

PEDAGOGIZATION OF “PROBLEMS WITH YOUTH” IN MEDIA DISCOURSE – POST-FOUCAULDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The main purpose of the paper is to outline a research perspective and findings obtained from preliminary analysis of some selected manifestations of pedagogization in media discourse. The analysis - based on the Foucauldian method of problematization - is concerned with some selected texts (newspapers, magazines and the reality show “Strict parents”) which problematize occurrences related to youth with the term “stressless upbringing”. First of all, the article is meant to encourage posing further questions about the manifestations, types and consequences of the process of pedagogization in media discourse.

Key words: *problematization, Foucault, pedagogization, media educational discourse, pedagogy, pedagogism, youth*

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the paper is to outline a research perspective and findings obtained from preliminary analysis of some selected manifestations of pedagogization in media discourse. My analysis and critique is based on the Foucauldian method of problematization, and the key theoretical concepts are the categories of pedagogization, media educational discourse, pedagogy and pedagogism. Therefore the paper consists of two main parts. In the first one, the research perspective and major concepts and analytical categories will be outlined; the second will present the findings of the preliminary analysis of the selected media reports and media pedagogization. The article is meant to encourage posing further questions about the manifestations, types and consequences of the process of pedagogization in media discourse.

2. PROBLEMATIZATIONS OF PEDAGOGIZATION – FOUCAULDIAN INSPIRATIONS

2.1. The concept of pedagogization

The concept of pedagogization was introduced into German sociology of education (Czyżewski 2013). In this field, at the turn of the 50s and 60s of the 20th century, Janpeter Kob (1959) and Helmut Shelsky (1961) used the term of pedagogization for the description and critique of educational reform and processes of institutionalization of upbringing in Germany. According to Kob, who is regarded as the creator of the concept of pedagogization (*Pädagogisierung*), this process, similarly to technicization and bureaucratization, is an inseparable element of modernization of society. Modernization manifests itself in the domination of institutional types of education (school education) over upbringing in non-institutional contexts (family, neighborhood and peer environments). As a result, it leads to marginalization of parents’ role to the advantage of stronger influence from “professional” educators and teachers. Kob and Shelsky pointed out the threats caused by linking-up pedagogization and modern excessive bureaucratization, employing the term pedagogism meant as the unlimited pretension of the pedagogical reason (in: Czyżewski 2013). I will return to the concept of pedagogism in the further section of the article.

In recent years, the concept of pedagogization has reappeared in educational and sociological studies carried out within a post-Foucauldian perspective. Referring to the history of the concept of

pedagogization, Marek Czyżewski (2013) identified two contexts of the application of the category and, as a result, two types of pedagogization: institutional and neo-liberal. The range and content of the institutional type refer to the first applications of the category for the above mentioned critique of educational reform in post-war Germany. The research on the neo-liberal type of pedagogization, in turn, is linked by Czyżewski (2013) to the works concerned with the Foucauldian concept of governmentality. On this basis, mainly in the English- and German-language pedagogical literature, the issue of pedagogization (English: educationalisation, less frequently pedagogization) returned in its new post-Foucauldian sense. Works by Thomas Höhne (2003), Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (2008) and collections of papers devoted to pedagogization found in special issues of magazines "Educational Research" (Smeyers, Depaepe 2008) and "Educational Theory" (2008) have been of particularly importance here (Czyżewski 2013).

In these works, the term "pedagogization" takes on various meanings. The collection co-edited by Paul Smeyers and Marc Depaepe (2008) includes interesting historical references, in which researchers show the phenomenon of "pedagogization of social problems", i.e. the situation in which education is perceived as a panacea for all maladies of societies. Simons and Masschelein, in turn, consider the concepts of pedagogization and "grammar of school" in the light of great importance ascribed today to the phenomenon of learning. The authors describe, from the historical and analytical perspectives, in what way the phenomenon of learning has become an "issue" for both the government and for the individual. Discussing the phenomenon of pedagogization, Simons and Masschelein show how the concept of learning has been separated from upbringing and teaching and linked to a kind of capital, which is something that every student is personally responsible for, that can be and should be governed and that decides on employment. The authors also consider the key role which the concept of learning plays in modern discourses of advanced liberalism, with the issue of promoting entrepreneurship brought to the fore (Ostrowicka 2012a). The key to understanding the neo-liberal type of pedagogization is, as Czyżewski emphasizes, the principle of entrepreneurship "as willingness to take initiative in all aspects of life.(...) Neither civil society, nor any aspect of life can be regarded here as a refuge of reality untouched by power relations" (Czyżewski 2013, pp. 60-61).

The stream of research on pedagogization discourse within the post-Foucauldian approach includes also the latest research publications of Polish sociologists and pedagogues compiled in a thematic volume "Societas/Communitas" (Czyżewski, Marynowicz-Hetka, and Woroniecka 2013). Along with Czyżewski's historical conceptual analysis, the booklet offers a similarly directed description of the two waves of pedagogization by Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka (2013) and many exemplifications of applying the notion of pedagogization in empirical studies. Relying on the definition of pedagogization offered by Thomas Höhne, the authors use this term to describe shifting pedagogical ideas and categories to domains which are not directly linked to the sphere of education, such as economy, politics or culture, and, as a result, defining their problems in terms of educational problems. Thus, in the process of pedagogization, teacher-student and mentor-pupil types of relationships are shifted to other social relations. In this sense, pedagogization means a wide-ranging process of sustaining or building a particular type of power relations in society (Czyżewski 2013). The nature of these relations is different in various types of pedagogization.

The institutional and neo-liberal types of pedagogization defined by Czyżewski are not separable, and they do not refer to the developmental stages of this phenomenon. Both institutional pedagogization and neo-liberal pedagogization discourses can be reconstructed in the modern education system, but also within institutions and contexts not directly linked to education, including the mass media.

Changes in the processes of pedagogization reflect changes in thinking about education and upbringing. These changes can be described as transitions and oscillations between teaching and learning, between knowledge passed and knowledge constructed at school, between teacher/mentor and student/pupil perspectives. The point here is a transition in which the category of learning is extracted as a category lying at the heart of educational practice, including the practice rooted in the institution of school.

2.2. The method of problematization

As we know, Michel Foucault refused to accept any “ultimate” solutions; neither did he suggest any clear interpretation of the method of problematization. He was interested in what ways certain occurrences, things and phenomena (such as madness, sexuality, crime) became “problems” and what in what kind of relation these ways of thinking remained with non-discursive practices and institutional and organizational changes (see Foucault 1995, 1998). He defined his method as problematization.

Problematization is a certain way of analysis and critique which is found both in the archeological and in the genealogical “phase” of the philosopher’s writings. We may say, borrowing the words of Nicolas Rose, that the purpose of Foucauldian problematization is some kind of “destabilization and defatalization of our reality” (Rose 1990, p. xii). It involves an attempt to examine in their definite and material results those types of rationalities which include our present, our ways of thinking and acting, in which certain practices are observed and inspired. Problematization is a particular type and a variety of critique, in which today’s certainties concerning what we know, who we are and how we should act are questioned (ibidem).

We may notice, as we follow Foucault’s studies, that problematizations have a discursive and a non-discursive dimensions, and they include organizational and infrastructural changes. In a “medialized society” (Czyżewski 2013), i.e. the one in which we deal with the continuous creating (building and transforming) the images of “reality” by the media, the discursive element of problematization is put to the fore. This provides justification for the project of research into the discursive dimension of problematization in media messages. Post-Foucauldian studies on problematization in media discourse may focus on its various aspects¹. I am concerned with some selected pedagogizing texts which problematize occurrences related to youth with the term “stressless upbringing”.

3. PEDAGOGIZING DISCOURSE IN THE MEDIA

3.1. Pedagogizing discourse as a research subject

In this paper I focus on the problematizations which can be included in the general concept of pedagogizing discourse. If we understand the notion of pedagogization as shifting pedagogic semantics into other spheres of social life that are not directly linked to the domain of upbringing, then the conceptual categories developed in pedagogical sciences, such as pedagogy, pedagogism and educational discourse become useful for the description and analysis of the phenomenon.

The semantic approach which introduces the concept of pedagogy is especially useful for examining problematization in pedagogical discourse. Consequently, we expand further the area of heuristic stimuli and opportunities to exploit the potential of modern pedagogy in research on media pedagogization. The concept of pedagogy in its original sense refers to the art of influencing children and youth in an effective way. Today, pedagogy is regarded as an educational paradigm, i.e. a certain model solution to an educational “problem”, and it may adopt a form of pedagogical doctrine, educational ideology or a hidden program of upbringing (Milerski, Śliwerski 2000). In its broadest sense, the concept of pedagogy conceals simply such a educational practice which is relatively coherent and sustainable (Kwieciński 2004).

Although Foucault, who has been my main source of inspiration, distanced himself from examining ideas, the ideas of upbringing and education are constitutive characteristics in thinking about education of intentional, purposeful (type purpose-means) kind. From this point of view, the suggested model of analysis of the structure of pedagogizing discourse would include examining the elements of

¹ See issues discussed in the majority of articles published in the volume “Societas/Communitas” 2013, vol. 16, no. 2.

educational paradigm. Any concept of this kind involves the following:

- 1) description and explanation of a situation (answers to questions: What is it? What is it like and why?)
- 2) indicating goals (answer to the question: what it should be like?)
- 3) indicating effective methods of achieving specified goals and a set of tools, taking into account social, political, economic and other conditions (answer the question: How to achieve the goal?).

Among the identified components of the concept of educational action only the first one can be directly linked to scientific theory. In contrast, normative and methodological assertions are philosophically, ideologically and world-view conditioned (Hejnicka-Bezwińska 2008). The structural analysis of pedagogizing discourse could create an opportunity to recognize "pedagogical gobbledygook" which appears as a result of replacing integration of different kinds of knowledge about education with a promise to take action under so called good intentions (Hejnicka-Bezwińska 2008).

From this cognitive perspective, studies on pedagogizing discourse fit squarely into extensive research devoted to educational discourse. In Polish pedagogical studies, the concept of educational discourse may have at least three meanings, which I called approaches: archeological, institutional and interactive (Ostrowicka in press). In the archeological approach, educational discourse is understood in a "Foucauldian way" as historically and epistemologically conditioned rules of building statements about education. In the institutional approach, it is a genre of "speech" present in school, being a kind of specialized communication practice which has its own principles and rules. The interactive approach, in turn, views educational discourse as an interactive event during which exchange of utterances takes place in the educational process (Milerski and Śliwerski 2000). In all three meanings I perceive the notion of educational discourse as a broader category, whose range includes pedagogizing discourse understood as its special case. Media discourse about education is educational discourse conducted in the media. A proposed model of a concept map for research into pedagogizing discourse is shown in Fig.1

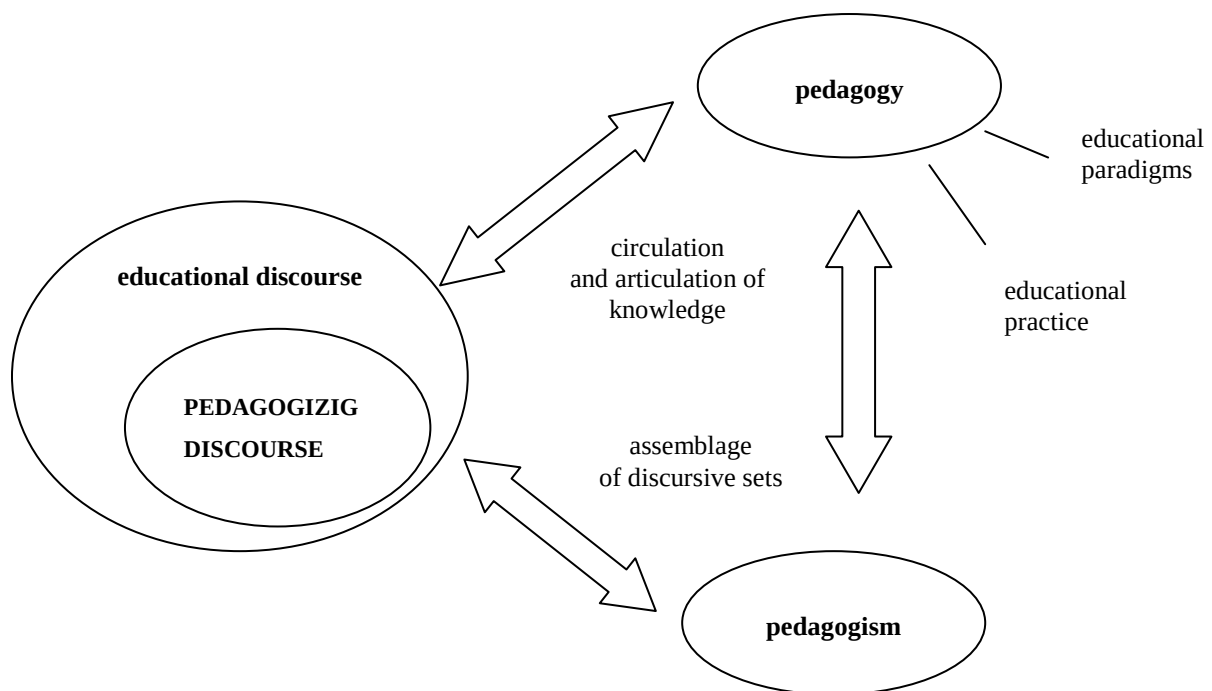


Fig. 1. The concept map for research into pedagogizing discourse

Adopting a Foucauldian perspective means that the question about regimes of truth which are produced and sustained by examined discourses becomes a fundamental research question. In addition, the subject of this particular research design does not include only everyday discourses, “common sense”, but also (and perhaps first of all) expert discourses, including scientific discourses (see Czyżewski 2013). In contrast to Searle’s “everyday speech acts”, Foucault was interested in so called serious acts of speech, i.e. the ones that had undergone some institutional testing. Most methodological tips concerning discourse analysis were introduced by the French philosopher in “The Archeology of Knowledge”. In this work Foucault (1977) admits that he uses the term “discourse” in many different meanings. The most important thing for further considerations, which is also emphasized by other Foucault’s thought researchers (e.g. Bacchi, J. Bonham 2014), is the fact that his concept of discourse refers to knowledge and not to language. Foucault uses the term “discourse” referring to particular types of knowledge, such as “psychiatric discourse” or “clinical discourse”. He applies the term discourse or discourse formations to mathematics, biology, psychopathology, political economics or general grammar.

We know, however, that Foucault did not introduce any specific method of discourse analysis; therefore researchers referring to his works use other sources as well and develop their own methodological solutions. Such a proposal with regard to examining pedagogizing discourse and examples of its practical applications is offered in the above mentioned work by Polish pedagogues and sociologists (Czyżewski, Marynowicz-Hetka, and Woroniecka 2013). Using the elements of ethno-methodological conversation analysis, the authors suggested a model of analysis of radio programs which includes “general categories” and a “scheme of analysis”. The general categories include:

- 1) circulation (circulation of discourses which leads to emerging of sets) and sets (constellation of discourse elements appearing in one text and coming from various sources),
- 2) articulation (linking heterogeneous elements of a set into assemblage) and assemblage (the ways of linking set elements)

Within the framework of the „scheme of analysis” of programs, a series of parameters which facilitate a more detailed description of messages and distinguishing their variant forms was formulated, namely:

- 1) interpersonal relation in a studio (e.g. the role of moderator),
- 2) communication format (e.g. varieties of rhetoric, types of recommendations),
- 3) broadcaster-recipient relationship,
- 4) image of the world (diagnosis of social reality),
- 5) production of intersubjectivity (ibidem).

Adopting the above-mentioned terminological solutions, we may define pedagogization as a process of circulation and articulation of pedagogies (their consolidation, reinforcement and lifting) which expresses claims of pedagogism. It seems that problems of pedagogism, psychologism and sociologism have been overcome in science, but they still thrive in the processes of media pedagogization. Pedagogism is an expression of a “strong” program of pedagogization, i.e. discourse expressed in the language of imperative of upbringing others and oneself (self-upbringing).

An exemplification of pedagogizing discourse in the media, which shows a strong program of pedagogization (pedagogism), can be found in problematization of occurrences and phenomena related to youth by playing with the piece called “stressless upbringing”.

3.2. Circulation and articulation of discourse of „stressless upbringing”

Media pedagogization (in media discourse) is noticeable in many areas. I have been interested in the explosion of discourse about youth as a problem for years (Ostrowicka 2012b, 2012c). Aggression and violence at school, “difficult” junior high school students, teenage pregnancies and similar issues evoke “chatter”, as Foucault would put it, with a clear pedagogizing profile. I would like to focus on one dimension of pedagogizing discourse in the media, which is related to strengthening stereotypical

dichotomy of coercion vs. freedom in upbringing. Using analytical categories distinguished by Czyżewski, I sought an answer to the questions about the “set” of elements empowering expert discourse in the media and the way of their “assembling”. As a result of the analysis of articles from the most influential press in Poland I observed an assembly of a specific kind of pedagogy – **sublime-persuasive pedagogy** (the term introduced by Kwieciński, 2011). It consists in linking the sets of discourse in such a way that it creates an impression that universal remedy which can solve all educational problems has just been discovered.

In the pop-culture media stream there is specific demand for narrations providing simple explanations for phenomena and occurrences defined in terms of “problems” with youth. A few years ago a suicidal death of a 14-year-old school-girl from Gdansk caused an “expert” media discussion about concepts of upbringing, school and youth. This tragic event became an “ultimate point” generating problematization of upbringing. The media messages that I examined (for more see: Ostrowicka 2012c) indicate a “strong” project of pedagogization (pedagogism). Claims of psychologists and sociologists and representatives of other disciplines to replace pedagogy in dealing with problems of upbringing and education are symptoms of pedagogism (Kwieciński 2011). In the examined media discourse psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, architects and others impersonated “experts on upbringing”. Apart from the types of pedagogism distinguished by Ludwik Chmaj as early as in 1938 (psychological pedagogism and sociological pedagogism) (ibidem), we can identify, with regard to the examined discourse, another one – philosophical pedagogism. Nowadays, in the process of pedagogization in the media, philosophers speak very often as experts. Being completely certain about her knowledge on the history of pedagogy, a philosopher explained:

„It was much easier to bring up when children were treated as things or “material for processing”; it is much more difficult to bring up when a child is regarded as a person having rights. The development of pedagogy, similarly to the development of Christian civilization, consists in eliminating violence from public life as much as empowering of the weak and excluded” (Środa 2006, p.8).

We also read:

„There is not much scientific evidence of an effective way of bringing up children. It seems, however, that there is more than enough data proving that an “extremely partnership” model of upbringing generally shows its complete inefficiency, especially when it consists in giving a child the right to decide about everything on its own and, simultaneously, refraining from punishment (not only corporal) as a way of influencing these choices (so called stressless upbringing)” (Radziwiłł and Radziwiłł 2006, p.8)

Media discourse around the death of the school-girl from Gdansk activated language of guilt and responsibility. Inefficient upbringing, equated with liberal upbringing described in terms of “stressless upbringing” was indicated as a source of problems with violence, aggression and crime. The participants of the media debate saw a straightforward connection between this occurrence and “brutality” of school manners and “liberal methods of upbringing” equated with so called stressless upbringing:

„We deal with brutality of school manners, which is a result of depriving teachers of their authority and ruining school discipline. This condition is a consequence of activities of numerous psychologists and educational officials, undertaken in the name of self-realization of youth and friendly school” (*Dziennik* 2006, p.16).

On the one hand, school was represented as a “wild zone” devoid of control and authority. On the other hand, its functioning was described by metaphors of prison, barracks and army, i.e. places with presumed discipline, clear hierarchy and structure of positions:

„Schools which teenagers attend resemble barracks rather than places where young people are supposed to be safe and spend their time usefully. Their games resemble prison abuse and army hazing” (Karnowski 2006, p.15).

The authors of the analyzed texts assumed that young people need upbringing and intervention from

adults:

„This tragic event explicitly showed the situation in schools and the necessity to restore order there (...) – Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński said” (Pezda 2006, p.1).

These and other media reports related to the “Gdańsk affair” clearly problematized the issue of the girl’s suicide on the basis of pedagogical categories. Due to the girl’s age, in accordance with cause-effect thinking the issue was linked to methods of upbringing and their institutional school application. Under commonsensical obviousness and naturalness, we had a discursive construct strengthening stereotypical dichotomy: coercion vs. freedom in upbringing (see Śliwerski 2007). Raising the issue of public debate about effectiveness of upbringing, Bogusław Śliwerski reminded that 80 years ago Bogdan Nawroczyński defined as limited any pedagogical thought which does not take into account two simple principles: “1) in every upbringing there are moments of freedom and coercion, 2) there are the most different, often mutually exclusive types of freedom and coercion in upbringing” (Nawroczyński 1987, p. 279, in: Śliwerski 2007, p. 9). Śliwerski emphasized the demagogic character of the discourse in which authoritarianism in upbringing is contrasted with liberalism and not with anarchy.

In the examined media discourse, the idea of freedom in upbringing was vulgarized and reduced to the antinomy of coercion. The imposed dichotomy as obvious imposed certain optics and language. In pedagogizing media reports, the model of a “strict parent” is forced as a panacea for any “educational problems”.

This **folk-pedagogism** (Kwieciński 2011) expresses itself in the search of a miraculous recipe, a “golden rule” for pedagogical success, prosperity and happiness in life. A popular variety of media pedagogization and an exemplification of folk-pedagogism can be found in educational discourse in the program “Strict parents”. It is a kind of reality show, broadcast since 2012 on TVN, a Polish equivalent of the British reality show “World’s Strictest Parents” (“Strict parents” n.d.). Channels from the USA and Australia, among others, have also purchased license rights to the show.

The program focuses on problematic behaviors of youth that biological parents are unable to cope with and which can be efficiently solved owing to “strict” upbringing. These “problems” in successive episodes are, for example, unconventional appearance, disobedience, aggression, addictions or animosity towards younger siblings.

„Obedience, discipline, consistency and rigor’ are the methods of upbringing employed by „Strict Parents”. Elements of expert discourse are assembled into the explicit pop-pedagogy of “strict parents”. A meaningful exemplification can be a statement made by a psychologist – an expert on upbringing in the program:

“In the 1960s, authoritarian upbringing which assumed complete children obedience was the obligatory parental style. Children had no voice, and corporal punishment was common. The 1970s brought a new trend commonly called “stressless upbringing”. Conversation became the basis of upbringing. It was thought that children could be treated as partners. As a result, we witnessed losing boundaries, loosening of bonds and an increase in the number of disorder behaviors among children. Modern developmental psychologists know that both excessively authoritarian and excessively liberal attitudes do not foster upbringing. It is necessary to introduce rules, determine roles (who is responsible for what), which are fundamental for the feelings of security and trust. They teach responsibility and anticipating consequences of one’s actions. The present educational trend postulates that parents should introduce principles ordering the functioning of the whole family and, at the same time, secure personal freedom (taking into account the level of development and cognitive abilities of a young person)” (Żyśko-Paluba n.d.).

The quoted utterance includes a set of two discourses: quasi-scientific and normative, which assemble, as a result, **sublime-persuasive pedagogy**. The utterance is supposed to sound scientific, but it lacks principles established in science. The psychologist as an expert in the program did not refer to any specific research or psychological theories. The reference to the knowledge of developmental

psychology gives validity to the presented narrative and justifies the expert character of the utterance. Generalizations about obligatory “trends” in upbringing did not refer to any particular place, country or culture. So, they suggested that a described “problem” and changes in thinking about education are global and universal. This diagnosis of the situation became a breeding ground for introducing and legitimization normative assertions. The opposite attitudes are once more authoritarianism and liberalism. Assembling quasi-scientific and normative discourses conceals persuasiveness of utterances which push a particular formula for solving “problems with youth”: upbringing through discipline, the method of “carrot and stick” (prize and punishment) and strictness.

4. CONCLUSION – THE QUESTION ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

Since the beginning of the mass media, people have realized their political and educational significance as tools of social impact. It was clearly shown in the studies on the history of television, (e.g. Attallah 1991, in: Szkudlarek 2009), which since its origin has been a commercial enterprise as well as educational one, playing a vital role in the process of “constructing the common world” (Szkudlarek 2009, p. 76). Szkudlarek rightly points out that the task of creating a common symbolic universe has always belonged to the fundamental functions of public education, so television as an institution entered the area which had been the domain of school competence. As a primarily educational institution, television can be examined with the same categories and theoretical concepts as other educational institutions. Similarly as it happens in case of studies on passing/transmitting/constructing knowledge at school or on curricula, TV programs are analyzed in the context of the theory of a hidden program of upbringing or prevailing educational ideologies. What is important and what needs to be stressed here is that I do not mean research on traditionally understood media education, i.e. research on media influence on attitudes and behaviors of society, especially children and youth. Showing educational importance of television, radio and the Internet lies in demystification of the “myth of the indirectness of contact between man and the world” (Szkudlarek 2009, p. 74): “the media, as intermediary institutions, fit squarely in the history of the fall of man, his individualization and pursuit of freedom” (ibidem, p.74). From the very beginning, television and other mass media have participated in the process of pedagogization – they have provided space and tools for, in Foucauldian sense, subjugating of the subject (subjectification).

Therefore, both school and the mass media as intermediary institutions are places where different types and relations of power, both disciplinary power as well as power of governmentality are executed. Both types of pedagogization (institutional and neo-liberal) are performed in the mass media. So, talking about the consequences of pedagogizing media discourse we should take into account ambiguity of the concept of pedagogization and complexity of the phenomenon of the means of mass communication.

According to the adopted optics of problematization, the question is about looking from a distance at the meaning of pop-pedagogies in their sublime-persuasive form pushed by the media. Assembling pop-culture sets belonging in various orders of discourse (e.g. scientific, political or everyday) is not anything “harmful” or unusual. Generally, this phenomenon can be regarded as favourable for “cognitive acquiring the world” and acting in it, if it manifests itself in integration of various kinds of knowledge. The meaning of pedagogization discourse in the media is fully revealed when it is considered in relation to the phenomenon of pedagogism. Sublime-persuasive utterances of “experts on upbringing” simplify educational reality, reducing causes of a “problem” to disturbances in upbringing processes, and solutions to effective application of a particular method. In case of the analyzed media discourse, what is meaningful is a stereotyping and self-validating “regime of truth” about apparent opposition between authoritarian and liberal upbringing, equated with so called “stressless behavior”. Expert discourse is supposed to create an impression of scientific discourse (by using expressions like: “according to scientific research,...”), but it is based on a conceptual category which does not exist in the language of science. The term “stressless upbringing” does not appear either in lexical resources of modern pedagogical sciences, or in academic textbooks (Śliwowski 2007).

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