

**РАЗДЕЛ III**  
**МИРОВОЙ ОПЫТ ТЕОРИИ ПЕДАГОГИКИ**

**Part III. WORLD EXPERIENCE IN THE THEORY OF PEDAGOGY**

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**DERMEVAL SAVIANI'S NON-CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY  
AS CRITICAL OF PROGRESSIVE SCHOOL IN JOHN DEWEY**

**Samuel Mendonça** (Campinas, Brazil)

*Introduction.* This essay presents foundations of the John Dewey's progressive school and raises suspicion on the consolidated critics established in Brazil by Dermeval Saviani concerning John Dewey education's conception. As a hypothesis, it proposes that if the progressive school is non-critical, like intended by the historical-critical theory says by Dermeval Saviani perhaps his theory is also non-critical, by some other reason, because it stimulates a critique without looking into John Dewey's work.

*Methodology and methods of the research.* From the literature review it was not finding any research concerning John Dewey, Dermeval Saviani or any discussion highlighting Brazil case. It demonstrates that it is necessary to read the work by John Dewey, besides circumscribing it and referencing it so that a minimally rigorous critique can be attained.

*The results of the research.* The current work supports the argument that the five steps of the historical-critical theory stem from the five points of the progressive school, highlighting the existence of a tacit acknowledgement from the former with respect to the latter.

*Conclusion.* The criticism of the progressive school, made by Saviani, without any indication of the John Dewey's text looks fragile. It is not only a methodological weakness, but also of merit, and the main issue with this kind of fragility, considering the importance of the author, is the influence caused over other authors, as demonstrated in the case of Silveira.

*Keywords:* John Dewey, Progressive school, Historical-critical theory, Dermeval Saviani.

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**Самуэль Мендонса** – доктор философии, профессор, Папский Католический университет Кампинаса.

E-mail: samuelms@gmail.com

**Samuel Mendonça** – PhD, Professor, Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas.

## НЕКРИТИЧЕСКАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ ДЕРМЕВАЛЯ САВИАНИ КАК КРИТИЧЕСКИЙ ВЗГЛЯД НА ПРОГРЕССИВНУЮ ШКОЛУ ДЖОНА ДЬЮИ Самуэль Мендонса (Кампинас, Бразилия)

*Введение.* В статье рассматриваются основы прогрессивной школы Джона Дьюи и ставится под сомнение консолидированная критика, инициированная в Бразилии Дермевалем Савиани и направленная на концепцию образования Джона Дьюи. Предполагается, что если прогрессивная школа не критична, как это предусмотрено историко-критической теорией Дермеваля Савиани, то, возможно, его собственная теория также не критична, потому что она стимулирует критику, не опираясь на работы Джона Дьюи.

*Методология и методика исследования.* При обзоре литературы не было найдено ни одного исследования, посвященного изучению работ Джона Дьюи, Дермеваля Савиани, или какого-либо обсуждения, освещающего опыт Бразилии. В связи с этим необходимо читать труды Джона Дьюи, а не только описывать их и ссылаться на них. Так можно выявить критерии методологического исследования.

*Результаты исследования.* В статье приводится аргумент, что пять шагов историко-критической теории являются следствием пяти пунктов теории прогрессивной школы.

*Заключение.* Критика прогрессивной школы со стороны Савиани без ссылок на тексты Джона Дьюи выглядит необоснованной. Однако это не только методологическая слабость, но и достоинство. Основной проблемой такого рода слабости, учитывая авторитет Дьюи, является влияние, оказываемое на других авторов, как в случае Сильвейры.

*Ключевые слова:* Джон Дьюи, прогрессивная школа, историко-критическая теория, Дермеваль Савиани.

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**Introduction.** John Dewey (1859–1952) has many important writings concerning democracy and for sure, study his legacy in Brazil is a foundation for understand the society, the democracy and the school. Besides this focus, studying his thought is necessary to understand about his philosophy, concerning his theories and around his ideas. This is not what we have in Brazil in general, unfortunately. For years, a very know Brazilian scholar it calls Dermeval Saviani presented John Dewey's ideas but not from his books. This is the main topic of this critical article or, in other words, we are going to demonstrate how non-critical is the Dermeval Saviani's critics concerning John Dewey's thought.

From the literature review it was not finding any research concerning John Dewey, Dermeval Saviani or any discussion highlighting Brazil case.

According to John Dewey's thoughts, the school space sets up the society space, a wide relationship that would make issues evident within the school, if his ideas were applied in Brazil. Certainly, American institutions do have issues, but theirs are definitely distinct from ours. This first observation is important to immediately remark that the meaning of Progressive school in Brazil per-

haps is not related to the same concept in the United States, at least the concept engendered by John Dewey, in particular in his work *Experience and Education* (1997). Evidently an anachronism should be avoided herein, therefore discerning between the Brazilian and the American democracies seems to be the initial condition to reflect on possible contributions by John Dewey for our democracy. Analogously, as far as schools are concerned the caveat is that a correlation between the American and the Brazilian schools should not be established right away, thus a careful reading of John Dewey's works is required so that whichever critical reasoning about his thoughts takes the context of his works into account.

Considering the diversity encountered on the published works by both the John Dewey Society (2017) and the Philosophy of Education Society (2017), American entities that have promoted a number of experts in the Dewey's subject matter as well as the diversity of the exploited themes by this author in the course of his intellectual trajectory, the present essay plays the additional role of an invitation to the study of the John Dewey's work, a hundred years past the publication of his work entitled *Democracy and Education*.

In Brazil, despite the fact that Anísio Teixeira (1993, 1977) had been a John Dewey's student in the Columbia University and had translated some of his books (Nobre, Mendonça, 2016), it was Dermeval Saviani (2000) the one that effectively spread John Dewey's name, through his critique of the progressive school or the new pedagogy. It is worth clarifying that Saviani (2000) did not disclose John Dewey's work (1997, 2009, and 2010), since Saviani did not employ it in his book, a regrettable slip in a so important work for the Brazilian academic community.

No reference to any of Dewey's texts is encountered in the work entitled *Escola e Democracia* by Saviani (2000), a flagrant evidence of the fragility on the critique performed by Saviani. For a demonstration of the lack of accuracy of that work, on the occasion of the presentation of the five steps of the historical-critical theory, Saviani (2000, p. 70) claims that: «...If it was possible to translate the teaching methods I am proposing in the form of steps similarly to the Herbart and Dewey's schemes, I would say that the starting point is not ... the activity that is the students' initiative (new pedagogy)»<sup>1</sup>. As a matter of fact, the names of Dewey and his theory are printed out in the aforementioned work, however neither any inspection nor any evidence of source for the work of this American thinker have taken place. Thus, the Saviani's classification which introduces the new pedagogy or alternatively the progressive school on the list of non-critical theories is fragile to say the least.

This claim is based on the suspicion that the progressive school criticized by Saviani (2000) does not relate to the conception of the progressive school developed by John Dewey (1997, 2009, and 2010). Interestingly enough, per-

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<sup>1</sup> In another essay, Lourenço Filho and Mendonça (2013, 2014) developed foundations of the progressive school of John Dewey, reworked in other terms in this part of this essay.

haps a large number of readers who really care about the rigorous and systematic knowledge will be able to meet the assumptions of the progressive school, straight from Dewey's text (1997, 2009, 2010) and not the fragile Saviani's (2000) critique which ignored the work by Dewey altogether.

Actually, there are authors who use the consolidated classification from the Saviani (2000) that the progressive school is noncritical, extending it up to the liberal conception of education (Silveira, 2011), however, the referred author commits the same imprecision that his master. Moreover, he criticizes the new pedagogy and extends it to the so called liberal conception without making any reference to the text of Dewey, though, quite the contrary employing the aforementioned work by Saviani (2000) in a fragile fashion, which did not examine the work by Dewey.

Formally, the foundations of the progressive school or new pedagogy by John Dewey (1997, 2009, 2010) are presented, and then the five steps of the historical-critical theory of Saviani (2000) are expounded in comparison to the five steps of the new pedagogy by Dewey (2010) in order to argue in the sequel that if the progressive school is non-critical, paradoxically the historical-critical pedagogy may be non-critical as well, precisely due to the lack of methodological rigor in the consolidated critique to the progressive school consolidated, which did not take into account the text by John Dewey.

**Methodology and methods of the research<sup>2</sup>.** Shortly after a century of the Enlightenment, the American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1998) developed, as opposed to the traditional method of education, an educational theory known as the new pedagogy or the progressive education, inspired by pedagogical and social advances stemming from that movement and intimately influenced by the Rousseau's active pedagogy – centered on the figure of a child – and by the Kantian moral psychology.

The starting point of Dewey for the development of a new educational theory is contextually set on top of the pedagogical vision shared by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1968) – (1712–1778), Immanuel Kant (1996) – (1724–1804), to whom the education could be classified into two distinct phases, though dependent and linked to each other: the physical education and the practical (or moral) education. For example, the first step refers to the care of children under the responsibility of the parents or tutors designated by them, being considered of extreme importance to the full development of the individual. Dalbosco (2011, 2011a) accurately elaborated the development stages on the thought of Rousseau which somehow are the foundations of the pedagogical perspective of Kant (1996).

However, the new economic demands arising from the industrial development caused social transformations that also influenced the educational sector, providing the school with an increasing importance on the education of chil-

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<sup>2</sup> We translated *from* the original: «...educação é vida, não preparação para a vida ... tudo deve ser ensinado tendo em vista o seu uso e função na vida» (Teixeira, 1973, p. 37).

dren. In a sense, Dewey (2010, p. 12) realized that «...Concentration of industry and the division of labor have practically eliminated household and neighborhood occupations – at least for educational purposes». In his argument, it gave rise to «...Radical conditions which have change, and only an equally radical change in education suffices» (Dewey, 2010, p. 12), justifying the need for an educational overhaul, both in practical and in philosophical levels.

On the other hand, paradoxically Dewey (1997, 2002) believed the school itself seemed to lose its original educational and community meanings, becoming abstract and unrelated to the social life. He said: «If then you contrast this scene with what goes on in the family, for example, you will appreciate what is meant by the school being a kind of institution sharply marked off from any other form of social organization» (Dewey, 1997, p. 18). Thereupon, Dewey warned to the fact that the school did not follow the social and economic development in which people were actually immersed and for which they worked and lived.

According to Dewey (1997), the school was attached to a kind of stagnant knowledge and wisdom surpassed, since the purpose of this was to «...prepare the young for the future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill which comprehend the material of instruction» (Dewey, 1997, p. 18). In contrast to this conception of school and education, Dewey advocated the importance of education as a process with a purpose in itself, certainly necessary for the future life of the learner, but, above all, alive and important in the present.

In his presentation of the pedagogy of Dewey contained in the introduction of Dewey's book entitled *Vida e Educação* (1973), Anísio Teixeira (1973, p. 37) exposes the philosophical position of the author whose understanding is that «...education is life, not a preparation for life». This way, he proceeds, «...all should be taught with a view to its usage and function in life» (Teixeira, 1973, p. 37)<sup>3</sup>.

Gadotti (2002, p. 144) also understands that «...According to such a vision, education was essentially about process and not product; a process of reconstruction and reconstitution of experience; a process of continuous improvement of the individual efficiency». Thus, the purpose of education would be in itself, day by day, during the process, admitting that self-interest and the prior knowledge of children as driving forces.

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<sup>3</sup> *It is worth clarifying*, in this case, that the concept of «learning to learn» understood in this text, is not related to the approach advocated by Perrenoud (1999) which outlines pedagogy of skills, though many of his assumptions are referring in fact to active pedagogy of Dewey, especially learning through problem solving. We highlight this important distinction, because, Duarte (2001), in a text that is exactly about this topic, relates directly the Perrenoud's pedagogy of skills and Dewey's active pedagogy, stating that the two strands are consonants, classifying them as «pedagogy of learning to learn».

The base of Dewey's pedagogy consists of a practical education based on learning by experience, allowing the learner to build and rebuild the knowledge from situations that are common in everyday life, that is, logical and practical elements for his perception, that are present in his cultural experience. In an effort to attain it, Teixeira (1973, p. 37) insists that «...the school has to put away the old system, to adopt the actual 'experience' as a unit of its program rather than the 'lesson', if it is the case that the school wishes to satisfy its purpose», defending the revolutionary position of the American thinker in the formulation of a new pedagogy, at the expense of the old traditional education.

In the book *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (2009, p. 56) presents his pedagogical project, in the chapter «Aims in Education», which «...is to enable individuals to continue their education – or that the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth». In other words, Dewey believes that the function of education is to prepare the learner for «learning to learn»<sup>4</sup> and, with it, enabling him to adapt himself to several demands imposed by life in his future. In this sense, we have a clear notion of an education that seeks to promote the freedom of the individual, since it provides him with conditions to walk by himself and to become independent to grow and instruct himself. It does not mean it is all about an individualist conception of education, rather it is absolutely an education of individuality.

Thus, similarly to the Enlightenment thinkers, Dewey (1991, 1997) criticizes the vertical and methodical imposition by the traditional school system, that inhibits the active participation of students and preset strict standards of behavior and conduct, often disproportionate to the child development and maturity, without taking into account the characteristics and experiences of students, finally understanding that the central objective of the educational school processes should be the development of autonomous individuals, considering people as unique and original beings, along with their characteristics, needs and interests.

According to Dewey (1997, p. 18), «...the traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly maturity». This type of schema, from the author's standpoint, extends the distance between the object and the mind of a child even further, creating an «...gulf between the mature or adult products and the experience and abilities of the young» (Dewey, 1997. p. 19).

Therefore, reflecting about the need for the design of a progressive school, Dewey (2002) notes even the furnishings of the traditional school, consisting of fixed and lined student desks, which conveys the idea of the existence of an intrinsic goal related to the maintenance of submission and order so that teachers can deal with as many students as possible, implying thereof in a passive and

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<sup>4</sup> We translated *from* the original: «...a proposição das pedagogias novas baseia-se no modelo da atividade da criança, sua ação, seus interesses e sua liberdade» (Morandi, 2008, p. 56).

receptive attitude from the students. Nevertheless, on the other hand the author proposes a living school, based upon action and learning through the experience.

Dewey believes that, in accordance with the traditional pattern, learning has its entire potential reduced, since «...Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders» (Dewey, 1997, p. 19), furthermore, in this sense, the autonomy development in students is constrained by the form and the method. While in traditional education the «...subject-matter furnishes the end [of the instruction], and it determines method» (Dewey, 2010, p. 8), being represented by a range of closed and static pieces of knowledge and defined by some kind of particular social convention of the culture in which it is embedded, not to mention the restricted role of the students, who are only assigned a duty of being docile, obedient and submissive so that they simply receive and accept whatever is said to them (Dewey, 1997, 2009, 2010). On the contrary, in the new education «...the child is the starting-point, the center, and the end» (Dewey, 2010, p. 9).

Morandi (2008, p. 56) states that, according to Dewey «...the proposition of the new pedagogies is based on the model of the child's activity, her action, interests and freedom»<sup>5</sup>. All educational efforts move towards the educational and intellectual needs of the learner; taking as its starting point the use of common and present elements in their everyday experience. Contrasting his new educational model to the old traditional paradigm, Dewey (1997) emphasizes that:

To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal; to preparation for a more or less remote future is opposed making the most of the opportunities of present life; to static aims and materials is opposed acquaintance with a changing world (Dewey, 1997, p. 19).

This short excerpt in the form of a synthesis allows us to realize the essence of the progressive school of Dewey, which is structured in opposition to the traditional paradigm, while advocating the importance of freedom, learning by experience, contextualization of the school knowledge with the reality of students, education as an end in itself, open-mindedness to new ideas and commitment to the future and to the social development. Still in the vein of understanding the theoretical framework underlying the new pedagogy of Dewey, Teixeira (1973, p. 28) states that «...the school should not be an isolated factory

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<sup>5</sup> We translated *from* the original: «...a escola não deve ser a oficina isolada onde se prepara o indivíduo, mas o lugar onde, numa situação real de vida, indivíduo e sociedade constituam uma unidade orgânica» (Teixeira, 1973, p. 28).

where an individual is prepared, but the place where in a real life situation individual and society constitute an organic unit»<sup>6</sup>.

In so doing, Dewey (2010) provides the school with the opportunity to become a «miniature of a community» in an «embryonic society», where the school can develop citizenship, responsibility and social participation in their students, transferring the learnt and experienced reality in the classroom to their everyday and concrete life, while the social life is rethought and reproduced within the school environment.

In contrast to the traditional school model, Dewey (2010) elaborates a new concept of school built upon action and learning through a personal experience, while stating that «...the moment children act they individualize themselves; they cease to be a mass and become the intensely distinctive beings that we acquainted with out of school» (Dewey, 2010, p. 33), thus paradoxically highlighting the importance of the individualization for the good social development of the student, without ignoring the obvious contribution offered by the collective aspect.

With a view to the understanding of the social aspect, Dewey (2010, p. 6) discusses the theme of the individual versus the collective in the context of school education, stating that «...we are apt to look at school from an individualistic stand-point, as something between teacher and pupil», because, in fact, the individual progress of each student mediated by it is what really matters, but advises that: «...yet the range of the outlook needs to be enlarged» (Dewey, 2010, p. 7), reaching also the social dimension.

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 individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself (Dewey, 2010, p. 7).

According to Dewey (2010) the school needs to relate itself to the concrete life of children, becoming a «second home» for them. The Dewey's project involves transforming schools into an «...embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history, and science» (Dewey, 2010, p. 29), providing students, from the perspective of the author, with «...instruments of effective self-direction» (Dewey, 2010, p. 29).

The last sentence of Dewey is noteworthy, which employs the term effective. From his point of view, the development of the student's autonomy is mainly directed towards the practical life, that is, towards the real life. As a result, he insists that the school shall be understood as the child's life itself and not

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<sup>6</sup> We translated from the original: «...a escola não deve ser a oficina isolada onde se prepara o indivíduo, mas o lugar onde, numa situação real de vida, indivíduo e sociedade constituam uma unidade orgânica» (Teixeira, 1973, p. 28).



unrelated to her. This is the motivation underlying his proposal for education through the experience and action, as commonly seen in a life in the wild.

The transference of the discussed and learnt subject-matter in school to other facets of life is mainly materialized in the context of life in community, as students exercise playing their roles of citizen. For this reason, we inevitably come to a conclusion concerning the importance of the school in the social development of its students, not only preparing them for life, but also empowering them to act as social individuals in their community, besides guiding them to develop their perception of collective life and to prepare for citizenship.

The citizenship exercise is closely related to the quality of the educational and cultural training received and developed by the individual, especially regarding his freedom to think and act based on principles he learned to choose as correct, fundamental elements of ethical and moral dimensions. Therefore, the actively conscious nonconceptual and participative training for citizenship presumably coincides with the training of autonomous learners.

That is why, Dewey (2002) explains that children lives should not be dissociated from what is taught in the school, rather the students prior knowledge should be given value, harnessed and developed as a starting point for the construction of new and meaningful knowledge. Upon realizing the relevance of prior knowledge, students engage further in their learning process, besides voluntarily developing their autonomy to quest for answers, for example to a problem proposed by their teacher.

Hence Dewey (2002) highlights the importance of the teacher in exercising the correlation between the material worked in the classroom and the environment surrounding and accompanying children in the course of their life, both in natural and social aspects. Such an exercise is a consequence of teachers' efforts towards the construction of a consistent context, fostering the understanding act in students from their personal experiences, which should be the basis for the preparation of their new interpretations and concepts about the world, combined with the freedom of their creativity and imagination. Morandi (2008, p. 55) agrees with Dewey on that by saying that «...teaching ... must be linked to the student's logic»<sup>7</sup>. According to Teixeira (1973, p. 39), «...the teacher is an essential element of the situation in which the student learns, moreover his function is precisely to direct, guide and stimulate the activity through the paths conquered by the adult knowledge and experience»<sup>8</sup>.

As for the interest in learning, Dewey (1973, p. 59) states that it may be triggered if «...if the subject-matter of the lessons be such as to have an appropriate

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<sup>7</sup> We translated *from* the original: «...o ensino ... deve estar vinculado à lógica do aluno» (Morandi, 2008, p. 55).

<sup>8</sup> We translated *from* the original: «...o professor é elemento essencial da situação em que o aluno aprende, e ua função é, precisamente, a de orientar, guiar, estimular a atividade através dos caminhos conquistados pelo saber e experiência do adulto» (Teixeira, 1973, p. 39).

place within the expanding consciousness of the child, if it grows out of his own past doings, thoughts and sufferings»<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, whenever the content is solely in accordance to the adult logic, thus being totally oblivious to the child life, such an involvement will require several maneuvers by the teacher, since, «...any relationship to childhood experience» (Dewey, 1973, p. 60). Therefore, it is mandatory to make this content «live intelligence», by emphasizing the its relevance and importance to the students, leading them to realize the meaning of this learning process and having them feel challenged to learn.

However, it is worth noting that Dewey is totally against the use of «...artificial and trick of method» (Dewey, 1973, p. 61) that, on the one hand, seem to «motivate» the student, but on the other hand, have him intellectually inactive. From Dewey's perspective (1973, p. 61), «...the mental assimilation does not work this way! It is a matter of awareness; if attention did not come into play, then neither the matter of interest was learned at all, nor transformed into intellectual force».

Teixeira (1973) presents a discussion based on his studies on the pedagogy of the American philosopher about two different ways of understanding the educational activity: mechanical training and education itself. According to Teixeira (1973, p. 22), «...training leads only to certain external conformation on habits and practices whose meaning we do not participate fully»<sup>10</sup>, i.e. something far from the child's life, not providing the child with conscious learning. «The child does not participate in the social significance of her habit»<sup>11</sup> (Teixeira, 1973, p. 22), she does not educate herself in fact.

In conclusion, Teixeira (1973, p. 22) claims that «...training is thus a preliminary and incomplete form of education», so that «true education» should lead the child to something higher than what is achieved through training or memorization. Furthermore, it should provide proper understanding and assignment of new meanings to the knowledge, or alternatively its «redirection» through the experience. For this reason, Dewey (1973, p. 46) states that «...the ideal is not gathering knowledge, but the development of skills».

Thus, Dewey (2002) justifies the need of a progressive school, where «...the life of the child becomes the all-controlling aim» (Dewey, 2010, p. 36). Teaching based on problem solving and in common situations of these kids everyday lives becomes a foundation for this new pedagogical model. Dewey (2002) declares that upon encouraging a child to think and react about certain problem situa-

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<sup>9</sup> We translated *from* the portuguese version: «...a matéria das lições tiver um lugar apropriado na expansão natural da consciência da criança; se nascer naturalmente das atividades, dos pensamentos e dos próprios sofrimentos da criança» (Dewey, 1973, p. 59).

<sup>10</sup> We translated *from* the original: «...o treino nos leva apenas a certa conformação externa com hábitos e práticas de cujo sentido não participamos integralmente» (Teixeira, 1973, p. 22).

<sup>11</sup> We translated *from* the original: «A criança não participa da significação social do seu hábito» (Teixeira, 1973, p. 22).

tions, one does not teach her in a mechanical fashion, rather one makes her to understand the principles involved.

As far as the principle – problem solving-based learning – is concerned, it follows Dewey's explanation.

<...> for the child to realize his own impulse by recognizing the facts, materials, and conditions involved, and then to regulate his impulse through that recognition, is educative. This is the difference, upon which I wish to insist, between exciting or indulging an interest and realizing it through its direction (Dewey, 2010, p. 40).

As stated previously, Dewey (2002) asserts the learning process must stem from an everyday life element, from an actual and concrete situation, from a social practice directly related to the apprentice life. In the sequel, «...for the child to realize his own impulse by recognizing the facts, materials, and conditions involved» (Dewey, 2010, p. 40), which refers to a stage of questioning and reflection, while evaluating possibilities and trying to understand the knowledge at hand, based on prior knowledge gathered in the course of a life, besides the interventions of the teacher.

The next step concerns the regulation of the initial impulse, when the child reflects and seeks the best alternatives to solve the proposed problem. Finally, the last step is the action itself, through which the child starts interfering in society, by solving problem situations and putting into practice the fruits of her labor. In this process, the teacher is the advisor, firstly acting «...through criticism, question, and suggestion» (Dewey, 2010, p. 40) and then, having the child «...consciousness of what he has done, and what he needs to do» (Dewey, 2010, p. 40). How to consider a perspective founded on science parameters, as it is the case of the progressive school, from a non-critical perspective, as did Saviani (2000), in accordance to Silveira (2011)?

According to Dewey (2010, p. 41), this kind of work stimulates the development of student's autonomy, making them achieve «...more training of attention, more power of interpretation, of drawing inferences, of acute observation and continuous reflection». When the learner gets voluntarily involved in his education, in a spontaneous, productive and serious fashion, while exercising his autonomy, the results from this process tend to be more efficient. This is the main scope of Dewey's progressive school foundation.

In view of that, the author seeks to expose precisely the relationship between the concrete child life and what is taught in the classroom. From Dewey (2002)'s point of view, ideally the school should be «...be a place in which the child should really live, and get a life-experience in which he should delight and find meaning for its own sake» (Dewey, 2010, p. 59), while effectively fulfilling its instructive and social functions, aside from cultivating the citizenship germ in the learner.

These assumptions may be enough to draw the conclusion that the progressive school, besides being critical is also philosophical and scientific, since

it is precisely based on the figure of the teacher as a mediator, who positions the child at the center of the learning process. Objectively speaking, we demonstrate the method parameters of the well-known historical-critical perspective, by Saviani (2000), in the same way as the landmarks of the progressive school, through the work *The school and Society* (2010).

**The results of the research.** As announced in the introduction, the pedagogical method by Saviani (2000) also known as the historical-critical pedagogy, consists of five parts, namely: (i) social practice; (ii) questioning; (iii) instrumentalization; (iv) catharsis and (v) other social practice.

Although Saviani (2000) presents his method as symmetrical to Dewey (2002)'s, he does not examine it for the quick differentiation he performs in his book. Thus, the structure of Dewey (2002)'s method is briefly presented to demonstrate that Saviani (2000) shows no improvement over the work he criticizes, besides being based on the perspective of the progressive school and making evident his agreement with the methodological structure of Dewey. Such acknowledgment by the Brazilian thinker of the structure of the progressive school is apparently enough to declare that his criticism of the progressive school does not disqualify it at all, quite the contrary, it gives due credit to that structure, in spite of in-existent direct reference.

The progressive school or new pedagogy is also comprised of five steps, namely: (i) the child faces an everyday life social situation; (ii) the child realizes her own impulse (questioning about the situation); (iii) start seeking to recognize facts, materials and involved conditions (situational assessment), (iv) regulates her initial impulse (think about it with a view to the best solutions) and (v) the action itself, through which she interferes in the society, solving problem situations (Dewey, 2010).

If in both perspectives there is the second step concerning the questioning, how can the progressive school be considered a non-critical theory? In this regard I resume my suspicion that Saviani (2000) may refer to another progressive school and not the one giving subsidy for the construction of his historical-critical theory. The stunning surprise arising from the text by Saviani (2000) is precisely not making explicit the progressive school, weakening his criticism, which ignores Dewey's text.

If, according to Saviani, it is relevant start from the social practice, the same is true for Dewey, with emphasis on everyday situations. In the vein of Saviani (2000), the third stage concerns the instrumentalization and, in the case of Dewey, similarly it is the situational assessment. The fourth point of Saviani (2000) refers to the catharsis, while for Dewey there is the regulation of the initial impulse. Finally, the last item of Saviani (2000) expresses another social practice, in the sense of resilience, which coincides with Dewey (2002)'s perspective, after all there is the action itself along with problem solving.

Silveira (2011, p. 170), in a text on the Philosophy for Children Program by Matthew Lipman, takes the criticism by Saviani (2000) that the liberal perspec-

tive holds an idealistic and “non-critical” character. Although not addressing John Dewey’s work, but Matthew Lipman’s work, upon starting from the construction by Saviani (2000) that classifies non-critical theories, without references to any text of John Dewey, in the case of the progressive school as demonstrated, his text highlights the risks of the lack of rigor of the first author regarding the influence that he may be exerted on other authors. Therefore, it arises again the suspicion that the historical-critical theory seems to have weakened itself by making a methodological mistake. This is not to disregard the importance of the political debate intended by this strand, nor ignore its importance to the formation of several respected researchers in Brazil, but to point, only and so only to the need of a contextualization, in-depth studies and direct use of the text by John Dewey.

Anyway, is it possible to affirm that the progressive school, at least the devised by Dewey, is non-critical? Would this criticism by Saviani (2000) stand up to this strand by Dewey? Looks like no and, once again, we affirm that the progressive school criticized by Saviani (2000) does not seem to match the progressive school of Dewey (1997, 2009, and 2010) for the lack of examination of texts by the American thinker.

**Conclusion.** On the issue of learn by doing, we can affirm that Dewey deems education as the children’s real life, not just the preparation for a life to be lived in the future, however, he emphasizes that his main goal is to empower the educating for the proper exercise of life in community, which the school is a smaller scale model, or, as he states, an “embryonic community”.

If, from this we can see that, for Dewey, the development of an independent learner is oriented mainly from practical life, real life - therefore the philosopher’s insistence for school to be understood as the child’s life itself and not alien to it, so his proposed education through experience and action, by the mold of life that usually occurs beyond the school boundaries - then we comprehend that when Dewey proposes a school that represents society in a form of community miniature, it is because he seeks developing social attitudes necessary for the formation of future citizens, promoting their autonomy and enabling the students encounter problem-situations in which they are able to exercise both brainpower and practical actions.

The criticism of the progressive school, made by Saviani (2000), without any indication of the John Dewey’s text looks fragile. It is not only a methodological weakness, but also of merit, and the main issue with this kind of fragility, considering the importance of the author, is the influence caused over other authors, as demonstrated in the case of Silveira (2011). Thus, this is not intended to reduce the importance of the work by Saviani (2000), especially in a time when the brazilian democracy seems to have been put to the test, as stated in the introduction, but to seek a broader understanding of the brazilian democracy compared to the United States’, in the same way that making comparisons

between the concept of man in Brazil and in the United States is a simple action that requires studying to know.

Finally, we aimed at demonstrating concerning John Dewey the importance of retrieving his text, especially for the critique of the progressive school and to think about the development of our society.

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