Social Media – Educational and Pedagogical Problems

Bogdan Zeler

Institute of Cultural and Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

Abstract

Communicational behaviour has undergone more and more dynamic transformations together with the appearance of the further forms of these media such as blogs and video blogs, social networks, communications applications especially Facebook and Twitter. The initial enthusiasm has gradually faded to a large extent and has been even replaced with elements of criticism. Web 2.0 media have the element of risk which can be generally understood as probability of occurrence of something unpredictable. Our anxiety connected with the media often has intuitional character, or it is a futurological self-fulfilling prophecy. We are often surprised with the way the media are used, it also refers to the consequences of entering the world of Web 2.0 media. These elements of risk are connected with such issues as identity, anonymity, identity theft, hate speech, Internet hate and trolling. Recently fake news have become a particular danger. Numerous communicational activities involve bots. Social media instead of connecting create informational filter bubbles. These communicational changes raise a question concerning the form of education and pedagogy, and about the character of activities on this field in which young people in the period of Web 2.0 media should participate. What new competences (social, personal, cultural, technical) are required in this new form of communication. Contemporary theories and currents in education are not always useful, even such radical ones as post-pedagogy and postmodern pedagogy. It seems to be crucial to indicate rules which will allow young users of 'new new media' to find their way in axiological space where constant values which so far have been the bastion of educational process are exposed to adiaforisation – the process of liberating some categories of actions from moral judgment, finding them ethically indifferent. 'Coming of Age in Second Life', the appearance of new anthropology of virtual man, to quote the book by Tom Boellstorff, makes us reconsider those educational and pedagogical contexts.

Keywords: social media, networking, risk, knowledge, pedagogy, education

Introduction

Since the appearance of Web 2.0 media or, as Levinson called them, 'new new media' (Levinson, 2010: 11) , we have seemed to link them with numerous positive associations. Firstly, they have become widely available for all Internet users. As one of the media researchers states, according to recent research carried out among Polish teenagers, they spend daily over six hours on the Internet. Mainly in social media.

Social media have been commonly connected with numerous advantages, among which the following have been dominating:

- building a community
- development of democracy and its typical systems of values and behaviour
- reinforcement of controlling function of society
- immediacy of this type of communication
- creating of new communicational behaviours (especially those connected with changing the emphasis from words to pictures)

Communicational behaviour has undergone more and more dynamic transformations together with the appearance of the further forms of these media such as blogs and video blogs, social networks, communications applications especially Facebook and Twitter. The initial enthusiasm has gradually faded to a large extent and has been even replaced with elements of criticism.

Web 2.0 media have the element of risk which can be generally understood as probability of occurring of something unpredictable.

Our anxiety connected with the media often has intuitional character, or it is a futurological self-fulfilling prophecy. We are often surprised with the way the media are used, it also refers to the consequences of entering the world of Web 2.0 media. Some intuitions connected with 'new new media' will be mentioned below.

Social media – the risk factors

Since the appearance of Web 2.0 media or, as Levinson called them, 'new new media', we have seemed to link them with numerous positive associations. Firstly, they have become widely available for all Internet users. As one of the media researchers states, according to recent research carried out among Polish teenagers, they spend daily over six hours on the Internet. Mainly in social media.

Social media have been commonly connected with numerous advantages, among which the following have been dominating:

- building a community
- development of democracy and its typical systems of values and behaviour
- reinforcement of controlling function of society
- immediacy of this type of communication
- creating of new communicational behaviours (especially those connected with changing the emphasis from words to pictures)

Communicational behaviour has undergone more and more dynamic transformations together with the appearance of the further forms of these media such as blogs and video blogs, social networks, communications applications especially Facebook and Twitter. The initial enthusiasm has gradually faded to a large extent and has been even replaced with elements of criticism.

Web 2.0 media have the element of risk which can be generally understood as probability of occurring of something unpredictable.

Our anxiety connected with the media often has intuitional character, or it is a futurological self-fulfilling prophecy. We are often surprised with the way the media are used, it also refers to the consequences of entering the world of Web 2.0 media. Some intuitions connected with 'new new media' will be mentioned below.

When we observe participants of 'new new media' we can notice the fact that they take numerous risky actions connected with defining their identity. Firstly, protecting privacy is commonly neglected. Personal details are publicised (forename, surname, address, workplace, e-mail address etc). In some cases those details evoke the risk of becoming a crime victim, or its use may result in becoming an accomplice to the crime. Defining our identity in social media we constantly choose the elements of our identity which we want to present to other users of the media, and on the other hand we choose the elements which should stay concealed. Through this kind of self-characteristic we often distort our image. It is not true, preferably idealized obviously. The most convincing argument can be provided with the analysis of profile photos in social media and the range of using photographic filters in their edition. Both 'polishing' the biographies and not mentioning some facts in professional career have similar character. Obviously pretending a fictional person is an extreme form of such behaviour, when the user suffers from peculiar form of 'split personality'. This type of identity 'transformation' can be called 'internal.' Its character is established by the person themselves, their efforts, decisions and chosen strategies.

"In the epoch of confessing society, when informational exhibitionism is not surprising for anyone [...] Every day through the network we expose ourselves to invigilation, we allow tendencies and trends to decide about our choices, and living under constant pressure of getting to technological and social position - out of service - we subjugate ourselves."(Foucault, 1998: 36)

Identity interferences and changes can become much more serious when they are caused by external factors, actions of other social media users. Such actions are: identity theft, impersonating another person. The influence of the environment has special dimension in the actions connected with judging other users. On the one hand those opinions can be motivating if they are positive, but on the other hand when we face criticism they can result in depression. The phenomenon of Internet

hate has such a character. It refers to actions taken because of anger, aggression or hate. These are all forms of attacking someone, mainly verbally but also with graphics and videos. Trolling is a similar phenomenon. It is intentional act of influencing other users aimed at ridiculing or insulting someone by sending aggressive, controversial and often untrue information. Usually consequent ignoring of trolling results in discouraging it, moving it to some other place or complete giving up the activity. However, if we do not stick to this tactics dealing with trolls and haters we may lead to serious psychological problems, which consequences can be crucial for our identity.

Teenagers observe in the media idealized images of their idols and other teenagers. The desire of 'being similar' results in the risk of dramatic choices, including suicide attempts.

Therefore it is worth noticing that more and more often we decide not to extend the circle of our friends or observers in social media. Users on their private profiles often limit themselves to several dozens of people they stay in touch with. It is similar with followed and observed web portals or web pages. On the one hand it provides the feeling of safety and allows to avoid malicious comments, but on the other hand it limits the amount of information and confines the borders of our network world. Media lose their social character and become our media fortress.

"It can be proved on several levels starting with daily following other people's activities in social media [...] and finishing with massive forms of marketing and various types of administrative, Internet invigilation which also influence our relations." (Bauman, Lyon,2013: 80)

The sphere of marketing seems to be an important example and marketing campaigns in social media become more and more popular, it can be said, they dominate them to some extent.

Searching for an appropriate target group in social media, preparing a campaign, choosing an appropriate place (Facebook. YouTube) and appropriate tools (for example CanYa, Power Editor, Facebook Analytics) dominated the way marketers think about social media. The clash of a professional equipped with specialised tools with an individual, often naive, recipient of the media creates a risk connected with the lack of competences. A creator of marketing campaign in social media and its recipient have definitely unbalanced positions:

Web 2.0 media became the favourite place of presence and activity for politicians, or even, as one can say, for doing politics. Twitter is particularly popular because it creates the possibility of instant dissemination of news about events, almost at real time, and equally instant commenting on them. We can mention Twitter activity of a former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs – Radosław Sikorski or tweets constantly written by the President of the United States – Donald Trump. Journalists wait impatiently for those tweets to tweet them on and comment on them. Such a method of doing politics and journalism may result in superficiality. After all Twitter message contains only 140 signs maximum and deeper reflection is hardly possible. Such a reflection takes also more time and Twitter gives no time at all. The sooner one passes the news on the better.

What may be surprising, the world of social media became also the domain of people connected with the world of religion. Aforementioned risk exists also in this case, after all the principles of faith and spontaneity seem to be contradictory. Still the issue of social media seems to be the matter of interest to theologians which can be proved by Gilberto Borghi's book 'Faith in the Time of Facebook'. It asks whether the generation of Facebook believes in God and what can be done to bring the young closer to Jesus in the time of social media.

Fake news – purposefully spread false information, is the phenomenon which refers to the aforementioned circle, it is also the biggest risk connected with social media. The role of Facebook in its spreading is estimated at around 30%. Therefore actions which are undertaken to warn against this kind of information are not surprising. Articles presenting an issue in a different way are indicated in the context and 'voting' of information recipients is organized. Still at present it is bound to fail. Much information, including social reactions, is generated by bots which use particular algorithms. On the one hand they detect false information, but on the other they generate it and make its identification more difficult. Danger connected with this kind of information is more and more visible, recently during the presidential election in the USA.

The risk connected with endangered security of the country is another issue. Social media seem to be the place which is more and more widely taken up by terrorism, which can be proved for example by Internet actions of Islamic State. Among the basic dangers connected with the sphere we can find:

"1. deformation of the content and implementation of false logical content to information systems through government contact channels and military systems of commanding

2. activity of special forces and information subjects of other countries and non-state actors

3. hostile operational activity of information and propaganda structures, state and non-state actors

4. propaganda and disinformation actions

5. domination of potential aggressors in information surroundings

6. penetration of information surroundings [...] by hostile propaganda and information structures

7. the loss of ability to influence and distribute information in information environment ". (Aleksandrowicz, 2016: 122-123)

Activity of state forces concerning security may lead to the risk of breaching human right for example invigilation in the space of 'new new media'.

Aforementioned phenomena and the risk connected with them suggest to move the issue of risk to ethical ground, where the notion of adiaforisation will be useful.

"Adiaforisation means that some categories are classified as free from ethical evaluation, 'ethically neutral', in which choice between good and evil does not take place – in other words, categories not mentioned by ethical codes [...]. This traditional today, orthodox mechanism of adioforisation still works and in some aspects it is even more efficient than in the times of relatively primitive technology. " (Bauman , And If ... ,1995: 156)

In ethical aspect, the risk is rooted in this indifference. "In the epoch of Web 2.0 technology co-participation should lead to co-responsibility, which obviously does not happen. It would not be exaggeration to say that co-participation first of all leads to complete legitimization of any quality, fading awareness of the source of a message and degradation of the meaning of quality." (Dziadzia, 2012: 109)

„Towards the media" – education and media pedagogy

The aforementioned phenomena relating to movements in the process of communication, politics, and widely understood culture provoke questions about educational dimension. The task of media education is to describe those communicational, social and technological changes, their interpretation and placing them in axiological context. The next phase it to indicate ways to shape optimal (proper) communicational behaviours connected with responsible using of 'new new media'.

It is optimistic that network in all those cases became the source of needed information and the place of communication exchange, a platform of dialog. It can be perceived as its advantage. Social media have a vital role in the process of education and organizing of educational activities. For example groups of students focused on a particular problem trying to solve it in the network space under supervision of a teacher-moderator have such a character. Facebook can be an example of media space for such activities. A society like that should have community of relations and be a community of place, memory and practice.

One of the basic categories used for describing the contemporary world is networking. It also refers to the world of information and knowledge. Henning Lobin characterized the process in the following way: "not only computers or people connect in the network with each other, also the knowledge itself has network structure. Opposite to hierarchical conception of knowledge, which is so meaningful for the culture of writing, nowadays another thought becomes more and more common. In the epoch of networking of knowledge the content of any information includes how and to what extent this information is connected with other information". (Lobin, 2017: 33) It seems that the most important task of media education nowadays is to realize the fact.

Is it really necessary for us to look for all the information in the network? Can media communication replace 'face to face' communication? It was certainly the easiest and the fastest solution. But a question arises about the elements which might have been neglected by us because of this facility. Moving life to the Network we have lost the freedom of choice, part of our rights, privacy, freedom of speech, work, transparency, and paradoxically possibility of free access to information and participation in culture. Changes experienced by our 'reformatted' brains are a good example. It results for example in the lack of ability to read a long text in a linear way. New new media users are constantly exposed to information, they start to

treat all of it in the same way, they cannot introduce proper hierarchy and selection of those element which contain elements of the truth.

In network we have to make individual decisions according to appropriate rules. Very often they decide about our identity, the way we estimate another person, the way we behave and react. Entering the Network we leave our traces and we not always remember about our security. The changes are more and more rapid, threats to our sovereignty are multiplied. The task of new media education should be producing a compromise between our life in the real and digital world.

The range of liberty in the Network for us and for others should be discussed. It should be linked with the sense of risk we experience in the digital world. It seems to be indispensable to present to the Network users the cost-benefit analysis connected with our presence in the digital world. Leaving our personal details in the Network can be a great field for educational activity. The loss of date or using it by other people can immensely influence our real life.

The competences which should be possessed by the Network users can be divided into two categories. The first one refers to technical contexts of this type of communication. It is indispensable to acquire knowledge concerning the way social media function: the ability to create an account or a profile, understanding the rules of security. The other category refers to social competences, in other word ability to communicate efficiently, clear formulation of opinions, understanding the character of changes taking place in contemporary media when paradigm of word is replaced with domination of image and multimedia effects. In this context media education has to be redefined because "media education is connected with the authority of images, sounds and messages, it means that the user has access to those elements and can or should analyze them in a critical way and judge them". (Godzic, 2015: 33)

Consequently, the following activities should be classified as the key media competences: the ability of searching and using information, estimating it, analysing, organizing and designing scheduled targets, processing and using the information in a critical way. These activities are the basis of the process of building knowledge understood in a modern way.(Borawska-Kolbarczy, 2016: 72-73)

Contemporary man experiences the same changes that widely understood humanistic reflection undergoes in the postmodern epoch. They influence numerous conditions of educational process. All those factors result in the necessity of describing the aims of media education which should be understood as education 'towards the media'. Traditional understanding of education, which was perceived as conveying knowledge and values typical for elder generations to a generation entering their life, has changed. Nowadays the young understand network processes better although they are not able 'to judge' them properly in the aspect of values (axiology). In this context pedagogical contexts of changes connected with existence in the world of Web 2.0 media seem to be essential.

Numerous elements of risk connected with this type of media were mentioned in the first part of the article. What should the basis of media pedagogy be like to minimize the factors of risk?

Until recently when asked about our identity we were able to give a strong answer. We could easily determine our sex, age, nationality, education. Asked about convictions we also did not have any problems with indicating a system of values close to us, particular ideological options. Today this 'hard', 'constant' identity was replaced with perceiving the world in categories of 'fluidity' and changeability. Informational revolution resulted in the appearance of dozens of cultures surrounding a contemporary man, cultures which are as meaningful as their own native national culture. The way the categories constituting international discourse have been understood so far has to be fundamentally transformed and revaluated. Society of the Network created in the epoch of the Internet becomes on the one hand a community, connecting all the network users, but on the other hand the phenomenon of alienation from the society can be observed. As Boellstorf says, a reflection over anthropology of virtual man becomes necessary. Refection over the way the virtual worlds change our perception of identity and our participation in society.

Behaviour characteristic for social media users is the evidence of those changes. We move political and educational dialog to the space of new new media, they change in a particular way our attitude to art and literature. In the space we create our identity (or identities, to be precise) and we meet another man and their culture. The media become the place where the opposition between 'Us' and 'Others' is exceptionally evident. Because of these factors we have to set tasks for participants of intercultural dialog anew. We also have to set new fields of media education which must be understood as education 'towards the media' on the one hand, and as education towards another Man on the other. In the 'philosophy of dialog' we can notice elements building the basis for social behaviour. Buber's conviction that the only real pair of words is

the word 'me-you' should become the basis for ethical choices made in the world of 'new new media' by their users. Emphasizing the ethical dimension of participation in media seems to be particularly important. Its bases are common for all reflection over deontology of media. It consists of basic values: respect for life and interpersonal solidarity. They also determine basic restrictions relating to media users, the newest media in particular: not to lie, not to cause unnecessary suffering, not to expropriate someone's property. All those rules and restrictions, which so far have been obvious in the world of journalism, in the network world become vague. That is why they have to become the basis for media pedagogy and media education. (Bertrand, 2007: 77)

The question about the theories and pedagogical conceptions in which we can find elements of this pedagogy is another problem. Two traditions seem to be worth recollecting. The first one is hermeneutic tradition. "Hermeneutic act [...] after complete encounter of the world of the author of the sign with the world of the recipient [...] on the level of the sign, which can be the basis for recreating identity of sense and function. It can be done by a person thanks to identity of personal and spiritual structure." (Bartnik, 1994: 112) An hermeneutic act understood in that way seems to allow all participants of communication process to realize responsibility for conveyed message and respect for co-participants of this communicational action. The other pedagogical context, which is worth mentioning, are movements in postmodern pedagogy: "post-structuralism as the theory of social life and its educational contexts, deep ecology [...] multicultural education" together with its fight for the shape of the politics of representation, education and simulated culture, postmodern world of consumption, popular culture" (Śliwerski, 2015: 392-393). All those models to a great extent influence behaviour and attitudes of Web 2.0 media users.

Conclusion

Social media convey great possibilities for interpersonal communication, disseminating of the attitude of tolerance and opening to other people. But they are also the space in which values are constantly denied, the place for disseminating hate, rejection and closing to other people. It can be said that in the new new media we can observe a struggle of two worlds: good and evil, us and others. Our common expectations concerning the media may remain unfulfilled. How should we behave in this new situation? How should existing dangers be dealt with? How can the attempts of breaking up the process of meeting with the Other in the Network be prevented? Will the controversial legal regulation solve the problem? Will the attempts of controlling the Internet become another source of restricting network freedom?

All those elements make us reconsider tasks that network dialog users have to undertake and set new fields of media education which should be understood as education 'towards the media' on the one hand, and towards Man on the other. It is necessary to create attitudes opened to other cultures, and at the same time emphasize the dangers of the contemporary world (terrorism, refugees). It should be new media pedagogy which would prepare societies to analyze complex phenomena characteristic for contemporary civilization, bring up a spiritually rich man and finally integrate man with the world of human community . Searching for the elements we have in common with another man and understanding the differences that divide us.

References:

[1] Aleksandrowicz, T. (2016). Podstawy walki informacyjnej [*The Basis of Information Battle*]. Warszawa: Editions Spotkania.

[2] Bartnik, C.S. (1994). Hermeneutyka personalistyczna[*Personalistic Hermen*eutics]. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego.

[3] Bauman, Z. (1995). A jeśli etyki zabraknie [*And If Ethics is Gone*]. *Kultura Współczesna,* nr 1-2.

[4] Bauman, Z. & Lyon D. (2013). Płynna inwigilacja. Rozmowy [*Liquid Invigilation. Conversations*]. Kraków: Wydawnistwo Literackie.

[5] Bertrand, C-J. (2007). Deontologia mediów [*Deontology of the Media*] (T. Szymański, Trans.). Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax.

[6] Boellstorff, T. (2012). Dojrzewanie w Second Life. Antropologia człowieka wirtualnego[*Coming of Age in Second Life. An Anthropologist Explores Virtually Human*] (A. Sadza, Trans.). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.

[7] Borawska-Kalbarczyk, K. (2016). Dziedzictwo Gutenberga kontra cyfrowa infosfera – o poprawę kompetencji informacyjnych młodzieży [Gutenberg's Heritage Versus Digital Infosphere – About Improvement of Information

Competences Among the Youth.] In N. Walter (Ed.) Zanurzeni w mediach [*Immersed in the Media*]. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu.

[8] Borghi , G. (2017). Wiara w czasach Facebooka [*Faith in the Time of Facebook*]. (J. Ganobis, Trans.). Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Św. Paweł.

[9] Cyndecka, M. (2014). Facebook wspólną platformą wymiany doświadczeń .W kierunku edukacji otwartej [Facebook - a Common Platform of Exchanging Experience.Towards Open Education]. In G. Penkowska (Ed.) Fenomen Facebooka. Społeczne konteksty edukacji [*The Phenomenon of Facebook. Social Contexts of Education*]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra.

[10] Dziadzia, B. (2012). Dylematy kultury uczestnictwa[Dilemmas of So Called Participatory Culture]. *Media i Społeczeństwo*, nr 2.

[11] Foucault M. (1998). Nadzorować i karać [*Discipline and Punish]* (T. Komendant, Trans.). Warszawa: Aletheia.

[12] Godzic, W., L. Rudzińska & M. Kowalska . (2015). Świat, który potrzebuje redukcji medialnej. Poznanie, terapia i wyzwania [The World Which Needs Media Reduction. Cognition, Therapy and Challenges]. In M. Fedorowicz & S. Ratajski (Eds.) O potrzebie edukacji medialnej w Polsce [*About the Need of Media Education in Poland*]. Warszawa: Polski Komitet ds. UNESCO oraz Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji.

[13] Levinson, P (2010). Nowe nowe media [*New new media*]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM

[14] Lobin, H. (2017). Marzenie Engelbarta.Czytanie i pisanie w świecie cyfrowym [*Dreams of Engelbart. Reading and Writing in Digital World*] (Ł. Musiał, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

[15] Śliwerski, B. (2015). Współczesne teoria i nurty wychowania [*Contemporary Theories and Movements of Education*]. Kraków: Impuls.