

Media Pedagogics: An innovative subdiscipline of Czech Educational Sciences?¹

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SOME HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE CZECH MEDIA PEDAGOGICS²

Pedagogical and didactic considerations on the use of media in education have existed since the media started to be used as a means to convey philosophical reality. In the Czech and German context this is also associated with the introduction of innovative spelling-book *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* of John Amos Comenius (1658) to Latin education at schools. Also the first consideration that people should learn to live with the media, comes from the early 17th century, again from the "teacher of nations". His book *Labyrinth světa a ráj srdce*³ (2003) discusses what effect "journalists" (those who then were journalists) have on society, and in the writing *Schola Pansophica* (1650) J. A. Comenius notes that schools should work with the "newspapers".

Media pedagogics in the Czech environment is an interdisciplinary area based on two historically related disciplines, but with different traditions and evolution. The first pillar is the concept of Media Education as a cross-curricular subject for elementary education and secondary general education prescribed in the Framework Education Programme (RVP 2007) created by Research Institute of Education in Prague, a department of Czech Ministry for Education in collaboration with the Centre for Media Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University (led by Prof. Jan Jirák). Furthermore the second field can be described as "media didactics", it is an educational technology, and has been developed since the 1920s though in various approaches by various institutes and therefore mainly separately. As a specific discipline it is more related to general didactics and, above all,

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² In this paper, we will be using this term, offered by Prof. Dr. Bernd Schorb from University of Leipzig, though we are aware of some terminological problems. Usually used the term "Media Pedagogy" bases on the continental European tradition of scholar discipline "Pedagogy" but understanding of this term in Anglo-American context is crucially different. "Pedagogy" are more or less methods and activities used in the classroom. In the Anglo-American environment the term "Media Literacy Education" is often used. But concerning European tradition it is complicated to use this term as translation of otherwise used "Media Pedagogy". Therefore, trying to find a label for the complex and integrative field that is in German "Medienpädagogik" or Czech "mediální pedagogika" we decided to take the third way – a term combining both, European and Anglo-American tradition and understanding of Pedagogy using its derivation "Pedagogics", in plural. Therefore, in this text we would understand Media Pedagogics synonymous to Media Pedagogy (as translation of the European term) and Media Literacy Education (as is used in Anglo-American environment), and as superior to Media Education.

³ In German i.e. (2004): Comenius: *Das Labyrinth der Welt*. DVA: München.

educational psychology. Despite the fragmented approaches it is, thanks to long term evolution, more or less a well researched area in the Czech Republic.

MEDIA PEDAGOGICS (MEDIENPÄDAGOGIK)

For a long time, the whole area of Media Education or Pedagogics was outside any interest of Educational Sciences. Finally in 2009 an important, and as we would like to note evolutionary framework of a Czech model of Media Pedagogics was introduced by Klára Šedřová in *Encyclopaedia of Education* (Průcha ed. 2009). Her contribution considers Media Pedagogics as a basic media sub discipline within Educational Sciences. Encyclopaedia gives, primarily to Czech theorists, a clear signal about a need of this area within the field of education. Above that, the arrangement of Media Pedagogics key word, to a certain extent similar to the German model, defines it as an complex interdisciplinary and integrative approach consisting of the areas of curricular Media Education, Media Didactics and also concerning the processes of socialization towards and through the media. In the words of Klára Šedřová, Media Pedagogics is "educational discipline that deals with the influence of the media in the process of education and socialization. It seeks to involve various ways in which the media cause or influence the learning process." (Průcha ed. 2009: 787) Although the Pedagogy as a discipline is considered as a field with a great tradition, in comparison to international experience, in the area of (mass) media there is an evident lack of conceptual approaches in educational theory and practice. In the following pages we will discuss the basic concepts and major components of media didactics and media education as is they evolved in the Czech Republic.

MEDIA EDUCATION AT SCHOOLS (SCHULISCHE MEDIENERZIEHUNG / MEDIENKUNDE) AND EDUCATION OF TEACHERS (MEDIENAUSBILDUNG)

The modern concept of curricular or school Media Education was for the first time noted in the 1st edition of the *Dictionary of Pedagogy* as an "... education to orientation in mass media, their use and also for their critical evaluation." The main objective for the learner was: "... to master basic levels of media literacy." (both quotes from Průcha/Mareš/Walterová 1995: 127) Compared to other countries, the implementation of some complex approach of media education to the education system began quite late (and very slowly) in the Czech Republic – ten years ago.

But it cannot be said that the articulation of a necessity of some media literacy (mainly by children) or pedagogically suitable use of media at schools is just a recent issue. The

roots of media-pedagogical thinking, apart from the above mentioned Czech philosopher Comenius, can be traced to the beginning of 20th Century and found in the context of film-boom and newspaper tabloidization (see i.e. Sloboda 2007). The roots were torn by both totalitarian regimes where media fulfilled ideologically desired educational, socializing and propagandistic function. Based on the interactional approach of one way (stimulus – response) the media influence of the 1960's and 1970's challenged a proofed wrong. In this period media were theoretically and practically used and mentioned only in the context of language, film and aesthetic education (see for example Jachnin 1968).

The current Czech model of Media Education is almost exclusively linked to the school curriculum (RVP 2004). It describes the objectives of media education on the level of knowledge and level of skill both developed in the context of a cross-curricular approach. This can be executed in three various forms (and their combinations): as a new specific school subject, as a topic and activities entering regular subjects, or as a school project. Besides knowledge-skills division and various ways of integration in the educational process, the RVP's model of Media Education differentiates between receptive and productive activities (leading to acquirement of both knowledge and skills). And here one notes that in relying more on the Anglo-American tradition of media education, emphasis is given on activities developing critically-reflexive skills and knowledge.

In the context of the practical execution of Media Education in the Czech Republic it can be said that:

- research on media educational topics is mainly done in the field of Media Studies, not within Educational Sciences (cp. Jirák/Kuchař 1997, Numerato 2004) nor by the teachers themselves (cp. Mašek 1997, Šedřová 2004),
- there is lack of methods and teaching aids implementing the cross-curricular topic into the school practice,
- there is a lack or insufficient study courses or even programmes on Media Education/Pedagogics at the university level, also university teachers able to teach this topic are rare,
- teaching and learning materials and their creation and teacher training courses are mainly or almost exclusively offered by non-governmental organizations.

It is quite abnormal that methodological support for school media education is done mainly by few non-specialized associations and organisations, and is usually of poor quality, (e.g., AMP o.s., AISIS o.s., Partners Czech, o.p.s, Člověk v tísni o.s., to name the competent ones). On the other hand it is very logical that NGO's are, often driven by financial support from ESF subsidies, filling the gap in the production of training courses and teaching materials that should be organised or should have been organised by governmental institutions or specialised educational institutions. This state is forcing a critical voice towards

such specialized departments and institutions financed from public resources, showing them the inadequacies of their activities so far, and the urgent need for media-educational research and methods for practical implementing,

This is also valid for public as well as private universities that are incredibly resistant to almost any implementation of media in the contents of pedagogical study programmes. If they are trying to extend preparation of future teachers with this aspect, it is dependent mainly on individual efforts of the department staff/lecturers and the positive attitudes of heads of departments. Another aspect is the very conservative, stereotypical, and therefore counterproductive attitude towards the topic of media that imposes it to be subordinated and handled by either Czech Language Education (based on assumption that it is near to literary critique and textual analysis and production) (University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, Charles University in Prague) or the Informatics / ITC Education (based on technological aspects of media) (Ostrava University). Very rarely are media handled by Visual Culture Education (University of West Bohemia in Pilsen). Exceptional activity can be found in the departments of Social Sciences Education (University of South Bohemia České Budějovice). However, generally there has been no recent study programme or complex education in Media Education / Pedagogics at any of the Czech universities, including, paradoxically, their Faculties of Education or media departments.

The experience at the *Department of Visual Culture* at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, shows that there is a further large effort needed to find a way of suitably implementing Media Education / Pedagogics into university education. Although as recent as 2007, as the only ones in the Czech Republic who understood the urge of media education of prospective teachers and started to educate them in this field trying to find links and overlaps with the Visual Education, it is still far from desired integration. Since 2004 our department has been through very intensive changes and due to a set of external restraints we had to redefine our position, aims and the content of our study programme and research focus. We were aware of a need to accent and strengthen the educational dimension of all activities and concepts in the fields of Art, Visual Culture, Media etc. Until then the prevailing stress on the artistic and creative skills of our students was (and still is) present through teachers' attitude and through a concept of the reflective practitioner (Schön 2001). Now, complementary pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1987) sets the background for innovated teacher training programmes. Nevertheless the transformation of the national curriculum and subsequent need of its evaluation and implementation of its themes into study content was also a strong motivation for redefining of our study programme.

As the Czech Framework Education Programme (RVP 2007), emphasizes an intersectional relationship between subjects and the cross-curricular subject of *Media Education*, it is very close to the topics of Art Education, mainly to its most progressive

approach of Visual Culture Art Education. In this approach an acquirement of Visual literacy is crucial, and the teaching and development of visual literacy media cannot be avoided. Therefore our Department of Visual Culture implemented a subject called Media Education into a Bc. study programme Visual Culture in Education and a subject Media Pedagogics into all three teacher training programmes (Art Education for Elementary School, Art Education for High School and Art Education for Elementary Artistic Schools).

MEDIA DIDACTICS (MEDIENDIDAKTIK)

In the context of Czech educational tradition there are more elaborated theoretical basis' and practical experiences in the area of Media Didactics. Again, the article of Klára Šed'ová in the Encyclopaedia of Education (Průcha ed, 2009: 790) defines it in a very general framework as "learning through media" and sees it as an important part of Media Pedagogics. Using and defining this term can be seen as progressive considering it is not frequently used in educational sciences and in scholarly literature. Two years before, in his article Jan Mašek (2007: 24) described the Media Didactics as a "didactic use of media and information technologies in teaching and learning processes." It could even be said that Media Didactics, as a complex field, was defined and labelled by Mašek for the first time. This is in a way bizarre concerning the actual and historical presence of scholarly literature, research and methods that can be understood (and retrospectively named) as media-didactical. The whole problem of media (mainly understood as mass media) has been present in Czech educational reality for quite some time. However, it appeared without wider pedagogical (and socio-cultural) embedding and understanding:

- as the simplified application of "didactic material aids" for teaching of various school subjects (for example educational films or audio exercises for language, history or geography education),
- in the implementation of information / communication technologies into learning process, (i. e. widely used in the field of Special Education),
- as a subject of its own in the Informatics or IT(C) Education,
- and in the unimplemented Film Education (from late 1960's),

Therefore it is worth noting that the present Czech concept of Media Didactics is based on and continues the traditions of teaching disciplines such as the Pedagogics of School Film, Didactical Technique, Teaching Technology, Educational Informatics or Pedagogics of Media, which have been emerging since the 1970's.

MEDIA SOCIALIZATION

Though “media socialization” (Mediensozialisation) is not explicitly defined in Klára Šeďová’s text on Media Pedagogics (Průcha ed. 2009) there is evidently a space where media education and acquiring of media literacy is executed outside the intentional educational context – in which Media Education and Media Didactics are embedded. This space can be defined as media socialisation (in German Medienerziehung in its broader sense)

Probably symptomatically for the handling of the field of media in the Czech Republic, the topics of media socialisation such as media socialisation in family, in the leisure time activities of youths or even the adapting of adults or elderly people to continuously changing world and everyday life, undoubtedly a medial everyday life, there is still rather rare and fragmentary knowledge and less research done. One can find hardly any original Czech knowledge in educational sciences (with exception of Šeďová’s family television socialisation (2009)), in other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and media studies only some findings and research has been introduced, for example mentioning few of the few: identity construction in so-called chat rooms, and various online games, aggressive behaviour in the virtual forms (Šmahel 2003), or communication disinhibition (Vybírál 2002) (both psychological approaches) or place of the media in youths’ leisure time (Sak 2004) or public opinion on appropriateness of media contents for children and on responsibility for the media education of children (Sloboda 2010) (both quantitative sociological approaches).

CONCLUSION

We have briefly summarized the state of the discussion and evolution of the field of Media Pedagogics. Undoubtedly in the Czech educational context there is a new and progressive field that encompasses the ambitions of an integrative and interdisciplinary approach. However, as we have shown there are spaces which can be linked on, that can be developed, there is no need to start from scratch. But, paradoxically steps have been undertaken that are based on only dubious or even absent theoretical knowledge and practical or research experiences.

For the Czech Republic, in the field of Media Education & Pedagogics it can be stated that there is,

- historical and contemporary theoretical base and practical experience in the area of media didactics, BUT dashed in various (mostly self-protecting) approaches,
- non-existent research in the Educational Sciences in this field and only occasionally of concern of other disciplines as psychology, sociology or media studies,

-a concept of curricular media education and pressure from the Ministry of Education to enforce Media Education at higher primary and secondary schools, BUT this effort was not preceded by appropriate remedies (teaching methods, teachers' education etc.), and this absence is only insufficiently and subsequently substituted by a few non-governmental organizations of questionable quality,

- only a slow, unwinding resistance of higher education system and institutions contributes to the schizophrenic state of legal obligation of introducing Media Education at all schools from 2007 on one hand, and on the other hand as a matter of fact not having anyone (competent, educated teachers) to execute it as there is still in 2011 no Media Education/Pedagogics study programme accredited on any of the Czech universities.

But despite all of this, there is Media Pedagogics – as an integrative interdisciplinary branch – at length introduced to the system of Educational Sciences / Pedagogy in the *Encyclopedia of Education*. Hereby cementing it as an innovative subdiscipline that is currently and onward pedagogically, socially and also politically desired and supported, giving broad but significant framework for any educational (and socialization) efforts concerning the media.

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