



PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

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It has been more than forty years since Roger Waters from the Pink Floyd band described the educational system as 'just another brick in the wall', thus pointing to, among other things, the lack of individual approach, creativity and criticism in education. Here we are, facing the fourth industrial revolution, which has brought reinforced investment in the development of smart technology, artificial intelligence and robotics. How can the educational process benefit and possibly prosper from the changes caused by the development of new technologies? Teachers teach generations of students who are growing up with the Internet and who communicate and socialise not only in the real, but also in the digital world. At the beginning of 2020, the world was gripped by a new crisis. The COVID-19 virus pandemic presents another significant challenge for the educational system and all its participants by requiring an accelerated development of new competences of teachers and students. How does the educational system adjust to the newly created circumstances? How do we perceive these changes in the context of contemporary education? The publication which will be presented in this text treats this question and other similar and relevant questions and it analyses the problems and perspectives of contemporary education.

The book *Problems and Perspectives in Contemporary Education* was published in English in October 2021 by The Institute for Educational Research in Belgrade, the Faculty of Philology of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in Moscow and the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Belgrade. The editors of the publication are Nikoleta Gutvajin PhD (Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade), Jelena Stanišić PhD (Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade) and Vera Radović PhD (Faculty of Teacher Education, Belgrade). The book comprises the works by authors from ten countries from around the world: Serbia, Russia,

Croatia, the United States of America, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Mongolia, Poland, Greece and Northern Macedonia.

The first work of this theme-based collection is a text titled *A modest ambitious proposal envisioning an education system that works for everyone*, where authors Kornelija Mrnjauš and Jason Laker present a historical overview of views of education and its goals starting from the period of ancient Greeks and Romans to date and where they also analyse educational changes which occurred due to the changes in various social, economic and political circumstances. The authors discuss the future of contemporary education, emphasise the importance of education that is suitable for all and remind us that, regardless of the development of new technologies and challenges brought by the contemporary era, education will always be present and indispensable. In the work *Knowledge in shadow – misconceptions related to light phenomena that are retained in spite of education*, Gordana Mišćević, Sanja Blagdanić and Marija Bošnjak Stepanović discuss the scientific literacy from the constructivist point of view and the importance of early introduction of scientific education in the educational system. The authors emphasise the importance of researching and overcoming illusions related to natural phenomena. The results of their research show, on the example of researching misconceptions about light phenomena, that the students of the fourth grade of primary school as well as their teachers dominantly do not manifest difficulties in solving the basic version of the task with the position of shadow in relation to the position of the Sun during the day. However, when resolving a more complex version of the task, which includes the change of the position of the Sun, most students have misconceptions and authors particularly draw attention to the fact that teachers also have the same misconceptions. The results of this research point to the role of teachers in the process of creating but also in the process of overcoming misconceptions.

The work of Ivana Đerić Dušica Malinić and Rajka Đević *Project-based learning: Challenges and implementation support* focuses on project-based learning. The authors primarily describe characteristics of three different methods of learning based on the constructivist theory of learning, which includes learning based on the project, learning based on the problem and learning based on research. It is accompanied by the critical overview of the process of implementing project-based learning in the educational system of the Republic of Serbia, or more precisely, the overview of two support strategies developed for the purpose: the training of teachers and school associates and creation of supporting manuals. The authors also discuss ways of supporting teachers by facilitating their work, informing them about formative assessment and monitoring, and by establishing techniques for making research-related questions.

In the work *Teaching rhetoric in primary school – towards modernisation of society with classical techniques and practices*, the author Jana Žmavc presents a unique model of learning rhetoric. The first part of the work gives an overview of the

development of the idea of teaching rhetoric as an important element of education. In the second part, the author describes the process of integrating rhetoric into the educational system of Slovenia, from the moment rhetoric was introduced as a new subject in the curriculum of the 9th grade in primary schools to date, including the results of the project of revising the curriculum from 2018. This work represents a complete and comprehensive overview of the implementation of the initial and subsequently modified curriculum for teaching rhetoric in Slovenian primary schools from the perspective of the author who has worked on this subject for more than twenty years and who has been the leading researcher and an active participant in this process since its beginning to the present day.

In the text *The importance of language culture in contemporary education*, Jelena Stevanović explains what language culture is and how it is acquired through the curriculums of the educational system of the Republic of Serbia. The goal of the research was to analyse the status of language culture in the curriculums of secondary schools in Serbia as well as the achievement of secondary school and university students in the language culture test. Although curriculums support the importance of language culture, the author emphasises that not enough attention has been given to language culture. Also, although results indicate that achievement levels in the language culture test are satisfactory, the author points out that respondents have had difficulties answering some of the questions related to grammar, orthography and lexicology. The author questions the level and purpose of knowledge related to language culture and she emphasises the importance of acquired knowledge in real language-related situations. The text *Definitions and defining as indicators of language development of preschool children*, the authors Jelena Stevanović and Emilija Lazarević present results of the first stage of the longitudinal study of researching the development of speech-linguistic, metalinguistic, general cognitive and graphomotor abilities of children. The results indicate that preschool children successfully define concrete nouns, but the authors have also recorded a great number of logical definitions, which is considered an advanced achievement. The authors emphasise the importance of asking questions and stimulating development of metalinguistic abilities at an early age.

The goal of the research titled *Primary school and preschool teacher motivation for horizontal learning: The challenge and perspective of the professional learning communities development* and conducted by Isidora Korać, Jelena Đermanov and Danijela Šćepanović was to research the way teachers evaluate their motivation for participating in trainings related to horizontal learning. The results of the research indicate that teachers are mostly motivated to participate in visits to other institutions and renowned lessons which include discussions and analyses, as well as to participate in international projects and programmes. The authors have singled out recognition of benefit from horizontal learning to be the most motivating factor for teachers. In accordance with the findings of this and previous researches, the

authors emphasise the importance of building a professional network for learning where a sense of belonging, community and connection can reinforce teachers' motivation to apply horizontal learning in practice.

In the text *How to integrate coaching into teacher training programs*, Nikoleta Gutvajn and Jelena Pavlović discuss the implementation of coaching as a form of professional development of teachers. It presents some of the principles of integration of coaching into the programmes of systematic training of teachers, and the programme titled *Prevention of aggression and violence at an early age* has been presented as an example of the programme of training preschool teachers with the coaching incorporated as a development intervention, and it has been successfully implemented in the Republic of Serbia since 2010. In the work *The problems of teacher's professional development in ICT context: An andragogical view*, Kristinka Ovesni and Vera Radović also focus on the professional development of teachers, but in the digital environment. The authors present a research whose goal was to find out how teachers evaluate characteristics of professional development in the digital environment and to identify difficulties they encounter. The results indicate that there are numerous benefits from the activities carried out in the digital environment and that they are important for a more intensive involvement of teachers in the process of learning and improvement of their professional practice.

In the work *Building teacher competence: the role of university teachers and mentor teachers*, Tina Štemberg and Sonja Čotar Konrad discuss the quality of initial education of teachers in Slovenia. The authors primarily write about the concept of teachers' competences, they refer to the European documents where they have been defined and then they describe the system of initial education of teachers in Slovenia. The authors emphasise the role of university teachers and mentors and their close and continuous cooperation as one of the key elements of a good programme of training future teachers.

Several following works that have been published as a part of this book are related to the effects of COVID-19 virus pandemic on the educational systems in different countries and at different levels. The authors of the work *Methodology for the collection of social media data about policy-related experiences on the frontline of education provision* Mihaylo Milovanovitch, Tijana Jokić Zorkić and Maia Gelashvili critically analyse the role of certain educational policies which have been planned or realised inadequately due to the lack of support and guidance of those who oversaw their enactment. The authors present the methodology of using social networks to gather data related to the way new educational policies have been perceived and implemented in educational practice. Although described methodology has been created for the needs of researching the effect of the pandemic on the educational system, the authors explain the broader application of this methodological model. The pandemic has not only affected the system of compulsory education; it has also affected the system of high education. The authors Sergey Kokhan, Ariunsanaa

Byambaa, Elena Romanova, Batbaatar Gunchin and Witold Kowalski treat this subject in the work *Implementation of distance technologies in Euro-Asian universities during the COVID-19 pandemic*. The goal of the study was to research the process of transition from traditional teaching to distance learning during the pandemic at two universities, one in Mongolia and the other in Russia. According to the results of this research, there are differences between these two universities in the way problems related to this transition have been tackled. According to the findings, the authors give useful suggestions on how to implement distance learning. Olga B. Mikhailova writes about distance learning in the work titled *Online studying at university during the period of COVID-19 virus pandemic: Students' motivation and resilience*. The goal of this research was to analyse the link between students' resilience and their academic motivation. The results indicate that total students' resilience is average or high and that it is the most distinctive component of cognitive motivation. The author presents details and results of the analysis which indicate that there is a link between resilience indicators and academic motivation indicators.

In the work *University students' motivation and learning strategies of self-regulated learning*, Milja Vujačić, Jelena Stanišić and Snežana Mirkov write about self-regulation as one of metacognitive activities which largely contribute to successful learning. The first part of the work describes different models of self-regulated learning, whereas the second part of the work presents research about the link between students' motivation and strategies of learning, as well as the link between the mentioned variables and academic achievement, gender and area of studying. The results show to what extent motivation and achievement of a certain level of self-regulation by using different strategies of learning matter for successful learning. Snežana Mirkov also writes about methods of learning in the work *University students' beliefs about learning and knowledge and their approaches to learning*. The goal of this research was to analyse the convictions of the students of economics regarding the learning and the knowledge and the link between those two with learning strategies. The author emphasises the importance of critical thinking for the development of intrinsic interests and she warns that changing traditional methods of learning is not enough unless we help students understand their own convictions in the context of their class experience. Most of the works included in this publication refer to the education of young people, but Olga Mikhailova and Karina Avagyan treated the learning of the adults based on the example of learning foreign languages. In the text titled *Psychology of learning in adulthood: Cognitive processes and motivation for learning a foreign language*, the authors analyse theories of cognitive development at an adult age and they write about the role of motivation and use of new technologies when learning foreign languages as an adult.

Besides health crisis which befell the world, experts warn of the ecological crisis as well. In the text *Pro-environmental values and education*, Milica Marušić Jablanović and Andreas Oikonomou analyse ecological values, as well as theoretical

and empirical findings about the link between the conviction and behaviour. With examples of good practice, authors describe how ecological education contributes to the adoption of ecological values in children. Finally, the text of Mile Srbinovski *Students' environmental literacy in the Republic of North Macedonia* is related to this subject and it represents the systematic analysis of works about ecological literacy in the Republic of Northern Macedonia, published between 2000-2020. Results point to average level of ecological awareness, whereas the highest level was demonstrated in the domain of the knowledge about ecology. The author interprets the findings and concludes that there is a need for developing the models of ecological education and the national strategy, as well as for the method of assessing and monitoring the level of ecological literacy.

In the work *The educational status and schooling problems of juvenile delinquents*, Marija Maljković, Nikoleta Gutvajn, Marina Kovačević Lepojević and Ljeposava Ilijić consider the characteristics of juvenile delinquency based on the data of registered cases in the Republic of Serbia. It also presents results of the research of difficulties that juvenile delinquents encounter during their education. The authors emphasise the need for more intensive efforts of all participants in education directed towards the improvement of the school climate, mentor programmes and relations between students and teachers, as well as for reinforced cooperation of these participants with court institutions. The last work in this publication *Developmental assets model: Implications for educational practice* was written by Branislava Popović Ćitić, Lidija Bukvić Branković and Marina Kovačević Lepojević and it focuses on the model of development benefits. The authors describe the model and highlight its components and importance for educational practice. The results of explorative research of the assessment of development benefits with the students of primary schools in Belgrade show that out of 40 benefits, only 14 have been developed to the level of a positive effect on the young people in the community. The authors suggest how this model can be implemented in educational practice and how it can facilitate the mapping and overcoming of problems.

The publication *Problems and perspectives of contemporary education* represents an important resource both for researchers and teachers, associates and decision-makers who actively participate in the educational process. The works focus on different subjects from the area of contemporary education, but if we read them carefully and look for messages that the authors wished to convey, we can see that they invite us to critically reflect on traditional methods of education, as well as on the necessity of introducing novelties into our educational system at all levels. This publication is a reminder that the educational system must be changed continuously in accordance with social, economic and political events. It is also a warning that it is not enough to be aware of the necessity of a change and to design it; it is necessary to implement the change at the right moment and in an adequate

way through cooperation of those who make decisions about the changes and those who implement the changes in practice.

In reference to Roger Waters' warning from the beginning of this text, it seems that the editors of this publication want to point out how important it is to strive for constructing a wall fit for a brick, rather than just adding another brick in the concrete wall.

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