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Rethinking Education and Emancipation

Diverse Perspectives on Contemporary Challenges

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Ways and Sideways of Emancipation: Dewey's Reception in Different Political Eras of an Other-Than-Western Context

Milica Sekulović and Aleksandra Ilić Rajković

INTRODUCTION

In the history of emancipatory pedagogical ideas, social history, and philosophy, Dewey is an unavoidable reference, mainly because of his vision and efforts toward the creation of democratic societies through education. He was a major figure of the American intellectual and cultural landscape as one of the main proponents of American progressive movement in the beginning of the 1990s. In the recently published *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory* (Peters, 2017), the chapter on Dewey's

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pedagogical legacy occupies 50 pages of text discussing various modalities of his theory. In the *Cambridge Companion to Dewey*, published in 2010, his contribution to various disciplinary fields is characterized as an inexhaustible source for understanding and reflecting on contemporary social problems.

Over the last 30 years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the work of John Dewey across a number of disciplines, reflecting the wide range of his intellectual pursuits in areas such as philosophy, political thought, psychology, education, communication studies, religion, art, and aesthetics (Cochran, 2010: 2). The main goal of this chapter is to explore the reception of Dewey's pragmatic pedagogy and to what extent he influenced the educational debate in the Serbian educational context starting from 1920 when Klapared's introduction to Dewey was published. Reception studies help to challenge the traditional idea of what "classics" is, prompting reflection on how the discipline has been constituted, variously and often amid dispute, over past centuries (Martindale, 2006: 2). According to reception studies, all meaning is constituted or actualized at the point of reception. The complex interaction between the text and the context of its reception opens space for almost countless new meanings. Reading then is the complex act of hearing the words of another, which is the complex act of making them fit within the linguistic structure and context (that is, history and genetics) of our own consciousness—it brings new contexts and analogies that are understood by virtue of old contexts and figure (Batstone, 2006: 17).

In an attempt to explore this reception, the chapter articulates it through both pedagogical discourse and ideological context, starting from the premise that these two are often inseparable. The main sample of research in the chapter are relevant pedagogical journals, textbooks for pedagogy and history of pedagogy, reviews and critiques that took Dewey's pedagogical legacy as a subject of interpretation. Serbian political and educational context will serve as an example of how the two discourses in Dewey's reception, prescriptive and liberal, interfere. Readers can make their own conclusions in terms of what to take away from this chapter: hopefully, it is an example (for their students and themselves) of historically tracing and analyzing the reception of any idea or any emancipatory thought with regards to different reception spaces and places, to enhance an understanding of how context and ideas interact. Importantly, it also shows how any school of thought or idea can be easily reinterpreted in the

light that suits the “message sender”. This example can be useful for the practices and reception analyses of an emancipatory classroom.

TOWARD AN ACTIVITY SCHOOL (1920–1940)

In the years before the First World War, interest in Dewey's pedagogical ideas in the international context still did not exist, although non-American editions and translations appeared relatively quickly. This was also the case in those countries where his works had already been published. In Britain, in 1902, Adams (Sir John Adams) prepared and published a collection of Dewey's lectures entitled *The School and the Child*. However, until 1920, there was no interest in the ideas of the American pedagogue and philosopher, neither in British pedagogical theory nor in practice (Darling & Nisbet, 2000). Also, his pedagogical ideas were sometimes subject to controversial interpretations. For example, Bittner points out that few pedagogical theories and practices have met with such strong reactive ambivalence in Germany as Dewey's. As it contained the ideas of democracy and pragmatism it clashed with the monarchical and idealistic patterns of school practice and pedagogic theory right from the beginning (Bittner, 2000). Dewey's works were translated by Elsa and Ludwig Gurlitt, however, these translations, published in 1903 and 1904, are in fact a reworking of the original. Gurlitt adapted Dewey's ideas to the needs of educational policy developed in the direction of distinct nationalism (Bittner, 2000). Gurlitt's translations were current until the 1920s. Georg Kerschensteiner, a school reformer in Munich, who often referred to the American pedagogue, did not use these translations but read his works in the original (ibid.).

On the occasion of the publication of the book *Democracy and Education* in the Serbian language in 1934, one of the reviews states that Dewey's ideas “find prepared ground in our country” (Anonymous, 1934: 152). The mentioned comment was not without reason. First, the professional public has already constructed a positive image of American initiatives in the field of new education, and Dewey was considered a central figure in contemporary American pedagogy at the time.¹ Secondly, translations of Dewey's smaller works have been published in Serbian for a full decade, while a translation of Clapared's study was published in 1920 (Klapared, 1920). In total, in the period from 1920 to 1937, at least

¹ See: Byse (1921), Rassel (1925), Radosavljević (1927), Cvetković (1931).

21 titles related to the pedagogical conception of John Dewey were published in the Serbian language.² Of this number, 16 refer to translations of Dewey's texts: monographic publications (4) and serial publications (12), often in several sequels. In addition to the stated number of papers that are signed by Dewey's name or that contain his name in the title, it is important to mention the reference to Dewey by Serbian pedagogues in their works (Ilić Rajković, 2013). It is especially worth mentioning the fact that Dewey's conception explained the theoretical basis of teaching in the first experimental school in this area.

The collection of Dewey's lectures, entitled *School and Society*, was first translated into Serbian in 1924 when it began to be published in sequels on the pages of the socialist pedagogical magazine *Učiteljska iskra*.³ Dewey's contributions from this publication have since been translated and published several times, both on the pages of the journal and as separate publications. The positive attitude toward the ideas of the American pedagogue was developed by domestic socialist teachers under the influence of Russian theorists of education Krupska, Blonski, Šacki, Lunčarski and others who knew and interpreted Dewey's philosophical and pedagogical concept (Mchitarjan, 2000).

Vojislav Mladenović and Dragoljub Branković are two scholars of importance within the movement for a new school and new pedagogy in Serbia. Both have published interpretations of Dewey's pedagogical teaching presented in *Pedagogija i demokratija (Pedagogy and Democracy)*. As a representative of the new pedagogy, Mladenović integrated Dewey's pragmatic concept of education into his pedagogical system, which he presented in the work entitled *General Pedagogy*. It is an extensive scientific study whose target group was students of higher pedagogical institutions. Also, it is one of the most important pedagogical works written in the Serbian language until the Second World War. On the other hand,

²This review did not include journals published in the publications of local teachers' and other societies.

³Djui, Džon (1924a) "Škola i društveni progres", *Učiteljska iskra*, 4: 6–17.

Djui, Džon (1924b) "Zadatak istorije u osnovnoj školi", *Učiteljska iskra*, 4: 7–11.

Djui, Džon (1924c) "Škola i dečiji život", *Učiteljska iskra*, 4: 7–20.

Djui, Džon (1925a) "Rasipanje u vaspitanju", *Učiteljska iskra*, 4: 4–17.

Djui, Džon (1925b) "Psihologija elementarnog vaspitanja", *Učiteljska iskra*, 4: 7–16.

Djui, Džon (1925c) "Frebelovi vaspitni principi", *Učiteljska iskra*, 4: 35–42.

Djui, Džon (1925d) "Psihologija zanimanja" *Učiteljska iskra*, 5: 11–14.

Djui, Džon (1926) "Razvitak pažnje" *Učiteljska iskra*, 5:19–24.

Branković, a high official in the Ministry of Education and Church Affairs, is the author of the concept on which the work of the first experimental school⁴ in Serbia is based. He neglected the practice of this school and explained the ideas of Ferrier and Dewey. The scope of the possible influence of both Mladenović and Branković, therefore, was not negligible, considering that one was focused on the domain of theoretical knowledge of the new pedagogical science, and the other on the establishment of new teaching practice.

In *General Pedagogy*, Mladenović repeatedly refers to the ideas that Dewey presented in the mentioned book. He also evaluates the translation into Serbian, pointing out possible problems in the interpretation of certain terms that arise from inadequate translation, pointing out the inconsistency in the translation of the title in Serbian, which reads: *Pedagogy and Democracy*. Such a title, Mladenović believed, gives the content of the book a meaning that Dewey as a “world-renowned scientist certainly did not want to give, despite the special use of the word education in America” (Mladenović, 1936: 752). He stated that the translation into Serbian suffers from the same shortcomings as the translation into German.⁵ A more adequate title, Mladenović considered, would be *Education and Democracy* because it sets out a system of teaching education from a policy perspective, and represents a theory of pedagogical action. The book does not provide a system of pedagogical scientific knowledge that would be considered pedagogy.

In Mladenović's (1936) opinion, Dewey gave the activity school a *theoretical basis* that is *much deeper and more realistic* than the concepts of other representatives such as Paul Ficker, Georg Kerschensteiner, and others because it is based on the notion of experience (Mladenović, 1936: 548). Mladenović (1936) focused his attention primarily on understanding and interpreting Dewey's understanding of the experience-opinion relationship. He notes that in itself (per se) the activity of thinking is unsustainable and that it makes sense only in relation to the other two

⁴We need to point out the problem of translation here. Serbian demonstration school was supposed to be a role model to other schools. Experimental work has not been applied for the purposes of scientific study on the basis of which some recommendations and decisions for the work of ordinary schools would be made. But on this occasion we will use the term experimental.

⁵Mladenović referred to: “Sturm, H. (1931), John Dewey: Demokratie und Erziehung (Democracy and Education). An introduction to philosophical pedagogy. German by Professor Erich Hyla. - Breslan, Ferdinand Hirt”, *Učitelj* 11: 630–634.

“heads of the side of our mental activity” according to emotions and will. Thought, will, and emotions are permeated in experience, and they get their meaning only in experience. Mladenović bases his theoretical and pedagogical system on the understanding of these three aspects of mental activity, accepting the thesis that a child “develops through experience; with an ever-increasing wealth of experience, experience flows” (ibid.: 440). Considering the general issues of didactics, Mladenović refers to Dewey’s teaching about the interest of students in teaching, and about the universality of the teaching method. Here, the reference to Dewey Mladenović, therefore, strived to understand as fully as possible and to specify the meanings of terms and concepts on which Dewey builds his pedagogical learning.

Branković opted for a different approach. He adapted Dewey’s ideas to his own personal, subjective and general understandings, so it is difficult to connect some of his interpretations with the original ideas of the American pedagogue. Branković presented his interpretation of Dewey’s ideas in the review of the book *Pedagogy and Education* and in the reports on the work of the experimental school in Belgrade.

Branković considered Dewey to be a **representative of the activity school movement**, basing this claim on the argument that Dewey in his teaching “does not start from performances as Herbart did, but from actions, from physical activity, from work” (Branković, 1934: 173). This author consistently attributes the meaning of *physical work* to the term *activity*. He also points out that “Dewey very skilfully, in accordance with psychology, presents evidence that every teaching must be done on a working basis”. It should be noted that in the terminology used by Dewey, there is no term meaning “working principle” (ibid.: 180). Branković, however, uses this expression to interpret the essence of the relationship between *experience and knowledge*. Branković further states that Dewey “develops it like no one so far convincingly, starting from the fact that experience is the original matter of sharing and suffering, and not of knowing” (ibid.). Branković emphasizes the contradictions between “sharing”, “suffering” and “knowledge” as those elements on which the process of creating experience is based. To this interpretation, he adds Dewey’s critique of the school of the time. Dewey, says Branković, rebuked the old school for not respecting the interdependence of “work and suffering”, which resulted in a dualism “between consciousness and body”, i.e., spirit and body. Among the multiple consequences of that dualism that Dewey cites, Branković focused on the problem of school discipline, which he

interpreted as follows: *The focus of* “the school discipline issue is that the teacher often has to spend a lot of time suffocating physical activities” (ibid.: 181).

Although Branković singles out the terms: work, experience, knowledge and discipline as the key to understanding Dewey’s teaching about the new school, his attempt to explain them remains on the margins due to the incomplete interpretation of the term work. In addition to the above, Branković recognizes in Dewey’s concept, as significant, the topic of the relationship between play and work in the curriculum. However, instead of pointing to the notion of *active occupations* that Dewey introduces to explain the role of play and work in the curriculum, Branković only exhaustively lists several forms of manual and other work that were available to students and teachers in the reformed school (ibid.: 183).

Branković interprets Dewey’s teaching on the goal of upbringing in the following way: “In the effort to acquire habits that will adapt the individual to the environment, Dewey finds the first goal of education, and this achieves the useful membership of the individual in the social community, which is really the main goal of the whole education”. Branković further notes that according to Dewey, the goal of education is “increasing the ability to grow” (ibid.: 175), and education, according to Dewey’s conception, is “an endeavor to provide conditions for growth”, this author believes (ibid.).

In the ideas from the publication *School and Society*, Branković found the pedagogical, social and psychological basis of the work of the experimental school in Belgrade. State Public School “King Alexander the First” in Belgrade (formerly “Terazije Elementary School”) was founded in 1935 as the first state experimental school in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The task of the school was according to the provisions of the Law on Public Schools from 1929, “teachers of public schools show that in our school, without any special changes, they can work according to modern principles of teaching education” (Branković & Lilić, 1937: 29). On the analysis of Dewey’s pedagogical ideas about the four instincts of the game and the related learning about interest and work, Branković defined the starting points for the organization of teaching at this school. “The experimental school starts from the fact that a child (and adult person) is a sensory-motor being, i.e. that it not only receives impressions but also reacts to them with movement [...] The tragedy of the old school was precisely that it did not pay any attention to these motor skills, it did not apply it in teaching, but even more, required more or less stiffness of the

body” (Branković, 1938: 25). Branković remains on a superficial interpretation of Dewey’s ideas and did not elaborate on Dewey’s understanding of active occupations, which is an operationalized expression of his understanding of teaching and learning.

However, from the analysis of records from the teaching practice in the experimental schools can be concluded that it was based on the principles of child-centered teaching, teaching that activates different potentials and opportunities of students, in an environment close to everyday life and in which they have the opportunity to present their experiences related to teaching topics (Ilić Rajković & Malinić, 2016). In this sense, we can state that Dewey’s ideas in the educational work of the experimental school found fertile ground.

“DEWEY REFLECTS THE CRISIS OF BOURGEOIS PEDAGOGY IN THE PERIOD OF IMPERIALISM”: EMANCIPATION MEETS BUREAUCRACY (1945–1970)

After the Second World War, the reception of Dewey’s philosophy of education in Yugoslavia was largely limited by and interpreted under the strong influence of Soviet pedagogy. The state of Yugoslavia (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was governed by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), led by President Tito. It was closely aligned with the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union ideology until the 1948, when the state “broke up” with “Stalinism”. This disassociation with the Soviet Union resulted in Yugoslavia co-founding the “Non-Aligned Movement” in 1961, to signal no formal alignment with or against any major power, continuing with its own version of social communism.

In the periodization of the development of Yugoslav pedagogy immediately after the war, Potkonjak (1994) distinguishes:

1. The period of domination of Soviet pedagogy (1944–1953)
2. The period of methodological reorientation (1953–1963)
3. The period of consolidation (1963–1970)
4. The period of self-governing pedagogy (1987) (Potkonjak, 1994)

These periods will serve as a conceptual and methodological framework for the interpretation and understanding of Dewey’s reception (or absence of reception) in the period until the breakup of Yugoslavia. The conditions

for the critical reception of Dewey's pedagogy almost did not exist until the mid-1950s. The reasons for such a negative trend were primarily of an ideological nature.

The period from 1945 to 1952 is characterized by the dominant influence of Soviet authors on Yugoslav pedagogy.⁶ In the period before the First Congress of Yugoslav Educators, held in 1952, the Soviet Union was accepted as the only model and source of solving all social issues and problems. Textbooks for general pedagogy and the history of pedagogy were translated from the Russian language, and cultural cooperation with the USSR took place through the activities of the *Society for Cooperation of Yugoslavia with the USSR*. Models of communist modernization and industrialization of society were programmed according to the model of Soviet five-year plans. Potkonjak (1994) emphasizes three main bases for the development of pedagogy in Yugoslavia after the Second World War: Serbian socialist movement, Soviet pedagogy and the spirit and achievements of the people's revolution. The connection with the pre-war pedagogical heritage was severed, with the existence of recognition of continuity with the activities of the socialist teachers' movement in the interwar period. The early post-revolutionary period was also characterized by a high level of centralization and political and ideological homogenization of the Yugoslav space. All semantic and ideological re-examinations and revisions until the mid-1950s took place exclusively within the leadership of the CPY,⁷ the only organization that de facto had the right to a public and permanent discussion of the horizons and values of the revolution (Suvin, 2017). Dewey's philosophy of education and the reception of pedagogical ideas by Yugoslav/Soviet authors was unanimously adopted as a *bourgeois and reactionary course in pedagogy*. It is interesting that Yugoslav authors ignored a positive reception of Dewey's ideas between the two world wars, which was promoted by the socialist teachers' movement. Also, after visiting the USSR in 1928, Dewey wrote with delight about the "Soviet experiment" and, above all, about Soviet pedagogues (Engerman, 2003: 33). Some of those Soviet era pedagogues, such as Lev Vygotsky and his followers, became some of the most influential figures in global pedagogy and educational theory, still influencing the development and

⁶Textbooks for history and general pedagogy by Kairov, Gruzdev and Ganelin were translated and used for the needs of the first generations of pedagogy students, but they were also often the main source for acquiring pedagogical education of teachers.

⁷Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

applications of socio-cultural psychology, constructivism, as well as the movement of “activity theory” in education today. It is also worth mentioning that those Soviet era pedagogues “needed” some Western scholar to “discover” them, to be “accepted” internationally.

Several pedagogy textbooks (of that Soviet pedagogic era) contained negative interpretations of Dewey’s pedagogy, mostly translated from Russian, as well as in individual translations of articles by Soviet authors published in domestic (Yugoslav) pedagogical journals. In the shortened Russian textbook by Golant and Ganelin (edited by the prominent Yugoslav pedagogue Teodosić (Ganelin & Golant, 1946), the presentation of Dewey’s ideas takes up 4 pages. The above-mentioned authors assess the philosophy of pragmatism as very suitable for promoting the ideas of the bourgeoisie by helping to justify those truths that distort reality and are useful for the bourgeoisie. The authors point out that Dewey in his works strives to build a school that would alleviate class differences, i.e., spreading the illusion of the harmony of interests of both capitalists and workers (ibid.: 70). Dewey’s ideas about education as a continuous expansion and reconstruction of children’s experience, taking the child’s interest in the process of curriculum formation, promoting the child’s research instinct and advocating an open curriculum are criticized by the author. Dewey’s conception of upbringing and education, on the example of its stated characteristics, is interpreted by the authors, without more detailed elaborations, as ignoring systematic teaching and knowledge and placing the child and school in the service of capital.

The sharpest criticism of Dewey’s pedagogy is in the work of the Soviet author Ševkin, which was published in Serbo-Croatian in the magazine *Savremena škola* (*Contemporary School*) in 1948 under the title *Reactionary Pedagogy of John Dewey*. The author defines pragmatism as an American product in the conditions of imperialism and materialism (Ševkin, 1948). He was further criticized for his opinion that child must be given a central place in education (Zorić et al., 2019: 296). Soviet and Yugoslav authors especially emphasize the unoriginality of Dewey’s placing the child at the center of the educational process, emphasizing Rousseau’s original contribution in that field, as well as Pestalozzi, who at that time was interpreted by the Yugoslav pedagogical public as *Soviet Makarenko* (Potkonjak, 1994: 32).

After the break-up with COMINFORM (in 1948), *the Commission for Exchange in Education between the SFRY and the USA* was established, as well as the development of the social and political system—Yugoslav self-management. The connection between Yugoslavia and the United States

in the field of science, culture and education took place in different ways, which began in 1950, with a series of programs, culminating in the establishment of cooperation with Ford, Fulbright and other American foundations.

On the basis of the American-Yugoslav contract PL-480, a program for translating and publishing books for free distribution to educational institutions, *Education and Democracy* was published in 1966 with a hard and luxurious cover, with Dewey's preface from 1915. The book's afterword highlighted the value of Dewey's efforts as a reformer in the field of pedagogy, in which his socially oriented views have remained relevant to education in America to this day, and that he firmly believed in democracy and social reform (Djui, 1966). However, in the relevant journals that represented the arena for the exchange of professional, and scientific-pedagogical discourse, we did not find a reaction from the pedagogical public regarding the publication of *Education and Democracy*. The reasons for that can be found on the foreign policy level since the relations between the USA and Yugoslavia destabilized in the 1960s. "No period of Yugoslav-American relations, even when they were on the upward trajectory, was without shadows, just as periods of tension were not without mutual space for apostasy, so that characterizes the sixties" (Vučetić, 2015: 58). Vučetić sees the Yugoslav policy of non-aligned people as a catalyst for problems in relations between Yugoslavia and the United States.

It is interesting to understand the reasons for the absence of theoretical and practical reception of Dewey's ideas when it comes to the comparative research of school systems. In the early 1950s, comparative pedagogy developed as a young discipline in Yugoslavia and was most often associated with the name of Dragutin Franković. In that period, the relations between the Western and Eastern blocs of countries relaxed and Yugoslavia opened up to the achievements of Western civilization. The adoption of the document entitled *Mutual acquaintance with the cultural values of the East and the West* was at that time an expression of easing the tension between the blocs (Janev, 2004: 90) but also increasing the position of UNESCO within those countries that were under strong Soviet influence (Petrović Todosijević, 2017). From the abovementioned, it could be concluded that a suitable ground for the practical implementation of Dewey's ideas, such as the interwar experimental school, is open. However, by consulting the magazine *Nastava i vaspitanje*, which was launched in 1952, as a branch of the *Pedagogical Society of SR Serbia*, we did not find a comparative study that offers models for the implementation of Dewey's pedagogical ideas in institutional discourse. In the review of the study by Milles

Innovation in Education presented by the Zagreb author Vladimir Mužić, entitled *Collection of Studies on Reform Efforts in American Schooling*, there is no mention of Dewey's reform efforts. As a branch of the *Pedagogical Society of SR Serbia*, we did not find a comparative study that offers models for the implementation of Dewey's pedagogical ideas in institutional discourse. In the review of the study by Milles *Innovation in Education* presented by the Zagreb author Vladimir Mužić, entitled *Collection of Studies on Reform Efforts in American Schooling*, there is no mention of Dewey's reform efforts.

The discourse was similar at the level of preschool education and upbringing. The magazine of the Association of Pedagogical Societies of Yugoslavia, *Predškolsko dete (Preschool Child)* was founded in 1950, with the aim of designing and improving the social education of preschool children, and some of the central topics and sections of the magazine were theories of preschool education, developmental psychology, family sociology and preschool education. It can be noticed that the above-mentioned goal and program orientation of the journal were largely in line with Dewey's fields of research and understanding of upbringing as a social function. In the period from 1971 to 1985, there is not a single translation or interpretation of Dewey's ideas about the child as an active participant in the educational process, the learning process as an active endeavor through the reconstruction of the acquired experience. Dewey's five lectures on *The Life of the Child* provided him the chance to reassert his basic approach to education. His constant theme was the wide possibilities for learning for the active child learner in guided child-centered kindergarten education (Castle, 2015). Dewey constructed his own notion of play that he argued fostered experiential learning, voluntary participation, and social order (Beatty, 2017). In *Education and Democracy*, Dewey devotes a special chapter to the relationship between play and work, considering play as an activity with a specific purpose, which has a presumed goal that is consciously accepted. Although Dewey's views on the relationship between play and work have been known to the professional pedagogical public since the mid-1950s, the editors of the magazine *Predškolsko dete* opted for translations by Jerome Bruner which are also included in the chapters on theoretical and practical issues of children's play. Why is this worth mentioning? Dewey and Bruner's theories were treated as opposites by Serbian/Yugoslav authors at the time (Mitrović, 1981: 32). With his conception of teaching and education, Bruner positions the role of the

teacher as a facilitator of the educational process in a central place and emphasizes the importance of having a structure of scientific knowledge in the child. In *Dewey and Bruner: A Common Ground* author Young tries to answer the question: “has Bruner followed Dewey’s ideas or repudiated them? The author concludes that even Bruner seeds Dewey as desiring that children be taught how to think reflectively or scientifically in order that they max achieve primarily social aims” (Young, 1972: 60).

TOWARD REVALUATION: RECEPTION OF DEWEY IN THE PERIOD OF YUGOSLAV SELF-MANAGEMENT (1970–1991)

In the period of Yugoslav self-management pedagogy (1970–1987), which is institutionally characterized by the dominance of the idea of secondary vocational education, as the idea of merging and coordinating the sphere of education and personnel needs, we encounter four significant, and can be said positive, interpretations of Dewey’s ideas. In the article *Pragmatistička pedagogija Džona Džuija (The pragmatic pedagogy of John Dewey)* published in *Pedagoška stvarnost (Pedagogic Reality)* in 1971, the author points out that Dewey was among the first to point out issues concerning the relationship between school and industrial life, and that Dewey’s instrumentalism goes far beyond pragmatism in the idea of seeing knowledge as a problem-solving instrument (Krnet, 1971). Also, in 1983, a translation of Dewey’s pedagogical creed was published in the journal *Pedagogija (Pedagogy)*:

Dewey’s ideas are indicated through the chapter *From Work Education to Manualism and Pragmatism* (Potkonjak, 1985) and presented in continuity with ideas of Kershensteiner. In other Yugoslav literature, Dewey was closely associated with Kerschensteiner (Sobe, 2005) although Dewey himself, to whom Kerschensteiner often referred in his works, did not have a positive attitude toward his ideas (Knoll, 1993). Although by the very title of the book, Dewey is classified as a “bourgeois theorist of labor education”, which we attribute to the relict of the Soviet orientation in Yugoslav pedagogy, Potkonjak classifies and interprets the pedagogy of Dewey as very layered and complex in her sought to connect and reconcile hat was and remained irreconcilable for bourgeois pedagogy: individuality and sociability, democracy and the class structure of society, freedom and

leadership in education, intellectually and practically, school and life, true and useful, learning and activity (Potkonjak, 1985: 215, 141).

With such an interpretation, the author does not take a completely negative attitude toward Dewey's conception of work education, although, according to his own confession, like other theorists of the activity school movement, he evaluates it from the point of view of the development of work education in bourgeois pedagogy. However, the author points out that such fear is one-sided and wrong, and that it marks their contribution to the critique of the "old school" and the orientation toward connecting school with life and work, emphasizing spontaneity, initiative and self-activity of each pupil. Finally, in the work on trends in comparative pedagogy by Mitrović from 1981 and the textbook on the history of education by Žlebnik from 1983, we find a positive critical reception of Dewey, and the call of both authors to revalued his pedagogical ideas:

Dewey was a staunch opponent of Herbart's formalism and dressage; in various ways, he advocated for the respect of the child, his interests, motives and his creativity, for approaching the schools of life, the environment and the family. And it is in this direction that we should look for one element in his pedagogy that is acceptable to us as well. (Žlebnik, 1983: 218)

TRENDS IN DEWEY'S RECEPTION IN SERBIA AFTER THE YUGOSLAV BREAK-UP

Since the beginning of the 90s, Dewey's ideas have been promoted again. Dewey's ideas are represented in various university study programs in Serbia. In the electronic bibliographic database COBISS, in the Serbian language, there are 40 works dating from 1990, which contain the name of John Dewey in their title. At the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, one doctoral thesis was defended (Zorić, 2009) and more than 10 master's theses on the pragmatic conception of John Dewey's education and some of its aspects (we do not have data available for other universities). Many papers have been published in Serbian scientific-pedagogical journals and collections.

Zorić (2010a) gives a comprehensive and critical analysis of John Dewey's pragmatist conception, noting that pragmatist pedagogy is one of the most important directions in the development of twentieth-century pedagogy, that Dewey significantly influenced his contemporaries, educational reforms in many countries, theory and practice of his time. He

points out that the relevance and modernity of Dewey's conception is that it relies on faith in social progress, which calls for reality to be objectively and critically assessed, and shows concern for the development of active and creative thinking of children (Zorić, 2010a: 404). Bodroški Spairosu (2000) considers Dewey's conception of children's nature in comparison with Rousseau's conceptions, and observing both authors as representatives of pedocentric pedagogy. The significance of the ideas of these two authors is in the fact that they based their pedagogical conceptions on appropriate understandings of children's nature, from which all other pedagogical solutions (concept, goal, content and methods of education derive). Zorić also discussed the work of the John Dewey Laboratory School at the University of Chicago with the intention of "conducting an objective analysis of its work, through consideration of its starting points, functions, concepts and curriculum" (Zorić, 2010b: 646). Pointing out that the evaluations of the work of this school often contained "superficial and vulgarized interpretations and interpretations" (ibid.). The paper states that this school can be considered experimental and that its work is a constant search for improvement of the quality of the teaching process in the meaning of efforts to satisfy the interests of students and the requirements of subjects, connecting the overall and everyday experience of children with those in school, as well as insisting on contextual rather than fragmentary knowledge, forming the habit of criticism, research and reasoning. The work of Banđur and Milosavljević (2011) is on a similar research line. Investigating the history of action research in education, the authors state that this methodological paradigm has its roots in the works of John Dewey and Kurt Levin.

Selaković and Milutinović (2013) discuss the ideas about the art of John Dewey and his conception of aesthetic upbringing and education. Considering them in the context of museum pedagogy, the focus of the analysis is on Dewey's approach to art as a just and correct path to democracy. Following the indicated trajectory, the authors of this paper state that "changing perceptions, increasing interest and moral sensitivity encourage thought and action related to social role and responsibility". In this regard, it is concluded that "art education contributes to a better understanding of man and society and the development of democracy", which recognizes Dewey's contribution to the philosophy of education in the museum. The teaching of morality was also researched by Zorić (2015) and in the context of Dewey's conception of teaching religion.

In his work on the occasion of the centenary of the *Education and Democracy*, Tadić (2016) looks at Dewey's work in relation to critical pedagogy, and then to the policy of education in modern Serbia. Emancipation is a basic pedagogical concept according to the representatives of critical pedagogy, which is associated with: empowerment, autonomy, self-determination, equality, pluralism, humanism, solidarity, as well as transformation, democratization of education and society as a whole. He notes that the principles of liberal education and progressivism are proclaimed in education policy in Serbia, while neoliberal approach based on ideology of efficiency dominates in reforms, and that education is still not understood as a national priority. On the basis of Dewey's ideas and their elaboration in critical pedagogy, Tadić states that an individual is able to get rid of the immediate conditioning of the material, to understand social issues, to be open to participation in society, able to think critically, which allows him to improve his living conditions. These potentials are achievable when the learning process is based on supporting the basic human needs of individuals and including the individual experience of all participants in the educational process (Tadić, 2016: 268). Zorić, Domiter-Protner and Vujisić-Živković (2019) in a very comprehensive way analyzed the influence of John Dewey on conceptions of Pädagogik in Yugoslavia.

BRIEF DISCUSSION

Dewey's pedagogical ideas, in the form of translations of his original texts, were continuously present to the pedagogical public in Serbia in the period from 1920 to 1940. His ideas were important for the foundation of the concept of activity school. After World War II, in the period of political and economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR (1945–1948), Dewey was considered a *reactionist servant of imperialism*. These connotations often came out from soviet interpretation and were accepted among the Yugoslav pedagogical community. After the break-up with COMINFORM in 1948, Dewey's pragmatic pedagogy gained its legitimacy. *Democracy and education* were printed in large numbers and disseminated for free.

Dewey's reception in this area reflects all the complexity that arises in the encounter of the text with different ideological, social, individual and disciplinary lenses. In the interwar period (1920–1941), Dewey's conception served as a theoretical and practical foundation for the ideas of the activity school movement. In the mentioned period, conditions were created for the institutional reception of Dewey's pedagogical ideas, and the professional pedagogical public was acquainted with Dewey's work

through a partially rich scope of publications. However, in this period, although there was a proclamation of the ideas of the activity school in the field of education policy, there was no consistent strategic work on the implementation of these ideas.

During the period of domination of Soviet pedagogy in the former Yugoslavia, a “matrix” for reading Dewey was established, which for almost 30 years influenced the reception (or rather we should say the absence of reception) of Dewey’s ideas. Dewey’s philosophy of education was viewed as bourgeois and reactionary concept in pedagogy, and the reception was further complicated by the fact that Yugoslav self-management pedagogy was in search of its theoretical and methodological foundation. It was not until the mid-1980s that there were modest steps and suggestions as to the opening Yugoslav pedagogy according to Dewey’s pedagogical heritage. An additional obstruction in Dewey’s reception was also caused by the Cold War tensions. In the period after the break-up of Yugoslavia, Dewey’s ideas are represented in various university study programs in Serbia. Starting from the 90s we could see a positive trend in Dewey’s reception. Authors investigating various modalities of Dewey’s pedagogical legacy and trying to provide models that will in fact oppose current trends expressed in the term *pedagogization*. The revitalization of Dewey’s philosophy of education came through the efforts of researchers in the field of education to promote values of democracy, autonomy, critical inquiry, freedom and participation, values that are suppressed by neoliberal educational policy. Four key questions guided the experimental work in their “Laboratory school” at the beginning of the twentieth century:

1. How can the school approach home and the immediate environment?
2. How can contents from history, science and art have a positive and real impact on the child itself? (How can a child find them valuable?)
3. How can teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic be based on everyday experience, and occupations?
4. How to pay adequate attention to individual abilities and needs?

The answers to these questions developed gradually, and one of the insights that Boyd assesses as the core for the further development of Dewey’s theory internationally was reflected in the attitude that real upbringing is an individual reconstruction of social experience (Dewey, 1913). “An idea, like a child, must grow. She was stillborn in Dewey’s

school”, states Boyd (Boyd & Rawson, 1965: 20). These key questions remain an inexhaustible source for further reflection and research on the application and legacy of Dewey’s emancipatory ideals.

CONCLUSION

This chapter tackled the reception of Dewey’s work in different political eras of an other-than-Western context, namely, that of former Yugoslavia and Serbia. The chapter shows how different ideological positioning of the state politics in different eras, within a relatively short time line, informed the reading, interpretation and application of Dewey’s work. The lessons for an emancipatory classroom practice is the consideration of how ideological and political positioning of any country/state informs the reception of any ideas, whether they are deemed emancipatory or not.

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