

ATTITUDE

Attitudes involve some knowledge of a situation. However, the essential aspect of the attitude is found in the fact that some characteristic feeling or emotion is experienced and, as we would accordingly expect, some definite tendency to action is associated. Subjectively, then, the important factor is the feeling or emotion. Objectively it is the response, or at least the tendency to respond. Attitudes it is the response, or at least the tendency to respond. Attitudes are important determinants of behaviour. If we are to change them we must change the emotional components. Allport has defined attitude as a mental and neural state of readiness organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects with which it is related.

A farmer may vote for a particular political party because he has been brought up to believe that it is "right" party. In the course of experience he may learn something about the policies of that party. In that case his attitude will probably change. As a result, he may be expected to vote in a different way. Knowledge, attitude and behaviour are then very closely linked.

Measuring attitudes

Attitude scales

It is meant for scientific studies. Scales have been developed for measuring a great number of attitudes. Each scale consists of a group of statements related to a particular attitude. Each scale consists of a group of statements related to a particular attitude. Some scales ask the person to respond by indicating whether he agrees or disagrees with each statement. Other scales ask the person to specify the degree of his agreement with a statement. The degree of agreement or disagreement will be given predetermined values.

Public opinion poll

A large number of people are asked only a question or two because they don't have much time to respond to many items. There are two major problems in public opinion poll (i) wording of questions and (ii) sampling.

For the poll to be accurate, the sample must be representative. For this we have to use stratified sampling. In stratified sampling, the polling agencies set quotas for certain categories of people based on census data. The most common categories are age, sex, socio-economic status, and geographical region, all of which are known to influence opinions. By seeing to it that the quotas, in the sample are in proportion to the categories in the general population, the sample is made more representative.

Attitude change

Well established attitudes tend to be resistant to change, but others may be more amenable to change. Attitudes can be changed by a variety of ways. Some of the ways of attitude change are as follows.

- By obtaining new information from other people and mass media, resulting in changes in cognitive component of a person's attitudes.
- Attitudes may change through direct experience.
- Attitudes may change through legislation.
- Since person's attitudes are anchored in his membership group and reference groups, one way to change the attitude is to modify one or the other.
- Attitude change differs with reference to the situation also.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ATTITUDES

I. MATURATION

The young child has only a very limited capacity for understanding the world about him and he is consequently incapable of forming attitudes about remote, or complex, or abstract things or problems. At about a mental age of twelve years the child begins to understand abstract terms such as pity and justice, and his capacity for both inductive and deductive reasoning shows a marked and continuous increase during adolescence. As a result of this growth in capacity, he becomes able to understand and react to more abstract and more generalized propositions, ideas and ideals.

At the age of four or five years, three characteristics especially deserve mention. These are curiosity, contra-suggestibility and independence. The child at this age is likely to express his curiosity by asking an endless series of questions.

Adolescence is marked especially by the maturation of sex emotions and by

the development of altruism and co-cooperativeness. These in large measure furnish the basis for the formation of attitudes that differentiate adults from children. Boys at the age of twelve years may have a distant interest in girls and they may even have crushes on particular girls, but their interest is quite different from what it will be some years later.

2. PHYSICAL FACTORS

Clinical psychologists have generally recognised that physical health and vitality are important factors in determining adjustment, and frequently it has been found that malnutrition or disease or accidents have interfered so seriously with normal development that serious behaviour disturbances have followed.

3. HOME INFLUENCES

It is generally accepted that attitudes are determined largely by social environment and that home influences are especially important.

4. THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The home environment is of primary importance in the formation of early attitudes, but friends, associates and the general social environment come to have an increasing influence as the child grows older and has wider social contacts.

5. GOVERNMENT

The form of the government seems to be an important factor in determining attitudes both towards government itself and towards other things.

6. MOVIE PICTURES

Attendance at movie pictures constitutes another important possible influence in determination of attitudes. Thurstone concluded that films definitely change social attitudes, although only about 10 per cent of the attitudes studied seemed to be affected by movie attendance.

7. THE TEACHER

Brown asked 300 graduate and undergraduate students in educational sociology to evaluate the various factors in their school experience that had been influential in the formation of personality and character traits. According to their judgement, the personalities of their teachers had been the most important single factor, 65.3 per cent thought this influence had been good, but 33.3 per cent thought it had been unfavourable. Only about 10 per cent did not consider, the teacher's influence important.

8. THE CURRICULUM

Thorndike asked 155 teachers to rate eleven subjects and activities on the basis of what they considered the value of these to be or the training of character. Teaching has the highest rank, but athletic sports come next. English literature and history have the best ranks for the regular school subjects; mathematics and foreign languages are ranked much lower. This indicates that, in the opinion of this group of teachers, literature and the social sciences have more influence than other subjects on the determination of attitudes. This seems a reasonable view and it suggests that the units of work and the readings in these areas should be selected with particular reference to their probable influence on the attitudes formed by the students.

9. TEACHING METHODS

One of the categories in Brown's study was "*manner of presentation*" of subject matter. This was judged to have a favourable effect by 8.0 per cent of the students and an unfavourable effect by 17.7 per cent.

Development of Attitude

Attitudes are not mere accidents of individual experience. They result from day-to-day living in the home, in the school, and in the community. Whatever attitude children develop can be traced, in part at least, to the effect upon them, of teacher precept and example. The challenge to teacher is that of helping the learner retain his identity, develop his individuality and absorb a background of democratic culture. Theoretically all education is aimed at helping learners develop to the full extent of their ability and those attitudes that fit them for living constructively in a democratic society.

Attitudes are formed without direction and also by direction as the result of careful planning by a person or persons who desire to encourage the development of certain attitudes in others. One function of school is that of stimulating young people towards acquisition of

attitudes that are individually and socially desirable. It is through initiation, emotional experience and deliberate efforts on the part of the individual himself, teacher, and other and new attitudes arise.

Child is a great initiator and builds its most of attitudes in that way. Adolescent develops attitude by his enlarging adjustment problems with expanding groups. The environment to which he is exposed influences the attitude either desirable or undesirably. Radio, television, film and printed matter contribute to the attitude development. Thus, there are so many factors that influence the adults to develop attitudes.