

Contemporary technologies for the organization of the field-specific sessions for youth aged from 14 to 18 years: evidence from Rosmolodezh sessions at the FDC "Smena" recreation camp

Natal'ja Jur'evna Leskonog and Sergey Igorevich Belov

Sholokhov Moscow State University for the Humanities, Verhnjaja Radishhevskaja str., 16-18, Moscow, 109240, Russia

Abstract. This article deals with a problem that concerns the use of contemporary pedagogical technologies when organizing and holding field-specific sessions for youth movement activists. Exploring innovative methods of the activities within the structure of Rosmolodezh, the Russian Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, authors give a characterization of all-Russian experience, highlighting the role of the creative component in the work with the youth activists. Based on the results of the study, authors suggest the recommendations on changing the format of working with youth in the regional centers.

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Introduction

To date, youth policy has evolved into one of the most important areas being in the focus of the political machinery. Negative experience of spreading of criminal groups and totalitarian sects in the 1990s that was occurring to the large extent due to the involvement of the representatives of the younger generation, as well as the active participation of young people in a series of "color revolutions" in the post-Soviet space and the latest political happenings in Ukraine, increasing the number of ultra-right groups, growth in the number of offenses committed by juveniles, which is observed in the last decade, demonstrate the consequences of failure of the authorities from pursuing sound policies in this area [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

The events of recent decades have also led today's Russian politicians to realize the fact that the lack of proper attention to the mentoring of youth inevitably entails a reduction in the number of active civil-minded citizens. The latter event ricochets to the attempts to build in Russia the state governed by the rule of law, to reform the elections and local government organization system, to encourage activities of charity organizations, as well as complicates efforts of the authorities and public figures to consolidate citizens. Thus, the statement, which was recognized for a long time in the teaching community environment, was recently accepted at the official level [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11].

However, the mere fact of awareness of the importance of youth policy is only the first step in solving the problem. Recognition of the importance of this problem raises the question concerned to development of specific techniques for working with the younger generation.

Methodology

The results of the work conducted by the staff of the Federal Children's Center (hereinafter FChC) "Smena" (at the village of Sukko, Krasnodar Territory), was taken as the empirical reference data for current study. Since 2013, based on the Federal Children's Center, the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs is actively pursuing field-specific sessions for young people aged from 14 to 18 years that are focused on the priority and prospective areas of the state youth policy, namely: student government, entrepreneurship, journalism, information technology, robotics, and housing and community amenities. Even now and/or in the near future the specialists of these scopes of activity will be in high demand that is caused by the strategic importance of noted focus areas for the development of the today's society.

Experience of FChC staff was identified and studied by applying comprehensive scientific and special methods, such as analysis and synthesis, generalization, induction and deduction, a systematic method and a survey in the form of a questionnaire.

Main part

Currently, FChC "Smena" is one of the major national centers of accumulation and sharing the best social and pedagogical experience on the implementation of programs on field-specific sessions in six priority activity-specific areas. Importantly, holding a good session is impossible without methodological support. Therefore Sholokhov Moscow State University for the Humanities (hereinafter Sholokhov University (SMSUH)) is a reliable partner of Rosmolodezh and

FChC "Smena" in terms of the development, implementation, and monitoring the results of field-specific sessions for youth aged from 14 to 18 years.

In our opinion, in the contemporary context, it is really important to provide support of high school "behind" field-specific sessions for youth aged from 14 to 18 years. Also, it makes easier to attract the target audience. Both potential session participants and their parents begin to think about children's future profession, find universities to go that naturally favors the choice of those centers, which are somehow related to a specific educational institution. Besides, the universities are interested in motivated students and are ready to conduct the professional orientation during the session, presenting specific areas of training.

Consider the communication of Rosmolodezh with Sholokhov University (SMSUH) in terms of the organization and holding field-specific sessions for youth aged from 14 to 18 years, evidence from the sessions of youth activists and Russia's children's organizations called "The Future Begins Today", which was held during November 4-10, 2013 at the recreation camp of FChC "Smena". The volunteers of the regional branches of All-Russia and international public associations that are members of the Federal Register of youth and children's organizations, benefiting from state support, were participating in this session.

One of the main specificities in the development and implementation of FChC session programs for young people aged from 14 to 18 years is the use of adapted educational technologies of the All-Russian Youth Forum called "Seliger". Educational program of the youth activists session was developed on the analogy of the "Seliger" forum (over several years, Sholokhov University (SMSUH) is a developer of number of activities of the forum). Thus the program included the following events: mandatory trainings in the first half of the day; VIP-meetings and workshop sessions, given by professionals in the afternoon; and creative work and leisure in the evening.

At that, the mandatory trainings include working out project management methods. The reason for this lies in the fact that the project method is one of the most common and effective techniques, which was revealed by state youth policy practitioners. In addition, the focus on this training area is related to the relevance of special task concluding in the formation of design thinking in youth aged from 14 to 18 years that today is of high demand among employees of both public and commercial structures.

It is important to emphasize that the quality of mastering the skills of project activities must necessarily be tested by practice. This task may be

successfully solved through conducting the so-called "conveyor", where participants present their projects for evaluation by the experts. The "conveyor" is based on the results of project management trainings and professionals consulting.

"Projects conveyor" is a traditional and popular technology used at the "Seliger" forum to evaluate and select the best projects in a number of nominations. Participants of the "Projects conveyor" file an application for their project and for a few days present the project to experts in various fields, who assess "the purpose of the project in terms of SMART", "project manufacturability", "media coverage of the project", "effects of the project", "project budget", "project risks", etc. Each expert evaluates the project and gives the scores from 1 to 10, where 1 is the minimum score and 10 is the highest estimate. Projects, scored the highest rating, get financial support.

On the session "The Future Begins Today", thirty two projects were presented on "project conveyor". Experts invited from teaching staff of Sholokhov University (SMSUH), who worked on the "Conveyor" at the "Seliger" forum, noted the high level of projects maturity. The authors of nine best projects, scored the highest ratings, got an offering of project consulting at Sholokhov University (SMSUH); among them, five of these projects have been brought to the level of project proposal and submitted by authors to All-Russian competition of youth projects conducted by Rosmolodezh.

Federal projects of Rosmolodezh were presented to all participants during the session. Looking ahead, we note that the feature of the sessions, held by Rosmolodezh, concludes in initiated aftereffect: after the session, participants are invited to take part in all activities of the Agency, to be involved into Federal projects of Rosmolodezh in their own regions, and to join the All-Russian youth and children's public associations.

Along with training sessions, VIP-meetings technology plaid a large part in organizing and holding the "The Future Begins Today" session. In the framework of this activity, session participants met with Eugene Nizhnik, Acting CEO of FChC "Smena", and Varteres Samurgashev, Olympic champion in Greco-Roman wrestling, lawmaker of the Rostov region Legislature. The guests shared with participants their success stories, which were largely due to their activities in public organizations. During VIP-meetings, project activists also presented their projects. As practice shows, presentation of the projects by participants during the VIP-meetings is a good way to attract famous people to support of youth projects. A number of projects were approved during the follow-up of VIP-meetings.

Conversations about a dream were another technology, which was tested by the organizers during the session of 14-18 year old young people. First such conversations about a dream held at the "Seliger" forum in 2011. Prior to the session, all youth leaders have been trained to conduct conversations about the dream. The latter represent a kind of philosophical discussions that help young people and adolescents to define their dream, develop plans to achieve it, consider the available resources that the country provides to achieve the dream, and the results of realization of a dream that will help Russia to become more competitive in the international arena. Such message promotes in session participants the formation of corporate consciousness on a nationwide scale. This is exactly a focus of the basic conversation thesis: "Me – it's Russia, Russia – it's me. My success is a success of my country. The success of my country is my success". In the context of the session program, such conversations helped many participants to take a fresh look at the social organizations as a resource for the formulation and implementation of their own goals, thereby fulfilling the youth mobilizing function.

Most session participants liked to talk about their dreams. It turned out that almost nobody previously talked to them on such topics that again confirms the importance of this technology and indicates the gaps in the educational system of the today's Russian schools.

Conversations about the dream are closely associated with the provision of a plan to achieve the dream. Therefore, the session curriculum deliberately included training on strategic planning called "Swing of Time", which was developed by S.V. Teterskiy, Ed.D., Head of the Psychology and Education Department of Sholokhov University (SMSUH). During the training, the activists made development roadmaps of their public associations inclusive of the interaction with Rosmolodezh projects, as well as All-Russia and international youth and children's public associations. Thus, session participants reinforced their long-term planning skills that were acquired during the project activity.

When analyzing the activities of the youth session "The Future Begins Today", it is also important to pay attention to the results of the related research, conducted under a grant from the Institute of Politics, Law and Social Development at Sholokhov University (SMSUH) by the authors of the present article, who are the collaborators of the noted institution. According to the results of research conducted, most leader camps and leadership sessions in the regions have a number of specific deficiencies. The strict focus on creativity is the first

of these faults.

The reasons for this accent are quite clear. On the one hand, in this case the sessions are less expensive, and on the other hand, creative sessions are focused on individuality, on the cultivation of the "Me" in participants (with the possible exception of sessions organized for creative teams). However, it completely ignores one of the major challenges when working with youth activists. This is training of leadership skills. In our view, activists and leadership sessions suggest another result to be expected, namely the development of social competencies, organizational and managerial skills. The program of activists sessions, as well as leadership sessions must be tailored to the attainability of expected results, focusing on the areas of professional activity, in which active part of youth will be obviously demanded.

The development of creative and leadership skills, when working with young people, must necessarily be combined with each other. A session "The Future Begins Today" can serve a good example. The organizers of this event have not abandoned the creativity, though used creative component differently. The session program included trainings on development of creative thinking to make participants realize that creative approach helps to solve any problems, including those with a high degree of uncertainty. For example, in the course of training, participants acquired the knowledge how to produce elements of decor, decorate the space, etc. having limited resources (rocks, gouache, brushes and paper).

The fact that all participants, regardless of their achievements, were called leaders and that in their understanding the status of the leader can be obtained just by receiving a formal confirmation (certificate or diploma), should be recognized as the obvious drawback of the most camp sessions. However, practice shows that leadership involves primarily the availability of field-specific competences and cannot be identified with a certain official sign. In addition, the acquisition of the real status of the leader requires extensive self-cultivation, as well as careful planning of self-actions. In this context it should be noted that conversations about a dream during "The Future Begins Today" session prompted participants to the idea that they should choose a specific area for applying their leadership skills (e.g., federal projects of Rosmolodezh), to develop a plan on achievement of a dream, to analyze what resources are needed to achieve it, and to think about where and how to find them.

Also the results of the study showed that in the course of field-specific sessions, undeservedly small attention is paid to the presentation of high schools.

The session at the FChC recreation camp showed the significance of this trend in the work with the younger generation.

Thus, Sholokhov University (SMSUH) and its branch in the city of Anapa were colorfully and memorably presented at "The Future Begins Today" session. Here the emphasis was made exactly on the profession careers, associated with the state and municipal government, organization of work with young people, and political science. Pedagogical team of the University, who worked at the session, was represented comprehensively (i. e, youth leaders were telling the children about the university, shared their experiences on college entrance and education process). Many boys and girls in the end of the session expressed a desire to study in Sholokhov University (SMSUH). After the session one of the young activists even wrote a letter to the University Chancellor V.D. Nechayev, asking him a number of questions about how the learning process at the university was organized and what qualities should ideally possess a student. Chancellor sent a young man detailed reply.

Final part

At the moment working practice with youth in the Russian regions is often built on the basis of technology that do not take into account the needs of the current situation and the short term prospects. The solution to this problem is possible through the study and promotion of experience gained by major centers for youth activists, such as, for example, FChC "Smena". Communication practice between FChC staff and representatives of the younger generation makes it possible to use resources that previously were not involved in mobilizing and training of youth, as well as giving the leaders skills, demanded by the state and society. Also, in the course of the FChC activities and during the "Seliger" youth forum, technologies were developed and tested to form in youth charismatic features, which promote the development of leadership practices, strengthen public spirit and consolidate civic position.

Conclusions

Today in Russia the existing technology on working with youth activists often characterizes formal attitude in the development of leadership practices among the participants of the session, making excessive emphasis on creativity; this brings certain damage in terms of acquiring by younger generation competencies related to long-term planning issues. In addition, poor attention is paid to youth mobilizing function. Elimination of noted disadvantages is possible through the development and promotion of major national centers of expertise,

focused on the work with young people through broader use of project activities, practicing VIP-meeting technologies and conversations about the dream, as well as attracting high schools to the activities of specific camps and sessions.

All this implies the need to create and distribute sets of new educational literature, organization of the teaching staff and volunteers trainings. These tasks appear to be effective within the project implementation by central structures, more specifically, by Rosmolodezh and educational institutions affiliated at this Agency.

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Leskonog Natal'ja Jur'evna
Sholokhov Moscow State University for the Humanities
Verhnjaja Radishhevskaja str., 16-18, Moscow, 109240, Russia

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