

ESTABLISHMENT AND RESULTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR "THE ROLE OF TELEVISION IN THE EDUCATION OF PARENTS" (1971) BASED ON THE NOTES OF ÁRPÁD KISS

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Abstract: Television has become one of the most widespread leisure activities in recent decades, and numerous research has supported the role of television in the development of individuals' personalities. Research in this area dates back to the 1970s, and one line of research focused on the role of television in parent education and the role of parental support in parenting. This area of research has been popular not only among educational scientists, but also among sociologists, psychologists, and medical professionals, so it became necessary to organize an international seminar. In our research, we used the method of document analysis to investigate the significance and subsequent results of this conference through the notes of Árpád Kiss. Our results can also provide new information for contemporary research in the history of education, cultural history, education and cultural studies.

Keywords: Television, parent education, parenting, education history, conference

1. Introduction

The beginnings of school TV-type broadcasts date back to the 1960s, but the broadcasts at that time were mostly only educational films that could be included in the formal curriculum. (Nagy, 1993; Takács, 1997). Nevertheless, the various audiovisual media have been used for educational purposes since their invention, but at that time these contents were intended only for experts and scientists. (Dijck, 2002). Content for the non-professional people that can be used in informal learning only appeared later, however, today, much of the literature has acknowledged the role of television in everyday, informal learning. (Fernstermacher & Cuthbert 1989; Kozma, 1999; Durkó, 1999; Rubovszky, 2002; Buckingham 2005; Martin, 2008; Share, 2009).

During the period of the international seminar entitled "*The Role of Television in the Education of Parents*", in the early 1970s, television became more and more widespread in Hungary. Among the television programs, there were frequently broadcasts designed for parents to help raise their children. (Kiss, 1972b). Educators, psychologists, sociologists and medical professionals have often contributed to the production of these programs. (Kiss, 1972b). These programs often encouraged parents to discuss what they saw on television with their children, but based on experience at the time, these programs were not attractive enough for those for whom they were specifically designed. (Kiss, 1972b). We can read in Árpád Kiss's note that despite television and the spread of these programs, how to support parents in the upbringing of their children with the help of television was a very neglected topic among researchers. Moreover, such efforts were often received with aversion¹. Endre Kelemen described in his report that "*sometimes people smile at that we want to educate the parents*"². Looking at the work of Árpád Kiss, this topic is only a station, but it fits organically into his image of

¹ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Notes (Árpád Kiss) (Hungarian)

² University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Television and family – Report on the International Seminar in Sopron, Outline, Endre Kelemen, 1971. november 11. (Hungarian)

mankind, according to which the greatest responsibility of adults engaged in socialization is to build society, show its situation and create a possible vision for the future. (Bicsák, 2008). He attaches great importance to the responsibility of adults to pass on knowledge to young people, so a conference aimed at educating this group, where the education of the responsible parent is at the center, is an essential part of his work (Bicsák, 2008).

2. Methods

In this study, we explore the international seminar entitled „*The Role of Television in the Education of Parents*” (1971) with the help of document analysis based on the notes of Árpád Kiss. The documents can be found in the Árpád Kiss Collection of the Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management of the University of Debrecen.

3. The international seminar entitled “The Role of Television in the Education of Parents”

In order to promote the topic, the Hungarian Television and the Hungarian UNESCO Committee raised the idea of organizing a conference on the subject. They wanted to discuss as widely as possible how television affects parents and how it affects upbringing in family³, and it was a serious task to convince parents to take on the greatest possible role and responsibility in the upbringing of their children until they reach adulthood⁴. It has also become an important goal to formulate proposals for the creators of broadcast TV programs and for the parents and educators who use the programs in practice (Kiss, 1972b).

3.1 The preparations

From the note of Endre Kelemen dated October 9, 1970, it can be seen that the preparations for the organization of the conference began very soon⁵. According to a letter dated February 2, 1971, addressed to Kelemen by Árpád Kiss, the conference was already covered in the press in May 1970⁶. Prior to this, the organizers conducted a questionnaire demand survey, for which the questionnaires were sent by post to 80 organizations of the National Association and 71 foreign televisions⁷. The place was also selected very early, in October 1970.

During the said press conference, the conference was given a different title, which was “*The Role of Television in Family Education*”.⁸ This discrepancy in the title was a problem later, and Árpád Kiss, with the consent of the UNESCO Committee, asked Kelemen to change the title, which, according to the letter, had already been agreed. As a professional reason for this, Kiss stated that the title published for the press was less in line with the purpose of the conference and was less attractive to the professional community⁹.

³ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Kiss, Árpád: The role of television in the education of parents (Report on the International Seminar in Sopron) manuscript, 1972 (Hungarian)

⁴ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Notes (Árpád Kiss) (Hungarian)

⁵ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Note on the preparatory work for the International Seminar to be held from 27 September to 2 October 1971, 9 October 1970 Endre Kelemen (Hungarian)

⁶ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Árpád Kiss' letter to Endre Kelemen, 1971. february 2. (Hungarian)

⁷ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Notes (Árpád Kiss) (Hungarian)

⁸ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Árpád Kiss' letter to Endre Kelemen, 1971. february 2. (Hungarian)

⁹ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Árpád Kiss' letter to Endre Kelemen, 1971. february 2. (Hungarian)

3.2 Invited participants, organizers

On behalf of the Organizing Committee of the International Seminar and the Hungarian Television, Árpád Kiss was invited by journalist and presenter Endre Kelemen, production manager Tamás Biegelbauer and János Legényei to participate in the organization of the conference and to chair the conference. The position of these three specialists at Hungarian Television at that time was not included in the sources we processed. He was also asked to chair the Editorial Board, which was tasked with formulating policy recommendations based on the lessons learned from the conference.¹⁰ In addition to the Hungarian Television and the Hungarian UNESCO Committee, Hungarian organizations participating in adult education and the International Association of Parent and Educator Schools took a significant supporting role in the establishment of the seminar. So Árpád Kiss took over the chairmanship of the conference. André Isambert, chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Association of the French Parents' School, was asked to be Vice-President. Isambert was recommended by Árpád Kiss to take part in the organization due to his expertise and experience¹¹.

During the seminar, work took place in two sections following the plenary session. Pierre Merien, Technical Adviser to the Board of Directors of French Television, was asked to chair the first section. Other rapporteurs took part in the section's presidency: TV producer Paula Semer (which television she belonged to was unreadable in the source), Dr Eufron Gwynne Cole BBC producer, Eileen Monoly, also a BBC staff member, and Dr. Erzsébet Kósa, Producer of Educational Television and Hungarian sociologist. The second section was also chaired by a section president and other rapporteurs. Polish sociologist Jadwiga Komorowska was asked to chair, with rapporteurs: Assefeh Assefi Khnosari, Iranian director of construction, Anette Suffert, head of the French Television Research Service's education team, and Dr Frans Wermer, Dutch sociologist¹².

3.3 Program, topics

The main purpose of the conference was therefore to examine and promote the relationship between television, parenting and education. As mentioned above, the plenary session was followed by two sections, followed by screenings of various films during the first two days of the conference, which were also open to discuss to the participants.

The first section looked at TV shows about parenting. This focused on the topics of TV broadcasts in different countries, as well as the means of expression of the programs and the methods they use. The second section focused on the question of how parents receive the TV programs intended for them. In this context, the impact on parents' attitudes and behavior, the use of television in parenting, and the relationship between creators and recipients were key issues.

The conference call also identified a number of areas which, although not in themselves integral to the subject of television, were identified. However, they were related to parental education and families, and these topics can be linked to the topic of television and educational programs. These topic suggestions included family planning, family upbringing methods and traditions, and the age-specific characteristics of children. Methodological issues related to television programs included the different forms of expression, the role of the contributing professionals, the possibilities of influencing, and how the knowledge acquired by parents from television can be realized in the practice of parenting.

On the first two days of the conference, films were screened after the section meetings.

On the first day, the following shows were watched and discussed: the first Senegalese short film "The Lady of the Camellia". It can be seen in a summary of this work, which can be found in the conference proceedings, that this film is about the quarrel between a husband's two wives and the issue of family

¹⁰ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Letter of invitation from the Organizing Committee of the International Seminar to Árpád Kiss (Hungarian)

¹¹ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Árpád Kiss' letter to Endre Kelemen, 1971. february 2. (Hungarian)

¹² University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Program of the International Seminar in Sopron. (Hungarian)

allowances through the man's irresponsible money management practices, as the man spends money on useless things instead of his child.¹³

In addition, a number of short films from foreign television have been screened. A recording of a kindergarten session broadcast by the BBC, a French short film about the effects of television and the work of one of the conference participants, Cassirer, were on display. After the screening, the audience had the opportunity to discuss what they saw.¹⁴

On the second day, participants were able to watch *Little Red Riding Hood*, followed by a California short film about an American pre-school. This day also featured a participant's own work, namely Assefih Assafi's film, as well as other foreign works. Interestingly, a short film about the educational problems of deaf children was screened among the short films presented. What makes this special is that in its age, public thinking was not yet open to the social inclusion of students and other people with disabilities, and education policies were only later open to the inclusion of these students. (Kálmán és Könczei, 2002).

3.4 Results of the conference

On the basis of the press report scheduled for October 11, 1971, immediately after the conference, the organizers planned to publish a hundred-page publication of the conference material, the presentations given there, and the content and results of the discussions.¹⁵ Indeed, the 230-page publication "The Role of Television in Parenting" published in 1972 summarizes the experience of the conference. (Kiss, 1972b). At the same time, Árpád Kiss published his impressions in Hungarian and French in Hungarian and French journals (Kiss, 1972a).

At the end of the conference, the organizing committee made proposals. First and foremost was the need for governments and UNESCO to place great emphasis on examining the impact of the scientific and technological revolution and changes in economic life on people, especially the way people and families live, and the impact on families, schools and pedagogical work¹⁶ (Kiss, 1972a). In Hungary, it has been stated that the Hungarian Television would undertake to launch such research in co-operation with organizations dealing with adult education and parental education. A further proposal was to set up a special unit at the UNESCO headquarters to examine issues related to parental education and the role of family educators.

4. Summary

In summary, the conference put on the agenda a topic that was very topical and important, but less recognized. Based on the notes of Árpád Kiss, we learned a lot about the origins of the conference. We were able to learn about the reception of the topic in the social and scientific environment at that time. Although the handwriting of Árpád Kiss can be found in the afterlife of the conference, apart from the published volume, we actually knew little about the significance of the conference in scientific life and whether it entailed changes in the assessment of the topic. Exploring this requires further research.

The event was created with the participation of many domestic and foreign researchers and television experts. The participants tried to examine and interpret the problem from as many aspects as possible, in an international comparison, and to come up with concrete proposals in accordance with the obtained results, which can be used both internationally and in Hungary, as well as for the individual participating countries. The topic, despite its lower recognition, received a lot of presence and

¹³ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Content description of the Senegalese short film *The Lady of the Camellia* (Hungarian)

¹⁴ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Program of the International Seminar in Sopron. (Hungarian)

¹⁵ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Television and family – Report on the International Seminar in Sopron, Outline, Endre Kelemen, 1971. November 11. (Hungarian)

¹⁶ University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Educational Studies and Cultural Management, Árpád Kiss Collection, Kiss, Árpád: The role of television in the education of parents (Report on the International Seminar in Sopron) manuscript, 1972 (Hungarian)

attention in the press, and it turned out that despite the Hungarian attitude, it is a more widely known and recognized phenomenon in the society of foreign countries. It can be said that despite technical advances and many transformations in the media, the seminar addressed issues that are still relevant today. In particular, how the media affects our day-to-day behavior and attitudes. As well as how television programs can provide content that can be utilized throughout everyday life.

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