Published by
University of Belgrade - Faculty of Education

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https://doi.org/10.18485/uf_edu_covid19.2024.1

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https://doi.org/10.18485/uf_edu_covid19.2024.2

Language editing and proofreading
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Prepress
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Cover design
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Circulation
100

ISBN (for publishing unit) 978-86-7849-341-6
ISBN (for Vol One) 978-86-7849-342-3

Printed by
Birograf, Beograd

Publication of this thematic collection of papers was financially supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

Belgrade, 2024

Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic caused numerous changes in the global world we live in today. These changes affected everyday life of practically all people on planet Earth. At the same time, everyday life of individuals and social groups, as well as of larger social sub-systems (trade, economic, political, cultural etc.) was adjusted to functioning in modified, pandemic circumstances.

Of course, changes also affected the educational systems of the largest number of countries worldwide. The request placed before schools and universities was, on the one hand, to keep the teaching process functioning and, on the other hand, to ensure its functioning in the conditions of safe environment, both from the aspect of teachers and school associates and from the aspect of students and their parents. It was imperative to prevent the spread of the disease within the educational system, but also suppress the spread of the virus from all participants in the educational process to people who are not in the educational system.

Since this is an infectious disease spread by droplet transmission, the solution which arose was distance learning. This in itself as a didactic-methodical concept is not new, but goes back to the end of the 19th century, while nowadays is has been almost fully applied, being known as *online distance learning* in the countries which accepted it. This has definitely been contributed to by the development of information-communication technologies, the Internet and Internet-based platforms and tools enabling it. However, even in the most developed countries of the world, the share of those who attend the teaching process virtually is significantly lower than those who attend it in a traditional way, in classrooms and amphitheatres. The farther the countries from the world centre as the term proposed by Wallerstein, the lower the availability of *online distance learning*. Poor development of the Internet is definitely one of the key reasons, but not the only one. There is also a certain dose of conservativism when it comes to the acceptance of new technical achievements.

As far as Serbia is concerned, its encountering the necessity of transferring on to *online distance learning* was like getting a childhood disease. While universities, or more precisely, certain faculties, had some previous experience, though limited, primary and secondary schools had no experience with this form of teaching. Therefore, it was necessary to make the system function in extraordinary circumstances, on the bases which were new both to the educational authorities and to pupils and students. That is why *online distance learning* was also characterized by

urgency, and this form of teaching in our country during the COVID-19 pandemic was labelled as *emergency online distance learning*. The specific feature was the need to urgent adjustment of the entire school system. Moreover, we would also like to point out that in the teaching process during the pandemic, apart from the Internet as a virtual medium, television was also used as a mass medium, regarding the main subjects for elementary school students. These experiences of urgent adjustment were gained by other countries, both in the region and worldwide, in which this form of teaching was applied.

Researching the COVID-19 pandemic, we believed that it should be explored from the aspect of the science of education. In general, the pandemic was dominantly researched as a global health issue, while it is also a global social phenomenon, and that is why it was the task of social sciences and humanities to face this challenge. The changes occurring in that period in the educational systems throughout the world were substantial and left their consequences both on the generations being schooled at all levels (from primary school to university) and on the educational process in the post-COVID-19 stage. Although the system was adjusted to newly-occurring emergency circumstances, large part of what was completely new was subsequently either accepted or rejected as a gained experience. In any case, the *online distance learning* model in Serbia was encountered in the emergency state conditions and the lockdown, and then the hybrid model which included combining the traditional teaching method and the one of distance teaching, which altogether affected the way in which participants in the educational process (pupils, students, teachers and parents) perceived this teaching model, its possibilities, achievements, advantages and disadvantages etc.

This two-volume thematic collection of the papers of international significance researches the COVID-19 pandemic or, more precisely, its effects on the modifications in the educational system from the perspective of science of education. The first volume, prepared and edited by Professors Sanja R. Blagdanić and Ivko A. Nikolić, contains 25 chapters in four parts, and refers to the results of the studies conducted from pedagogical, didactic and methodological aspects; the second volume, prepared and edited by Professors Uroš V. Šuvaković and Dejan Vuk Lj. Stanković, contains 29 chapters in five parts related to s*ocio–humanistic aspects*.

I am grateful to my associates for their efforts and energy in enabling the publication of this two-volume monograph. I would particularly lie to thank the reviewers who conscientiously and responsibly reviewed this thematic collection.

In Belgrade, 13th July 2024

Professor Danimir P. Mandić

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

37.018.43:004(082)
37.091:004(082)
616.98:578.834(082)
37.091.3(082)

EDUCATION through the Covid-19 pandemic. [Vol. 1], [Pedagogical, didactic and methodological aspects] / editor-in-chief Danimir P. Mandić ; [edited by Sanja R. Blagdanić, Ivko A. Nikolić]. - Belgrade : University, Faculty of Education, 2024 (Beograd : Birograf). - XIII, 367 str. : ilistr. ; 30 cm

Tiraž 100. - Str. V-VI: Foreword / Danimir P. Mandić. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz radove. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad.

ISBN 978-86-7849-342-3
ISBN 978-86-7849-341-6 (niz)

1. Mandić, Danimir, 1964- [главни уредник] [аутор додатног текста]
а) Образовање на даљину -- Зборници б) Ковид 19 -- Пандемија -- Зборници в) Информациона технологија -- Образовање -- Зборници г) Настава -- Методика -- Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 160221449