

## *The Educational Theory of John Dewey and its Influence on Educational Policy and Practice in Macedonia*

### *La teoría de la educación de John Dewey y su influencia en la política educativa y la práctica en Macedonia*

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**Abstract:** The paper gives an overview of the impact that the educational theory of the American philosopher and educator John Dewey has had on education in Macedonia since the establishment of the educational system after the Second World War. Within this framework two periods are identified and analysed. One refers to forty-five years of socialist development, during which the traces of Dewey's presence and influence are recognized in the policy documents that shaped the education in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia as part of the former Yugoslav federation. The analysis of the second period covers the last twenty-five years of development of education in the socio-political context of a sovereign state, and is focused on reform initiatives for improving the teaching process introduced in the 90s of the past century. They are marked by the implementation of three major international projects that altered the traditional teaching organization and methodology in elementary and secondary public schools in Macedonia: *Active teaching-Interactive learning*, *Step by step* and *Reading and writing for critical thinking*. The theoretical foundations of these projects are explored, and common elements that can be traced back to Dewey's educational concepts and values are identified and discussed.

**Keywords:** John Dewey; Educational theory; Educational reform; Teaching methodology; Education in the Republic of Macedonia.

**Resumen:** El presente artículo ofrece una visión general del impacto que tuvo la teoría de la educación del filósofo y educador John Dewey sobre la educación en Macedonia, desde el establecimiento del sistema educativo, después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Dentro de este marco, se identifican y analizan dos periodos. Uno se refiere a cuarenta y cinco años de desarrollo socialista, durante el cual las huellas de la presencia y la influencia de Dewey se reconocen en los documentos de políticas que dieron forma a la educación en la República Socialista de Macedonia como parte de la antigua Federación Yugoslava. El análisis del segundo periodo comprende los últimos veinticinco años de desarrollo de la educación en el contexto socio-político de un estado soberano, y se centra en las iniciativas de reforma para mejorar el proceso de enseñanza introducido en los años 90 del siglo pasado. Ambos están marcados por la puesta en marcha de tres grandes proyectos internacionales que alteraron la organización y la metodología de enseñanza tradicional en las escuelas públicas de primaria y secundaria de Macedonia: *Active teaching-Interactive learning*, *Step by step* y *Reading and writing for critical thinking*. Sobre la

base del examen de sus fundamentos teóricos, elementos que señalan a los conceptos y los valores educativos de Dewey son identificados y discutidos.

**Palabras clave:** John Dewey; Teoría de la educación; Reforma educativa; Metodología de enseñanza; Educación en la República de Macedonia.

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## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of the XX century the American philosopher and educator John Dewey introduced to the world his educational theory that sparked a movement of international dimension. It was founded on the seven-year «adventure» of his Laboratory school at the University of Chicago, which was motivated to «discover in administration, selection of subject matter, methods of learning, teaching and discipline, how a school could become a cooperative community while developing in individuals their own capacities and identifying their own needs» (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936, pp. xv-xvi). In the following years his educational thought was developed and presented in his major works, *How we think* (Dewey, 1910) and *Democracy and education* (Dewey, 1966) and dramatically shaped the educational reform process in a variety of educational contexts.

A hundred years later, Dewey's educational concepts and approaches still generate interest, and since the 90s of the past century, have been affirmed by educators from different countries in the world who were seeking answers to questions raised by contemporary conditions (O'Hear, 1991; Röhrs & Lenhart, 1995; Ryan, 1995; Silcock, 1999; Sullivan, 1996; Tanner, 1997). That is why some of them point out that Dewey has been rediscovered in the 90s (Ryan, 1995). The recent inclination towards Dewey's thought is particularly apparent in many former socialist countries where for a long time his ideas had been considered to be anti-intellectual (Žlebniĳ, 1983, pp. 216-217). In the former Yugoslav federation the pedagogy of pragmatism, the name that was and is still used to designate the educational theory of Dewey, was not thoroughly analysed, which resulted in lack of knowledge about it and often wrong interpretation of many of his ideas. Even the leading pedagogues in the Former Yugoslavia admitted the vagueness and misunderstanding which in the past had led to non-critical application of Dewey's ideas in the teaching process (Potkonjak, Šimlesla, 1989/II, p. 232). Hence, even before the break up of the federation, the need for rediscovery and reconsideration of Dewey's thought was confirmed and it was given crucial importance: «all the leading educational theories in the world are to be characterized and positioned according to how closely they appear to align with Dewey's theory or depart from it» (Žlebniĳ, 1983, p. 218).

The Republic of Macedonia is certainly one of the ex-socialist and former Yugoslav republics, which has embraced the Western educational legacy since its independence in 1991 and has embedded it in the development of the theoretical foundations of the newly established educational system, and especially in the organization of the educational practice in the schools. However, the scientific ground for revival of Dewey's thought was poor. For a lengthy period, Macedonian educational science showed neither inclination for, nor interest in fundamental studies aimed at better understanding the essential characteristics of Dewey's philosophy. Except for a few of Dewey's works, translated into Serbo-Croatian in the 30s and 60s (Djui, 1934, 1966; Djui, 1935; Djui, 1936) and the translation of Clapared's *Pedagogy of Dewey* (1920), in the former Yugoslav countries the ideas of Dewey's educational philosophy were treated in few articles (Krnet, 1971, pp. 368-381; Mandić, 1971, pp. 480-492), book chapters (Mitrović, 1976, pp. 298-320) and in the short previews of the History of Pedagogy (Žlebnik, 1983, pp. 205-218; Zaninović, 1988, pp. 234-245). All these publications were written by researchers from other Yugoslav republics and carried the ideological burden of socialist pedagogy. In fact, the official Marxist-Leninist ideology in education, which had ruled since the formation of the Yugoslav Federation in the Macedonian schools, denounced Dewey's ideas as «bourgeois-reactionary» and therefore scholarly work upon it was not appropriate. The situation hasn't changed much even in independent Macedonia. Today there is only one book in Macedonian that sheds light on Dewey's educational theory (Миовска-Спасева, 2005) and not even one translated book of him into Macedonian. Hence, the Macedonian academic community still faces the challenge to clarify and present in a comprehensive way this important educational philosophy and to illuminate its historic and present relevance in order to contribute to its better understanding and evaluation in a global context.

Nevertheless, despite the limited research on Dewey's educational concepts, his presence in Macedonia can be traced, although more implicitly than clearly and loudly expressed, and more on a theoretical level as widespread values and terms, than on the level of their integration into school practices. The article will discuss the elements of Dewey's theory that were identified in the official educational policy documents of the former Socialist Republic of Macedonia, and those perceived in the theoretical foundations of the major reform projects for improving the teaching and learning in the schools of today's Republic of Macedonia.

## **2. Dewey's theory and the educational foundations of socialist Macedonia**

During the forty five-year period of socialist development, education in Macedonia bore the features of the overall education of the Yugoslav federation. The goals, principles and contents of education at all levels of schooling were

being built on the ideological foundations of Marxism, which was understood as «a scientific theory, a class liberation ideology and a revolutionary practice of the working class» (Damjanovski, 1985, p. 28). In striving to liberate the educational process from the recidivism of the «civil school» and the «bourgeois ideology», Macedonian pedagogical workers turned to Soviet pedagogy, which was perceived as the only science about socialist education (Angeloska-Galevska, 1998, p. 92). It was the source in which the education policy makers and researchers in Macedonia, as well as in the entire Yugoslav community, sought and found directions for the development of the educational theory, research and practice.

However, other theoretical currents can also be identified in the official documents that shaped the organization and teaching methodology of educational work in the Macedonian schools. For example, in the first normative, programmatic and didactic-methodological documents in which the fundamentals of the new concept of schools in Macedonia were laid, it is not difficult to identify elements of social pedagogy, the pedagogy of pragmatism, and the working school, as well as a didactic model of complex teaching (Kamberski, 1994, p. 66; Angelovski, 1985, p. 87)

It is interesting to note that in some of the official documents of the first Macedonian government issued in 1945 and referring to the need of reforming education, one can recognize some of the famous Dewey thoughts from *School and Society* (Dewey, 1949) expressed almost in the same way: «One of the first and most important tasks of the teachers in the new Macedonian school is to perform a complete rework, a complete reorganization, a true revolution of the old school», which ought to be transformed «from schooling institution into a part of the social life, from a bookish school into a social school» (Kamberski, 1994, p. 65). These words echo Dewey's striving for a «deep and complete transformation of the traditional school», which ought to become «an embryonic form of social life» and «a place where the child lives» (Djui, 1935, pp. 15-19).

Similar analogies can be found concerning the position of the student in the teaching process. Dewey's famous words about the need for a Copernican revolution where «the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve», and «the center about which they are organized» (*ibid.*, p. 20), can be found in an almost identical form in the program document of the Ministry of Education of the Presidium of ASNOM<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> ASNOM is the acronym for the Anti-Fascist Assembly of the People's Liberation of Macedonia (Antifaštičko Sobrańie na Narodnoto Oslobođuvanje na Makedonija), which represents the first supreme government authority in the People's Republic of Macedonia that was constituted on August 2, 1944.

Now it is supposed a new Copernicus will appear who ought to move the pedagogical center, so the student, who has so far been a planet, shall become a sun around which the school program and the weekly schedule of lessons, the order, hygiene, and everything else in the school will rotate. That new Copernicus for our school will be the new Macedonian teacher (Kamberski, 1994, p. 66).

The excerpts from this program document, which regulates the primary school teaching at the earliest stage of the postwar development of Macedonian education, undoubtedly show connection with Dewey's thought. Presumably, these ideas were not imported directly from the US, but the path of their impact went through the Soviet pedagogy which at that time determined the directions of development of the Yugoslav science of education. In fact, during the 20s and 30s the principles of progressive or «new» education strongly shaped the official school policy in Russia and most of the American and West European innovations in teaching and learning, such as Dalton Plan and the Project Method, became part of the official curricula (Anweiler, 1995, p. 125). The Russian Labour School, which main representatives admitted explicitly Dewey's contribution in giving them directives while standing on «virgin soil» (Блонский, 1919), was embedded in the first official documents that define the theoretical foundations of the elementary school curriculum in the post-war Macedonia (Привремен наставен план и програма, 1945; Раководство за учителите, 1945). They also witnessed the priority of the educational model of «complex» instead of subject teaching, which in the 20s experienced great affirmation in the Soviet schools. Hence, the newly established Macedonian education adopted the socialist tradition in progressive education which had embraced the American and European new education together with the Marxist programme of radical social transformation. In this sense, Dewey's ideas that are recognized in the policy documents which shaped the organization of the school work in the socialist Macedonia immediately after the Second World War, should be regarded within the broader framework of international education developments in the first decades of the XX century, which reveals diversity of the progressive education movement and the transnational links and influences between various positions to be found within it.

Dewey's ideas, even not so explicitly expressed as in the aforementioned documents, could be found in some of the official documents for reforming the Macedonian education during the 60s and early 70s as well as in the program documents from the late 70s where the quality of the teaching was reviewed and attempts for its improvement were made (Bezdanov, 1979). However, although Dewey's thoughts could be recognized in some written materials, his name was never mentioned and it was stressed that a decisive struggle is necessary against all the «[...] foreign phenomena that are unacceptable to Marxism and socialism, as well as against the influences of civil liberalism»

(ibid.). Probably because of this, the documents and recommendations that incorporated new approaches in the educational work, did not find direct realization in practice. Dewey's ideas could not be infused into the traditional model of school organization and teaching process, which was characterized by frontal work, the transfer of ready-made knowledge and its memorization, the authoritarianism of the teacher, and the receptiveness and passivity of the students (Kamberski, 2000, p. 68). In fact, up to the early 90's the curriculum implemented in the schools in Macedonia at all levels of education was closed, prescribed and imposed by the state and «sociocentric», which means that in the process of education the starting point and the center was not the child, but the interests of socialist society. This point of view is completely contrary to Dewey's; consequently, the educational practice in Macedonian schools was completely opposite to the one Dewey was fighting for.

### **3. Dewey's educational theory and contemporary reform activities in Macedonia for improving teaching and learning**

During the past 25 years the Republic of Macedonia, as many other countries in the region, has been engaged in serious reviews and transformations of its education system and practices. The reform changes were founded on the modern processes of democracy, decentralization, autonomy, pluralism, multiculturalism and globalization, as well as on the international documents of education and educational standards of knowledge and skills, established on the principles of lifelong learning (National programme for the development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015, 2006, pp. 13-19).

The socio-political climate in Macedonia after its independence was a favourable one for the revival of Dewey's ideas, which brought new reading of his philosophy of education and attempts to implement his ideas in the educational practice. The current relevance of Dewey's thought is a result of the correspondence of the basic characteristics of his philosophy with the values of modern living. His philosophy of pragmatism, which is inclined towards particularity (i.e. the facts and the actions - *doing*) corresponds to the present time of changes, pluralism and democracy, which requires initiative, openness, enterprise, as well as developing capabilities for flexibility, adaptability and problem solving. That is to say, Dewey's approach to education has become acceptable because it primarily gives emphasis to the reality we live in and the active role of the individual in it.

One of the key educational policy issues and the main pillars of the most important strategic documents on education development in the country,

the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015 (2006) is aimed towards innovating the instruction and more appropriate satisfaction of the needs for education of the youngsters and the adults, which means promotion of teaching and learning. The activities for improving the teaching process started almost a decade before the National Strategy. Actually, since the early 90s many international projects have been implemented in all levels of education mainly with the purpose of introducing new teaching methodology. They all started as experimental programs taking place in a number of schools, and the intensity and the pace of their spreading was determined by the achieved outcomes, and consequently, by the support they received from the national policy makers. Among the programs that have made a significant and longlasting contribution to the improvement of teaching methodology, especially at the elementary level, several are to be identified: *Active Teaching-Interactive Learning*, *Step by Step* and *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT)*<sup>2</sup>. Given the interest of the Ministry of Education and Science of Macedonia for their sustainability and institutionalisation, these programs actually reflect the new reform course of the state policy in education. They have significantly contributed to developing the educational policy and shaping the current educational practice in the schools, especially at the elementary level. They do not intervene in the curriculum, but give teachers tools for more efficient methodical shaping of classwork. In fact, these projects were entrusted the responsible task to change the traditional model of educational work and, together with the new curricula, to contribute to the intensification of democratic processes in education in Macedonia. Therefore, teachers of almost every elementary and secondary school in Macedonia have been trained in the teaching methods that they promoted, providing them with effective tools for their everyday work.

In line with examined literature an attempt to compare the theoretical foundations of the three projects was made in order to identify in them elements that explicitly or implicitly point to the educational theory of Dewey. Although each of them has its specific features, they share the same ultimate objective:

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<sup>2</sup> *Active Teaching-Interactive Learning* is the first project that brought new teaching methodology in elementary schools in Macedonia. Its beginnings are to be found in 1994/95 in class teaching (grades 1-4), and later in subject teaching (grades 5-8) (More detailed information in: Adam-eska, 1996; Adam-eska i dr., 1998; Seer, 1996). *Step by Step* program entered in the same period, but in preschool education. Since 1996/97 it expanded in class teaching and since 2000/01 in subject teaching as well (Burke Walsh, 1996a, 1996b). The implementation of the *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking* program started in 1997/98 as the only project in the country that simultaneously entered in all levels of education. Beginning from 2001 it was integrated with *Step by Step* and implemented in elementary schools throughout the country as *Step by Step to Critical Thinking* (A-kovska-Le{kovska & Miovska, 2000; Miovska-Spaseva & A-kovska-Le{kovska, 2010).

to develop lifelong learners, responsible citizens and active participants in the creation of a democratic society (Adam-eska, 1996; Burke Walsh, 1996a, 1996b; Temple, Meredith & Steele, 1997). This aim reveals the democratic spirit of the school that Dewey found essential for defining of its mission at the beginning of the XX century:

If we train our children to take orders, to do things simply because they are told to, and fail to give them confidence to act and think for themselves, we are putting an almost insurmountable obstacle in the way of overcoming the present defects of our system and of establishing the truth of democratic ideals...Children in school must be allowed freedom so that they will know what its use means when they become the controlling body, and they must be allowed to develop active qualities of initiative, independence, and resourcefulness, before the abuses and failures of democracy will disappear (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p. 304).

In the formulation of the aims of all three programs one can identify the need for fostering the values of democratic life and for developing abilities and skills that emerge from them. The goal of the *Step by step* program is «to educate the youngest members of society in a way that will encourage individualism, choice, initiative, critical thinking and respect of differences among people, so that the next generation of citizens could be better prepared for successful living in democracy» (Pasarella & Tveit, 1996, p. 3). Compatible with this ideal is the main goal of the *Reading and writing for critical thinking* project of preparing valuable citizens in an open society who must be cooperative, but also be capable of leadership; must be respectful of people from diverse backgrounds, but also possess individual initiative (Temple *et al*, 1997, p. 2).

The fundamental means for the realization of these goals is student-centered teaching and the active dimension of student's learning. This approach is evident in the definition of each of these projects: *Active teaching* «puts in the center the student personality and the learning processes» (Adam-eska i dr., 1998, p. 18); *Step by step* is «a program that introduces child-centered teaching methods» (Pasarella & Tveit, 1996, p. 3); *RWCT* promotes «student-centered learning and teaching strategies that can be implemented only in student-centered classrooms» (Temple *et al*, 1997, p. 2). Although the child-centered movement goes beyond Dewey's educational theory, and Dewey himself was alarmed by its excesses (Dewey, 1963, 1974), there is no doubt that he was one of its main representatives and furthermore, according to some authors, he is considered to be its founder (Darling, 1994).

The importance of Dewey's contribution to the theoretical conceptualisation of each of the projects is explicitly expressed in the written materials that refer to *Step by step* and *RWCT* program. Dewey's name appears beside Piaget, Vygotsky,

Ericson, Bruner, Montessori, Gardner and Kaminsky (Pasarella & Tveit, 1996, p. 4; Burke Walsh, 1996, p. 7; Temple *et al*, 1997; Steele, Meredith & Temple, 1998). The trace of Dewey is mostly hidden in *Active learning*, since this program is of English, and not American origin. Nevertheless, the comparative analysis of the philosophy of the three programs, point out that they are all closely associated with Dewey's educational theory, although it is necessary to bear in mind that it is a part of a heterogeneous educational legacy in which similar, still different theories are to be found unified around philosophical viewpoints of constructivism, critical pedagogy or experiential education. There is no doubt that Dewey has been for a lifetime engaged in elaborating a constructivist theory of knowledge and considered to be the philosophical founder of this approach. However, his ideas have been integrated and reworked into new educational theories which emerged during the XX century, thus forming a broad approach of constructivism in education. By the 1980s the research of Dewey and Vygotsky (1969) had blended with Piaget's work in developmental psychology (Piage, 1955), and by the end of the century Bruner (1965) developed the model of discovery learning, acknowledging his debt to Dewey and building it on Vygotsky's social constructivism. Each of them have added new perspectives to constructivist learning theory and practice which differences may be ultimately seen as differing degrees of emphasis on varying aspects of an identical problem: knowledge is constructed in the process of learning by doing and by bringing prior knowledge into a learning situation in which the the learners re-evaluate their understanding of it.

Since many authors planted their ideas on a common ground and largely overlaped in their theories, it is hard to clearly distinguish the Deweyan elements in the theoretical foundations of the three programs. Still, several concepts are easily recognizable as key principles of his educational theory, although not exclusively related to it.

### 3.1. *Learning as a process*

One of the major changes that are initiated with the realization of the three programs refers to the essence of learning. Memorizing and reproduction of the information are not the final goal, but the beginning stage in the process of learning: «Functional instead of factual knowledge» is emphasized in Active teaching (Adam~eska i dr., 1998, p. 20); «conceptual knowledge and practical experience» is demanded in RWCT (Temple *et al*, 1997, p. 15); learning is understood as «a continuous process of expansion and development» in Step by step (Burke Walsh, 1996a, III-1). In these requirements one can recognize Dewey's perception of learning as a process and not a product and of the learner

as an important agent in the learning process (Dewey, 1966, 1974b). It is the learner who creates or «constructs» knowledge from his own activities of exploration, discovery and reasoning.

### 3.2. *Learning through personal experience*

This is another feature of the projects which directly refers to Dewey's theory. In educational methodology of the program *Step by Step* in which an analysis of the contribution of several authors regarding its theoretical foundations is made, the name of Dewey and his notion that the personal experience is a vital component of the process of formation of concepts in children is in the first place (Burke-Walsh, 1996a, pp. 1-7). In *Active teaching*, learning through personal experience is one of the main characteristics of the organization and realization of teaching, because it is considered that the knowledge gained through personal experience is more lasting and more productive (Adam-eska i dr., 1998, p. 24). Closely related to this is that all three projects stress the need that the content, activities and experiences that are performed in school should be primarily relevant to the actual life of the child. Taking into account the concept of development in educational theory of Dewey, and accordingly, the vital importance of the current life experience of the child in the learning process (Dewey, 1949, 1966), it is quite clear that in terms of this element the contemporary models of educational work in elementary schools in Macedonia reflect the impact of Dewey's theory.

### 3.3. *Learning as inquiry and problem-solving*

In direct connection with the previous characteristic is the research dimension of learning. It is especially emphasized in *Active teaching* that stresses that students need to gain knowledge not only from the others, but as a result of independent inquiry and solving the problems that they formulate by themselves or by the group they belong to (Adam-eska i dr., 1998, p. 25). The research aspect of learning is the crucial element of the RWCT program too, and it is reflected in the definition of critical thinking that is accepted by the project authors: «To think critically means to be curious, and to use strategies of inquiry: framing questions and searching systematically for answers. Critical thinking works on many levels, not only settling for facts, but pursuing the causes for and the implications of facts...» (Temple *et al*, 1997, p. 15). Students' greater intellectual engagement is a demand in the *Step by step* program too. In the list of the roles that students need to have in the teaching process, the first two are: the role of *thinkers*, which enable them to reflect on their actions and connect the previous with the new knowledge, and the role of *problem solvers*, which

help them find alternative solutions for the difficulties they face and look at the problems as opportunities for discovery (Burke Walsh, 1996a, pp. 1-4). All three projects promote inquiry which is a key part of constructivist learning and problem solving approach in teaching and the fundamental method of thinking in the educational theory of Dewey. «The complete act of thought», as he named it (Dewey, 1910, p. 68), enables students to face the changing reality and the problem situations in social life. Furthermore, the cognitive operations that are performed by the students during the process of inquiry correspond to the stages of the individual critical examination of the students in Dewey school.

### 3.4. *Individual approach in teaching*

The child-centered approach, which is shared by the three educational models, put in front individualization as a basic principle in the organization of teaching and school life. It means respect for the uniqueness of each student and creating conditions for their optimal and overall development (Burke-Walsh, 1996b), while the teacher is engaged, through dynamic implementation of a variety of methods, to create conditions for each student to find their own way and pace of learning (Adam-eska, 1996, p. 22). Respecting students' individual needs, abilities and interests is one of the key features of Dewey's educational philosophy and of his laboratory school in Chicago. The realization of the individual treatment of students is closely connected with their active engagement in different activities, because «the moment children act they individualize themselves, they cease to be a mass and become the intensely distinctive beings...» (Dewey, 1949, p. 49).

### 3.5. *Social dimension of learning*

The previous characteristics stress the importance that the projects give to the development of students' cognitive abilities. However, they all agree that the preparation of citizens who will actively participate in the creation of a democratic society means not only enabling for critical thinking and facing with problem situations, but also developing social skills. This requirement is especially expressed in the *RCWT* project, whose theoretical foundations are equally informed by the learning theories of constructivism, metacognitive learning, critical thinking and education for social responsibilities (Temple *et al*, 1997). The latter theory argues that as a prerequisite for becoming valuable citizens, the students should develop: a capacity for empathy with others; a sense of efficacy, a feeling that participation in the affairs of the community (the classroom, the town, the nation) is worthwhile; a sense of the meaning of one's life in relation to the historical moment; a sense of integrity between one's beliefs and one's actions

(*ibid.*, p. 22). The same ideas although formulated in a different way, are to be found in the Methodology of the *Step by step* program, which is based on four key concepts: *care* for self, for the others and the environment; *communication* as an important instrument for overcoming misunderstandings and community building; *connection*, which refers not only to new information and previous knowledge, but to the connections between different people and creatures that live on earth; *community*, which develops the sense of belonging and the need to be useful for the others (Burke Walsh, 1996b, pp. 1-4).

Stressing the necessity for development of these values, all three projects put a great attention to cooperative learning, the role of the individuals during group work and the relationship between students as well as the students and the teacher. Students are stimulated to work in pairs and in groups of different size and structure. They are engaged in debates, discussions and problem solving situations during which they learn to build their own opinion and to respect other's, to help each other and to develop tolerance and patience to listen to the others. These attitudinal and behavioral components that constitute a sense of social responsibility point out at Dewey's interpretation of democracy as «a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience» (Dewey, 1966, p. 64) and to the social and moral ideal of education in democratic community: «Education should create an interest in all persons in furthering the general good, so that they will find their own happiness realized in what they can do to improve the conditions of others» (Eames, 1977, p. 201). By stimulating the social dimension of learning, schools create individuals who will be aware of the role and responsibility they have regarding the community they live in.

### 3.6. *Integrated curriculum*

«Integrated learning» (Seely, 1996, p. 22) and «integrated thematic planning and realization of the activities» (Adam-eska, 1996, p. 21) is an approach that all three projects promote instead of traditional class organization with different unrelated subjects and prescribed time limitation of classes. Different subject areas are linked, and the content and the activities are realized within a flexible daily schedule that takes in consideration students' interests and personal choice. This approach, which is especially accepted in class teaching, reflects to a great extent Dewey's ideas of unity of life («All studies arise from aspects of the one earth and the one life lived upon it») (Dewey, 1949, p. 106) and the natural unity of the studies («When the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationship to this common world, his studies are naturally unified») (*ibid.*, p. 107). Actually, the integrative curriculum is in close association with the holistic approach that Dewey advocates and his request to relate school to life.

### 3.7. *Teachers' teamwork*

The integrative approach in teaching inevitably implies continuous and intensive cooperation between teachers, which is realized as joint planning, realization and evaluation of activities. In all three models of educational work, teamwork of teachers and their collaboration with the other participants in school life, is one of the most important conditions for successful and efficient teaching. It is also emphasized that its realization does not deny the creativity and independence of teachers, but on the contrary, teamwork is treated as a synthesis of individual and collective ideas, as a conception that is accepted globally, and is realized individually and relatively independently (Adam-eska, 1996, p. 23). The continuous sharing of ideas and experiences by teachers was one of the key factors of the successful work of the Dewey school in Chicago. Its teachers were specialists in certain areas, but their different profile was in function of achieving unity of objectives and methods. Therefore, according to Dewey, they are inevitably directed one towards the other in all stages of the educational process.

### 3.8. *The teacher as a mediator*

New teacher's role was one of the major educational changes that were introduced by the aforementioned projects. The teacher was not longer seen as a dominant person in the classroom who delivers the planned subject content by whole class teaching, by providing conditions for order and discipline while lecturing and by hierarchical communication with the students. All three projects emphasize that student-centered learning needs a teacher who creates conditions for an open and responsible interaction; enables students' intellectual autonomy; encourages their initiative, critical thinking, inquiry and independent learning; respects their individual needs and capacities; makes conditions for students to develop their own attitudes; applies different strategies for students' assessment and self-assessment; represents a model for their behavior (Адамческа и др., 1998, p. 23; Ачковска, Миовска, 2000, p. 157; Passarella & Tveit, 1996, p. 8). All these features are in line with Dewey's ideas that the teacher has a complex and responsible task to be «an intelligent medium of action» (Dewey, 1974a, p. 205), which implies that he needs to know his students well and to direct their experience development in accordance with their individual intellectual and character traits.

## 4. Conclusion

Dewey's educational theory was never largely and deeply integrated into the educational policy and school practices in Macedonia. Still, two periods

were identified in which the elements of his philosophy have been traced and documented: at the beginning of the establishment of the national system of education in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia after the Second World War, and at the early stage of development of the independent Republic of Macedonia in the 90s, when the reform of teaching and learning became one of the major priorities of the national educational policy. The analysis of the theoretical foundations of the international projects that brought methodological innovation in the education in independent Macedonia demonstrated that many of Dewey's concepts were infused into the modern reform attempts for teaching improvement. The identified elements show the directions in which Macedonian education is moving regarding teaching and learning. However, the reform process is neither a smooth, nor a fast one. The implementation of the new teaching methodology in Macedonian education today is a top-down reform and the governmental aspirations and reform strategies do not always meet the school needs and the conditions for teaching and learning that are often characterized by lack of educational space, large number of students in class groups, unavailability of reference literature, lack of teaching resources and educational technology for implementing teaching innovations. As a result of these organizational and financial concerns, many teachers demonstrate strong resistance to any reform in Macedonian education. On the other hand, the new classroom organization sometimes seems to bring only superficial changes, such as simply implementing the new teaching strategies without understanding the theory and the basic principles behind. Therefore, it is necessary to have a wider, Deweyan look at the educational process in which teaching methodology will be regarded in correlation with the curriculum, school discipline, the role of the teacher, the role of the school. Any structural change of the education system must take into account the need of an integral approach to the reforms in education, where the interventions in different segments will be interrelated and coordinated.

The policy documents that programmed the educational work in the post-war Macedonian schools and contemporary reform tendencies in the field of teaching methodology do not refer exclusively to Dewey. They also reflect the interrelated impact of many intellectual roots from the past, as well as of the theories of many European and American educators in the course of the XX century which share a large number of underlying assumptions. However, there is no doubt that Dewey's book has remained relevant and is still open for Macedonian educators and, if read carefully and comprehensively, it offers «evergreen» lessons on how to improve the contemporary practices in schools. In fact, the seeds of his work, spread at the dawn of the past century, continue to bear fruit and earn respect.

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