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Fundamentals of Social Representation for Education Research
Fundamentos das representações sociais para a pesquisa em educação
Fundamentos de las representaciones sociales para la investigación en educación

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This paper presents a bibliographic review to discuss the elements of the Theory of Social Representations, focusing on the epistemological dispersion historically linked to Psychology and Education Sciences. It also brings forth the researches about the application of that theory in the field of education. The study was conducted by reviewing the classical frame of reference, in dialogue with researches of social sciences, to answer the question: What aspects of this theoretical set can be used in educational researches? The results indicate that the social representations are versatile to manage and offer reliable interpretations. However, it is important to highlight some risks that must be managed by the researcher in the field.
Descriptors: Education; Psychology social; Methods.

O texto apresenta levantamento bibliográfico para discutir os princípios da Teoria das Representações Sociais, levando em conta a dispersão epistemológica historicamente ligada à Psicologia e as ciências da Educação, bem como as pesquisas sobre a aplicação da teoria na área da educação. O trabalho foi desenvolvido pela revisão do referencial clássico, no diálogo com interlocutores das ciências sociais, tendo em vista a pergunta: Quais aspectos desse conjunto teórico podem ser utilizados na investigação em educação? Os resultados aqui expostos sinalizam que as Representações Sociais apresentam versatilidade no manejo e confiabilidade das interpretações. Destacam-se apesar disto, alguns riscos que devem ser administrados pelo pesquisador em campo.
Descritores: Educação; Psicologia social; Métodos.

El artículo presenta una revisión bibliográfica para discutir los principios de la Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales, con especial atención a la dispersión epistemológica vinculada históricamente a la Psicología y a las Ciencias de la Educación, y también a las investigaciones acerca de la aplicación de la teoría en el campo de la educación. El trabajo fue desarrollado mediante la revisión del marco clásico, en diálogo con interlocutores de las ciencias sociales, para responder a la pregunta: ¿Qué aspectos de este conjunto teórico pueden ser utilizados en la investigación en la educación? Los resultados aquí expuestos indican que las Representaciones Sociales presentan versatilidad en el manejo y confiabilidad de las interpretaciones. Se destacan, a pesar de esto, algunos riesgos que deben ser administradospor el investigador en el campo.
Descriptores: Educación; Psicología social; Métodos.

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2014, the career and the life of the psychologist Serge Moscovici came to an end. His most relevant academic contributions regarded the theory of knowledge and the psychosocial processes for the constitution of the subject.

From the second half of the 20th century, concepts such as Social Representations (SR) and Social Situations have become important influences in the procedures for the analysis and interpretation of psychological and sociological phenomena.

In this study, the current political context appeared conducive to stimulate and promote the debate regarding the insertion of the psychologist in basic education. The interim government which has taken office motivates a renewal, as do the public agenda regarding the quality of national Education, suggesting that the proposal has been made interesting for both corporations and the civil society as a whole. The research, as a result, is a preliminary step for broader researches, regarding the SR of professionals in basic public education.

Considering the frame of reference designated in the preliminary project, it is recognized that the issue of identity is present in many researches along the history of Psychology, and that the teaching profession is a subject dear to Education sciences - especially in contemporary times. The results exhibited here indicate that the SR are versatile in its use and trustworthy in its interpretations. Nonetheless, they offer risks which must be managed by the researchers, both in the field and in the final writings.

The complete research is targeted at the possibilities of continuing education, tuned to the needs felt by teachers in their day-to-day work, and based on the construction of a school which learns and helps its community in the daily professional tasks.

Regarding higher education, the profile and the registered discourses may point out different ways to elaborate cohesive and meaningful formative propositions, that can definitely help facing the problems that arise from the opposition between theory and practice in one's initial and ongoing training.

This text describes the bibliographic survey conducted with the objective of discussing the principles of the Theory of Social Representations (TSR) considering: a) the epistemological dispersion, historically connected to the sciences of Education and Psychology; and b) the researches regarding the use of TSR in the Education field. The work was developed from the reading of the main work by Moscovici[1], which aimed at starting a dialogue with interlocutors from Psychology and Social Sciences. The main question that this work tried to address was: which aspects of the TSR can be used in the investigation regarding professional identity in the interior of schools?

METHOD

This study is part of a research considered to be basic, exploratory and qualitative.

A bibliographic survey was conducted regarding methodological aspects arising from a theory which is already classic in Social Psychology. Data was collected through readings and critics, all supported by authors who bring the works of Psychology to other fields of the Social Sciences - especially that of Education.

Strictly speaking, the procedure just outlined does not allow for the establishment of hypotheses, as the original and larger project did not raise any, and therefore, there was no intention to verify them. What was aimed at was the exploratory objective of the investigation, which was loyal to the emerging and indicting paradigm to which this project tried to affiliate itself.

RESULTS

Initially, the work which marks the beginning of the theory was analyzed - "The social representation of psychoanalysis"[1] - using Content Analysis[2]. Following that, the relationships found with Human Sciences in general were synthesized, especially those with Pedagogy. Excerpts were organized from the whole, in order to illustrate the

most meaningful influences to structure ulterior investigation.

Exploratory studies were developed using operations which allow for the apprehension of the connections among different variables, based exclusively on internal aspects of the text[2]; therefore, there was a greater focus on criticizing the most stagnated and hermetic analytic procedures. At this point, the concepts advocated by Moscovici are resumed[1].

DISCUSSION

The historian Carlo Ginzburg is the first to illustrate a dilemma that is typical of human sciences, with which they deal with since their origin. It is an assertion, accompanied by a question: "to sacrifice the knowledge of the individual element to generalization (more or less rigorous, more or less capable of being formulated in mathematical language), or to try and elaborate, perhaps with unsteady steps, a different paradigm, based on scientific knowledge (but whose scientificity is yet to be defined) regarding the individual"[3].

Noting the ideology that goes into the building of any knowledge regarding society - and moving away from the classic division between subject and object of knowledge -, what is left is to choose between the adoption of a consolidated epistemological statute (natural sciences) to reach results of little relevance, or a frail statute (indicting) for more relevant results. However relevant to the initial statement, a set of propositions and assumptions can be found in the TSR, which can make the methodological task less frail (or doubtful).

Therefore, the two sciences manifested in the background of the work travel very different trajectories, though they share the same suspicion upon their own epistemological statutes.

Psychology, particularly, has become a consolidated technical field in society, with its own council and professional register - even if there is no academic consensus. Pedagogy, on the other hand, is outlined as a modern science much before, and still suffers from the lack of professional tools and

consideration, as studies regarding the formation of teachers show[4].

Regarding the constitution of the individual and the professional, there is a conception of subjectivity from the 19th century which was based on the chasm between subject and object of knowledge. Such a division had been held true since Plato[5].

In the field of social sciences, however, the discourse is highlighted as a space for the construction and expression of a knowledge/being which men acquire in their social and interpersonal relationships. From this perspective, identity is also built by a network of subjective and social relationships, apart from the dynamics of power, in which the individual is immersed - and it can be investigated through the analysis of these resources. Similarly, Moscovici[1] treats the SR as products of interpersonal intersections. In the socially conformed and created relationships, men give the world meaning.

Since ancient times, Education has been developed as a vital process, an experience which builds the humanity in each individual, and offers the conditions to reproduce "life", in a broader meaning[6]. In words from the preface of the book "History of pedagogical ideas"[7], written by Antônio Joaquim Severino "education has taken a long time to become a concern for theorists, and still lacks more conceptual consistence", exactly because it is "lived".

The ancient educative tradition has historically advanced as a series of experiences related to rituals, dogmas and taboos. The animist cults and Totemism are examples of systems which communicate and stabilize the socially accumulated knowledge through metaphors and interdictions. The oriental tradition - whether in Taoism, Hinduism, or among the Hebrews (although based on mnemonic methods, "which fossilized intelligence, imagination and creativity")[7], recurred to a feeling of harmony, of self-knowledge and balance, which was part of the natural development that included the interaction between

younger and older people - such as in the works of Lao-Tzu or Confucius (551-479 BC).

Starting from the 5th century BC, one can perceive the development of a more systematic reflection about this condition, which underlies human existence (as a unity) can be noted and of civilization (as a structure or organization). Western classical antiquity, especially from the works of Plato, gives birth to a new way to think about education, which gradually turns it into a fundamental institution for the definition of sociability and cultural patterns - that even meets the interests of the State.

Some platonic ideas worked as a support for the division produced in the field of ideas between subject and object of knowledge. According to Gadotti[7], Plato:

> *"formulates the central task of all types of education: remove the 'eye of the spirit' buried in the thick swamp of the apparent world, in constant mutation, and make it look to the light of the real being, the divine; to pass gradually from the illusory perception of the senses to the contemplation of a pure reality, free of any falsehoods." For him, only when this task is fulfilled, education truly exists, the only thing men can bring into eternity. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to "convert" the soul, to see the education as the "art of conversion".*

This idealistic philosophy promotes the assumption that the master (teacher) detains solid knowledge, and the student is an individual devoid of knowledge, to whom the only option is to unrestrictedly accept the guidance imposed upon them. Following this tradition, techniques and procedures are developed in the European Middle Ages, to help in the transmission and anchoring of the content which was then taken as "true". That characterizes the philosophical-educative system known as scholasticism, whose "pedagogical process" is expressed in the compendium *Ratio Studiorum*, from the Society of Jesus.

Only from the 17th century on, philosophical traditions which defend the building of knowledge through experience arise, valuing the body and the senses, and bringing education closer to empiricism and realism. With the advance of post-renaissance modern science, authors such as Francis Bacon (1561-1621), John Locke (1632-1704), and even Stuart Mill (1806-1873), developed reflections regarding the principle of the "Tabula Rasa" - according to which the categories of thinking are completely developed from experience, and are not related to innate attributes, nor to any rules of universal truth.

At this point in history, the polemic is also stimulated by the adoption of principles disseminated by authors such as John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) who first defines the concept of didactics and J. J. Russeau (1712-1778), who advocates freedom and solidarity as grounds for the ideal educative practice. That is, it was frequent for philosophical debates to guide and justify the school education models used from the 5th century BC to the French Revolution in the 18th century.

This situation starts to change when another area of knowledge starts to be consolidated from the 19th century on - Psychology. Considering the methodological and epistemological development of modern Psychology, in the period that goes from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th, it can be noted that theories and systems generated to define both clinical and investigative objects and procedures differ considerably.

In Europe, then shaken by the development of modern science and by the rise of contemporaneous National States, the object of study was called "disturbances of reason", and the scientific field "Psychopathology" - a direct influence of the Age of Enlightenment that came to pass in the main countries, such as: France (Pinel, 1745-1826; Esquirol, 1772-1840; Morel, 1809-1873; Charcot, 1825-1895; Janet, 1859-1947; Liebeault, 1823-1903 and Bernheim, 1837-1919) Germany (Griesinger, 1817-1869; Kraepelin, 1856-1926 and Bleuler, 1857-1939) and Austria (Breuer, 1842-1925). In the USA (William James, 1842-1910; John Dewey 1859-1952), the outlines given to the diagnoses and procedures were of a different fashion, and were more rules for the verification and validation of knowledge than actually some unifying and total principle of nature or human development.

Considering this retrospect - as well as trying to dialogue with the main references upon which TSR was based -, one arrives at the work of two authors who changed the history of Psychology and Pedagogy: J. Piaget (1896-1980) and L. Vygotsky (1896-1934). Among the contributions made by Piaget, the most important ones are the ideas of "epistemic subject" and "balancing". Vygotsky, by his turn, is an exponent of the historical-cultural line of thought, and it is said that his most relevant ideas are those about the formulation of concepts and the relationship between language and thought.

To Piaget, who gives birth to the field of genetic epistemology, the notion of an epistemic subject defines the object (the acquisition of knowledge by the individual) and the method (study about the origin of the superior forms of thought), and Psychology dedicates to those from then on. This approach also influences the education sciences, especially when it comes to the processes of human development. The notion also influences Moscovici, since it corresponds to the way in which the TSR conceives the genesis of the representations:

> "It should be noted, initially, that the balance is not an extrinsic or added quality, but properly intrinsic and constitutive of mental organic life. A rock, in its environment, can find itself in a state of stable, unstable, or indifferent balance, and none of those will affect its nature. An organism in its environment, on the other hand, has multiple forms of balance, since its postures to its homeostasis, and those forms are necessary to life. These are, therefore, intrinsic characteristics; thus, long-lasting imbalances are organic or mental pathological states"[8].

To develop the concept of epistemic subject, a subject who advances in the cognitive schemes through action and experience, Piaget borrows the notion of balance from natural sciences. To him, the organism is to be seen as an open system, which interacts with the external disturbances, resulting in the balancing process. The work of Piaget registers that, from a psychological standpoint, this physiological process, responsible for the maintenance of the body, has cognitive consequences. Moscovici, on the genesis of the SR:

> "To diminish the tension and the lack of balance, it is necessary for the alien content to enter a current content, and for what is out of our universe to penetrate our universe. More precisely, it is necessary to make familiar the unusual and unusual the familiar, change the universe without stopping it from being our universe[1]".

Historic-cultural Psychology is not only an important paradigm for Psychology and a profound influence in educational sciences, as it also allows for an approximation to the concept of SR. According to Vygotsky, who also analysis the genesis of the cognitive processes in human beings, the development of concepts is a creative process (in which the subject acts) which happens as long as motivation (affectivity), problems and objectives are articulated. Rejecting explanations which considered environment, social context or internal factors (maturation) to be causes for the development of conceptual thinking, the Russian aimed at improving the studies which highlight the interactive features of this psychosocial process:

> "verbal thought is not a natural and innate form of behavior, but a historical-cultural one, and that is why it distinguishes itself basically through a series of specific properties and laws, which cannot be found in the natural forms of thought and language. However, the main conclusion is that, once the historical character of verbal thought is recognized, one should extend to this form of behavior all the methodological theses that historical materialism establishes for all phenomena in human society. Finally, it should be expected that, generally speaking, the way in which the behavior historically develops will directly depend on the general laws of the historic development of human society"[9].

In this regard, Moscovici also registers some considerations about the genesis of concepts (inside the SR process) and its connection with social interactions. In the 10th chapter of "Social Representation in Psychoanalysis", for instance, the author discusses some observations conducted during the interviews conducted in Paris. He debates with what he calls Genetic Psychology - included among theories criticized for their positivist and behaviorist traits - and defines how he sees the ordering of the elements articulated in the process of

acquiring reason. Moscovici defines as dialectic the relationship between social context and individual thought:

> "Once their physical and ideological universes are dominated, the child and the adolescent are far from reaching a general domain of their intellectual tools. Society does not ask for that. The ability to do so is not assured. Acquiring intellectual mechanisms only happens in response to a reality, a precise content [...] The objective conditions for the insertion of a group or individual in the physical or social environment do not always become concrete in the same step of intellectual evolution, if we suppose we have a universally valid framework of this evolution"[1].

Given this overview, all the most important works which serve as a reference for the establishment of TSR are given. It begins with the definition of two universes of thought: the reified and the consensual. This idea is developed according to the works of the philosopher Lévy-Bruhl. This author studied the primitive mentality, and for him, the logic of human thought is contextual and depends on its references, which are constructed such as a web, with elements and interactions which recur in a specific social group. In the case, the reified thought operates like the scientific speech, in which assertions are valued as truths. Consensual thought, on the other hand, operates from elements of the understandings that are shared by a specific group.

Lévy-Bruhl works in an original way with the concept of collective representations, developing the conception that emotional aspects are fundamental components of these forms of socialized and socializing knowledge. In that respect, this seems to be one of the most remarkable traits of the theory this investigation adopts, the holistic idea that the content and the meaning of actions, invested in social representations, are unities in a larger set of psychic phenomena[1].

In sociology, as well, E. Durkheim (1858-1917) identified in his concept of collective representations the functional and coercive character these representations develop - according to Moscovici, this conception can only be defended when closed societies (uniform and static) are analyzed. In the current complex societies, the representations present an essentially dynamic and creative character. Another current of thought with which the TSR author disagrees is behaviorism, which advocates the need to eliminate interpretation from scientific procedures, through standardized tests and quantifiable results.

While Durkheim creates a dichotomy, finding collective and individual aspects in the process, Moscovici tries to integrate them, perceiving that both reality and individuals are forged during the constitution of social representations. In this definition of the object, the author presents social representations as a form of knowledge which the individuals use in order to familiarize and prepare themselves for action - having both consensual and prescriptive functions. In this regard, Moscovici, develops two concepts which describe the organization of SR: the figurative knot and the representation field. According to the author, the representation is produced in the cognition of the individual, answering to psychic demands; however, it is ordered by the "figurative knot" which synthesizes the images, the notions and judgments of a group[1].

With the concept of representational field, two aspects of the SR are highlighted: one of them symbolic (from which another concept is related) and another figurative (through which a SR is evoked). What defines the social character Moscovici gives to representations (as opposed to a collective one) is the existence of a mechanism and a relational dynamic which define these SRs - and not only the fact that they are present in society or are shared among individuals/groups. For him, the process of aprehension (and construciton) of reality from them:

> "Implies in a rearrangement of structures, a remodeling of elements, a real reconstruction of what is given in the context of values, notions and rules, which it then starts to share as well. In fact, the external data is never something finished and unique; it gives a lot of freedom to play for the mental activity which strives to apprehend it. Language takes advantage of this to circumscribe it, to drag it in the flux of its associations, to impregnate it with its metaphors and project it in its real space, which is symbolic"[1].

Right now, there are two ongoing psychic processes, which can be studied by methods liked to TSR: anchoring or "mooring" (in which a new concept is incorporated to the present structures previously in individuals and groups) and objectification (in which knowledge becomes concrete and translated in action as well - that also reveals its practical knowledge features). Moscovici proposes that the SR are the texture around a field of representations in which the themes emerge through categories:

> *"The dimension we designate with the expression 'representation field' refers to the idea of image, social model, to the concrete and limited content of propositions related to a specific aspect of the object of representation. Opinions may involve the represented whole, but that does not mean the set is ordered and structured. The notion of dimension forces us to judge that there is a field of representation, an image, where there is a hierarchical unit of elements"[1].*

As for anchoring and objectification, they can be said to relate to a broad process in which social (or collective) dynamics trigger psycho-cognitive transformations in individuals, who by their turn, based on such dynamism, change the context and the conditions of social reproduction. Anchoring represents the function of familiarization and occurs through classification (categories, images and concepts) and labeling (economy of thought), being responsible for framing, fitting, the new element inside the network of ideas shared by the group - its character is not neutral. Objectification has the naturalization as one of its functions, a process in which symbolized characteristics are reinforced, causing new attitudes (actions) to be coherent to the group in which they are developed. The operation is what turns the immediate into abstract, which actualizes, which restate the thing in face of its meaning - an interpretive character is consubstantiated in this operation:

> *"To objectify is to reabsorb an excess of significations making them material (and thus adopting a certain distance from them). It is also to transplant to an observational level what was only an inference or symbol [...] ideas are no longer seen as products of the intellectual activities of certain spirits, but as reflexes of*

something that exists externally. The perceived was substituted by the known"[1].

Therefore, the SRs are psychosocial phenomena, whose character is structuring/operative in the shared reality and generative in the collective construction of knowledge. The concept of SR involves the dimensions of social structure, organization and functioning. It is valid to state that Moscovici, with the SR, overcomes the dichotomy created by Durkheim between individual/psychic and collective/sociological - targeted at the study of language, values, norms, taboos, concepts - when he tries to explain dynamism (creation and reformulation) of representations and the practices conditioned by them. Another element present in the TSR is the idea that these representations characterize a modality of knowledge which is close to common sense:

> *"In order to understand how a representation is formed, it is important to clarify two elements, the figure (image) and the meaning (concept). The first one refers to the phenomenon in the social world. The second one is the value or meaning given to this figure by the individual. Therefore, one can say that signification is capable of conceiving an object without its presence, giving it meaning and symbolizing it, while the image is the perceptive activity, as it recovers this object by making it concrete"[10].*

Thus, some results obtained through the use of the TSR in an educational context follow. The article by Menin, Shimizu and Lima[11] presents a study carried out in the mid 2000s regarding theses and dissertations - registered in the recognized post-graduation programs - which used the TSR to investigate representations of teachers in basic education. The work describes the issues which guided the investigation of the researches: if the object defined in the researches would be susceptible to a social representation; if the subjects approached are sufficiently characterized, and if these researches are adequately giving back to the contexts in which they are produced.

Jodelet[12], who, from a methodological standpoint, continues the work of Moscovici, creates important descriptions of the practical consequences which can result from choosing the TSR. For example, observing

expressions and manifestations of the discourse (communication) also leads one to consider the solidarities they engender. The advance in the researches on SR also reveals "the construction of a psychological and social science of knowledge", in which symbology and cognition are part of an ample process of (re)construction of the real. Neither psychological (in the classic sense) nor sociological, this theory exposes its practical consequences when the subjective and collective demands which are part of its definition are articulated. It sees cognition as a psychological function which structures and organizes shared (and authorized) contents in a certain social context:

"*Common objects are found through the cognitive study of knowledge: the study of thought contents, the declarative and processual knowledge (to know what and how); the analysis of such knowledge in terms of structure and memory. However, if we consider the relation between the structural and processual characteristics and the social conditions of production, circulation and finality of representations, there is a radical difference. Since it is both derived and inferred, the knowledge that derives from social representations cannot be thought according to the dominant model of information treatment. Its study allows for one to circumvent the difficulties this treatment brings forth [...] In addition, the interest in the function of representation and its relation to a referent to communication allows one to clarify the obscure zones which are left in the cognitive approach of representation"[12].*

In other words, Jodelet[12] suggests that the social representation is revealed among individuals through conducts which are followed in particular contexts. Such conducts, however, can present themselves as discourses, speeches, posture, gestures and images. They can be apprehended immediately by the observer of the phenomenon, since such significations are expressive of whoever produces them, and bring on their wake a consensual definition regarding the represented object; while others need to be interpreted in the light of socio-historical characters, and only indirectly observed. The understanding of this process helps in the construction of strategies for interventions in teacher training, since the contents of the representation activate and mobilize the individual in their quotidian craft.

With that in mind, the empirical works of Alves-Mazzotti[13,14] present some elements that amplify these notes. Some important guides are: a) the representation does not have an intermediary role in the relationship between subject and object, it is the process in which perception and concept are interchanged; b) a consequent investigation in SR considers the analyzed material both as product and as process; it is not enough to identify which are they, and it is also important to describe and compare how they are defined; and, c) the recognition of the figures, which appear in the plot expressed by the subjects, are composed by nuclear elements - which have a symbolic value, associative power and salience[13] - and peripheral ones.

In turn, there are pertinent factors to consider, as they signal the position of TSR in front of other theories which produce knowledge about discourse, language, logic and persuasion. Analyzing representations, along the development of Psychology and Sociology, has generally implied in "leaning to one side" - either individual (cognition, perception) or social (identity, power). More than that, semiotics, as well as analytics, is understood to treat objects in their formal relations - in a symbol as in a syllogism.

This was an attempt to consider possible interlocutors, not to risk being hermetic - something which clearly distinguishes the TSR approach from other canonical and orthodox currents of thought. In this regard, representation is seen as an action taken by the subject, its content being related to the (self) identification that one has of oneself and of the social group in which they are inserted. Therefore, the more orthodox structuralist position is abandoned, "since each time one of these opinions is taken, what is said of something is what is said of oneself and one's own group"[14].

So far, the history of the concept of SR and some of its characteristics have been approached, mainly following the path traveled by Moscovici. Through history, the field of study was found to be Social

Psychology, and through the characteristics mentioned, some criteria and consensus were pointed out, which showed a way to position oneself with regard to such references. In this discussion, the observations about TSR aim at expanding the dialogue with works which put this theory in action. These brief considerations are part of the dialogues with TSR, which stem from the work of Moscovici[1], which was developed in opposition to positivist (neutrality / physical sciences) and functionalist (body metaphor and objectivity of the social fact) precepts, which separated, when treating the objects, the individual and collective dimensions of the subject.

This is not a discussion of the scientific or objective nature of the theories (or their subsidiary sciences). Recently there has been an increase in initiatives (especially in programs which conduct the psychologist initial trainings) and researches (pioneered by European academic centers) which incorporate elements of critical emancipation regarding the "clinical" paradigm, claims a historical-critical (or historical-cultural) approach as the most appropriate approach for work, as well as institutional analyses as encouragement for the teaching professional to achieve self-awareness and improve their educational practices.

Considering the debate conducted by Moscovici regarding the ideas of Durkheim, the concept of collective representations is a starting point, in sociology, for the notion of psychic constructs which are forged by social life. From this perspective, the foundational stones of myths, legends and religions, are at the origin of the values and conducts presented by individuals in their day-to-day lives. These systems operate mental forms which conduct the psychic development of the subject, according to the prevalence of the social fact upon every individual, advocated by the positive method. Therefore, collective representations are stable types of social action transmitted by tradition.

Moscovici highlights the importance of such a conception, according to which human development and behavior are defined in a dialectic relationship to social context. His use of Durkheim's principle, however, does not prevent him from criticizing and overcoming the restrict scope in which collective representations were applied. Durkheim, according to Moscovici, was involved in studies about myths, and that led him to look at the stability of the forms of thought and conduct, how they are produced in closed societies and how they linger in ones individual conformation. Moscovici, on the other hand, wants to look forward, and proposes a theory for the study of phenomena which happen in an open society, such as contemporary France. The solution in this case was to redefine the representations, which are now social, and emphasize the relational and dynamic character presented by these unities.

In other words, Moscovici refrains from the thought that the SR are generated by tradition; in complex societies, the multiplicity of references (political, economic, religious and others) prevents them from being homogeneous and stable as in closed societies.

Social representation would be a phenomenon which develops in history through advances, setbacks and contradictions. The double (they are socially shared and individually realized) and temporary (changeable through history) character of SR is exactly what Moscovici advocates, in opposition to the evolutionist and functionalist lines of study.

The results found by Menin, Shimizu and Lima[11] are important evidences of theoretical-methodological weaknesses which must be avoided. The main ones can be synthesized as follows: bibliographic reviews regarding the studies carried forth are very limited, and when the references used are restricted to an isolated chapter, without offering elements for data analysis, the TSR is underused.

When it comes to such underuse, generally, it can be noted that the TSR works as a subsidy to justify a work's choices and data collection procedures, but it is not prominent in the body of the text, and only superficially aid the hypotheses and analysis which conclude the works which utilize it[11].

CONCLUSION

In the scope of this essay, the methodological definition is seen to have a position regarding the many ideas presented throughout the evolution of psychological and educational paradigms.

It is possible to verify the dependency regarding an adjustment in ones point of view, aiming at: escaping the tendency for dichotomy and analysis (logic) of traditional Psychology; facing discursive units of health professionals as manifestations of psychosocial characteristics; and integrating the social dynamic with symbolic objects, built and shared in (and by) subjects.

It is seen as productive to work with the recognition that metaphors and metonymies created by the individuals reveal more than logical operations, even being able to translate the preferable and desirable within a specific characterized group.

Thus, one must be careful when establishing if the focus object admits being studied with TSR and which are the organizations and hierarchies of figures present in the social context - in this case, in the particular context of the schools.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Érico de Pinheiro Lopes de Paula was responsible for the scope and the stages of the article.