

MEDIA IN 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION – IN THE TEACHER'S PRACTICAL THOUGHT

Natalia Maria Ruman

Department of Humanistic Education and Auxiliary Sciences of Pedagogy
Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education,
Bielska 62, 43-400 Cieszyn
University of Silesia in Katowice
nruman@interia.pl

***Abstract:** Cyberspace is the environment where contemporary society, and in particular its younger generation, lives and functions. It is an area which offers a spectrum of new opportunities with regard to education, communication, one's professional career as well as leisure time. In addition to its unquestionable advantages, cyberspace provides ample ground for numerous hazards that have to be confronted by social scientists, humanities scholars and those pursuing engineering disciplines. This paper is designed to provide and discuss examples of areas, rules and methods relating to the use of multimedia in the contemporary instructional and educational environment, and to outline opportunities and problems connected with the status and role of electronic media in society. There are various views and positions regarding the role and status of computerisation of Polish education. On one hand there are those who are of the opinion that it is necessary for schools to teach new cultural techniques, and on the other hand, many people subscribe to the view that IT education should be abolished if the computer disturbs personal contact between the teacher and the student. That is why media education should be aimed at inculcating students with a cautious attitude towards media.*

Keywords: Media education, computerisation, educational environment

INTRODUCTION – MEDIA IN EDUCATION

The enormous progress of civilisation and the communication techniques closely associated therewith cannot help impacting human beings and their intellectual as well spiritual development. With globalisation in full swing, there are strong trends towards homogeneity of popular media culture. Mass media are a determinant for a new dynamic type of culture, the so-called mass culture (Luhan, 1995: 67-69).

Mass culture is a product of contemporary technological civilisation and represents specific values that have been studied, and been a subject of controversial opinions, for many years now. Literature on the subject presents a wide spectrum of opinions – ranging from opinions holding that mass media have an enormous effect on the development of norms, standards, values, through moderate views to downright criticism.

Mass media influence our conscious and subconscious minds, breaking down all social barriers, and ignoring age limits, they are available for everyone and at any time. Content offered to us by the media is becoming an integral part of our thoughts, it is becoming that, which seems to be obvious. Images, above all, invoke emotions and create a semblance of reality. Such media do not develop an individual, they only make individuals more and more passive. Therefore media are increasingly determining how we perceive, understand and experience the world.

Contemporary media are marked by the dominance of images and almost automatic marginalization of words (human beings are regarded as *homo videns*, who are reading less and less and live in a world of imitation), imposing a particular manner of constructing and perceiving messages. “Emotionalisation” of messages weakens the ability to critically evaluate content. This dependence on the media makes us reflect on the extent to which the media have an impact on human presence, on the development of the world of values. In this era of traditional authority figures being undermined, young people give themselves over to propaganda, advertisements and unsophisticated entertainment. The mass media are becoming both a model, and deformation of, social behaviours. Strong emotions accompanying information in audio-visual messages are encoded in the RECIPIENT'S consciousness. Such emotions can be of both positive and negative nature (Jankowska, 1985: 37-40).

A negative attitude is characterised by addiction to media that leads to the formation of a specific mentality, in other words, as it were, to a distorted world view (in a broader perspective). On the other hand, positive attitudes require some effort on the part of the one “receiving” a media message. Such attitudes are based on the recipient's critical thinking, retaining it and allowing the recipient to have their own opinion in particular creative actions. Positive attitudes are categorised as follows: critical ones – sound, objective approach; selective reception; creative activity – media messages being insufficient to satisfy one's creativity needs and to allow one to personally engage in intellectual pursuits; broad horizons – built upon an appropriate hierarchy of values, dialogue – when an opportunity to engage in participative or interactive communication is taken up; tolerance – being open to the phenomenon of diversity (Nowakowska-Buryła, 2003: 32-33).

1.1 Media in education – an outline

In the 1980s in Western Europe, stakeholders in education started considering the use of media in teaching. At the beginning, computer literacy programs were

proposed that would be delivered in various types of schools and at various education levels.

We can distinguish four types of education forms:

- introduction to computer science and computers;
- extended curriculum to include computer science;
- a computer science course correlated with a particular occupation or trade;
- an offering of applied computer science courses.

What was important was the formal integration of new media with educational processes on a technological plane as well as a new school subject – computer science. That is demonstrated by the following aims and objectives of computer literacy courses:

- to familiarise students with basic concepts and structures in computer science;
- introduction to computer and peripherals use;
- to impart knowledge on possibilities of use and control of IT techniques;
- introduction to the presentation of problem solutions in an algorithmic form;
- to provide information on individual programming languages (Kron; Sofos, 2003: 2-27).

New opportunities afforded by the use of media were presented:

- a) ability to access, at any place and time, large amounts of data to be processed;
- b) establishing an interactive relationship between computer systems regardless of the distance between them;
- c) a variety of uses both in local and external networks;
- d) creating virtual realities interrelated with real presentations in such a way that one cannot tell the difference (Gajda, 2004: 33-37).

By providing information from various spheres of life, media can stimulate one's interest, satisfy cognitive curiosity, develop moral stances, in other words, they serve the purpose of disinterested education. A significant role of the media is to provide the latest information, stimulate cultural interests, satisfy the need for relaxation and entertainment. The pedagogical aspect of media reception boils down to learning the latest education technology, selective and active reception of content provided by the media and co-development of educational programs. What is of particular urgency is embracing the latest educational technology and developing students' selective and critical media reception (Gajda, 2004: 33-37).

1.2 Media education vs culture

Computer programs available in the market allow users to independently create presentations that combine images, graphics, text, sound and video sequences – (multimedia) and address multiple senses simultaneously, which increases education effectiveness. Progress is also made in software – multimedia software is entering widespread use. Software development companies offer a range of educational programs. A multimedia program addresses almost all of the information acquisition channels – sight, hearing, and the verbal channel. Teaching effectiveness is increasing, students' comprehension of subject matter is enhanced, learning pace is increasing, and the scope of acquired knowledge is also extending. Computer programs can be used both in the classroom and at home for independent study. EduROM multimedia course-books are used too. These educational materials conform to the core curriculum approved by the Ministry of National Education. HOWEVER, multimedia should be used as a supplement and an addition to a lesson prepared by a teacher, as it is the teacher who highlights the information the students should pay attention to and is responsible for all the aspects of the lesson being taught.

Modern education enthusiasts assume that the classroom and lesson-based system will sink into oblivion, thematic blocks will be created, electronic books will become available, education will be offered through the so-called e-learning. On a pan-European scale distance education is co-ordinated by the European Distance Education Network (EDEN) established in 1990 in order to promote distance education through the provision of a platform for collaboration. EDEN is an association open to all types of schools at all education levels as well as networks of academics; we will witness an intensive development of programs offering simulations to solve problems, and proper use of such programs can increase the effectiveness of educational activities and enhance learners' creative thinking; the teacher's role as an expert will change into that of an animator.

Unfortunately, creating virtual worlds solidifies the barriers, and extend distance, between people, and contributes to gradual disappearance of imagination in learners, as well as building communication barriers between the student and the teacher (Hatalaska, 2002: 53-54). DESPITE THE ABOVE, it appears necessary to include media education in the education process. Media are conducive to human development accompanied by respect for knowledge, wisdom and beauty. The human being needs to learn to live again and the role the mass media play in this process is significant (Gordon, 1982: 25). All media are a tool to explore the world and to make life more pleasant, but a tool is useful only to those who have learned when and how to use it. The same tool in the hands of those who do not know when and how to use it may turn out to be dangerous. Media have an effect on our daily lives and behaviour as well as the development of values.

Media are a powerful instrument for shaping human character, their instructional and educational value is very significant, but we must remember that if media are

not subject to any control, they can do more harm than good from an educational perspective.

In discussing the effect of media on recipients, we can distinguish three attitudes: immunity, acquiescence and activity.

A distinction is to be drawn between two essential types of occupational competencies: those associated with media pedagogics and with the use of media in education. Both these types are based on media competencies which we acquire throughout our lives by interacting with new media on a daily basis.

Media-pedagogical competencies are those competencies that allow instructors, on the basis of their own life experience, on one hand, to transfer their communication and functional competencies to their own practice as well as education, skills improvements and further education, and, on the other hand, to make a contribution of their general professional competency, entitling them to work as teachers, which forms the basis of their pedagogical competencies as well as competencies in educational use of media.

According to Stefan Aufenanger, there are four dimensions of media-pedagogical competencies:

- Familiarity with pedagogical / didactic concepts: from the perspective of media pedagogics professionalization, it appears important that the teacher should know and be able to properly use established concepts.

- Knowledge about children's and teenagers' media worlds: educators and teachers should have access to the media world of their pupils and students. It is only with this knowledge that they will be able to put themselves in young people's shoes and adopt their perspective.

- Raising awareness of the subject of the media and experiences associated with media: being aware and sensitive means being open to intentions that can be expressed by means of media, stories and characters shown in media.

- Activities related to media pedagogics: media-pedagogical competence should be imparted specifically with reference to practical activities, carried out as supervised teaching practicums or lesson observations. Media pedagogics casuistry should be given consideration as a significant supplementary concept - a form of education whereby real life cases are analysed and discussed in order to identify options of action aimed at properly resolving a given case (Baacke, 1997: 31-35).

According to Sigrid Blömeke, there are five areas of media-pedagogical competencies:

- Media didactical competency: ability to reflectively use media and information technologies in appropriate forms of education or teaching and further development thereof.

- Media educational competency: ability to discuss topics in class that are related to media, with reference being made to the most important pedagogical ideas.
- Socialisation-related competency in the media context: ability to constructively take into account learners' requirements in media-pedagogical activities.
- School development competency in the media context: ability to shape and develop framework conditions for media-pedagogical activities.
- Teacher's own media competency: ability to pursue content-focused, independently defined, and creative activities in a socially responsible manner (using media and information technologies) (Strykowski, Kąkolewicz, Ubermanowicz, 2008: 59-68).

The afore-mentioned multiplicity of aspects (multiple dimensions of competencies) cannot, in practice, be implemented in a hierarchical order. It would be more accurate to say that they are linked by mutual interrelations and functional connections and their implementation depends on a particular, current action context in which particular competencies are required. It should be remembered, though, that media-pedagogical competencies already comprise certain dimensions of media-didactical competencies, and the transition area between these two competency planes is not clearly defined.

Operating and using media (e.g. a photographic camera, a microscope, a movie camera, a computer); ability to create web pages using editors as well as developing, combining, collecting teaching materials; essential knowledge on technical equipment (on computers, modems etc.) - these are but a few difficulties faced by teachers in connection with the introduction of media courses to school curricula. It is important to stress that we are not talking here about specialist knowledge that only specific professional groups have (e.g. programmers); still, teachers who want to work using latest technologies should have essential knowledge so that they are less dependent on specialists. Competencies related to the functioning of media are closely connected with the ability to coordinate work. Teachers perform the role of an expert, i.e. they carry out activities that previously were carried out exclusively by specialists. They not only use pre-prepared materials but also, increasingly on an unassisted basis, look through sources and prepare content specific for a given audience.

It is proposed that media education should take into account the following aspects:

- children's and teenagers' life circumstances as well as communication environment;
- needs and emotions;
- level of knowledge and experience specific to this development stage;

- level of the ability to make judgments and degree of axiological awareness.

Proper media education should therefore create such conditions for learning that learners can actively familiarize themselves with media in terms of their pedagogical aspect.

CONCLUSION

Information education is education preparing for life in information society. By drawing an analogy between events that happened several centuries ago and the most recent history, one can develop in young people certain intellectual predispositions that they will find useful in their lives, such as: the ability to evaluate critically, logical thinking, the ability to analyse political and social events, the ability to select and assess information provided by the mass-media, sober assessment of situations, also in terms of ethics (Jadczyk, 1998: 65).

Active teacher participation in computer courses will help to broaden your knowledge and skills in the area of computer technology in teaching.

Knowledge of computer technology allows for the self-help of scientific research. Media education provides teachers with more freedom in teaching methods.

Every effort should be made to ensure that media should properly fulfil their mission and should not constitute an obstacle to recipients' emotional and moral development. As John Paul II said: "(...) Ladies and gentlemen: as communicators of the human word, you are the stewards and administrators of an immense spiritual power that belongs to the patrimony of mankind and is meant to enrich the whole of the human community" (Pope's address to the people of the communications industry, Los Angeles, 15 September 1987, n.8) (John Paul II, 2004: 345-348; John Paul II, 2004: 12-14).

Parents as the first educators of their children are also the first source of information about media. They have a duty to instil the ability to "use the media in a moderate, critical, watchful and prudent way" in the family home (*Familiaris consortio*, 76). Young people should acquire basic knowledge of audio-visual culture not only in their family home but also at school. It is necessary to teach how to navigate the world of illusion and fiction created by the media in a safe and conscious manner. Out of the sheer multitude of items on offer one should choose those that *do* broaden one's knowledge, widen one's interests, as well as contributing to the development of one's personality and spiritual sphere (Żurkowski, 1984: 41-43).

In our times – in the media society, it is necessary to equip the school community with competencies in using media education tools, and in particular, with the skill to use computers and the global IT network. It is important not only to have technical skills but also to be able to practically use individual tools that support the process of accomplishing the objectives of the didactic process (Goban-Klas,

2004: 307). Hence the importance of equipping every educational establishment with the latest media tools and devices that will improve the effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning. Universal access to an enormous amount of information on the Internet and in other mass media will certainly have an effect upon the individual, while assigning an entirely new role to the teacher. The teacher's role in media education is of inestimable importance as it is the teacher who, to a great extent, is responsible for teaching quality and it is her/his competencies that determine the effectiveness of media education activities.

Media is a powerful instrument for shaping a person, their educational and educational values are valuable, but we must be aware of the fact that uncontrolled care can harm the child in the sense of education.

REFERENCES

- Baacke, D., 1997: *Medienpädagogik. Grundlagen der Medienkommunikation*, Tübingen.
- Buckingham, D., 2003: *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gajda, J., 2004: *Media w edukacji*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Goban-Klas, T., 2004: *Media i komunikowanie masowe. Teorie i analizy prasy, radia, telewizji i Internetu*, Warszawa-Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Gordon, G., 1982: *Communication and Media. Hosting Hours*. In J. Gajda (Eds.), *Telewizja a upowszechnianie kultury*. Warszawa: Wyd. Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, s. 19-46.
- Jadczyk, M., 1998: *Treści etyczne w podręcznikach historii dla liceów ogólnokształcących*. Kultura i Edukacja, 3, s. 52-73.
- Jan Paweł II, 1999: *Środki społecznego przekazu pomostem pomiędzy wiarą i kulturą*. Orędzie na Światowy Dzień Środków Społecznego Przekazu 1984. In *Orędzia Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*. Kraków: Wyd. M, t. 1, s. 212-237.
- Jan Paweł II, 2004: *Media w rodzinie: ryzyko i bogactwo*. Orędzie na XXXVIII Światowy Dzień Środków Społecznego Przekazu 2004. *Społeczeństwo*, 2, s. 340-359.
- Jan Paweł II, 2004: *Media w rodzinie: ryzyko i bogactwo*. Orędzie na XXXVIII Światowy Dzień Środków Społecznego Przekazu 2004. *L'Osservatore Romano, wydanie polskie*, 4, s. 11-16.
- Jankowska, H., 1985: *Rozwój czynności poznawczych u dzieci*. Warszawa: Wyd. Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych.

- Komendziński, T., 2001: *Cognitive science, metaphor and conceptual blending*. Toruń: Adam Marszałek.
- Kron, W. F., & Sofos A., 2003: *Dydaktyka mediów*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Luhan, Mc M., 1995: *Przeказniki, czyli przedłużenie człowieka*. In: M. Mc Luhan, *Wybór pism* (53-74). Warszawa: Wyd. Artystyczne i Filmowe.
- Nowakowska-Buryła, I., 2003: *Postawy dzieci wobec mediów*. Edukacja medialna, 1, s. 24-42.
- Strykowski, W., & Kąkolewicz, M., & Ubermanowicz S., 2008: *Kompetencje nauczycieli edukacji medialnej*. Neodidagmata, 29/30, s. 52-81.
- Żurkowski, B., 1984: *Wartości w świecie dziecka*. Warszawa: PWN.