

OPINION

on the dissertation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

Subject: Philosophy via Distance Learning: theories and educational strategies

Doctoral candidate: Vincenzo Filletti

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Daniela Sotirova

Reviewer: Associate Professor Dr. Yoana Pavlova, Technical University of Sofia

Relevance of the issues.

The last decades have been marked by the development of technologies, which influencing every aspect of living and we are forced to adapt at an ever faster pace to this techno-world in personal and professional terms. Technology modifies not only our relationship with the world, our learning process, but also the way we understand ourselves. The description of this process is cleverly captured by the concept of "infosphere" introduced by the philosopher Luciano Floridi

In this context, Vincenzo Finetti's dissertation deals with a very topical issue, namely the impact of the information space on education and in particular the teaching of philosophy. The quest for the digitalization of education (from primary, middle, high schools to universities) shows the weaknesses of the pedagogical methods applied. The successful teaching of philosophy, through distance education, requires a philosophical reflection on the overall change in education process.

Dissertation Structure.

The dissertation is 210 standard pages and is structured into an introduction; four chapters with their associated sections and subsections; a conclusion with conclusions and recommendations, and references used. The reference list includes 296 titles.

Content Features.

The introduction of the dissertation consistently and logically sets out the main propositions outlining the relevance of the research problem. Some essential theoretical prerequisites for analyzing the topic are indicated.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, the doctoral student has examined the teaching of philosophy through some philosophical and pedagogical lenses, the analysis of which helps to trace the significance of the new possibilities. Attention is paid to the existing epistemological dichotomy between pedagogy and didactics. Through the prism of significant philosophers such as Plato, Descartes, Popper, Gadamer and systems thinking, an analysis of the pedagogical and didactic problems of teaching is made. Various models of teaching philosophy in different cultural settings are described to illustrate the difficulties that exist in teaching philosophy.

In the process of teaching in a digital environment we have the preservation of the didactic triangle - teacher, students and knowledge. A change is required from a pedagogical point of view in the preparation of the learning context, teaching methods and techniques. The development of pedagogy up to the present day and the dynamics that have occurred in teaching are traced.

In chapter two of the thesis doctoral students uses the concept of translation, borrowed from Averroes, applied to the teaching of an online digital lesson. The author assumes that online teaching implies communication, which actually becomes a translation of thought, language and knowledge. In other words, the encounter with the other, whether online or face-to-face, implies a continuous reinvention of the teacher-student relationship. In an e-learning environment, it is necessary to create a bridge of communication between interlocutors in order to establish a dual gaze. Teaching in a digital environment requires rethinking methods and the teacher-student, teacher-learner relationship. Teachers need to embrace the possibilities of new media in education, especially in philosophy, where existing topics can be revisited in new ways.

Chapter three of the thesis examines the concepts of communication and education in the views of Hans Georg Gadamer and Umberto Eco. Emphasis is placed on understanding online communications and their roles according to psychologist and philosopher Paul Watzlawick. A comparison of philosophy and psychology in Bandler and Grinder's model of neurolinguistic programming is made. In this context, a re-engineering of our own new identity is proposed in a virtual world whose dynamics seem complex and which is still evolving.

Chapter four of this dissertation examines human anthropological development and the acquisition of new skills through the use of tools. In modernity, the use of digital tools is presented as a complement to human skills. The concept of "technology as prosthesis" by French philosopher Bernard Stigler is examined. In his theory, Stigler argues that technology

appears as that element which is able to shape the whole horizon of human existence, even human experiences are mediated by technical and technological tools that expand the potential possibilities of human beings.

The risks that lie in the use of technology in digital learning are discussed. For this reason, the doctoral student proposes the use of connectivism theory to make sense of the student-teacher relationship and the creation of knowledge by the student. The ideas of connectivism as collective intelligence are justified pedagogically and didactically by the use of digital tools and the relationship that students establish with the help of smartphones, tablets, computers and augmented and virtual reality visualization devices. The acquisition of knowledge, especially by adolescents, in our century, is unthinkable without the use of digital tools. The created digital learning environment has its own dynamics and supports different connectivity among participants. The PhD student has made suggestions for student activities to support the co-education process.

Contributions of the thesis

The dissertation has a clear structure and logical presentation. The volume of used and analyzed literature sources is impressive.

The notion of "infosphere" is explored, according to which information and communication technologies change people's perception of themselves, the way one communicates with others, and the approach to shared and co-constructed knowledge (connectivism).

The idea of distance learning as translation is presented. In the academic world, and especially in schools, a process of digitalization of education has begun, which, however, requires a reformulation of the idea of the educational process and knowledge transmission. The digital online lesson implies a communication that turns out to be a translation and requires a continuous reinvention of the teacher-student relationship.

The theory of digital tools as prostheses that augment human skills is elaborated. Technologies such as smartphones, tablets, computers and augmented and virtual reality visualisation devices will increasingly enter schools, through which students will connect and learn.

Conclusion:

In the dissertation presented by Vincenzo Filletti, a number of significant results of scientific and scholarly application have been obtained. I consider that it meets the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Science and Education and is in accordance with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LADASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LADASRB and the Regulations of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. This gives me grounds to propose to the Scientific Jury to award Vincenzo Filletti the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: 14.09.2023

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Assoc. Prof. Yoana Pavlova)