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Journal Scuola Democratica  
REINVENTING EDUCATION**

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**VOLUME I**

**Citizenship, Work and The Global Age**

**ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"**  
Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 - Rome, Italy

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***Title* Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” – Reinventing Education VOLUME I Citizenship, Work and The Global Age**

This volume contains papers presented in the 2nd International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” which took place online on 2-5 June 2021. The Conference was devoted to the needs and prospects of Reinventing Education.

The challenges posed by the contemporary world have long required a rethinking of educational concepts, policies and practices. The question about education ‘for what’ as well as ‘how’ and ‘for whom’ has become unavoidable and yet it largely remained elusive due to a tenacious attachment to the ideas and routines of the past which are now far off the radical transformations required of educational systems. Scenarios, reflections and practices fostering the possibility of change towards the reinvention of the educational field as a driver of more general and global changes have been centerstage topics at the Conference. Multidisciplinary approach from experts from different disciplinary communities, including sociology, pedagogy, psychology, economics, architecture, political science has brought together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate constraints and opportunities for reinventing education.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and inter-disciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners’ mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 800 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on research, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

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## Citizenship, Work and The Global Age

### A Premise

What is education for? This philosophical question cannot be answered ignoring contributions from social and educational sciences. The growing focus on learning outcomes should have prompted discussion on the values and aims in defining policy objectives and developing accountability systems and evidence-based approaches. Whereas for years public discourse on education has most frequently been confined to a merely sector-based perspective, without addressing the relationship (i.e., interdependency and/or autonomy) with globalised societies or to face the new challenges of contemporary's world. The relationship between education and society and the issue of aims can be observed in a new context which has seen the weakening of the society-nation equation and the strengthening of global dimensions.

The crisis born of the pandemic is more and more global and multidimensional. It inevitably obliges to ask what the post-pandemic socio-economic scenarios could be and what challenges might emerge from the transformations of education and training systems and policies. Many researchers and observers think that the most relevant of these challenges is that of inequalities between and within countries. The medium-long term nature of many of these challenges poses a complex question: does the pandemic tend to widen or narrow the time-space horizons of people perceptions, rationalities, and decisions?

For decades, the field of education and training has witnessed continuous growth in globalization and internationalization: just think of the role of the large-scale assessment surveys and the increasing influence of international organisations. Phenomena and concepts such as policy mobility (lending and borrowing) or – within another field of research – policy learning, as well as global scaling up, global-local hybridization and policy assemblage might find a useful opportunity of debate and in-depth analysis in this stream. This might also be true of the related issue regarding how comparative research must be carried out and of the relationship between some government 'technologies' adopted in the latest cycle of policies – for example, quasi-market, evaluation, and autonomy of schools and universities – and the ever more criticized neo-liberal paradigm. In this framework, without any revival of the political or methodological nationalism, a critical rethinking of the national dimension, perhaps too hurriedly assumed to be 'obsolete', can be useful also for a comparative reflection. As to our continent we are in the presence not only of globalization of educational policies, but also of their Europeanisation, due to the extent of the European Commission's strategy and its Open Method of Coordination. Beyond the official distinction between formal, non-formal, and unformal learning, it seems European initiatives and programmes shape a new policy world preparing the future of education, particularly through different expert networks, new ways of conceptualizing knowledge, and disseminating standards. On these issues there is no lack of reflections and research, some of which very critical indeed, whose results deserve to be broadly shared and discussed, too.

The equipping of the new generations with the tools – knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values – to live in a plural and interconnected world is delicate matter indeed in Europe. It is the issue at stake for the encounters – and at times clashes – between old and new visions and

forms of pluralism and secularism. Around this theme are developed educational policies and strongly heterogeneous curricula. Such topic is linked also to the variability in young people's competences and attitudes towards 'cultural otherness'.

Life-long learning is another question of notable importance at international level as it implies both a diverse temporal horizon for education and its link to the dimensions of work. And a different approach to the relationship between school and extra-scholastic (life-wide) learning is also implied. From this stems the necessity of greater investment for example in both the early years (ECEC) and the adult education. We might ask, however, how much has been done to achieve this goal, and whether it risks remaining a fascinating but largely unfinished project for a long time.

Within a general rethinking of the aims and the means at the disposal of education systems, many papers ask whether until now enough has been done to educate towards citizenship and democracy and whether various national educational systems have adopted this issue as their core mission.

A second group of questions derives from some crucial challenges – such as the dramatic deterioration of the biosphere, the climate, and the health – which impose both the necessity of rethinking this mission in a planetary context and redefining the 'citizenship' as a concept not merely national, but multi-level, that is ranging from global to local; and in our continent European, too. How deeply are our nations presently involved in the task of educating their citizens in terms of knowledge of global and trans-national issues? And are they striving to build a collective common consciousness in Europe? What help is being given in this sense by proposals elaborated and experiences promoted by international organizations or the EU?

Finally, starting from infant and primary schools, what weight does citizenship education have in schools, what approaches are adopted and what have shown to be the most effective? What didactics are applied and what seem to be the most promising experiences? To what extent are teachers prepared and motivated and students interested in it? Universities and adult education should also play a role in citizenship education. What proposals and significant experiences can be described and examined?

The Volume also includes contributions on the relationship between education and economic systems which is a classic subject of social science. During the twentieth century, the functionalist perspective established a close link between 'school for the masses' and the construction of individuals personalities conforming to values and social objectives. Professions have then become more and more specialized and therefore requiring ever more targeted skills. Hence, the insistence on the need to train future workers in technical and technological skills, as well as more recently in the 'soft skills' climate, increasingly necessary in certain sectors of the economy (Industry 4.0). The alliance between the functionalist perspective and the neoliberal visions finds its conceptual and practical pivot in the employability conceptual frame. On the other hand, since the 1970s, critical research has highlighted that formal education system contributes to the reproduction of inequalities, confirming and strengthening hierarchies and power relations between different actors of the economic system. These lines of investigation have underlined the weight of cultural and social capital in determining school performance, but also the inflation of educational credentials as a combined effect of mass schooling and changes in the economic system. In more recent times, the fragmentation of the educational and training systems, because of the

multiplication of public and private agencies in charge of training citizens, in addition to the explosion of the non-formal and informal as learning places (e.g., on the Internet), challenges the school to maintain its primacy as a place responsible for training workers. Moreover, it questions its ability to continue to represent a social elevator and / or a place of social justice.

The issue of the reproduction of inequalities and differential returns of educational qualifications fuels lively and stimulating interdisciplinary debates: economic stagnation, mass unemployment and job instability affect the inclusion of young generations in the labour market. Recently, in the context of lifelong learning policies, the relationship between training and work has become increasingly central, but the definition of the goals of these policies is not neutral: in the neoliberal mantra it is a question of guaranteeing the adaptability, employability and autonomy of each individual, so that one can occupy a place in society according to the dominant values. There is no shortage of critical voices about this individualistic and functionalist interpretation of the Lifelong Learning vision. On the other hand, even the supporters of neoliberal-inspired policies want an inclusive training offer (from a meritocratic perspective), as it is essential for recruiting resources and supporting flexible production systems focused on knowledge.

The attention of scholars focuses on the effects of the 'knowledge society' in the educational system of European countries. In this perspective, several studies have focused attention on the orientation processes that contribute to the reproduction of inequalities as the students from the lower classes tend to orient themselves, and are oriented by their teachers, towards the vocational paths, stigmatized within the educational systems.

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## John Dewey's *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, and the Post-revolutionary Educational System

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**ABSTRACT:** *Even though the reception of John Dewey's pedagogical theories in Russia and the Soviet Union has been extensively investigated, there are still several little-known aspects to the subject, especially concerning the circulation of his ideas in Tsarist and post-revolutionary Russia, and it is on these that this article focuses. Dewey's works were translated into Russian at the beginning of the twentieth century and again after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. During the 1920s, his writings formed the basis of a series of experiments in the reform of Soviet schools, which were not conceived as authoritarian institutions as they were later in the 1930s, under Stalinism. This article is divided into three parts. The first introduces the context in which Dewey's works were first translated into Russian, before the Revolution, in order to reform Tsarist schools. The second deals with the spread of Dewey's theories, and in particular the place of American concepts within Soviet reforms, as they corresponded to the values and purposes of the Marxist schools that the new Bolshevik government defined as polytechnics, charged to train future collective workers. The third section describes some aspects of the Soviet educational system that are presented in Dewey's work *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World: Mexico – China – Turkey*, which he wrote in 1929 after his trip to Russia in the previous year. In this writing, he observed the creation of a Marxist educational system during the 1920s, through which American activism was diffused.*

**KEYWORDS:** *John Dewey, History of the School, Educational System, Russia, Nineteenth Century, Twentieth Century*

### Introduction

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, there was a quest for new educational models, and these were discussed and exchanged internationally. It was proposed that these new models and the schools they inspired should correspond to developments in wider society and aim to encourage its positive progress. The science of the child, which was elaborated by the American psychologist Stanley Hall (1846–1924), focused on the need to educate on the basis of principles that related to psychological development. In America, the philosopher John Dewey realized that this aspiration to change society through education was a chance to offer educational opportunities to the next generation, in particular to the

children of immigrants and those from the lower classes (Sébastien-Akira, 2017).

Dewey's conception of education, which he developed at the University of Chicago Laboratory School, was one of the most important achievements of the American progressive education movement. Founded by Dewey in 1894, this school offered a real change in education, although he was not the only educator who was stressing the development of learning processes based on labor in schools. Its influence rapidly spread internationally, and it constituted a real model for change. Russia was the nation in which Dewey's theories spread most quickly because at the end of the nineteenth century, after the liberal reforms of 1864, education was considered to be the only means by which to improve the living conditions of the population and modernize the country. School reform needed models that could erase social differences, as these were still a feature of the old-fashioned Tsarist school system (Caroli, 2020). Interest in Dewey's ideas had already arisen in the pre-revolutionary context of debates about Tsarist reform. Recent studies have highlighted the different phases in which Dewey's theories were received, and the reason why they especially took root in post-revolutionary Russia. His ideas began to circulate most widely in the 1920s, when experimentalism was one of the main features of the Soviet school system (Kornetov, 2014; Rogaceva, 2016; Rudderham, 2021). For this reason, it is necessary to look at the early translations of Dewey's works in order to understand how his theories were received after the Revolution. His works were translated from 1907, at a time when a great variety of theories were circulating, all aimed at renewing educational culture, institutions and schools.

By comparing the two phases of Dewey's reception in Russia, before and after the Revolution, it will be possible to understand the reception of his work more comprehensively and in relation to the main educational problems that the country had to cope with. Before the Revolution, the main problems were the illiteracy of children and adults from the poorer classes, and a lack of education for neglected children from the urban working class (section 1). When Dewey's theories circulated in post-revolutionary Russia, they were considered to be one of the main supports for Marxist reform of Soviet schools, which aimed to shape a classless society (section 2). Finally, Dewey's *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World: Mexico – China – Turkey* is considered, in which he discusses the Soviet educational system, a huge communist enterprise that faced the major social problems of child abandonment and illiteracy and charged schools to train and indoctrinate a new generation of workers and peasants (section 3).

## **1. Dewey's reception in pre-revolutionary Russia**

Recent studies have demonstrated that an intensive pedagogical movement formed around the well-known school at Yasnaya Polyana, which was founded in 1859 by the well-known Russian writer Leo Tolstoy for peasant children. Tolstoy traveled throughout Europe in order to discover a model for a new type of school for Russia, but realized he was searching for something very different from the schools he observed. He wanted to create a 'laboratory' for knowledge, based on informal lessons and manual work, unique because there would be no timetable, physical punishments or homework. Freedom was one of the main principles and practices of this educational culture, which was inspired by Rousseau's philosophy of education. Tolstoy's innovative thinking was the starting point for the creation of 'new schools' in Russia in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and, thanks to the author's fame, for the renewal of schools internationally (Caroli, 2020).

The pedagogical movement tied to Tolstoyan ideas was defined as the 'free education movement'. It was led by the philosopher Ivan Gorbunov-Posadov (1864–1940), who took a leading role in disseminating the ideas of so-called Tolstoyism (*tolstovstvo*), with a rich debate about innovations in schooling being encouraged by the publishing house Posrednik (Intermediate). This was set up in 1897, also by Tolstoy, to promulgate educational innovation, with the book collection *Library* (by I. Gorbunov-Posadov) *for Children and Youth* (*Biblioteka Gorbunova-Posadova dlia detei i iunoshestva*) and the journal *Free Education* (*Svobodnoe vospitanie*) being particularly influential. Posrednik also published the well-known Italian book *Hearth. Book for Boys* (1886) by Edmondo De Amicis, which was translated and adapted to Tolstoyan philosophy by Lenin's sister.

Tolstoyan publishing activity also concerned the publisher Pavel Aleksandrovich Bulanzhe (1865–1925), who was a writer and translator. After he met Tolstoy in 1888, the two writers developed a twenty-year friendship. From 1893, Bulanzhe worked at Posrednik, but for distributing prohibited works by Tolstoy and his contacts with sectarians in 1897, he was briefly expelled from Russia. After moving to England, where he published Tolstoy's works, he returned to Russia at the end of 1899, but from 1900 to 1904 lived constantly under secret police surveillance. Founder and owner of the publisher A. Pechkovskii-P. Boulanzhe and K., Bulanzhe published the very first translation of Dewey's *School and Society* (*Shkola i obschestvo*) into Russian in 1907. It was his own translation, and the foreword and annotations were by Ivan Gorbunov-Posadov (*ibid.*, 126). This was the beginning of interest in Dewey's ideas. Translations are often the first source of international circulation of educational models and ideas, but sometimes indicate that a deep interest already exists between cultures. Indeed, from the end of the eighteenth century, there had already been connections between Russian and American culture. For example, the city of Chicago and its university, at which John Dewey had arrived in 1894 to

take over the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy, had contacts in Russia both in cultural and economic fields. Of particular importance are the reports written by William W. Brickman (1913–1986), a great supporter of Dewey's ideas, and co-founder of the Comparative Education Society (later renamed the Comparative and International Education Society) in the United States in 1956 (Brickman, 1960; 1964).

Another point of contact was the well-known philanthropist Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, which catered for recently arrived European immigrants. She visited Yasnaya Polyana in 1896 and accepted a donation towards her social activities from Tolstoy. Later, in 1903, a Russian architect, Aleksandr U. Zelenko (1871–1953), lived for a time at Hull House, and probably met John Dewey when he gave lectures on social psychology there. On his return to Moscow, Zelenko spread a Hull House-inspired idea of settlement work with his collaborators Luiza Schleger (1862–1942) and Stanislav T. Shatskii (1878–1934). Through Zelenko, Shatskii probably became acquainted with Dewey's pedagogical conception. Close to the 'free education movement', Shatskii opened the first Settlement (in Russian *settlement*) for children from poor neighborhoods in Moscow in 1906; but this was closed by the Tsarist government after charges of socialist indoctrination were made. In the following years, Shatskii founded an experimental school named *Cheerful Life* (*Bodraia Zhizn'*) in Kaluga. This was an expression of his overarching vision that fully integrated education and work, and offered a boarding school education alongside training for agricultural work both for illiterate children and adults (Brickman, 1960, 83-84). It was based on self-organization and the collaboration of all participants with the activities that were offered. The model of the American progressive school was considered suitable both in terms of the type of institution and in terms of its curriculum. One member of the free education movement, Nikolai V. Chekov (1865–1947), argued that a further reform in Russia should introduce eight years of school attendance, and that this should be based on a decentralized organization. After the Revolution, Chekov joined the central administration of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment and was one of the main specialists in the primary school system. The curriculum of these schools retraced the American model, being based on active methods of learning (Caroli, 2020, 125-128). Dewey's conception of developmental stages of learning, of an active methodology of learning, and of the role of education in the creation of a new society was crucial for the Soviet authorities as they shaped a new educational system.

## **2. Dewey and activism in post-revolutionary Russia**

From the October Revolution of 1917 until the 1930s, the reception of Dewey's ideas meant that Soviet educational authorities encouraged the

realization of Marxist schools, in which the learning process was associated with labor in order to guarantee training for future workers. The Soviet school system was ready to experiment with activism, and all educational strategies helped to shape a system that corresponded to the Bolshevik ideology of schooling. Different debates, tendencies, and solutions animated the cultural context of the post-revolutionary decade.

On the basis of the *Uniform Labor School Regulations* that were published on October 1, 1918, all schools came under the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment, and were given the name Unified Labor School. They provided free, compulsory, coeducational, and secular education to all children from eight to seventeen. They were divided into two levels: the first for children from eight to thirteen, and the second for children from fourteen to seventeen.

Productive labour must serve as the basis of school life, not as a means of paying for the maintenance of the child, and not only as a method of teaching, but as socially-necessary productive labour ... The school is a school-commune, closely and organically linked through the labour process with the environment. Instruction throughout the school was to have a 'polytechnical character' (Fitzpatrick, 1970, 28-29, 33)

While originally school was to be attended for nine years (five years at elementary school and four years at middle school). in 1921 it was reduced to seven, maintaining the nine-year cycle for vocational schools. Inside the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment, two main tendencies concerning so-called polytechnic work inside the future Marxist schools emerged. One of these was represented by the Ministry of Enlightenment's Anatolii V. Lunacharskii, who opted for education being prolonged until the age of seventeen without early specialization, while others pushed for early specialization in order to prevent youth unemployment. Utopian political projects concerning the introduction of 9-years school system collided with the scarcity of resources necessary for buildings, teachers and textbooks.

Simultaneously with institutional reform, curricula and methods were constantly discussed, elaborated, and revised in light of the Marxist political ideals of the new regime. In this period, the interest in Dewey's theories was made evident by the intensity of the translation into Russian of his works *Psychology and pedagogy of Thought* (*Psikologija i pedagogika myshleniia*, 1919, second edition in 1922). *School and Society* (*Shkola i obschestvo*, 1920, 1921 and 1925). and *The School and the Child* (*Shkola i rebenok*, 1921) by Stanislav Shatskii, R. Landsberg, and L. Azarevich. After 1925, though, translations of Dewey's works ceased. Although these translations have not yet been studied from the viewpoint of hermeneutical analysis, thereby highlighting how the translated texts respect the originals (and their titles) or were adapted,

by being cut or in other ways, for Soviet readers (whether reformers or teachers). one may observe that they played a huge role in the debates around educational reform. It was not only Shatskii but also other important pedagogues of the time, such as P.P. Blonskii, A.P. Pinkevich, and Anatolii Lunacharskii, who made frequent mention of Dewey's works.

Overcoming the traditionalists was only possible thanks to Dewey's works in particular and American progressive pedagogy in general, with the *Dalton Laboratory Plan* by Helen Parkhurst (1887–1973) and the 'project method' (in Russian also well-known as 'complex method') by Dewey's pupil and collaborator William Heard Kilpatrick (1871–1965). These methods introduced into Soviet school a new active way of acquiring knowledge (Holmes, 1991, 32-35).

According to the 'project method', learning was a project around which all activities were organized. All traditional school subjects ceased to exist, to be replaced by society, labor and nature, around which all pupils actively built their knowledge. William Kilpatrick's work *The Project method. Application of the Aimed Setting in Educational Process (Metod proektov. Primenenie celevoi ustanovki v vospitatel'nom protsesse)*. with an introduction by N.V. Chekov, was translated into Russian in 1925, and might have circulated before this date. Influentially, active learning, based on the 'project method', was introduced at the 'Timiriazev biological station', which was founded in 1918 near Moscow for the study of nature and natural sciences. This extra-school institution was the basis for the development of the Young Naturalist movement, which was very widely spread across the Soviet Union until the fall of the communist regime (Caroli, 2019).

In a similar way, the *Dalton Laboratory Plan* by Helen Parkhurst was implemented. This required that pupils undertook their assignments by learning from textbooks given to them by their teachers. An exhaustive analysis of the adoption of these active methods should be carried out in order to investigate how these methods were implemented, how the teachers reacted, and if the pupils enjoyed them and felt motivated. Both of these didactic experiments had been abandoned by the end of the 1920s.

In a very famous pupil diary, *The Diary of Kostia Riabtsev*, which concerned the school year 1923/1924 and was published in 1928, the ironic description is a representative case of how these innovations were received:

Our school is introducing the Dalton plan. It is a system according to which the schoolworkers [*teachers, in Russian shkrapy*] don't do anything, and the pupils still have to learn. At least I've understood so. There will be no lessons now, but the pupils will be given assignments. These will be given for a month, we can do them both at school and at home, and as soon as they are ready, we present them in the laboratory [*rather than a normal classroom*]. In each laboratory

there will be a 'schoolteacher' who is a particular specialist in his matter: in mathematics, for example, there will be Almakfish, in social science Nikbetozh, and so on. They are the spiders and we are the flies (Ognev, 1925, 7).

The pupil further describes the teachers' and the pupils' disorientation as the new laboratory did not have a desk. This method probably required better teacher training than it was possible to offer Soviet teachers. In any case, in the context of political and economic change at the beginning of the 1930s, different decisions about elementary schools – published in 1931 and 1932 – marked the end of experimentation and the return to a traditional way of learning that was based on subjects and discipline. Stalinist schools aimed to train future specialists to allow the planned industrialization of the country and the development of a planned economy.

Active educational methods were also to be found in other educational institutions, an example being the out-of-school activities of the Pioneer Organization 'V.I. Lenin'. This structured all activities in sections, to educate children in discipline, obedience, and a collective life that promoted Communist values.

A great number of colonies opened in Russia between 1918 and 1922, organized to address the problem of abandoned children that in post-revolutionary Russia assumed unprecedented proportions. These were also based on an active educational system. Children had to participate in everyday activities and work in handicraft laboratories (Caroli, 2004). In the first version of the Soviet film *Road to Life* (*Putevka v zhizn'*, 1931). by the film-maker Nikolai Ekk (1902–1976). which was dedicated to the reeducation of abandoned children and young offenders in one of these colonies, John Dewey appears on the screen to narrate the introduction, summarizing the film's content, which was set at the beginning of the 1920s:

Ten years ago, every traveler in Russia came back with the stories of the hordes of wild children who roamed the countryside and infested the city streets. They were the orphans of soldiers killed in the war, of fathers and mothers who perished in the famine after the war. You will see a picture of their old road to life, a road of vagabondage, violence, thieving. You will also see their new road to their new life, a road constructed by a brave band of Russian teachers.

After methods of repression had failed, they gathered these children together in collective homes, they taught them cooperation, useful work, healthful recreation. Against great odds they succeeded. There are today no wild children in Russia.

You will see a picture of great artistic beauty, of dramatic action and power. You will also see a record of a great historic episode. These boys are not professional actors. They were once wild children, they once lived in an actual collective. You will also see an educational lesson of the power of freedom, sympathy, work and play to redeem

the juvenile delinquent; a lesson from which we too may learn (Bowen, 1962, 5).

Huge reforms were made so that homeless children could be assisted and educated. Several colonies that were based on work offered a solution to this new educational problem. Shatskii, Makarenko, and other educators created hybrid models that mixed American experiences of educational and social work with Communist pedagogy.

### **3. Dewey's *Impressions of Soviet Russia***

In 1928, John Dewey visited the Soviet Union as a member of the American Society for Cultural Relations with Russia. This unofficial trip, which was made by twenty-five American educators, included the editor of the journal *School and Society*. Dewey's views about Soviet education appeared in several articles published over the following years, and in 1939 a book entitled *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World: Mexico — China — Turkey* was reprinted. Very critical about the educational system, Dewey was at the same time quite positive about the political system, observing that «Communism, if one judges from impressions that lie on the surface in Leningrad, lies in some remote future» (Dewey, 1929/1964, 47).

In the third chapter, he observes that «propaganda is education and education is propaganda» and that «propaganda and education» are identified by Soviet pedagogues (ibid., 71). Of the different aspects that Dewey observed as being oriented towards American liberal attitudes, it is important to consider three of them, in order to understand his comparative approach to the Soviet educational and school system: these are the condition of childhood, the public system of Soviet schools in relation to family education and its ideological content, and reception of the 'project method'.

Concerning the first aspect, Dewey observed in Leningrad, as many foreign visitors did, that «even the 'wild children' who have formed the staple of so many tales have not disappeared from the streets of the large cities» (ibid., 55). Besides cultural institutions, he also had the opportunity to visit an orphan asylum, which was unlike any he had previously seen because children:

...were not lined up for inspection. We walked about grounds and found them engaged in their various summer occupations, gardening, bee-keeping, repairing buildings, growing flowers in a conservatory (built and now managed by a group of particularly tough boys who began by destroying everything in sight). making simple tools and agricultural implements, etc. (ibid., 57).

From this perspective, Dewey presents the evolution of Shatskii's educational experiment, from constitutional democrat at the beginning

of the century (when he had contact with the Settlement movement and founded a colony inspired by Tolstoyism in Moscow) to Communist «as symbol of the social phase of the entire Soviet educational movement» (ibid., 75-76). He is aware of the fact that

those reforming and progressive endeavors which were hampered in every possible way by the Tsar's régime were actively and officially promoted by the Bolshevik régime, a fact that certainly influenced many liberal intellectuals to lend their cooperation to the Bolshevik government (ibid., 77).

Concerning the second aspect, Dewey describes the educational and school system, with some comparative details, in two central chapters of his work, titled *What Are the Russian Schools Doing?* and *New Schools for New Era?* The function of the school is «to create habits so that persons will act coöperatively and collectively as readily as now in capitalistic countries they act 'individually'» (ibid., 74). According to his impression, schools are «the arm of the Revolution» because they connect education with the formation of a new cultural attitude.

Dewey observes that one of the most important pedagogical innovations is «the technique which has been worked out for enabling teachers to discover the actual conditions that influence pupils in their out-of-school life», because this implies an important effect on the whole of family life. He remarks on the first part of the educational system, dealing with children from three to seven, and summer colonies, which were aimed to replace the family role, the parents being engaged in the industrialization process, and he concludes that «there are many elements of propaganda connected with this policy, and many of them obnoxious to me personally» (ibid., 86). Indeed, the increase in public schools was in general connected with a new conception of family education, and Dewey observes that «what is going on in Russia appears to be a planned acceleration of this process» (ibid., 85). Finally, concerning the 'complex method', Dewey deepens the concept of «socially useful work» as a criterion to determine the value of Kilpatrick's 'project method' used inside Soviet educational institutions (colonies and schools). and, although his impression doesn't correspond to reality, he argues:

That which distinguishes the Soviet schools both from other national systems and from the progressive schools of other countries (with which they have much in common) is precisely the conscious control of every educational procedure by reference to a single and comprehensive social purpose (ibid., 83).

In the chapter devoted to education, *A New School for a New Era?*, he underlines that the main idea of the underlying reform is connecting schools with social life. For the first time «there is an educational

system officially organized on the basis of this principle» (ibid., 88). He observes also that the American influence, rather than that of Tolstoy, was on the whole predominant. The central place of human labor in educational curricula was evident in the organization of the curriculum. Dewey underlines that the 'complex method' should be intended as a method that involves «a united intellectual scheme of organization» and that it was connected with the concept of auto-organization of children, which was adopted by another well-known educator, Moisei M. Pistrak, and other pedagogues, but was considered artificial in American schools. Dewey continues:

In view of the prevailing idea of other countries as to the total lack of freedom and total disregard of democratic methods in Bolshevik Russia, it is disconcerting, to say the least, to anyone who has shared in that belief, to find Russian school children much more democratically organized than are our own; and to note that they are receiving through the system of school administration a training that fits them, much more systematically that is attempted in our professedly democratic country, for later active participation in the self-direction of both local communities and industries (ibid., pp. 98-99).

The Soviet educational system was a «going concern: a self-moving organism». Nevertheless, he concludes that he felt humiliated that the liberal principles of progressive education were incorporated more in Soviet schools than in American ones, and that American teachers could find models in Russia of schools where progressive democratic ideas were completely embodied.

## **Conclusion**

Analysing some elements of Dewey's reception is important for the history of transnational education, because his ideas met very different political contexts, and his methods were therefore adapted to differing school systems. Nevertheless, comparing Dewey's reception before and after the Russian Revolution of 1917 indicates, on one hand, a very deep interest in progressive education and in its innovations and, on the other hand, a different degree of political openness toward these foreign innovations in post-revolutionary Russia and before the advent of Stalinist totalitarianism.

The advent of Stalinist schools at the beginning of the 1930s meant a return to the Tsarist culture of education, with strong discipline and traditional learning strategies based on teachers' authority. During the Cold War, there was a strong attack made on Dewey, and his impressions of Soviet Russia were considered from a political perspective. In 1952, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* cut down the size of

the article on Dewey, and he is described as «a reactionary bourgeois philosopher and sociologist» who worked «in the interests of aggressive policies of the government of the USA». Moreover, he is charged with «spreading racial obscurantism, amorality, unscrupulousness», and is condemned for using education «as a tool to indoctrinate capitalism on the one hand, to foment hatred of Communism on the other», being «an ideologist of American Imperialism (and) a violent enemy of the USSR» (Brickman, 1960, 85).

It goes without saying that the translations made of Dewey's works corresponded to each phase of reception. In 1968, *Liberty and Culture* (*Svoboda u kul'tura*) was translated and from the 1990s, some other works have also been translated into Russian, the most recent example being *Democracy and Education* (*Demokratiia i obrazovanie*, 2000).

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