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**A Reflection of the Teacher's Responsibility for Democracy, From the
Perspective of John Dewey**
Reflexe odpovědnosti učitele za demokracii z pohledu Johna Deweyho

Bakalářská práce

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Declaration of Authenticity

I declare that all material presented in this paper is my own work or fully and specifically acknowledged wherever adapted from other sources.

I understand that if at any time it is shown that we have significantly misrepresented material presented here, any degree or credits awarded to us on the basis of that material may be revoked.

I declare that all statements and information contained herein are true, correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

In Prague, 29th of June

Darja Jeništová

Annotation

This thesis is concerned with Dewey and his ideas about education and society, specifically, his thoughts about the connection between education and society. According to Dewey, a teacher is the most important figure in any democratic society. Therefore, this study focuses on teachers and schools. The question I want to answer is: what does school and teacher mean for society. In the scientific portion of this thesis, I seek to answer the question: Are Dewey's ideas compatible, or incompatible with the ideas of Czech teachers. Twelve Czech teachers were interviewed. And the answers were compared with those of Dewey (as per my understanding of his papers).

Anotace

Tato práce se zabývá názory Johna Deweyho na vzdělávání, společnost a především jeho spojením vzdělání a společnosti. Podle Deweyho, je učitel důležitou osobou pro každou demokratickou společnost. Proto se tato práce zabývá učiteli a školami. Chtěla bych odpovědět na otázku: Co učitel a škola znamená pro společnost. V praktické části hledám odpověď na otázku, zda jsou názory českých učitelů kompatibilní s názory Johna Deweyho. Výzkumu se zúčastnilo dvanáct učitelů. Jejich odpovědi jsem srovnala s odpověďmi Deweyho (tak jak jeho názorům rozumím v této práci).

Key words

Dewey, education, teacher, experience, reality, school

Klíčová slova

Dewey, vzdělávání, učitel, zkušenost, realita, škola

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Introduction

Czech society is in a period of rapid change in its opinion on education, democracy and responsibility. The whole society feels the need of change in our educational system. Part of this new phenomenon is related with education, democracy and equal opportunity. We can see many examples of it. A lot of public debate is focused on this topic; for example, in 2015 this was the main topic of the forum 2000 Democracy and Education; the Vaclav Havel Library held a debate focused on inequality of education: Myth or reality in 2017? These challenges are understood as public and the whole society feels responsibility for it. This responsibility motivated the founding of many new private schools. Schools are facing problems with the integration of foreigners and also of children with special needs.

Our world is changing and education has to reflect it. I believe that there are similarities with the current global and multicultural world and Dewey's world. Singule, a Czech educationalist in the 20th century, who occupied pragmatism,¹ describes Dewey's era as era of changes. ² Industrialization was changing the labor market as well as other parts of society. High rates of immigration brought many people from greatly different cultures into Dewey's America. For these and other reasons, I believe that it is again highly important to study how this challenge was solved in history. John Dewey was one of many specialists who had to face many problems similar to those we need to solve today. We can find useful inspirations in his ideas. These are reasons why this essay considers Dewey's point of view.

The purpose of this essay is to consider Dewey's attitude to the relationship of democracy and education. This essay has two parts: the first describes Dewey's ideas about school, education and democracy, and the second is practical: it compares his ideas with the opinions Czech teachers. I want to compare, to see if there are any similarities, if there is any space for evolution, and if the teachers reflect upon these crucial topics of education.

¹ *Databaze knih* [online]. Daniel Fiala. [cit. 2017-02-05]. Available at: <http://www.databazeknih.cz/zivotopis/frantisek-singule-60502>.

² SINGULE, František (ed.). *Americká pragmatická pedagogika: John Dewey a jeho následovníci. (American pragmatic pedagogy: John Dewey and his followers)*. 1st ed. Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1990. pp 14.

1 A short biography

John Dewey was born in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont. At that time it was culturally diverse city - almost half of citizens were immigrants.³ He attended the University of Vermont, was a secondary school teacher, received his Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University. He moved to Chicago University in 1894 and turned his attention to education.⁴ As the Chair of the department of philosophy, he helped establish a separate department of pedagogy at Chicago University. He founded the University Laboratory School in 1896, which initially included 16 pupils and two teachers.⁵

Dewey was a strong advocate of professional teachers' unions. He helped organize the Teachers League of New York and encouraged its alignment with the American Federation of Labor. Educational leaders throughout the world sought his advice. He was a frequent speaker at the meetings of educational societies and he traveled widely, visiting schools in the Soviet Union, Turkey, South Africa, Mexico, Japan, and China. He died at his home in New York City on June 1, 1952.⁶

His impact on education was enormous. Pedagogical practice all over the United States was shaken and modified his ideas. He had some direct influence, for a while, in countries like India, South Africa, and Russia. In Japan, after World War II, under the occupation by General MacArthur, it was the native disciples of Dewey who helped to introduce modern democratic ideas into Japanese higher education. When Communism came to power in China, it paid Dewey a compliment for having dominated and controlled Chinese education for thirty years, so that now it was time to expunge the notions of "that great fraud and deceiver" (p. 204). Indeed, there were several decades when the only products of American culture exported overseas that

³ I believe that this cultural diversity could be important for his philosophical thoughts.

⁴ DYKHUIZEN, George. John Dewey: The Vermont Years. In: *Journal of the History of Ideas*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959, 20(4), pp. 515.

⁵ FERNSTEIN, Matthew. ZALTA, Edward N. (ed.). "Dewey's Political Philosophy", In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. The Standforf Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005. [cit. 2017-05-26]. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/dewey-political/>.

⁶ HICKMAN, A. Larry. Dewey, John (1859-1952). In: *Philosophy of education: an encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Pub., c1996. pp. 146.

would be recognized almost anywhere in the world were Charlie Chaplin, Wrigley's Spearmint Chewing Gum, and John Dewey.⁷

⁷ FITCH E. Robert. Review: George Dykuizen's "The Life and Mind of John Dewey". In: *The Journal of Religion*. University of Chicago Press. 55(2), 1975. pp. 247.

2 The Reality and an experience

Before everything else, I believe that it is crucial to understand Dewey's concept of reality, experience and life. Thanks to this comprehension we will acquire better and deeper insight into Dewey's educational and political conviction. For Dewey, it is "the very nature of life to strive to continue in being. Since this continuance can be secured only by constant renewals, life is a self-renewing process. What nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life."⁸

Tim Madigan claims that:

Dewey argued that all knowledge is derived from experience, and that 'ideas must be referred to their consequences' – it is important to distinguish between theories and their applications. The name of the movement with which he is identified, Pragmatism, comes from the Greek word meaning 'action'. In this practical spirit, for Dewey, philosophy's main role is to assimilate the impact of science on human life. Dewey was therefore one of the first philosophers to take Darwin seriously.⁹

Dewey's view of reality is based on Darwin's evolutionary theory. This description is also confirmed by Ostdiek, an American professor who has worked at the Department of Philosophy and History of Science at the Charles University in Prague, who said that Dewey's idea of reality "could be fairly described as a mature depiction of Darwin's Ontology".¹⁰

Reality (living reality, including all minding reality), according to Dewey, is not something rigid, but is in constant modification – it is an evolution. There is no essence of reality, because reality is in the process of change or better reality is the process of changes. Because of this, we need to be regularly in touch with this ongoing change of reality. Human being can be in contact with their surroundings or reality only through their

⁸ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-05-25]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_I#Summary.

⁹ MADIGAN, J. Timothy. Dewey and Darwin. In: *Philosophy Now: A magazine of ideas* [online]. 2009, 26(1), 2. [cit. 2017-05-17]. Available at: https://philosophynow.org/issues/71/Dewey_and_Darwin.

¹⁰ OSTDIEK, Gerald. *Cast in Plastic: Semiotic Plasticity and the Pragmatic Reading of Darwin* [online]. Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010 [cit. 2017-05-20]. Available at: http://www.academia.edu/555821/Cast_in_Plastic_Semiotic_Plasticity_and_the_Pragmatic_Reading_of_Darwin.

experience. And because reality is in the process of change, every experience and all knowledge is interwoven with every moment.

As I have mentioned, for Dewey,, experience is the only method of getting to know reality; therefore, experience is the fundamental part of Dewey's philosophy and pedagogy, moreover, experience occurs continuously.¹¹ He also claimed that experience is necessary for life: solving problems and conflicts makes us alive. It can be enjoyable but also painful.¹² For Dewey:

The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined. On the active hand, experience is trying—a meaning which is made explicit in the connected term experiment. On the passive, it is undergoing. When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness or value of the experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience.¹³

In other words, experience has two parts - the first part is activity and the second is observation. Human being does something and then he or she watches what happens - how does environment react. It is fundamentally important to realize connection between my doing and changes in the world around. If I am unable to see this relation, I will not be able to think at all. I will always try some reaction or action toward world without any understanding to the goal or the possible results. I will not be responsible for my acts, because I cannot understand what it can have meant or caused. At first I need to understand that my actions have some impact, that there is a relation between my act and a reaction of the environment. Only then can the active part change into experimenting or testing. Thanks to the testing, we can recognize more and more related conditions and related results, and we can understand our next act more deeply - we will be able to know what conditions we need, what actions we can successfully take, and what we can expect in result. So there are two parts: at first my act (the active part) and then my observation of

¹¹ DEWEY, John. *Art as experience*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1980. pp. 35.

¹² DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education*. [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-05-25]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_XI#The_Nature_of_Experience.

¹³ Ibid.

the reaction of the environment which are the results of my act (the passive part). Because of this there is no experience without thinking, without problem solving - we need to think to see the connection between an act and a reaction of an environment.

With this in mind, we understand that the aim of thinking is not knowledge; thinking is but a tool, it has no aim. But it is this tool that makes people able to adapt to change, and understand the changes that are inevitable in the world, not the least of which include changes in society.¹⁴

¹⁴ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-05-25]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_XII#Summary.

3 Influential educational movements in the 19th and 20th century

Singule describes Dewey's era as an era of changes. People were moving from country to cities, industrialization changed labor market and families that did not have so much influence anymore. There was high percentage of immigrants during Dewey's life. There were many people from very different cultures. American society needed to integrate them.¹⁵ All these problems had to be solved. There were two main, and according to Dewey extreme, educational systems used in United States - Herbartism and Romanticism. Dewey had to face them and adopted a stance on both.

3.1 Herbartism

For Herbart, there are:

Five formal steps in teaching: (1) preparation, a process of relating new material to be learned to relevant past ideas or memories in order to give the pupil a vital interest in the topic under consideration; (2) presentation, presenting new material by means of concrete objects or actual experience; (3) association, thorough assimilation of the new idea through comparison with former ideas and consideration of their similarities and differences in order to implant the new idea in the mind; (4) generalization, a procedure especially important to the instruction of adolescents and designed to develop the mind beyond the level of perception and the concrete; and (5) application, using acquired knowledge not in a purely utilitarian way, but so that every learned idea becomes a part of the functional mind and an aid to a clear, vital interpretation of life. This step is presumed possible only if the student immediately applies the new idea, making it his own.¹⁶

We can see that most of his "steps" are focused on teacher's activity. Only the fifth step demands child's activity and it is for talented children only.

Hrušková and Somr also defined Herbartism as an educational system that places the greatest importance on teachers, educational process and strict discipline.¹⁷ His idea spread

¹⁵ SINGULE, František (ed.). *Americká pragmatická pedagogika: John Dewey a jeho následovníci. (American pragmatic pedagogy: John Dewey and his followers)*. 1st ed. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1990. pp. 14.

¹⁶ Johann Friedrich Herbart. In: *Encyclopaedia britannica* [online]. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1994. last modified on 28.6.2014[cit. 2017-02-15]. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johann-Friedrich-Herbart>.

¹⁷ SOMR Miroslav, HRUŠKOVÁ Lenka. *Herbart's Philosophy of Pedagogy and Educational Teaching (Herbartowska filozofia pedagogiki i kształcenia)*. Studia Edukacyjne nr 33, Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2014. pp. 415.

to the United States thanks to Illinois State Normal University. Specially thanks to Ch. DeGarmo, Ch. McMurry, F. McMurry.¹⁸

These definitions show that this educational system is for children both strict and passive. Dewey defines it as “passive absorption of academic and theoretic material”.¹⁹ According to Dewey is this pedagogical system not focused on children or teachers but on curricula. Not teachers, not even children are able to influence curriculum and both are mostly passive. This system can be changed (and very often was) into simple handing-over of disconnected data file.

Dewey rejected the definition of education as such passive preparation for life; he explicitly argued that, for him: “education is a process of living and not a preparation for future life.”²⁰

3.2 Romanticism

The other influential pedagogical system of Dewey’s time was “romantic teaching” – also well known as “negative education,” and Jean Jacques Rousseau is one of its most significant representatives. He put his ideas into a book called *Emile, or On Education*. His educational system is based on the idea of natural goodness. This goodness is, according to Rousseau, damaged by society, and by its system and education. So he turned the whole system of education from an emphasis on the teacher and the curriculum to the child. As we have already mentioned – The Child, for Rousseau, was perfect and clear without any influence of society.²¹ Rousseau understood society and it’s relations as negative and he wanted to protect “clear and perfect” children from this inferior and unnatural influence. “His essential idea is that education should be carried out, so far as possible, in harmony with the development of the child's natural capacities by a process of apparently

¹⁸ HAROLD B. Dunkel. Herbartism Comes to America: Part I. In: *History of Education Quarterly*. 9(2). pp. 202. [cit. 2017-03-21]. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/367318>.

¹⁹ DEWEY, John. *How we think*. Boston, New York, Chicago: D.C.HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS, 1910. pp. 215.

²⁰ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

²¹ BERTRAM, Christopher. Jean Jacques Rousseau, In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005. [cit. 2017-02-26] Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/dewey-political/>.

autonomous discovery”²² The child should be literally left to develop on her own, according to his/hers natural needs and interests. He/she should be protected from domination, subordination and manipulation of society and teacher.²³

Dewey was critical to this view of society and education. He did not understand society as something entirely and axiomatically negative. He defines both society and life as process – ongoing, always changing, but in a radical continuity. Yet too: “Since this continuance can be secured only by constant renewals, life is a self-renewing process.”²⁴ Therefor also, his definition of child was neither positive nor negative: children are also in process, and cannot be “clean and perfect”.

The role of the teacher was the next issue that Dewey found problematic in this educational system:

Dewey argued that the teacher must play an active role in the educational process. The task of the teacher is to guide the child in his or her own quest, to direct the energies of the child away from what is debilitating or destructive, to focus the attention of the child on important themes and problems, and to help her or him develop the tools needed to play a full and productive role in society.²⁵

3.3 Dewey’s perspective

We researched two extreme pedagogical systems, which were powerful and actual during Dewey’s life and he had to form a definite opinion for them. He mostly criticized that neither of them demand activity on the part of teacher; in the first, Herbarium, responsibility and activity re both transferred from the children and teachers to the curriculum. In the second, romantic education, responsibility and activity are transferred from the teacher to the children. Dewey claimed: “every teacher should realize the dignity

²² BERTRAM, Christopher. Jean Jacques Rousseau, In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005. [cit. 2017-02-26] Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/dewey-political/>.

²³ BERTRAM, Christopher. Jean Jacques Rousseau, In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005. [cit. 2017-02-26] Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/dewey-political/>.

²⁴ DEWEY, John. *The School and Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1915. pp. 9.

²⁵ HICKMAN, A. Larry. Dewey, John (1859-1952). In: *Philosophy of education: an encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Pub., c1996. pp 147.

of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth.”²⁶ As argued in the *Philosophy of Education: an Encyclopedia*, Dewey does not accept the role of the teacher as a passive part of education. The teacher should direct the child’s mind towards important themes and problems (which should define the curriculum – as opposed to the notion of the curriculum as ‘fixed and final’ set of facts).²⁷ Therefore the teacher has a vital position. A teacher is the one who shows the problem, but then she or he has to allow the child the space to figure out a solution to the problem on her own. The teacher is the one who will be and is responsible for society – for the solutions found for social problems, and how children learn to shape it and them. In this:

Education is thus a training of character and a training for citizenship. Character, for Dewey, is built up as the individual comes to understand and appreciate the consequences of his or her conduct and the relationships that such conduct involves. The school, as a miniature community, serves as a laboratory in which relations and connections can be explored. Good citizenship is one of the expressions of character. Because of his belief that education develops the capacities of the student to share effectively in social life, Dewey argued that all meaningful education is moral education.²⁸

Dewey saw a connection between life and education: he defined life and education as “the very nature of life to strive to continue in being. Since this continuance can be secured only constant renewals, life is a self-renewing process. What nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life.”^{29 30} Dewey actually said that living being could be recognized by two characteristics. The first is physical restoration – eating, sleeping – and the second is social restoration, which means education. Education is an inseparable component of life.

²⁶ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

²⁷ HICKMAN, A. Larry. Dewey, John (1859-1952). In: *Philosophy of education: an encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Pub., c1996. pp 147.

²⁸ Ibid.pp. 152.

²⁹ SINGULE, František (ed.). *Americká pragmatická pedagogika: John Dewey a jeho následovníci. (American pragmatic pedagogy: John Dewey and his followers)*. 1st ed. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1990. pp 9.

³⁰ From this definition it is evident why Dewey could not agree with Herbart’s idea about education as an unimportant part of life. Education is not only preparation for life, it is inseparable part of it.

John Dewey defines the educational process as the “participation of the indivisible in the social consciousness of the race.”³¹ From this we can see that education has two portions for him, the first is social and the second is individual. These two portions are in close relation.

He even claims “all reforms which rest simply upon the enactment of law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile.”³² He understands education as a powerful institution, which can shape society. This is why the teacher has a crucial role, not only for education but also for the whole of society. Another example of his connection of school and society can be found in “My Pedagogic Creed”, where Dewey defines the school as “primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be the most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and use his own powers for social ends.”³³ Dewey changed the relationship between society and school. He did not underestimate the importance of the curriculum and the teacher, and at the same time he argued that one of the purposes of education is to teach children to participate in society.³⁴ Even though Dewey lived in a period of changes and extreme educational systems, he tried to balance them.

³¹ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ HICKMAN, A. Larry. Dewey, John (1859-1952). In: *Philosophy of education: an encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Pub., 1996. pp. 150.

4 School

We have already mentioned the changes in society during Dewey's life. Families did not have as much influence on children as in previous generations, the United States faced enormous immigration, and not only from abroad. Due to industrialization, people were moving from the countryside to the city in massive numbers. The educational system needed to respond to these circumstances. For Dewey, school partly replaces the family role in society.³⁵ Student should become "an inheritor of the funded capital of civilization."³⁶ And through this inheritance, children are supposed to become members of a bigger family - society. And we have already mentioned, the only society that could function in this way, the only society worthy of the name or acceptable to Dewey, is a democratic one.

Dewey divided education into two parts, psychological and social, both of which are crucial. For the social part, school substitutes for family, but also society. School, for Dewey, "should simplify existing social life; should reduce it, as it were, to an embryonic form."³⁷³⁸ The world is overly complicated for children, who are not able to manage it without preparation. School would simplify the world (social life included). It will extend the family's social life to the school, and the school will extend this social life in normative, healthy, and broad way. Children need to be and to see a connection between his/her life, family and social relations, and their various fields of study: therefor school is real life. On the other hand, school had to tend to the need of children too. Children need to

³⁵ SINGULE, František (ed.). *Americká pragmatická pedagogika: John Dewey a jeho následovníci. (American pragmatic pedagogy: John Dewey and his followers)*. 1st ed. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1990, pp 9.

³⁶ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Dewey had very demonstrative example of this idea, in his book *Democracy and education* page 295: "Geography and history are the two great school resources for bringing about the enlargement of the significance of a direct personal experience. The active occupations described in the previous chapter reach out in space and time with respect to both nature and man. Unless they are taught for external reasons or as mere modes of skill their chief educational value is that they provide the most direct and interesting roads out into the larger world of meanings stated in history and geography. While history makes human implications explicit and geography natural connections, these subjects are two phases of the same living whole, since the life of men in association goes on in nature, not as an accidental setting, but as the material and medium of development."

behave according to their interests.³⁹ Education creates ongoing action and work that has social goals. School is a form of social group life - and it needs to be connected to experiences from other social groups. Education expands skills for participation in social life.⁴⁰ This should create a real life of community and the real life of a child. Because the teacher is not understood as untouchable, reserved authority – he/she became a member for community.

The importance of community life in school is manifest; it even forms the very aims of education, which are 1. natural evolution of understanding, 2. social skills 3. intelligence supported dialog. Education creates ongoing action and work with has social goals. School is form of social group life – which need to be connected to experiences from other social groups. Education expands skills for participation in social life.⁴¹ School should create new social groups that could help children to become aware of people from different part of society.

Dewey was concerned with equal opportunities for the whole of society. The very aims of education were based of “a conception of democratic citizenship in which every person has the opportunity to reach her potential and develop varied interests.”⁴² This fact Dewey clearly explained in his speech to parents:

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy. All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to its future self. Here individualism and socialism are at one. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be the to itself.⁴³

³⁹ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

⁴⁰ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916 [cit. 2017-05-25]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_XXII#Summary

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² MINTZ, Avi I. Dewey on Educational Aims. In: *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2016. pp. 5.

⁴³ DEWEY, John. *School and society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1915, pp. 3.

From this declaration his view is apparent - equal opportunity is crucial for democratic society, there is no possibility to avoid this consequence according to him. He was not willing to accept anything less demanding, because opportunity is the very foundation of democracy.

5 Democracy

For John Dewey, democracy is firmly connected with education. In many of his papers we can see how important democracy and social active society are for him. Weber describes Dewey's letters to James where Dewey motivates “him to expand the democratic ideals into his philosophy.”⁴⁴ There is no doubt about his love for democracy, which he clearly saw as the best – the most workable government system.

According to Singule, Dewey defines education as a social process and therefore school is, for him, the primary social institution.⁴⁵ Singule also claims that Dewey's pedagogy and American democratic ideals were connected from the very beginning of his influence on pedagogy. It was connected with the application of these ideas into social and political life.⁴⁶

More, his obsession with democracy is described in the *Philosophy of education: an encyclopedia*, in several circumstances in Dewey's life. For example, he:

[...] rejected the two-track system of education proposed by some educators during the period immediately prior to World War I. Their suggestion was that children should be tested at an early age and then routed on the basis of aptitude into either "vocational" or "academic" schools. Dewey replied that such system would undermine democracy by sanctioning the separation of "bookish" from "mechanical" education and creating a social chasm across which communication would be difficult.⁴⁷

As we can see, he finds communication and social equality as inevitable if one is to build the foundations of democratic society.

According to Mintz “Social interaction is necessary but not sufficient for a flourishing democracy – its citizens must additionally be inclined to observe, investigate, and inquire; in short, they must desire throughout their experiences and their lives to grow,

⁴⁴ WEBER, Eric Thomas. James, Dewey, and democracy; *William James Studies*; Dec 2009, pp 91.

⁴⁵ SINGULE, František (ed.). *Americká pragmatická pedagogika: John Dewey a jeho následovníci. (American pragmatic pedagogy: John Dewey and his followers)*. 1st ed. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1990, pp 60.

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp 9.

⁴⁷ HICKMAN, A. Larry. Dewey, John (1859-1952). In: *Philosophy of education: an encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Pub., c1996, pp. 148.

to continue their education.”⁴⁸ Mintz says that Dewey saw social interaction as crucial for a democratic shape of society; this corresponds with Hickman's point of view.

We have already mentioned the importance of democracy, for Dewey, and its connection with education. He defined democratic society as:

Human society represents a more perfect organism. The whole lives truly in every member, and there is no longer the appearance of physical aggregation, or continuity. The organism manifests itself as what it truly is an ideal or spiritual life, a unity of will. If then, society and the individual are really organic to each other, then the individual is society concentrated. He is not merely its image or mirror. He is the localized manifestation of its life. And if, as actually happens, society be not yet possessed of one will, but partially is one and partially has a number of fragmentary and warring wills, it yet follows that so far as society has a common purpose and spirit, so far each individual is not representative of a certain proportionate share of the sum total of will, but is its vital embodiment.⁴⁹

Dewey balanced individual will and “the will of society”. Human being represents society and acts because society cannot act on its own. In other words society is not alive without acting that is why it needs human on the other hand human creates the society.

⁴⁸ MINTZ, Avi I. Dewey on Educational Aims. In: *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2016. pp. 2.

⁴⁹ DEWEY, John. The Ethics of Democracy. In: *BOYDSTON, Joann. The Early Works, 1882-1898*, 5. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975, pp. 237.

Conclusion

Education was crucial for Dewey. He apprehended education as a powerful method of social progress and reform.⁵⁰ Therefore, the role of teacher is essential. Every teacher represents the whole of society and all of its values. He or she introduces these values to the next generation. And this generation is brought into society by the teacher - as the teacher brings society into the classroom. Hence the teacher's role is important for the whole of society, according to Dewey.

Dewey's attitudes are clear, and my intention in this work has been to show his creed, his reasoning for his creed, and the relevance thereof. I think his ideas can be used only with deeper understanding, otherwise they will convert into something superficial - a dysfunctional shell within the previous content.

Czech society is facing problems similar to those of Dewey. We can use his ideas and draw inspiration from him in solving our problems today. We have an opportunity to change Czech society from below. We can use the surest instrument that we have: education. It is undeniable that many people are working on it, but we cannot be content with only a few really excellent schools. We want to change every school so every child will have access to high-quality education. Not because it would be nice to do so, or even because it is the morally right thing to do, but because it is a crucial pillar of democracy, without which democracy can neither thrive nor survive.

⁵⁰ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

Scientific portion

1 A research target

The target of this dissertation is to answer the fundamental question: Does there exist incompatibility or compatibility between the ideas of Czech teachers and those of Dewey?

We scrutinized Dewey's ideas in the first part of this essay, from this we were able to create a reasonable questions for teachers. I believe that these questions comprise all three principal spheres that are, for Dewey, closely related with education. The three principal spheres are - Education, Experience, and Democracy.

1.1 A semi-structured interview

Because these areas of research are not easy to define and it is impossible to respond the questions by a simple yes or no, it would not be beneficial to use a questionnaire. The research method we have decided to use is an interview. "In conducting an interview the interviewer should attempt to create a friendly non-threatening atmosphere. Much as one does with a cover letter, the interviewer should give a brief, casual introduction to the study; stress the importance of the person's participation; and assure anonymity, or at least confidentiality, when possible."⁵¹ Because we believe it is much easier to talk about our conviction then to write them, and it is easier to create the above-mentioned "non-threatening" atmosphere, we wanted to have an occasion to meet teachers and have an opportunity to specify every single question, if there was any misunderstanding. Teacher could, and very often did, say something more than questions without such a "personal touch" would actually allow. The very last positive impact for the researcher is that it was also very often an occasion to see particular projects, classrooms and schools.

The semi-structured interview is a method roughly determine questions in advance and ask more detailed questions during the flow of a casual conversation. This method allows us to obtain unadulterated answers to

⁵¹ CONNAWAY L. S. and POWELL R. R. *Basic research methods of librarians*. 5ht ed. Santa Barbara California: Libraries Unlimited, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, 2010. pp. 170.

questions and carry out our investigation in a short time. In order to bring out the thinking process of the PT as much as possible, we applied a semi-structured interview technique rather than a structured interview that asks prepared questions without changing their orders. In a semi-structured interview, we are allowed to add questions according to the flow of a conversation.⁵²

1.2 Quantitative methods

The difference between quantitative and qualitative method is crucially important to understand according to the author. Otherwise we will not manage to choose the right research method. Patton claims that:

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases ($n = 1$), selected purposefully. Quantitative methods typically depend on larger samples selected randomly. Not only are the techniques for sampling different, but the very logic of each approach is unique because the purpose of each strategy is different.”⁵³ We have decided to use quantitative method inasmuch as we wanted to examine as much teachers as possible - to create relatively objective and statistically valid research. “The logic and power of probability sampling depends on selecting a truly random and statistically representative sample that will permit confident generalization from the sample to a larger population. The purpose is generalization.”⁵⁴

Although it is not so common to use interviews for quantitative methods Brinkmann claims that “In survey research interviewing, standardized questions are often posed that seek answers that are open to quantitative procedures.”⁵⁵

1.3 Subjects of research

This research is focused on primary school teachers in Prague. Twelve primary school teachers (1st till 5th grade teachers) were interviewed. I sent emails to schools and, when possible, to teachers (some Prague schools have personal e-mails on their website

⁵² OHGIRI M. YAMADA K. and YUMINAGA H. KIDA N. HAMADA H. Comparison of Gait Analysis by the Way of Semi-structured Interviews. In: *Digital Human Modeling. Application in Health, Safety, Ergonomics and Risk Management*. DHM: Lecture Notes in Computer Science, 2014. pp. 46.

⁵³ PATTON, M. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1990. pp. 169.

⁵⁴ Ibid.pp. 169.

⁵⁵ BRINKMANN, Svend. Interview. In: *Encyclopedia of Clinical Psychology*. New York: Springer New York, 2014. pp. 1008.

some of them have school e-mail only) and some of these teachers answered positively and they were willing to answer my questions, hence they are all volunteers.

There are 4111 primary schools in the Czech republic in 2016/2017, according to The Ministry of education, youth and sports, 173 of them were private schools and 41 of them are church schools,⁵⁶ with means that 94,8 percent of schools are held by state, therefor we have examined only state schools.

Every conversation was held by the author of this essay. The interviews were audiotaped and 4 of them were held in a coffee bars and the rest of them in a school classrooms. The interviews were anonymous. I marked the teachers with an order numbers for better orientation. The complete interviews are included in an appendix.

1.4 Limits of the research

This research is limited, because every teacher in the research is a volunteer. I sent an e-mail to state schools in Prague. I received a response to some of the e-mails. I believe that it is the reason why every teacher I had the pleasure to meet was highly active and willing to work probably more than her colleagues, and they were mostly interested in the topics of this study. I include the e-mail because it perhaps influenced the result of the research.⁵⁷ Despite these shortcomings, I believe this research offers contributive results.

Majority of teachers in the Czech Republic are women. The Ministry of education, youth and sports claims that in 2015/2016 were 84,3% of Primary schools teachers

⁵⁶ *Statistické ročenky školství výkonové ukazatele* [online]. The Ministry of education, youth and sports. [cit. 2017-06-01]. Available at: <http://toiler.uiv.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>.

⁵⁷ Dear Mrs.,

My name is Darja Jenišťová and I am a student at the Charles University my field of study is oriented at education. I am interested in teacher's responsibility for democracy. I am founding the ideas of John Dewey as very remarkable. I would like to compare the ideas of Czech teachers and those of John Dewey in my bachelor thesis. I would like to research your opinions on democracy, education and experience. Would you be so nice and dedicated me your time? I would like to make an interview with you? It should not take more than 20 minutes. I know that you are very busy and I will adapt to your time options. Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your reply.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

Darja Jenišťová

females,⁵⁸ thereby is the research impacted - all the twelve interviewed teachers are also women.

⁵⁸ Teachers, total and as % of female and male teachers: by type and kind of school. In: *The Czech statistical office* [online]. The Czech statistical office, 2016. [cit. 2017-05-01]. Available at: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/32853391/300002163302.pdf/73e642d8-4f0d-47f9-8074-39e81a097d15?version=1.2>.

2 Experience

What does it mean to have an experience?

According to Dewey:

Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and enviring conditions is involved in the very process of living.”⁵⁹ According to Dewey is an experience necessary for life - even more experiencing is living. Dewey compared experiencing to feeding because both of these a renewing process. “It is the very nature of life to strive to continue in being. Since this continuance can be secured only by constant renewals, life is a self-renewing process. What nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life.”⁶⁰

41,6% answers of teachers were neutral, which means that they are neither incompatible nor compatible with Dewey’s point of view. There was no answer that would be incompatible. The answers of seven teachers, that is 58,6%, are compatible with Dewey’s idea of experience.

For example, the fourth interviewee: “The experience usually starts as a problem or a crisis I have to solve.”

Can you tell when someone else is having an experience?

It is impossible to think and have an experience without problem. Human being naturally wants to find the solution of it. Therefor we create interim hypothesis and we test it.⁶¹ The child needs to test his/hers hypothesis, the experience provokes the activity and the activity furthers the experience, enlarges it, and transforms (reconstructs) the child.

66,6% of answer were compatible. The second teacher described even children’s interest as very important. The four teachers (33,3% of them) were neither compatible nor incompatible. There was no incompatible answer.

Do you have to do something to have an experience?

⁵⁹ DEWEY, John. *Art as experience*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1980, pp. 35.

⁶⁰ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-06-05]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_I.

⁶¹ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-06-10]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_XI.

This answer is very similar with the previous one, for Dewey. The experience necessarily raise activity, the experience is firmly connected with activity. That causes thinking.

For the first time some of the teachers were incompatible with ideas of Dewey. It was not a tiny percentage of them (33,3%). Most of these answers were motivated by idea of a ceaseless experience that is happening and we just participate it. They understood experience as something more passive, as something that is happening without our activity around us. On the other hand, most teachers were compatible; it was 75% concretely.

Do some have people experience all the time?

According to Dewey meaningless experience does exists - but it is an experience so poor (in terms of the quality of meaning) that is can no longer be called experience. Hence it is the possibility of not experiencing some phenomena that occurs within the grasp of experience, but fails to become experience.

This question was problematic, because some teachers realized that they needed to change their previous answer.

Five of them (41,6%) claimed that all people are experiencing all the time. Most of their colleagues unconsciously agreed with Dewey. 58,6% of answers were compatible with Dewey.

Can a person influence how many experience he/she has?

For Dewey true experience and actual thinking are possible only about something unfinished, something problematic. Every thinking is new – and it really does not matter if someone else has already found the answer or solution.⁶² On this account, the amount of experience can be increased by the presenting of new problems.

The majority of mentors believed that it is possible to influence the quantity of experiences. It was 75% of the interviewees. One teacher did not want to answer the question. And two of them, that means 16,6%, think that it is impossible to influence the quantity of experience.

And how can you help your students to ‘have more’ experience – that is, ‘learn more’?”

⁶² DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-06-05]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_XI.

The answer to this question is already mentioned in the previous answer. The amount of experience can be increased by the presenting of new problems. It is also important to connect new experience or knowledge with something already known. "I believe that only through the continual and sympathetic observation of childhood's interests can the adult enter into the child's life and see what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully."⁶³

For the 16,6% was this question pointless. And 4 (33,3%) replies were neutral. The 50% of answers were compatible with Dewey. Some examples are attached.

The second interviewee: "I want them to learn through their own experience and work.... I give them impulses for activity. It is not important if it is practical or theoretical activity."

The tenth interviewee: "I have been a teacher for a really long time, but it would not be easy to find two similar lessons, because I teach for the children. I want to know what is interesting for them and then I use it in class. If they love sport, I will use it in PE, math, Czech and even in geography."

Is there any difference between qualities of experience?

Dewey distinguishes the quality of the experience. For example, it is not possible to separate emotions from experience, because there is no emotion itself - experience includes emotions in its nature. Emotions are a quality of experience, not an independent entity. In the same way we cannot separate the body - because it is a part or quality of experience. And some experience, as we have seen, is meaningless, again according to Dewey, because it is so bad in quality meaning that it cannot be called experience.⁶⁴

Eight teachers consider differences between qualities of the experience, this means 66,6%. One teacher did not want to answer and the three teachers (25%) claimed that there is no difference between qualities of the experience. For them, the only difference is if it is a positive or a negative experience.

⁶³ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

⁶⁴ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-05-25]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_XI.

3 School

What does school mean for you? How does your school look like?

According to the definition provided by Dewey: “Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends.”⁶⁵

Half of the answers were neutral; the other half compatible with Dewey. For example, the fourth interviewee: “The school is an institution that tries to integrate children to the society.”

Do you agree with your school curriculum? Can you change it?

School is community for Dewey; therefore, every member manages to change it. “I believe that the child should be stimulated and controlled in his work through the life of the community.”⁶⁶

The 100% of teachers voiced agreement with their school curriculum. This was a very interesting question, because there was an un-uttered opinion that if the teacher does not correspond with their school then he or she should find a different school. In other words, he or she should not try to change the school, but he/she should try to find a school with a similar set of convictions.

The fifth interviewee: “I am the first and the second class teacher and I do not think that there can a big difference. The children always have to learn to read a write. I can use new methods, but it depends on me not on the school.”

The possibility of changes is related to this. One teacher said that it is impossible for her to change curriculum. It was the ninth interviewee: “This school is old and there is already a working program. I think that if you do not like it you can always find a more suitable school for you.”

Eleven (91,6%) teachers said that it is possible to change their schools, at least a little.

⁶⁵ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Can students somehow influence the school?

I mentioned above, that school is community, that had to balance individuals and institution. “I believe that in the ideal school we have the reconciliation of the individualistic and the institutional ideals.”⁶⁷ That is the reason why not only the teacher is responsible for the school, but so are the students. “I believe that the discipline of the school should proceed from the life of the school as a whole and not directly from the teacher.”⁶⁸

66,6% of teachers concurred that it is possible for their students to influence the school or class. The first interviewee: “Yes they can, but my students are really small. Therefor they can influence our class more than school (it is too complicated for them to understand it). They want to change something and they can actually see the change - I think that it is important for them.”

The second teacher gave this example: “They wanted to have a possibility to go out (there is a courtyard) during a break. Therefor they can, but they have to make sure, that they will be back in classroom in time.”

Three teachers (25%) said that children organize some activities, but they cannot really change everyday habits in the school.

One teacher said that children are too small to influence any school activity; this is incompatible with Dewey.

Does your school try to be in touch with its surrounding? How? Is your school connected with society? How?

“I believe that school must represent present life - life as real and vital to the child as that with he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or in the play-ground.”⁶⁹ Dewey wanted to connect society and school. The connection with life behind the school wall was crucial. His understanding to school was shaped by this idea. “I believe that school is primarily a social institution.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

The 100% of asked said that their school was in touch with its surrounding society, or at least the school tried to do so. The sixth interviewee: “Yes we do. The school organizes ceramics for adults, Christmas markets, the sports tournaments, the floral for parents and children.”

Is it difficult for children to become accustomed to life in school? Do you have any special program for this?

Dewey claimed:

I believe that, as such simplified social life, the school life should grow gradually out of the home life; that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar in the home. I believe that it should exhibit these activities to the child, and reproduce them in such ways that the child will gradually learn the meaning of them, and be capable of playing his own part in relation to them.⁷¹

With idea of strict discipline and quick separation from the children’s previous life, Dewey resolutely did not cohere. His school gently followed on from previous habits and interests of the children.

Two teachers said that it was not easy for children to get used to the school, but their school did not have the special program for these children. This process is not difficult for children according to three teachers, therefore the schools does not have any special program for these children. Seven (58%) teachers said that it is not difficult for children to become accustomed to life in school because they have special program for them. There are some examples.

The fourth interviewee: “I think that it is not difficult for them. Every child is inspected by a teacher and a school psychologist before enrollment. If the child is not ready he/she can attend the kindergarten or the zeroth class in the school. And these children, I mean from the zeroth class are already some schoolchildren. Thus I think it is no difficult for them.”

The sixth interviewee: “No, it is not. We have special program it is called “Let’s start together”. Every child can participate on it if parents want them to. The children can get used to school and teachers. They can meet most of the teachers. These classes are for

⁷¹ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

children with postponement commencement of school attendance. Sometimes is children not ready for school, there is a psychologist who decides it.”

Does your school create community?

The community is essential according to Dewey. The creation of community is one of the very aims of teacher and school. “I believe, finally, that the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life.”⁷² The role of community cannot be underestimate, because it assumes responsibility for stimulus and control. “I believe that under existing conditions far too much of the stimulus and control proceeds from the teacher, because of neglect of the idea of the school as a form of social life.”⁷³

Ten teachers described their schools as a community. They were certain that the class creates community and sometimes their school was too big to create genuine community, but it was almost reaching it.

The seventh interviewee: “It is the big school; it has two buildings. Therefore, I am happy that we do know each other (I know every teacher and I like them all). Of course there are people who are closer to me. ... There is a gatekeeper and she knows names of every child. We do not want anyone to stay aloof from the others. I think that although it is the huge school it creates community.”

Two teachers said, that it was impossible for them to answer. For example,

The third interviewee: “I do not know, because I do not work here for a long time. I do not have enough experiences to answer.”

⁷² DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

⁷³ Ibid.

4 Democracy

What is democracy?

It is not easy to choose one definition of democracy, because it was both crucial and an endless source of inspiration for Dewey:

Democracy as compared with other ways of life is the sole way of living which believes wholeheartedly in the process of experience as end and as means; as that which is capable of generating the science which is the sole dependable authority for the direction of further experience and which releases emotions, needs and desires so as to call into being the things that have not existed in the past. For every way of life that fails in its democracy limits the contacts, the exchanges, the communications, the interactions by which experience is steadied while it is also enlarged and enriched. The task of this release and enrichment is one that has to be carried on day by day. Since it is one that can have no end till experience itself comes to an end, the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute.⁷⁴

91,6 percent of interviewees were compatible with Dewey. Only one teacher was not compatible. I enclose her answer.

The seventh interviewee: “This is not easy to answer. I tried to participate on a local political activity a few years ago. And I was not successful therefore I have decided not to participate on political events. ... I think that politics is profaned and that it does influence us in negatively. I have not been watching TV for two years. ... I do not even vote anymore. I just want to live a happy life.”

What is your role in democracy? Who do you support it, if you do so?

Dewey did not underestimate power of school and education he declared that education is the easiest and the only certain shaping toll of the society. The convinced is distinct in his quotation:

I believe that all reforms which rest upon the enactment of law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile. I believe that education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the

⁷⁴ DEWEY, John. *Creative Democracy - The Task Before Us* [online]. Available at: http://pages.uoregon.edu/koopman/courses_readings/dewey/dewey_creative_democracy.pdf.

adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction.⁷⁵

Because of power of education and school is the role of teacher crucial. “I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth.”⁷⁶ The teacher need to know and realize the responsibility of his/her profession, he/she bears responsibility for growth of next, healthy and democratic generation.

According to eight teachers, their role in a democracy is compatible with Dewey. Three teachers answered neutrally and the answer of one teacher was incompatible.

What do you think about equal opportunities in society / in school?

This problem is important for Dewey. His ideal school and society is “a conception of democratic citizenship in which every person has the opportunity to reach her potential and develop varied interests.”⁷⁷ An inequality was dangerous and if it is excessively widespread situation it had potential to destroy democracy. He said:

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy. All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to its future self. Here individualism and socialism are at one. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be the to itself.⁷⁸

Five teachers (41,6%) were compatible with Dewey. They realize the importance of equal opportunities and they want to create as equal environment as possible on the other hand they do reflect that it is only an aim and it is almost impossible to reach it. But they believe that they should try and do their best. I enclose one example of these teachers.

⁷⁵ DEWEY, John. My pedagogic creed. In: *The School Journal* [online]. 1897,54(1). [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ MINTZ, Avi I. Dewey on Educational Aims. In: *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2016. pp. 5.

⁷⁸ DEWEY, John. *School and society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1915, pp. 3.

The fifth interviewee: “I think that it is an important and legitimate requirement. I think that it is one of the manifestations of democratic society, when people have the opportunity to educate.”

Six teachers (50%) were neutral. And one teacher was completely incompatible. Her answer is also included.

The seventh interviewee: “I think that everyone has some conditions, and if you really want to achieve something then you will. I believe that education is overestimated in the Czech Republic. I think that if you really want to do something then you will - you do not have to have a special education for it. I think that there are equal conditions and opportunities in education. Everyone has an opportunity to do what he or she wants.”

Do you cooperate with any organization that tries to help this?

Ten teachers said that their school cooperated with these organizations. One of these schools even has their own programs for the children. The eleventh interviewee: “There is the special endowment fund, parents can loan money without any interest. So we have this at least economical help.”

One teacher said that they do not cooperate with any organization. The fifth interviewee: “No, we do not, or our school does not. It depends on every teacher. There is someone who is from weighted sociocultural environment in every class. It does not have to be a Roma child, it can be single parent child or parents underestimate the importance of education. Than it really depends on the teacher if he or she is able to engage the child.”

The last teacher said that she did not know.

What kinds of children usually attend your class? Are they usually from the same social class?

According to Dewey:

The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups. An undesirable society, in other words, is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal

interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder.⁷⁹

I believe that the meaning of this short quotation is clear. We need to create such society where every member of every social group will manage to access any other group. There is no other way of maintaining (or rather, for Dewey, a better word choice would be renewing or even reconstructing) a democratic society.

In the olden times, the diversity of groups was largely a geographical matter. There were many societies, but each, within its own territory, was comparatively homogeneous. But with the development of commerce, transportation, intercommunication, and emigration, countries like the United States are composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs. It is this situation which has, perhaps more than any other one cause, forced the demand for an educational institution which shall provide something like a homogeneous and balanced environment for the young. Only in this way can the centrifugal forces set up by juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counteracted. The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment. Common subject matter accustoms all to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated.⁸⁰

Eight teachers (66,6%) described their class as varied. Four teacher (33,3%) said that their class was attended by children from very similar social class.

The fifth interviewee: “The vast majority of my pupils are children from parents with a university degree.”

Do you think that the environment can influence education? How?

Yes - that would be answer of Dewey, because education occurs through environment. And once again:

It is the business of the school environment to eliminate, so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence upon mental habitudes. It establishes a purified medium of action. Selection aims not only at

⁷⁹ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-05-25]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_VII#Summary.

⁸⁰ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-05-26]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_II.

simplifying but at weeding out what is undesirable. It is the office of the school environment to balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment.⁸¹

Absolutely all teachers (100%) assessed environment as crucial.

For example, the third interviewee: “It would be great to say that it is not. But it is crucially important. It is the foundation. A child is really limited by these conditions. If there is no support from family than it is much more difficult for a child.”

The twelfth interviewee: “Definitely yes, because they take over the opinions from the family. If the parents say that it is enough to be able to read and write and he or she does not need the rest than the child is probably going to see it from the same point of view.”

What do you think about inclusion? Do you see differences in classes that include children with special needs and those without?

Dewey’s answer is implicit in the previous questions. Variability is helpful and healthy for society. And school is embryonic form of whole society.

Nine teachers described the inclusion as something positive, but they would appreciate more help - for example more teaching assistants.

The first interviewee: “There are differences, but we do not have any class without children with special needs therefore it is almost impossible to compare it. We have a children of foreigner in every class, because the school in the center of Prague. Usually there are children with dyslexia, dysgraphia, Asperger syndrome and the like. Or we have a lot of children with this tendency but they still do not have a diagnosis. The difference is huge; if there are not such differences then the class works in a different way. And if there is no teaching assistant and I have 28 children in the class, then it is really complicated.”

This teacher realizes that a class that includes children with special needs works differently. She has to use new method and she needs a teaching assistant. She also combines the children of foreigners together with children with special needs.

⁸¹ DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. [cit. 2017-05-29]. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education/Chapter_II.

Three teachers, that means 25 percent, did not agree with the inclusion, which is incompatible with Dewey.

The third interviewee: “I think that it is not good idea. Some of my colleagues from university work in special schools and we talk about the inclusion a lot. There is a teaching assistant with me in my class, because there is a boy in my class and he is not self-reliant. He would be transferred to a special school few years ago. But today he is still in a class and he really disturbs the rest of the class, he is not able to concentrate or work on this own. The teaching assistant is really helpful, but you cannot have class with five children with special needs. The class is like a team for me and it always works according to the weakest member. There are children who are really strong and who lead the team, but they cannot be in the minority.”

What we can learn from the answer is that even only one child is real problem for her. She obviously has not changed her methods and she only ignore his presence in the class. I think that this is really dangerous because it creates an environment and breeding ground for bullying. The next most interesting information is that this single, different child is a threat to the functioning of her whole class, according to her - because he is, in her mind in the majority.

Do you have any children of foreigners in you school (class)? What do you think about it? Do you see any difference in classes with children of foreigners and without?

Again, Dewey’s answer is found in the previous question. Variability is helpful and healthy for society. As mentioned above, school is an embryonic version of society, therefore school must be as multivalent as the society of which it is part.

Eleven teachers (91,6%) had one or more children of foreigners in the class. Their answer is clear there are no problems if the child is able to speak at least a little Czech. If the child is not able to speak Czech at all then it is little bit more complicated, but there are a special language courses for these children. Only one teacher did not have any child of foreigners.

The fifth interviewee: “It depends on a language competence. If the child attended a kindergarten, then it is much easier. Sometimes it is easy to communicate with a child but his or her parents do not speak Czech. There is also a difference in vocabulary, but it become broader because of reading. And that goes for everyone. It is problematic if it is an older child who does not speak Czech; there are real contrasts. But we have a special

language program for foreigners. I think that there are opportunities to work on the language.”

The twelfth interviewee: “We have a special supporting language program; it is called “the Czech language for foreigners”. The school cooperate with the teacher who works specially with these children. There are 3 or 4 kinds in the class so it is really high-quality and effective. She concentrates on problems that are common for us but that are complicated for a foreigners.”

Do you know John Dewey? Have you ever used his ideas in your class? Why? How?

Was it successful?

Eight teachers (66,6%) did not know Dewey at all. Four teachers (33,3%) knew his name and they knew that he was an American philosopher.

The twelfth interviewee: “I know him. I know that he occupied with the democracy and education, but I do not know anything more specific.”

Conclusion

The most compatible question was: “Do you think that the environment can influence education? How?”, “Does your school trying to be in touch with surrounding?” and “What is democracy?”. Also the question “Do you have any children of foreigners in you school (class)?” and “Do you cooperate with any organization that tries to help children from a weighted sociocultural environment?” were compatible with an ideas of Dewey. These are the topics we can use and build on.

I am really thankful for an opportunity to meet so many interesting teachers. I know that they are not the most representative sample of Czech teachers because the vast majority of teachers did not answer my e-mail. Despite this I believe that this research is valuable.

All the teachers agreed that the environment of a child is crucial. A high percentage of them cooperates with some organizations that tries to help the children from a weighted sociocultural environment, but according to teachers these organizations are not able to work with all children in need because they are overfull.

Almost every class has some children of foreigners. A children of foreigners in schools are a new phenomenon in the Czech Republic; therefore, I think, we can get inspired by foreign import of theories.

Therefore, I think it might be useful for our educational system to come to know John Dewey more deeply. Of course there were differences - some ideas of teachers were very incompatible with John Dewey, some of them were incompatible with their previous answer. Nevertheless, a lot of their ideas were compatible with those of Dewey. I think that this is good news. I think we can use this compatible areas and work on them. There are a lot of teachers who are considering their work and who are willing to learn and change their methods, therefore I believe that there is a possibility to change the educational system.

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Summary

The main topic of this thesis is the teacher and her or his responsibility for democracy according to John Dewey. It has two parts.

The first part discussed the ideas of John Dewey and the possible sources of them. It presents Dewey's thoughts that are connected with education according to him - society, democracy, and etcetera. It also explains Dewey's point of view on reality, Darwin and experience.

The second part is the scientific portion. It is research that compares the ideas of Czech teachers with those of Dewey. It demonstrates the compatibility – and sometimes lack thereof, between the ideas of Czech teachers and those of Dewey. Twelve Czech teachers participated on this research. All twelve teachers were volunteers.

Shrnutí

Hlavním tématem této práce je odpovědnost učitele za demokracii podle Johna Deweyho. Tato práce je rozdělena do dvou částí. První část se zabývá myšlenkami Johna Deweyho a jejich možných zdrojích. Deweyho myšlenky spojené se vzděláním jsou společnost, demokracie a tak dále. Také vysvětluje Deweyho názory na realitu, Darwina a zkušenost. Druhá část je praktická. Ve výzkumu byly porovnány názory českých učitelů s názory Deweyho. Rozeznává se zde, zda jsou tyto názory kompatibilní s názory Johna Deweyho. Tito učitelé se výzkumu zúčastnili dobrovolně.