

# Past and Current Trends in the Analysis of Textbooks in a Quebec Context

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## ABSTRACT

This article draws from two research programs on the use of textbooks for a variety of school subjects by elementary-school teachers in Quebec. Highlighting the main analytical orientations pertaining to textbooks both in Quebec and elsewhere, it first distinguishes between textbooks and schoolbooks, and then presents the importance and the role that textbooks, in Quebec elementary teaching, have had over the past 40 years. Lastly, the article portrays the state of research on textbooks, unveiling the need for a comprehensive, situated approach in research on textbooks, as well as work focused on how teachers use them and on the impact of this use on both practice and learning.

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to identify the problems surrounding research on the interaction between existing instructional materials and how teachers use them. There are three interrelated objectives. Reaching these objectives is a preliminary step to conducting empirical research with elementary-school teachers. The first objective is to clarify the concept of “textbook.” In light of this clarification, the second objective is to paint a picture of the conceptual development of the textbook in Quebec. The third is to identify the kinds of analyses made by research on textbooks and the subjects on which such research tends to focus.

This investigation is at the heart of two research programs currently being conducted by the CRIE (Research Group on Educative Intervention). The first research program<sup>1</sup> aims at analyzing the didactic,<sup>2</sup> pedagogical, and assessment practices of elementary-school teachers who use didactic materials in French language arts, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary studies.<sup>3</sup> The general hypothesis of the program is that “didactic materials are structured in line with pedagogical, disciplinary, interdisciplinary, didactic, and assessment underpinnings [, and these] partly determine teachers teaching-and-learning practices and

pupils learning processes" (Jonnaert et al., 1996, p. 9). The second research program<sup>4</sup> relates exclusively to how elementary-school teachers use textbooks that are presented as interdisciplinary, as well as any other, in-house documents substituted for textbooks in a school setting. This program identifies and compares representations of these materials and of their use as found among the different parties involved: designers of textbooks, civil servants, and school administrators. These representations are compared with each other, with the representations found among practicing teachers, and with what is promoted in government documents. Additionally, this program confronts these representations with observed classroom practices; these practices in turn are compared with those of teachers who use single-discipline-based materials. In contrast to the first research program, the hypothesis that governs this one is that interdisciplinary teaching practices influence the production, choice, and use of teaching materials. Whatever the case, studying the relationship between instructional materials and teaching practices is designed to bring out the interactions that characterise interdisciplinary school texts and their impact on the interdisciplinary practices of elementary-school teachers. Research on this relationship is made all the more relevant by the fact that most teachers are both users and producers of instructional materials (Simard, 1997).

The concerns underlying these two research programs arise from the results obtained from earlier studies conducted by researchers in the CRIE and the current context of educational reform in Quebec. On one hand, the questions that have generated these research programs are congruent with other research conducted earlier within the same group. In fact, studies on interdisciplinary teaching representations and practices conducted by Lenoir (Lenoir, 1991, 1992) show that teachers are prepared to use approaches based on integrated subject matter, to the extent that they are supplied with integrated textbooks. Further, reports obtained from elementary-school teachers as part of another study (Pellerin & Lenoir, 1995) make it clear that the use of some textbooks, presented as providing integrated subject matter, is equivalent to taking religious vows. The findings in these earlier studies make it possible to entertain the hypothesis that didactic materials can exert a degree of control over teaching practice. But above all, these two research programs exist in the context of a recent educational policy statement (Government of Quebec, 1997b). This Ministry action plan announced a major reform at the levels of elementary and high school curricula. The Ministry is developing new programs of study, the implementation of which began in the year 2000 (Government of Quebec, 2001), for the early elementary-school cycle and continue through subsequent years until it covers schooling all through high school. The implementation of these new programs will certainly involve designing and marketing new didactic materials. To this end, the Ministry of Education has planned to redefine the concept of basic didactic materials, as well as the criteria used for evaluating them. In addition, through Bill 180, a committee for pedagogical resources was formed in 1998. Before these new materials reach the classroom, it is important to reflect on the relationship

between didactic materials and teaching practices, as well as on the potential influence of these materials on practices. This is precisely the central goal of the two research programs described above.

For both research programs, there were two preliminary steps: first, to pin down recent developments in the concepts and positions put forward by Quebec's Ministry of Education with respect to textbooks, since one cannot properly understand the present without a good understanding of the past; second, to review published results from research on the analysis of textbooks. This article aims to accomplish these two things, but these require that the object of study, namely textbooks, must be clearly defined.

Our literature review was restricted to publications in French and English that have appeared in Europe or North America over the past 20 years. We may as well state immediately that scientific documentation pertaining to the analysis of interdisciplinary school textbooks appears to be missing. A search through ERIC on "interdisciplinary approach" yielded 4,725 titles published between 1990 and August 1997. With one exception, none of these dealt with the analysis of interdisciplinary teaching materials. The exception is Champagne and Cornbleth (1991), who draw attention to the inadequate integration of the natural sciences, history, and philosophy in American textbooks intended for Grades 6 through 9. As will be seen, however, many studies have analyzed textbooks from other perspectives.

The present article is divided in four parts. The goal of the first part is to delimit the subject of study: the concept of "instructional" or "didactic" materials (using the notions invoked by the word "didactic" in the Francophone tradition).<sup>5</sup> The second part situates this subject of study in the Quebec context, essentially by identifying the position and role that instructional materials occupy in elementary teaching in Quebec. To ensure that readers unfamiliar with the Quebec context can grasp the subject at hand, we will contextualise our object of study in light of the successive educational reforms that have taken place in Quebec since 1960. We then present the state of research in the field of instructional material analysis. This review of scientific literature enables the identification of the major trends that have to date prevailed in this field of research. Finally, in the last part of the article, we identify the premises for an analysis of didactic materials from the point of view of their relation to teaching. We must stress that there is no question of putting forward empirical results relating to modes of use of textbooks by Quebec elementary-school teachers at this point in our research. What is, however, essential is to complete the preliminary work, including a systematic review of the scientific literature on the issue.

### **TEXTBOOKS VERSUS SCHOOLBOOKS: SOME DEFINITIONS, FEATURES, AND FUNCTIONS**

Before situating textbooks in the Quebec educational context, we must, in order to better pinpoint the object of study, clarify some terminological

issues relating to publications for use in schools. It is important to do this because there exist several proposed definitions. Some of these are too comprehensive (for example, Richaudeau's, 1979); others, not explicit enough, as illustrated by Choppin (1980), who names two categories of school texts: "schoolbooks in the strict sense are so defined by their authors or publishers intentions . . .; the other category are books that have been turned into schoolbooks through long-standing and generalized use in a teaching context" (p. 5). Stray (1993) reasons similarly, differentiating schoolbooks on one hand, which are books used for teaching and learning purposes but that were not necessarily intended primarily for educational purposes by their authors and publishers, from textbooks, which are books "designed to offer a pedagogical and didactic presentation of a certain field of knowledge" (p. 73). Here, we are only concerned with textbooks, which, if we work with Stray's and Choppin's frameworks, include the student's textbook, the teacher's guide, exercise or learning workbooks, in-house pedagogical documents, and explicitly pedagogical reference tools, such as a school atlas and time charts.<sup>6</sup> By extension, our definition of this category of materials includes computer-based tools designed for educational purposes, even though the word "textbook" may seem a little inappropriate for them.

Stray (1993) writes that the textbook "is situated at the crossroads of culture, pedagogy, publishing, and society" (pp. 77–78). This view is in agreement with that of Choppin (1980, 1992), who views the textbook as simultaneously a consumer product, a medium for academic knowledge, an ideological and cultural vector, and a pedagogical tool. Venezky (1992), on the other hand, views the textbook as "a cultural artefact and as a surrogate curriculum" (p. 437). This notion of the surrogate curriculum is also to be found in Woodward, Elliott, and Nagel (1988), who write, "Significantly, in the last several decades, textbooks have taken over the curriculum in many schools of this nation, particularly at the elementary and junior high levels. Teachers rely on textbook programs to supply not only subject matter content, but also teaching strategies and tactics in the form of elaborately worked out approaches to the presentation of the major school subjects and detailed lesson plans. Local curriculum development has been largely replaced by the work of authors, publishers and textbooks selection committees" (p. 1). For their part, although they don't go quite as far as to use the notion of surrogate curriculum, Julkunen, Selander, and Ahlberg (1991) write of the textbook as an important and little known form of the curriculum. It is therefore important to conduct comparative analyses of curricula and textbooks.

Purves (1993) emphasizes the need to situate textbooks in a wider context: "textbooks exist within a political context no less than do schools; we cannot discuss either as if they were representations of an isolated entity called 'pure knowledge' or 'pure pedagogical practice'" (p. 14). In the same vein, Johnsen (1993) states, "A textbook is neither just object content, nor pedagogy, nor literature, nor information, nor morals, nor politics. It is the freebooter of public information, operating in the gray zone

between community and home, science and propaganda, special subject and general education, adult and child" (p. 330).

Thus we must add to the didactic and pedagogical dimensions that we naturally associate with textbooks, ideological and cultural ones. Further, textbooks operate as part of an economic process. The textbook is complex in both its features and its functions. The fact is that textbooks are located at the interface of the formal curriculum and the lived or real curriculum (Berman, 1987; Perrenoud, 1984).<sup>7</sup> Thus, since textbooks constitute an expression of the formal curriculum, they are liable to act as substitutes, even if only in part, for curricula, and thus to give rise to the appearance of an implicit curriculum (Eisner, 1985) associated with the real curriculum. Through its position at the interface, the school textbook operates in a curricular, didactic, and pedagogical dynamic.

Given these diverse features and functions, textbooks must be viewed not only as operating at the heart of an educational context, but also at the heart of a specific socioeducational context. To examine their use as found in teaching practice thus requires analyses conducted upstream of the educational intervention, at the level of social decisionmakers and textbook designers. It also requires that these be situated socially. For Richaudeau (1979), the textbook—to which he gives the broad definition of teaching material—can be studied under four themes: contents (analyzed for their sociocultural, ideological, scientific, and pedagogical dimensions), communication (communicative meanings, forms of the message, readability, density), method (organisation, method of use, and adaptability), and textbooks as material objects (sturdiness, manipulability, cost). Johnsen (1993), offering a synthesis of the classification of 467 texts on the study of textbooks reviewed by Woodward, Elliott, and Nagel (1988), identifies only three categories: a textbook's ideology, use, and development. Anderson and Tomkins (1983) and Johnsen (1993) both take into account the various parties involved in textbook production, dissemination, use, and evaluation. Following Gérard and Roegiers (1993), it must be acknowledged that every textbook emerges from a complex set of interactions that require the contribution of numerous parties to the processes of design (the authors, the editor of a collection, technical and scientific advisors, and so on), publication (the publisher, the printer, the illustrator, the layout artist, readers, and so on), for evaluation (evaluators, testers), and for use (decisionmakers and end users: pupils, teachers, and teacher educators).

Moreover, although, as Anderson and Tomkins (1983) point out, we mustn't forget that "materials may well be powerful determinants of the curriculum" (p. 2), it is nevertheless the teacher who adapts the materials and determines how they are used. It is for this reason that research must be conducted on three levels: analysis of textbooks and appropriate documentation; analysis of social representations of their design, selection, and use; and analysis of actual practice. This is the perspective adopted specifically by the second of the two research programs being conducted by the CRIE, the one focused on textbooks purporting to be interdisciplinary.

Thus delimited, the definition of the textbook that we are using to conduct the two research programs allows us to rule out scientific literature that does not fall within its scope. However, from the outset, it enables us to see that examination of the relationship between textbooks and teaching practices occurs in a place of complex interactions where numerous parties interact. Furthermore, this definition makes evident the existence of an equivocal relationship between textbooks as tools and the curriculum as determinant of knowledge to be taught and its features.

### **TEXTBOOKS IN THE QUEBEC EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT SINCE 1960**

To properly understand the evolution of concepts relating to textbooks and their place in Quebec teaching, including the position of the government of Quebec, which plays a large role in the matter, it is important to go back a little way in time. Quebec society, like other Western societies, was transformed between 1960 and the present, with the most marked changes taking place between 1960 and 1970. In particular, the launch of the first Soviet spaceship *Sputnik* in 1957 had an impact that reverberated through all Western educational systems, but especially in North America (Lenoir & Laforest, 1996). The ensuing complete reexamination of the educational system in the United States and Canada took varying forms. In Quebec, the perceived “backwardness,” in the face of the Soviet Union’s apparent technological advances, of an academic education that had long been declared to be the best in the world by conservative forces reinforced the ideology of “catching up” that had been spreading among elite Francophone groups since the end of World War II and that had led to the overthrow, in 1960, of the conservative *Union Nationale* party by the Liberal Party (Lenoir & Laforest, 1996). The fact was that the curriculum<sup>8</sup> for elementary-school teaching, dating from 1959—among the most traditionalist in its design, given the significance assigned to certain subjects, in particular catechism (Catholic instruction); its linear and encyclopedic content organisation and the teaching methods it favoured—merely reproduced, barring a few details, those that had preceded it since the beginning of the century.

While for at least half a century, Quebec’s school system had been characterised by what was viewed by the social powers favouring the modernization of society as sclerotic stability, for the subsequent 40 years it was agitated by reform after reform. These were carried out as part of large-scale, internal sociopolitical and ideological movements (Bourque & Laurin-Frenette, 1970; Laforest, 1989; Monière, 1977; Rioux, 1968; Ryan, 1971), which were in turn subject to external influences.

#### **The 1960s**

At the start of the 1960s, the Parent Report (Government of Quebec, 1963–1965), emerging from a deep-seated movement towards the modernisation of society in Quebec, during a period appropriately called the

“Quiet Revolution,” initiated significant shake-ups: a Ministry of Education was created in 1963; free schooling was instituted; legislation and other measures aimed at rationalizing the system and replacing its control by the Catholic Church with state control (Audet, 1971; Lenoir & Laforest, 1996). Since that time, the Quebec government has progressively increased its measure of control over the school system. One of the most recent steps taken in this direction is the replacement, at the beginning of the 1990s, of the approval of university programs for preservice teacher education by the Approval Committee for Teacher Education Programs (CAPFE: *Comité d’approbation des programmes de formation à l’enseignement*), instead of by the Quebec Conference of University Rectors and Principals (CREPUQ: *Conférence des recteurs et principaux des universités du Québec*), which retains its legal control over all other university programs (Laforest & Lenoir, 1997).<sup>9</sup> Consequently, for the period following the 1960s, it is impossible to analyse programs of study in Quebec, especially on the issue of textbooks, without repeatedly referring to government policy, due to its omnipresence in the field.

At the same time, in 1969, Quebec set up collegial studies as a distinct level of schooling. Qualification at this level may be general, lasting two years and providing continuity and a smooth transition between high school and university education, or it can be technical, lasting three years and leading directly into the job market. In the same year, the Province of Quebec created a provincial university: the *Université du Québec*, comprising six constituent universities found across the province, which exist side by side with the preexisting private Francophone and Anglophone universities. This same wave of change abolished the *école normale* (teachers’ colleges) and the *École des Beaux-Arts* (school of fine arts), and universities were given sole responsibility of teacher education (Hamel, 1991; Mellouki, 1989). These socioeducational transformations, examples of the profound social changes and political determination to bring Quebec into the post-industrial world, had a direct influence on educational goals and the processes of teaching and learning, and thereby influenced the way the role of the textbook was conceived.

Until roughly 1969—because the changes we are discussing took place over both the medium and the long term—textbooks remained deeply traditional teaching tools. Conceived by religious communities and disseminated by publishers that belonged to those communities, these textbooks were violently condemned in the Parent Report (Government of Quebec, 1963–1965, II), which identified “the poverty of textbooks in use in public schools” (no. 115). The Parent Commission called for all textbooks that displayed “impoverished language, doubtful taste, and outmoded pedagogy” (no. 187) to be eliminated. The social upheavals briefly described above, in fact, presaged a rupture concerning the place and role occupied by textbooks.

### **The 1970s**

Following the democratisation of the school system that took place during the 1960s, the first half of the 1970s witnessed the implementation of new

programs of study, commonly known as “framework programs.” These were designed to correct the inherent problems of traditional teaching that was book-based and stereotyped (Government of Quebec, 1963–1965, II). These programs, which were restricted to the formulation of general guidelines for each subject matter, were based on a concept diametrically opposed to the one that had prevailed until that time. They worked from the theoretical foundations of a model for educational action relying on a so-called organic (as opposed to mechanical) concept of educational activity (Superior Council of Education, 1971), and heavily influenced by currents of American thought that promoted a nondirective approach, as well as by the concept of active learning informed by French thought, more particularly that of Freinet.

As stated by Laforest (1989), during this decade of reform, “It would seem the only desirable orientation is that of a methodologically active school. Nevertheless, no clear definition of such a school is provided; nor more than a clear orientation pertaining to the kinds of materials that can support this type of pedagogy” (p. 104). In this context, inspired by nondirective theory, of “active pedagogy” and freedom in the choice of contents to teach, textbooks did not get good press. This attitude was naturally strengthened by the fact that the Parent Report had condemned both the limitations of book-based teaching and the outmoded design of certain textbooks. In the ensuing wave of strong opposition to textbooks, Paré (1971) did not hesitate to call them stupid and harmful tools by condemning their traditional, reductive approach, their conservative vision, and the book-based teaching that they fostered. As early as 1964 Lefebvre had strongly denounced the mythical style of history teaching provided to elementary-school children, the inappropriateness of the chronological approach, and the numerous ideological, apologetic, and “catastrophic” biases (as he put it) communicated by traditional history textbooks. These books, said Lefebvre, presented a heroic and mythical version of the history of French-Canadian society. They would have the children believe that this society was committed to a divine mission that had first taken the form of propagating and preserving the Catholic faith on North American soil and then of disseminating traditional French civilization; further, this was a society heavily threatened on all sides: by the forces of nature, by inimical neighbours and treacherous Indians, and so on. Moreover, Lefebvre argued, this presentation of history was “catastrophic” in that it culminated “in an inevitable depreciation of the present” (1964, p. 29). These books would have us believe that the only admirable era preceded 1760 and the Conquest! In the face of these harsh criticisms, which many teachers subscribed to, Quebec publishing houses greatly reduced their production of textbooks during the 1960s, often limiting themselves to simple reissue; and textbooks had almost completely disappeared from elementary schools. To fill the gap, teachers made systematic use of handouts.

At the start of the transitional decade of the 1970s, the Ministry of Education had announced further reform of elementary and high school teaching. With the coming to power in 1976 of the *Parti Québécois*, whose

agenda was independence for Quebec, further administrative and pedagogical reforms followed on the first wave of major transformations.

### The 1980s

In 1977, the government of Quebec released the *livre vert* (the Green Paper) entitled *L'enseignement primaire et secondaire au Québec* ("Elementary and Secondary-school Teaching in Quebec"). This was to be the basis for a large-scale consultation on policies that it intended to hold in the sphere of education in order to "complete" the reform begun after the release of the Parent Report. In 1979, it published its policy statement (Government of Quebec, 1979), which largely endorsed the proposals made two years earlier and opened the door to their implementation.

New programs of study for elementary and high school education were developed and implemented during the 1980s. Clearly based on a neo-behaviourist model, they relied on a hierarchical set of prescribed behavioural objectives said to be observable and measurable. In the Green Paper of 1977, the Ministry of Education had noted that "the diversity of the didactic materials in use and, in many cases, the lack of basic textbooks, maintains parental dissatisfaction" (Government of Quebec, 1977, p. 32). In its 1979 action plan, a whole chapter was devoted to teaching materials. The authors "consider necessary that schools make basic textbooks available for the subjects taught in every grade of elementary and high school" (Government of Quebec, 1979, p. 107). The intention was "to restore basic textbooks to a place of prominence among teaching materials, and . . . emphasize their value as a fundamental teaching tool" (p. 105). This uncompromising statement of intent must be situated in the context of the time, when textbooks were being reintroduced.

The 1979 policy statement expressed a clear intention to exert a tighter control over both teaching contents and pedagogical methods; this was the Quebec government's will to take teaching contents and processes into its own hands. The development of more specific programs of study and the restoration of textbooks to the educational process would appear to have been two key approaches to reestablishing uniform content and ensuring a degree of control over teaching. In the policy statement, one finds a paragraph where the consequences of the lack of textbooks is described. It reads: "this situation has not failed to give rise to a certain number of problems: firstly, for pupils, deprived of a principal reference book that could serve to give them consistent bearings through their learning process; secondly, for teachers, who saw their task considerably changed without having been prepared for this new challenge; thirdly, for publishers, whose contribution to pedagogical progress was abruptly undermined; and finally, for parents and school boards, who lost a key perspective from which to assess pedagogical progress in schools" (p. 104). Not a word is spoken in this passage of the government's political motivations. The orientations adopted are presented as flowing from factors outside the government's control and to which it must submit.

What is evident from the 1979 action plan is that the Ministry assigned to textbooks multiple functions and a first-rate importance. Besides being a guide for both pupils and teachers, textbooks were assigned the role of pedagogical barometer. It is important to note that the Ministry appears to assume a little too quickly that classroom practice is a reflection of the pedagogical methods employed in textbooks. Additionally, in order to justify the restoration of a place for textbooks in the field of teaching, the Ministry engages in a process of counterargumentation against their main opponents. The following passages are highly revealing of the fundamental nature of the role the Ministry assigns to textbooks: "Some would have it, that one would identify in encyclopedias, scientific works, and contemporary media more advanced knowledge than what is found in textbooks, which are quickly outdated. It is agreed that teachers must be able to resort to other sources of documentation, but this responsibility does not fall upon pupils. The experience of recent years has demonstrated that pupils, especially in elementary school, usually limit their work of so-called research to the simple transcription of information found here and there without making an effort to grasp and synthesize it" (p. 105).

The passage quoted makes it clear that, on one hand, the work of seeking out and synthesizing varied information from different sources is not the pupil's responsibility; and on the other hand, that the textbook is called upon to some extent to replace the pupil's learning process, since pupils are either incapable of performing these tasks in a significant way or so situated as not to be allowed to do so. Viewed this way, the textbook supplants the cognitive work to be done by the pupil by supplying the latter with contents that are already structured and synthesized.

It would appear that textbooks were also conceived as indispensable operational complements to programs of study. In fact, the Ministry declares that textbooks "make it possible to ensure that some of the subjects of study that form part of the program have been properly handled in class" (p. 105). This statement presupposes that teachers teach the full contents of a textbook. Given this assumption, the textbook clearly is not seen as a tool in the service of educational practice, but truly as an "indispensable guide" (p. 105) that directs and determines the educational context. Provided with a framework and guided by programs of study and textbooks, teachers were being defined as something close to simple technicians responsible for conveying predetermined and prestructured contents. Taken to its limit, this approach turned the textbook into a substitute for the teacher and relegated the latter to the role of a technician of preprogrammed knowledge transfer.

And yet, the Parent Report had stated that elementary-school teachers should not be enslaved to textbooks: "Elementary schools should have a working library plentifully stocked with textbooks as a way of minimizing the drawbacks of the single textbook. Textbooks must be viewed as sources of references, not as the official bearers of the sum total of knowledge" (Government of Quebec, 1963–1965, II, no. 187). The orientations of 1979

would appear to have moved away from the notion of textbook use that had in fact been implemented during the 1970s.

Henceforth, textbooks were to fill a threefold function of substitution: substitution for learning processes, substitution for teaching, and a potential substitution for the program. Further, they were to serve as an instrument of control over both the teacher's teaching practices and the pupil's learning processes. By virtue of this fact, the didactic materials, whether basic or supplementary, assume the appearance of an inescapable point of reference for the educational context and, above all, a tool likely to strongly evoke the subject of study as well as the processes of teaching and learning. And indeed, as stated by the Ministry in a somewhat apologetic tone, "textbooks don't just bring together varied knowledge, they constitute a reference resource. It directs towards the establishment of connections between the different concepts under study, to synthesize them, and to test the value of what is learned. They can help the teacher handle the various parts of a program of study with precision. When the wealth contained in a good textbook is acknowledged, one realises the gaps within a teaching method that claims to be able to do without textbooks" (Government of Quebec, 1979, p. 106).

In a context of this kind, textbooks explicitly take on a greater role as indispensable guides—and implicitly as substitutes—than as pedagogical and didactic aids. Further, this role applies as much to the pupil as to the teacher, as the Ministry's statements clearly indicate. For example, in the general guide for developing basic teaching materials (Government of Quebec, 1991), the Ministry makes use of effectively the same words to define the respective roles of the student textbook and the teacher's guide: "The textbook constitutes the pupil's personal work tool. It serves to make the learning process concrete and provides it with a unifying thread. . . . Functioning as a kind of *vade-mecum*, it must fill the dual role of teaching and guiding and do so conveniently. The teacher's guide is intended for the teacher. It serves to make the teaching process concrete and provides it with continuity. Reference tool and a support to activities, it must fill the dual role of informing teachers and supporting their actions by helping them set up conditions favourable to learning" (pp. 11–12). Henceforth, the role of guide entrusted to textbooks is operationalised through a strict framing of teaching practices.

So defined, textbooks are conceived of as tools enabling the unfolding of both the process of learning and the process of teaching. The significance of the role assigned to them, within government documents at least, may be expected to have an impact on how teachers see them and thereby on teachers' educational practices. It is in this context that issues surrounding the curricular, didactic, and pedagogical notions conveyed by textbooks assume their full importance. Government documents produced for creators of textbooks, however, largely skip these issues.

In view of the significance of the role now assigned to textbooks, they become subject to a process of evaluation before being approved. The criteria that govern this evaluation are to be found, among other places, in

a general guide and “design-grids” specific to each subject matter. Between 1979 and 1987, the Ministry of Education released 45 guides for the preparation of didactic materials for preschool, elementary school, and high school. Within this plentiful array of prescriptive documentation are found various evaluation criteria, grouped under three broad categories: content (learning processes, orientations, contents, assessment, precision; teaching processes, practice, management, resources, adjustment; learning objectives), production (print quality, layout, and so on), and social values<sup>10</sup> and standards of presentation<sup>11</sup> mandated by the Ministry of Education (Government of Quebec, 1991).

This process of evaluation is essentially designed to ensure that textbooks conform to programs of study and prevailing sociocultural norms. From that moment on, the models of educational action conveyed by textbooks would be little questioned, a trend all the more to be expected in light of the Ministry’s statement that “from the varied pedagogical models, educators can draw numerous, valid elements to contribute to their educational activities” (p. 85). The Ministry rejects “from the outset any pedagogical model whose effect would be to render pupils passive or consign them to a regressive style of teaching, that refuses to create an intersection between young people’s experience and their process of learning and development” (p. 85). In line with this statement, the evaluation guides contain a very open description of a textbook’s component parts. As a result, they attribute an important place to the authors’ and publishers’ personal pedagogical and didactic concepts.

By the end of the 1990s, enthusiasm for the latest reform and the hope invested in a more rigorous restructuring of programs had somewhat died down (Superior Council of Education, 1987, 1991a). It had become clearer and clearer that the measures taken led to dead ends. Admittedly, the new programs were being either little or badly implemented. In fact, the very possibility of implementing them was being reexamined (Government of Quebec, 1990). The instrumental and behaviourist approach that characterised the programs had proven to be far too restrictive and the imposing nature, maintained by cumbersome control procedures, led teachers to feel a sense of dispossession and that their autonomy was being denied. All this occurred at a time when public discussion pointed to the urgency for reprofessionalising the teaching profession (Lenoir & Laforest, 1996; Lessard & Lévesque, 1998).

### **The 1990s and the Situation Today**

Following a long debate on the quality of education that had resumed in 1983 (Superior Council of Education, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1991c, 1994a, 1994b, 1995a, 1995b; Government of Quebec, 1992a, 1993b, 1994b) and the high-tech revolution that marked this decade (Superior Council of Education, 1994c; Groupe Repartir, 1990; Lacroix, 1993), as well as within a climate of economic and financial crises, the Quebec government established the *Commission des États Généraux de l’Éducation* in 1995.<sup>12</sup> Based on

consultations conducted across Quebec, in its final report the Commission assigned to schools, not a mission for the pursuit of excellence in education, given the massive drop-out phenomenon that had been observed, but rather a mission for the pursuit of success in school, as characterized by the school's new functions of instruction, socialization, and qualification (Government of Quebec, 1996b; Proulx, Ollivier, & Lessard, 1997). Following the final report generated by this broad public consultation, the Inchauspé Report (Government of Quebec, 1997a) proposed reform of elementary- and high-school teaching curricula that promoted a focus on mastery of essential knowledge, integration of knowledge using an interdisciplinary approach to contents grouped in broad learning domains,<sup>13</sup> changes to the subject-matter guides and presentation formats of programs of study, and so forth.

The Ministry action plan published not long after the appearance of the Inchauspé Report (Government of Quebec, 1997b) adopted practically without modification the proposals in the latter document, for a complete recasting of the curriculum. As well, the plan announced a set of administrative and legislative measures designed to increase the independence of individual schools, reorganise structures by substantially reducing school boards and severing their religious affiliations,<sup>14</sup> and so on.

The most recent Ministry policy statement on education (Government of Quebec, 1997c) has not yet given rise to specific guidelines and directives about textbooks. It does, however, specify that “didactic material, primarily textbooks, plays an important role in pupils’ lives. It greatly influences teaching and learning and convey numerous values. That is the reason why, in Quebec as in other provinces and other countries, a system of ministerial evaluation and approval has been set up to ensure that didactic materials respect current programs of study as well as various ‘social’ criteria. This system, which has been in place for some twenty years now, and which had been called for by the Parent Report (Government of Quebec, 1963–1965), must now be adjusted to the new demands set by development of the curriculum. The truth is, on one hand, all acknowledge the right to greater autonomy for those working with pupils. On the other hand, the potential created by the new information technologies will soon challenge the current function of didactic materials and especially textbooks. In this context, certain practices will have to be adjusted accordingly” (p. 21). Thus, under Bill 180, the Ministry of Education has just set up a committee for evaluating teaching resources, which consists of a dozen people and has only one seat for representation of the universities. Bill 180 also significantly altered the distribution of power and responsibilities between school boards, schools, and parents by setting up institutional councils. The mandate of the committee includes “revising the criteria that govern evaluation of textbooks, such that textbooks may display greater scientific rigour and offer more dynamic learning processes” (Government of Quebec, 1997c, p. 14). It is important to emphasize that Quebec parents—and, it goes without saying, publishers—favour the use of required textbooks, as shown by an analysis conducted by the *Journal des débats de la*

*Commission de l'éducation à l'Assemblée nationale* in September 1997, available for inspection on the government of Quebec's website.

## Overview

To summarize, in Quebec two broad conceptions of the place and role of textbooks have sometimes clashed and sometimes succeeded one another. One conception, while not denying the importance of textbooks, questions the prominence of their function. As early as 1931, Brother Marie Victorin wrote, "Without denying the usefulness of textbooks, I wonder if we haven't exaggerated their importance. We must realize that if we're not careful, books, and textbooks in particular, soon cease to be a mirror and instead become a screen which, instead of broadening thought, can easily repress it, restrain it, and lock it up in the terrible prison-house of words" (in Aubin, 1997, p. 12). Nearly 40 years later, Audet (1970), at a conference on French-language textbooks in Canada, asked the question again in a paper called "*Le manuel scolaire: miroir ou écran?*" ("Textbooks: mirrors or screens?"). Closer to home, in 1991, Chabot has examined the question of textbooks in similar terms in "*Le manuel scolaire: entrave ou panacée?*" ("Textbooks: hindrance or cure-all?"). Lenoir (1981), for his part, expressed concern over the quality of the new textbooks on the market and presented three principles focused on an open concept of the textbook and on the need to anchor learning situations in reality. He insisted on the importance of the real, reminding readers of the Parent Commission's view that "one instinctively seeks books that lead to a knowledge of reality, even when this reality is already present in front of the teacher's and pupils' eyes" (Government of Quebec, 1963–1965, II, no. 111). He viewed textbooks as a reference tool designed to give priority to interactive pedagogy and the ability to question, rather than a pedagogy of rote response and revealed truth. In line with these views, he rejected the idea then being put forward that textbooks present a summary of a program of studies, if not the whole program itself. As Audet (1970) wrote, "For as long as they have existed, textbooks have almost always been on trial. Their most prestigious opponents are Rabelais, Montaigne, Paul Déroulède, Dr. Ovide Decroly, and Célestin Freinet" (p. 9). He adds, "Present-day teachers who espouse active methods have all vehemently voiced their opposition to the abuse of textbooks" (p. 11). And it was already observed earlier in this article that Paré (1971) rejected textbooks, Lefebvre (1964) condemned them, and the Parent Report placed restrictions on them (Government of Quebec, 1963–1965, II).

In contrast, the other conception of textbooks defends their central place and essential role in teaching. In Quebec, the Ministry of Education has surely constituted one of the most ardent representatives of this view since its policy statement of 1979 was published. But other voices had already been heard. For example, Trudel and Jain (1970), summarizing their report on the inquiry they had conducted into history textbooks as requested by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism,

observed, "Whatever may be said about textbooks, they have an essential role. They are at the heart of all teaching. It is the contents of the textbook rather than the observations of the teacher that pupils retain, especially when they do not go further than grade 10 or 11" (p. 105). Aubin (1997) provides support for this position when he writes, "Over the course of their lives, the only books that a significant proportion of the literate public will have read are the textbooks they were required to use in school" (p. 5).

Be that as it may, the conception of textbooks that prevailed in Quebec until 1969 was traditional and theocratic, and presented teaching-and-learning as the delivery/reception of "true teachings" based on the model of the catechism.<sup>15</sup> From 1970 to 1980, strong opposition to earlier messages and their modes of transmission, relying on educational concepts that advanced pupils' action and a nondirective approach, crystallized around a rejection of textbooks, among other issues. Following this period of transition and beginning around 1980, a return to more conservative notions can be observed, with calls made in the name of the need for greater rigour and control for the reinstatement of the required textbooks. The message and its method of presentation changed, however: although knowledge was still being presented as preexisting, it was now stated to be important to systematize knowledge better by means of specific learning objectives and to implement procedures for unveiling the knowledge prescribed. To put it very reductively, the transition was made from a concept of knowledge transfer through revelation to one of knowledge transfer through unveiling and inculcation. The whole issue of didactic transposition (Chevallard, 1985; Tochon, 1999),<sup>16</sup> a concept that has met with great success throughout the Francophone world and that views curriculum structuring as the direct result of the presentation of scholarly knowledge in the form of teachable knowledge, was thus placed squarely on the agenda in the middle of the 1990s.

## **TEXTBOOKS AS AN OBJECT OF RESEARCH**

With a situated portrait of the evolution of concepts of school textbooks in Quebec now complete, it becomes necessary to do an overview of scholarly literature in English and French about textbooks. What studies on textbooks have been conducted in recent decades and what issues have they addressed? What do we know of textbook use today by teachers and pupils? For it must be observed that, although during the 1970s a degree of rejection of textbooks prevailed not just in Quebec but also in the United States and many other Western countries (Johnsen, 1993), today they would seem to have reassumed an important, if not central, place in the teaching and learning dynamic.

### **Around the World**

Of circumstances in the United States, Woodward, Elliott, and Nagel (1988) observed that "prior to the 1970s, however, there was virtually no attention

given to wider issues pertaining to the curriculum role and the quality and instructional design of textbooks" (p. 2). True, numerous American studies dealt with content-knowledge. These include, for instance, the work of Elliott, Nagel, and Woodward (1985), the Education Development Center (1988), and Shulman and his students at Stanford. On the other hand, these last projects, for example, dealt only with high-school teaching and sought to determine the impact of disciplinary training on practice. Woodward, Elliott, and Nagel (1988) emphasize the constant focus of the last two decades on analyzing contents in ideological and cultural terms. Other areas investigated by research on textbooks are cognitive processes (Nicely, 1985), scientific rigour (Flanders, 1987; Porter, 1989; Staver & Bay, 1987), ideological bias (FitzGerald, 1979), clarity (Anderson, Armbruster, & Kantor, 1980), and readability (Davison, 1984). Scholarly publication in the French language shows research analyzing textbooks principally from the point of view of contents (Caritey, 1993; Choppin, 1980), especially in ideological terms.

Thus, above all in France, but also in the United States, history textbooks were condemned for their ideological biases (Ferro, 1981; FitzGerald, 1979; Mariet, 1982; Moniot, 1984), which were said to favour the powers that be, while science and mathematics textbooks were damned for their scientific weaknesses (Flanders, 1987; Porter, 1989; Staver & Bay, 1987). Principally, however, it was elementary-school social studies textbooks that came under the heaviest fire (Agostino & Barone, 1985; Alleman & Brophy, 1994; Armbruster, 1984; Elliott, Nagel, & Woodward, 1985; Galissot & Thoraval, 1969; Giannangelo & Kaplan, 1992; Hall, 1985; Hogue, 1986; Jacob, 1988; Kincade & Pruitt, 1996; Klein, 1993; Leroy, 1953; Wade, 1993; Wade & Everett, 1994), because, among other reasons, of the question of conceptual development (Armbruster et al., 1991; Haas, 1988; Reyes & Smith, 1983) and coherence (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1991). A point that must not be lost sight of, however, is that for the public, textbooks are the expression of educational beliefs and intentions (Venezky, 1992).

Analyses to date have dealt above all with the contents of teaching materials. In particular, the contents of textbooks. These analyses follow various goals: approval, analysis of internal coherence, selection and weighting of knowledge, and the search for seeing "the effect, the sign, the vehicle, or the instrument of values, opinions, and ideologies" (Moniot, 1984, p. 7), as well as assessing social dimensions and impact. Numerous analytical frameworks have been designed in line with one or another of these goals (Chambliss, 1994; Richaudeau, 1979).

Reshef (1986) remarks that there are highly expert studies "that conceive of the textbook as a finished cultural product whose analysis need take account of neither the processes prior to their appearance as finished products (namely everything relating to their production and design) nor subsequent to it (the teaching processes that they make possible or within which they are used)" (p. 27). The weakness of these content analyses has been criticized by Garcia and Tanner (1985), Siler (1986–1987), and Wade

(1993), while Caspard (1984) has condemned such analyses for doing no more than underlining the presence of self-evident contents and values and restricting themselves to studying the values conveyed by school materials. Weinbrenner (1992) draws attention to the many gaps in this area of research; in his view it is a field suffering from significant theoretical, empirical, and methodological limitations (p. 22). He states that the didactic and methodological functions of school materials have been insufficiently analyzed and that we know very little about how teachers and pupils use these materials.

As for analysis of teaching materials generally, while Venezky (1992) writes, at the conclusion of his synthesis of research on teaching materials in the United States, that "textbooks occupy a dominant position in American education, perhaps because of problems in the selection and training of teachers" (p. 456), he also adds, "Many issues in textbook development, adoption, and use remain to be explored. We know little about the decision making processes of publishers and editors and probably less about how textbook design directs the relationship between student and text. Teachers also direct the student's relationship with the textbook, but how effectively they do this and how their mediation is influenced by textbook appearance and promotion is open to debate" (p. 457). His findings are similar to those of Weinbrenner (1992), who argues that research on teaching materials is incomplete in three ways: theoretically, because, among other things, their didactic and methodological functions have not been sufficiently determined; empirically, because we know so little about how teachers and pupils use these materials, both in class and outside of it; and methodologically, because we do not yet have either adequate methodological procedures or tools to measure and evaluate research conducted in this field.

In the same vein, Weinbrenner (1992) also states that research on schoolbooks should broaden its investigation beyond content analysis. To this end, he suggests three broad categories of research: process-oriented research, which would study the whole lifecycle of a textbook, including its design, its approval, its dissemination, its adoption, its use, and its abandonment; product-oriented research, which would examine textbooks as cultural and ideological vectors and as teaching tools; and reception-oriented research, which would deal with the influence of textbooks on teachers and pupils as well as the reactions they elicit from various social groups (p. 23).

According to Johnsen (1993), a scholar who has worked on a critical analysis of several hundreds of studies that tackle the textbook from different angles, carried out in western Europe and North America, textbooks are giving rise to increasing research. Johnsen's differs from Zahorik (1991) and Venezky (1992), who claim that little research has been done on the use of textbooks in teaching. Where Johnsen (1993) does agree with these writers is in his conclusion that this field of research suffers from numerous weaknesses. Among the points he raises are the focus on content analysis from an ideological perspective, the shortage of work done on the process

of developing and disseminating textbooks, the shortage of analyses on methods of classroom use, methodological weaknesses and divergences, and the narrowness of research approaches (pp. 327–28).

In summary, although numerous studies have been conducted on textbooks, the research in question remains restricted essentially to analysis of the educational content from a historical and ideological point of view. To quote Reshef (1986), “However interesting they may be, these studies emerge from a process, of social history or the history of ideas which lacks purely didactic foundations” (p. 27).

Along with the scholarly literature, numerous guides to designing and evaluating textbooks exist (Chatry-Komarek, 1994; Richaudeau, 1979; Gérard & Roegiers, 1993). Many of the analytical frameworks we examined were designed strictly in view of the production of textbooks (Institut international de planification de l'éducation, 1995; Oppel, 1976; Pearce, 1988; Séguin, 1990). Though interesting in themselves, these frameworks are devised from a prescriptive and normative perspective. They are thus of little use in the examination of relations between textbooks and teaching practices, since such an examination requires not an evaluation of the textbooks using specified criteria, but an analysis of their didactic, pedagogical, assessment, and other tendencies. This latter analytical perspective has been extremely underdeveloped to date.

### **In Quebec**

The situation in Quebec appears to be much the same. For example, Aubin (1997) presents a historiography of the Quebec textbook, stating that little has been written on its history. Further, although numerous studies have been carried out on textbooks as ideological vectors, specifically in relation to ethnic minorities (Arcand & Vincent, 1979; Blondin, 1990; Laville, 1991; MacAndrew, 1986; Ross, 1969; Vincent, 1978; Vincent & Arcand, 1979), sexual stereotyping (Dunnigan, 1982; Jeanmart, 1975), nationalism and religion (Brosseau, 1993; Charpentier, 1978, 1983; Laloux-Jain, 1974; Nepveu, 1982; Paradis, 1980), ideological clashes between Francophone and Anglophone points of view in the interpretation of Canadian history (Laville, 1993; Palmer, 1969; Rocan, 1992), or in the way of conceptual analyses of their educational contents (Brosseau, 1989; Fafard, 1994; Roy, 1978), few have addressed textbooks' curricular, didactic, and pedagogical dimensions.

There exist, however, certain studies that tackle the textbook from a broader perspective. An example is Caritey (1992), who studies textbooks in terms of both the transmission of educational contents and pupils' reception. Then, there is Laforest (1989), who analyzes teaching materials within a frame of reference that deals with educational ideologies. Charpentier (1983), in an analysis of history textbooks, displays a degree of concern with the pedagogical practices emerging from them. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that textbooks as didactic and pedagogical tools have given rise to very few studies in Quebec. Aubin (1997), whose work is on

research on school textbooks and Quebec historiography, states, "One is struck by the scarcity of studies on the pedagogical presentation of books for pupils' use. Textbooks on pedagogy have been the subject of a certain number of studies, it's true, yet extremely few studies have examined the pedagogical dimension of the hundreds of books produced for pupils' use or of the way these books are used by teachers" (p. 92).

Furthermore, the conceptual frames advanced for the analysis of textbooks tend to engage with textbooks outside the socioeducational context within which they are conceived. And yet, as Choppin (1992) points out, textbooks "are inseparable, in both their development and their use, from the teaching conditions and methods of their times" (p. 20). Consequently, textbook analysis should be conducted in a comprehensive, situated perspective. To the extent possible, account should be taken of both the processes of development and approval occurring prior to the emergence of the product itself as a didactic and pedagogical tool and as an ideological vector, and the processes subsequent to its emergence, namely "the classroom practices that it makes possible or precludes" (Reshef, 1986, p. 27).

### **Overview: The Need for a Comprehensive and Situated Analysis**

The influence of textbooks on teaching practices remains a field of research that has been little explored. As Caritey (1993) observes, whereas for some, textbooks influence mindsets and practices (Alverman, 1987, 1989; Hinchman, 1987; Zahorik, 1991), for others this influence remains unproven (Freysinet-Dominjon, 1969; Moniot, 1984; Riemenschneider, 1984). In a word, opinion is divided and the influence of schoolbooks on classroom teaching practices remains very poorly understood to date. We quote Venezky (1992) once again: "Many issues in textbook development, adoption, and use remain to be explored. We know little about the decision making processes of publishers and editors and probably less about how textbook design directs the relationship between student and text. Teachers also direct the student's relationship with the textbook, but how effectively they do this and how their mediation is influenced by textbook appearance and promotion is open to debate" (p. 457).

Given the disparities observable in the few data that are available, however, the need to situate research on textbooks is made more clearly evident. With the exception of observations regarding relatively high use of textbooks, the research conducted to date does not allow for general conclusions about their role and methods of use. It does, however, offer highly interesting avenues for reflection.

According to several researchers (Armento, 1986; Durkin, 1983; Morrisett, Hawke, & Superka, 1982; Shannon, 1982; Zahorik, 1991), in the United States 60 to 95 percent of class time is dedicated to activities that require the use of schoolbooks. Zahorik (1991) is among those who conclude that textbooks are prevalent, but only for 60 percent of teachers; while Woodward, Elliott, and Nagel (1986) state that 90 percent of elementary-school social studies teaching is based on schoolbooks, and especially textbooks.

Hummel (1988) finds that in Europe, "school textbooks determine in large measure what goes on in class, a fact confirmed by several sources" (p. 14). Research conducted by Gentil and Verdon (1995) in France shows that elementary-school teachers state they use the students' textbook systematically or often, in proportions ranging from 53 to 90 percent, depending on the subject matter. They also say they require pupils to use a textbook, either systematically or often, in slightly lower proportions. The student textbooks thus would appear to be used more often by teachers themselves than by pupils. The study by Tournier and Navarro (1985) shows that teachers considered the student textbook to be indispensable (31 percent), very useful (29 percent), or useful (34 percent). It would thus appear that textbooks occupy center stage in educational action, at least in some countries.<sup>17</sup> Data regarding methods of use by teachers and pupils, however, are few and vary according to country.

Alverman (1987, 1989) concludes on the basis of the two studies he has conducted in the United States that textbooks exert significant influence in teachers' decision making and in teachers' relationship with content and pupils. Like Hinchman (1987) and Zahorik (1991), he identifies three ways of using textbooks: systematic use, which he calls coverage, the most common; use as a source of information, which he calls extension; and use as a reference in discussion, which he calls thinking. Stodolsky (1989) notes that it is not clear that teachers teach strictly by the book (p. 180). Davey (1988) observes that one-third of elementary-school teachers state they use textbooks to supplement teaching, while another third state they use them for group work and discussions. The Gentil and Verdon (1995) study conducted in France, like that of Tournier and Navarro in 1985, reveals textbooks to be viewed mainly as a source of exercises. Furthermore, Gentil and Verdon (1995) found that for a significant proportion of respondents (36 percent in mathematics and 25 percent in reading), the student textbook is considered as a guide to the teacher. Tournier and Navarro (1985) found that for a little over 60 percent of respondents, the student textbook was both a teaching tool for the teacher and a learning tool for the pupil.

The gap between these findings reveals the influence of the socioeducational context in which textbooks exist. It would thus seem that an analysis of textbooks conducted with a view to determining their potential influence on teaching practices, or vice versa, must take account of the specific curriculum/didactic/pedagogical dynamic in the educational system involved, such that not only determinants in the development of textbooks, but also those that influence their use, are identified.

## CONCLUSION

Two major findings emerge from what we have presented above. First, in 1979 Quebec opted decisively to introduce required textbooks into the classroom. At the time, this choice was in accordance with the neo-behaviourist orientations set by the Ministry of Education, which had taken

concrete form in the production of curricula structured by behavioural objectives. How can this position be reconciled with the current constructivist party line? It is not possible to explain this apparent contradiction at this time. Will we be seeing, for example, via the work of the committee on didactic resources, created by the Ministry of Education, the implementation of measures to guide production of new textbooks and render them compatible with these new perspectives, thus profoundly altering the epistemological presuppositions that dominate textbooks? Or will the Ministry, through concern for the wishes of influential social groups, including publishers, subordinate pedagogical requirements to political and ideological pressures? It is too soon to answer these questions. What can be said is that, behind the choices to be made in the coming decade—and beyond—regarding the design of textbooks and their place and role, may be discerned a major issue relating to the conception of educational action and the place and role assigned to teachers. Will we be seeing the maintenance and indeed the strengthening of a technician's role for teachers, reinforced by the development of behavioural competencies (Rey, 1996), a behaviourist model of competency based on Burchell (1995), and the implementation of what Perrenoud (1984) calls closed professionalism, which rests on an instrumental view of the teaching function? Or, conversely, will the guidelines adopted, including those relating to the design and role of textbooks, go beyond the current lip-service and sound the call to open professionalism (with a social vision), underpinned by the development of conscious competencies (Rey, 1996), which Burchell (1995) unites under the label of interactive model and that are characterized (in the socioconstructivist perspective) by their generative capacities (Lenoir et al., 1999)? Future textbooks will no doubt be good indicators of the social choices that will prevail and unfold in Quebec society.

Our second finding is that a review of the scholarly literature does not shed light on the relationship between textbooks and teaching practices, given the lack of studies on this topic. While interesting in itself, the literature addresses other questions and, to the great surprise of researchers in the CRIE, is deafening in its silence on classroom methods of the use of textbooks by elementary-school teachers and, indeed, by high-school teachers. And yet, textbooks, viewed by the Ministry itself as indispensable guides for both the pupil and the teacher, constitute an inescapable fact of education in Quebec since 1979. A review of the scholarly literature yields the conclusion that neither textbooks' classroom use by teachers, nor their impact on practices, nor the effects of their use on school learning, are really known. Do we owe the lack of such research to the epistemological position adopted by researchers, who perhaps view knowledge to be taught in a realist light and teaching basically as a process of transmission? Or might it be thanks to state control over production of both textbooks and teacher-education curricula? Might it be due to the influence of discipline-based structure on the determination of both teacher-education processes and research in universities? These explanatory hypotheses are certainly worth considering for French-speaking Europe, but what of English-speaking

North America? Here, numerous other factors could apply. On this score as well, we are not in a position to suggest explanations at this time.

It should also be noted that a historic overview reveals a trend in Quebec for gradually increasing government control over contents to be taught and teaching practices, and even over learning processes. This trend is hardly compatible with the process of professionalization that is being proposed. Such a process entails, as Lang (1999) clearly shows, the appropriation of autonomy by the teaching profession; and this autonomy must exist in five spheres: practice; organizational work conditions; knowledge specific to the profession; economic and social work conditions; and the political sphere of legitimization, definition, and protection of one's mandate. The first two spheres are directly threatened by rising control over the school system by political authorities.

Earlier we quoted Anderson and Tomkins (1983) to the effect that, however significant the impact of a textbook on curriculum, it cannot be forgotten that at the end of the line, the practitioner decides how it is used. In light of this, what is the practitioner's degree of both perceived and real autonomy? To be able to identify those things that relate to individual use by teachers, the didactic and pedagogical assumptions conveyed by textbooks must first be identified. It should not be forgotten that these assumptions shape the formal curriculum. The textbook thereby becomes, to a certain extent, a well-defined and circumscribed expression of the formal curriculum, while also becoming a mold that shapes it in return. In virtue of this fact, analysis of textbooks requires prior analysis of a range of government documents that provide educational guidelines. This twofold approach is needed to deal with the delicate question of the curricular/didactic/pedagogical dynamic specific to textbooks.

In light of this overview of the situation of textbooks in Quebec and the perspectives of research conducted on textbooks, what emerges is the need to examine classroom use of textbooks by teachers and pupils. Their importance in the teaching and learning dynamic demands in-depth study of their place and role and their relationship with the curricular, didactic, and pedagogical dimensions of teaching. Such an examination, moreover, must not ignore the importance of situating the textbook within the social context of its production, as well as within the web of interactions involved in a textbook's design, dissemination, and choice. Such, in brief, is the framework for the two research programs described at the start of this article. We await empirical results. The first ones are now published (Lenoir, Rey, Roy, & Lebrun, 2001; Spallanzani, Biron, Larose, Lebrun, Lenoir, Masselter, & Roy, 2001).

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## NOTES

1. This research program is being conducted over a three-year period (1997–2000) and is entitled “Use of Didactic Materials by Elementary-school Teachers: An Interdisciplinary Approach.” It is funded by the Quebec government’s FCAR fund (Fund for training researchers and aiding research; project number 98E2859). The project is headed by Professor Carlo Spallanzani, who is also responsible for research on pedagogical practices. Other researchers include Diane Biron (research on didactics in mathematics), Mario Laforest (research on didactics in human sciences), François Larose (methodology issues), Yves Lenoir (research on interdisciplinarity), and Gérard-Raymond Roy (research on didactics in French).
2. The concept of didactics is used systematically, in the French-speaking sphere, to designate a teacher’s relationship with knowledge. Didactics constitutes the interface between the curriculum and pedagogical practices. It neither defines nor prescribes a particular teaching methodology, but enables reflection on the contents of what is taught, its epistemological underpinnings, its links to scientific knowledge and social practices of reference, and on the structure the contents are given for teaching purposes. Further, it offers the practitioner guidelines for pedagogical action. A special issue of *Instructional Science* entitled “Didactics in the Francophone World” appeared in March 1999, under the editorship of François Tochon. This issue aims to introduce research on didactics to an English-speaking readership (Tochon, 1999).
3. In Quebec, numerous textbooks carrying the Ministry of Education’s stamp of approval make explicit claims of embracing an interdisciplinary approach. They are designed to bring together, in a single book, teaching contents from the programs of distinct subject matters. Generally, the subjects brought together are: French (native-tongue), human sciences, and *Formation personnelle et sociale*. Until recently, the expression most commonly used to refer to this phenomenon in Quebec was “subject matters integration” (*intégration des matières*). Lately the idea has fallen into disuse, yielding to the concept of interdisciplinarity. There is no room here to clarify the theories that, one way or another, call on the creation of relationships between various subject matters. (In fact, these theories sometimes propose to merge subject matters and sometimes even recommend existing classifications of subject matters be abandoned.) All that it is possible to say here is that in Quebec, operationalisation of the concept of interdisciplinarity, when taken in the sense suggested by *intégration des matières*, results essentially, where educational practice is concerned, in the establishment of relationships between the contents of subject matters, rather than, for example, the practices flowing from integrated studies. For more details, consult Beane (1997), Klein (1990, 1996), Larose & Lenoir (1998), Lenoir (1999, in press), Lenoir, Larose, and Geoffroy (2000), and Lenoir and Sauvé (1998a, 1998b, 1998c).
4. This project is being conducted over a three-year period (1998–2001) and is entitled “Use of Interdisciplinary Materials by Quebec Elementary-School Teachers: Impact on Practices” (*L’utilisation du matériel interdisciplinaire par les enseignants québécois du primaire: impacts sur leurs pratiques*). It is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC; project number 410-98-0307). Professor Yves Lenoir heads the project, in which the following researchers are collaborating: François Larose, Gérard-Raymond Roy, and Maurice Sachot (of Université Marc Bloch, Strasbourg).
5. Teaching material is considered to be didactic if it relates to the knowledge to be taught (e.g., textbooks, movies, videos, maps, timelines, etc.). Otherwise it is

- considered to be pedagogical, in that it promotes or provides support to teaching and learning activities (e.g., overheads, workbooks, posters, etc.).
6. Note that our usage differs significantly from that of Quebec's Ministry of Education. The Ministry distinguishes between basic didactic materials and supplementary didactic materials. Generally speaking, basic materials cover teaching sets (student textbook and teacher's guide) as well as reference works in current use, such as dictionaries, grammars, atlases, and Bibles (Government of Quebec, 1991, pp. 11–13). Supplementary materials consist of computer-based resources, audiovisual materials, and so on.
  7. For Perrenoud (1984), the "formal curriculum" derives from government publications that define the broad directions and orientations of teaching, thus from the prescribed curriculum, while the "real curriculum" refers to the curriculum as given concrete form through classroom reality.
  8. The concept of the curriculum does not have the significance in French-speaking Europe that is assigned to it in North America. In fact, it is invoked relatively little, even though increased internationalisation in the exchange of ideas has led to its introduction into the French-speaking sphere. Rather, the concepts traditionally present in this community were those of the *cursus* and the *programme d'études*: the course of study and the program of studies. In Quebec, which is closer both geographically and conceptually to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of thought of North America, the notion of the curriculum is current. Nevertheless it should be noted that it is essentially understood in the classical and formal sense; namely, one that defines it as "the organised whole of the programs of study for a given level of teaching or for a given institution, as given authoritative force through units of value, and leading to the acquisition of a diploma" (Legendre, 1988, p. 135).
  9. Following two decades of sometimes virulent criticism of preservice teacher education, this field was subject to administrative and curricular reforms (Superior Council of Education, 1991b; Government of Quebec, 1992b, 1993b, 1994a) that began in 1991 and are still under way. They have enabled the Quebec Ministry of Education to exert a greater control (not to say a complete takeover) over universities in respect to teacher education (Laforest & Lenoir, 1997; Lessard & Lévesque, 1998). These reforms have had an impact on all kinds of teacher education, from preschool to adult, including the education of specialists and the sphere of vocational education. The prevailing concepts associated with this reform are professionalisation, the acquisition of competencies, interdisciplinarity (in the sense of generalism), subject-matter integration, and general culture (Government of Quebec, 1993a, 1994a).
  10. For example, values related to religious and democratic life, respect for various cultures, and the affirmation of one's own culture.
  11. For example, the equitable representation of both sexes or various ethnic groups in the illustrations.
  12. This Commission, which was a commission of inquiry, conferred for 18 months. The mandate assigned to it by the government of Quebec was, in the first place, to consult all of the Quebec public on the situation of education in Quebec and derive from this consultation an analysis of its main elements. In second place, to identify, based on these consultations and this analysis (Government of Quebec, 1996a), avenues and priorities concerning actions to be taken to ensure the future of Quebec education. In its final report, the Commission presented 10 priority areas; one-third of these related to the restructuring of elementary and high school curricula with the intention of raising their cultural level (Government of Quebec, 1996b).

13. The Inchauspé Report (Government of Quebec, 1997a) proposes four types of action designed to transform current practices in depth (p. 30). One of these is the bringing together in unified groups of some current programs under five broad learning domains (languages; technology, science, and mathematics; the social world; the arts; and social and self-development); the visible and real integration of new educational elements into teaching, including those known as transverse competencies; and, as a means of fostering interdisciplinarity, the establishment of conditions promoting, not just vertical integration of contents in a single subject matter, but more important still, the horizontal integration of subject matters taught in a given year.
14. These particular measures have been in force since June 1998.
15. The structure of the contents of textbooks was heavily influenced by that of the "little catechism." This little book of religious dogma was used in all Quebec schools at the time as a result of the neo-Thomist reform advocated by Pope Leo XIII imposed on Quebec and caused to spread through the clergy in the 19th century. The little catechism took the form of questions and answers designed to present the religious notions every Catholic child was expected to acquire.
16. The concept of didactic transposition relates to the process of reorganizing scientific knowledge to make it accessible to pupils. Adherents of this concept, primarily didacticians of mathematics, postulate that the design of programs of study occurs essentially on scientific foundations and that their contents are scientific. This position, which leads to viewing the disciplinary expert, or at the very least the didactician, as occupying a dominant position in the process of devising programs of study, is currently the subject of lively debate in the Francophone world. Several authors, including Chervel (1988), Develay (1992), and Sachot (1993), have shown that it is necessary to clearly distinguish between scientific disciplines and subject matter, that the design of programs of study rests as much on other foundations as on scientific ones, and that the former may even predominate. See also Raisky and Caillot (1996) and Tochon (1999).
17. It appears that in Quebec no systematic research has been conducted on this subject.

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