

“School for Life “– Theoretical Background and Analysis of Croatian Reform in School Education

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Abstract

Objections to the fact that education is, on the one hand, overburdened by theory and separate from practice or, on the other hand, completely separate from theory can be found in contemporary researches and theory of education. These objections also imply the problem of selecting the content, as well as the way of teaching and formulating the desired outcomes arising from the education process. One of the possible solutions to this problem is the concept of “school for life”, which, in the pursuit of John Dewey’s philosophy of education, leads to the abolition of the false dichotomy of theory and practice in education. Contemporary education can, therefore, no longer be understood as a process in which passive subjects acquire knowledge, but as activity of subjects that by experimenting and innovating adjust the content that comes from experience and ultimately applies them again to everyday life. In this way, the outcomes of the educational process should be understood not as dogmatic reproductions of existing knowledge, but as an entity’s ability to participate fully in the life of the community to which it belongs, including lifelong education, participating in the process of acquiring work experience and active, responsible and constructive action within community. The demand for meaningful education related to the subject’s developmental age, its interests and close to its everyday life experiences is also shaped by the current reform of the Croatian educational system, which is developing under the concept of “school for life”. The aim of this paper is to establish the theoretical framework of such a request, to analyse specific Croatian case and to examine how close to the contemporary tendencies in education Croatian reform in school education has really come to.

Keywords: John Dewey, philosophy of education, “school for life”, contemporary education, Croatian reform in school education

1. Introduction

For most people, Dewey’s work is probably most recognizable and known by educational and political theories. However, for those who have read some of his works in education and political theory, it is also known that those theories are often intertwined. For Dewey, it is education that leads to functional democratic society. Of course, democracy, as Dewey sees it, is not just one of the systems of government, it is more the way the Western civilization should function and how it should be built around the ability to effectively solve problems and discover inventive solutions. Of course, there are some generic skills, common values and general knowledge that students should be taught when undergoing educational processes and they absolutely must be included in economic and civic activities. However, the main goal is to develop students’ abilities that will guarantee the development of intellectually and morally capable agents for democratic life in the future. To be able to secure a democratic way of life and the desired problem-solving approach it is mandatory for Dewey to radically change the way societies educate their children. The old, traditional, educational paradigm with its curriculum-centred approach, strict authority of teachers and external motivation should be replaced with progressive methods of developing students’ abilities through their own interest and everyday life experiences and with teachers that guide their students and utilize their internal motivation. Dewey starts with pragmatism and develops his own educational theory – educational instrumentalism

- that should help to achieve the main goals of education as he sees it. This way, memorizing facts, developing predetermined skills and gaining knowledge that is not necessarily related to contemporary world prove to be obsolete concepts that societies must overcome. Overcoming those concepts in practice is, of course, a different matter that is not easy to achieve. The term "School for Life" is an often-adopted term that stands for all the aforementioned new and progressive educational processes. How different societies cope with adopting these new guidelines and aims that should lead to the implementation of the problem-solving concept of education is a matter of experiential research and case study analysis. Therefore, we will offer some insights into the undergoing Croatian educational reform, its problems, aims and compatibility with Deweyan theory of education for life.

2. Instrumentalism in Education – Theoretical Framework for Learning and Teaching Through Experience

Contrary to dualistic views which advocate separation of sensations and ideas, separation of stimulus and response or, even broader, separation of body and mind¹, John Dewey² famously argues that human experience is not a disjointed sequence of limited activities that are separated and completed in themselves, but a comprehensive reflex arc or division of labor of organic unity (Dewey, 1896: 358). Therefore, human experience is built by "sensation or peripheral stimulus; idea, or central process (the equivalent of attention); and motor response, or act, as three disconnected existences, having to be somehow adjusted to each other" (Dewey, 1896: 361). It is not hard to perceive the similarity of Dewey's psychological starting point regarding the structure of one's experience, that is, students' experience when it comes to the problem of education and the nature of knowledge, and his doctrine of educational instrumentalism derived from the concept of pragmatism in philosophy of science. Aside from just being described as a practical approach to problems and affairs, pragmatism³ is considered a philosophical movement, especially active in USA where it was founded by Charles S. Peirce and William James. Pragmatism stipulates that (1) thoughts are holders of functions that guide action and (2) that truth is to be tested by the practical consequences of belief ("Pragmatism" (2019)). Similar to pragmatism, Dewey presents his understanding of the process of learning and education – human experience is a developing system of activities that are initiated by thoughts and that lead to accepting or rejecting starting ideas by testing them through that same experience and proving them to be true or false.⁴ Understood in this particular way, ideas are a kind of mechanisms that enable people to predict natural events, to understand social processes or to build their own institutions. All of the things mentioned should obviously benefit humankind and thus make the education primary concern of developed societies. Therefore, psychological functionalism⁵ or our natural predisposition for acquiring knowledge as a starting point leads to educational instrumentalism as a mechanism by which acquired knowledge will be shown as useful in understanding of nature and our own society. Taking everything that was said into consideration, Dewey "shows that the subject of a stimulus (e.g., the student) is not a passive recipient of, say, a sensation but an agent who *takes* it amidst other ongoing activities in a larger environmental field" (Hildebrand, 2018). That is the reason why, at least for Dewey, learning process should be organized as a continuing activity or as a process in which inquirers (students) should move from questioning facts of the world around them to the coherent and useful answers that make their living in that same everyday world possible and meaningful. Such is the nature of a true educational process for Dewey and it is more than obvious that, following his line of argumentation, he argues for problem-oriented teaching and learning which, in turn, is very similar to scientific research:

"This scientific attitude of mind might, conceivably, be quite irrelevant to teaching children and youth. But this book also represents the conviction that such is not the case; that the native and unspoiled attitude of childhood, marked by ardent

¹ This dichotomy is also known as the mind-body problem, or even soul-body problem, and refers to an unsolved problem of the nature of the relationship between thought and consciousness as results of activity of the mind and the brain as a physical entity. The problem was especially addressed by René Descartes, resulting in Cartesian dualism, meaning there is a clear distinction between mind and matter. The complexity of this problem is widely acknowledged and in order not to complicate it even further, there is a tendency to avoid the term *soul* due to its additional religious meanings which, in turn, can move interest to completely different, although related problems. For Dewey, natural body that is manifesting consciousness and thought is a sort of a mystery (Dewey, 1929: 248).

² For more details on Dewey's work on education and philosophy in general, see J. S. Gouinlock (2019), D. Hildebrand (2018), and R. Field.

³ For further reading on pragmatism, see entry "Pragmatism" by C. Legg and C. Hookway (2019).

⁴ The difference between instrumentalism and scientific realism is related to the truth and falsehood of theoretical terms. While instrumentalism holds that those terms should provide meaningful descriptions of the natural world and is not concerned with their correspondence to external reality, scientific realism holds that, besides reliable predictions, theoretical terms must describe the world accurately. For further details, see entry "Instrumentalism" by R. de Neufville (2018).

⁵ For further details on psychological functionalism, see entry "Functionalism" by J. Levin (2018) and "Functionalism" (2017).

curiosity, fertile imagination, and love of experimental inquiry, is near, very near, to the attitude of the scientific mind.” (Dewey, 1910: iii).

There is an obvious relation between scientific research and educational process, but not in a sense of the latter being the same as the former, but on a different, lower level. Dewey's main point is that educational process, and that means both learning and teaching, should be problem-based, focused on the student and oriented towards developing children's natural predispositions for curiosity, imagination and experimenting. Everything aforementioned should also be related to the facts of external world that surrounds students and in which they live in. In conclusion, this way students have to solve problems that are part of their world and in which, by solving those problems, they will improve their own lives as much as the lives of other members of their community. That is the theoretical framework of the so-called “School for Life,” which is supposed to replace traditional schools and traditional educational processes of learning and teaching which are considered obsolete and which are not fulfilling the needs of students in the contemporary world. Therefore, it is mandatory to show what this change consists of when talking about specific school systems.

3. School for Life – Practical Changes in School System

Although John Dewey was preoccupied with different philosophical themes and questions, he saw the potential that philosophy and philosophical inquiry had in dealing with educational problems. Trying to avoid overspecialization in philosophical inquiries, he saw everyday life as a legitimate area for experimenting, researching and problem-solving. Taking into consideration the specificity of philosophy, it can be concluded that philosophy can be seen as a general theory of education, although the term *education* is already burdened with its own problems and history (Siegel, Phillips and Callan 2018):

“The educational point of view enables one to envisage the philosophic problems where they arise and thrive, where they are at home, and where acceptance or rejection makes a difference in practice. If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow-men, philosophy may even be defined as *the general theory of education*.” (Dewey, 1916: 338).

However, it would be wrong to think of Dewey and his work as only theory-oriented or as just theory-producing with philosophy as a starting point. Dewey was also well known for his high school and college teaching, extensive writing on education, dealing with curricula and even administering schools and departments of education. Perhaps his biggest practical impact in the educational field was establishing the University of Chicago's Laboratory School¹ where he experimented with the already mentioned concepts of instrumentalism and psychological functionalism (Hildebrand, 2018). Education, as Dewey saw it, had to be oriented towards the development of students' natural predispositions and towards establishing their rightful place among other people in the communities in which they belong. Besides setting those main goals of educational processes, Dewey contributed to the development of the practical side of making those processes possible. For Dewey, a new paradigm of education meant that the whole concept of learning and teaching should be reconsidered and revised. While learning, as already mentioned, should be problem oriented, old teaching roles and concepts had to be abandoned for the most part. Of course, teachers were still expected to be experts in their respectful fields of teaching, but they also had to get to know their students and those who they teach. This meant that they had to get familiar with students' cultural and personal backgrounds because learning processes that should be established in a connection to a specific student and their everyday life require knowledge of that same student in order to integrate specific lessons and specific learners. (Hildebrand, 2018). Problem-oriented learning and teaching demanded even greater change in order to move from the traditional education. Besides working on their expertise and getting in touch with the social contexts those students lived in, teachers were obliged to abandon traditional methods of rewarding and/or punishing students. That obsolete form of external motivation was about to be replaced by a form of internal motivation, and by that, the Deweyan new educational paradigm included connections that had to be established between the schools' pre-existing curricular goals and specific students and their interests.² These parts of the new educational paradigm are possibly the most recognizable ones in the contemporary school systems. The final major change in education was the one regarding the content that is supposed to be taught, even though that is just one of the major questions regarding aims and questions about education, and even more broad, schooling (Siegel, Phillips and Callan 2018). While traditional education was

¹ As mentioned by J. Gouinlock (2019) and further analysed in „University of Chicago Laboratory Schools“ (2013).

² As it will be shown, Dewey not only insisted on students' specific interests, but also considered them to be fully compatible with the interests of the whole community. This way, it was possible to connect students' development and growth of true democratic society.

centred on the curriculum and, that is to say, centred on content and facts that students were to memorize, progressive educational theorists were trying to establish education that would be centred on children.¹ So, contrary to the traditionalists who thought that “children were empty cabinets which curriculum fills with civilization’s lessons” and that “content was supreme, and instruction should discipline children to ensure they are receptive” (Hildebrand, 2018), Dewey promoted the child as the centre of education, but including the broader context or family and community in which the child lives and in which their everyday life, together with the problems that emerge, takes place. However, turning his attention from curricula and memorizing to psychological and sociological context and problem-solving does not mean that there are no facts and content that should be included in educational processes, that there is no need for teachers as experts or that there even is no need for teachers in their traditional roles at all. It is also possible to highlight some of the most known objections to Dewey’s educational reform as follows: 1) Dewey promotes ahistorical and cultureless education, 2) Dewey sacrifices knowledge, facts and subject matter to skills and processes, 3) Dewey rejects the authority of teachers (Petrovic, 1998: 513); and to show that it is safe to say that Dewey takes middle ground when referring to these aspects of education. Dewey accepts the importance of content or facts and values that are being taught in schools, but rejects the superiority of memorizing and the unquestionable position of teachers. That is why, when faced with the dilemma about the dominant education system, Dewey’s view is much closer to the progressivists than to the traditionalists. Saying that, reorganizing education the way that Dewey suggested it should be organized means that schools will have to become institutions which are familiar with students’ social and psychological context and which provide knowledge and values that are in the best interest of students and their respectful communities through problem-based learning and specific students’ interests that arise from everyday life.

3.1. Contemporary Education – Improving Self and the Society

There are obvious benefits that education and schooling provide. From economic prosperity to placing value in education and knowledge by themselves as something we strive for and want to live by. The problematic part about the goals and aims of education is the time in which we expect those benefits to be evident. Dewey’s educational progressivism acknowledges and accepts both short term and long-term goals and aims:

“For Dewey, the school and the classroom teacher, as a workforce and provider of a social service, have a unique responsibility to produce psychological and social goods that will lead to both present and future social progress.” (Talebi, 2015: 7).

This becomes even clearer when explaining why both the present and the future are equally important. Developing students’ predispositions in the present is important because of their contemporary life and inability to precisely foresee what the civilization will look like in the future (Talebi, 2015: 7). However, Dewey is aware of those same students participating in the industrial and economic processes in the future, so their abilities and skills will have to prove useful even in that unpredictable future. However, participating in those processes should not be the final goal of education as Dewey sees it. The main goal should be preserving and improving the most important part of the Western civilization and that, of course, is democracy but not just as a system of government. So, in conclusion, instead of developing randomly predetermined skills, the main goal of education is to develop students’ natural predispositions in order to produce intelligent, moral² and competent citizens that will think and act in true democratic spirit. Of course, this is rather easy to say and hard to actually do, and there are critics who praise Dewey’s ideas, but also point out it is hard to say how those ideas would be implemented in reality:

“However appealing John Dewey’s thought may be, there is no denying that it lacks a sense of *realpolitik*. Dewey’s descriptions of democracy as associated living, of schools as embryonic communities, and of politics as the education of

¹ The whole debate on whether Dewey failed to make and support true change in education and radically transform education in a way it really needed to be transformed, if we were to talk about new paradigm, should be left aside as it is not our main problem in this article. However, it can be pointed out that such criticism regarding Deweyan educational reform and his relying on traditional curricula exists and is often shown in Dewey’s relation to educational progressivism. For further reading on progressivism, see Labaree (2005), and for distinction between Dewey and progressivists, see Weis, DeFalco and Weis (2005).

² There are approaches that insist on moral and ethical dimension as the center of any Deweyan educational reform. The main reason behind this is to overcome utopian character of Dewey’s view and to show that “1) Dewey’s concept of ethical love and his argument that it is a means to social re-form and 2) Dewey’s concept of happiness and his argument that ethical love is the means to happiness.” (Fishman and McCarthy, 2010: 3).

publics have stirred the imagination of many people because they resonate with deeply humane and widely shared values. (...) Despite that, when one reads Dewey's writings wanting to know how the kind of democracy, education, or politics he described might be developed, one comes up lacking." (Condliffe Lagemann, 1996: 171).

It is yet to be seen how each educational and schooling system deals with the problems that occur when developing education the way Dewey wanted it to be, and to analyse and study cases that take into consideration the specifics of each education system is mandatory.

4. First Steps towards the "School for Life" in the Republic of Croatia

One of the foundations of every country's development is the quality of the formal education system. Dynamic changes that happened worldwide have led many countries to the conclusion that education systems must be adjusted and modernised in order to keep up with those changes (Schleicher, 2018). Numerous changes that have happened in Croatia over the past decade, especially undergoing the process of joining and becoming a full member of the European Union (2013), also reflected on the need for the Croatian schooling system to be reformed. Despite many attempts, the Croatian education system has not been thoroughly reformed in decades. One of the main objections to the system is that curricula are based on outdated educational theories whose foundations are rooted in traditional transmissional pedagogy and that are not compatible with the challenges and requirements of the new millennium (Bognar, 2016; Matijević, 2011). In that sense, the teaching and learning process in Croatia is almost exclusively based on the requirement to learn the prescribed content and it is focused on encouraging the adoption of factual knowledge and carrying out lower thought processes. Considering the great amount of prescribed compulsory content, there is not much space left for teachers' autonomy or innovation, or for a student-oriented teaching process. The focus of the educational process on learning the prescribed content has led to students playing a passive role in the teaching and learning process, as well as to them neglecting to develop the competences that are considered crucial in both personal and work life in the 21st century. Negative results of such an education system were apparent in the results of the PISA 2015 survey, the largest research conducted worldwide that assessed the knowledge and skills of fifteen-year-old students. Among other things, the research explored the extent to which students are capable of applying the knowledge they gained in school to everyday life and to new and unfamiliar situations. The results of PISA 2015 showed that Croatian fifteen-year-olds performed below-average when compared to their peers from other member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The results clearly show that students in Croatian schools are overwhelmed with a great amount of factual information that must be memorized, whereas processes that include understanding those facts, applying them and linking them to everyday life are almost non-existent (Bras' Roth, Markočić Dekanić and Markuš Sandrić, 2017).

One of the crucial moves whose goal was to reform the Croatian education system was the adoption of the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (2014). One of the aims of the Strategy was to implement an Comprehensive Curriculum Reform. The aim of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform, conducted by the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, was to change and implement an efficient education system in the Republic of Croatia. Some of the tasks of the reform were to establish and implement a type of education that would qualify the students to overcome the challenges in life and work in a modern world, and to come up with a curriculum that would establish a link between the education system and economic changes and needs. On that account, in 2015 began the work on the main curricular document named National Curriculum Framework (NCF), as well as the work on curricula for certain levels and areas of education, and for each subject.¹ Drafting those documents was based on previous attempts to improve the Croatian education system and on modern theories related to the processes teaching and learning processes. The Comprehensive Curriculum Reform aimed at modernizing the Croatian education system², i.e. at setting clear goals and learning outcomes that would develop students' entire personalities, at changing the paradigm of the teaching process in the sense of achieving a greater autonomy of the teachers in choosing the content, methods and teaching strategies, and at determining

¹ A total of 52 curriculum documents were drafted – the main one, National Curriculum Framework, national curricula for certain levels, types and areas of education, cross-curricular themes, curricula for each subject on elementary and secondary school levels, as well as the Framework for the Evaluation of the Learning Process and Outcomes in the Croatian Education System, the Framework for the Adjustment and Encouragement of Learning Experiences and Evaluation of Achievements of Students with Difficulties, and the Framework for the Encouragement of Learning Experiences and Evaluation of Achievements of Gifted Students

² In 2011, a National Framework Curriculum was adopted, and it represents the first attempt at reformation of the Croatian education system in accordance with modern teaching and learning theories. It is considered as one of the main documents that influenced the drafting of the National Curriculum Framework.

clear evaluation criteria and criteria for grading students' achievements. Moreover, the reform tried to emphasize the need for students' active participation in the teaching and learning process, development of students' skills and attitudes, such as critical and creative thinking, enterprise, innovation, responsibility towards self and others, solidarity, empathy, etc.

One of the first steps towards achieving the goals of the reform education programme and curriculum documents was the implementation of an experimental programme "School for Life"¹. The aim of that experimental programme was to verify the feasibility of curriculum documents, especially the curricula of certain subjects through practice, and the success of the implementation of student-focused methods and strategies in the teaching and learning process.

The "School for Life" experimental programme was conducted in 74 schools in the Republic of Croatia during the 2018/2019 school year. One of the main goals of the programme was to train teachers to establish a much greater autonomy they were granted by new curricular documents, i.e. the new paradigm of the teaching and learning process. The principal thesis was that only a teacher who is exempt from teaching prescribed content and who is granted freedom in the process of creating content and establishing their own teaching methods can be focused on achieving the learning outcomes, i.e. to think of the student as the centre of the teaching and learning process.

Teacher training was initially conducted online, and different tasks were produced for them to familiarize themselves as much as possible with relevant information related to concepts and changes that come with the educational reform. The goal was for the teachers to take part in different activities and tasks under leadership of a mentor, to contemplate the teaching and learning process, introduce themselves with different teaching and evaluation methods, exchange their own ideas, materials, techniques and evaluation methods with other teachers. Conclusions about the success of the conducted teacher training will only be able to be drawn after the implementation of the curriculum reform in all schools is complete, which is expected to happen in the 2019/2020 school year.

5. John Dewey as Inspiration to Education Reform in the Republic of Croatia

As we have already pointed out, John Dewey established that experience does not only encompass passive observation and subsequent acquisition of knowledge, but it should also be viewed as actively influencing things. If this is put into the context of education, i.e. teaching and learning, it can be said that the process of learning happens by doing. Students apply the knowledge and skills they acquired, and, in doing so, reconstruct their own knowledge and skills, as well as acquire new ones. This is why the term *learning by doing* is associated with Dewey's perspective on the learning process – it is close to the pedagogy of experiential learning that places the student in the centre of the teaching and learning process (Vujčić, 2016; Cindrić, Miljković and Strugar, 2010). Moreover, Dewey emphasizes the importance of moral development that can be interpreted as development of affective area, i.e. moral values that are the foundation of a community.

The goal of this chapter is to establish to what extent has Dewey's view of learning as active participation of students in the process of construction and reconstruction of their own knowledge, based on their acquired knowledge and experiences and aimed at acquiring new ones, built into the National Curriculum Framework, the main document of the current education reform in the Republic of Croatia. Moreover, its goal is to determine the extent to which the National Curriculum Framework encourages the development of values whose aim it is to shape citizens that actively participate in the community. To summarize, we will analyse to what extent has the new document influenced the Croatian education system in the sense of distancing itself from learning that is based on the transfer of knowledge and memorizing facts towards learning that is based on the active role of students, research-based, problem-based and project-based classes and collaborative learning. We will also analyse if the education system encourages adoption of values.

The National Curriculum Framework is the main document that prescribes the principles, values, goals, expectations from students, evaluation methods and the structure of education system of the Republic of Croatia. In other words, it represents the manner in which education is organised and structured, from the very beginning to the end of secondary school. It was written in 2016 as part of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform, and it served as a base for all other curricular documents.

¹ A part of the Croatian public considers "School for Life" a process separate from the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform. This is due to the fact that not all curricular documents that were drafted during the process of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform were officially approved, and some of them have been significantly amended. However, the official position of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia is that "School for Life" is an extension of what was drafted and partially implemented as part of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform.

By analysing the National Curriculum Framework, we will try to conclude how the process of education in the Republic of Croatia was contemplated about and if learning is defined as a social activity that includes the relationship between the process of education and acting in a society.

The introduction of the National Curriculum Framework states that one of the goals of the curriculum reform is to provide the students with a form of education that would be closer to their everyday life and that would train them for the challenges of modern life. Another goal is to introduce a form of education that would provide the society with a dynamic, responsible and constructive action in different communities (Jokić, Baranović, Hitrec, Reškovac, Ristić Dedić, Vuk, B., Vuk R., 2016, 3). Moreover, the National Curriculum Framework emphasizes the need to place the student in the centre of the education process and the necessity to shape the youth as people who:

recognize their potential and use it both for their own growth and development, and for the good of the community;

utilize their knowledge and skills to cooperate with others, solve problems and think critically and creatively;

are open to understanding other communities and respect the rights, dignity and value of every person;

actively and responsibly participate in the community (Jokić et al., 2016, 12-13).

The National Curriculum Framework also defines some generic competencies that represent a sort of precondition to living and working in the 21st century. Those competencies are possible and should be encouraged at all levels and in all types of education. Dewey's thoughts on education can easily be recognized among the emphasized generic competencies. Thus, the National Curriculum Framework singles out the following: need to develop students' knowledge and skills that enable them to recognize, analyse and solve problems, think critically, evaluate and conclude based on new information, creative and innovative worldview, cooperation and connection with others (Jokić et al., 2016, 16-19). Finally, the National Curriculum Framework prescribes the principles of learning and teaching while emphasizing the need to use strategies and approaches that enable the following:

active role of students in the sense of encouraging the learning process by directly observing, researching and participating;

connection with everyday life;

achieving distance from lower cognitive processes and adopting facts in accordance with more complex forms of thinking, such as critical and creative thinking, encouraging innovation, problem-solving;

encouraging cooperation and interaction;

linking the new learning process with existing knowledge, skills, experiences (Jokić et al., 2016, 24-25).

It is evident that the National Curriculum Framework, the main document that regulates the education process in the Republic of Croatia, is closer to modern teaching and learning theories that are rooted, among other things, in Dewey's thoughts on education process. It also emphasizes the need for placing the student in the centre of the teaching and learning process and their active role in the process of constructing their own knowledge.

On the other hand, the National Curriculum Framework mentions and shortly explains the following values: knowledge, solidarity, identity, responsibility, integrity, respect, health and enterprise (Jokić et al., 2016, 13). It is not possible to conclude to what extent are the process of development and adoption of values really encouraged in the Croatian education system based on listing values in only one place in the document. However, we can say that National Curriculum Framework has dedicated more space to emphasizing the importance of student participation in the teaching and learning process than to the importance of developing a system of values. The true image of the extent to which the development and adoption of a system of values is encouraged in the teaching and learning process will only be able to be seen after conducting an analysis of course curricula, i.e. textbooks, and empirical research on the teaching process.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to give a summary of John Dewey's educational thought and show its relation to contemporary changes in education. His views on education, often described as progressive in contrast to traditionalists, introduce educational instrumentalism developed from pragmatism. Instead of predetermined generic skills that are not necessarily related to the society students belong to, Dewey argues for developing intellectual and moral abilities that emerge from the

change in the educational paradigm, that is, knowledge and skills that students acquire and develop should come from their experience and everyday life. It is partly a child-centred approach with preserved contents, facts and values important for any functioning, democratic community. However, the way in which knowledge is acquired and in which skills are developed should not be predetermined with disregard to students' natural abilities and social contexts they come from. Their backgrounds prove to be as important as curricula. Related to that fact, memorizing facts and authority of teachers undergo some changes too. The role of teachers becomes a guiding one, and memorizing steps out of the way to make room for education based on problem-solving. All of these changes show how Dewey's progressive theory of education is related to the contemporary understanding of education expressed with the term "school for life," and is even its starting and focal point. Dewey's theory of education therefore proves to be a theoretical framework through which we can analyse specific curricula. In that regard, we incorporated the current educational reform in Croatia into Dewey's educational theory and tried to show that it is indeed Dewey's thoughts and contemporary understanding of education that can be recognized in the process of change in education in Croatia. However, what the specific results of this change will be, remains to be seen and another analysis and case study should be done to compare those results with the reform's proclaimed aims and goals, like the ability to participate fully in the life of the community to which it belongs, including permanent education, participating in the process of acquiring work experience and active, responsible and constructive action within community.

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