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## DEFINING AN ATTITUDE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF REHABILITATION

“Rehabilitative education is defined as a conscious and intentional process of exercising a direct or indirect influence on derelict people in order to prepare them for fulfilling constructive social roles, in accordance with the social expectations”<sup>1</sup>. The imperilled youth is frequently characterized by the aggressive, withdrawing and dogmatic integration of attitudes. In this regard, the educator’s responsibilities are closely linked to modifying the ideas and beliefs, emotional inclinations and attitude dominance in their charges. If man’s set of attitudes is dominated by positive attitudes, these will be correcting any other of his attitudes, including the negative ones. Therefore the process of rehabilitation ought to be directed at shaping one’s overall positive attitudes, which also involves such aspects as the transformation of one’s prejudices, stereotypes and dispositions into complete attitudes.

There are numerous definitions of the term “attitude” representing the various theoretical concepts put forward by their proponents, each of whom emphasises selected components of an attitude. Out of them emerge three major groups of attitude definitions:

1. definitions referring to the sociological tradition, in which the emphasis is put on the importance of the relation between the attitude holder and its object;
2. definitions created within the confines of behavioural concepts and learning theories;
3. definitions related to cognitive theories in psychology. These may also be described as structural as they consider the notions of “organisation” or “structure”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Górski, *Metodyka resocjalizacji*, Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, Warszawa 1985, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mika, *Psychologia społeczna*, Warszawa 1981, p. 112; J. Bazylak, *Postawy religijne młodzieży i ich związki z wybranymi elementami osobowości*, Warszawa 1984, p. 18; J. Bielecki, *Wybrane zagadnienia psychologii*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 82–83.

## 1.

L.L. Thurstone perceives attitude as the extent and intensity of a man's favour or disfavour about any specified topic<sup>3</sup>. Th. M. Newcomb, R. H. Turner and Ph. E. Converse claim that "attitude is a certain consequence of an affective response to an object, which is more stable than the motive – the emergence of which is dependant on the impulse: an individual's attitude toward something is equivalent to one's susceptibility to succumbing to a particular type of motivation"<sup>4</sup>. K. Obuchowski, on the other hand, sees attitude as a disposition manifesting itself in behaviours marked by a positive or negative emotional direction toward an object, person or situation<sup>5</sup>.

## 2.

The concept proposed by K. Obuchowski is also similar to the behavioural views of attitude. "The Dictionary of Psychology" defines attitude as "the way an individual behaves in a particular situation"<sup>6</sup>. According to W. M. Fuson, in turn, attitude is described as the likelihood to behave in a particular way in a given situation<sup>7</sup>.

## 3.

"The Encyclopaedia of Pedagogy" refers to attitude as a relatively stable set of beliefs, emotions and feelings as well as behaviours of an individual in relation to a person, object or issue<sup>8</sup>. "Attitude", says T. Mądrzycki, "is the organisation of knowledge structures, beliefs, feelings, motives and certain patterns of an individual's behaviour in relation to a particular object or class of objects"<sup>9</sup>. S. Nowak's definition of attitude says it as a total sum of relatively stable predispositions to evaluate its object and react to it emotionally, accompanied by relatively stable beliefs on the nature and characteristics of that object<sup>10</sup>. A similar structural approach has been presented by S. Mika, who describes attitude as "a relatively stable structure (or one's disposition for such a structure to emerge) of cognitive and emotional processes as well as behavioural tendencies expressing one's particular relation toward a given entity"<sup>11</sup>.

The analysis of the above definitions brings the following conclusions: attitude is always inseparable from its holder and it always has its object; the attitude object may

<sup>3</sup> In: S. Mika, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Th. M. Newcomb, R. H. Turner, Ph. E. Converse, *Psychologia społeczna*, PWN, Warszawa 1970, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> K. Obuchowski, *Psychologia dążeń ludzkich*, PWN, Warszawa 1983, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> N. Sillamy, *Słownik psychologii*, Wyd. „Książnica”, Katowice 1995, p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> In: S. Mika, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> W. Kozłowski, *Postawy i nastawienia*, w: *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna*, ed. W. Pomykało, Fundacja Innowacja, Warszawa 1993, p. 611.

<sup>9</sup> T. Mądrzycki, *Warunki i metody zmiany postaw*, In: *Teorie postaw*, ed. S. Nowak, PWN, Warszawa 1973, p. 319.

<sup>10</sup> S. Nowak, *Pojęcie postawy w teoriach i stosowanych badaniach społecznych*, in: *Teorie postaw...*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> S. Mika, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

be general or specific, animated or material, real or imaginary; attitude is perceived and analysed; the structure of attitude consists of three components: cognitive, affective and evaluative, as well as behavioural (actual actions); the main characteristics of attitude are its intensity, direction, complexity, consistency, range and stability<sup>12</sup>.

The cognitive component of an attitude includes the beliefs and knowledge of its object. One's beliefs, however, may be inconsistent with one's knowledge (one may have beliefs while simultaneously having knowledge as well as without having it). Knowledge may be true (when derived from competent knowledge sources) as well as false; it can be narrow (specific) and broad. One's knowledge of Chinese culture accompanied by one's acquaintance with the economy as well as politics of China may indicate the fact of one's possessing a broad knowledge of this country. Consequently, the process of shaping attitudes is largely influenced by the extent of applying knowledge in practice.

Furthermore, the existence of attitude is dependent to a large degree on its affective and evaluative component, which fulfils an orientating function as well as motivates an action. One's knowledge and beliefs together with one's evaluations and emotions serve as a basis for determining the intensity and direction of an attitude.

Attitude intensity (force) refers to the frequency of behaviours characteristic of a particular attitude. A child experiencing paternal death, for instance, may either miss his or her father very often, only occasionally, or they may simply be indifferent toward this fact.

Attitude direction (sign) basically depicts the course taken by the attitude, representing one's positive (+) or negative (-) attitude toward its object. Hence it is also possible to hold a neutral attitude toward that object.

The behavioural component is expressed in one's disposition toward a particular behaviour. In turn, the attitude in which a certain course of action has been taken toward the object can be referred to as a firm attitude.

The above complexity is associated with the individual components of an attitude. In fact, the three main components are not always equally distributed on an attitude. Consequently, it is possible to single out attitudes having all their components strongly developed (complete attitude) as well as those with some components weaker than others (incomplete attitude) – which is a defining characteristic of emotional and intellectual attitudes. This type of attitudes which do not include all their necessary components encompasses prejudices and stereotypes, for instance.

Attitude consistency is the accordance between the three components in terms of the direction (positive or negative) and force, while attitude range refers to the number of people, things, or phenomena associated with an attitude. It is a frequent occurrence that some attitudes fall within the domain of others, to which they are inferior.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118–121; J. Makselon, *Spoleczny kontekst funkcjonowania czlowieka*, In: *Psychologia dla teologow*, ed. J. Makselon, PAT, Krakow 1990, pp. 207–211.

Another important defining feature of an attitude is its stability, which pertains to the extent to which attitudes are susceptible to changes. Social psychology puts emphasis on the relative stability of attitudes in contrast to dispositions. A disposition is understood as the readiness to react in certain situations and not to react in others<sup>13</sup>. Unlike an attitude, the notion of a disposition stresses the readiness to react rather than an affective and emotional relation toward an object. Consequently, dispositions (inclinations) are characterized by possessing a larger number of habitual components than attitudes. In turn, a relative stability of attitudes enables making accurate predictions of human behaviour, at least within a short period of time. However, there are also sudden changes in attitudes occurring, for instance, in the domain of our spiritual lives (reformations).

As far as attitude sources are concerned, W. Prężyna does not perceive attitudes as innate mechanisms. According to the author, "it is only possible to indicate an indirect and relative dependence of attitudes on some innate components, which results from the fact that the development of attitudes depends on certain constitutional personality factors and the basic needs individuals are equipped with when they are born. However, it is the broadly understood individual experience of each person that constitutes the decisive element in the genesis of attitudes. The amount and quality of that experience, in fact, is the most vital source of attitudes"<sup>14</sup>.

Eliminating the causes of social derailment as well as removing their effects constitutes the basic part of rehabilitative education, which is simultaneously directed at the modification of attitudes.

## OKREŚLENIE POSTAWY W PERSPEKTYWIE RESOCJALIZACJI

### Streszczenie

Młodzież zagrożona często charakteryzuje się agresywną, wycofującą i dogmatyczną integracją postaw. Zadania wychowawcy będą zatem dotyczyły modyfikowania pojęć i przekonań, nastawień emocjonalnych oraz dominacji postaw. Jeżeli w systemie postaw człowieka dominujące będą postawy pozytywne, to będą one korygować pozostałe jego postawy, w tym także te negatywne. W resocjalizacji winniśmy dążyć do kształtowania pełnych postaw pozytywnych, czyli do przemieniania uprzedzeń, stereotypów i nastawień w pełne postawy. Wyeliminowanie przyczyn wykołejenia społecznego oraz usunięcie skutków oddziaływania tych przyczyn stanowi zasadniczy element wychowania resocjalizującego, które jest zarazem modyfikacją postaw. Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia różne definicje postawy oraz jej następujące cechy: intensywność, kierunek, złożoność, zawartość, zakres, trwałość. Zawsze istnieje przedmiot postawy i zawsze jest ona czyjaś. W strukturze postawy wyróżnia się trzy elementy: poznawczy, emocjonalno-oceniający, działaniowy.

<sup>13</sup> S. Mika, *op.cit.*, p. 11; W. Kozłowski, *op.cit.*, p. 615.

<sup>14</sup> W. Prężyna, *Zasadnicze źródła postaw*, „Roczniki Filozoficzne” 21 (1973), 4, 128.