

ANALYSIS OF THE SLOVAK DISCOURSES OF SEX EDUCATION INSPIRED BY MICHEL FOUCAULT¹

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Abstract: The aims, rules and topics of sex education exist on paper, but have yet to be implemented in Slovakia. Although the curriculum creates the illusion of openness in this field, the silence on sex education in schools provides space for the alternative, “more valuable” quiet discourses of religious education. Under these conditions, it is silence that is proving to be an advantageous strategy for the majority of those who should be voicing their opinions. Instead, they listen and control. By contrast, those who do speak out, children and young people, do not in fact, speak to them, but mainly among themselves. Those who are silent and listen are not prepared for the younger generations confessions on sexuality, which are mostly taken from the liberal area of media, especially the internet. The silent frequently lack, at the very least, the basic ability to react and debate in this changed situation. Those who are involved in the discussion on sexuality in Slovakia are those who should listen and supervise.

Keywords: sexual education; sexuality; confessions; power; discourses on sexuality.

*[T]he truth of sex became something fundamental,
useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable.*

(Foucault 1978, 56)

Analyses of Discourses Inspired by Michel Foucault

Discourse analysis has become a well-known means of conducting qualitative analysis. It is thanks to the work of Michel Foucault that this analysis has spread from linguistics to the field of social structure and social practice (Diaz-Bone 2007). Psychologists study how people create their social worlds through language and in language-created contexts. The focus of interest has been shifting from the individual, his/her experiences of the language and its productive and power potential (Willig 2003). In our analysis, we apply Foucault's

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ideas loosely and do not use a more structured approach as Carla Willig has done, for example. We have been particularly inspired by the Viennese school of critical discourse analysis and their work on questions of manipulation and misleading and inappropriate discourse tactics and strategies. In our research we focus on the main streams of discourse as sources of sex education. Our goal is to reveal how discourses function, both generally and globally, as social and cultural sources that people employ while conducting their activities (Stainton Rogers 2003), specifically, we are mostly concerned with the way in which sex education has been conceived of in Slovakia.

Our analysis of the curriculum on Education for Marriage and Parenthood in Slovakia and the question of the reciprocal effects of knowledge and power has brought us closer to Foucault's traditional discourse analysis. The disputes that arose in relation to the Handbook on the Methodology of Education for Marriage and Parenthood in Slovakia show which situations and which power relationships provoke particular discourses and which tactics and strategies are used in them. In our analysis we cannot fully use the approach offered by Foucault; we have simply selected those parts that we deemed to be relevant to the material we subjected to empirical analysis. Our aim was not to apply Foucault's theory in an identical or authentic manner. The ideas relating to this topic and our own analysis have simply been inspired by Foucault.

We are conscious that this perspective has been narrowed down and that, as a result, many other important relationships and ideas outlined by Foucault may not feature in this study. Nevertheless, from our point of view, we have tried to point out the key issues. Our ambition is not to apply Foucault's philosophy here, rather to use those parts of his analysis we considered to be most useful. If the repressive hypothesis appears in our text at all, then it is simply a reflection of the nature of the material that we analyzed. The following areas receive the most attention: who discusses sex education, how it is discussed, what consequences it has in terms of power, and what knowledge is gained as a result.

We are conscious that in writing this study we are influenced by the socio-cultural context in which we live: a European *scientia sexualis*. Thus, we must be aware of which ritual of the truth confession of sexuality we are providing here. Nevertheless, our aim is simply to describe and analyze the games concerning the truth about sexuality.

Hypotheses from the Perspective of Foucault

The recent development of sex education in Slovakia indicates that it is only partly directed by the Foucaultian rule of a unified structure (Foucault 2002). On one hand, it is true that knowledge in this area does not come from enlightened reason and is not directed by the rule of logic, on the other hand it does not submit to the laws of the unified structure either—a discursive formation that operates outside the conscious level of individual subjects. Relatively little effort is required in order for knowledge to become a powerful tool that helps to keep the given social system in action, that is at the lowest cost and with the highest efficiency (Foucault 1975). The lowest cost and the highest efficiency may well be represented by silence. Not, however, silence that is caused by repression, but rather intentional silence that quietly enables other rival discourses (for example on self-development, the family, love, etc.) to come to the fore. The official silence on sexuality found in schools simply creates

the illusion that sexuality is not discussed there. Despite this official silence, animated discussions among pupils on this topic are common. Discussions on sexuality abound in the environment outside school, as we all know. By contrast, teachers and the school as an institution remain silent and discussions on sexuality are still viewed as something that should be secret in our country.

According to Foucault (1978), discourses on sexuality multiply in areas, where power operates as a means of its performance. Discussions about sexuality cannot be prohibited at school. However, power over sexuality is best introduced using unobtrusive and disguised mechanisms. Unfortunately, at this time, we do not know much about these mechanisms. Where Slovakia is concerned, the only part that is visible is the compulsory curriculum on Education for Marriage and Parenthood that lays out a particular educational framework (which we will examine in detail later). This curriculum is compulsory and cross-disciplinary. Thus, each school subject should include the teaching of some elements of this curriculum. This may represent one of the instruments of power that is diffuse and inconspicuous, and, at the same time, effective. Unfortunately (or possibly fortunately), this mechanism, were it to be bound up with power, as Foucault argues it should be, would very difficult to apply in our schools.

At school we may witness the discreet enlightened discourse of an innocent, asexual child, despite the fact that the everyday reality faced by teachers is quite different, often in fact the opposite. But there is also another contrasting discourse which holds, almost certainly under the influence of psychoanalytical discourse, that all children are sexually active or, at least, that they have an inner disposition to sexuality. In both cases, however, it should be agreed that the sexuality of the child has to be nurtured and supervised, because it contains within it collective, individual, moral sources of danger that may threaten the child's sexuality.

Discursive Sources

We begin our analysis with a view of the main discursive streams in society that are related to sexuality and sex education. They form the social framework for both the educational concepts and the practice and at the same time represent sources of these. Discourses on sexuality have been developing throughout the history of mankind. In modern history—since the Victorian period (19th century)—discussion on sexuality has been regulated by strict rules on when, where, in which situations, and between whom it is or is not allowed.

Everyone knew, for example, that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence to the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed (Foucault 1978, 4).

Currently, discourses on sexuality are being influenced by the gradual "decay and weakening of government power" (Bauman 1995, 14). Advertising, television and the cinema now control the debate on sexuality and the images, scenes and stories of sexuality. However, this highly visible presence in the media does not preclude the simultaneous social

marginalization of sexuality. On one hand, sexuality is continually being represented in the media, yet on the other, the sexual experiences, fantasies and desires that are not able to attract the attention and interest of the public remain undiscussed (there are no signs such as the value of surprise, the formation of conflicts, the breaking of norms, dramatization, etc.,) or in extreme cases they remain unspoken, unconsidered and unknown (Schmidt 2003).

Following Foucault, *four discursive streams* were identified in the areas of sexuality and sex education: 1. the Christian tradition bolstered by Victorian morality; 2. Medical and sexological discourse; 3. Liberal (civil) discourse and 4. the discourse on HIV/AIDS. They differ from one another in the values, preferences, goals which are expressed by the people who are considered to be competent to teach sex education and the overall goal of this education (see Table 1). These different trajectories often come into conflict, but they also lead to the creation of alliances between them (Lukšík, Supeková, 2003).

Table 1: Selected Signs of Discourses on Sexuality

Discourse	Values, Priorities, goals	Disagreement, restriction	Prevailing “spirit”/ Emotional overtones	Education	Main target groups of education	Persons responsible
Christian (the Jewish-Christian tradition strengthened by Victorian morality)	Reproduction, monogamy, fidelity, maturity, marriage, family, virginity, different roles of men and women, The foetus’ right to life	Homosexuality, premature sexuality, masturbation, infidelity, contraception	Restrictive, optimistic, fighting, alarmist, high-principled	Parental education, moral education	Young people considering marriage	Parents, priests
Medical (scientific, sexological)	Reproductive health, maturity, scientific facts, control of instinct, sexual difference, women’s rights	Methods not scientifically proven	Informative objective, aggressive, highly principled	Instruction on reproduction, sex education	Women and men separately	Medical doctors
Civil – liberal	Freedom, personal choice, de-tabooing, equality of men and women, tolerance of sexual minorities	dogmatism	open, permitting, tolerant	Sex education	all, minorities	teachers, experts, activists
Discourse on HIV/AIDS	Risk, prevention, personal responsibility, solidarity with HIV+	Labelling of “risk” groups	Pragmatic, alarmist	prevention, health education	All	Experts, activists

We have briefly described the discourses that operate in relation to sex education. Their names are indicative of their origins (their historical roots can be found in other studies, for example in Lukšík, Supeková 2003). Using the example of our analysis of the curriculum of Education for Marriage and Parenthood and the discourses on the Methodological Handbook on this subject in the Slovak Republic, we outline how particular discourses assert themselves in practice, what their goals are and which power tactics they use.

Curriculum of Education for Marriage and Parenthood and Reality

At the level of the school, the discourse on sex education has been incorporated, in a very specific way, into the “Conception of Education for Marriage and Parenthood at Elementary and Secondary schools”, which has been used in schools since 1998. According to Bianchi et al. (1999), as the title suggests this is probably the only subject that is defined in terms of its aims rather than as is generally the case, as part of the ongoing quest for greater human knowledge and existence. This is a consequence of the social need to strengthen the value of the traditional family and the need to reverse the unfavourable demographic trend in Slovakia. In this sense, this form of education fulfils a strategic or political role.

In the Conception of Education for Marriage and Parenthood at Elementary and Secondary schools, a two-stranded approach has been built into the framework of ethical and religious education (Bianchi et al. 1999). Within the ethical dimension of the Conception, Christian discourse—“the education of a moral and mature individual”—meets civil discourse—“a civilised and sophisticated manifestation of sexuality”. The Conception also includes a less significant medical (scientific) discourse, represented by information on physiology, anatomy and reproductive health. The ecological discourse, aimed at risk prevention includes topics such as “the negative impact of drug addiction”, “the principles of safe behaviour”, or “resisting the negative effects of the environment and their influence on premature sex” (in this case linked to Christian values).

Sex education has its own syllabus, but it is also part of the curriculum of other school subjects. It is to be taught, for example within the framework of biology, ethics and religious education, etc., but in practice it is rarely implemented. According to Bianchi et al. (1999), the basis of the Conception, albeit not explicitly expressed, is based on Christian values that stress the value of heterosexual monogamy within marriage, and warn against premature sexual experience, auto-sexuality and these values also express a desire to provide close links between family and school regarding education in this area, for it is reasoned that parents bear responsibility for this aspect of child rearing.

The way in which this Conception of education functions in practice is shown by some examples from the research findings. A majority of teachers responded negatively to the question “Should the school subject “Education for Marriage and Parenthood” be renamed “Sex Education”? (Masaryk 2004). One of the reasons given was that the subject has frequently undergone name changes. Others thought the name was an accurate description of the context within which sexual relations occur and claimed that the term “Sex Education” would provoke an unsuitable reaction in pupils, especially boys, who would make disparaging comments and expect something different. Therefore, encouraging

discourse on sexuality, admitting the truth about sexuality, is not entirely possible because the teachers do not have the expertise. In other words, they are not able to listen, evaluate and interpret, because the pupils are one step ahead of them, since they are able to freely access the information on the internet. Teachers thus retreat into those areas in which they feel they have some degree of competency, or try to protect themselves by the guarantees provided to them by their positions of traditional authority at school. A direct discourse on sexuality which might reveal a lack of expertise in matters of sexuality would shake their authoritative position, as traditionally conceived of in schools. In addition, the research found that in their responses, teachers highlighted consumerist approaches to sexuality and the vulgarization of the language on sexuality as the main problem areas (Masaryk 2004). The undeveloped nature of the discourse on sex education among teachers meant that teachers felt uncertain in dealing with possible clashes over a discourse taken from the media and transformed by children through peer communication. Thus, the pupils bring into schools a liberal discourse on sexuality that they have learnt from the media. Teachers clearly cannot provide, in contrast, an equally strong modernistic socializing discourse, because theirs has already become rather anachronistic and dated. In society at large, it has probably also outlived itself. Thus, the official discourse on sexuality in schools is somewhat lacking these days. It has dissipated and has been substituted, at the unofficial level, by the influence of liberal discourses from outside school (the media and the internet in particular). The idea of sex education as being a discreet diffuse and quiet component of several school subjects has yet to be realized, (it may exist in some areas in the form of a hidden curriculum; however, we do not have adequate qualitative analysis in this area). The discourse that has penetrated and now silently governs the curriculum on Education for Marriage and Parenthood is a Christian one. For the official discourse on sex education, simply being “on paper” appears to suffice. Perhaps the idea is that truth must first appear on paper, that it should be clear and definite, and then it can become the subject of true confession and an instrument of power. The truth on sexuality is, it seems, neither an essential, nor useful thing, but only precious and risky—this is probably the position that corresponds to the Christian discourse.

A Methodological Handbook: Tactics of Power

The open clashes between the discourses can be seen in several scandals. One of them relates to the Methodological Handbook of Education for Marriage and Parenthood (Rovňanová et al. 2007). The authors based the topics contained within it on the compulsory curriculum of Education for Marriage and Parenthood approved by the Ministry of Education of Slovakia, on the findings of a survey of the existing knowledge and needs of pupils and teachers (Lukšík, Lukšíková 2006), and also on the requirement of teachers who participated in various conferences on sex education. The authors of the Handbook are a teacher with many years of experience in Education for Marriage and Parenthood; a university lecturer and a research worker who has been working in the field for a long time; a psychologist who has worked in sex education for many years; a human rights expert; and specialists in gender studies. The Methodological Handbook was published by the Slovak Family Planning Association (SFPA), a member of the International Planned Parenthood

Federation, which is well-known for its human rights approach to sexuality and sex education, and stands on a civil-liberal platform.

The Handbook was greeted by a wave of criticism, whose tone was directed by the Slovak Conference of Bishops (SCB). The Handbook was given to the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for approval, but it was not approved. At present, it is available on the internet and teachers can use it as an unofficial manual. The discourses circulating around the Handbook were no longer about the silence or lack of silence as in the case of the above mentioned curriculum of Education for Marriage and Parenthood, but related to the following questions: which truth on sexuality is most suitable for children and who should be responsible for conveying it. We would now like to outline some of the tactics of power that were used to gain a licence on the truth about sexuality.

The First Power Tactics

It is important to correctly select and incorporate knowledge in the education process; at the same time, it is equally important to use the correct method in teaching the subject. In the first tactic to have appeared in connection with the Methodological Handbook, power is linked to knowledge, but the question of who will use and control the method in which knowledge is conveyed to the pupils and students in this field is of equal importance.

The sexual side of a person is part of his/her unique personality. Mathematics or geography is not. Thus, information on sexuality cannot be placed at the same level as other school subjects. The pragmatic dimension should therefore be provided at the very end... We will stress one more: sex education is not comparable to other school subjects (From an Open letter by the Chairman of the Slovak Conference of Bishops to the Minister of Education of the Slovak Republic).

“The sexual side of a person is part of his/her unique personality.” Is this not a masked and hidden manoeuvre? According to the religious education curriculum, it is not personality but faith that is important when speaking about sexuality. On the other hand, however, if it is an individual’s “code” that should be followed from early childhood in order to establish whether or not there are any indications or tendencies that some abnormality is developing, then this could be the key to understanding why sexuality is seen as one side of a person’s personality in Christian discourse.

Discourse, according to Foucault (1978), frequently operates on the basis of controversial tactics. The fact that it was suggested that Education for Marriage and Parenthood be made “a different”, “special” school subject, probably means that it should be taught in “a different”, “special way”, than is generally the case in schools; the authors of the Handbook themselves proposed alternative methods for teaching it. (In the Methodological Handbook there is an explicit suggestion that this school subject be taught in differently from traditional subjects).

It is possible that the Christian discourse does not like the proposed interactive teaching method that would involve the participation of pupils and break the obvious silence during school lessons. If it were mainly the pupils who were to speak at school,

(which is clearly not very likely), it would be similar to the confession of truth on sexuality. And that would not be suitable because this is the area of Christian listening. Interaction might disrupt the defined limits of the realm of power at school, both temporarily and in different situations. It requires new skills and an effort to promote the balance of power between the teacher and pupils.

The Second Power Tactics

Reality is hidden by the moral question. This tactic does not focus on knowledge but raises a moral question. It covertly manipulates and a struggle for morality to prevail is manifested in the discourse.

The Methodological Handbook of Sex Education for Pupils at the Upper Level of Elementary Schools is considered to be “a technical manual” by the Slovak Conference of Bishops (SCB). And the Slovak Family Planning Association, its author, has been declared the propagator of the ideas and values of a “culture of death”. (20.8.2007 13:42:36/SITA, ČTK, zh).

The pamphlet clearly contains ideas that are not, according to the SCB, in line with a morality that brings happiness to people in their sex lives, specifically in terms of abortion, euthanasia and the misuse of contraception. (www.sme.sk).

A glance at the Handbook confirms that the discourse within it has been manipulated. It is not in fact a pamphlet, as the handbook has 249 pages (including teaching materials). One of the chapters in the Handbook is entitled “abortion—the artificial termination of a pregnancy—a termination”, which does not favour any particular notion in terms of the language used. The Handbook does not promote abortion; on the contrary, the negative consequences are pointed out and both the pro-life and pro-choice positions are explained as well. There is no mention of euthanasia in the Handbook. The chapter on contraception is based on the concept of planned parenthood as a basic human right. All the different types of contraception are listed and the risks and restrictions associated with the use of hormonal contraception are stressed. The questions contained in the end of unit exercises are on topics such as: why do some girls and women decide to have an abortion? If you were in a position of authority, what would you suggest to prevent undesired conception? Explain the differences between an abortion, a mini-abortion and a miscarriage.

In these tactics of power, an interest in happiness is presented in opposition to *the promotion of ideas on the culture of death*. Power, as is stated in Foucault (1978), which focuses on the body and reproduction, is organized around concerns for life rather than the threat of immortality. The moral question and the attempt to give greater weight to morality conceals the real situation. The Christian discourse has it that the “liberal” authors have also allegedly manipulated the “truth” as presented in their Handbook.

The Third Power Tactics

It is necessary to accept sexuality as a cultural value versus needs and the legislative framework. This tactic aims to control sexuality by defining it as a cultural value, thus as a discourse.

Firstly, the individual person has to accept her/his sexuality and recognise its value. It cannot occur through instruction, but through education that is general, gradual, and appropriate for the age of the individual. If this requirement is preceded by pragmatism, albeit prematurely, the first aspect (accepting one's sexuality) cannot be fulfilled (From an Open letter of the Chairman of the Slovak Conference of Bishops to the Minister of Education of the Slovak Republic).

The other side argues for the rights of children and for a legislative framework. The introduction to the Handbook states:

This Handbook is dedicated to all the brave, enthusiastic and devoted teachers in elementary schools, who acknowledge the importance of sexuality in human life, who are not indifferent to the needs and rights of children, where questions of human sexuality and interpersonal and intimate relationships are concerned (Rovňanová et al. 2007).

Foucault (1978) claims that because sexuality has gained such power, the question of who we are is directed towards sex; not, however, to sex as in nature, but sex as in history, sex as in meaning and sex as in discourse. We can raise questions concerning sex in order to gain access to its secrets, secrets which have long been maintained in silence. According to this tactic of power, we may access sexuality, it would appear, not on the basis of our experience and information, but only after we have adequately prepared for and accepted the correct cultural value of sexuality.

Sexuality, in principle, does not require a legislative framework and it should not affect human needs; power functions on bases other than human needs and the law. According to Foucault (1978) "the right" (not in the sense of the legal right) to life, body, health, happiness, having our needs satisfied, the "right" to find without oppression and alienation exactly what a person is and what he/she could be is a political answer to all the new procedures of power.

The Fourth Power Tactics

Not to disturb the secrecy. In this tactic it is important for discourse to control knowledge, but not to fully reveal its secrets, and certainly not in a practical handbook.

The author commenting on the Handbook from the Christian position states:

It also draws attention to methods of kissing, which allegedly serves to help protect children from sexual violence. According to the SFPA, children should show courage in love and show that they can examine their own preferences. At the end they receive instructions on how to French kiss. And all this is backed up by the slogans: You can do whatever you wish with your body. Everything happens for the first time once in your life. Follow your own feelings. Discover your abilities. You will gain experience through practice (Poloňová 2007).

In the Methodological Handbook there are no instructions on French kissing. There is no reference to the above mentioned slogans. The Handbook is a manual and thus it breaks the secrecy of sexuality on which its power is built. It lies in contradiction to the Christian understanding of sexuality as a disturbing mystery. Perhaps that is why, two years after the criticisms of the Handbook, nobody has yet taken the initiative of writing a "better" handbook.

The Fifth Power Tactics

Scientia sexualis, ars erotica and the law. In this, the relatively unsuccessful power tactic of the defenders of the Handbook, proves that expanding the notion of *scientia sexualis* to include such things as “ars erotica” and the “legal dimension” is not, it seems, productive.

We will further try to educate the youth about responsible sexual behaviour and openly warn them against the dangers, but also call their attention to the positive aspects of sexuality as a valuable part of human life (Slovak Family Planning Association, 20.08.2007 13:42:36/ SITA, ČTK).

In any case our aim is not to and never was to promote “the technical aspects of sex”, which you are accusing us of. Nowhere in the documents are there texts encouraging youths into having a premature sex life. On the contrary, the aim is to guide young people towards responsible sexual behaviour and provide them with sufficient knowledge so that they can protect themselves against sexual diseases, unexpected pregnancies (and thus to prevent abortions), but also to foster in them respect and understanding for the rights of others with particular emphasis on the equal rights of women and respect for those of homosexual orientation (Open letter of the Slovak Family Planning Association).

In the discourse of the Slovak Family Planning Association we find not only the voice of *scientia sexualis* but also that of *ars erotica*. They also turn to the law to support their case. According to Fafejta (2004) in *scientia sexualis*, power over the individual should be strengthened—the potentially dangerous tendencies of human beings should be suppressed in the spirit of healthy sexuality, while in *ars erotica* the power of the individual should be strengthened—the individual should know his/her own inner potential.

Final Remarks

The institutional context within which the discourses on sex education have been developing consists of the Church, the market economy and the institutions of civil society. The silence has partly been broken, the value positions relating directly to sexuality are more or less hidden, and sex and sexuality are veiled in mystery by conservative discourses, while more important values such as love, marriage and the family have been pushed out. They have to be deciphered from the names and symbols. In comparison with other discourses, the liberal discourse is subject to a continual, albeit non-systematic revealing of the secrets about, or indeed the truth on sexuality, which leads to individualization, or the illusion of individualization and the needs of the sexualized individual that can be fulfilled by the purchase of sexualized products. School serves to prepare the future consumers of sexualized products through the programs that are sponsored by firms selling hygienic products and contraception, although in a direct sense this takes place only to a small degree. School mainly fulfils a conservative, modernistic mission: school without an entertaining stimulus (of which sexuality is most certainly one) serves to socialize children into becoming responsible citizens, who participate fully in the market economy and expand the lines of working people and consumers.

Christian discourse has an illusory power over sexuality at school that controls the curriculum of Education for Marriage and Parenthood, that influences the ethical dimension of education and has religious education within full grasp of its power.

However, it uses silence as a strategy which is probably not effective given that there is no reaction to possible confessions of the truth on sexuality. The only fundamental control simply functions, so it seems, through the officially bred language that does not accept direct, coarse or vulgar expressions. School, even though it is conservative, is open to the influences of the outside, mainly liberal environment that determines thematic trends and the manner of communication.

The Christian discourse is grounded in the great prohibitions that originated in the 17th century: sexuality only has value if it concerns adults and marriage; it demands moral restrictions and control over the language, body, relationships, etc. Nevertheless, since this direct discourse is unlikely to attract many people today, the manipulation and tactics used have become more sophisticated. Personality and dignity have become the basis of its reasoning and emotionality is used as well. He who “withdraws” from the ongoing public discourse loses his position and his existing, or potential participation in the sources of the power. The almost invisible and unheard discourse on HIV/AIDS has been concealed by the Christian discourse on AIDS, which sees it as an illness of interpersonal relationships.

In sex education, the dominant discourse has been that of *scientia sexualis*. The more objective discourses (in the sense that they offer several perspectives) have poorer prospects than emotional ones that capitalize on the real and fictitious weak points of the rival discourse. In battle, it seems that emotive and manipulative truth wins out over the rival’s fictitious confessions of the truth.

According to Foucault (1978, 145) one of the ways of breaking free from power is to assert one’s “right” to life, body, health, happiness, having one’s needs satisfied and the “right” to discover, free from oppression or “alienation”, what exactly a person is and what he/she could be (here the quotation marks around the word “right” signify that it differs from the legal conception of right). According to Reaper and Smith (1998), the position taken by Foucault reveals new opportunities to us. However, they ask what will guide us in this life with its new opportunities?

Analyses of the media discourse regarding the Methodological Handbook of Sex Education provides evidence for the blurring of particular discourses on sex education. These findings correspond to a statement made by Hekman (1995) that in any historical period, discourses take on varied and heterogeneous forms, thus although each period will have its hegemonic discourses, there will also be other non-hegemonic ones, formed from a combination of discourses, from which subjectivity can be constructed. In addition, Foucault (1978) referred to the fact that it was necessary to conceive of discourse as a series of interrupted segments, whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable; nonetheless, the world of discourse represents a multiplicity of discursive segments, which can be used in various strategies.

In Slovakia, sexuality has become the subject of an ideological battle. It has been politicized and problematized through the media. Discourses are instruments of the struggle for power. It is not the expert and legislative reasoning that is important (at least, in this case in Slovakia), but the fighting spirit, the emotionality, the pseudo-defence of the interests of those who are more powerful (the parents). Gaining the powerful on one’s side, emotively labelling one’s opponents (“harbingers of death”), creating one’s own rules and then applying them to others are also crucial.

Another wider area in the conflict between discourses, where various interests partially meet and criss-cross, is that of intimacy. It is from intimacy that each one of us carefully selects that which corresponds to his/her discursive sources. The Christian discourse concentrates on zones of intimacy (Plummer 1994) relating above all to the family and spirituality, while liberal discourse focuses mainly on individuality and sexuality. In our schools, battle is being played out over the selection of these zones of intimacy. In the forefront stands the family, and to a certain extent also individuality, emotionality (during ethics lessons), while sexuality takes back stage. In Christian discourse, intimacy is frequently used to blur the sexual—the construction of the intimate as something that is not public, that is not discussed openly and that should be kept hidden from the outside world. This approach supports the tactic of silence on sexuality at schools.

In our opinion, despite the risks emanating from *scientia sexualis*, discussions on sex education should be transformed removing them from the political and ideological level and transferring them to the scientific and expert level; Foucault would probably be sceptical about such a transformation. Human sexuality in all its diversity is still not conceived of as being equal, particularly in the options available to men/boys and women/girls in selecting their own prospects. At the same time, several research studies (Marková 2007a,b; Švihelová 2006 and others) point to the fact that constructing sexuality is more complex and varied and that it is not simply constructed through conventional discourse sources that support traditional conservative constructions of sexuality and thus also sex education.

From our brief analysis of sex education in Slovakia and the discourses forming it, we can ascertain that power asserts itself through knowledge when:

- It depends on that knowledge and at the same time it has (or declares that it has) a method for applying this knowledge; the discourse on the method is equally important as the discourse on the knowledge;
- It points to valued goals, e.g. life, happiness, marriage, the family—when it takes over this goal and contrasts it with goals that are less valued;
- It marginalizes inappropriate topics and emphasizes the appropriate ones;
- When knowledge/power succeeds in being, at least partially, diffusive and blurred in the social and school practice;
- It is convinced of the suitability of its philosophical and rational background and the harmfulness of other ones;
- It knows, or is convinced that it knows how knowledge should be *dolled out* and when those important moments come when it may be accepted by the subject;
- Knowledge is wrapped in a suitable shroud of secrecy;
- Discourse shapes sexuality as a personal and cultural entity that will finally be controlled by the subject itself and not as a biological, social and legal entity;
- *Scientia sexualis* is not linked to *ars erotica*.

We would like to conclude with something that seems to lie outside the line of thought we have been following and that is the relationship between power and knowledge. However, it illustrates the Foucaultian transformations of thinking that are led by an interest in the truth, to which we add with pleasure:

Sexuality is something that is created by us—it is much more our product than a discovery of the hidden aspect of our desire. It is a part of our freedom in this world. Sex is not fatality; it is a chance to lead a creative life (Foucault 2000, 161).

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