

Promising Forms of the Growth of Socio-Political Activity of the Youth in Modern Russian Region

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Abstract: The article deals with the problem of the socio-political activity of young people in modern Russia and its civic position. Regional experience is analyzed on how to politically activate the youth. On the example of the Belgorod region, the forms of the growth of the socio-political activity of young people, including youth representation and youth public associations, are considered. Much attention is paid to the professional education of political science students as the most socially and politically active part of the student body, to the areas of prevention of destructive political behaviour. Problems are identified that impede the socio-political activation of young people, primarily students who are not political scientists, students of colleges, lyceums, colleges and schools. Among the problems are an insufficient level of knowledge about political life, a low level of awareness of ongoing political events, and an unformed civic position. Promising, in the author's opinion, forms of growth of social and political activity of young people with interest and leadership qualities are proposed – participation in the activities of youth parliaments, youth governments, youth election commissions, specialized political science clubs. There is a need for mass political education and prevention of destructive political activity among the youth.

Keywords: youth socio-political participation, youth, social responsibility, disruptive political activity, political education

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Introduction

An important condition for the political development of modern Russia is the successful integration of young people into the socio-political relations, the effective use of their potential in the interests of the society and the state. Having a high degree of adaptability to political and socio-economic changes, «... the youth acts as a driving force of social development and represents a strategic resource of the state, which is more

important than raw materials, fuel and financial resources» (16; 17). Understanding the significant role of the youth in solving current and future challenges facing the society and the state gives reason to talk about the need to involve the young people in socio-political processes.

Studies show a fairly high potential for political activity of the youth (9; 12; 16), nevertheless, the political sphere of life is not a priority for them. According to the results of all-Russian studies, more than 80% of the young Russians are either not interested in politics, or do not have a definite opinion about it.

Only 19% of Russians at the ages between 14 to 29 are really interested in politics. This is explained not only by a weak understanding of the notion of political activity and a lack of comprehending of «how politics works», but also by the fact that the daily worries of the young people have little to do with what they consider as politics.¹

The same trend can be observed in the individual regions of the Russian Federation, young people do not attribute politics to the priorities of their interests, and interest in it is more situational than permanent (30).

The level of the youth's interest in political events is rather low; the same can be said about the willingness to defend their rights and interests, about the desire to take part in politics itself. Thus, we can understand that the young people do not associate their personal political participation with the fate of the country, they do not believe that it can influence the adoption of important decisions (30).

In practice, such an attitude reflects in political and legal nihilism, and low electoral activity.

Neither does socio-political activity attract Russian youth as a «way of expressing socially significant needs and interests.» The researchers have recorded a tendency towards its atomization, towards the dominance of individualistic behavioral strategies in the process of social activity, and the unwillingness to solidarize on a positive basis (4). Modern young people are more inclined to help with money than to be in public organizations and political parties: charitable contributions are made by 25% of Russians aged 25-34 years, which is 10% higher than the national average; more than 80% of respondents do not want to be in public organizations of various kinds².

Young Russians are not prone to identify the realization of their own interests with public and state goals, which indicates the lack of formation of their civic position.

Situational interest in political life, lack of systematic knowledge about politics, about a civil position and lack of life experience make young people vulnerable to the influence of various kinds of populist, radical and extremist forces:

1 The Russian "Generation Z": attitudes and values, conducted by the German Foundation. Friedrich Ebert together with the Levada Center (2022), Vedomosti, Available from: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2020/04/29/829352-molodezhi-ravnodushni>.

2 Young people are ready to help others and motivated by the idea of duty (2022), Available from: <https://rg.ru/2021/07/23/issledovanie-molodezh-gotova-pomogat-drugim-i-motivirovana-ideej-dolga.html>.

In case the socio-economic and political situation in the country is unfavorable, the possibility of manipulation of young people is possible. The events in Moldova, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, where one of the main driving forces was the youth can come as examples of this (7).

In order to preserve socio-political stability and the successful development of Russian society, the socio-political activation of the youth based on a civic position, as well as effective forms of its development, is of particular importance.

Materials and methods

The empirical base of the research includes documents and materials of educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, public associations (statutory documents, reports, databases), which allow to identify the goals and objectives of their activities, official statistical and information-analytical materials, as well as the results of sociological research of various research centers of the Russian Federation and regional research groups that fix the focus and the level of socio-political activity of the young people in the Russian Federation and its regions, materials of the Internet information and communication network.

The regulatory framework is represented by the Federal Law of the Russian Federation «On the Youth Policy in the Russian Federation» (2020)³, the Fundamentals of the State Youth Policy in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 (2014)⁴, the Law of the Belgorod Region «On the Youth Support» (2013)⁵, the Strategy of Socio-economic Development of the Belgorod Region for the period up to 2025⁶, programs on civic education and patriotic education.

The main methods used in this study are data analysis, content analysis of social networks, descriptive statistics. The main scientific approaches are: systemic, structural-functional, comparative, normative.

The problem of socio-political activity of the youth and the forms of its development in various aspects finds theoretical and methodological justification in the works of Russian and foreign researchers. For the first time, the phenomenon of socio-political activity of citizens was reflected in the classical works of the foreign authors G.Almond, S.Verba (2), D.Easton (17), G.Lasswell (19), and of the domestic authors G.G.Diligensky (11),

³ Federal Law of the Russian Federation of 30.12.2020 No. 489-FZ "On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation" (2020), Available from: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_372649/.

⁴ Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 29.11.2014 No. 2403-r "On approval of the Fundamentals of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025" (2014), Available from: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_171835/5416a7ecf3afe3ff052deb74264bbf282e889ef/.

⁵ The Belgorod Region Law No. 223 dated 03.09.2013 "On Youth support in the Belgorod Region" (2013), Available from: <https://base.garant.ru/26352635/>.

⁶ Resolution of the Government of the Belgorod Region dated 25.01.2010 No. 27-pp "On approval of the Strategy of socio-economic development of the Belgorod Region for the period up to 2025" (2010), Available from: <https://zpp.bgunb.ru/resource/25012010.pdf>.

V.V.Petukhov (24), L.V.Smorgunov (27), S.A.Pfetzner (26), S.N.Chirun (31), O.N.Yanitskaya⁷. The socio-political activity of young people with an emphasis on specific age and social characteristics is studied by V.P.Babintsev (3), I.M.Ilyinsky (14; 15), O.A.Koryakovtseva (18). A comprehensive consideration of the factors (political, social, legal) influencing the socio-political activation of the youth is reflected in the scientific works by O.Y.Garanin (6), A.G.Masalov (20), V.V.Pavlovsky (23). The role of political socialization in the development of the skills of political participation of young people is revealed in the scientific papers by P.I.Babochkin (5), R.Y.Zulyar (13), V.N.Pomazanova (25). The importance of political education, in particular, at the university, in the process of which the civic activity of future specialists is formed, is raised in the studies of I.A.Chikharev (32), O.V.Stoletova (28), N.N.Denisenkova (10), Zh.V.Boyko (8). They also emphasize the importance of political education at the university, in particular in the process of which the civic activity of the future specialists is formed. The researches by S.V.Aleshchenko (1), P.A.Merkulov (22), O.A.Koryakovtseva (18) are devoted to the development of socio-political activity of young people based on the interaction of state authorities and civil society institutions in the context of state and public youth policy.

Results

The theoretical analysis of the scientific works testifies to the unity of views of modern scientists expressing the importance, the need to activate the socio-political potential of the modern Russian youth for the further development of the society, the formation of its active citizenship.

The analysis of the modern practices of working with the young people in the political segment makes it possible to identify a variety of forms and directions of the development of the youth activity. Russian and regional experience demonstrates that the youth representation and membership in youth associations, considering the development of citizenship as a priority goal, is quite promising. In most subjects of the Russian Federation, youth representation includes such forms of collective activity organization as the Youth Parliaments, the Youth Governments, the Youth Councils under legislative and executive authorities, etc. For example, in the Belgorod Region, the Youth Government has been working since 2004, it is an advisory body under the Regional Government, acting on a voluntary basis. The priority objectives of the structure are to acquire knowledge and practical skills in the field of public administration, preparation for professional activity in the structural divisions of executive authorities. To achieve these goals, they use the following methods of activity development among the youth: participation in strategic sessions on territorial development; participation in the discussions of regional development concepts; participation as members of expert commissions; participation in targeted excursions to regional enterprises, representing the various sectors of the economy. The competitive

7 Yanitsky O.N. Public Activism in Russia: Yesterday and today. *Power*, 2015; 2:5.

mechanism has shown its effectiveness, the winners are included in the regional personnel reserve, receive proposals for cooperation.

The Youth Parliament of the Belgorod Region began its work in 2021⁸. This form of work with young people involves the development of legislative skills, increases legal literacy and civic responsibility. The development of activity goes through the direct participation of the youth themselves in the development and consideration of the youth initiatives, through the discussion of draft laws of the Belgorod Regional Duma in the field of youth policy implementation.

Thus, the youth representative structures effectively socialize, create an opportunity for the use of the potential of the youngsters in the political and socio-cultural development of territories, the youth can come as a personnel reserve for the state authorities and for the local government, an instrument for the inclusion of the youth in the work of the civil society. There are other forms of socio-political activation of the young people in the region, such as the Youth Election Commission, youth councils of territories, student unions, school self-government.

Youth associations are also one of the most effective forms of involving young people in the socio-political process, a mechanism for their preparation for participation in the political life of the region, or of the country. Despite the fact that the political socialization of the youth is not prescribed in the statutory documents of youth associations as a goal, it is carried out in the process of implementing current tasks through practical activities. Performing the traditional functions of aggregation and articulation of interests for public organizations, being involved in youth policy, they «... act as the most important mechanism for designing the future of the country, society and the state» (33). The formation of a civic position among young people is carried out through work in the youth branches of political parties. In the Belgorod region, the most famous are the «Molodoya Gvardiya» (the Young Guard) and «LKSM» (The Leninist Communist Youth Union of the Russian Federation), which in modern conditions demonstrate the formation of a civic position on the example of active patriotism (actions «Volunteers for Donbass», «Unaddressed Donorship» and humanitarian actions in the border region).

Special attention should be paid to the youth political science associations functioning at the specialized departments of universities in the region. A scientific discussion club of young political scientists has been working at the Belgorod State National Research University since 2014. The members of the Club are the students from the 1st up to the 4th year of education with the «Political Science» major. On the one hand, it represents

...a certain model of civil society: this is a scientific community, an interest club, and a platform for making judgments on current political issues. This is an example of an effective educational technology. The club is a model of extracurricular developmental education and upbringing. It forms a positive intellectual environment, being the most accessible infrastructure for

8 Resolution of the Belgorod Regional Duma of 25.02.2021 No. P/5-29-7 "On approval of the Regulations on the Youth Parliament under the Belgorod Regional Duma" (2021), Available from: <https://www.belduma.ru/meetings/mparlament/postmp.pdf>.

exchanging opinions, comparing positions, developing proposals, strategic concepts for solving various socio-political problems, and allows applying theoretical knowledge in practice (8).

On the other hand, the Club was created on the basis of a student initiative. The motivational side is significant in «cognitive independence» and indicates the degree of involvement of a student who is a future young specialist in politics into vibrant the socio-political activity.

In order to get acquainted with the practical side of the state authorities' functions, with the duties of the local self-government and civil society institutions, such activities as educational excursions, including field trips, thematic round tables on acute social topics, meetings with representatives of the expert community, business games («elections of the President of the Russian Federation», «elections to the State Duma The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Belgorod Regional Duma», etc.) can be carried out.

One of the tasks of student associations is the integration of students into the socio-political process, the formation of their civic culture. During the work of the Club, more than 200 extended meetings were organized and held with the involvement of university students and the students of high schools and gymnasiums in Belgorod. The format of the meetings provides a wide range of opportunities for the young people studying at school or in areas of training not related to political science to gain knowledge about politics and apply them in practice. Meetings with politicians and civil servants of the city and of the region, with representatives of election commissions, with the leaders of regional branches of political parties are especially vivid, as they reveal different aspects of work in the political sphere, participants share their experience with students, while the young people have a personal opportunity to get answers to an array of urgent questions. Such forms of work, on the one hand, provide the value orientation of the professional training process with the inclusion of students in professional and value-based activities, that in its own turn, contributes to the effective formation of professional competencies; on the other hand, they politically socialize the non-political students and form their cognitive activity. In case of being systematic, such forms will allow to build effective communication between the youth and the authorities and increase the level of trust in between.

Conclusion

The considered forms of development of socio-political activity of the youth constitute a didactic basis for the organization of «cognitive independence» of the young people, form its political consciousness and civil culture. In the future, in our opinion, it is necessary to pay more attention to mass political education, which is carried out through the system of schools, through secondary vocational and higher education. The priority task of such education is the formation of citizenship, political socialization. Modern teachers face a difficult task to respond quickly to changing conditions, select effective educational technologies that will help students understand the events taking place, critically

comprehend them, identify their potential and opportunities to influence the political process.

Media projects can also be one of the directions of political socialization of young people. As an example, we can cite the project «Youth Radio – NEON», implemented by political science students of the National Research University «BelSU» (The National Research University «Belgorod State University»). Weekly political information, live broadcasts with experts and educational podcasts help the young people who do not have a political science education to critically perceive political information coming from different sources, to navigate its diversity.

Along with the development of socio-political activity of the young people with a positive orientation, there is a need to prevent manifestations of destructive social and political behavior among the youth. Specialized centers at educational institutions help in this matter, in BelSU it is the Center for Civic and Patriotic Education of Students, the Center for Intercultural Communication, the Center for the Prevention of Extremist Manifestations in the student environment of the National Research University «BelSU». The Belgorod Region became the first Russian region to officially adopt regulations on the activities of cyber friends in accordance with the Federal Law of the Russian Federation «On the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development»⁹. Cyber Squad represents voluntary associations of like-minded people aged 18 and over and was created with the aim of intensifying the counteraction to the spread of illegal information on the Internet that can harm the health and development of the younger generation, the formation of positive content and the support of a comfortable and safe environment on the Internet¹⁰.

Of great importance in preventing the destructive activity of young people is their socially useful employment. Already today, at the state level, it is necessary to realize not only the ideological and educational, but also the economic feasibility of financial investments in organizing the socially useful youth employment, which will save much more money than those spent today on overcoming deviant manifestations in the youth environment.

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⁹ Federal Law of the Russian Federation dated 29.12.2010 No. 436-FZ "On the protection of children from information that harms their health and development" (2010), Available from: <http://www.consultant.ru/document/consdocLAW108808/>.

¹⁰ Resolution of the Government of the Belgorod Region dated 22.05.2017 No. 181-pp "On the organization of cyberdrug activity in the Belgorod region" (2017), Available from: <https://zakon.belregion.ru/upload/iblock/3aa/181-%D0%BF%D0%BF.pdf>.

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Contribution of the author

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