

FOREWORD

The conceptualization of the project “*REFORM – Rethinking Bulgarian Education FOR the 21st Century: Concepts, Methodologies, Practices, and Players*” (2021 – 2023) started in the midst of the Covid pandemics in 2020 and followed the introduction of online education from a distance (ORES) in Bulgarian schools. At present, three years later, ORES is applied only to individual and specific cases. Nevertheless, the ORES experience has irrevocably enriched the armory of teaching practices at school and revealed some enduring methodological challenges.

In its first year, the REFORM project started by exploring the philosophical concepts of cognition and education, and how digital technology changes the latter in comparison with previous communication technologies. A thoughtful introduction to this philosophical discussion provides the first paper of the present collection written by our colleague Nevena Ivanova. For more detailed inquiry into our previous work, the reader may also refer to the volume “Thematic Papers, Philosophy Nowadays: reflections on education and the digital transformation of knowledge” (2021) edited by Slobodan Nesković and Bogdana Todorova. In addition, a special edition of the online scientific journal NotaBene “Pandemics, Knowledge and Education” was dedicated to our research on the global institutional discourse on the future of education, the global trends in education, digitization, and (multi)literacy.

This present volume of “Philosophy” encompasses research papers that are the product of our work during the second year of the REFORM project (2022) in which we aimed at the empirical exploration of the situation in Bulgaria during the pandemics, and the collection of relevant data about good practices in online education in countries which are leaders in providing quality school education and in digitization as well (Finland).

My own contribution to the volume (Hristina Ambareva) builds on the analysis of the major conceptual change brought by introducing digital technologies in school education, and provides empirical data about practices and specifics of digitization of education in Bulgaria. The paper develops an argument about socialization as a crucial dimension of education in the digital age. The work of Silvia and Mariana Pencheva supplies additional empirical information and analysis on the matter by presenting a case study on the introduction and usage of Google Classroom in an innovative elementary school in the town of Veliko Turnovo. Mariana Todorova addresses the issue of the “accelerated digitization” in Bulgarian education during pandemics with attention to deficits and societal challenges facing digitization

of the system, one being the demands of the labor market. The experience of Finland is discussed extensively along with factors that facilitate the success of the latter. The applicability of the principles of Finnish education to the Bulgarian context was also examined.

In the second part of this volume Bogdana Todorova reaffirms the school as a place for socialization and discusses the “re-conceptualization” of knowledge and “re-framing the school” in terms of a place which should prevent radicalization and counteract religious fundamentalism. She emphasizes that the process of re-conceptualizing education needs the implementation of the ‘emergent knowledge’ and ‘techno-moral value’, which work as a collective intellect allowing students to see what is really good and ensuring suitable educational environment for the so called New Young Muslims.

The paper of Albena Nakova and Valentina Milenkova offers a thorough historical analysis of the power relations behind knowledge and curriculum creation in the system of education. In the tradition of Foucault and Bourdieu the authors discuss how even the seemingly neutral knowledge implies “social and political determination”.

Drawing from Bourdieu’s theory, the excellent paper of Oana Șerban goes deeper into the discussion about transformations of the cultural and social capital into digital capital with the subsequent reproduction of social inequalities thus affecting the field of education as well.

The concluding article of this volume is dedicated to the Bulgarian national strategy for development of higher education by 2030 and the main challenges it defines. In particular, the paper discusses the dimensions and strategies for digital literacy improvement. Certain shortcomings and omissions of the strategy are also pointed out.

In its second year the REFORM project has made a further step toward examining the state of distance education in Bulgarian schools and exploring good practices in countries with or without prior experience in digital learning. In addressing these research problems, the resulting papers adopt an interdisciplinary approach. The latter ensures a comprehensive exploration of the different aspects of digitalization of education. Combining different epistemic perspectives, spanning from social and political theories to philosophy of cognition and futures studies, it helps to acquire deeper understanding about the way digitalization and distance transform the learning process - its meaning, its underlying value, its core concepts and its instruments in terms of methodology and infrastructure.

Hopefully, this volume can also become a modest contribution to the very significant and dynamic field of digital age education studies.

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