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Forming Youth Policy: The Experience of Kazakhstan

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Abstrac

Both the present and the future of any country depend on the socialization of its youth. As a result, state and society as a whole determine the appropriate directions of life activity aimed at promoting the social formation of the youth. At a certain stage of development, new structures form, which perform a specific function, i.e. implement a set of tasks that are united under the name "youth policy".

The article analyzes different approaches to defining the concept and content of such categories as "state youth policy" and "youth policy". We have proved that the state is the main subject implementing youth policy and analyzed the Chinese experience in this sphere.

The article presents the results of the sociological research entitled "Attitudes towards youth policy and the study of the needs and interests of young people in Almaty", which is the basis of the corresponding conclusions.

We have also concluded that the formation of youth policy in modern conditions requires the active involvement of young people who are full-fledged members of society and should take an active part in its life.

Keywords: youth, youth policy, state youth policy, government bodies.

Formando una política juvenil: la experiencia de Kazajstán

Resumen

Tanto el presente como el futuro de cualquier país dependen de la socialización de su juventud. Como resultado, el estado y la sociedad en su conjunto determinan las direcciones apropiadas de la actividad de la vida destinadas a promover la formación social de los jóvenes. En una cierta etapa de desarrollo, se forman nuevas estructuras, que realizan una función específica, es decir, implementan un conjunto de tareas que están unidas bajo el nombre de "política de juventud".

El artículo analiza diferentes enfoques para definir el concepto y el contenido de categorías tales como "política juvenil estatal" y "política juvenil". Hemos demostrado que el estado es el sujeto principal que implementa la política de juventud y analizamos la experiencia china en esta esfera.

El artículo presenta los resultados de la investigación sociológica titulada "Actitudes hacia la política de juventud y el estudio de las necesidades e intereses de los jóvenes en Almaty", que es la base de las conclusiones correspondientes.

También hemos concluido que la formación de una política de juventud en las condiciones modernas requiere la participación activa de los jóvenes que son miembros de la sociedad y que deben participar activamente en su vida.

Palabras clave: juventud, política juvenil, política juvenil estatal, organismos gubernamentales.

1. Introduction

Some scholars (Fisher, Dybicz, 1999; Verschelden et al., 2010; Zainieva, 2006) believe that the recent development and adoption of specific state measures that would regulate the conditions for moving into adulthood and contribute to the youth's gradual entry into independent life began with the UK in the 16th century.

However, only in the 1960s-1970s, the concept of "youth policy" began to be regarded as an integral, political-legal and organizational-managerial system that has proper resource allocation, including professionally trained staff for the realization of rights, freedoms and needs of young people. During this

period youth policy in Great Britain, Germany, France and other Western countries began to form as an independent state activity (Eliseev, 2015). This process was influenced by the systemic economic crisis of the 1970s and early 1980s. First, it manifested in student revolts in France in the late 1960s and had a negative impact on such traditional public institutions of socializing the youth as family, school and employment.

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the need for state intervention in youth-related issues led to the formation of a complex state youth policy in France, Italy, Germany, Great Britain and other Western countries with the appropriate legislative base and institutional foundation. Furthermore, structural subdivisions were also formed to implement a set of tasks within the framework of youth policy (Zinurova, Tuzikov, 2012). For instance, there are the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, as well as federal and state councils for children and young people in Germany (Wondratschek, 2014).

I. Ilinskii distinguishes between two types of youth policy: state and public (Ilinskii, 2001). State youth policy is an activity of specially authorized state bodies aimed at solving the existing problems of young people, ensuring their socialization and inclusion into social and political life. The scholar considered public youth policy as a combination of the existing ideas and views of young people that were realized through formal and informal structures of civil society for the needs of sustainable development (Ilinskii, 2008).

In our opinion, this difference is conditional since there is no clear distinction between these policies. However, public youth policy is less manageable than the state one, which is based not only on formal norms but also informal institutions, stereotypes, moral and mental foundations that have been formed over the centuries.

Summarizing the existing concepts in political science and sociology, we can distinguish between three approaches to the definition of this concept and content of such categories as "state youth policy" and "youth policy".

Followers of the first approach (Morciano et al., 2016; Zubok et al., 2016) that can be conventionally called "statist" claim that state youth policy is presented as a system of integrated and regular state activities in relation to young people, therefore they do not recognize the existence or diminish the importance of other types of youth policy.

The second approach to studying youth policy is presented by scholars (Flanagan, Sherrod, 1998; Camino, 2000) who prefer non-governmental types that are present in society. In this regard, youth policy represents the activity

carried out by the youth itself, as well as the activity of other political actors to reveal the potential of young people.

Developing the idea of two-component youth policy, including state youth policy, V.A. Lukov suggests using a more general term "public youth policy" for denoting the second component, which means "the process and result of the interaction of young people with social and political movements (including the youth ones), organizations, parties, amateur and informal youth associations. The subjects of such a policy can be actors outside the sovereignty of some state: international organizations, humanitarian funds or transnational corporations" (Lukov, 2013, p. 138).

Supporters of the third approach (Williamson, 2008; Scales, Benson, Roehlkepar-tain, 2001) distinguish between the concepts of "state youth policy" and "youth policy". In this context, they determine state youth policy as the core of youth policy. Thus, H. Williamson writes that "first, youth policy is a broader concept because it includes the policies of all government structures, public institutions and organizations, i.e. subjects of such a policy; second, not just the proclamation of specific ideas but their legislative consolidation can turn young people into a real force" (Sherman, 2002, p. 70).

Many scientists (White, Wyn, 1998; Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, 2002; Zeldin, 2002; Sherman, 2002; Andersson, 2012; Eliseev, 2014; Melnikov, 2014) agree that state is the main subject in the implementation of youth policy and performs specific functions to exercise the powers of state bodies, namely:

- 1) The institutionalized system of values common to modern youth that should be legally enshrined and recorded into the main regulatory legal acts, strategies, programs and public awareness campaigns of the above-mentioned values in mass media (Sherman, 2002). The structuralization of the interests and values of various groups of the population and the search for a compromise between them. The state is the only subject capable of performing this function (Andersson, 2012);

- 2) The legal regulation of the activities and interactions conducted by different subjects implementing youth policy (Eliseev, 2014);

- 3) The coordination of efforts of all state bodies, parties, organizations, associations, movements and various social institutions to ensure the necessary conditions for the development and self-realization of young people (Melnikov, 2014; White, Wyn, 1998);

- 4) The social protection of those groups of young people who are unable to solve their own problems or at least improve their own lives (Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, 2002; Zeldin, 2002).

The implementation of youth policy in a certain state is conditioned by many comp

onents of society, in particular, its political system and the corresponding social policy.

Some activities concerned with the implementation of state youth policy are carried out in the former Soviet republics, including the Central Asian region of the CIS countries.

For a start, we should pay attention to the fact that the formation of state youth policy in the CIS countries began in their early days and was based on the traditions laid in the USSR. In the USSR, there were three attempts to develop a proper youth law that will form the corresponding policy: in 1966, 1977, between 1987 and 1991. However, only the last attempt resulted in the adoption of the Soviet Law "On the general principles of state youth policy in the USSR" on April 16, 1991.

The ideas of this law laid the basis for the development of a legislative framework in a number of the CIS countries. Thus, the Law "On state youth policy" was adopted in Kazakhstan on June 26, 1991; the Law "On the foundations of state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan" was adopted in Uzbekistan on November 20, 1991; the Law "On state youth policy" was adopted in Tajikistan on March 13, 1992; the Law "On state youth policy in Turkmenistan" was adopted in Turkmenistan on October 1, 1993.

On June 12, 2000, the Interparliamentary Committee of the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan adopted the model law "On the youth and state youth policy", which defines the objective, principles, main directions and measures for implementing state youth policy (Model law "On state youth policy", 2012). This law encouraged state bodies of the CIS countries in the Central Asian region to adopt new legislative acts on regulating state youth policy:

- The Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the Law "On state youth policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan" in July 2004 (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 581, 2004) and the new Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On state youth policy" on February 9, 2015 (2015);
- Tajikistan adopted the Law "On the youth and state youth policy" on July 15, 2004 (2004);
- Uzbekistan adopted the Law "On state youth policy" on September 14, 2016 (2016);
- Kyrgyzstan adopted the Law "On the foundations of state youth policy" on January 27, 2000 and the new Law "On the foundations of state youth policy" on July 31, 2009 (Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 256, 2009);
- Turkmenistan adopted the Law "On state youth policy" on August 29, 2013 (Law of Turkmenistan No. 423-IV, 2013).

We should emphasize the basic laws that stipulate the mechanisms for the implementation of state youth policy are supplemented by other legislative and legal acts in the Central Asian region of the CIS countries aimed at its implementation. This is not about a wide legal field that conditions the socialization of young people for solving important problems of society as a whole (labor, education, health, etc.) but about the legal and regulatory acts aimed at creating mechanisms for the implementation of state youth policy and specific programs whose object is the youth. Thus, youth-related programs are quite common in many CIS countries.

This process is accompanied by the adoption of other regulations, in particular, resolutions, orders, presidential and governmental decrees. In August 1999, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the concept of state youth policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. In June 2007, the Government approved the concept of supporting and developing the youth competitiveness for 2008-2015, and on February 27, 2013, it adopted the concept of state youth policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2020 "Kazakhstan 2020: the way to the future" (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 191, 2013).

In April 2006, the President of Kyrgyzstan signed a decree stipulating the development of state youth policy in the Kyrgyz Republic until 2010. On August 10, 2017, the subsequent governmental decree approved the program entitled "The development of youth policy for 2017-2020" (Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic 471, 2017).

While regarding executive bodies dealing with the implementation of state youth policy, first, it is necessary to mention that they existed practically in all CIS countries and, second, executive authorities were established in some countries that were only responsible for regulating state youth policy. For example, the Committee on Youth Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (1993-1994 and 1997-2006); the State Committee for Youth Affairs in Kyrgyzstan (1991-1992). However, these functions were often transferred to the authorities dealing with other issues (education and sports) apart from youth policy.

We should also note that, unfortunately, the authorities of most countries experience certain transformations in this sphere. Thus, the highest executive authorities of the CIS countries of the Central Asian region regulating the implementation of state youth policy are as follows: the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan; the State Agency for the Youth, Physical Culture and Sports under the Government of the Kyrgyz

Republic; the Committee on the Youth and Sports under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan; the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan; the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Summarizing the above-mentioned data, we need to highlight that:

1. The implementation of state youth policy in the Central Asian region of the CIS countries is carried out at a fairly high level. In particular, it is revealed by:

- The development and adoption of an effective legislative and regulatory framework for the implementation of state youth policy;
- The formation of structures in government bodies responsible for coordinating actions in the sphere of state youth policy;
- Attempts to involve the youth and its public organizations in the implementation of state youth policy.

2. The analysis we conducted demonstrates that the Republic of Kazakhstan achieved tangible success both in developing the necessary legislative and regulatory framework and in the activities of the executive authorities in the sphere of youth policy if compared to other CIS countries of the Central Asian region.

Nowadays, the Kazakh society is going through deep political, scientific, technical, socio-cultural and economic transformations, whose main factor is the humanization and democratization of all spheres of public life. In such conditions, it is relevant to study the issue of developing effective mechanisms for inspiring young people and determining the priority directions of this type of state activity. The tangible result of introducing public administration reforms objectively determines the revision of scientific approaches to the development of new areas of youth policy.

All these challenges are first reflected at the local level, where representatives of the local government bodies should daily solve many tasks that are aimed at practical work with young people (Mezhina, Vasileva, 2012). In this connection, we conducted the sociological study entitled "Attitudes toward youth policy and the study of the needs and interests of young people in the city of Almaty".

This study aims to clarify the attitude of young people towards the implementation of youth policy in Almaty.

Research hypotheses:

- 1) Ineffective ways and information channels regarding the activities and projects implemented by the city council lead to the fact that young people are unaware of them.
- 2) The lack of interest among young people in the implementation of

youth policy conditions their social passivity.

According to the study results, we can conclude that the objective set above was attained.

2. Methods

The research object is the youth of Almaty at the age of 17 to 35 years.

The research subject is the attitude of young people living in the city of Almaty to youth policy.

The tasks of this study:

- 1) To reveal the attitude of young people in the city of Almaty regarding events held in the framework of youth policy and identify the degree of satisfaction among young people;
- 2) To analyze the attitude of young people to youth policy and events, in which young people want to participate.

The study was conducted in the period from January to March 2019.

The necessary data was collected through a survey (questioning) of young people, i.e. residents of all districts of Almaty. The respondents independently answered the questionnaire we provided. Then we generalized their answers and conclusions on the research results.

Our study comprised the youth aged between 17 and 35 because we were interested in young people who can independently participate in the social and political life of society.

We surveyed 385 people aged 17-35 (N = 385). We used quota sampling and several criteria for selecting observation units (gender, age). The inaccuracy did not exceed 5% and is represented by socio-demographic indicators.

There were 34.8% respondents with higher education, 36.4% respondents with undergraduate education, 13.5% respondents with secondary education and 6.5% respondents with secondary vocational education. The total number of respondents included 45.4% of women and 54.6% of men.

3. Results and discussion

Throughout this sociological study, we have determined the following indicators:

- The level of awareness among young people about the activities of youth policy implemented by the city administration of Almaty;
- The level of youth participation in these events;
- The level of organization of these events from the viewpoint of young people;
- The directions and activities that are interesting to young people of Almaty;
- The level of youth participation in public associations and organizations;

– The level of youth participation in the life of society and student work collectives.

To determine how young people assess the youth policy implemented by the city administration of Almaty, it was necessary to analyze the awareness of young people about this work, the source of information and the level of participation in the events held.

When answering the question: "Do you know about any events held by the city administration?", a large part of the respondents (47.0%) considered themselves well-informed about the events held by the city administration of Almaty. Furthermore, most of them were young people aged 17-28 (30.9%). At the same time, every second respondent (40.3%) did not know about the activity of the city administration and 12.7% of the respondents could not decide whether they knew about the events held by the city administration. Only 6.0% knew about the above-mentioned events and actively participated in them. 26.5% of the respondents sometimes took part in these events (most of them were students).

This state of affairs can be explained either by the insufficient attention of the authorities to informing young people or the reluctance and disinterest of young people in the events implemented within the framework of the urban integrated program. Thus, the awareness among young people of the activities held by the city administration cannot be considered high enough.

The level of participation in such events (Table 1) is regarded as quite low. Thus, only 6.0% of the respondents actively participated in the activities held for young people and 26.5% of the respondents sometimes participated in such events.

Table 1. The respondents' answers to the question "Did you take part in such events?" (the total number of respondents, %)

Possible answers	The number of respondents, %
Yes, I take an active part	6.0
Yes, sometimes	26.5
No	21.6
Difficult to answer	4.4
Did not answer	41.5
Total	100.0

The information support for the programs and activities realized within the framework of youth policy is an important part of their effective organization. The respondents (32.2%) called the Internet the priority source for receiving information about the events held by the city administration of Almaty (Table 2). According to the youth of Almaty, friends are the second-best source (21.8%) and the administration of their educational institution or workplace are the third-best source (18.4%). Traditional mass media were important for a smaller part of the youth: TV was significant for 12.7%; newspapers and magazines were crucial for 4.4%; radio was named as the key source by 3.6%.

Table 2. The respondents' answers to the question: "Which source of information about events was the most effective?" (the total number of respondents, %)

The source of information	The number of respondents, %
Internet	32.2
Friends	21.8
University administration, workplace	18.4
TV	12.7
Other sources	6.6
Newspapers (magazines)	4.4
Radio	3.6
Difficult to answer	0.3

We should note that young people aged between 17 and 28 (71.0%) preferred modern information channels (official Internet websites, Internet forums). To improve the level of awareness among young people regarding youth-related activities, it is necessary to post more information on Internet websites that are in considerable demand among young people.

The youth of Almaty was asked to assess the organization of the events held by the city administration.

In general, the organization of the above-mentioned events was evaluated quite high since 14.8% of the respondents rated it as "high" and 46.3% of the respondents assessed it as "high enough". 33.8% of the respondents considered the level of organization as "average". A small part of the respondents critically assessed the organization of such events by the city administration of Almaty (quite low – 3.7%, low – 1.4%).

To increase the level of youth participation in the events held by the city authorities, we have determined directions and events that are interesting for young

people living in Almaty (Table 3) because, as already noted, the modern level of participating in such events is quite low.

Table 3. The respondents' answers to the question: "Which events supported by the city administration would you attend?" (the respondents were asked to choose no more than three options, %)

Preferable events	The number of respondents, %
Supporting the career development of the youth	32.2
Developing the creative potential of young people	28.8
Solving employment issues	25.2
Forming a healthy lifestyle and preventing offenses	25.2
Focused on sports and tourist activities	24.4
Supporting young families	23.4
Organizing leisure time	23.4
Supporting vulnerable groups of the population	12.5
Encouraging the cooperation of young people in the city, country and international arena	8.1
Promoting the interaction between the city administration and young people	4.9

contribute to their career development (32.2%). 28.8% of the respondents took an interest in the events focused on the improvement of their creative potential. Every fourth respondent (25.2%) noted that they would like to take part in the activities solving issues of employment, the formation of a healthy lifestyle and crime prevention (25.2%). Sports- and tourism-related events were also mentioned by young people (24.4%). The respondents would like to participate in the activities that contribute to the organization of leisure time and support young families (23.4%). At the same time, the programs that support young families were interesting for the majority of young people aged 29-35. Young people were less concerned with the problems of vulnerable groups of the population, youth cooperation and interaction between the government and the youth. Thus, only 12.5% of the respondents expressed a desire to participate in the activities supporting vulnerable groups of the population, 8.1% of the respondents took interest in the events promoting international cooperation in the city and country and only 4.9% of the respondents would like to take part in the events ensuring interaction between the city administration and the youth.

The next set of questions should determine the activity of young people in the social life of Almaty, in particular, the degree of their participation in youth

public associations and youth self-government bodies.

As evidenced by the data obtained, a larger part of young people in Almaty was not members of any youth public associations (79.2%). Among the respondents who participated in public associations (20.8%), the majority comprised men (12.3%) at the age of 17-28 (15.6%). As one can see, there is little activity among the youth of Almaty regarding participation in youth public organizations possibly due to the lack of motivation, including material motivation and their focus on career development.

The respondents who were members of youth public organizations were asked to determine how actively their organizations solved the existing problems (Table 4). It can be noted that members of youth public organizations evaluated the work of the latter quite positively but a certain part of the respondents was hesitant to answer this question, which indicates either their weak awareness of the organization activity or the formal nature of their participation.

Table 4. The respondents' answers to the question: "How actively do youth organizations solve the existing problems?" (the total number of respondents, %)

Possible answers	The number of respondents, %
Take an active part in solving these problems	46.9
Sometimes try to solve the existing problems	25.7
Difficult to answer	23.9
Do not carry out any activities	3.6

Thus, it is evident that 46.9% of the respondents noted that youth public organizations were actively functioning. 25.7% of the respondents believed that they were sometimes involved in solving the existing problems. 23.9% of the respondents found it difficult to answer the question. 3.6% of the respondents said that youth organizations did not carry out any activities at all.

The next question: "Are you a member of youth self-government bodies in universities or labor collectives?" demonstrates that 34.5% of the respondents were members of youth self-government bodies and labor collectives. The remaining 65.5% were not members of such organizations. Young people aged 17-28 (22.5%) were the most active, including women (17.5%) and men (16.7%).

More than half of young people who were members of self-government bodies noted that these bodies were active enough (59.4%). 25.9% of the respondents

claimed that they sometimes participated in the life of their university or work collective. 13.5% of the respondents had difficulties answering this question. 1.2% of the respondents were sure that these structural units did not carry out any activities (Table 5). According to the youth (59.4%), there is active work on the part of youth self-government bodies and labor collectives.

Table 5. The respondents' answers to the question: "How actively do self-government bodies function?" (the total number of respondents, %)

Possible answers	The number of respondents, %
Carry out many activities	59.4
Sometimes participate in youth-oriented events	25.9
Difficult to answer	13.5
Do not carry out any activities	1.2

The respondents were offered a list of directions common to youth policy that are regarded as interesting and necessary (Table 6).

Table 6. The respondents' answers to the question: "Which areas of youth policy are necessary and interesting for you?" (the respondents were asked to choose no more than three options, %)

Preferred directions of youth policy	The number of respondents, %
Employment issues	54.0
Support for the creative youth	39.0
Sports and tourist activities	38.4
Organization of leisure time	33.0
Help in difficult situations	31.4
Preventive measures against unhealthy habits and HIV	18.4
Crime prevention	11.7
Patriotic upbringing	9.9

The respondents were offered a list of directions common to youth policy that Consequently, more than a half of young people living in Almaty (54.0%) considered the direction connected with employment issues the most interesting and desirable since work in a modern society largely determines the life of a person, their confidence in the future and career development. Young people also needed creative support (39.0%), sports and tourist activities (38.4%),

leisure activities (33.0%), assistance in difficult life situations (31.4%). The prevention of bad habits and HIV (18.4%), crime prevention (11.7%) and patriotic upbringing (9.9%) were the last to be noted by the respondents.

Although young people did not consider patriotic upbringing relevant, the overwhelming majority called themselves patriots of the city of Almaty (68.5%). 18.1% of the respondents did not consider themselves patriots and every eighth respondent was hesitant to provide a decisive answer (11.9%).

4. Conclusion

The formation and implementation of youth policy aimed at creating favorable conditions for developing the potential of young people are among the key directions of reforming the Kazakh society. The realization of youth policy in modern conditions requires the active involvement of young people acting as full-fledged members of society and taking an active part in its functioning.

The sociological study aimed at assessing the youth policy implemented by the city administration of Almaty by young people has demonstrated that their awareness of the activities carried out in this sphere is not high enough due to the lack of information in modern channels of its distribution (the Internet) preferred by young people. The level of participation in such events is quite low, which can be explained by both the passivity of young people and their low awareness of the above-mentioned events. However, the respondents' opinions on the level of their organization are quite positive. To increase the participation of young people in the events held by the city authorities, we have determined directions and events that are interesting for the city youth. These events should contribute to career development and employment, improve creative potential, form a healthy lifestyle, sports- and tourism-related activities, leisure activities and support young families.

Regarding the desire of young people to participate in youth programs, we should note that young people are most interested in the activities focused on career development and employment, the improvement of creative potential and support for young families, as well as sports-, tourism- and leisure activities. Young people are least interested in the problems common to vulnerable groups of the population, youth cooperation and interaction between the city executive committee and the youth itself.

As evidenced by the study results, most young people living in Almaty are not members of youth public associations. Full-fledged members are mostly men at the age of 17 to 28. As one can see, there is little activity among young people living in Almaty regarding youth public organizations due to the lack of motivation, including material motivation, and focus on their own careers. In

addition, young people are not actively involved in the life of society or student work collectives. More than half of young people living in Almaty consider the youth policy related to employment issues the most interesting and necessary direction of its development.

Further studies might clarify employment prospects as they are seen by the youth itself and the role of state youth policy in this sphere.

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