

MYTHS IN CONTEMPORARY UPBRINGING IN A FAMILY

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Abstract. *Family discourse has been topical in all periods of anthropogenesis; also nowadays it hasn't lost its topicality because family is declared as one of the principal values also in this period. Family structure (number of parents and children) is emphasised mainly in contemporary public discourse about a family. Concurrently it is discussed unconnectedly in the public discourse on different kinds of children behavioural difficulties. In this discourse, an important family function – upbringing is disregarded. Aim of upbringing is improvement of attitudes by cooperation of all participants of upbringing in the upbringing environment. Children perspective idea is the leading one in the postmodernism leading pedagogical paradigm that has become the ruling one in the theory and practice. Irrespective of the declared humane principal approaches and principal values myths manifest in the public discourses and in the upbringing area in a family that are made legitimate. Myths develop actively in places where there is lack of information and knowledge and where it is necessary to maintain a sense of safety and emotional balance. So innovative processes of contemporary society activate also the issues on place of myths on the upbringing process.*

Aim of the article is to analyse theoretically the subjective and objective provisions for creation of myths, their importance in the upbringing process in a family, outlining the risks in upbringing.

Keywords: *upbringing in a family, myths in upbringing, pedagogical trend, family.*

Introduction

Family and upbringing in a family cannot be analysed separately from the understanding of the particular persons (family members) on this social unity. D. Matsumoto related the upbringing in the family also with the social context, emphasising that upbringing is related with understanding of the particular society on the purpose of personality development (Matsumoto, 2000). Also L. Juang and R. Silbereisen emphasise that upbringing is to be analysed in the particular social context that is named by the authors as the social niche (Juang & Silbereisen, 1999). V. Maksakova emphasises that a child in contemporary family perception is regarded as an active partner in the upbringing process (Максакова, 2008). This opinion is substantiated by V. Maksakova in the philosophical traditions of anthropology – a person in a unique entirety, but upbringing process – a specific type of human existence and special life action of a person the essence whereof is cooperation pointed to self-completion. That is why the needs and abilities of a person to take part actively in the upbringing process is one of the basic principles of this contemporary upbringing direction. The competence of parents in upbringing improves during the life action (Максакова, 2008). N. Peseshkian regards that upbringing firstly

is the understanding of parents about their behaviour and its consequences (Peseshkian, 1987). Respectively, to implement the ideological concept of contemporary upbringing in practice, one must start with self-awareness, reflexion and self-criticism (Rubene, 2008) or social facilitation of pedagogical thinking (Böhnisch, Schröer, Thiersch, 2005) that activates the importance of self-education of a person. However, self-education of people in Latvia is still a new and unclear social construct. On the one hand, there are many discussions on problematic behaviour of children, diagnosis (e.g. diagnoses “hyperactivity”, “autism spectrum disorders”) and different artificially created social statuses (“indigo children”, “crystalline children”) are inadequately used in the pedagogical practice, but the issue on upbringing and self-education is not included in this discourse. Belief system of parents on the upbringing of children is created by their views on child’s development, on social place and role of a child in the society and family and understanding on their own personality and behaviour. If these views are blurred and expectation as to the development and child’s personality and upbringing process in general don’t match with the reality, disappointment develops in parents. Disappointment is an emotional state that most frequently justifies the disinclination to act, respectively, disinclination to assume responsibility. Disappointment acts as an initiator of psychological safeguard mechanism, in the result of it myths in upbringing are created or maintained.

In the theories of mythology (Bart, 1957, Hubner, 1985, Losev, 1994) it is regarded that a myth is a wide culturological sense that includes the understanding of world’s being, it exists in the cognition of each person including the opinion of a person about himself/herself, other persons, environment and historical time. In the source of anthropogenesis myth occurred as a type to explain the world and place of a person in it. This explanation was a construct of understanding of a person that is why it not always justified the reality and the explanation has an allegoric and symbolic importance. From the very beginning myths explained important information through symbolic figurativeness. Myth didn’t become a scientific and conceptual form of representation of reality because it didn’t have an analytically synthesised vision of the world, but it had an absolute matrix. Also nowadays there exist and are created myths in upbringing perhaps because a myth has an absolute matrix also nowadays irrespective of scientific vision of the world and fundamental changes in the understanding of the world. They are construed and legitimized by postmodernism ideas and rapidly growing mobility of persons, contemporary types of communication, and subjective comprehension-incomprehension of oneself and the world. In the result of it new myths in upbringing increasingly occur.

Postmodernism situation and challenges created by ordinary upbringing create a necessity to analyse theoretically the creation of myths in upbringing,

the subjective and objective conditions of their development, their importance in the upbringing process in the family.

Subjective level of myths development

Family myths and legends are important in family morphogenesis. Family myths is a definite unconscious agreement among the family members that maintain the unity of a family and regulate the family provisions (Черников, 2005, Эйдемиллер et al., 2006). At family level, myth creates inadequate views of family members about their own group (Эйдемиллер et al., 2006). Function of a family myth is to hide a deniable information about a family member or the whole family from the cognition by creating a positive vision of an event (Stierlin, 2001). Family myth is a specific protective mechanism that ensures the entirety of a family (Stierlin, 2001, Эйдемиллер et al., 2006). Myths are characterized by irrationality therefore they limit the possibilities of a family to solve difficulties (Шнейдер, 2007). A myth can exist in a functional and dysfunctional family (Черников, 2005). When analysing the importance of a family myth, E. Eidemiller, I. Dobryakov and I. Nikolskaya specify that myths are topical in all family development cycles, but they are most necessary when a third person enters into the family, during serious social changes or in case of family dysfunction (Эйдемиллер et al., 2006, Лидерс, 2008). A. Napier and K. Whitaker emphasise that, when accumulating, myths so significantly raise the level of anxiety and/or wish for the freedom that family members cannot afford to confess in the myth (Napier & Whitaker, 1988). H. Stierlin divides myths as follows: harmonizing, apology, reconciliation and saving myths (Stierlin, 2001).

Family myths inhibiting aspect is that a family gets rigid and resists the changes that are determined by the changes of family life cycle. In the first generation, for example, a myth ensures a compensating strategy that a response to past problems, thus activating a huge, but real accomplishment motivation. However in each following generation this myth is more and more separated from the reality and it increasingly deliberately moved. This can cause serious narcissistic disorders of family members and/or incite to unproductive activities (Олифрович et al., 2007). So content of a myth in the following generations may be obstructive for development of family functions because it causes an inadequate self-perception and unproductive behaviour patterns, although in the first generation a myth had a protective function.

Family legend is defined as true or fictional interpretation of individual facts of family history that allows maintaining the myth of the 'correct, successful, heroic, friendly, loving' family. A legend also has a protective function and it can refer to micro, macro and individual family functioning level (Эйдемиллер et al., 2006). Legend, unlike a myth, has an intentional character, it is accepted as truth or misrepresentation of information.

Another phenomenon of psyche gives raise to myths. Structures and models of dynamic cognition that determine the understanding, interpretations, values, aims and strategies in upbringing of children reduce the uncertainties and adapt child's development with the upbringing implemented by the parents to their understanding about upbringing and life in general (Harkness et al., 2000). So parents may adapt the specific features of child's development, behaviour and relations to their understanding about these issues; such solution of situations gives raise to myths because it denies reality.

Objective level of myths development

Postmodernism includes the ideas of pluralism, democracy, liberality, freedom, consumerism, varied information, entertainment, mobility, choice. Dynamic uncertainty of contemporary world determined not only the skills to manage this situation, but parallelly also skills and dare to maintain personally important values, irrespective of the fact that traditional and classical perceptions and concepts are impulsively interpreted. Concurrently with constructive, creative manifestations, postmodern perceptions outlays also trends that indirectly changes the perceptions about a family and upbringing because anything can be deconstructed, mixed, levelled, mocked, disarranged, fragmented from the postmodern point of view. People get concepts on current events and leading ideas in contemporary science or particular scientific discipline from public discourses. Nowadays they are mass media that form the views of persons and understanding on a particular issue, because in accordance with the idea S. Moscovici, social perception of journalists as representatives of mass media is generalized in the society, including also about the upbringing. Social perceptions occur by integrating the new information by way of communication in new knowledge (Moscovici, 1981). Public discourse forms mediated and often uncritically the attitude of a person towards himself/herself, others and the world, including the upbringing. This combines different experiences, opinions of upbringing, but often fails to include methodological and axiological principles that allow a person to act freely and manifest reflection of activity in relation to the upbringing thus creating an illusion of consent and in the result – imitation of the upbringing process. Therefore upbringing experts shouldn't simulate the illusion and irrationality. This fact on principle burdens the (implicit-explicit) complicated way of transfer of most important upbringing values from one generation to the other, because first, parent may have a unilateral view on the essence of upbringing or they get confused in the diversity and ambiguousness of opinions, secondly theoretical cognitions are detached from ordinary practice because representatives of mass media perhaps have a tendency to interpret and put accents in upbringing issues within the framework of their understanding that not always is scientifically and rationally justified. Thirdly, experts in upbringing that are chosen in the

particular discourse do not correspond perhaps to the status of an upbringing expert and thus parents receive unprofessional explanations. Besides, it must be taken into account that there are professionals in Latvia who support and postulate focusing on intuitive searches of spirit essence of a person (Reņģe & Austers, 2008). In everyday situations these persons don't notice the not very rational nature of their thinking (Kahneman & Tversky, 2000) thus facilitating the scientific illiteracy in the society (Miller, 2007). In pedagogy it is called theorization of one's experience, namely, conditional new construction of subjective ideas that includes an authority subject to conditions and subjectivity in perception about *conditio humana* (Winkler, 2006). Thus subjective hopes and views on results and consequences are offered instead of theoretical advances (Winkler, 2006). However, it must be admitted that this situation is not unequivocal, because on the one hand public discourse forms the social perceptions of persons about the upbringing, but on the other hand public discourse activates those issues which the society expects from them. Thus the public discourse activates the expectations and understanding of the society.

Consequently, mythology in contemporary upbringing created by the public discourses marks risk, because it has become one, but important developer of basic attitudes of cognition of the society. In the result there is risk that mythism in upbringing can increase because the information gap phenomenon is created (Frith, 2000). Information gap in the upbringing discourse means influence of unilateral and ambiguous information on perception and knowledge of parents about the upbringing they implement in the life action of the family. Respectively, perception and volume of knowledge in one part of society increase (those who know another language, are interested to search for other information resources), but decrease in the other part (those who use only one mass media, don't know other languages), in the result the knowledge gap between different social groups increases. Consequently communication potential is created (Mqueil & Windhal, 1993). This includes totality of properties and/or factors that determine the skills of parents to handle information thus facilitating or hindering the communication (Mqueil & Windhal, 1993), in case of upbringing implementing or not implementing the offered professional information in the ordinary upbringing process. So, on the base of specific influence of contemporary public discourse on formation of understanding, knowledge and attitudes of members of society, this situation increases the risk that a vicious circle develops in the upbringing (Medne, 2012). It can develop because, firstly, contemporary mythism gets deeper – myths are created where there is lack of information, perception and knowledge (Raipulis, 2008) and they legitimize irresponsibility in the upbringing. Perhaps it is connected also with the ideas of radical humanism that postulate mysticism and occultism becoming more topical in Latvia (Reņģe & Austers, 2008). But mythism facilitates creation of products of pedagogical fashion. In the result artificially and uncritically formed peudosocial statutes (indigo children,

crystalline children) and pseudovalues in upbringing are legitimized, but the issue of family and upbringing is left in second plane in this situation (Mollenhauer et al., 1978, Bergmann, 2006, Raipulis, 2008). Such social phenomena as pedagogical “fashion” are not accidental, they cannot be ignored (Bergmann, 2006). E. Pikler calls such action of parents as illusion of parent’s pride because they proudly postulate that their children are more special instead of looking for causes or analysing children’s behaviour (Pikler, 2007).

Myths in upbringing can be created also from scientific cognitions, such as limited understanding of dialectic methodology or unskilful interpretation of the obtained data levels the pedagogical situation to statistical data and isolates it from side factors. Dilemma is in the fact that when empirics and data turn, tradition of understanding of ideas gets lost from the point of view of science, respectively, with all empiric research data of pedagogical phenomena one cannot understand anymore what characterizes them as pedagogical phenomena; research obtains important knowledge on schools, kindergartens and families, but cannot formulate none of assertions on practical reality of upbringing where its participants are involved as actors (Winkler, 2006). Such myths facilitate inadequate expectations of parents as to positive changes in development of personality, unilateral understanding of upbringing contradictions, conflicts and difficulties in upbringing as negative and unproductive phenomena. This is perhaps M. Winkler states an opinion that “as trivial it would sound: scientific discipline and profession, teachers who work practically and theoreticians of this field must have an idea of what they are talking about, what they research theoretically or empirically” (Winkler, 2006). Therefore the upbringing discourse should create real base for vision of the world, social ideal, real vision of child’s future portrait that would stimulate parent to assume responsibility for their decisions with a real purpose and upbringing methods to reach this aim. For this to happen, scientific contemplations about pedagogy, upbringing theory, pedagogical reflexion must create the readability of the works, so it is connected with texts and reflexion that works already in the approximate and strange because it thematizes limits and draws attention to border crossings (Dux, 2000).

Conclusions

Theoretical analysis of problem stimulates to draw a conclusion that myths in upbringing

- are connected with perception of public discourse on the essence of upbringing process and aim thereof by directing the perception about the upbringing in a family,
- manifest as important regulators of parents’ behaviour in the upbringing process by attributing a particular meaning and direction to the upbringing,

- are not accidental products of unconsciousness, but are a type of perception and implementation of knowledge, but they are not rationally justified and works as a psychological self-protection mechanism.

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