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# THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND ACTUALITY OF THE CONCEPT EDUCATION THROUGH ART\*\*

Abstract: This paper is on the relation between art and education through the concept Education through Art, from the perspective of progressive pedagogy. Theoretical foundation is analysed through the theories of John Dewey and Herbert Read who stressed that art should be experienced, not only because of its prefect value, but because of its pedagogical potential (for the purpose of recreating and reconstructing experience). Elliot Eisner contribution is also analysed, who discussing the significance of art, points out at the cognitive aspect of art in education. With his work, pedagogy gets steady alternative model in relation to the contemporary school which is intellectually oriented and in which pedagogical work in school is focused on verbal and mathematical proficiencies.

Progressive pedagogy opposes traditional formalism in education, which is organised in advance by the subject syllabi, and teaching to the test. It promotes desirable interdisciplinary organisation of teaching, with the cross curricular activities, transforming the learning environment in this way. In the paper, we discussed implications for the praxis of theoretical concept, which directs the work at school towards the whole development of personality and it affirms realisation of creative activities through play and research integrating art in the process of learning.

**Key words**: progressive pedagogy, aesthetic pedagogical work, Education through Art, integrated / interdisciplinary teaching.

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## PROGRESSIVISM AS ALTERNATIVE ORIENTATION OF INSTRUMENTALISATION OF PEDAGOGICAL WORK AT SCHOOL

Inevitable contradictories which follow interweaving of the interests of the society (reproduction of steady social relations and productivity) and individuals (harmonious development of autonomous and authentic individual) were the basic topic for the most significant theoreticians of pedagogical work during the whole  $20^{\rm th}$  century.

Classical academic tradition of Western education in that period was based on the belief that the aim of education is ötransmission to the present generation of bodies of information and rules or values collected in the pastö, and that the basic task of a teacher is ŏdirect instruction of such information and rulesö. The important emphasis is on the view that educating ŏconsists of transmitting knowledge, skills, and social and moral rules of the cultureŏ (Kohlberg, Mayer 1972: 453).

The school is influenced by the outer structures (a service of economic, political and cultural elites) which realise their interests with the aid of school. An individual at school learns how to adjust to general organisation and to do his/her duty thoroughly. Educational process is limited on the adjusting the individual to his/her environment, on preparation for the future life, on modelling behaviour and personality. Versatile development of personality is reduced to gaining knowledge, skills, habits and professional development, to planned exercising and getting used to crating desirable form of behaviour, to adopting general knowledge and supporting conformist forms of behaviour (Mandi , Gajanovi , 1991). Clear indicators and consequences of this kind of narrowing and limiting of the educational process in the area of pedagogical work at school, have remained so far its particularly instrumental function and transforming teaching into training in accordance with the requirements of the environment (particularly with the requirements of the market in our contemporary occurrences).

Progressivism becomes strong as an alternative pedagogical ideology (Kohlberg, Mayer, 1972), at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and its founder is American philosopher and pedagogue John Dewey<sup>1</sup>. Particular significance in the pedagogical work at school belongs to emancipators component connected to the subjective experience of students that their learning and behaviour in the classes is regulated from the inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task (absence of enforcement and pressure). Progressivisms tried to reach the stated ideal by forming the basis of educational process on experience, needs and interests of students. Engaging curriculum and humanising relations, school and class are seen as the best

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> John Dewey was professor of philosophy at Columbia University; president of the American Philosophical Association, and co-founder of The New School for Social Research.

way for satisfying students with school life, as Dewey wrote about and stressed that *education is a process of living, and not preparation for future living* (Dewey, 1897). Students should be encouraged to find their place in the community of students according to their interests, and the role of a teacher is to create life situations at school and to help students solve those situations by themselves. In this concept, pedagogical work of a teacher means long lasting and patient building of the environment which encourages self-development, cooperation, positive communication and individualisation (in the sense of understanding and obeying needs and individual differences among students).

The whole development of a personality as an aim of education is discussed in the progressive pedagogy from the objective requirements of the social life (and practical facing with it), as well as from the point of a subject, as process of inner development of the individual (in the field of intellect, cognition, emotions, character, will, temperament, observation). Dewey wrote that it was necessary to overcome comprehension of education as preparation of huge masses of people for earning of money for living, performing some sort of work which does not refine those who do them, which mean nothing to those people (apart from material value), as well as understanding that primary education serves exclusively the purpose of reading, writing and calculating and that is mechanically processed. These sorts of understanding of education poison with absence of broad-mildness (Dewey, 1916: Chapter 19). Education which he calls liberal education is seen as general spiritual education. Critical relation towards founding teaching work based on technocratic demands with developing specific competencies and qualifications (working) which suppress human component at the margin of this work are nowadays in pedagogy particularly stressed. Progressive pedagogy nowadays is directed towards giving active resistance to dominant social (particularly educational) policies and praxis determined by adjusting human value to technological advancement and requirements for efficiency. This sort of resistance and activism in recent years is particularly stressed in the concept Education through Art. It is about the concept in which relation between pedagogical work and art is seen from the progressive perspective: art is defined as a sort of experience and the role of art in education is seen in the context of development of a versatile personality.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE PROGRESSIVE CONCEPT EDUCATION THROUGH ART

John Dewey considered experience as a source of knowledge and that core of education is represented in continuous reconstructing of experience. In interaction with life environment, experience is never in a still position. It reflects and reorganises daily occurrences, impressions and information. Art was written about as a form of experience. Each kind of creating is connected to experience, and there is a close relation between aesthetic experience and the one of a general kind.

Dewey in the book *Art as Experience* deals with the problem of separating art from everyday life. He pointed at the fallacy of understanding aesthetic experience as a specific experience, separated from the everyday life activates which can be achieved only in art institutions ó museums, theatres, galleries (Milenkovi, 2016; Selakovi, Milutinovi, 2013). He tried to explain significance of integrating art into the common experience by connecting aesthetic experience with the experience of everyday life. Each experiential occurrence widens social and cognitive development of an individual. Art fulfils life and widens life experience, helps *reviving the sense* of individual live, leads to improvement of life quality and it creates collective life in a community.

Dewey believes that people should be exposed to music, architecture, sculpture and paintings of the best quality and to have a wide context for learning from experience. New kinds of experience appear, new forms and techniques are visualised following artists gestures in art movements and works. With the means of their work, artists provoke some individuals to chose and imagine alternative realities, to create and change thier environment. Choice of media and objects stimulates ideas, questions and analysis deepening experience. Works of art are not a finished story; they appear through the interaction with the observer (Goldblatt, 2006). There is no experience with the presumed values, something that is a significant sort of experience for a single person, need not be the same for someone else. This is why the value of experience can be measured only with the effects it has on someoness present and future and the scope which the individual can contribute to the society.

It is necessary to organise contents of teaching accepting previous experience of students in the educational process. Previous experience would enable them to adopt experience which would contribute to personal development in the future and society on the whole (Selakovi, Milutinovi, 2013; Hadfli Jovani, 2012). It is not justifiable to make decision in the curriculum of the subjects which are the appreciative, those concerned with intrinsic value, and the instrumental, concerned with those which are of value or ends beyond themselves (nowadays, it is recognized in separating subjects which are included in the final testing at the national level). õThe formation of proper standards in any subject depends upon a realization of the contribution which it makes to the immediate significance of experience, upon a direct appreciation. Literature and the fine arts are of peculiar value because they represent appreciation at its best [...] But every subject at some phase of its development should possess, what is for the individual concerned with it, an aesthetic qualityõ (Dewey 1916: 249).

Dewey was strongly standing for quality education, which would enable students to develop different aspects of their personalities. He thought that each child had needs which could be seen in three aspects: social (desire to communicate with others), constructive (desire to do good), research (desire for cognition) and expressive (desire for creating). At school, they are satisfied with the processes of

learning in interaction with the peers, studying and contemplating on art, and with creating new ideas or works of art. As active participants, they develop abilities to change themselves and the world around them (Goldblatt, 2006). Based on the stated belief, in his recommendation for teaching work, significance of well established situations for solving problems in leaning was stressed.

British aesthetician Herbert Read<sup>2</sup> gave significant contribution to affirmation of the topic and attitude that art should be the basis of pedagogical work in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He states in his book *Education through Art*, that there is an error in all educational systems and their methods because they nourish rationalism which led to one-sided development of a man and ruining inner harmony and that only aesthetic education can make a harmonious relation between senses, emotions and intellect (Hadfli Jovan i, 2012; Joksimovi, 2016; Mitrovi, 1969). He tought sthat each individual is born with certan potentialites which have a positive value and that it is his proper destiny to develop those potentialeo (Read 1958: 2). Art (includes not only the visual arts, but also literature, drama, music and dance) is understood as a creative activity which satisfies all the needs and inner needs for each individual, and this is why education with the means of art should be directed to pedagogical work with children's senses and imagination. The aim of art understood in this way and its role in pedagogical work is to opreserve organic uniqueness of a man and his/her abilitieso, because uniqueness of mind is the only source of social harmony and individual happiness (Mitrovi 1969: 22). He consider that šthe aim of education is the creation of artists ó of people efficient in the various models of expressiono (Read 1958: 11).

For him, art is õway of education ó not so much a subject to be taught as a metod of teaching any and all subjectsõ (Read 1966: 8). He said that there was not a subject õfrom aritmetic to calculus, from nature study to theoretical biology, from the writing of poetry to metaphysicõ that could not be acquired creatively and aesthetically in activities akin to the arts (Read 1966: 115). Read attempted to show that the whole development of the child might me boult on sequences of aesthetic and creative experiences. In accordance with the concept of pedagogical work which basis is aesthetic principle, he stood for introducing this principle into teaching, so creative aesthetic activity becomes the core of the curriculum and the focus of pedagogical work. He stressed the significance of connection among teaching subjects. The programme of pedagogical work and educating should be represented as scale of children's interests with the aim of self-expressional and self-realisation (Joksimovi, 2016). His concept involves working in relation to the ways in wich children naturally expres themselfs in artistic media, recognizing various natural stages of growth wich require different kinds of teaching. The proceses is centred in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Herbert Read was co-founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (London); president of the United Kingdom Society for Education in Art; one of establishers (1954.) the International Society for Education through Art as an official partner of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

the thoughts and activitied of students, he wrote that õthe elements educate him ó air, light, the life of plants and animals; and relationships educate himõ (Read 1958: 288). He gives significant role to the teacher, as part of environment and as a guide in interaction. The teacher is mediator between the student and his environment, as a person who can initiate and maintain metod of spontaneous development (Keel, 1969).

American theoretician of education Elliot Eisner<sup>3</sup> gave great contribution to the theory of aesthetic education in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ó through upgrading, concretisation of progressive ideas and concepts Education through Art. He stressed the significance of not only intellectual factors, but also spiritual, mental, emotional and physical ones in education. Explaining the significance of art, cognitive aspect of art in education is highlighted, opposed to the belief that artist perceive art primarily emotionally, and that art does not require intellectual involvement. Explaining how art contributes to cognitive advancement Eisner points out that art integrates different forms of beliefs in itself, because ability of creating a new art form requires engagement of imaginative capacities which can be visual, musical and poetic ones (Maksimovi, Tadi, 2016). He particularly contributed to the concept that imagination and creativity, which most frequently are connected with art processes; start to be considered as significant factors in the processes of thinking, learning and cognition. (Ve anski et al., 2017). Thinking was considered to be connected to feelings and he showed that it is not the production of verbal construction through language structures, but changeable personal occurrence which is gained by the senses. The way of learning in art helps children develop different forms of thinking, to understand better the world around us and to face insecurities in life and these points at the significance of introducing art into the school life (Hadfli Jovan i, 2011).

As Dewey, Eisner stressed the significance of learning based on personal experience. Art gives unique contribution to individual experience and understanding of the world, through the different way of expression ó drawing, music and movement make new sense, imagination is widened and better creativity in reacting to new situations is formed (Stewart, 1977; Hadfli Jovan i , 2011). Art teaches students to rely on feelings, to pay attention to details in the process of creating, to turn back to the beginning, reorient ate and make new choices, make new decisions and to accept the consequences of their choice (Eisner, 2004).

Elliot Eisner started the initiative for evaluating the programmes referring to art subjects at schools in the USA in 1974. Results of the completed evaluating studies showed positive connection of education with art contents with different aspects of life and learning (Maksimovi , Tadi , 2016). Theoretical assumptions

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Elliot Eisner was professor of Education and Art at Stanford University; president of the National Art Education Association; president of the International Society for Education Through Art; president of the American Educational Research Association, and president of the John Dewey Society.

about the needs of overcoming approaches in which art in schools is limited only on *learning about* essential values and achievements from the field of art through art objects, processing and applying the concept Education through art were supported, integrating art into the teaching subjects from non-art subjects (integrative approach 6 introducing art into the different aspects of teaching work).

## CONCEPT EDUCATION THROUGH ART IN A CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL

In the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we still witness instrumentalization of education, transmissive model of teaching (market orientation) and marginalisation of humanistic values and principles in educational policy and praxis. Contemporary representatives of progressive pedagogy still tend to direct discussions about basic pedagogical dilemmas direct towards the humanistic ideal of holistic approach to child's development, and a great significance is given to education with the aid of art. Above all, they oppose traditional formalism in education which is proposed by the subject curriculum in teaching as preparation for testing. They are also recognisable by striving for the following issues: stimulation student s development by creative and self-expressive activates; curriculum which starts from the student's experience and which supports his/her activity, researching and solving problems; collaborative leaning which initiates group cooperation and mutual work; the role of a teacher as a facilitator of development of individual potentials and multi functional education directed to the whole personality (Milutinovi 2009: 279). Significance is given to the whole development of a child and one-sided orientation of the contemporary school stressing intellectual growth is criticized. Praxis of testing and selection at school led to identification of educational work at school with the process of verbal and mathematical proficiencies adoption (Kohn, 2008). The basic assumption is that there should be thorough changes between teachers and students in planning and realisation of teaching contents and activities in a progressive school.

Progressive pedagogy promotes interdisciplinary organisation of teaching, according to the topics which cross many disciplines, as a desirable one. Art in such organisation of work should not be taken as contents *about* which art subjects are about, but contents through which students develop many-sided *through* different teaching fields and topics. Art brings students different perspectives and expression (interpretation of the world), it crates new sense, develops imagination and divergent thinking. It suggests realistic of different activates through play and research and this means creative process of learning through which students pass in a similar way as artists and researchers. There were numerous attempts for culture and art to be integrated into the educational process in many countries (Finland, Germany, Canada and the USA) in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hanna et al., 2011; Kora, 2013; Maksimovi, Tadi, 2016).

Applying the programme based on integrated and interdisciplinary approach, students learn contents through carefully planned classes (Mathematics, Chemistry, History, Geography, foreign languages...) within which art is integrated into the process of learning. Schools in this way encourage teachers to use approaches to active teaching by which the process of learning is connected to personal interests of students. The research proved that including students into this sort of programme gave positive results concerning readiness for cooperation, engagement in the class and public speaking. Students has more self-confidence and wish for overtaking risk in learning, they were not scared of expressing their thoughts and ideas to their teachers, peers and parents. Studies show that experience of learning by art can change attitudes of the young towards themselves and other people, that they develop self-control, empathy and tolerance towards others. In the schools which are included in the programmes of integrating art, a number of disciplinary measures and suspensions is lessened and this points at lessening risk of underage delinquency (Hanna et al., 2011).

Teachers involved in the stated programmes were more motivated for work, their engagement was better and the circle of their individual work was enlarged, considering the circle of their work outside the subject they teach and the whole organisation of school. Programmes led to wider changes in school life such as change of the timetable of the school, relying on parents and artists from the environment as significant resources for improving the work of school, teachers took the roles o leaders and they organised cooperation with different partners from the local community (Burton et al., 1999; Maksimovi , Tadi , 2016). If the integrated approach develops through the use of the art contents and if it is applied adequately, the teaching process gets new sense in relation to the traditional way of working at school.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Contemporary school should from pedagogic (humanistic) perspective should be institution which represents a good pedagogical model to students with the whole work. This can be observed in the procedural plan thought the democratisation of the teaching process and managing school, as well as for curricular and didactic innovations which would enable directing the teaching process towards the humanistic ideal of the many-sided development of personality.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it still means resistance from the insturmentalisation of schools: distance from the praxis of transforming teaching into training in accordance with requirements for efficiency (requirements of the economy). This sort of resistance is seen as continuity of struggle of progressive pedagogues for realisation of humanistic and emancipators vision of education in which art was given particular significance: both at the level of teaching contents which are learnt, and with requirements for the aesthetic principle to be introduced into teaching.

In the concept Education through Art, the relation between education and art is not seen only in the field of aesthetic education, but also from the wider point ó from the progressive perspective. Art is defined as a form of experience. It was shown that cognitive aspect (as well as aesthetic, emotional and behavioural) of using art in education can significantly contribute to teaching in the programmes of integrated/interdisciplinary organisation.

Considering the fact that art integrates many different forms of contemplating, and that it demands engagement of imaginative capacities (it contributes to imagination, creativity, innovation) its contribution is connected to the quality of very processes of contemplation and learning in different academic disciplines. With the aid of art, students can better understand the world which surrounds them, they can build up better relations in the community, they can build up inner motivation for hard work, they can learn with more efficiency, they can acquire autonomy in facing with versatile educational and life challenges ó and these are the basic aims of progressive understood education.

Realisation of the concept Education through Art demands redefining priorities in the aims of education, at the level of educational policy (the system of education) and systematic changes at the school level which can enable conditions for creating school culture (primarily the sort of relation and curriculum) in which art would be considered as common everyday experience, the basis for pedagogical work at school.

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