

Students of Social Work in the Slipstream of the Politics of Activation: Results of Explorative Studies.

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1 Introduction

In some parts of society there exists the impression that social work represents “the good” of the world. Social work seems to incorporate what nowadays seems to be increasingly disappearing in society: affection, support, well-meaning words for those who are on the edge of society, or who are indeed no longer part of society.

This attitude is illustrated by the German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1993, 371): “Dass der Mensch von Natur aus gut sei, diese merkwuerdige Idee hat in der Sozialarbeit ihr letztes Reservoir (the idea that the human being is good by nature is only still held in social work)”.

This statement needs further examination. Since the 1970’s the academic discussion in social work discusses both the controlling and the helping side of social work (e.g. Boehnisch/Loesch 1973, Dickens 2011, Healy 2005, 172ff; Huenersdorf 2010). Even though the theoretical opinions differ, no one in professional social work still accepts the notion that social work is just a “helping profession”. It is well established that the support of social workers is also orientated on normalisation and control, otherwise social work in modern society would not be possible. On the other hand it is essential for social work as a profession that even though there is the dimension of control, social work requires an element of support and aid (Edelmann 1977, 67). Social work is just possible if the profession is seen by the public and the client to work towards the enhancement and wellbeing of the client and improving their chances of inclusion in society (Wagenblass 2004).

This dilemma of help on the one hand and controlling on the other is the main subject of the following article. Social work has to be seen by its potential clients as a “friendly institution”. In reality, as far as society is concerned, it has the function to normalize and have services that secure social control. The authors of this article examine this dilemma on a professional level with a focus upon students of social work. The students are challenged to develop during their studies an attitude that enables them for their future work to balance the need for help and support on the one hand and control on the other (Becker-Lenz et al 2012; Oevermann 2009).

It is evident that students selectively absorb the knowledge and very individually reflect the academic discourse (e.g. Nagel 1997; Schweppe 2006; Thole/ Kuester-Schapfl 1997). Biographically established experiences of the students can be modified by their academic studies. However, it is not possible to completely transform them (Grasshoff/ Schweppe 2009). Studying theoretical positions of social work does not automatically lead to an internalization of such positions. The reasons for that are very complex. On an analytical level

it can be distinguished between experiences of socialization *during the process of studying* and socialization *before the studies*:

During their academic education students are confronted with the fact that social work is a heterogenic discipline. The academic curricular are organized with an interdisciplinary focus. Subjects related to educational science, sociology, psychology, law and other topics that are not genuine subjects of social work are part of the regular curriculum. Also, there is no consistent consent about what is defined as “genuine” professional attitude of social work. A broad range of theoretical approaches compete; the history of social work is complex and the working areas are divergent. Currently it is unknown whether it is possible to develop a professional attitude or identity as a social worker by studying social work – and if so it is unknown which processes enables students to develop such professional attitudes (Becker-Lenz et al 2012, 24).

Before studying students have a broad range of individual socialization experiences. The students don’t enter their academic education as blank slate. They show biographical pre-experiences which will be part of their academic education (Friebertshaeuser 2006). Especially in the case of social work it is essential that students during their life span develop attitudes and opinions toward social issues via social contacts, mass media and institutional connections. In this context especially institutions of the welfare system function as “educational agent” (“Erziehungsagentur”) (Lessenich 2012). According to Lessenich it is characteristic to the “activated” welfare state that a certain type of attitude is formed by a specific political logic: the concept of the human being as an “Aktivbuerger” (active citizen):

“Jeder Mensch ist Hueter des Humankapitalschatzes, jeder Buerger ein Traeger von produktiven Potenzialen – und alle sind sie gehalten, diese Schaeetze zu heben und ihre Potenziale zu entfalten” (Lessenich 2012, 61). (Every person is the keeper of a treasure of human capital; every citizen is a repository of productive potentials. All human beings are asked to discover their treasures and develop and utilise their potentials).

In this logic, people with social issues have not been active enough or did not appropriately invest into their human capital. Problems are individualised (Bruett 2011; Dahme/ Wohlfahrt 2005; Dingeldey 2011). Social support should be available a short time only and aim to empower people to solve their issues by themselves. Empirical studies show that this logic is not primarily associated with the motive of aid. Instead, institutional support seems to be legitimised if a person is not at all able to cope with their issues (Oorschot 2006). This interpretation of problems has been de-legitimised by political reforms that focus upon activation of the past years. If future professionals of social work are more influenced by their biographical pre-experiences than by the impact of academic education it is to be expected that the future generation of social workers follow the attitude that people are responsible for their own social issues and social support is just available *quid pro quo*¹. There is a need for empirical research that proves or refutes this hypothesis. The following article provides research results of studies conducted at universities in Germany. Before we discuss the research results we will discuss theoretically the conceptualisation of professional attitudes in social work.

¹This argument needs some differentiation: Current social political reforms personalise social problems in a way that social problems result as a lack of motivation or a lack of virtues. But that tendency of political reform did not lead to a widespread disregard of the established welfare system in Germany. On the contrary, the German welfare state is well regarded by the German public (Nuechter et al 2010; Sachweh et al 2009; Wendt 2008).

2 Attitudes in the context of the development of a professional stance

The individual preconditions for becoming a professional social worker have been discussed in a broad manner. That includes the question of “geistigen Muetterlichkeit” (spiritual motherhood) (Salomon 1926), moral attitude (Mueller, 1987), as well as a broad range of descriptions of competencies (Dewe/Ferchhoff 1986), which focus on personal maturity, integrity, wisdom, holistic views, experience, motivation, spontaneity, identification, conscientiousness, feeling of the fingertips, strengths of character and a positive ethical orientation. As during the life span accumulated personal attributes and pre-professional attitudes (von Spiegel 2011) as well as a question of “Eignung” (suitability) § 72 Abs.1 SGB VIII) personal attributes are still important. They build the foundation of professional development and qualification.

The understanding of “attitudes” that is used in this article bases on the individual preconditions for professional work that which is the professional orientation of action² or the “Haltung” (attitudes and stances) of the professionals in social work. The formal directions for professional work defined for instance in mission statements, professional concepts or professional law can be seen as structural support for professional work. But they always offer room for interpretation that enables professionals to adapt formal direction to their specific working conditions. The interpretations of formal directions depend on the attitudes of the individual professional.

Professional competence comprises ability (“Können”), knowledge (“Wissen”) and attitude (“Haltung”) (von Spiegel 2011, 96f). Ideally competence bases on the relationship of a professional knowledgebase, a set of skills and the ability to act appropriately as well as on specific motives and interests. Competence also means the ability to define in a specific situation an appropriate action and balance the needs of the involved people and the environment of action (von Spiegel 2011, 82). “Können” (ability) is based on a methodical skillset that enables the ‘artisanal’ implementation of professional tasks. “Wissen” (knowledge) encompasses a broad range of knowledge bases including scientific knowledge. And “Haltung” (attitude) is defined by the fact that professional action in social work is based on ethical values (von Spiegel 2011). Competent action requires the skill and willingness to reflect and confront the personal values and attitudes with the fundus of knowledge and values that are related to the profession of social work (von Spiegel 2011). Peters (2011, 216) describes two (positive) elements of professional attitude: Firstly an individual orientation that is based on ethical principles as an individual basic attitude. And secondly professional actions that are orientated on that specific basic attitude which is justified by ethical reason and implements reflective values and norms.

Due to the fact that professional social workers are challenged in their day to day work to interpret formal directions and adapt those directions according to the needs and circumstances of a specific case, it is fundamental to develop a set of professional attitudes that guide and justify decisions for action made by the professional (Mayntz/ Scharpf 1995, 52). Therefore it is essential that future professionals develop profession-related attitudes during their academic qualification to professionalize their actions (Dewe/ Otto 2011). That

² Orientations of action comprise both, cognitive and motivational aspects. Cognitive aspects focus on perception of situations and options to action as well as predictable outcomes (Mayntz/ Scharpf 1995, 53). Motivational aspects are factors of propulsion for meaningful action (in the sense of Max Weber). That includes also views in choosing options of actions (Mynatz/ Scharpf 1995, 54).

challenges the question how to form attitudes in students that reflect the disciplinary discourse³.

The academic education should offer the opportunity to reflect personal attitudes and biographical knowledge and put them in context with the ethical values of the profession to shape a new professional attitude (Becker-Lenz/ Müller 2009).

3 Some comments about socialization at universities

As discussed in the introduction, developing a social pedagogical attitude during the academic education is a difficult task. Attitudes are on principle changeable, but at the same time they are so in-grained that they become the inner and outer nature of a person (Winkler 2011, 17). Research about socialization processes at universities confirm this skeptical view. Personal experiences before and during academic education are very complex, they are not clearly predictable and they are rooted in very individual reflections.

However, on principal there is the possibility that despite all difficulties academic education can influence attitudes in students. For example, some research describes how attitudes towards the question of social equality are not just formed by the primary socialisation, but changes much later in a person's biography (Danigelis et al 2007; Elchardus/Spruyt 2009; Wegener 2010). Cross-sectional studies have shown that changes in attitudes can't be found in all students, but some groups of students change their attitudes due to their academic education (Friebertshaeuser 2006; Horstkemper/Tillmann 2008; Schweppe 2006).

A Belgian cross-sectional and longitudinal study has published very informative results (Elchardus/Spruyt 2009): According to this study both strong selection processes as well as some socialisation effects are evident during academic education processes. Students of all kind of subjects show already at the beginning of their academic education a diverse range of social-political attitudes (selection). Those attitudes then change depending on the choice of subjects (socialization). Especially in the area of social science, changes in attitudes during the process of education have been evident, not so much in the studies of economics or law. The lack of research in Germany is the main barrier to compare the development of student's attitudes in different discipline (Bauer et al 2010, 2).

4 Surveys with students and professionals engaged in social work

The major gap in research can't be closed by this article. However, in the following article we compare three different cross sectional research studies that involve mainly students of social work. Those studies were conducted in 2010 in three different universities. The results of those studies are supplemented by an additional study that focuses on professionals that already work in the field of social work. The studies were based on two main research questions:

1. What relevance have welfare critical attitudes in (future) professionals of social work?

³ In theory professional social work is defined as professional identity (Harmsen 2004) or as professional habitus that enables the social worker to apply his specific professional understanding of a specific case in a professional team (Becker-Lenz/ Müller 2009, Graßhoff 2011). Professional work is not standardized work. A social worker acts in a professional manner if he is able to overcome uncertainties (Müller 2011, 144) in applying his knowledge and skillset according to his professional values and attitudes (Düring 2011).

2. Can punitive tendencies be seen in connection with welfare critical attitudes? That means for instance that in the work with disadvantaged groups interventions are connected with negative sanctions.

Both research questions have been tackled differently so the results of the research studies are not directly comparable. In describing the results of the three research studies we do not seek to follow a stringent research analysis but would like to demonstrate explorative tendencies that underline the need for further research. Therefore we will not describe in further detail the methodological process of the research but rather present the results in a rather descriptive way.

4.1 Survey with students of the University of Bielefeld

At the University of Bielefeld, approximately 180 future educational scientists (Diploma, BA, MA as well as a minority of 9% of students who have educational science as their minor subjects), have been questioned during a mandatory lecture in which the main subject was social work at the Faculty of Educational Science about their political and moral orientations (Ziegler 2011). Of those students, 58% agreed with a statement “it is important that pedagogic has a strong focus on the value of discipline”. 53% of those students agreed with the statement that “criminals should be punished harder” and 25% agreed with “we should be harder on outsiders and trouble makers and people that create unrest in order to maintain law and order”. 52% of questioned students felt that social workers should educate young people so they know how to “behave properly”, 44% feel that criminals should rather be punished than receive support and therapy towards rehabilitation. Nearly a quarter of all questioned students find that the law should be harder to punish people that oppose police man. These questions were chosen to operationalise “punitive authority”.

The research did not just focus on the punitive attitudes but also on students attitudes connected with welfare. The view that “people who receive welfare money are taking advantage of welfare benefits” is shared by 55% of the students. 51% of the students find that in Germany most of the unemployed people could really find work if they only wanted to. 73% of the students agreed with the statement “whoever really makes an effort in society can achieve something or be someone”. 32% share the opinion that most single parent mothers just have children in order to receive welfare payments to avoid employment. 43% share the opinion that a lot of unemployed people and those receiving social benefits just don’t want to go to work and 40% of questioned students share the opinion that the social security system leads to the situation where more and more people don’t want to take on personal responsibility for their lives. 77% of the students are convinced that there are a lot of families that have lived for so many years on social welfare so their children develop an attitude that working for money is not worthwhile.

Those research questions can summarize under the headline “skepticism towards the welfare system”.

If we add up these research items we can conclude that more of a third of the questioned students have an authoritarian punitive attitude. A clear majority of the students (54%) can be considered as skeptical towards the welfare system. There is a relationship between both components of $r=.592$.

A major result is that these attitudes “ceteris paribus” hardly differ between the different educational levels (Diploma, BA, MA). However, there is a clear connection to the number of

semesters studied. The longer the student received an academic education, the lesser punitive attitudes or “welfare skeptical” tendencies in students are shown.

The statements of the students show a correlation to attitudes of equality. For example the extent of a person’s attitude of egalitarianism⁴ correlates negatively with punitivity ($r = .222$) and skepticism towards welfare support ($r=.309$). Achievement-orientated individualism⁵ correlates significantly positive with punitivity ($r=.485$) and skepticism towards welfare support ($r=.641$).

The research results show that an attitude of achievement-orientated individualism is more evident in the questioned students than egalitarianism. Egalitarianism is rather accepted if it is “directed downwards”. For instance, students disagree mostly with statements such as “Universities should implement a stronger numerus clausus in order to minimize the number of students in seminars to create an effective learning atmosphere” (just 8.4% of students agreed with this statement).

Overall students identified themselves with 52% as “rather left” in the political spectrum. Just 3% consider themselves as “very left”. Further 3% identified themselves as “rather right”; no one consider themselves as “very right” on the political spectrum. In summary we can state that: The more students identify themselves towards the left political spectrum, the more their attitudes are oriented to equality and welfare (and the lesser to punitivity).

Those results lead to the conclusion that political education should be part of the curriculum in social work and pedagogical studies.

4.2 Survey with students of the University of Vechta

During a teaching-research-project in 2010 students of the University of Vechta were questioned about their attitudes towards punishment. The design and results of the research in Vechta show similarities to the study conducted in Bielefeld. The data collection was based on a standardized questionnaire⁶. At the University of Vechta overall 252 students participated in this research. With 77 % (N=194) most of the students were enrolled to study social work (BA). Further 15.9% studied a BA “Combined Studies”, 6.3% gerontology and 0.8% Management of services. Most students (54.6%⁷) studied at the time of research in their second semester and could be considered as beginner students. This is of importance as students in their first and second semester did not cover in their curriculum reflections of deviant behaviors, delinquency, and criminology according to their plan of studies. That

⁴Egalitarianism was measured by items such as “Do you consider as fair if parents pass on their wealth to their children even if that means children of richer parents have then better chances in society?”.

⁵Achievement-orientated individualism was operationalised by items such as “People just take on additional responsibilities in their job if they receive additional payments for it.” or “An incentive for achievement depends on differences in incomes”.

⁶ The questionnaire was mostly with items over four-stages Likert-scale designed. Overall the questions focuses on issues such as punitivity, attitudes towards the justice system and towards alternatives to punishment and prison sentences, attitudes towards the welfare system such as opinions on equality and self-responsibility; devaluation of certain groups of people, sense of security and worries about crime; attitudes towards deviant youth, self-efficacy and life-satisfaction as well as statements regarding social work as an institution of punishment and disciplinisation.

⁷30.6% (N=77) were in their fourth semester and further 14.7% (N=37) in higher than 4 semester.

means that their attitudes towards punishment and sanctions are rather based on personal views than informed by scientific education. Dominant in this sample are females with 76.2% (N=192), 22.6% (N=57) were male.

Overall the results of the research lead to the conclusion that amongst the students are attitudes evident that are skeptical towards the welfare system and rather agree with restrictive, punitive and authoritative sanctions.

A central question is how society treats its “weakest” members: with retributive, autoritive and segregative elements or with improving chances of equal access to resources of a society. The students agree that a minimum standard of living should be provided. But many agree that this must be combined with achievement (79 - 87%) and incentive (42% - 48%): About 42% of the questioned students find that an incentive for achievement should always be connected to differences in income. 48% agreed with the statement “people that life in a welfare-state take on less responsibility for securing their life”.

Even more skepticism could be seen towards potential recipients of welfare money: Students formulate prejudgments towards the unemployed and recipients of welfare money. The tendencies in answering the research questions bring up an association of the so-called “Sozialschmarotzer” (“social-freeloader”). 88% of the students believe that there are families that live more than one generation of welfare-money because the children form an attitude of “achievement and employment are not worthwhile”. More than a half of the students (53%) agree with the statement: “A lot of babies are born in a family because of the children-bonus received by the welfare-system”. 70% of the questioned students find that the majority of welfare-recipients receive support inappropriately and take advantage of the system. 76% follow the idea that long-term unemployed live a comfortable life at the cost of society. 61% believe that welfare-recipients do not want to seek employment; 54% agree that most of those unemployed would find employment if they would only look hard enough for it.

The tendencies of answering questions regarding deviance, punishment and execution of punishment show a rather hard attitude towards criminals and deviant youth. Punishment is considered as the most effective answer of society for criminal behavior (52% agreement) and 48% of the students find that the current laws are not tough enough to punish criminals and deviant youth appropriately.

However, a more differentiated picture evolves if the option for punishment is set against an option of rehabilitation and re-socialization. Just 12.3% of students find that punishment is more effective than rehabilitation and re-socialization.

If a person is however convicted and serves a sentence in prison then students of social work find that a prisoner should have a harder life than people that life outside of prisons (55%).

Misconduct of young people should be corrected by professionals of social work (79% agreement). 66% of students find that social workers should educate their clients to behave correctly and norm-adequately. More than a half of the students see one reason for youth crime is that young people lack respect towards authorities and order (53% agreement). 34% of the students find it important that pedagogic focuses on values such as discipline and obedience. To secure law and order 56% of the students find it is appropriate to be harder towards criminals and 40% feel that in order to keep law and order subculture, trouble-makers

and marginalized people should be punished. Those answers demonstrate a clear punitive attitude in students of social work.

The results of this research are comparable with results of other studies (e.g., Rubin 2011). Similarly to these studies, there is a strong relation between a welfare-critical attitude and a punitive attitude. Students that demand distributive justice and agree with the principles of a welfare-system have less punitive tendencies. Also, there is a significant connection between individual punitivity and the faith in justice. Students with an optimistically and liberal view of life show more tolerance towards deviant behavior. On the contrary students that feel powerless and fatalistic show rather punitive attitudes ($r = 0.373$ and $r = 2.45$). Also, a relation between individualistic responsibility and punity is evident: Students that believe in achievements and individual responsibility show rather punitive attitudes.

Even though those results have limited meaningfulness and can't cover the full extent of the issue it is possible to develop recommendations for academic education and practice of social work: the interpretation of clients as "social-freeloaders" and the idea of deviation as the result of individual accountability will impact the work of the future generation of professionals. Further research on an in-depth level is needed.

4.3 Survey with students of the University of education in Freiburg

At the Pedagogical University of Freiburg an explorative research study was conducted in 2010 questioning teacher students as well as students of pedagogic subjects in and outside of a school-related setting⁸. The study focuses on punitive attitudes in students of pedagogic. Also, questions of attitudes toward social politics, philosophies of punishment and aims of education were addressed during this research. The results based on an analysis of overall 228 questionnaires. The sample comprises 121 students of teaching, 75 BA-students and 32 diploma-students (Dollinger 2011). Most of the students that chose pedagogical subjects outside the school-setting were students of social work.

The results relating to the attitudes of students concerning social politics are very revealing. Critical positions found quite a lot of agreement. For instance 48% of the students questioned agreed with the statement "a lot of people lead a comfortable life within the 'social hammock'". 28% of the students found that too many people of marginalized groups depend on welfare support. Nearly a quarter (24%) agreed with the arguments of the "Hartz-reforms" that social support should be only offered if people show initiative for achievement in return. Even though the number of students that share those attitudes seems small it has to be stated that the results are worrying, considering those students represent future pedagogues that might be working with disadvantaged children and young people.

The following statements illustrate students' attitudes regarding philosophies of punishment with punitive tendencies: 10% of the students agreed with the statement "criminal youth should be punished with a prison sentence", whereas 60% (rather) disagree. Approximately a third of the student (29%) answered neutrally. Rather manifestly are the results regarding the

⁸ The pedagogical subjects in the non-school related setting comprise social work and adult education. The research study was conducted before students specify their academic education in choosing between social work and other subjects. A small number of students that study "diploma of pedagogic" are included in this group of students too.

statement “criminal foreigners should be deported”: 12% agreed, 75% disagreed and 13% are neutral.

Also, students’ positions regarding specific offenses are rather clear. The students were asked to rate on six different levels of punishment which one seems to be the most appropriate punishment for certain offenses (Reuband 2010). The offences include first-time theft in a department store (young offender; low value); repeated consumption of hashish and burglary (high values). In the case of theft, the results show that even young offenders that have not been in contact with the police before should be punished with a quite hard sanction such as community work. Even though the scientific recommendation of some criminologists consider waiving the punishment because of a high likelihood of stigmatisation related to those processes (Albrecht 2010, 325), most students would not consider waiving the punishment as an option: Just 4% would consider this. In the case of consumption of hashish, 16% consider waiving negative sanctions and 30% suggested social community work as a sanction. Stronger views were formulated regarding repeated burglary: here the preferred level of punishment was imprisonment. Overall the results show stronger punitive attitudes in students of teacher training than in students of social work (e.g., in the case of burglary 35% of students in teacher training demanded imprisoning compared to 19% of students of social work).

As already known from results of other research studies there is a significant relation between welfare-critical attitudes and punitivity: Students with critical views regarding social welfare tend to develop stronger views on punishing crime.

Furthermore, the results concerning the philosophy of punishments are relevant: Conducting a factor-analysis three philosophies of punishment were developed, which can be defined as punitive philosophy, social-integrative philosophy and pedagogical philosophy. The research results show: students that follow a punitive philosophy are more willing to punish specific offences. On the other hand students with a rather social-integrative philosophy show low inclination for punishment.

Surprisingly, a connection between a pedagogical philosophy of punishment and punitivity could not be discovered: Students that believe crime could be confronted with pedagogical interventions (such as working with parents or enhancing individual competencies) show neither punitive tendencies nor tendencies for non-punitivity. It seems that pedagogical attitudes can be positively combined with different initiatives against crime. This aspect seems to develop high popularity in the context of youth-crime-politics (Dollinger/ Schabach 2013, 240): Education of young delinquents takes place either way – if punishment is intended and also if sincere help was the intention.

Also a relation between objectives of education and punitivity can be discovered. The objectives of education can be divided by factor-analysis in normalistic objectives and emancipative. Normalistic orientated educational objectives aim to order and obedience; emancipative objectives aim to enhance autonomy and self-confidence. Students that developed normalistic educational objectives are rather punitive whereas students that follow emancipative educational objectives developed low punitivity.

Overall the results of the research study show that a punitive attitude is not very dominant amongst the students. However, a significant potential towards punitive tendencies was evident. Those tendencies require attention during academic education because attitudes

regarding punitivity are not isolated. Those attitudes are related to attitudes towards education and welfare-criticism. It can be assumed that those students – regardless a specific field of work – might show punitive tendencies in working as future social workers.

4.4 Interview with professionals

In a recent research study conducted by Holger Ziegler and Simon Mohr as part of the project “Future of human resource development in children and youth support (Zukunft Personalentwicklung in der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe)” overall 2300 professionals of 57 different institutions have been questioned. One part of the research focused on attitudes of the professionals towards their clients. Approximately 36% agree with the view that most problems of the clients are a consequence of laziness or lack of responsibility for their own life, and 37% mean that the welfare-support that the clients receive rather leads to less initiative. A third of the questioned students agree that social workers should educate their clients in how to behave properly. Around 40% advocate for more emphasis on discipline and order in social work. More than 2/5 of the students find it important to punish clients for a lack of collaboration in the support process. Those results give an insight in how future social workers might execute their social support – in a rather “blaming-disciplinary” way (responsibilisierend-disziplinierendes Deutungsmuster) (Mohr/ Ziegler 2012).

Rather conservative theories speculate whether a stronger willingness to punish might reflect a kind of professionalism that demonstrates the ability for strong action instead of “Kuschelpädagogik” (“cuddly pedagogic”). But the current research shows the opposite.

On an individual level a “blaming-disciplinary” attitude correlates in a significant way negatively with further education, work-satisfaction, autonomy of actions and decisions, and the extent of professional relations to clients, interest on the client’s wellbeing, and the demand on quality work and efficacy. This attitude correlates positively with an economical view than with a client-orientated approach, with burnout, physical discomfort, cynicism, frustration and shortness of staff.

It is of interest that those attitudes are not just individual. According to the research results there is a strong relation between the extent of “blaming-disciplinary” attitudes in individual staff members and the extent of those orientations on an organisational and structural level ($r=.323$). Therefore it is not surprising that we found “blaming-disciplinary” attitudes in entire institutions. It is obvious that punitive orientated structures of an organisation impact on the individual attitudes and actions of a professional. The extent of “blaming-disciplinary” attitudes in an organisation relates to deficits in staff education ($r=.236$), restriction of staff’s autonomy ($r=.388$), with a negative review of leadership ($r=.223$), a low orientation on the clients ($r=.448$), a negative working-climate ($r=.505$), a low work-satisfaction ($r=.306$), a low staff-retention ($r=.363$), high extent of pressure on the staff ($r=.424$) as well as a broad range of further characteristics that show a punitive orientated institution in a bad light.

From a political-progressive view the extent of punitivity is a worrying fact itself. However, at least those who agree with an ideology of compulsion and punishment should realise that punitivity is an indicator for bad working conditions, high cynicism and alienation from work.

Data from the thesis of Verena Klomann (2013) that is based on a representative study of staff members of a social service (ASD) in Rheinland demonstrate the importance of the content of the curriculum of social work for the development of students attitudes. Students that reflect critically on issues of power and authority during their academic education have a lower

punitive attitude, a positive view on the clients of social work, and a positive attitude towards the welfare-system. Also, according to the research of Klomann (2013) professional social workers that reflect on power and authorities during their academic education feel that they are able to implement a lot of the content of their training in their professional work and see the academic education as a good basis for their professional work.

According to the results of current studies in all field of social work the level of professionalization is raising. Therefore it could be predicted that the level of punitivity should decline. However, the research of Mohr and Ziegler as well as the study from Kloman contradict this prediction and find a rather increasing tendency of punitivity.

5 Conclusion

In summary the results of the four research studies underline the importance of analyzing attitudes in (future) professionals. This is relevant in regard to their qualifications but also regarding their attitudes towards punitivity and welfare-criticism. The results of the studies show a tendency that professional social workers develop a stronger emphasis on control and conditionalization of care and support. To define which support is appropriate for which group of clients is not just a matter of individual choice but also defined by society and institutions (Urban-Stahl 2009, 81). The ambiguity of care and support on one hand and control on the other is a structural element of social work (Urban-Stahl 2009, 78). However, that does not imply a punitive orientation in concepts and professional actions (Kessl 2011). Social work itself leads to “Neuprogrammierung des Sozialen” (resetting of social life) (Lutz 2008, 6) which requires a reflection of professional and ethical maxims.

The tendency of activation is congruent with objectives of social work following the principle of “Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe” (Empowerment) (Kessl/ Otto 2003, 66-68). However, it should be reflected that the current activation-program of the current welfare-system operates rather in a repressive and excluding manner that covers social pre-conditions of life and structural issues in focusing on individual (miss-) conduct. It is the professional responsibility of social work to counteract those orientations and activate clients in a genuine socially responsible and appropriate manner. The discussed research results underline the importance of implementing discourses and reflection regarding activation and attitudes to punitivity in academic curricula. Further research is necessary to define the best strategies and pre-conditions for doing so.

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