(Not) Everything is Black: University Students on the Future of Education in Serbia and Croatia

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Abstract

Futures Studies is a discipline that explores potential, probable, and preferred futures, employing diverse and imaginative methodologies to do so. One such method is the Polak Game, a research tool used to assess both the essence of optimism/pessimism and the influence thereof, applied not only in Futures Studies but also across various fields including Education. This game, employing a 2x2 matrix to capture participants' perspectives on the future, has seen extensive use in these domains. Our study aimed to investigate how current university students of Philology and Education in Serbia and Croatia perceive the future of education. The methodology involved students completing an online questionnaire featuring the Polak Game, alongside open-ended questions regarding their metaphors for the future of education and their opinions on its current state. Additionally, students rated their desire to work as teachers in schools on a scale from 1 to 10. The sample comprised 204 students (122 from Serbia and 82 from Croatia). Results indicated a predominantly essence-pessimistic view of the educational future among Serbian students (81%), though less pronounced in the Croatian sample (54.9%). Conversely, the level of influence-optimism was similar in both groups (79.5% in Serbia, 74.4% in Croatia), suggesting that despite differing levels of essence-pessimism/optimism, students in both countries harbor an optimistic outlook regarding their own impact on the future of education. Notably, students from both Croatian and Serbian faculties of education expressed a strong desire to work in schools (scoring an average of 9 on a 1-10 scale), whereas Serbian philology students exhibited less enthusiasm (with an average score of 6). The metaphors chosen by students to characterize their views on the future of education were found to align with their respective optimism/pessimism paradigms and will be detailed in the presentation.

Key words

educational futures; essence optimism/pessimism; influence optimism/pessimism; metaphors; Polak Game

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