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## SHAPING CIVIC ATTITUDES AS A MEANS OF PREVENTING SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION

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**Summary.** The problem of social exclusion is not new. In different periods of development of civilization, people were marginalized for different reasons. The core feature of exclusion is inability to fully participate in socio-economic life. Thus, it seems necessary to promote inclusion of individual people or groups in the right area of social life. Activities promoting inclusion will be aimed at eliminating or modifying reasons for marginalization.

Very important, if not crucial, in this question is shaping civic attitudes. Since only a human - conscious citizen is able to participate in important for him/her social events. Consciousness of rights and duties enables proper social interactions, realization and finding ourselves in specific social roles. Internalization of civic values prevents both from auto-marginalization and from marginalization of different groups or people.

**Keywords:** social marginalization, civic education, civic attitudes.

## MODELAREA ATITUDINILOR CIVICE CA MIJLOC DE PREVENIRE A MARGINALIZĂRII SOCIALE

**Rezumat.** Problema excluziunii sociale nu este nouă. În diferite perioade de dezvoltare a civilizației, oamenii au fost marginalizați din diferite motive. Caracteristica principală a excluziunii este incapacitatea de a participa pe deplin la viața socio-economică. Astfel, este necesar să se promoveze includerea persoanelor sau a grupurilor individuale în zona potrivită a vieții sociale. Activitățile de promovare a incluziunii vor viza eliminarea sau modificarea motivelor marginalizării.

Foarte importantă, dacă nu esențială, în această problemă este modelarea atitudinilor civice. Întrucât doar un om - cetățean conștient este capabil să participe la evenimente sociale importante pentru el/ea. Conștientizarea drepturilor și obligațiilor permite interacțiuni sociale corecte, realizarea și propria regăsire în roluri sociale specifice. Interiorizarea valorilor civice împiedică atât auto-marginalizarea, cât și marginalizarea diferitelor grupuri sau persoane.

**Cuvinte cheie:** marginalizare socială, educație civică, atitudini civice.

### Introduction

Social marginalization is nowadays thought to have become a global problem, which needs to be solved for the sake of all mankind. Curbing the processes of marginalization is one of the basic conditions of social and economic development - on a local, national, regional and global scale. Preventing marginalization and taking action to enable social inclusion of the socially excluded is a moral obligation of every responsible person, and even more so of the State. Such action can take various forms of professional, organized and institutionalized help. Marginalization and exclusion are an inherent part of social inequalities related to unequal access to important aspects of human life. These aspects include lack of participation and limited access to the following institutions / resources: labour market, consumption markets, educational system, judicial system, social benefits and social security. Social exclusion is a process

of deprivation of social significance and the ability to influence the course of events [11, p. 8].

### **Social marginalisation - definition of the concept**

In social pedagogy, the term "social marginalization" is used interchangeably with the term "social exclusion" [14, p. 12].

Social marginalization (exclusion) is a multi-faceted problem, which concerns both individual people and groups in the context of different social activities.

According to J. Pawłowska, social exclusion refers to a situation where, for various reasons, a person is deprived of opportunities to fully participate in social life. This problem results from the fact that in relatively prosperous democracies a part of citizens not only fails to enjoy privileges of economic development, but practically does not participate in any aspects of social life. According to the author, current exclusion does not involve deprivation of specific rights but lack of opportunities and abilities to benefit from them [12, p. 39].

Exclusion can manifest itself when a person's life opportunities are significantly limited as well as when a person becomes increasingly relegated and functioning beyond the official and established social and legal order. This kind of exclusion is reflected in attitudes, beliefs, assessment of life situation and also in assessment of possibilities for active participation in social life.

Individuals or groups of people affected by exclusion find themselves in a very unfavorable social situation which can result in inappropriate behavior and lack of pro-social attitudes. Social exclusion results in an individuals' or groups' loss of sense of subjectivity as well as the ability to influence reality and effectiveness of actions. The situation of exclusion, regardless of whether it affects groups or individual people, is characterized as follows (according to F. Mahler):

- deprivation of power and ability to make decisions,
- fewer rights and more responsibilities,
- limited possibilities and more restrictions,
- limited economic possibilities and lower economic status,
- limited educational, vocational and leisure opportunities,
- higher vulnerability to social pressure, crisis and their consequences,
- legal discrimination,
- social stigma and discriminatory actions [14, p. 17 in Mahler, 1993, p. 193].

Social exclusion involves abandoning the customary and socially accepted way of life or failure to follow it. The reasons for such state of affairs can be as follows:

- living in unfavorable economic conditions;
- social processes of marginalization, resulting from massive and dynamic changes (e.g. crisis, sudden collapses of regions);

- lack of "life capital" which enables individuals to take up suitable social positions, obtain proper qualifications, enter the labour market, start a family;
- lack of access to certain institutions which equip people with "life capital" and allow them to develop it;
- experiencing various signs of discrimination as a result of wrong legislation, cultural biases, stereotypes;
- having characteristics which hinder the possibility of using common social resources due to: disabilities, addictions, chronic illnesses;
- exposure to harmful activities of other people, e.g.: violence, blackmail, indoctrination [3, p. 232-233].

Chrostowska quotes Germani's typologies of forms of marginalization based on the criterion of various areas of human activity, in which these forms tend to occur. Marginalization can involve:

- production sphere - access to work, unemployment,
- consumption sphere - hindered access to goods and services due to low income,
- cultural sphere - marginalization manifests itself in behavior patterns which prevent individuals from performing social roles,
- sphere of education - limited access to educational institutions, literature, arts,
- sphere of welfare - limited access to housing, healthcare, welfare services,
- sphere of politics - limited possibilities of expressing one's views, taking decisions concerning civil rights [5, p. 213].

Regardless of the way in which social exclusion is defined and characterized, the fact of relegating excluded individuals beyond the sphere of correct and rightful social functioning is essential. Excluded people or groups of people do not have a chance to fully participate in taking social decisions and shaping the world they live in. They also do not have the opportunity to mobilize and realize their social capital which is essential for proper functioning in society [see 2, p. 38]. Marginalized people participate in communal life to a lesser degree than other participants.

Social marginalization can be also analysed in terms of civic participation. An accurate definition of such participation was given by T.H. Marshall, who found some criteria to describe the scope of civic participation. He distinguished the following criteria: civic component - essential for gaining individual freedom including freedom of speech, property, the right to justice; political component - focused on the right to exercise political power (participation in elections); social component - defined by the right to reach the state of economic security, right to participate in social environment and to live in conditions specified by standards of civilization [15, p. 189-190]. Thus, citizens' participation in various forms of social and political activity is crucial as it enables them to make political decisions as well as to meet their own needs and civil

liberties. Social constraints or personal resignation from civic activities will result in social exclusion. The opposite of exclusion, that is relegation from the social structures, is inclusion which involves pro-civic attitudes, solidarity - integration of an individual or a group with society [6, p. 31 in Roy 1996].

### **Civic society and the need for civic education**

Activities which are aimed at social inclusion, thereby preventing social exclusion, involve shaping a broadly defined sense of civic virtue. Only within civic society, where citizens participate in decision making processes and social activities, social exclusion can be curbed and neutralized.

Vital aspects of civic society such as civic education, civic attitudes or civic awareness are the result of multifaceted long-term activities. Therefore, if we do want to be a civic society, we have to create such society by educating its citizens. If we want to retain democracy, we have to promote its values in a school environment and to show how its principles and procedures work in practice. If we want to teach patriotism, let's only teach its best version - civic patriotism [8, p. 44].

Researchers into pedagogy cannot agree as to the meaning of the term 'civic education'. Some of them narrow the meaning of civic education to the area of knowledge which focuses on rights and duties of citizens. In such presentation of civic education, developing mental skills is thought to be the most important aim of education. Other researchers lay greater emphasis on practical skills and, at the same time, stress the need to create for learning people opportunities to act [7, p. 238].

"Civic education is a fragment of mental and moral education placing a human in society and equipping him in attributes required to efficient, conflictless and useful participation in social and political life. It should shape people who are aware of their membership in given community with an imperative of active participation in life of this community for the common good" [4, p. 20-21].

The author mentions two trends in civic education. The first one, called instrumental (mental), stresses the importance of transferring and assimilating social, political, legal and economic knowledge. It constitutes the basis for the development of the second trend - the guiding (moral) one. The latter aims at shaping specific civic attitudes (pro-social ones). Chmielewski believes that shaping the above attitudes is a fundamental aim of civic education. By its nature civic education serves in the first place values of the human good and the social usefulness. There is a fundamental relationship and link between two aspects - the happiness of an individual and his/her social usefulness [4, p. 20-21].

The aim of civic education is to prepare conscious citizens who will take responsibility for their country in many areas of life. "It should install in young people the understanding of *raison d'être* of their country, its spiritual and cultural values, its economic resources, its relations with other countries - both close and distant ones. It

should let them become familiar with its political and social institutions and with their functioning [1, p. 317].

Civic education, when carried out in a proper way, should prepare children and young people to the following: Living in a community and being aware of their rights and duties, managing difficult situations, using their sensory and intellectual skills, developing self-awareness and the ability to critically and fairly judge people and events [10, p. 80].

According to Janusz Abramczyk, civic education is at the same time moral education. This implies the need to influence people's personality and will so that they can manage different legal and, most importantly, moral duties. Those duties are related to different forms of social activity and concern 4 areas:

- 1) Duties towards oneself: "They consist in developing virtues which are essential for responsible use of civic rights, developing moral sphere and sense of dignity, acquiring habits and attitudes encouraging contacts with other people, respecting social, professional, and civic obligations, especially the sense of one's responsibility.
- 2) Duties towards others. They involve a sense of solidarity and its practical use, spirit of tolerance and understanding, respect for beliefs and rights of other people, keeping one's word, the ability to cooperate with others.
- 3) Duties towards the State. They involve strict obedience to rules, rights and binding regulations, honesty, acceptance of charges legally applied to all citizens, willingness to work in political, social and vocational field.
- 4) Duties towards your country. They include development of feelings which evoke love to one's homeland - without chauvinism- so that those who live in it can feel safe and can live duly [1, p. 318].

### **Shaping civic attitudes**

The essence of civic education is, and has always been, shaping civic attitudes. Civic attitude is perceived as active attitude which is voluntarily chosen, not imposed on people. It is expressed in the individual's conscious consent to participate in community and, more importantly, one's obligation to promote the common good [13, p. 125]. Regarding the structural interpretation of attitude [inter alia 9] we can define some aspects of civic attitude. According to Kazimierz Przyszczypkowski these are as follows: the cognitive aspect of civic attitude is expressed in collective consciousness that *others together with me participate in the same "we"*. Next aspect, normative aspect, involves perception of community and solidarity as a need and necessity. Manifestation of an attitude, that is behavioral aspect, manifests itself in belonging to different organizations, associations which express institutionalized aspects of activity of different communities and classes [13,p. 125]. Such interpretation lets us assume that civic attitude involves

both the processes taking place prior to activity (cognitive, emotional, motivating processes) as well as the activity itself.

Civic attitude, in all aspects, is axiologically determined. The axiology of citizenship applies to the following values: internal sovereignty, external independence, national and social integration, political freedom, justice, subjectivity of people and institutions, democracy, egalitarianism, tolerance. Civic attitudes are also determined by requirements of legal regulations, ethical norms, moral principles and one's knowledge. Those values are clearly related to the realization of civic rights and duties. Fulfilling obligatory civic duties is motivated by avoiding negative sanctions (avoidance of punishment), whereas exercising civic rights which are not sanctioned may have its origins in out-of-civic axiology (the area of interests, satisfying one's needs, realization of personal goals) [16, p. 137]. The opportunity to exercise civil rights and duties, and therefore to manifest civic attitudes can take two forms: The first form includes "task-oriented realization of obligations towards the State, society, human communities, public institutions, social organizations, the natural environment, safety. The second one involves performing participatory functions in the scope of using rights, goods, opportunities and chances" [16, p. 137].

Shaping civic attitudes is, like every educational activity, a long-lasting process, which is determined by many factors. Activities aimed at shaping civic awareness are undertaken by institutions, groups and educational environments, which participate in the process of civic education. In a similar way, the task of shaping civic attitudes does not only come under schools, states or local governments. "The process of shaping civic attitudes should be planned and carried out in such a way that every young citizen of our country beginning his/her active civic and political life is fully aware of:

- privileges to which citizens of parliamentary democracies are entitled by participating in managing public affairs through voting in elections on local and national level,
- the meaning of civil liberties granted to citizens by constitutional acts,
- the scope of duties resulting from the fact that they become rightful citizens of the Republic of Poland [1, p. 320].

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