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Multiple Refractions Through Time and Space

Edited by Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Jürgen Schriewer

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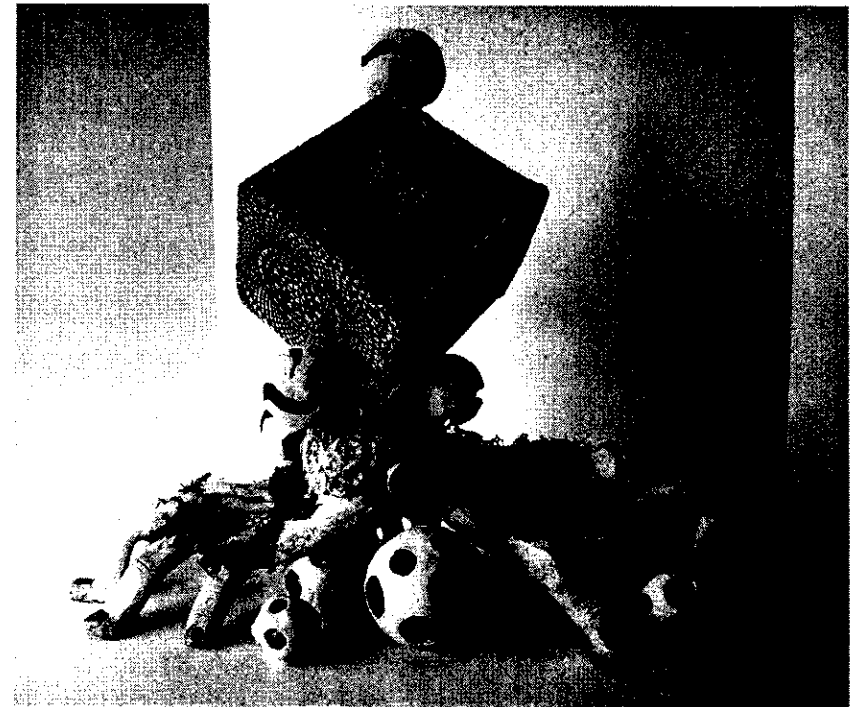
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*Frontispiece Empiricism, by Ana Jofré*

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## Foreword

This edition is published to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. A Faculty of Education at Queen's University was founded in 1907 and closed in 1920, but re-opened in 1966 with classes starting in 1968. Forty years later, we celebrate the position it has attained in Canada and the world. On behalf of the Alumni Committee, friends of the Faculty and members of the education community, we are proud to present this anniversary volume to you.

Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, former dean of the Faculty worked to cultivate and maintain an international community of educators as part of the mission of the Faculty. The planning for this commemorative edition began in 2007 with an invitation to a number of leading researchers to attend a symposium about the relevance of the thought of John Dewey to education. Queen's University welcomed these investigators in sessions and round tables on the subject at the beginning of 2008. The articles that are included in this volume are based on the reflections developed at these meetings. The contributions portray a broad geographic and cultural scope, and offer a detailed analysis of the international circulation of the educative ideas, connecting well with the international dimension of the academic work.

Yours in Education,  
Joan Jardin and John Olson  
Alumni Committee, Queen's University

64. Ibid., 1017.
65. Daniel Tröhler, "The Global Community, Religion, and Education: The Modernity of Dewey's Social Philosophy," *Studies in Philosophy of Education* 19 (2000): 179.
66. Ibid.
67. Communication from James Scott Johnston, March 21, 2008.
68. Hurtado, *Le system pédagogique*, 103.
69. John Dewey. *Experience & Education* (London and New York: Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1963), 29.
70. Domingo Barnés, "Un Aspecto de la Filosofía de los Valores y la Pedagogía," in *Ensayos de Pedagogía y Filosofía* (Madrid: La Lectura, 1920/n.d.), 45–46. Gonzalo Jover has developed this theme at length in: "Readings of the Pedagogy of John Dewey in Spain in the Early Twentieth Century: Reconciling Pragmatism and Transcendence" in *Democracy and the Intersection of Religion and Traditions: The readings of John Dewey's Understanding of Democracy and Education*, Rosa Bruno-Jofré, James Scott Johnston, Gonzalo Jover, and Daniel Tröhler (Montreal, QC and Kingston, ON: McGill-Wueen's University Press, 2010); 79–130.
71. José Gaos, Prólogo del traductor, in John Dewey, *La Experiencia y la Naturaleza* (México: F.C.E., 1948), XIX–XXXV.
72. John Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy" in *James and Dewey on Belief and Experience*, eds. J. M. Capps and D. Capps (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1909/2005), 188.
73. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 391.

### 3 Dewey in Argentina (1916–1946) Tradition, Intention, and Situation in the Production of a Selective Reading

*Marcelo Caruso and Inés Dussel*

In Argentina, the name of John Dewey has persistently been quoted in educational debates since the beginning of the twentieth century, when his work began to be read and known by an increasingly wider circle of educationalists. As in many other countries, Dewey was considered a representative of educational liberalism, and an advocate of activism, child-centered pedagogy, and educational democracy.<sup>1</sup> Associated with this range of ideas, and especially with (North) Americanism, the figure of John Dewey was as much loved as it was attacked.

One of the most striking and certainly most unexpected places in which Dewey's name was pronounced was at a political gathering held some days prior to the national general elections that were won by Juan Domingo Perón, in the midst of a heated pre-electoral climate in February 1946. During a meeting held at the Luna Park stadium in Buenos Aires, the director of the local Teachers' College and well-known fascist ideologist Jordan Bruno Genta shouted in front of "25,000 teachers who had been required to attend on threat of dismissal": "The pernicious influence of John Dewey . . . must be eradicated from Argentina's schools . . . The progressive school must be replaced by the traditional school".<sup>2</sup> These kinds of incidents, taking place in a repressive context marked by a military dictatorship aligned with a national-Catholic ideology, solidified the already bad reputation of Perónism in those years. At any rate, John Dewey himself commented on the anecdote in the weekly *Time*, where the report had been published, in laconic terms: "The item about Argentina was new to me. Under the circumstances there, I regard it as a compliment."<sup>3</sup>

It is indeed much-telling that Dewey's name played a conspicuous role in Genta's portrayal of the enemy of tradition and nationalism. In these dramatic months, and following the aftermath of World War II, the political debate was extremely polarized. One of the poles was expressed by the coalition of traditional parties confronting Perón's bid, ranging from

the most conservative and traditional parties dominated by big landowners from the Northern provinces to the more progressive liberals from the Radical Union, to the Socialist and Communist parties, which called itself “Democratic Union,” and reduced the political confrontation to a mere opposition between “democracy” and “fascism.” At the other pole, the Labor party supporting Perón constructed a clear-cut political antagonism between Perón and Braden (the name of the American ambassador who was heavily involved in domestic politics at that time) that was framed as nationalism against “North American” imperialism.<sup>4</sup> In this context in which pro-American and anti-American positions were pitted as central to the political antagonism of that time, mentioning Dewey was not merely a scholarly reference, but it was used to evoke a series of associated meanings—needless to say, most of them negative.<sup>5</sup> It has to be noted that John Dewey’s influence in Argentine education was not significant at that time, and whether the congregated teachers even understood the meaning of Genta’s attack is unclear. However, Argentines often dealt with Dewey’s positions and concepts, looking rather for self assertion than for other forms of knowledge. The work of Dewey could not be ignored in the interwar period but, at the same time, acquaintance with it did not lead to any generalized welcoming of his positions and thesis.

In this chapter, we would like to set forth the thesis that the fate of Dewey’s ideas in the Argentinean educational field during the interwar years was mainly a story of selection and even exclusion of some of his works, which did not lead to the formation of any significant re-reading and appropriation of his texts. Working through translations, articles, and comments written on Dewey, we will not seek the deviations of a *true* version of Dewey, but instead will focus on understanding the range of alternative readings that were available at a particular time, and the contexts of debate in which they became possible. As an inescapable international reference in the international educational arena of those years, Dewey offered novel conceptions on learning, the school, the curriculum, democracy, liberty, ethics, and society. We will focus on the problems Argentinean educationists faced when they came to speak about “democracy” in education and schools as a path for the reconstruction of the marginalization of his work in the educational field.

#### DEWEY’S FIRST READERS ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR: LIBERALISM AND/IN TRANSLATION

As has been said, Dewey’s work was widely read in many countries, and this reading combined the advance of an international movement in pedagogy with the construction of national educational scenes in those years. This combination of international pedagogies with national fields seems to be particularly important in Argentina where, since its independence from

Spain, the quest for legitimacy and solidity in the process of modernization had frequently been processed with the help of foreign authorities and models.<sup>6</sup> Argentinean elites followed the French model of a common, secular, and free primary school and supported the importation of French positivism, which became the founding educational philosophy of the Argentinean school system. In the first decade of the twentieth century, educational forces influenced by positivism took the upper hand and imposed a design for mass schooling, which formulated a pedagogical program marked by scientificism and rather authoritarian pedagogical rapports.<sup>7</sup> This program tied the expansion of schooling to the building of the nation-state.

It was in this context that the challenge posed by Dewey’s work was taken and discussed for the first time. On the whole, North American education constituted a rather marginal reference for educational reformers in Argentina, usually more appealed to by European experiences. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the references for legitimating the national experience were sought either in the Hispanic past or in “native” figures such as the *gaucho* or the *indios*.<sup>8</sup> But in the pedagogical field, “North Americanism” was indisputably linked to the very influential educationist and former president of the country, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–1888). Sarmiento had traveled to the United States in 1845/1846, and years later he became the Argentinean ambassador in that country, a post he resigned from in order to return to Buenos Aires as President-elect in 1868. He befriended Horace and Mary Mann, and was deeply moved by their experience of developing a centralized educational system with a strong social basis. When he directed the schools of the province of Buenos Aires, he conducted a significant local process of reform, in which he gave impulse to Local School Boards and to organizing a standardized system. As a President, he promoted the migration of sixty-five normal school graduates from the United States, who had a pervasive influence in the creation of Normal Schools throughout the country.<sup>9</sup>

But Sarmiento’s North Americanism would remain a solitary example for many decades. Along with economic and political reasons (economic and political competitiveness for the leader role in Latin America),<sup>10</sup> in turn-of-the-century Argentina, the intellectual climate was tainted by an anti-North American movement called “Arielism”. Influenced by the Spanish defeat at Cuba in 1898, the Uruguayan José E. Rodó addressed Latin American youth denouncing the perils of the imperialist expansion of the United States across Latin America, already experienced by the materialist temptation pervading our culture—the spirit of Caliban represented by North American values and fashions.<sup>11</sup> This movement clearly favored anti-liberal responses and weakened support for alternative educational models based on the U.S. experience.

Some scholars have asserted that Argentina, after Spain, was the most receptive country for Dewey’s ideas in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> This assertion, however, might lack significant evidence for its

support. The first translation of Dewey into Spanish, *My Pedagogic Creed* (orig. 1897), was published by the Chilean educationalist Darío Salas in Santiago de Chile in 1908. The first Spanish translations of Dewey's books, *The School and Society* (orig. 1899) and *How We Think* (orig. 1910), were published in Madrid (1915) and Boston (1917) respectively. Spanish educationalists were very active in the translation and publication of Dewey's work in these years until the Civil War.

Only in the case of *How We Think* can we see an Argentinean interest in translating and expanding Dewey's ideas. Ernesto Nelson (1873–1959), a school inspector who in 1902–1906 spent some time at Columbia University, wrote a sharp foreword to this book, which had been translated by the Argentinean student Alejandro Jascalevich. Nelson and Jascalevich knew each other from their time shared at the experimental secondary school at the University of La Plata, the first research university in the country. Nelson was the director of the reform boarding school of which Jascalevich was one of the first graduates.<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that all Dewey's texts published during the first three decades of the twentieth century were related to education, Nelson showed in his foreword a profound knowledge of his philosophical work. In the introduction of this "psychology," Nelson pointed to the fact that, in Dewey's philosophy, "democracy," together with "evolution," "the establishment of psychology as a natural science" and the "scientific method," constituted the fundamental marks of modern civilization.<sup>14</sup> This new "state of collective life" had discarded dogmatic positions and its philosophical foundations such as a "realist" concept of truth. "Democracy," Nelson argued, was associated with the loss of absolutist sources of authority and, consequently, it invited the individuals to become active, because all hierarchies between ratio and experience were no longer relevant.<sup>15</sup> He acknowledged that Dewey's system of philosophy, although highly inspiring for educational reform, was more than an educational philosophy, and he quoted Dewey, who asserted that philosophy is a "generalized educational theory." For Nelson, the time had come in which "education and democracy" had to become "correlative terms" in Latin America.<sup>16</sup> He called for a renewal of educational discussions increasingly based on the "lessons of facts." This "urgent" task for the whole continent was tied to the "liberation from dogmatism, convention, and half-certainties."<sup>17</sup> Nelson was a convinced pro-North Americanist: he was one of the founders of the North American-Argentine Cultural Institute and of the Rotary Club, and wrote a number of books and papers on North American culture and institutions.<sup>18</sup> He was kindly accused by one of the establishment pedagogues of an "inflamed Yankeeism" (*yanquismo enardecido*).<sup>19</sup>

Of course, Nelson was not the only Argentinean educationalist who had a thorough knowledge of Dewey's work. In his turn, Raúl Díaz (1862–1918), one of the chief inspectors of federal education, subscribed to Dewey's ideas as part of a more comprehensive form of democratic cultural politics. Díaz had been commissioned by the Argentinean government to visit the United States in 1907–1908.<sup>20</sup> He returned deeply impressed by what he saw and

brought with him a number of experiences regarding school government by children. He emphasized Dewey's commitment to democracy and stressed both social and psychological aspects of education against the biological and psychological reductions related to hegemonic positivism.

Elements of pragmatism and the introduction of the issue of "democracy," both in the school curriculum and school life, distinguished Nelson and Díaz from other authors more concerned with the issue of reforming only teaching and didactics. Nelson, in particular, sustained an emphasis on "democracy" at a very special moment in the country's history. Democratic politics gained momentum in Argentina after the new electoral law of 1912, and the first middle-class movement, *Unión Cívica Radical*, took power after democratic elections in 1916.<sup>21</sup> At that time, it seemed possible and appropriate to re-orient the educational system under the "radical" governments that held office from 1916 to 1930. But these governments had to deal with an inherited—and quite successful—path of economic and cultural development.

In the educational system, the radicals gave impulse to some reforms at the level of the universities (where a grassroots movement provoked a considerable change in 1918) and vocational training, but left most of the structure of mass schooling unchanged.<sup>22</sup> Thus, educational policies clearly favored expanding the existing structures and scarcely affected the pedagogical and institutional culture of Argentinean schools. Although the promise of political democracy was at the top of the political agenda, the wave of "democracy" did not encompass the domain of education.

However, educational policies allowed more initiatives at the pedagogical level, and this paved the way for new readers of John Dewey's work. In a freer political and cultural atmosphere in the 1920s, liberal and radical educationalists who confronted the educational (and political) status quo started to read and translate Dewey's texts. Although well-known among teachers, Nelson's and Díaz's readings on Dewey, which particularly emphasized the issue of democracy, did not go beyond a restricted circle.

In the following years, Argentinean educators from many different tendencies such as Catholicism, Marxism, and moderate or liberal Spiritualism regarded Dewey's ideas with contempt, and thought they were neither suitable nor positive for the further development of Argentinean schooling. Although respected as an educator—but almost unknown as a philosopher—Dewey became a "classic" reference of educational thought during his lifetime, but ironically there was a comprehensive marginalization of his works and positions from the political and educational arenas.<sup>23</sup>

#### FIRST STEP TOWARD MARGINALIZATION: OPPOSING VIEWS AND GENERAL REJECTION OF DEWEY IN THE 1930S

That shift happened more clearly in the 1930s, when the New School Movement became the official pedagogy of the first brief military régime (1930–1931), with strong ties to right-wing Catholicism. Juan Bautista

Terán (1880–1938), president of the National Board of Education from 1930 to 1932 under the military government of José E. Uriburu, led a movement “to spiritualize the school”.<sup>24</sup> He criticized both positivism and pragmatism, which he accused of reducing the child to a “beam of instincts and tendencies.” “School should not only be a gym to awake and give full shape to a child’s spontaneity,” as Dewey and Montessori sought.<sup>25</sup> The aim of education, in Terán’s view, should be to shape a moral being with freedom and responsibility.

Terán considered Dewey as a naturalist philosopher, an heir to Rousseau. “Dewey’s practicist sets aside the purely intellectual and ethical aims (of education), or considers them already included in the teaching adapted to the conditions and conveniences of the environment in which the child is going to develop. (His philosophy) is a strict application of pragmatism, of the doctrine characteristic of his own race and country, according to which utility is the supreme aim of philosophy.”<sup>26</sup> For Terán, not only was this philosophical system ethically wrong but it was also condemned to historical failure, as the recent crisis of the United States showed. In his view, its incapacity to achieve material wellbeing and its disdain of “pure,” contemplative, or speculative culture, had led that country to bankruptcy. Obviously, he did not think it was wise to follow the model but to fight it.

Terán defended Spiritualism as an educational philosophy, as it implied a return to intelligence in opposition to pragmatism’s “cult of life”.<sup>27</sup> He advocated the traditional humanist curriculum and denied the value of vocational schools because they “condemn people to live in empiricism and prevent them from getting access to the highest possibilities of intelligence.”<sup>28</sup> In his argument, activism was subordinated to discipline, order, and respect for the rules, which were the military government’s pedagogical principles. The New School that Terán and his partners had in mind was similar to the one developed in fascist Italy. Terán’s appeal in 1930 launched a decade in which alternative experiences within the New School were to be persecuted, and radical teachers exonerated.

This kind of reading of Dewey, however limited and biased it may seem, was not confined to right-wing Catholic educationalists such as Terán. The reader may be struck by many resemblances between Terán’s view of Dewey and Aníbal Ponce’s, the latter being one of the professors expelled during that period because of his Communist affiliation. Ponce (1898–1938) condemned Dewey’s pedagogy as a utilitarian and purely methodological expression of American bourgeois civilization. He ascribed his criticism to a roughly deterministic form of Marxism. He considered Dewey as part of the “methodological trend” of the New School, which sought to increase the performance of students by adjusting pedagogy to a child’s personality, both biological and psychical.<sup>29</sup> Dewey’s claim for collective work at school was a response to changes in capitalism. Fordism required a new school centered on child socialization, instead of the individualism of traditional schools. According to Ponce, Dewey and Montessori implied a capitalist rationalization of teaching.

Ponce’s condemnation of Dewey and the whole New School Movement was related to a class reductionism that structured his discourse and led him to disregard national issues and any other kind of nuances or mediations.<sup>30</sup> This bias may have prevented him from dismantling the discursive equivalences that had been established years ago, that equated Dewey’s pedagogy with the efficientist movement and vocational and manual training.<sup>31</sup> Another important issue involved in his rejection of Dewey is the traditional admiration that Argentinean leftist political parties had devoted to Sarmiento’s “civilizing” endeavour, sharing the official pedagogical grammar.<sup>32</sup> Thus the Left had criticized all the reforms which intended to dispute classic *bachillerato*’s legitimacy.<sup>33</sup>

Attacked by both right-wing and leftist pedagogues, Dewey had few followers in those years. Among them was another man from the Left who was distinctively and firmly engaged in the New School Movement. The teacher Jesualdo Sosa (1905–1982), born a Uruguayan and with a vast experience in Argentina, had a different view of Dewey and New Education from Ponce’s. He considered Dewey as “one of the most progressive bourgeois partisans of the school of work,”<sup>34</sup> the school of the socialist tomorrow. Dewey’s proposal articulated school work to intelligence and democracy, both issues eschewed by Kerchensteiner. Jesualdo considered the influence of Fordism and Taylorism in Dewey’s work but he qualified his concepts as “evidently progressive”<sup>35</sup> with respect to his predecessors’ educative means and objectives. One of the negative remarks Jesualdo made about Dewey was the presence of religion, a topic that was associated in South America with conservatism. Once again, Jesualdo stood out among leftist pedagogues when he recognized that the term “religion” could include some kind of constructive mysticism “necessary for human perfection.”<sup>36</sup> Jesualdo was one of the few pedagogues framed in the political Left who laid bridges for religious spiritualism.<sup>37</sup>

Returning to the pedagogical field, it was Terán’s reaction that articulated the prevailing reading on Dewey in the 1930s and the 1940s, and not Jesualdo’s plea. However, evidence has been found that some teachers studied Dewey’s work in courses they organized by themselves.<sup>38</sup> Correlative with these readings from the right-wing and the Marxist Left, Dewey’s popularity gained momentum among teachers when his texts became more “pedagogic” and less “political,” and could thus be less identified with a liberal democratic creed—a shift that will be dealt with in the next section. This shift seems to be consistent with the “technical” profile that the Argentinean New School Movement was acquiring, as its first radicalized versions waned and became inaudible.<sup>39</sup>

## SECOND STEP TOWARD MARGINALIZATION: DEWEY AMONG TEACHERS (1920–1946)

We will focus now on the reception of Dewey’s ideas related to the political-pedagogical discussions enacted within the teachers’ press during the



interwar period. We have already mentioned the disregard and contempt that most educationalists had of American pragmatism and its political philosophy. We will now present some evidence of the strategies of reformist teachers regarding their readings of Dewey's work, based on a survey of the articles on New Education published in two central educational journals in the interwar period.<sup>40</sup> The first one, *La Obra* (the work), was the most important weekly journal for teachers. The second one, *El Monitor de la Educación Común*, the official publication of the National Council for Education, was delivered to all schools and had a monthly appearance. Although *El Monitor* was not a paper written directly or exclusively by teachers, they began to play a more significant role as authors from the 1920s onward. These two journals shaped the educational discussion of that time and can be taken as representatives of the mainstream educational thought of Argentinean teachers.

There is no doubt, considering the amount of quotations that his work received, that Dewey was a symbol of New Education in these journals; as one contributor said, he was "the most salient personality in the current American pedagogical movement."<sup>41</sup> The New York teacher Estelle Jovin reinforced this impression in her conference at the Faculty of Philosophy in Buenos Aires: "In the United States, we consider that the true beginning of modern or progressive education was 1896, when John Dewey founded his experimental school at the University of Chicago."<sup>42</sup> On the whole, Dewey was presented as the mainstream of American pedagogy. In a radio conference from 1931 that was published in *El Monitor*, Dewey celebrated educational progress in America and buttressed the advancement of schooling despite some deficiencies. He stated that Americans had done their best in reaching the values identified with the "great American dream." Probably, his critical and pessimistic remarks on the modern technological society and schooling were not of interest to the Argentinean editors, due to the even more enthusiastic view on schooling which continued after the economic backlash in 1929.<sup>43</sup> But it is also remarkable that this piece, praising the United States, was published while Juan B. Terán, whose anti-Deweyanism has been made clear in our previous section, was the president of the National Council of Education which edited *El Monitor*. This shows that the journal probably had a certain degree of autonomy and had close ties with the educational discourses that circulated in the pedagogical field, and not only with the "official" pedagogies.

In the 1930s and 1940s, there are many references to Dewey, most of which are only cursory mentions without substance,<sup>44</sup> generally picturing him as part of a purportedly larger homogeneous group of new educationalists.<sup>45</sup> North American schools—wrote the teacher Bustos in the northern province of La Rioja—were successful in showing, together with those from Italy, Germany, Belgium, and Russia, the "reality" of the New School.<sup>46</sup> It is very likely that Dewey's prestige or fame was the privilege of an urban audience, interested in reform issues related to the New School Movement.

Besides these frequent references in passing to Dewey, only a few texts originally written by Dewey circulated in these publications. In *La Obra*, more engaged with the progressive movement in schools, the bulk of references made were of some fragments of Dewey's work and a conference, as well as a review of his work.<sup>47</sup> In the official journal *El Monitor*, only a radio conference was completely published in 1931.<sup>48</sup> There is a remarkable continuity between the consideration of Dewey's work in these journals and the previous publications. All of them privileged exclusively educational texts and discarded his works on philosophical and political issues. Argentineans perceived Dewey mainly as an educator, and his philosophical background of pragmatism played a minor role in the knowledge of American models.<sup>49</sup>

These narrow-scope readings of Dewey's work continued for most of the period we consider in this chapter. The comments on *The School and the Curriculum*, published in *La Obra* 1925, are almost paradigmatic. The book reviewer indeed mentioned that Dewey stressed "the eminent social role played by schooling." Dewey's work itself remained in this regard closely tied to a critique of the school subjects and their "artificiality."<sup>50</sup> A teacher from the distant province of Misiones identified Dewey with the critique against the rigid Herbartian didactic model.<sup>51</sup> One famous leader of the teacher movement in those years, Rosario Vera Peñaloza, mentioned Dewey as a valuable supporter in the critique against traditional school desks, which she claimed were designed exclusively for looking at or listening to the teacher and which never promoted active work in the classroom.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the presentation of Décroly's ideas on centers of interest in the curriculum included positive references to the American educator, even though he had forged a different, more flexible concept of interest than that of Décroly.<sup>53</sup>

There are some exceptions to this kind of selective and limited reading of Dewey's work. Lorenzo Luzuriaga (1889–1959), the famous Spanish educationalist who lived in Argentina in exile after the defeat of the Spanish Republic, played a crucial role in turning Dewey into a popular figure among progressive circles, and while doing so, attempted to bring other aspects of his thought to the fore. Not only did he translate many writings by Dewey, but he also tried to recast Dewey's work in a different light. Luzuriaga had been active in commenting on and translating Dewey since the mid-1910s, still in Spain. Once in Argentina, and on top of the multiple articles he published on Dewey, it is the publication of *Experience and Education* in Buenos Aires in 1939, translated by Luzuriaga, that can be regarded as the second largest effort to disseminate a more complex image of Dewey's work in Argentina after Nelson's comments in 1917.

Luzuriaga analyzed Dewey's work as a paramount piece of modern psychology, and saw in Dewey's view of the functioning of the mind his most original contribution, a kind of *diferentia specifica* among progressive educationalists. Capacities, which are to be developed by training, are not the

foundation of the mind, but the organization of experience, stated Luzuriaga. On this basis, he continued, it is almost mandatory to understand school life as a “small” society, because experiences are fundamentally a product of social interaction. Luzuriaga presented Dewey’s work as having recast pedagogy within the frame of social progress and critique.<sup>54</sup> He also advocated the introduction of manual training in schools, which he considered to be “methods for life” and not merely a vocational form of training.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Ernesto Nelson had tried to point out the social aspects of Dewey’s educational ideas.<sup>56</sup> However, the complexity of Luzuriaga’s and Nelson’s readings did not have a serious impact on the mainstream of Argentina’s reception of Dewey’s work, but remained rather isolated examples of nuanced and complex readings of his work.

This pattern of reading is not only relevant to Dewey, but also the entire New Education Movement. Since the 1920s, modern educationalists had often disentangled the goals of pedagogical reform from the projects of social change, thus defining a field of expertise which many teachers and school officials considered to be apolitical. A review of the articles written by worldwide famous “stars” of the New School Movement published in *La Obra* between 1921 and 1945 shows a total neglect of the Soviet experience in the 1920s and 1930s, and also a concentration on authors such as Décroly, Ferrière, Cousinet, and Montessori, who emphasized the psychological aspects of education. In the 1930s, nationalistic tendencies in society and politics pervaded curriculum decision making, and many patriotic “rituals” were introduced into schools in these years. The question of the (in)compatible nature of “(North) American” techniques and a “national” curriculum became more visible and urgent.

In his work “Why Progressive Schools?,” published by *La Obra* in 1933, Dewey addressed these kinds of questions. He recognized that pedagogical methods varied according to social and political contexts. Progressive schools, he continued, are a product of modern societies and these are organized in very different forms. But in all societies, he added, even in those with diverse régimes, it is possible to know objectively the specific pedagogical needs of the people.<sup>57</sup> Argentinean teachers valued the possibility of a politically neutral progressive pedagogy. Some teachers—at least those that were published in the journals—could simultaneously consolidate their field of expertise, including their “progressive” *élan*, and, at the same time, support authoritarian forms of school life. “That the New Education,” the editors of *La Obra* stated in 1944, “has nothing to do with any principle or political, social and religious régime, is proved by the fact that their different forms emerged and spread in countries with the most disparate systems of government.”<sup>58</sup> This statement tried definitely to show that the “nationalist orientation of teaching,” issued for the first time in 1931,<sup>59</sup> was not an obstacle to be surpassed by the New School Movement in Argentina: The new education “is not only wholly compatible with the nationalist orientation that teaching has to support, but also, as it has been shown, it implies

in no way the most insignificant obstacle for the fulfillment of all those goals, which the Federal State has adopted for schools.”<sup>60</sup> In his plea, the author mentioned Dewey in order to assert that the “active school” is only “a form of pedagogical work.”<sup>61</sup> Whereas in the 1930s *La Obra* published some contributions that analyzed old pedagogies as techniques for the formation of “subjects and slaves,”<sup>62</sup> these positions declined some years later, and “progressive” educators soon looked for a compromise with the leading politics of the time marked by authoritarian discourses and a renewed religious tone.

In the 1940s, Dewey’s work faced a new conjuncture of popularity. After the aforementioned publication of *Experience and Education* in 1939, Luzuriaga, the Spanish educator in exile, started an ambitious project of translating and publishing Dewey’s major educational works. Following the translation of *The Sources of a Science of Education* (orig. 1929), published in Buenos Aires in 1941 with a second edition in 1944, he published *The Child and the Curriculum* (orig. 1925) and *My Pedagogic Creed* (orig. 1897) together in 1944. Six new editions had followed by 1967. *Democracy and Education* (orig. 1916) appeared in Buenos Aires shortly after the coming of Perón to power in 1946 and had been re-published six times by 1971. This renewed popularity eventually led to Genta’s sharp invective against Dewey’s influence on Argentinean schools. Only in the context of this wave of publishing, and obviously within the political climate that was described at the beginning of this chapter, were Genta’s anxieties understandable.

The reappraisal of Dewey’s work in the early 1940s, particularly during the nationalistic dictatorship from 1943 to 1946, was not only a byproduct of Luzuriaga’s translation and publishing activities (of course, the texts had to be at the disposal of the teachers to be reappraised), but was also a result of an increasing democratic movement among teachers confronted with an authoritarian and pro-Catholic educational policy. Teachers found in Dewey’s ideas the opportunity to reestablish a sense of democracy and republicanism, now menaced by the emerging Labor party and Perón. However, this reassessment was still far away from Dewey’s complex and multi-layered formulations on democracy, and the questions he posed concerning the authority of knowledge.<sup>63</sup> Argentinean teachers identified “democracy” first and foremost with the constitutional provisions from 1853. They considered the old constitution as “a kind of mystic, a deep-felt and a warmly-embraced one.”<sup>64</sup> The mystification of the constitution culminated in the assertion of its “eternal character” as “the most liberal worldwide.”<sup>65</sup> For these teachers, the relatively high degree of inclusion of the poorer classes in the school system defined the democratic nature of modern Argentinean schooling.<sup>66</sup> Other aspects of Dewey’s democracy, for example its relation to pluralism and diversity, the critique against an authoritarian school culture and against any type of totalitarian tendencies in society, were not picked up on by this group of readers.

Once they had defined a field of technical expertise, which involved a depoliticization of pedagogy, Argentinean teachers related to the New School Movement then had to redefine their positions vis-à-vis the politics of the time. This reconsideration did not imply a re-politicization at all. On the contrary, this group of teachers reasserted the technical nature of pedagogy, which could be put to serve different political projects. Many teachers in these dramatic years supported a left-right “democratic” coalition of conservatives, liberals, radicals, socialists, and communists against Perón, and mystified republicanism and liberalism in a way that neglected any discussion about educational democracy that went beyond the integration of all children into schools. Liberal teachers spoke about democracy after 1946 as a coined term for the opposition to Perón’s government, while they mystified the “democratic” character of pre-Perónist Argentinean schools.<sup>67</sup> In their turn, Perónist educators, even though they were not comfortable with the extreme views voiced by Genta, did not want to include Dewey, a “foreign” educator, in their struggle for re-defining “democracy” as being only a social rights and welfare state, disregarding its authoritarian frame. Thus, by lack of will or by a political and epistemological difficulty in perceiving his work otherwise, most Argentinean readers were incapable or unwilling to consider the many aspects of democratic education that were opened up by Dewey.

## CONCLUSION

What, then, can be conceptualized with regard to these different readings of Dewey in Argentina? We would like to argue that tradition, intention, and situation were key determinants in configuring a pattern of reading that marginalized Dewey’s work and, when it was considered in educational discussions, reduced its complexity to technical aspects of renewed pedagogies and active schools.

First, republican and liberal traditions reduced his multilevel concept of democracy and redefined it as being only the affirmation of the older path of educational development. These traditions reduced “democracy” to formal procedures and did not consider it as being more “substantive” in the sense of a new social form of passionate deliberation, cultural progress, and social cohesion. Second, the intention of the teachers in achieving a respectable position as experts in a concrete field of practices, such as pedagogy and didactics, reduced their view of the educational arena and, consequently, Dewey was constructed as a “depoliticized” pedagogue unattached to controversial social and political discussions. Lastly, changing political situations reinforced these tendencies. In the 1930s, faced with the new “national tendency in education,” many teachers from the field of progressive education asserted the possible articulation of their pedagogy to many regimes and ideologies, thus reducing Dewey to a provider of neutral

techniques. With the emergence of Perón as a political leader and Perónism as a political identity, “democracy” became an issue, but the prevalent concept of democracy of those years was by no means marked by Dewey’s consideration of “democracy.”

In this sense, the semantic resources of the Argentinean teachers and their possibility of attaching new meanings to “imported” educational knowledge were mainly given at the level of selection. Argentinean educationalists did not create an “Argentinized” Dewey by attaching new meanings to his work. As displayed in the teachers’ press, they rather selected strongly legitimated texts and readings in order to fit him into their professional and political strategies. They did so in line with the official educational tradition, their own purposes of ‘technical’ legitimacy, and the changing political situations. These selections, indeed, are not original enough to speak about any true “variation” of Dewey’s ideas. Beyond Luzuriaga’s efforts in publishing Dewey’s works, and contrary to Jordán Bruno Genta’s investive, Dewey’s educational principles related to democracy had little impact in defining Argentinean educational policies.

## NOTES

1. Among the many writings on Dewey’s influence on international pedagogy, see: *Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey: Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education*, ed. Thomas S. Popkewitz (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); Gert Biesta and Siebren Miedema, “Dewey in Europe: A Case Study on the International Dimensions of the Turn-of-the-Century Educational Reform,” *American Journal of Education* 105 (1996); Jaime Caicedo Escudero, “La escuela nueva y activa en América Latina. Influencia de Dewey en las reformas educacionales de Chile 1927 y 1945,” in *Sociedad y educación. Ensayos sobre historia de la educación en América Latina* (Bogotá: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 1995); Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon, “La diseminación de ideas deweyanas en Bélgica a través de los manuales de pedagogía,” *Historia Caribe* 10 (2005); Jaime Nubiola and Beatriz Sierra, “La recepción de Dewey en España y Latinoamérica,” *Utopía y praxis latinoamericana* 6 (2001).
2. Quoted in: “Dewey Stands Firm,” *Time* (21 August 1944).
3. See the readers’ Letters of *Time* (11 September 1944).
4. This was the term used by the actors, although it only referred to the United States.
5. For an analysis of this electoral process, including some educational aspects, see Marcelo Caruso, “El Año que Vivimos en Peligro. Izquierda, Política y Pedagogía” in *Discursos Pedagógicos e Imaginario Social en el Peronismo (1945–1955)*, ed. Adriana Puiggrós (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1995).
6. Juan Carlos Tedesco, *Educación y Sociedad en la Argentina (1880–1945)* (Buenos Aires: Solar, 1986); see also my discussion of the international models of reference in the reform of primary schools at the end of the conservative era, Marcelo Caruso, “Zweideutige Verweise. Preußen als Vorbild argentinischer Schulreformen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Projekts von Carlos Saavedra Lamas,” in *Preußen und Lateinamerika*, Sandra Carreras ed. (Münster: Litt, 2004).

7. Adriana Puiggrós, *Sujetos, Disciplina y Currículum en los Orígenes del Sistema Educativo Argentino, 1884–1916* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1990); Carlos Escudé, *El Fracaso del Proyecto Argentino. Educación e Ideología* (Buenos Aires: Tesis, 1990); Roberto Alfredo Miranda and Osvaldo Miguel Iazzetta, *Proyectos Políticos y Escuela, 1890–1920* (Rosario: Matética, 1982).
8. Tulio Halperin Donghi, *El Espejo de la Historia. Problemas Argentinos y Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*, (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1987), 160ff.
9. Jennie Howard, *En Otros Años y Climas Distantes* (Buenos Aires: Raigal, 1951).
10. See Carlos Escudé, 1942–1949. *Gran Bretaña, Estados Unidos y la Declinación Argentina* (Buenos Aires, Ed. de Belgrano, 1988).
11. See Charles Hale, "Political and Social Ideas in Latin America, 1870–1930," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell, Vol. 5 (Cambridge/UK: Cambridge University Press), 414.
12. Nubiola and Sierra, "La recepción de Dewey en España y Latinoamérica," 116–129, 117. A similar statement, although referring to Brazil and Argentina as the pioneering countries for the reception of Dewey's work in Latin America, was advanced earlier by Walter Brickman, "John Dewey's Foreign Reputation as an Educator," *School and Society* 70 (October 22, 1949): 261.
13. Sara Jafella, "Universidad Nacional de La Plata: Dos Concepciones en su Período Fundacional," *Anales de la Educación Común* (2006): 196.
14. Ernesto Nelson, "Introducción a la Edición Española," in *Psicología del Pensamiento*, ed. John Dewey (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1917), xii.
15. *Ibid.*, xv–xvi.
16. *Ibid.*, xix.
17. *Ibid.*, xxi.
18. See i.e.: E. Nelson, *The Spanish Reader* (Boston: DC Heath and Co., 1916); *Las Bibliotecas en los EE.UU.* (Washington: Dotación Carnegie para la Paz Internacional, 1929); *La Salud del Niño, su Protección Social en la Legislación y en las Obras.* (New York: La Nueva Democracia, 1929).
19. Víctor Mercante, *Charlas Pedagógicas* (Buenos Aires: R. Gleizer, 1927), 12.
20. Raúl B. Díaz, *Ideales y Esperanzas en Educación Común* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de L. J. Roso y Cía., 1913). In his view, the United States was the only country in the world which could show a school being "the center of the life and happiness of the child, close to his home, . . . guided by the nation's ideals of democracy and greatness." (1).
21. For a general view of this period, see *Argentina en la Paz de Dos Guerras, 1914–1945*, Waldo Ansaldi, Alfredo Pucciarelli and José C. Villarruel eds. (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1993).
22. María Delia Terrén de Ferro, *Historia de la Instrucción Pública en la Argentina, 1916–1930. Formas Institucionalizadas de Enseñanza* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Universidad del Salvador, 1996).
23. Cf. An earlier work written by us, Inés Dussel and Marcelo Caruso, "Specters of Dewey in Latin America: Some Notes on the Reception of Educational Theories," *Paedagogica Historica* Supplementary Series III (1998), 380–86. See also Marcelo Caruso, "John Dewey und Jean Piaget: Weltklassiker im lateinamerikanischen Kontext," in *Weltkultur und kulturelle Bedeutungswelten*, ed. Jürgen Schriewer (Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 2007).
24. Juan B. Terán, *Espiritualizar Nuestra Escuela. La Instrucción Primaria Argentina en 1931* (Buenos Aires: Librería del Colegio, 1932).
25. *Ibid.*, 4.
26. *Ibid.*, 12.
27. *Ibid.*, 13.
28. *Ibid.*, 42.
29. Aníbal Ponce, *Educación y lucha de clases* (Buenos Aires: Cartago, 1984), 163. He considered the existence of a second trend, "doctrinarian," which he also criticized. In Ponce's view, the doctrinarians held that the methodological tendency wanted to prepare children for present times and not for the future, as it was its own aim. According to Ponce, Terán's pedagogy could be inscribed in this second type.
30. See Oscar Terán, "Aníbal Ponce o el Marxismo sin Nación," in his *En Busca de la Ideología Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Catálogos, 1986).
31. See Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1896–1958* (New York: Routledge, 1986), who argues against this reductionism.
32. We have borrowed this term from Bernstein's work on the structuring of pedagogic discourse. The official pedagogical grammar refers to the hegemonic set of "rules which regulate the production, distribution, reproduction, interrelation and change of legitimate pedagogic texts (discourses), their social relations of transmission and acquisition (practice) and the organization of their contexts (organization)." Basil Bernstein, *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse. Class, Codes and Control* vol. IV (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 193.
33. An Anarchist educationist, José María Lunazzi, produces another critique in line with Aníbal Ponce's. In *Reconstrucción Educativa* (Buenos Aires: Claridad, 1935), he accuses Dewey of not desiring to change the social conditions which produce inequities and injustice, and of advocating adjusting the school to the social setting. He gets close to insult when he says that Dewey can be equated to low-band practicism (mercachifle practicismo) (64). The only aspect in which Lunazzi diverges from Ponce is when he defends the importance of material and technical education, and demands a balance between intellectual education and contact with real life and things.
34. Jesualdo, *Los Fundamentos de la Nueva Pedagogía* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Americalee, 1943), 132.
35. Jesualdo, *Diecisiete Educadores de América. Los Constructores, los Reformadores* (Montevideo: Ed. Pueblos Unidos, 1945), 198.
36. *Ibid.*, 199.
37. Another interesting case of an original reading is the one done by the Jesuit priest Alberto Hurtado, recently canonized. Hurtado studied in Leuven and earned his Doctorate with a thesis on "The Pedagogical System of John Dewey in Front of the Requirements of Catholic Doctrine," in 1936. See Caicedo Escudero, "La escuela nueva y activa en América Latina," 260. On his return to Chile, he established himself in higher education institutions. Today there is a Jesuit University that bears his name. No similar case of a Catholic studying and reappraising Dewey can be found in Argentina.
38. See Adriana Puiggrós, "La Educación Argentina Desde la Reforma Saavedra Lamcas Hasta el Final de la Década Infame," in *Escuela, Democracia y Orden* (1916–1943), Adriana Puiggrós ed. (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1992): 95.
39. Puiggrós, "La Educación Argentina"; Silvina Gvirtz, *El Discurso Escolar a Través de los Cuadernos de Clase (1930–1970)* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1999).
40. We want to thank Gabriela Trentin (Humboldt University, Berlin) and Leandro Stagno (University La Plata, Argentina) for their support in the archival work related to these journals.
41. J. M., "El Niño y el Programa Escolar, de John Dewey," *La Obra* 95 (1925): 324.
42. Estelle Louise Jovin, "La Educación Progresiva en Estados Unidos," *La Obra* XIV: 254 (1934): 707.
43. John Dewey, "Algunos Aspectos de la Educación Moderna," *El Monitor de la Educación Común* LI: 712 (1932): 39.

44. Juan Carlos Agulla, "La Escuela Nueva," *El Monitor de la Educación Común* LX: 815 (1940): 20-25.
45. Luis Galdames, "Algunos Aspectos de la Educación Primaria en Norte América," *El Monitor de la Educación Común* LI: 712 (1932): 39.
46. Pedro W. Bustos, "Renovar la Escuela Desde la Escuela," *La Obra* XI: 196 (1931): 201.
47. John Dewey, "De la Oposición entre el Programa Escolar y el Niño," *La Obra* V: 94 (1925): 297; John Dewey, "Mi Credo Pedagógico," *La Obra* XI: 196 (1931): 198-99 and XI: 197 (1931): 250-52; John Dewey, "¿Por qué Tener Escuelas Progresivas?," *La Obra* XIII: 254 (1933).
48. Dewey, "Algunos aspectos de la educación moderna," 42.
49. Hugo Biagini, *Filosofía Americana e Identidad. El Conflictivo Caso Argentino* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1989).
50. J. M., "El Niño y el Programa Escolar, de John Dewey," 324.
51. Emilio Abelleyra, "Fundamentos de la Escuela Renovada," *El Monitor de la educación común* LI: 707/708 (1932): 117.
52. Rosario Vera Peñaloza, "Los Jardines de Infantes y las Escuelas Nuevas," *El Monitor de la Educación Común* LI: 713 (1932): 86.
53. Luis Borruat, "Orientaciones y Organización de la Escuela Moderna," *La Obra* II: 38 (1922): 4-6; also "La Escuela Activa" *La Obra* IV: 77 (1924): 433-34.
54. At this time, other Latin American educationalists also presented a "purely" psychological Dewey. These works would become very popular many years later with teachers. See Lourenço Filho, "Principios Fundamentales de la Educación Activa o Funcional," *La Obra* XIII: 229 (1933): 243-46, particularly 243.
55. Lorenzo Luzuriaga, "La Pedagogía de Dewey," *La Obra* II: 42 (1922): 12. See also, in the same vein, Lorenzo Luzuriaga, "La Escuela Activa," *La Obra* V: 105 (1925): 828-29.
56. Ernesto Nelson, "La Educación en las Obras de Previsión y de Protección a la Infancia," *El Monitor de la Educación Común* LI: 710 (1932): 73-88; Ernesto Nelson, "Significado, Finalidades y Formas de la Acción Social Popular," *El Monitor de la Educación Común* LI: 712 (1932): 9-19.
57. John Dewey, "¿Por qué Tener Escuelas Progresivas?," *La Obra* XIII: 233 (1933): 436. Second article published in: *La Obra* XIII: 234 (1933): 483-85.
58. See "La Escuela en Acción. La Escuela Activa," *La Obra* XXIV (1944): 469.
59. See "El Consejo Nacional de Educación Rearfirma la Orientación Nacionalista de la Enseñanza," *El Monitor de la educación común* L: 704 (1931): 119-20.
60. Dewey, "La Escuela en Acción. La Escuela Activa," 470.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Elisabeth Huguenin, "La Práctica de la Escuela Activa," *La Obra* XIII: 230 (1933): 294.
63. See, among many scholarly studies, the remarkable texts by Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1995).
64. John Dewey, "Pueblo Demócrata," *La Obra* XXV: 418 (1945): 90.
65. John Dewey, "Principios Liberales," *La Obra* XXV: 419 (1945): 138.
66. John Dewey, "La Escuela, Puntal de la Democracia," *La Obra* XXIV: 410 (1944): 423.
67. For the shaping of this discourse in the Argentinean Left, see Caruso, "El año que vivimos en peligro."

## 4 Ruralizing Dewey

### The American Friend, Internal Colonization, and the Action School in Post-Revolutionary Mexico (1921-1940)

*Rosa Bruno-Jofré and  
Carlos Martínez Valle*

In the article "Mexico's Educational Renaissance," published in *The New Republic* on September 22, 1926,<sup>1</sup> John Dewey wrote that rural education in post-revolutionary Mexico, one of the most important social experiments that had taken place in the world, had helped him recover his faith in the school as an instrument for social transformation, and in his own educational ideas.<sup>2</sup> Dewey's acknowledgement of the work of Mexican educators was repaid from south of the Rio Grande with tributes and expressions of gratitude to the American educator. The process of mutual legitimation included reciprocal quotation. Thus, Dewey quoted Moisés Sáenz saying "nowhere have I seen better examples of a socialized school than in some of these rural schools in Mexico."<sup>3</sup> Sáenz had studied at Columbia between 1921 and 1922 and taught at the Lincoln School in New York. At the time when Dewey wrote the article, Sáenz was the Sub-Secretary of Education, a position he held between 1925 and 1931.<sup>4</sup> This apparent circular unity in the discourse seemed to imply a close rapport between the international educational model and its local and regional application. In the same article, Dewey went on to say:

I have long had a pet idea that "backward" countries have a great chance educationally; that when they once start in the school-road they are less hampered by tradition and institutionalism than are countries where schools are held by customs which have hardened through the years. But I have to confess that I have never found much evidence in support of this belief that new countries, educationally new, can start afresh, with the most enlightened theories and practices of the most educationally advanced countries.<sup>5</sup>

Although Dewey argued for a creative relationship between school and society, the quotation suggests that he seemed to forget that the inter-relationship