THEMATIC SECTION

SEKCJA TEMATYCZNA

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Framing Analysis – Possibilities of Use in Studies of Media Discourse on Higher Education

Abstract

This article presents the basic assumptions and tools characteristic of framing analysis – a perspective of reconstructing schemas of interpretation (frames) in public communication. The potential of framing in research on discourse, especially in analyses of media discourse and higher education, has been described, along with an example of designing an analytical process of media framing of the university in the context of the current reform of higher education in Poland. Introducing the essentials of framing and reflection on the processes of assigning meanings are in line with the goal of promoting conscious participation in public discourse and shaping the reality of higher education and the contemporary university.

Keywords: framing analysis, discourse, media, university, higher education.

Introduction

Without a doubt the term *discourse* has gained immense popularity in the social sciences and in the humanities. In the face of progressive saturation of social life by the media, the importance of research on public communication and media discourse is increasing. Processes of mediation affect all domains

of culture, redefining existing social roles and functions of public institutions, and posing new challenges for them. These challenges also face the contemporary university, which – as Aleksander Kobylarek (2016) claims – is standing today on the edge of the paradigms of functioning, somewhere between tradition and postmodernity. The author suggests basing discussions on the media conducted in the context of the university on "reliable and in-depth analyses of the so-called 'media discourse', which creates various types of multi-threaded cultural texts, extended by interdisciplinary studies of the contexts and conditions of the reality formed by this very discourse" (Kobylarek, 2016, p. 13).

Research on the processes of assigning meanings in the media often uses concepts, methods, and tools derived from the area of discourse studies. The perspective of framing analysis, derived from studies on framing public life, responds to similar needs. Referred to as "the essence of media epistemology" (Olczyk, 2009), with its specific analytical repertoire, it helps to reconstruct the interpretation schemas contained in media messages and to trace patterns which manifest themselves in public communication.

Karol Franczak (2014) defines framing as a "supplementary", "auxiliary analytical proposal" for discourse analysis. In this perspective, discourse analysis has overriding importance. The proposal presented in this article focuses on the discursiveness of the subject of study, which can be captured by research conducted in the perspective of framing. It is based on the assumption that "the study of framing is thus primarily the study of language or, more precisely, discourse" (Gierycz, 2018, p. 50).

With regard to the specific character of the subject of inquiry, the discourse in question in terms of its genre can be defined as public and media-based, whereas on the thematic level, it can be viewed as related to issues of higher education, the university. Analyses conducted at the boundaries of separate areas need to take into account their intellectual traditions, theoretical and methodological foundations, as well as contemporary trends, along with the possibilities and needs of research that appear in each of them. Ulrich Teichler (2015, p. 841) defines the goal of higher education researchers as "[…] the enrichment of joint reflection of the state of higher education on the part

of the higher education researchers and the higher education policy makers and practitioners". Thus, the issues raised have a deeply educational value, not only because of the specific character of the media and the formatting of reality in media communication, but also because of the specific fragment of this reality that constitutes the subject of these messages, which is higher education.

In the face of the next wave of higher education reforms, we may echo the words of Marek Kwiek (2015, p. 70), saying that "the struggle for the shape of an institution is also, or perhaps even primarily, a struggle to shape the discourse legitimizing its place […]". Improvement of the quality of these discussions (and consequently of the actions taken) may be aided by reconstructing the existing debates on changes in higher education and universities based on the instrumentation of framing analysis. This interdisciplinary perspective also gives some hope for a communicative encounter of representatives of various disciplines and their languages – of all those who are linked by the domain of higher education. In the words of Stephen Reese (2007, p. 148): "framing alerts researchers to the possibilities available from other perspectives".

Understanding the university not only as a discursively constructed subject of research and an object of change, but also as a changemaker, this article focuses on higher education and the practices of framing in discussions around the changing university.

Framing analysis as a theoretical and methodological perspective

The genesis of framing is complex and includes such domains as cognitive psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence and anthropology. The development of framing in social sciences was related to interest in the constructive nature of social reality.

In the area of contemporary studies on the framing of public life, we may distinguish: the media studies trend combined with the study of *media frames*; the sociopolitical media studies trend related to the analysis of *collective action frames*; and the communication trend, focused on reconstructing the frames

used by journalists, especially in the news media (Czyżewski, 2010). All of these research trends are mutually interrelated and they share an interest in the ways of formulating messages in the media.

In the literature on the subject, framing is already referred to as the most frequently used theory in the top mass communication journals since the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century (Bryant & Miron, 2004, after: D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010, pp. 1–2). To define framing, such labels as perspective, approach or concept have been used. Framing as a theory also functions under the name theory of media effects, which emphasizes the impact of frames media recipients.

Within the area of framing analysis, the fundamental concept is the frame, defined as an interpretative schema, a pattern of representing a given phenomenon, event, or problem. According to the most frequently quoted definition, following Robert Entman (1993, p. 52), framing is about *selection* and *salience*, while "to frame" means: "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". After nearly a decade, Entman (2003, p. 417) changed the original interpretation of framing to some extent, describing it this time as consisting in "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/ or solution".

Considering the main ways in which frames are understood in the literature, attention should be paid to the classification of frames according to their internal and external aspects. The internal aspect relates to the mental structures of the recipients of messages, i.e. *individual frames*. In the external aspect, emphasis is put on *media frames*, related to the properties of the content created by journalists.

The theoretical division into *media frames* and *individual frames* becomes blurred in the processes of frame circulation. These processes are well illustrated in *A Process Model of Framing Research* by Dietram A. Scheufele (1999, p. 115). We may distinguish here the level of constituting media frames (and

what is related to the distribution of frames in the media space) and the level related to the recipients' frames, as well as the possible consequences of the frames being received by various participants of public life, which may be discernible in their attitudes, behaviors, and choices. The dynamics of inter-penetration of individual frame elements within the process of framing reveals that it is a complex process, mutually dynamizing meanings in multi-subject communication. Due to my interest in media discourse, I shall focus on the level of message analysis and media frames.

In analyses of the frames present in the media, two framing functions are most important: the diagnostic function and the prognostic function. Where *diagnostic framing* involves defining problems, identifying their sources and assigning responsibilities, *prognostic framing* is related to proposing solutions to the indicated problems. Two basic steps in the research procedure are related to the above functions of framing: identification of *framing devices* and identification of *reasoning devices*.

Framing devices, related among others to searching for linguistic structures in texts, or – as Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki (1993, p. 61) would prefer – to rhetorical structures, among which, following Gamson (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), they distinguish *metaphors*, *exemplars*, *catchphrases*, *depictions*, and *visual images*. A slightly different set of structures is proposed by Entman (1993, p. 52), according to whom "[t]he text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments".

To reconstruct the interpretative schemas present in texts, frame research-ers also identify the *reasoning devices* which, based on various justifications, suggest what needs to be done with the issue at hand (Franczak, 2014, p. 142).

In addition to the diagnostic and prognostic function, we may also indicate the motivational function of framing, consisting in gathering and mobilizing supporters, especially in relation to the study of *collective action frames*.

Media frames can be reconstructed inductively or deductively. Inductively selected frames are linked to specific issues or problems (hence they are

also known as *issue frames*). Framing in this case can be defined as strongly related to the process of *selection* and assigning of importance (*salience*) to particular topics, which Entman (1993, p. 52) describes as one of the most important features of framing. Frames reconstructed through deduction are combined with journalistic conventions (Palczewski, 2011, p. 33), repetitive patterns of representing specific issues in the media. These frames, known as *generic frames*, relate to different topics and occur independently of time and place, in different cultural systems. These are the frames for which the following names have been used among others: *conflict*, *economics*, *attribution of responsibility*, *violence*, *horse race* (Neuman et al., 1992; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Kellow & Steeves, 1998; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese, 2005; Palczewski, 2011).

Framing research also emphasizes the cultural dimension of frames, and at the same time their relationship with discourse: " [t]he *culture* is the stock of commonly invoked frames; in fact, culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

From this perspective, the proposal of a wider use of framing in research on discourse seems to be somewhat natural, especially when we repeat after Stephen Reese (2007, p. 148) that the value of framing lies in its potential for joining domains that should remain together in contact.

Framing in research on discourse

As Karol Franczak (2014) writes, framing analysis was never directly related to discourse analysis, but he shows the framing perspective as a remarkable analytical offer for researchers of discourse due to its "methodological background" (Franczak, 2014, p. 136). Analytical tools derived from the area of framing analysis are shown to be useful especially where the discourse perspective offers limited or imprecise analytical instruments, e.g. in post-Foucauldian optics. Among the potential areas of benefits derived from cooperation, the author also lists conversational analysis, corpus-based and linguistic research, as well as critical discourse analysis (Franczak, 2014, pp. 137–138).

Studies of framing in public life, like discourse studies, are interdisciplinary. They share an interest in similar issues and empirical materials, however, they come from different intellectual traditions, which results in methodological discrepancies. For this reason, according to Franczak, attempts to combine them should not take place on the basis of consolidation (of conceptions and categories of analysis), but rather on separate analyses of the same material in a given research project. As one of the possibilities of conducting research, Franczak indicates analyses that (after van Dijk, 1993) would fit into a broad multidisciplinary strategy. Another proposal would cover the following two dimensions limited to the level of media coverage (Franczak, 2014, p. 138): "[…] analyzing frames, i.e. patterns of interpretation that select and highlight elements of the perceived reality, and discourse analysis, understood as examining the patterns of speaking and writing discernible in public messages".

Among the issues that connect both "areas of knowledge about communication", Franczak (2014, p. 136) lists such issues as public disputes, the content of media communications, ways of presenting social events and problems in the media, negotiating meanings, shaping public discourse, social construction of reality, as well as the influence of media discourses on public opinion.

The latter issue is relevant in any variant of framing-related research. Stopping at the study of the frames contained in media communication, it is difficult to eliminate the aspect of the impact of frames on the recipients, related to the question: "to what extent do the messages filling the media space shape the image of the world of 'ordinary people'"? (Franczak, 2014, p. 139).

Therefore, one should not be surprised by the opportunity noted by Franczak (2014, p. 153) in the wider use of framing in research on the public sphere, which may be helpful in developing "discourse awareness", understood, after Marek Czyżewski (2013), as the ability to distinguish the world from its images, and to help overcome the limitations of scientific language. On the basis of framing analysis, scientific discourses are also treated as spaces of the existence of frames, where social discourses are often reproduced without the attention they deserve (Franczak, 2014, p. 136).

This issue is related to the problem of global and political engagement, common to both areas. In studies on discourse, this problem concerns particularly clearly oriented works in the area of critical discourse analysis, and in studies on framing – mainly analyses of new social movements and *collective action frames* (Franczak, 2014, pp. 147–148). In framing analysis, this involvement is not a rule, but rather a possibility, which creates an opportunity for "reframing" public debates, e.g. in the political context, as proposed by George Lakoff (2005).

This highlights the problem of the agency of the actors of public life, which is also related to the question of deliberate participation in shaping the discourse (Franczak, 2014, pp. 149–150). There are ambiguous positions on this in both areas of study. In theories and research on discourse, this agency – although in different versions and variants and with the support of other key categories (such as struggle, identity, manipulation) – is exposed in critical discourse analysis, the conception of Chantal Mouffe and Ernest Laclau or in rhetorical analysis. Framing analysis, on the one hand, clearly treats discourse as "an area subject to demystification" and on the other, assumes the possibility of random actions, unrelated to the conscious and deliberate exposition of worldviews inherent in discourse (Franczak, 2014).

Regardless of the answer to the question about the intentions of shaping the discourse, it is important to be sensitive to the phenomena and processes related to the "discursiveness" of the social world, including the important space for their implementation, i.e. the media.

Considering the benefits of the framing perspective in research on discourse and for this research, in addition to expanding discourse awareness, Franczak considers the possibility of broadening the "framing awareness", which is related to several circumstances. First of all, referring to the theoretical foundations of framing, he indicates that thanks to this awareness:

> […] broadcasters and recipients of media frames would pay more attention to the schemas of interpretation spreading in the public discourse, which are used to indicate the causes of social problems, define ways of assigning responsibility and formulate proposals for future solutions (Franczak, 2014, p. 153).

Franczak (2014, p. 154) writes that framing studies offer better opportunities for discovering patterns in public communication, including the complexity of public disputes. In this way: "the study of framing makes it possible to limit the practice of 'reinventing the wheel' – so often present in discourse analysis – i.e. predictable identification and routine marking of positions present in public debates". The processual approach to discourse with the use of framing analysis also makes it easier to capture changes in the methods of framing over time, while long-term observation of the analyzed processes permits us not only to better understand the patterns of public communication, but also to notice changes in its general tendencies.

In the second edition of the *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, in the section entitled "Approaches and Methodologies", there is a chapter by Cynthia Gordon (2015) presenting framing as a theory used in discourse analysis to study communication as a social phenomenon, focused mainly on creating meanings and construction of identities. In the summary of "Framing and Positioning", Gordon (2015) emphasizes that framing directs our attention to: "how language is used to create multilayered human experiences and multifaceted identities, and how meaning-making and identity construction are best understood as intertextual phenomena", thus, when used in discourse analysis, it helps to "advance our understanding of selves, situations, social life, and language in use".

It is worth reiterating that the study of framing is primarily defined as the study of language, and more precisely – of discourse (Gierycz, 2018, p. 50).

Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki (1993), who show "Framing Analysis: [as] An Approach to News Discourse", define framing "as a strategy of constructing and processing news discourse or as a characteristic of the discourse itself" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 57). From this perspective, framing is at its source related to discourse.

In the face of the considerations made so far, after Karol Franczak (2014), we may treat framing as an "auxiliary analytical proposal" or a "valuable supplement" to studies on discourse, but it is also possible to raise the issue

of the discursive character of the research subject and deal with it using the help of analyses based on the framing perspective.

Discourse and framing analysis in higher education research

Despite the different traditions and varieties of research in the area of higher education (including those related to their international development and local versions), there is agreement among researchers that this is an interdisciplinary area. Among the various trends in research on higher education, Dominik Antonowicz (2015) highlights the most important distinction made by Urlich Teichler (2005). These are trends focused on examining the quantitative and structural aspects, aspects related to science studies, education and study, as well as the institutional dimension of higher education. These issues are familiar to researchers who combine interest in the subject of higher education with interest in discourse, as matters of higher education and the university are reflected in public debates, especially in the context of successive reforms (Zimniak-Hałajko, 2013; Gubański, 2016; Dziedziczak-Foltyn, 2017; Ostrowicka et al., 2019).

Helena Ostrowicka (2018) writes about "the need and potential of discourse analysis in higher education research" in an edited volume devoted to this subject. In this context, it is about the multidimensional and heterogeneous "discursiveness of the university", which "means that it [the university] is the subject of discourse and exists within meaning-creating practices" (Ostrowicka, 2018, p. 14).

In the present article, I would like to highlight the phenomenon of discursiveness of the subject of higher education and university research, as presented by the media, which can be investigated using tools from outside the domain of discourse studies. This area is framing studies.

Framing in higher education research published in international academic journals – as shown by the results of a literature review (Rzyska, 2018) – is a perspective used in this area, especially in studies focused on issues of public policy, but also academic education, communication

and mediatization (Pick, 2006; 2008; Jang & Kim, 2013; Knudsen, 2014; Snowden & Lewis, 2015; Miller & Morphew, 2017). The chapter by Queenie K.H. Lam (2020) entitled "Framing Theory for Higher Education Research", published in *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*, shows that interest in framing among higher education researchers around the world is growing.

Based on selected concepts of framing (related to such categories as: the *framing process*, *frames*, *framing devices*, *framing effects*, *framing functions*, *framing actors*, *frame analysis*, *framing analysis*, and *framing power*) and based on the model of the news framing process by Scheufele (1999), Lam (2020, p. 176) presented the *Universal framing process model* which can be applied in higher education research. The motivation to construct this model came from the changes in public communication related to the current transformations of the media, such as digitization and democratization.

In Polish studies in the area of higher education, framing is practically not used, except for several traces, where it is associated with public discourse and discourse in the media. The article by Bartłomiej Łódzki (2017) is an example of the use of framing to study the media image of a scientist in the Polish opinion-forming press. The publication by Justyna Dobrołowicz (2016) is an attempt to combine framing with concepts derived from Michel Foucault's repertoire in researching the image of education in daily newspapers, using the example of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and in the author's own article from 2017 on framing the school and education in Polish press discourse, one of the frames found in the results of the analyses (the frame for the economization of education) refers to the university. In her monograph devoted to the transformations of contemporary universities, Kamila Biały (2011) uses critical discourse analysis to examine various materials. In her analyses of public discourse (a conference discussion on the reform of higher education) she refers to the category of *frame*.

From a critical review of Polish research and scientific discourses on higher education (Rzyska, 2021) emerges a specific dispute which may be described as a dispute on the "identity" of the university, i.e. the result of the meanings assigned to it – to the university, located between the power

of global processes and local tradition (Antonowicz, 2015). The local (traditional, national) perspective of thinking about higher education and the university is rooted in the Humboldtian and Napoleonic traditions; the global (neoliberal, transnational) perspective is related to the Anglo-Saxon, notably British and American, direction of thinking, which manifests at the level of policy toward higher education (Kwiek, 2010, p. 49) and which is the subject of heated disputes. Consequently, in scientific discourse, the university can be read out as shown in pairs of oppositions, such as: a community of values and goals/a company (Goćkowski, 1997); a place of debate and dialogue/a factory or a supermarket (Hejwosz, 2008); the university understood 'universalistically'/a corporation (Kościelniak & Makowski, 2011); a temple of wisdom/an enterprise (Melosik, 2012); a place of discovering the truth/an object of market argumentation (Nowakowska-Siuta, 2018).

Intellectual curiosity about how the university is constructed in media discourse led me to a project of my own study on representations of the university using the framing perspective (Rzyska, 2021). To show the possibility of using the framing analysis perspective in research on media discourse related to higher education, further I briefly present the process of organizing my individual research. The presentation and justification of the research issues and individual stages of the analyses will enable me to show, at least fragmentarily, a number of decisions necessary in the course of planning and conducting research such as described here.

Designing a process of analyzing university framing in media discourse

Considering the specific character of the media in relation to its function of mediation, I directed my interest to discursive representations of the university. Following Michał Paweł Markowski (2010, p. 319), I refer to the epistemological model of representation, understood as a crucial tool that is indispensable for learning and cataloging the world, which "mediates in shaping the image of the world we have at our disposal".

The subject of my research (Rzyska, 2021) were representations of the university, which in 2015–2018 dominated the press discourse in Poland. The context for the study was provided by the reform of science and higher education introduced by Minister Jarosław Gowin under the name of Act 2.0. The aim of the study was to reconstruct the dominant representations of the university in press discourse, based on the analysis of material from two daily newspapers: *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*.

In view of the goal set out in this way, I turned to the main problem, related to the answer to the following question: What frames are used in press discourse to construct images of the university? I singled out further, more detailed questions:

1. What problems related to the university, their causes and potential solutions were highlighted in the periodicals under study? (This question relates to the definition of framing and the basic steps in the procedure of a researcher of frames);

2. What groups of actors take part in constructing frames in the analyzed messages? (After all, there are no frames without owners. Thanks to identifying the social actors in a given discourse, it is easier to understand the specific organization of that discourse);

3. Is the dispute indicated by the results of the earlier critical analysis of scientific discourse literature also visible in the media discourse under study, and if so, in what ways? (This question is related in a particular way to the specificity of the particular study case and its broader context. It should be emphasized that justification for it is provided by the understanding of public discourse in which various types of discourses and knowledge systems intersect, and where representatives of various social worlds move between these worlds and transfer meanings);

4. How did frames of the university in the press texts studied change over time? (An answer to this question will allow us to define the dynamics of framing and discourse processes over the years);

5. Are there any differences in the ways of framing the university between the texts found in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and those in *Rzeczpo-*

spolita? (This question is important from the perspective of perceiving the frames. Answering it will allow us to grasp a set of interpretative schemas that reaches the model reader of a given source, one who can participate in shaping his beliefs on a given topic. In this dimension, some potentiality is assumed, but the results obtained provide material for further research on the reception of the messages).

The analytical process that I am trying to present began already at the stage of constructing the corpus of empirical materials. This corpus – as I mentioned – consisted of press texts from two Polish dailies, considered to be the most opinion-forming,[1] both with paper circulation and electronic editions. The scope of the collected materials was set from October 1, 2015 and the last day of September 2018 – preceding the entry into force of the new law on higher education and science. Thus, the analyses covered a total of three academic years, during which talks about changes in higher education and work on the reform continued. The context of the study comes into play here – it determines the scope of the collected materials, as well as the analytical and interpretative possibilities.

The selection of texts for analysis was divided into two stages. Stage one was related to the analysis of the content of the materials, and resulted in a collection of press texts in which the word *university* appeared. The second stage of the selection involved screening for texts in which the university was thematized, i.e. became the subject of discussion. Attention was drawn to the meanings assigned to the word *university*. This stage made it possible to distinguish various ways of representing the university and led to the emergence of categories appearing most frequently.

Due to the specific nature of the medium, an important stage in the analytical process was an analysis of press headlines and leads (Pan & Kosicki,

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[1] According to the ranking of the Institute for Monitoring the Media entitled "Najbardziej opiniotwórcze media w Polsce" [The Most Opinion-Forming Media in Poland]. Retrieved 21 October 2022 from: https://www.imm.com.pl/category/baza_wiedzy/raporty-imm/.

1993, p. 59). The broader analysis covered the content of entire texts. Regarding the definition of framing, I encoded the following elements in relation to the university: problems, causes of problems, evaluations, and proposed solutions. Multiple reading and preliminary analysis led to the conclusion that the analytical procedure of an inductive-deductive nature will be the most useful for capturing the specificity of the discourse in question. First, I distinguished the main thematic threads and the characteristic ways of presenting them, which allowed me to define the dominant *issue frames*. On their basis, I reconstructed two *generic frames* characteristic of the media under study – selected from ready-made examples provided in the literature. Particularly helpful in the reconstruction of the frame was the analytical model presented by Tomasz Olczyk (2009), based on the essential processes of framing, i.e. selection, amplification, and discursive articulation.

It should be noted that the method of work and its individual stages were markedly saturated with the specific character related to the qualitative research strategy, where an important feature of the research procedure is the ability to modify the conception of the research project at every stage of the work, in keeping with the needs resulting from the data and dictated by the overarching goal.

Framing in higher education studies – toward (auto)reflection

Apart from the benefits indicated so far, the framing perspective in analyses of media discourse also comes with certain problems and limitations.

Queenie K.H. Lam (2020) reminds the readers about the character of modern media communication, emphasizing the importance of mechanisms and constructs beyond *news framing*: the role of the actors of framing and its various effects related to the level of frame reception.

On the one hand, the study of media discourses does not allow drawing conclusions about the impact of the media frames regarding the recipients. On the other hand, the researcher should take into account the potential of such interactions. The stage of selecting materials should be dictated by the reach of the medium or by the *visibility* and the popularity of the message (e.g. in

a given group/groups). For content available on the Internet, various signs of interest in the message can be identified, but it is difficult to treat them unequivocally as an authentic reflection of the level of attention paid to it. This also reveals the problem of manipulating information as a deliberate ploy aimed at shaping the discourse (Baron-Polańczyk, 2019). Yet another problem concerns setting the boundary between senders and recipients of frames.

The choice of analytical material is related to the decision whether the researcher intends to look at an event or topic, or at frames that go beyond specific events or cases. These choices are linked to specific analytical procedures. One should also be aware of the problems associated with each of the possible paths: on the one hand, there is excessive freedom (with inductive procedures), and on the other, excessive schematization (with deductive procedures). Reconstruction of frames present in media communication paradoxically carries with it the risk of consolidating these frames in public discourse. In the area of higher education, the researcher needs to maintain a certain distance and exercise caution when the messages under study concern the researcher's own institution (Trowler, 2014).

In research projects that do not come with a step-by-step guide, the consecutive stages should be theoretically sound, closely related, and follow internal logic. It is essential to be sensitive both to the needs arising from within the empirical space, and to the external context. Failure to reflect on the entirety of the research endeavor, including its practical implications, may lead to a situation where framing research may resemble the sad metaphor of higher education research as "a tree without fruit", as once formulated by George Keller (1985).

Undoubtedly, the framing analysis perspective responds to the needs of contemporary research in the area of higher education, with the need for "self-reflection" (Frackmann, 1997) is gaining in importance, along with the need for enriching reflections on the state of higher education among researchers, practitioners and policy makers (Teichler, 2015, p. 841). Discussions about higher education, after all, reveal ways of perceiving and imagining the role of the contemporary university, which – to some extent – are reflected in the practices of shaping this institution.

Even though the idea of framing reminds us of the need for dialogue involving multiple stakeholders, a separate issue concerns the will to realistically create and use such opportunities. However, without a thorough reconstruction of the existing ways of communication in discourses about changes, introducing changes which take into account the communicative interests of the particular groups – including students – seem all the more difficult to imagine. With regard to higher education policy, framing can serve both as its legitimization and delegitimization, and above all – it can facilitate critical reflection on its shape, as well as independent assessments of the current situation.

Discourse awareness, understood as the ability to distinguish the world from its images, along with framing awareness, which allows reconstructing the intricacies of public communication – nowadays seem to comprise a valuable intellectual package, a kind of universal capital that becomes necessary for every participant in public life. Due to the omnipresence of frames in contemporary discourses, I see framing as a source of educational value, related to caring about the quality of understanding and shaping of discourses. It is also worth seeing this as one of the roles of the university.

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