

ARTICLES–STUDIES



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RISK AND CIVICNESS DISCOURSES AS EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES OF CONSTITUTING THE “ENTREPRENEUR OF ONESELF”¹

ABSTRACT

This paper is a continuation of my reflection upon “neo-liberal entanglements of education” and an attempt to interpret Michel Foucault’s works with respect to selected aspects of youth policy in Poland. My focus here is on the relations between the issues of government and morality. I will begin with a brief examination of Foucault’s views on government and governmentality, pointing out some trains of thought that will be developed in the further sections. In what follows, I will present an attempt at the risk discourse analysis, focusing my attention on the regimes of truth employed in youth policy. Discussing the political and economic potential of realized risk used by the neo-liberal program, I will refer to some specific ideas of “technologies of the self” – from the Greek principle of care for oneself; then, the idea of getting to know oneself to the modern ethics of investing in oneself. Finally, referring to Foucault’s findings, I will place neo-liberal techniques within the context of two regimes: the discourse of threat (risk) and the discourse of civicness. I will examine how the production of the “threat” and “civicness” as educational practices of constituting of *the self* takes place within these regimes.

¹ Research funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (subsequently by the National Centre of Science) in the years 2009–2013 as a research project No. N106250937.

Key words:

governmentality, youth policy, entrepreneur of oneself, risk discourse, civicness discourse

1. Introduction

This paper is a contribution to the discourse on neo-liberal governmentality and an attempt at interpreting Michel Foucault's works with respect to selected aspects of youth policy in Poland. One of the most interesting trains of thought is how the concept of governmentality provides the language and the framework for considerations concerning the relations between the practices of government and the problems of constructing subjectivity between politics and ethics². Therefore, the line of reasoning is aimed at the analysis of government as a set of practices operating thanks to the choices, desires, and aspirations of individuals. I want to pay special attention to this aspect of the concept of governmentality, i.e. the immanent bond between totalisation and individualization, between practices of power and technologies of the self.

In the Polish reception of the concept of governmentality in educational research, one can notice an apparent delay in a comparison to studies and observations conducted within the Anglo-Saxon context and in continental Europe. In the field of educational research in Western countries, this line has been developed in a number of studies that cannot possibly be listed here, but include, for example, the works of Stephen Ball, James Marshall, Mark Olsen, Michael Peters, Jan Masschelein, or Maarten Simons³. Focusing on the discourses generated at national and international levels, these studies show new and significant dimensions of the educational policy constituted in response to the exterior technologies of power that are present in pan-European discourses of strategies for governing education,

² M. Dean, *Governmentality. Power and Rule in Modern Society*, London 2010.

³ See for instance: S.J. Ball, *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-Structural Approach*, Buckingham 1994; J. Masschelein, *Experience and the Limits of Governmentality*, "Educational Philosophy and Theory" 2001, No. 4; J.D. Marshall, *Michel Foucault: Personal Autonomy and Education*, Dordrecht 1996; M. Olssen, *Michel Foucault: Materialism and Education*, London 2006; M.A. Peters, *Foucault and Governmentality: Understanding the Neo-Liberal Paradigm of Educational Policy*, "The School Field" 2001a, No. 5–6; M.A. Peters, *Education, Enterprise Culture and the Entrepreneurial Self: A Foucauldian Perspective*, "Journal of Educational Enquiry" 2001b, No. 2; M. Simons, J. Masschelein, *The Governmentalization of Learning and the Assemblage of a Learning Apparatus*, "Educational Theory" 2008, No. 4.

economic globalization, knowledge society development, promotion of lifelong learning, enterprise, etc.⁴

The so far unsatisfying reception of the Foucauldian notion of governmentality in Polish educational research is due to the long-term absence of a complete Polish translation of the lectures given by Foucault at the Collège de France between 1977 and 1997. It was not until 2010 that the Polish translation of the lectures entitled *Security, Territory, Population*⁵ appeared, followed by *The Birth of Biopolitics*⁶ in 2011.

My earlier paper⁷ was concerned with exploring the discursive relations between the notions and assumptions included in the “cultural politics of risk”⁸ and the ideas proclaimed in the neo-liberal discourse. I examined the assumption constitutive for the risk factor conception, i.e. that social problems are located within the individual or the family. This assumption moves structural and social problems (such as unemployment, alcoholism, crime, or violence) into the domains described, explained, and interpreted in terms of individuals’ weaknesses. Following this train of thought, I want to draw attention to the normative consensus of the risk discourse, which constructs the “truth” about particular threat zones, as well as the possibilities of risk reduction in youth policy. In order to do this, I employ Foucauldian works devoted to technologies of the self and then move on to discuss neo-liberal techniques of individualization of responsibility, which coexist harmoniously with the risk discourse.

This paper is a continuation of the reflection upon “neo-liberal entanglements of education”⁹. The generally implied Foucauldian perspective marks this reflection. My focus here is on the relations between the issues of government and morality. I will begin with a brief examination of Foucault’s views on government and governmentality, pointing at some themes that will be developed in the further sections. In what follows, I will present an attempt at the risk discourse analysis, focusing my attention on the regimes of truth employed in youth policy. While discussing the political and economic potential of realized risk used by the neo-

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, Warszawa 2010.

⁶ M. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Warszawa 2011.

⁷ This paper is a continuation of my reflections presented in *The Foucauldian Concept of “Governmentality” in the Critical Reflection upon Neo-liberal Educational Policy*, “Culture and Education” 2012, No. 1, and it includes excerpts from the above mentioned article.

⁸ D. Armstrong, *Becoming Criminal: The Cultural Politics of Risk*, “International Journal of Inclusive Education” 2006, No. 2–3.

⁹ E. Potulicka, J. Rutkowiak, *Neoliberal Entanglements of Education*, Kraków 2010.

liberal program, I will refer to some specific ideas of “technologies of the self,” which is based in the Greek principle of care for oneself, the later idea of getting to know oneself, and the modern-day ethics of investing in oneself. Finally, referring to Foucault’s findings, I will place neo-liberal techniques within the context of two regimes: the discourse of threat (risk) and the discourse of civiness. I will examine how the production of the “threat” and “civiness” as educational practices of constituting of *the self* takes place within these regimes.

2. Government and Governmentality

The theme of government appeared in Foucault’s lectures given at the Collège de France in which the French philosopher described two types of government: the type of exclusion of lepers and the type of inclusion applied in case of plague¹⁰. Foucault generally raised the problem of government during the analysis of connections between technologies of the self and technologies of domination. According to the Foucauldian perspective, “Government is any more or less calculated and national activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes”¹¹.

The Foucauldian concept of government then includes the assumptions concerning human behavior and the possibility of conducting it. The point is that human behavior is conceived as something that can be regulated, modified, shaped, and directed towards specific ends. Thus, the notion of government includes the idea of shaping human behavior according to some kind of rationality. This leads us to another implication: incorporating moral issues into the study of government. In *The History of Sexuality*¹², Foucault’s notion of morality has two meanings. In the first meaning, morality is identified with a moral code; morality is, to put it differently, “a set of values and rules for action which are proposed to individuals and groups by diverse institutions imposing requirements, such as the family, education centers, churches, etc. Sometimes, these values and principles are clearly

¹⁰ M. Senellart, *Course Context* [in:] *Security, Territory, Population*, M. Foucault (ed.), Warszawa 2010.

¹¹ M. Dean, *Governmentality...*, op.cit., p. 18.

¹² M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Warszawa 1995.

formulated in a coherent doctrine and recommended in education. But, it also happens that they are transmitted in a dispersed way and then, instead of forming systematic unity they create a complex play of elements that complement, correct, and invalidate each other at certain points and thus enable compromises and evasive actions. With these reservations, this set of rules can be called a moral code¹³. In the other meaning, morality is conceived as moral behavior, that is ‘the real behavior of individuals with respect to the rules and values prescribed to them – morality defines then the way individuals comply more or less comprehensively with the rules of behavior’¹⁴. At the same time, Foucault highlights various types of behavior complying with the moral code, namely the ways of constituting oneself as a moral subject. What is important is that the notion of morality is based on the concept of self-government, which presumes the autonomy and ability to regulate different aspects of behavior¹⁵. The ethical dimension of government is manifested in various ways. Government has a moral aspect because it assumes, with a different degree of verbalization and directness, the knowledge of what types of individual and social group’s behaviors are good, honest, proper, and responsible. At a different level, the ethical aspect of government refers to the way individuals govern themselves, their bodies, their inclinations, and problematize their behavior. Thus, the rational and moral dimensions of government practices illustrate the immanent bond between the political and institutional issues and the area of desires, aspirations, needs, and lifestyles¹⁶. Government does not only concern technologies of power, but also technologies of the self. Thus, the concept of government assumes the primary freedom of the governing and the governed – their ability to act and think. It is a form of power that is grounded on “the regulation realized exclusively through the freedom of everyone and on its base”¹⁷. Viewing the issue of government in this way implies another significant theme in Foucault’s thought – governmentality.

The studies of governmentality involve, on the one hand, the analysis of the organized “regimes of practices” in their complex and changeable relations with various ways in which “truth” is produced. On the other hand, they include the analysis of the ways of governing ourselves according to what we take to be true about who we are and what our nature as human beings is. However, exercising

¹³ Ibidem, p. 164.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ M. Foucault, *Security...*, op.cit., pp. 71–72.

freedom is subjected to what is accepted as “normal” in society¹⁸. As I will attempt to demonstrate in my further reasoning, such a normative consensus is assumed, produced, and reconstructed in the modern discourse of risk and civiness. Both constructs (risk reduction and initiating civic activities) are harmonious with neo-liberal governmentality and apparent in the promoted “technologies of the self”. In the following part of the article, I examine some ways of exercising discipline, supported by the standard of “risk factors” and “civiness”, which range from various forms of direct pressure to mechanisms of self-regulation and “technologies of the self”. The assumption that we know what constitutes proper behavior of a man and that there is social consent about risk factors provides justification for the responsibility of individuals for the course and conditions of their existence.

3. Normative Consensus in the Risk Discourse

In the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, the notion of risk appears within the context of normalization that characterizes the modern security apparatus. Foucault examines the problem of the extensive analyses of the “degree of risk” while referring to the example of the smallpox epidemics and introducing the practices of inoculation since the beginning of the 19th century. This initially confusing, but effective method of preventing smallpox was possible to formulate within the perspective of the probability theory due to the prevalence statistical methods involved¹⁹. Within the technologies of statistics, individuals were subjected to surveillance, profit, and loss calculations; and the analyses of the level of the risk of becoming ill, the probability of recovery and death. The statistical analysis of case distribution has enabled recognizing the level of risk for specific age and professional groups. What is important is that “this calculation of risk indicates clearly that it varies according to age, life conditions, place of living, and background. Risk is diverse then – there exists something like zones of high risk”²⁰. In the trajectory of modernization from the first modernity to the risk society, the awareness of risk more often supersedes other forms of awareness and solidarity. Modern society gained the name of the risk society. In Ulrich Beck’s theory, little attention is given to the diversity of types and the range of risk, but the author implements the view of a deep crack concerning the emergence of the risk society.

¹⁸ M. Dean, *Governmentality...*, op.cit.

¹⁹ M. Foucault, *Security...*, op.cit.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 79–80.

Apart from numerous differences, Beck and Foucault's cognitive perspectives have a common trait: the issue of increasing the need for information and the consistent growth of knowledge about threats and the possibilities of risk reduction. Moreover, both authors point to the shift in the function of security apparatuses, now based on the meticulous gathering of data and information about risk factors, endangered places, and objects rather than immediate interventions²¹. This condition is reflected in the emergence and popularity of the risk factors concept, which is employed in political agendas to justify actions targeted at youth. The interest in risk factors has a global nature, which has been raised repeatedly by Alan France and Derrick Armstrong. In Poland, the main program and strategies of youth policy refer to the paradigm of risk (risk factors and risky behaviors), e.g. Youth Strategy for the Years 2003–2012, Social Policy Strategy for the Years 2007–2013, the *Zero Tolerance for School Violence* program, or the State Programme for Preventing Social Maladjustment and Crime among Children and the Youth. In response to the problem of aggression and violence among teenagers, the risk factor concept was adopted to explain and legitimize the general aims of the state youth policy. Within the governmental context, the program “for improving security conditions in schools and institutions”, known as the *Zero Tolerance for School Violence*, was created at the beginning of 2007 in response to the situation in which “the youth and children are endangered by crime and demoralisation”²². The solutions introduced by the program found their immediate justification in the scientific knowledge of “risky behaviors” of young people:

The behavior of a young person depends on his or her individual characteristics and environmental factors. They may be of protective character (protective factors) or increasing likelihood of engaging in a specific behavior (risk factors). The protective factors include: strong emotional bond with parents, interest in schoolwork, regular religious practices, and observance of the law, standards, values and social authorities, belonging to a positive group [...] Risk factors involve the qualities, situations and conditions conducive to the appearance of risky behaviors, e.g. the high level of fear and anxiety, low self-esteem, emotional and social immaturity, poor internal control, unrealistic expectations of oneself and others, lack of interest in schoolwork, disturbed relationships with parents, improper family structure, etc.

²¹ P. O'Malley, *Governmentality and Risk* [in:] *Social Theories of Risk and Uncertainty*, J. Zinn (ed.), Oxford 2008, pp. 52–75.

²² *Zero Tolerance for School Violence*, Governmental Programme for Improving Security Conditions in Schools and Institutions, Annex to the Government Resolution No. 28/2007, Adopted on 6 March 2007, Warszawa 2007, p. 7.

The more risk factors and the more harmful they are and the longer they last, the higher the likelihood of engaging in a risky behavior is²³.

Since the 1980s, the risk factor theory has given rise to new policies and practices in state politics in Great Britain. In addition, this paradigm has had a significant influence on the politics of juvenile justice and the shift of the politics of crime reduction towards new forms of social prevention and creating new forms of support for children, the youth, and families²⁴. Similar solutions are implemented in the United States, the Netherlands, and Australia²⁵. However, political programs ignore the fact that numerous premises influencing the way in which social problems and possibilities of changing behavior are perceived and defined underpin the risk factors theory. The central point is that the assumption is not always verbalized; that is, the assumption of the individualistic and psychodynamic nature of social life²⁶ and recognition of the cognitive development and rational thinking as the main characteristics of man²⁷. It is also assumed that there is a normative consensus, i.e. social agreement, about what is “right” and what is “wrong”, as well as what is “good” and what is “bad.” While writing about risk factors and “social developmental model”, Richard Catalano and David Hawkins²⁸ explain how their approach is based on a belief in consensus: “[...] a normative consensus exists in society to the extent that everyone knows the ‘rules of the game.’ This level of agreement on rules makes group life possible [...]”²⁹.

The problem then concerns agreeing upon and understanding the “rules of the game” and acting in accordance with moral standards. Behaviors become “problem behaviors” when individuals have not learned those universal norms and values or when society fails to give clear messages about what is acceptable and what is un-

²³ Ibidem, p. 9. The authors refer to J. Szymańska’s research: *Prevention Programmes. Principles of Professional Psychological Prevention*, Methodological Centre for Psychological and Educational Assistance, Warszawa 2002, p. 17.

²⁴ A. France, D. Utting, *The Paradigm of ‘Risk and Protection-Focused Prevention’ and Its Impact on Services for Children and Families*, “Children and Society” 2005, No. 2.

²⁵ J.C. Howell, S. Bilchik, *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders*, Washington 1995; A. France, *Risk Factor Analysis and the Youth Question*, “Journal of Youth Studies” 2008, No. 1.

²⁶ A. France, *Risk Factor...*, op.cit.

²⁷ P. Taylor-Gooby, J.O. Zinn, *Risk in Social Science*, Oxford 2006.

²⁸ R. Catalano, D. Hawkins, *The Social Development Model: A Theory of Antisocial Behaviour* [in:] *Delinquency and Crime*, J.D. Hawkins (ed.), Cambridge 2000; A. France, *Risk Factor...*, op.cit.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 156.

acceptable³⁰. Thus, in the semantic field of the risk discourse, we encounter the statements which, presuming normative consensus, construct “truths” about the possibilities of reducing threat and providing security. The strategy of “blaming the victim” and making individuals free and responsible shows the depth of power relations combining disciplinary technologies and technologies of the self. The universal recognition of the fact that proper behavior in a situation of uncertainty (of employment, labor market, “crisis” etc.) is responsible for one’s present and future career, educational situation, and “suitability for employment” activates and strengthens one’s thinking in terms of “investing in oneself”, as well as using one’s knowledge, skills, and competence to accumulate “capital” for the future. Thus, the “general atmosphere of risk” comes to the aid of the neo-liberal discourse. The technology of the self, which provides reduces risk and uncertainty, is entrepreneurship built on one’s own initiative, activity, foresight, and willingness to be constantly mobile and flexible on the labor market. In this respect, neo-liberal devices match the rationality of the risk discourse that presumes the ability of “rational” individuals to practice self-regulation based, fundamentally, on the knowledge of oneself. Good management of one’s own capital is possible on the condition of “getting to know oneself”. In the further section of the article, following the track indicated by Foucault, I will reflect upon the ideas of producing knowledge of oneself (getting to know oneself) from the conception of self-renunciation to the ideas of investing in oneself in the modern technologies of the enterprising “self”.

4. Care of Yourself – Know Yourself – Invest in Yourself

In the introduction to *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault asks how “individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects?”³¹. He proposes “[studying] the games of truth in the relationship of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject”³². This question becomes the key issue for the following lectures at the Collège de France.

Technologies of the Self offers a genealogical description of the technologies of getting to know one’s self and taking care of one’s self in Greco-Roman philosophy, and, then, in Christian religiosity. Technologies of the self allow “individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ M Foucault, *The History...*, op.cit., p. 146.

³² Ibidem, p. 146.

on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”³³. What is particularly important for our consideration is this shift of the concern with one’s self towards getting to know one’s self. The principle of taking care of oneself, as Foucault argues, is an idea that is deeply rooted in Greco-Roman culture and the one that brought the precept of getting to know oneself into operation. The familiar Delphic principle „know yourself” (*gnothi seauton*) took precedence over the earlier ancient set of practices and the imperative of being concerned with oneself and taking care of oneself (*epimelēsthai sautou*). The principle of self-care, “the incitement to occupy oneself with oneself became so widespread that it became a truly general cultural phenomenon”³⁴. The idea of “know oneself” superseded the “care of oneself” as a consequence of the transformation of moral principles. Taking care of oneself was a theme in ancient philosophy and became a kind of moral imperative shaping the art of life and personal conduct. It was also developed in practices, procedures, institutions, and regulations facilitating at the same time a specific way of gaining and creating knowledge based on self-reflection and the production of the truth of oneself³⁵. As a result, “a whole art of self-knowledge developed, with precise recipes, specific forms of examination, and codified exercises”³⁶. Foucault examines practices of self-perfection and their relation with self-knowledge. As he argues, “know yourself has obscured care of yourself” under the influence of the morality of asceticism, which insists that “the self is that which one can reject”³⁷. This idea of “self-renunciation” and rejection related to the methods of self-examination and revealing the truth about oneself became extremely important during the early Christianity period. The act of confession of the truth about oneself requires rejecting or renouncing oneself because reaching the truth is only possible by “violent rupture and dissociation”³⁸. In *The History of Sexuality*³⁹, Foucault defines confession as a whole set of procedures serving to incite the subject to produce such a discourse of truth about his sexuality, which would have an effect on himself, the subject. The

³³ M. Foucault, *Technologies of the Self* [in:] *Philosophy, History, Politics. Selected Papers*, M. Foucault (ed.), Warszawa–Wrocław 2000, p. 249.

³⁴ M. Foucault, *The History...*, op.cit., p. 11.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 435.

³⁷ M. Foucault, *Technologies of the Self...*, op.cit., p. 11.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 271.

³⁹ M. Foucault, *The History...*, op.cit.

modern practice of confession derives not only from the Christian tradition of confession, but also from pre-Christian philosophy. The verbalized form of disclosing the self is highly important here. Since the 18th century, owing to humanities disciplines, it has been also placed far beyond the religious context. Medical, therapeutic, and pedagogical models have expanded the techniques of examining consciousness employed in the confessional. In confession, the constitution and construction, as well as the transformation of a specific format of the subject come into effect at the same time. The confessional is expected to tell the truth about him or herself. Confession means acknowledging, a declaration or disclosure of own opinions and emotions leading towards knowing the self and shaping self-knowledge. Reaching one's inner states is assisted by the expertise of "psy" sciences – the language and techniques elaborated within the framework of psychology, psychotherapy, and pedagogy⁴⁰. The individual is perceived as a "voice", as a subject having the right to speak about oneself and about one's world.

The pressure to tell the truth about oneself, alongside with the confessional practices expanding beyond the religious context, is deeply rooted in Western culture. This pressure calls attention to the problem of telling (producing) the truth. In a series of lectures given at Berkeley in 1983 entitled *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia*, Foucault problematizes the practice of *parrhesia* in classical Greek culture. The problem of truth is not the theme of Foucault's analysis, but rather the problem of the truth teller and truth telling as an activity⁴¹. His considerations focus on the questions of who has the right to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and in what relation to power⁴². When we pose these questions with regards to the "regimes of truth" of the neo-liberal discourse, we would notice a particularly organized encouragement to speak-organized forms of "civic society" that were created for this particular reason. The figure of civil society enables us to perceive the complexity and ambiguity of relations between power and society. The rationality of the "voice" is particularly evident in the European youth policy, which was conceived as a way of mobilizing and using "capital" located in the governed youth⁴³.

⁴⁰ N. Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, London–New York 1990.

⁴¹ A.C. Besley, *Foucault, Truth Telling and Technologies of the Self: Confessional Practices of the Self and School* [in:] *Why Foucault? New Directions in Educational Research*, M.A. Peters, A.C. Besley (eds.), New York 2008.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ H. Ostrowicka-Miszewska, *Hostages of the Future – Of Discursive Policy Towards Youth*, "Przegląd Pedagogiczny" 2007, No. 1, pp. 71–78.

5. The Rationality of the “Voice” and Civiness Regime

To exist, neo-liberal power needs active citizens involved in (quasi)non-governmental organizations and civic society associations. According to the neo-liberal economic rationality, the competences of the state are shifted to “responsible” and “enterprising” individuals. This shifting of competences provides citizens with opportunities for active participation in solving specific problems, yet at the cost of taking part in the discourse oriented at the comparability of results and achieving effects. The agendas created within the framework of the discourse of civiness, such as youth councils, youth parliaments and fora, as well as youth strategies and legal regulations (e.g. *Youth Strategy for the Years 2003–2012*⁴⁴ or *The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*⁴⁵) are good example illustrating this technique of governing youth. Documents defining youth policy provide for particular ways of “youth participation” and organizational structures within which “youth have their say”. These are the technologies which assume that government requires applying “technologies of releasing resources” that provide instrumental solutions to all social and political problems⁴⁶. Mobilization techniques focus “agency” around a specific set of aims to construct young people into an involved citizens, and as active members of youth communities and organizations. A significant element supporting civic technologies in governing youth is the language of “representativeness” and the “voice” of active participants of common strategies and projects. The discourse of civiness provides young people with opportunities for active participation in resolving specific and defined problems. The central category of the rhetoric of civiness is “taking part”, and active participation becomes an attribute and a privilege of a citizen, but also his assignment. Civiness becomes subordinate to technical effectiveness; active participation is to be a recipe for the improvement of the situation of “endangered” youth, i.e. endangered with social exclusion, unemployment, poverty, and substance abuse. The course of this activity is subjected to constant surveillance and assessment, e.g. in quantitative indices of distribution and frequency of occurrence⁴⁷. Legal and economic regulations match the concept of civil society; the

⁴⁴ The document prepared by The Ministry of Education and Sport and adopted by the Government on 19 August 2003.

⁴⁵ The document approved by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on 21 May 2003, published in Poland in 2005 by order of The Ministry of Education and Sport.

⁴⁶ W. Walters, J.H. Haahr, *Governing Europe. Discourse, Governmentality and European Integration*, Warszawa 2011.

⁴⁷ H. Ostrowicka, *The Paradox...*, op.cit.

citizen is both the subject of law and *homo economicus*⁴⁸. The discourse of youth civicness is based, on the one hand, on “technologies of the self” – constructing an active, operating, and responsible citizen through self-reflection and investing in oneself. On the other hand, it is based on procedures, institutions, and legal forms providing diagnosis, surveillance, and exercising immediate influence. Young people constitute a kind of investment area (investment estimated at billions of euros) on the way towards a “knowledge-based economy”. This type of government is supposed to provide a network for competitiveness in order to make the most of individual and institutional potential and energy. The subject of the neo-liberal project is an entrepreneur of oneself, who is “one’s proper capital, one’s proper producer, and the source of one’s incomes”⁴⁹. Civic engagement might be perceived as an enterprising activity. It is thanks to civic engagement that a young person makes an investment in oneself; an investment whose results are felt in the future. The stake of neo-liberal politics is to make the market, competition, and the enterprise into “the formative power of society”⁵⁰. It is a matter of constituting a certain moral consensus based on “social ethics of enterprise”, popularizing, and multiplying the form of enterprise within society. It is not the man of exchange or man as the consumer that is the subject of neo-liberal project, but the man of enterprise and production. A young person, as a participant of the European youth policy program, departing from certain capital that he possesses, produces his own satisfaction⁵¹: the satisfaction of his/her aspirations, of his/her need for self-realization, self-perfection, and agency. These individual choices entail bearing specific investment costs in order to gain some benefit or “profit”. Youth mobilization program and “lifelong learning”, which make the youth suitable for employment are a kinds of investments aimed at increasing the income, which is measured not only in terms of purely economic categories, but also in terms of psychological gratification.

According to Foucault, the rationality of the market, which performs a regulatory function for the entire society, does not constitute a commoditized society, as put forward by Karl Marx in the first volume of *Capital*, or a consumer society in which a general measure and criterion of social relations and human communication is exchangeable value. In the new art of government, it is not the matter of the “commodity society”. This is how Foucault writes about it in *The Birth of Biopolitics*:

⁴⁸ M. Foucault, *The Birth...*, op.cit.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 231.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, pp. 164–165.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

The society regulated by reference to the market that the neo-liberals are thinking about is a society in which the regulatory principle should be not so much the exchange of commodities as the mechanisms of competition [...] What is sought is not a society subject to the commodity-effect, but a society subject to the dynamic of competition. Not a supermarket society, but an enterprise society⁵².

The central position is occupied by the figure of the “entrepreneur of oneself”, who participates, in accordance with the logic of competition, in civic technologies and achieving goals⁵³. These technologies shape governing young people through exploiting their “resources” and mobilizing them to attain specific ends. The technologies of the enterprising “self”, defined by satisfaction measures, reflect the connection between individual and institutional aspirations and “optimization of results”⁵⁴.

6. Conclusion

The studies on the neo-liberal practices of governing youth in the Foucauldian sense include analyses on the systems of practices and power involving the processes of knowledge and truth production, which are legitimized by various types of rationalities. In this context, the risk discourse appears as a practice that produces the “truth” about what constitutes risk, what its limitation is, its cause and effect, and what are the necessary methods for the reduction of uncertainty. The discourses on youth civicness, which were brought back to public debate in Poland with unusual intensity in the 1990s, are similarly totalizing. They create and transform specific ways of realizing “active citizenship”. These two regimes combine totalisation and individualization practices. Reading Foucault’s works enables us to interpret the ancient ethics of “care of oneself” as a field that created conditions for the ethics of truth telling and confession, as the practices constituting “the self”. This, in turn, enabled, according to the logic of self-perfection and self-control, the transformation of the “know oneself” ethics into the ethics of the “entrepreneur of oneself”. A particular type of individualization, which originated in the system of pastoral power, has been imposed in the last few centuries and adopted in the neo-liberal practices of governing the youth.

⁵² M. Foucault, *The Birth...*, op.cit., p. 163.

⁵³ M. Dean, *Governmentality...*, op.cit.

⁵⁴ W. Walters, J.H. Haahr, *Governing Europe...*, op.cit.

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