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Ilona ŻEBER-DZIKOWSKA

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2815-914X>

The Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce

e-mail: ilona.zeber-dzikowska@ujk.edu.pl

Parental attitudes towards children in the first educational stage

Abstract

The subject of the study is parental attitudes towards a child in the first educational stage. The study demonstrated parental attitudes and their significance in child's development and upbringing.

The aim of the study and the author's matter of concern was the most common parental attitudes towards children in the first educational stage. Parents' views on attitudes, proper child-raising and pedagogical difficulties have been discussed. And also how parents broaden their knowledge of child upbringing.

The interpretation of the research findings led to conclusions that, according to parents, the most common attitudes are: demanding, cooperative and overprotective ones. Living in a multi-child family and family breakup affect attitudes toward children.

Keywords: parental attitudes, development, stage, child, attitude.

When observing parents' behaviour towards their children various pedagogical attitudes can be noticed. They include such aspects as attitude to life, professional work and child-raising.

Parental attitudes and their significance in child-raising

Children's development and future depend to a high degree on parental attitudes which are considered by numerous researchers to be factors conditioning the following aspects.

Parental attitudes consist of three components:

- Emotional (which can be expressed in words),
- Mental;
- Action.

“Emotional factor determining specific action is considered by numerous scientists the most characteristic feature of a particular attitude”¹. What appears crucial is the fact that “parental attitudes are flexible and follow the changes in different stages of a child’s development”². M. Ziemska emphasises that quality and degree of the freedom given to children and the control over them change. Parental love is expressed in a specific attitude towards a child and determines upbringing style and effectiveness of pedagogical methods. “The same pedagogical methods will produce different results depending on the emotional attitude of parents who employ them”³.

Parents’ attitudes towards their children are a kind of a synthesis of acquired knowledge, inborn tendency to socialise with another person, a child in this case, and skilful or even artistic moulding of family bonds.

Right and wrong parental attitudes

Considering the direction or power of a negative or positive reaction to a child one can distinguish negative and positive attitudes. Negative attitudes are revealed in various forms of aggression, for example ridiculing, imposing corporal punishment, avoiding contact with the child, neglecting them. Positive attitudes, on the other side, are marked by actions aimed at child’s wellbeing, deep involvement in their upbringing.

The right parental attitudes include: accepting the child, cooperation, allowing the child sensible freedom, acknowledging children’s rights in family. “Accepting a child means embracing them as they are, with their appearance, dispositions, possibilities and easiness to be successful in some fields but also limitations and difficulties in others. Parents like their children and derive pleasure from being with them. They approve of child’s actions and support them. Such an attitude can be described as open-heart attitude”⁴.

Cooperating with a child means involving and attracting interest in the child’s work and play and also engaging the child in parents’ activities and daily issues which are appropriate for the child’s developmental stage.

Providing a child with sensible freedom suitable for their age is a way for them to become physically independent from parents and, consequently, build

¹ A. Dakowicz, *Potrzeby indywidualne małżonków zadowolonych i niezadowolonych ze swojego związku. Edukacja. Studia, badania, innowacje*, Bydgoszcz 2014, p. 99–105.

² M. Ziemska, *Postawy rodzicielskie*, Warszawa 1986, p. 169.

³ M.B. Pecyna, *Psychologia kliniczna w praktyce pedagogicznej*, Warszawa 1999, p. 59.

⁴ J. Imrichova, *Postawy rodzicielskie w ujęciu psychologicznym*, <http://www.psychologia.net.pl/arttykul.php?level=540>; access: 4.11.2018.

up conscious psychical bond in the child. Parents give their growing children space for work and play away from them. Although the amount of freedom increases it does not decrease parents' authority.

A critically important parental attitude is acknowledging the child's rights in the family and not overestimating or not appreciating their role. Parents who give their children benefit of the doubt, allow them to follow their passions and respect their actions contribute quality to their lives. Parents who reveal the right attitudes towards their children provide them with care, attention, meet children's needs and help to fulfil them. Rich deposits of patience and repeated explanations and clarification of their own points of view to the child build good and strong relationship with children. They easily establish contact with the child and it is accepted by both sides, based on mutual respect, understanding and liking. They enjoy their child's successes and progress in their development. They can keep distance and look objectively at their child and also accept them the way they are⁵.

Each positive attitude corresponds with an adversarial, inappropriate one. So attitude of acceptance corresponds with rejection, cooperation – avoidance, sensible freedom – overprotection, acknowledgement of rights – excessive expectations, forcing, notorious criticism.

Family is essentially a domain of specific, irreplaceable emotional intimacy, relationship comprising shared experiences, joy and sadness. It is a strong centre of influences which can either decondition efforts of public pedagogical institutions or offer support decisive for efficiency of these efforts. In a family circle children adopt their attitudes, shape their way of being, set moral standards. "This prominent family role is strengthened by intensified homecentrism expressed in the feeling that paramount need of a family is own place to live with own, intimate 'corner' for each family member"⁶. The integrated family pattern emphasises good emotional atmosphere, clear tendency for mutual contacts, established practice of pedagogical caretaking, responsiveness to a child's needs and possibilities, which is transferred to moderate upbringing problems. Living conditions are vital for family life, namely adequate flat size and its optimal space arrangement providing each family member with a place where they feel safe and relaxed. Also, family home must satisfy conditions facilitating child's development.

All the influences a child falls under in family home largely determine the child's proper development which is transferred to the child's positive attitude towards school, acceptance of school environment and good educational start. Child-raising process and shaping child's personality is a lengthy process which

⁵ E.H. Erikson, *Tożsamość a cykl życia*, Poznań 2004, p. 34.

⁶ A. Nowotnik, *Środowisko rozwoju dzieci w wieku szkolnym: potrzeby dziecka a jakość rodzinnej i pozarodzinnej oferty edukacyjnej*, [in:] *Sześciolatki w szkole: rozwój i wspomaganie rozwoju*, ed. A.I. Brzezińska, J. Matejczuk, P. Jankowski, M. Rękosiewicz, Poznań 2014, p. 59.

requires regularity and consistency to manage the child in a consistent way both at home and in a nursery school.

Methodological framework in own research

The research aimed at indicating the most common parental attitudes towards children in the first educational stage. With the reference to the research purpose the main problem was formulated as follows: What are the most common parental attitudes towards children in their first educational stage? Consequently, the following hypothesis was constructed: It is assumed that the presented parental attitudes towards children in their first educational stage are intuitive.

The research was performed in January 2019 and involved parents of students from Years 1 to 3 (243 people) who agreed to participate. The research was arranged in two primary schools in Płock: Mira Zimińska-Sygietyńska Primary School N°12 and Kornel Makuszyński Primary School N°3.⁷ These are two of the biggest primary schools in Płock, which was the reason why they were thought to be the right place to conduct the survey of 29 questions. An interview was conducted with five early school teachers.

Interpretation of own research findings and on the basis of other authors' literature

The conducted research has confirmed that the most common parental attitudes towards children in the first education stage are cooperative attitude (40,33%), demanding (25,10%), overprotective (17,28%) and liberal (13,17%). The fact is confirmed by, among others, research in the subject of parental attitudes as determinants of proper social and emotional development of the early school child undertaken by J. Skibska. The research findings reveal that predominant parental attitudes are: cooperative attitude (57,8%) and demanding (38,4%)⁸. D. Rusiak expressed a slightly different outlook in her research *Parental attitudes and identity development in the stage of early adolescence*. The research demonstrates that parents adopt mainly attitudes of acceptance (46%), demanding (30%) and autonomy (22%)⁹.

⁷ I. Borna-Ilińska, I. Żeber-Dzikowska, *Postawy rodzicielskie wobec dziecka na pierwszym etapie edukacyjnym*, Płock 2019, p. 111.

⁸ J. Skibska, *Postawy rodzicielskie jako determinant prawidłowego rozwoju społeczno-emocjonalnego dziecka w młodszym wieku szkolnym – komunikat z badań*, [in:] *Społeczno-ekonomiczne uwarunkowania rozwoju rodziny*, ed. K. Szczepańska-Woszczyńska, M. Hronec, Dąbrowa Górnicza 2014, p. 355–364.

⁹ D. Rusiak, *Postawy rodzicielskie rodziców a kształtowanie się tożsamości osób w okresie wczesnej dorosłości*, „Młoda Psychologia”, vol. 2, Warszawa 2014, p. 119.

The research has demonstrated that living conditions of a family significantly affect parental attitudes. Nuclear families living in good conditions, not multi-child ones are marked by correct parental attitudes. On the other hand, single-parent, multi-child families with poor living conditions often adopt negative attitudes: child's domination over parents, aggression, violence and other abusive acts. These have been proved by, among others, K. Makaruk's research *Polish People's Attitudes towards Corporal Punishment and Administering them in Parental Practice* which reveals that single-parent families are often marked by violence and corporal punishment (81,6%), what is more, "beating" is one of the most common pedagogical method in single-parent or pathological families (54,3%)¹⁰.

The research findings indicate that parents are satisfied with the time which they spend together with their children (87%). It is confirmed by, among others, M. Wójtowicz-Dacka's findings which demonstrate that what parents consider vital is playing and talking with children, which develops the bond and gives the feeling of security (65%)¹¹. It leads to the conclusion that proper child-raising is a personal matter and partly a social duty (51%). Another conclusion based on the research findings is that parents do not need to sacrifice everything for the sake of their children (35%) and upbringing method greatly influences the shape of child's personality (88%). It is supported by, among others, K. Miler claiming that "Family exerts enormous influence on a person's upbringing and development as it is their first natural environment"¹².

The research has also demonstrated that parents should rather adopt a casual and playful approach (48%). The surveyed parents stated that there is no one precisely defined upbringing style (36%). A slightly different view is presented by J. Skibska in her research since her findings indicate that parents should follow strictly defined upbringing rules (81,7%) authoritatively and consequently (64,2%)¹³. Moreover, the findings of the own research have led to the conclusion that parents take care of their children independently (84%), most interviewees adopt the upbringing model employed by their own parents (51%) while a smaller number of responders (49%) do not raise children this way. Also, parents gain knowledge of child-raising from family experience (33%), intuition (25%) and watching friends or relatives (19%). This view has not been supported

¹⁰ K. Makaruk, *Postawy Polaków wobec kar fizycznych a ich stosowanie w praktyce rodzicielskiej*, „Dziecko Krzywdzone. Teoria, Badania, Praktyka” 2013, no. 4, p. 46–50.

¹¹ M. Wójtowicz-Dacka, *Wiedza o potrzebach psychicznych małych dzieci w opinii dwóch pokoleń rodziców*, „Przegląd Pedagogiczny” 2012, no. 1, p. 289–298.

¹² K. Miler, *Problemy wychowawcze we współczesnej rodzinie polskiej*, „Pedagogika Rodziny” 2011, no. 1/2, p. 211.

¹³ J. Skibska, *Wspomaganie rozwoju małego dziecka we współczesnej przestrzeni edukacyjnej – konteksty wyzwań – komunikat z badań*, [in:] *Teoria i praktyka oddziaływań profilaktyczno-wspierających rozwój osób z niepełnosprawnościami*, ed. G. Gunia, D. Baraniewicz, vol. 3.1., Kraków 2014, p. 194–205.

in E. Kopeć's research which reveals that parents acquire the knowledge from school (61,7%), family experience (23%) and church (19,1%)¹⁴.

The research has proved that parents devote more than three hours daily to their children (70%). A similar view has been presented in research in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, which indicates that, according to researchers from University of California (USA) and Collegio Carlo Alberto (Italy) in 1965 mothers spent approximately 54 and fathers 16 minutes daily with their children, and at present mothers devote 104 and father around 59 minutes daily, which in total amounts to 3 hours every day¹⁵. Parents arrange time together with their children (71%) and try to develop their interests (88%). What is more, the research findings show that sex of a child does not affect upbringing style (55%), in general children do not pose upbringing problems (82%) but when such problems occur parents sometimes ignore children's rude behaviour (50%). M. Ruszkowska's research findings have led to the conclusion that children create upbringing problems such as acts of aggression (35,1%), ignoring teacher's instructions (24,4%) and disobedience (21,7%)¹⁶.

The research also confirms that parents do not read books about child-raising (65%) and, in their opinion, upbringing involves taking conscious and intentional actions aimed at total development of child's personality and preparing them to live in the society (98%).

In summary, despite scientific progress in the area of child-raising, parents express the same views that previous generations demonstrated. Parents are not eager to participate in workshops and trainings. Most parents did not answer open questions, which testifies to the fact how little parents have to say in the subject of raising their own children. As for structured questions, in some cases answers were ticked at random.

Conclusions

The research findings have led to the following conclusions:

1. Cooperative, demanding and overprotective attitudes are the predominant parental attitudes in the first educational stage.
2. The factors which affect the process of shaping parental attitudes towards children are: raising children independently by parents, following the family

¹⁴ E. Kopeć, *Sposoby pozyskiwania wiedzy o wychowaniu przez rodziców: (na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań)*, „Studia z Teorii Wychowani: półrocznik Zespołu Teorii Wychowania Komitetu Nauk Pedagogicznych PAN” 2014, no. 5/1 (8), p. 123.

¹⁵ *Rodzice spędzają z dziećmi coraz więcej czasu*, „Journal of Marriage and Family”, dostęp: <http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C411403%2Crodzice-spedzaja-z-dziecmi-co-raz-wiecej-czasu.html>; access 27.06.2021.

¹⁶ M. Ruszkowska, *Trudności wychowawcze edukacyjne dzieci z rodzin wieloprotymowych*, „Rozprawy Społeczne” 2016, vol 10, no. 2, p. 58–59,

child-raising tradition and gaining knowledge of the process from scientific sources, other people's observations and intuition.

3. Parents help their children develop properly by devoting them much time, concern and attention. They arrange leisure time together with children and promote their interests.
4. Child's sex does not affect parental attitudes in the first educational stage.
5. Being a multi-child family and living conditions influence parental attitudes towards children in the first educational stage.
6. Family breakup affects parental attitudes in the first educational stage.
7. Children in the first educational stage do not create many pedagogical problems. The problems which may occur are: disobedience, acts of aggression towards their peers and siblings, neglecting parents' instructions, reluctance to participate in any activities other than watching TV and playing computer games. Sometimes parents ignore such behaviours.
8. Parents should broaden their knowledge of child-raising in the early-school stage but they do not always do so. It is advisable to read relevant books, online articles, guides, press articles, participate in workshops, training sessions and conferences, study online forums, listen to friends' and family's advice, copy behaviours of close friends and relatives, follow own parents' patterns, draw conclusions from individual experiences talk to teachers, visit children's school regularly, watch television programmes.

Proposed solutions concerning parental attitude

Child's development in the first educational stage considerably influences a young person's future life which is why the right upbringing serves a fundamental role. Contemporary parents raise their offspring individually, spend a lot of time with children and feel satisfied with it. Parents in the first educational stage demonstrate cooperative, demanding and overprotective attitudes. Cooperative attitudes belong to a set of right attitudes, which are targeted at the child, that is without excessive focus but also without excessive distance. They involve establishing informal contact, without tension but, at the same time, without exaggerated liberty. The other two attitudes: demanding and overprotective belong to the set of wrong attitudes. Parents should avoid adopting overprotective attitudes to a large extent as they are unfavourable for children. It engages parents' focus on the child to such an extent that they neglect their own needs and focus thoroughly on the child, protect them at any cost and in every possible way. Taking such an attitude parents may undermine the child's development of independence and autonomy, make the child feel convinced that they lack skills and power to act, make them doubtful about their own abilities, may stop them from developing skills necessary to face difficulties, they may

become distrustful and resourceless. Demanding attitude has the opposite effect, though. The child may become suppressed, will not express their own views, will be afraid to speak their minds even on a minor issue. Demanding attitude may stop a child from pursuing their own dreams and aims as they will try to satisfy the parents and meet their expectations.

Parents should be determined to raise their children and let them develop properly. If parents demonstrate wrong attitudes, they are advised to consult counsellors or try to gain knowledge in the area of child-raising independently. One of the possible solutions is to enrol in workshops in Parents' Academy. During the classes a parent can acquire knowledge and valuable advice on how to support child's development so as to love not harm, how to solve difficult situations and manage stress. Interesting meetings for overprotective and oversensitive parents are organized in Poland by Institute of Health Psychology. Experienced psychologists advise how to raise a child in order to promote proper development. They instruct on how to administer punishment and rewards in the right way and overcome pedagogical difficulties. Additionally, Institute of Health Psychology regularly publishes online interesting articles concerning child-raising methods and presents numerous research findings in the field of child upbringing. Schools organize meetings for parents who adopt wrong attitudes or do not manage child-raising properly. Then the parents have the opportunity to listen to interesting information but also share experiences with other parents. Apart from team meeting parents can also be assisted by a psychologist or a coach. Moreover, it is recommended to read relevant books, online articles and child-raising guidebooks, browse Internet forums, talk to teachers and visit school regularly. All these aim at child's proper development and upbringing.

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Postawy rodzicielskie wobec dziecka na pierwszym etapie edukacyjnym

Tematem pracy są postawy rodzicielskie wobec dziecka na pierwszym etapie edukacyjnym. W pracy przedstawiono postawy rodzicielskie i ich znaczenie w wychowaniu dziecka oraz jego rozwoju.

Celem badań i przedmiotem zainteresowań autorki były najpopularniejsze postawy rodzicielskie wobec dzieci na pierwszym etapie edukacyjnym. Zostały omówione poglądy rodziców na temat postaw, prawidłowego wychowania dziecka oraz problemów wychowawczych. A także – jak rodzice poszerzają swoją wiedzę w zakresie wychowania.

Interpretacja wyników ankiety pozwoliła na wnioski, iż w opinii rodziców najczęstszą postawą jest wymagająca, współdziałająca i nadopiekuńcza. Wielodzietność i rozpad rodziny wpływają na postawy wobec dziecka.

Słowa kluczowe: postawy rodzicielskie, rozwój, etap, dziecko, postawa.