the teaching of social studies is confirmed overseas in the French documentation regarding the conception of social studies didactics (or education) (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2004). Instead of being centered essentially on the different tools used by the teacher in relation to the learning objects or with the personal characteristics of the learning subjects, this didactical approach adopts the form of a critical didactics through which a scientific field of development of knowledge is progressively elaborated (Jonnaert, & Laurin, 2001).

However, it remains that this praxeological and critical approach of didactics is not without raising important questions. Can these didactic approaches contribute significantly to the evolution of educative practices? How does this didactics approach participate in the education and training of teachers? Even if this trend has a significant presence in both Quebec and French scientific literature, it is important to note that the relationships between the diverse forms of didactics and relationships between didactics on one side and pedagogy on the other side continue to be relevant nowadays because the line that divides didactics and pedagogy still remains quite vague (Astolfi, 1997; Develay, 1997; Jonnaert, & Laurin, 2001).

2.3 Rupture between a reified knowledge and a constructed knowledge: A more constructivist form of didactics?

Regarding the conception of knowledge, we are faced with two sharply divergent visions.

The first position corresponds to the realistic perspective, according to which knowledge constitutes a phenomenon that is pre-existent to the human subject and independent from the existence and activity (Castañon, 2007; Chaui, 2000; Lenoir, 1993a, 1993b), something that is univocal and exists outside the human being, waiting to be discovered or unveiled. When one adheres to a vision that is founded on the conviction that knowledge pre-exists the human being, in other words, knowledge is already there and waiting to be discovered, access to this knowledge is nothing more than the result of a discovery made spontaneously and independently by the student (pedagogy of chance) or the result of the utilization of the gradual unveiling method by the teacher (pedagogy of discovery).[5]

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[5] In the case of a personal discovery, we note that direct observation as a learning process is highly valued and that the experiences, interests, and needs of the learning subject are strongly emphasized. In Québec, this concept of access to knowledge, which was strongly influenced by the North-American humanist tradition and the French research on the pedagogy of awakening (Best, 1973), echoes the empiricist vision according to which truths and rational ideas are acquired via immediate experience (Becker, 1992, 1995; Castañon, 2007; Chaui, 2000). Regarding empiricism, Da Madeira Freitas and Libâneo (2006) mention that before we have an experience, our mind resembles a blank page upon which nothing is written; another analogy would be that our minds resemble a paste without form; however experience fills out the page or gives form to the paste. Consequently, it is by being in direct contact with reality that the student will be able to get a true picture of mankind and relationships between the individual and society and relationships between different societies. In addition, the gradual unveiling of knowledge is based on the systematic use of positive reinforcement, on a rigorous hierarchical structure, and on the step-by-step disclosure of the content in order to ensure that the objectives in terms of

The second position, which opposes the first concept since the 1990s, is represented by the constructivist perspective, which considers that knowledge is a human production that is socially and historically situated, in other words a construction elaborated by a real flesh and blood human subject living in the society (Lenoir, 1993a; Werneck, 2006). For authors such as Castañon (2007), Gaya (2006), Lenoir (1993a) and Werneck (2006), having recourse to the constructivist perspective implies the necessity to exclude the idea of an independent reality, the conception of a pre-existing knowledge transmitted by heritage (the a priori thesis) or existing in nature and waiting to be discovered (the empiricist thesis) (Becker, 1992, 1995). According to Gaya (2006), the constructivist hypothesis [6] goes beyond the dualism between the subject and the object. Access to knowledge is conceived as a production made by the subject, as a process of objectification mediated by scientific approaches.

As mentioned by Lenoir (1993a), realism, which marks the positivist thought and leads to consider reality as an entity that is independent of human

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observable and measurable behaviours will be met. In Québec, this particular conception, which was strongly influenced by the various research done by Skinner, Bloom, and Gagné, echoes the *a priori* perspective, according to which the capacities of an individual are innate, regardless of whether they are already present and formed at birth or potentially determined and waiting maturity to be expressed (Becker, 1992, 1995; Rego, 1999).

[6] This approach considers that knowledge depends on the human subject because "what human beings are able to understand depends on the observing subject and not on the observed world" (Lenoir, 1993a, p. 392). This concept refers to the theory of interactionism, which proposes the existence of an interactive structuring relationship between the learning subject and object (Becker, 1992, 1995; Lenoir, 1992). However, two conditions have to be met to construct a new knowledge. First, the subject must act on the learning object. Second, that subject must incorporate the learning object to the cognitive structures already in place, which runs counter to the empiricist approach and naïve inductivist vision in the conceptualization of the reality (Lenoir, 1992).

beings, leads to reification, that is to say, to the commodification of the reality: "one attributes properties to the objects that are proper to the subject and to the relationship of objectification that constitutes the subject as such" (p. 390). Consequently, this is the object of the relationship (the outcome) that becomes predominant, and not the relationship to the object that ensures the cognitive process. In this sense, it is important to question the way of developing the intellectual autonomy of the student by promoting a realistic conception of knowledge, by attributing an autonomous existence to a form of knowledge that constitutes the exclusive production of the human subject which seeks to resolve the questions and problems that they experience in time and space. However, we feel that such a vision of knowledge and access to knowledge is coherent with the conception of the purposes associated to the teaching of human sciences and with the hegemonic vision of didactics, particularly before the 1990s.

It must be recognized that there is an increasing effort in the field of didactics to integrate the constructivist perspective, with the learning process of the students, which comes into conflict with a realistic concept of the status of knowledge and the naïve empiricist vision of the access to this knowledge. However, it is important to note that, despite the change of perspective that occurred in the field of didactics, the understanding of knowledge according to the realist thesis remains a very concrete reality in the classroom, in particular in the representations the teacher adheres to , in the lesson planning elaborated by the teacher, and in the teaching material used by the teacher (Daudel, 1990; Lebrun, 2002; Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001; Oliveira *et al.*, 2011; Plonczak, 2003; Risner *et al.*, 2000; Zhao, & Hoge, 2005). This observation brings us to put into

question the capacity of this field of study, which becomes more and more constructivist over time, to make significant advances in terms of concepts and practices regarding knowledge and the modalities to access knowledge.

2.4 A student that remains active, but a strong tension between three different points of view regarding the learning subject

Absent for many centuries in any reflection pertaining to education (Rey, 1998), the child has become the centre of attention in the different approaches that we have identified in the documentation that we analyzed. Nevertheless, the important place attributed to the child in these conceptions is played out in different ways and highlights some widely divergent points of view. Influenced by the so-called personalist theories (Bertrand, 1993), of which the American humanism of Carl Rogers is the most prominent example, and in response to any form of teaching that is oriented towards the transmission of content, didactics was centered on the individual, their basic needs and personal interests. Therefore, didactics brought to the forefront an active subject who possesses all the elements they needed to learn and, consequently, to learn for themselves.

The influence of the behaviorist perspective was also noticeable in this didactical approach. In reality, the behaviorist approach, under the guise of a hierarchical and gradual learning process, also championed the notion of active subject and stated that programmed learning should respect the rhythm and the active participation of the subject in activities offered to him.

Finally, the constructivist perspective, which, as we pointed out, was brought progressively closer to the core of social studies education, also emphasizes the active role played by the student in the construction of knowledge. Unlike what we have seen in the previous approaches, this new active subject is part of an interpersonal dynamics in which there are also two other poles, namely knowledge as a learning object and the teacher acting as a mediator in the relationships between student and knowledge.

But, if these three perspectives bring to the foreground the image of a student who plays an active role in their own learning, it should be noted that the central position accorded to the child within this context is only sometimes apparent. What emerges primarily from the first two perspectives is, on the one hand, the vision of a subject who has to be educated as someone who knows how to adapt to the society to which they belong, which relates to the notion of citizenship transmission in social studies (Dupuis, 1977) and to an individualist approach to education conceived essentially as an action on the individual subject, and, on the other hand, the vision of a subject who has to be educated as someone who knows how to name and apply the correct action in the school or social task they are   being asked to do. Yet, from this viewpoint, the active subject is reduced to a pseudo-subject who must react to external information (*stimuli*), which refers to a vision of didactics that is focused on control and leads the learning subject to acquire prescribed knowledges in accordance with established procedures. Such a conception of didactics overlooks the important role of social mediation that can be assumed by the teacher acting as the mediator par excellence in the relationship between the student and the learning object (cognitive mediation). In one case, the teacher is reduced to a

role of catalyst for the activity done by the student, whereas, in the other case, they can easily be replaced with any type of technology (for example, a teaching machine, a school textbook, etc.)

On one side, these conceptions are *ispo facto* opposed to the vision of man as a citizen who knows how to react critically and appropriately to diverse situations that arise in school life or social life where the human being is seen as a subject who is first and foremost social by nature. On the other side, the same conceptions are closely related to the North-American individualist mentality or to the ontological vision of an individual who is interested, liberal, selfish, and disengaged from his collectives, a vision advocated by the Taylorist model (Couturier *et al.*, 2004). It does not mean that the active subject is really active because a wide gap exists between the didactics of the researcher and the didactics of the practitioner (Martins, 1988). In that sense, getting the student into action on the pretext of doing a constructivist activity can lead to the development of an individualistic vision of the active student and produce a psychological aberration in which the exclusive centration on this "active" student takes the form of passive attention given to the learning process of the student, and, consequently, that student forgets what is appropriate to learn (Meirieu, 1985).

2.5 Conceptualization: scientific approach versus natural approach

The analysis of the documentation suggests that the learning approach can be described in three different ways, namely a positivist perspective

(inductive approach), which focuses its attention on the observation and description of the environment, a neo-positivist perspective (hypothetical-deductive approach), which implies the formulation of research hypothesis and the confrontation (validation versus invalidation) of these hypothesis to the reality, and a constructivist perspective (scientific approach to conceptualization), which takes into account the cognitive processes that play an essential role in the construction of reality.

In the first two cases, access to knowledge remains mainly focused on the discovery, via either the trial and error technique or the gradual unveiling method, of a reified reality pre-existing the subject, while, in the last instance, the conceptualization approach proceeds from the assumption that knowledge can exist only through the construction of the reality by the subject. According to Deshaies (1965), " children learn a history of man that is too often idealistic, that does not correspond to the fundamental requirements of the historical science, and that is ultimately a pure abstraction (inculcation) of concepts and facts" (p. 67). Lefebvre (1964) went along the same lines when he underlined that at the elementary level in Québec, it was not really history that was taught to the students, but rather some form of mythology. According to this author, mythology serves only to inculcate in younger generations the vision of the world that is sought by society, hence the need to use the most natural approach possible in order to allow the student to explore the reality that surrounds him.

The utilization of so-called natural approaches falls within what Dupuis (1977) has called simplified human sciences. In this context, human sciences are viewed as a vehicle for transmitting a simplified knowledge and attitudes that

are characteristic of the experts of the different disciplines in that field.   It should be noted that both the inductive approach and the deductive approach had a strong presence in scientific geography (Bailly, & Beguin, 2001) and that the transposition in the school environment of these two approaches guarantees the utilization of a more scientific method of teaching geography and history, in contrast with a form of teaching based on the transmission of knowledge, which appears to be the *sine qua non* condition to its renewal (Le Roux, 2005).

The question here is: How is it possible to transpose in a direct and simplified manner such approaches in the classroom when the teacher knows in advance where to go and what notion or concept he wants to teach to the student? According to Le Roux (2005), the implementation of these approaches in the school environment functions in appearance only under the guidance of a teacher who pretends to apply them because "the constraints in the classroom are not --- and cannot be --- of the same nature that the constraints are on the researcher. School constraints are specific: number of students in the classroom, level of its students, time constraints, available documentation, constraint of result, [constraint of providing] a response to a question, a response perceived as being true" (p. 135)

Some of the questions that arise include how can we contribute to conceptual development and critical thinking if we use these so-called natural approaches that focus on observation? Do we believe at last that knowledge can exist outside and beyond the human subject who is producing it, outside of the socio-historical context which determines it?

It is by trying to address these issues that the scientific approach to conceptualization was strongly highlighted in the documentation regarding the didactics of social and human studies that was published since the second half of the 1980s. This approach is the result of the adoption of the socio-constructivist position and its subsequent association to a relationship of objectification, which requires the utilization of some cognitive processes of mediation (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001). For these authors, the conceptualization approach must be apprehended as "the implementation of processes of abstraction that is applied to a segment of the human world in order to produce a symbolic representation of this world, the reality" (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001, p. 590)

In fact, the construction of reality helps to develop an interpretative system of the human phenomenon, that is to say, the construction of meaning [7](Barth, 2000). Pour Develay (1992), the construction of meaning in geography involves inevitably the presentation to students of problems which need to be solved. In a similar line of thought, Laurin (1998) mentions that an approach that is less "natural" but more systematic and rigorous is arranged around a central idea: "it proposes a problem-solving approach, [it] seeks to demonstrate or understand something or to solve a problem, not only to describe a landscape or learn facts of knowledge" (p. 19). However, as it was underlined by Le Roux (2005), the didactical reflection regarding the role, the contributions

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[7] The term « meaning » refers to what learners learn, to what makes sense to them (Barth, 2000). In fact, meaning is always constructed by the learner and the construction of meaning is a common activity, not an individual reflection or individual activity. According to Barth (2000), meaning constitutes a process of social internalization. Knowledge takes form in this encounter, in this relationship.

and the limitations of the problem based learning approach (problem-based learning method in the process of accession to knowledge remains quite rudimentary in geography, where the term has different meanings (for example, the student must face a problem, the student must be confronted with a situational problem, the student must solve a problem, etc.). Moreover, there seems to be some confusion about the notions of scholar problem and scientific problem.

However, the adoption of a systematic and rigorous approach that uses the problematization approach is becoming more frequently found in the scientific literature regarding the field of human sciences in Québec. This approach is considered an indispensable means to insure the construction of reality (constructivist perspective) through a process of objectification of the realty. However, it is interesting to note the complete absence, in literature, of a critical and detailed analysis regarding the utilization of the problematization approach in the real context of social studies education. Even though many studies have identified elements that are typical of the scientific approach (the conceptualization approach) regarding the representations to which teachers or the future teachers adhere (Lebrun *et al.*, 2011), the lesson planning of future teachers (Lebrun, & Lenoir, 2001) or the school textbooks used in classrooms (Lebrun, 2002; Lebrun, 2009), the implementation of that approach in human sciences classrooms remains unclear. Is it because the complexity of such an approach leads the researchers in the field of social studies education to conclude—even before starting to question themselves on the subject—that this is an approach that is difficult to implement in the classroom? Or are we simply dealing with the consequence of a form of education that, in spite of its

praxeological appearance, remains strongly prescriptive and instrumental by nature?

Conclusion

The critical analysis of the scientific literature regarding the teaching of social and human sciences highlights a number of important tensions and ruptures relating to the foundations, the perspectives, and the conceptual framework that defines the field of social studies education at the elementary level in Québec after the publication of the *Rapport Parent* in 1964.

In this article, we discuss the tension between the purpose of socialization and the purpose of emancipation, between a subject who knows how to adapt himself and a subject who is able to think, between reified knowledge and constructed knowledge, and between natural approaches and scientific approaches. Influenced sometimes by the so-called personalist theories and the technologic theories and other times by the constructivist theories (Bertrand, 1993), the tensions that we have identified in the literature illustrate the diversity of conceptions and points of view in this domain. These conceptions and points of view are directly related to the underlying foundation of the thought process of those who collectively implement the teaching of social studies and invite us, namely the researchers in the field of education and trainers (teachers) of teachers, to exercise great caution when transposing specific concepts, perspectives, and methods that derived from psychology,

sociology, education, economy, and even from the sciences that claim to represent teaching.

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