

Robert Dorczak – doctoral dissertation: “Analysis of Political Discourse on Education in Years 2016–2020 in Poland from a Critical Perspective” – Summary

The topic of this doctoral dissertation is the analysis of the political discourse on education in Poland in 2016–2020 from a critical perspective. The research method chosen by the author, i.e. Critical Discourse Analysis, is based on the assumptions according to which discourse is treated as a social action, i.e. the practical use of language producing specific social effects, as a way of giving meaning to the social reality by defining the field of possible ways to think and express its interpretation, and as a tool of symbolic violence expressed in the control over access to the creation of discourse and its content. The introductory part of the dissertation indicates how important it is to study discourse, especially public and political discourse, from the point of view of a modern communication-based society. The importance of the analysed topic was also emphasised, i.e. of the debates on education in Poland, which, since the government announced plans to reform the education system in 2016, has become a topic that strongly polarises the Polish political debate.

The first chapter of the work outlines the basic research problems undertaken by the author and characterises the research method used. The aim of the study was to determine, based on the analysed fragments of discourse, the features of Polish political debate and discursive strategies used by politicians, to present the visions of the role of education in Polish society represented in political discussions and the interests of various social groups expressed in them, as well as to characterise the differences in these dimensions between political parties. This chapter also mentions the basic theoretical premises of the study of discourse, i.e. the concepts by Jürgen Habermas, who postulated what a democratic and open political debate should look like, by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, who described language as a tool for exercising power and symbolic violence, and by Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk, the precursors of CDA, who pointed to the role of discourse in the reproduction of power relations and social inequalities and the need for its critical analysis in order to contribute to social change. Based mainly on the works of these two researchers, the features of CDA as a research method and the research tools used in the work were also presented. The method used in the research was based on the analysis of the linguistic layer of the examined texts, the interpretation of the discursive situation and the context of their creation, and the explanation of their role in the reproduction of power relations and the legitimisation of prevailing ideologies. This part also

presents the method of selecting research material and characterises the two parliamentary debates devoted to education, extensive fragments of which, together with a detailed analysis, are included in the work.

The second chapter of the dissertation contains a broader description of the theoretical assumptions of discourse research, in particular CDA. Key concepts and definitions from the point of view of the study are listed here, especially the definition of discourse, public discourse and political discourse, i.e. a specific type of language use by politicians and on political topics. The theoretical foundations of CDA are also described here, i.e. the theories developed by thinkers such as Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci within the Western Marxist trend, by Jürgen Habermas and the "Frankfurt School" and by Michel Foucault. All these theorists emphasised that language and the way it is used are closely related to social structures and the relations of power and domination prevailing in society - Marxist theories and Foucault's concept emphasise the role of discourse in the reproduction of these relations, while the theories of Habermas and other representatives of the "Frankfurt School" emphasise the potentially emancipatory nature of communication. Drawing on both sources, CDA emphasises the inextricable connection between discourse and power, but its goal is the emancipation of marginalised groups and social change. This chapter also presents research and concepts regarding the Polish political debate, according to which it is characterised by strong polarisation, ideologisation and brutalisation, taking the form of "ritual chaos" in which reaching consensus is impossible.

The third chapter presents the most important theories regarding education and its role in society, which touch on its discursive nature and are important from the point of view of analysing the discourse around the education system. These are theories developed in the structural-functional and conflict paradigms, which emphasise the systemic aspect of education and its relationship with the social structure, including the role of schools in the reproduction of social inequalities or its emancipatory nature. This part also provides examples of the most important studies of the discourse on education in the world and in Poland and the conclusions drawn from them. Finally, the political context of the analysed debate after 2016 was also outlined, i.e. the growing polarisation of the Polish political scene and the main assumptions of the reform introduced by the government were described.

The section devoted to conclusions contains a summary of the results of the analysis of the selected research material. First of all, it turns out that the parliamentary debate in Poland is characterised by a high degree of ideologisation, polarisation and ritualisation of endless

conflict. A large part of the analysed statements did not touch on the topics that the debates were devoted to - they were only aimed at outlining the sharp identity of one's own political party and often brutally discrediting political opponents. Politicians also used arguments from many levels, mostly non-substantive, which made it impossible to discuss openly and reach an agreement on any issue. The political fight covered the essence of the dispute, but the analysed discourse also contained fragments indicating the way politicians perceive the role of education. Especially by the politicians of the ruling party, school is perceived as a tool to influence young people and transmit a specific ideology or worldview, in this case a conservative one, or one based on the social teaching of the Catholic Church. Therefore, in the vast majority of their statements, politicians expressed their own political interests or the interests of generally understood symbolic elites - only single statements made the voice of excluded groups, for example people with disabilities, appear in the discourse, which proves how important the presence of representatives of such groups in the public debate is. Although most political parties used the same discursive strategies, there were some differences between them, which are also described in the last chapter of the work. Finally, at the end, possible further directions of research on political discourse and educational discourse in Poland are presented.