

## **GEOGRAPHY SCHOOL IN THE MIRROR OF YOUR SOCIAL REPRESENTATION**

Xosé M. Souto González & Diego García Monteagudo

In the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century there was an important debate on the explanation of the facts and social phenomena. Since geography and other social sciences the explanation of human behaviour in relation to the memory of the past, social relations, spatial assessment or social representation of the school system was sought. Our goal is to show the obstacles that appear in academic circles as a reference for the construction of an educational public space where geography can manifest their powers to facilitate useful learning the knowledge of the local environment in its global context.

### **INTRODUCTION**

More than forty years ago, Horacio Capel in a seminal article on Geography of Perception it indicated that in the seventies of the twentieth century, was attending a major change in the explanation of events and social events, which he called the turn behaviour (Capel, 1973). Faced with the positivist logic of quantitative models appeared phenomenological interpretation of human events; a way of explaining that was classified as a Humanistic Geography as Geography of Perception and Behaviour (Boira and Reques, 1991). Emotions, intentions and human behaviour were considered, as was the case in other social sciences. In the early decades of the twentieth century advances in neuroscience research (Diaz, 2007; Damasio, 2010) they endorsed empirical evidence from the influence of emotions and feelings in the reasoning and individual and collective decisions.

All these theoretical considerations show that the proposed learning in the information society, after the Internet technology revolution has to be different from a century ago. But school routines often take us back to the nineteenth century. Why is it so

difficult to innovate in teaching geography and social sciences?

## **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

In different teacher training courses, initial and ongoing, there has been a similar question: why study the Geography Schools in this course? Some people understand that it is an academic knowledge with little impact on their daily work; however others are able to relate this taxonomy with the evolution of science and knowledge, which allows us to construct a theory about our decisions and the need for critical autonomy.

At another point we have insisted that the different schools or philosophical tendencies allow us to explain the school context where learning and citizen occurs (Souto, 2010). So we have it extracted some thoughts on the implications of this kind of knowledge at the time of the teaching program. The experiences of other groups innovation Spain (eg those of Fedicaria) and Latin America (which meet in RedLadgeo and the Geoforo) 1 have highlighted the need to define a theoretical framework in which innovation is contextualized. This theoretical argument intensify the safety of teachers in decision-making.

For this reason we have interested in the sociology of education, not only to know the social context of the school, but also to understand the social representations that determine one way or another to educate in social problems from geography. The selection of this object of study, social representations, and invites us to think about the relationship between subject and social context, because we understand that learning is the responsibility of the individual, although this is done within a social and cultural community. In this regard, the commitment to constructivism is not only an approach from cognitive psychology, but also a confluence with the world of geography of perception and social representations.

However, working with surveys active teachers and students of the Master Teacher of Secondary Education, it has revealed that schools of Geography are not sufficiently known by the students of the Master of Geography neither the teachers who go voluntarily courses and continuing education seminars. But this ignorance contrasts with the powers presuppose a future teacher, that as according to most respondents must know how to select the social and environmental problems. The dilemma is to explain how you can make this selection to connect with the thoughts and emotions of students if the theoretical framework of the Geography of Perception or Humanistic is not known.

Consequently, this paradox corresponds to a double stereotype. By a pedagogical part, because it is understood that the practice of the classroom does not require an epistemic reflection to organize the sequence of activities. On the other academics, as it is the lack of involvement of the teaching of geography in university research. So

when we ask future teachers we define the characteristics of a professor of geography or social studies we have observed that the most repeated words correspond to dynamism, motivation, curiosity or informed person.

From the above, the hypothesis of this research that affirm that the social representation of teachers of Geography is related to a view from common sense and is accepted as such by Geography teachers follows. So study social sciences, geography or history, it corresponds mainly with an image of rote learning of facts and concepts that have been synthesized from the academic knowledge and part of what is called culture distinguished. This means that there is no correlation between academic knowledge and what is transmitted as a profession in the classrooms of non - university education.

The representation of geography as maps, territory and space, as well as teacher associated with the words of dynamism and motivation, has led us to seek a theoretical logic to the interpretation of these words and so we come to the social representations as a theory that relates the social context with personal arguments. That is, we seek to understand the reasons why a teacher of Geography understands that his goal is to guide the learning of social and spatial problems and does not consider it necessary to know the schools Geography, which have different ways of conceiving these situations, especially looking complementarity between social context and individual perceptions. We also wish to explain the reasons why geography is associated with space, territory and maps and not these concepts and techniques are used to define the problems of places where students live or perceived through the media.

The next methodological step is to ask: What gives us the theory of social representations to the knowledge of school geography? From the perspective of analysis of teaching in school geography we are interested in the provision of social representations as a synthesis of social and individual influences on the way to work the teachers, who as we know from other studies from the teaching of history is a essential for pleasure or disinterest of students by matter element 2 .

The contributions of M. Domingos (2000, 2010) and J. Saraiva (2007) bring us the psychological analysis of the sociological Moscovici Bourdieu in the search for the explanation of teachers habitus in the way of explaining the school Geography. First influenced by the characteristics of social and family of teachers own origin, which determines their conception of the school system, then decisively influences their initial and ongoing training, with readings that can perform the work seminars that can foster and discussions with colleagues. All these factors are shaping the teaching figure as well as his conception of matter, in this case geography.

Social representations allow us to combine in an argumentative discourse elements that define the personality of a teacher, both their individual skills and their social or

structural conditions. Thus the use of semantic memory to explain some geographical concepts you have learned are mediated by the use of episodic memory, which makes a stop over in explaining some places than in others, or “decorate” the explanation means geographical with stories of life experiences. In this sense it is using methods that have been described by the Geography of Perception and Behavioural when exposed to result from the combination of subjective space and absolute represents the complex space where converge personal experiences with data statistical and verbal extracted from various reports.

Moreover, social representations allow us an epistemic reading of the pedagogical and psychological models, such as constructivism. On the one hand takes into account the individual 's capabilities by biological growth (the phases of balance / imbalance Piaget) and other interactions with the cultural environment, where a zone of proximal development that stimulates neuronal use to build relationships there synaptic. In this sense, the impact on the teaching of geography is important because it offers a way for the gradation in the sequence of activities. And again, the school of perception and behaviour is relevant to graduate structural learning medium (location, location, orientation) and valuations of living space, where topophilia and topophobia are explanatory concepts.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The added value of social representations is determined by the analysis of social contexts of teachers and students, especially their social projections and desires of life in the future. Such sociological analysis we avoid falling into the “trap” natural child and allows us to specify the content to be developed from the different places where the schools are located.

Collective representations that are shared within an organization work as an organizer of thought and action, determining the relations of subjects with each other and with homework, and influencing change processes. In educational institutions, representations about educational reform are prominent among the representations, since all actors, and especially political education, are concerned about the viability of these reforms place, as in the Argentine case (Durán, 2015).

The first conclusion is that the ongoing administrative reforms are an obstacle to innovation by considering teachers in partisan political bodies school contents are determined. That is, the social representations of teachers act as a barrier to innovation, as it is understood that they / them have no capacity or legitimacy to form certain contents which are formulated in the official curriculum. Thus, we found that decisions regarding education (education policies, technological development, funding and curriculum change) depends increasingly on the social acceptance of the priorities and

directions of scientific activity. Must have the views of teachers, families, students and citizens in general, because they become a factor influencing the pace and direction of reforms. That is why we understand that social perceptions about the relevance and meaning of science, as has been the case of geography, becomes a factor promoting or an obstacle to innovation objectives. It has also been highlighted innovations that have been attempted since the academic or political institutions, without regard to routines, habits and perceptions of society in relation to the school subject, represent a failed attempt to transfer scientific knowledge to school. So we have to know the opinion of students of Geography.

Second, the representations and perceptions of everyday life of students have not been considered generically in the development of school activities. They understand that school teaching of geography is not useful to solve problems in their daily lives. Therefore, it shows that the very complexity of social representations, knowledge suggests that educational agents (teachers, administrators and non-teaching staff) have on the education system and the matters in general. It is a task you have to think and reflect for long-term results as they know the social representations involves psychological, personal and professional all members of the educational community aspects. Moreover, in relation to the image of school geography a nuclear representation confirming the presence of this material associated with maps and in the XXI century, new technologies of representation of the territory appears. In this sense the danger of confusing the teaching methodology with the use of these techniques and mapping tools appears, which brings us back to the old debates of the seventies with the addition of the audiovisual media in basic education.

Third, in the field of social representations we are a third type of obstacles. We refer to the opinion built with "common sense" of families, students and citizens who understand the school Geography as a cultural knowledge that serves to know curiosities of the world. These social representations are an obstacle to innovation projects. In addition, the development of curricular projects has declined since the eighties of the twentieth century, when we had the contributions of already established groups (such as Germanías-Gharbi or Cronos) and others who appeared in these years (Insula Barataria, Ires, Gea-Clío, Pagadi). But in the early decades of the century these groups have disappeared, except for IRES and Gea-Clío. They appear, in return, various blogs and websites of teachers and schools that spread their classroom experiences, often without a reflection on the possibilities of generalization to other schools.

In teaching innovation groups through theoretical reflection with school practice, research studies with suggestions for improvement in the classroom, evaluation of school learning with teacher training models sought. A research program has sought to share through instruments such as the Iberoamerican Geoforo or Fedicaria. However, social

perception is that the projects and groups have been relegated to a second term in favour of the expansion of partial ideas and projects that arise in relation to the daily practice and spread through social networks. In such technical means research found an object that will allow us to assess its impact on improving teaching geography to favour an independent and critical of the relations between space and society learning. And although this idea already investigated in other scientific papers, we intend to account for some research being done at the University of Valencia in format Works Final Master of Research in Specific Didactics. On the one hand, the line of social representations and environmental education that includes the contributions of Diana Santana (2014), Dafne García (2015) and Laura Sánchez (2016), under the direction of Professor Antonio J. Morales whose collective publications (Morales, Caurín, Sendra and Parra, 2014), synthesized educational applications of these premises. On the other hand, research on social representations and geographical space under the tutelage of Professor Xosé M. Souto (2013) line whose research contributes Diego García (2016) by focusing on the teaching of rural spaces.

Finally, you can see that the analysis of school geography is deeply rooted in the study of curriculum, methods and resources. There is less analysis of representations of classroom practice of teachers and students perceptions and dreams of innovation groups. We understand that the qualitative orientation is very important to question school routines and find ways of innovation. For this challenge it is necessary to lay the theoretical basis on which to lift scaffolding empirical alternative building. And in this building for public criticism autonomy we wanted to contribute from this research.