

## Youth and social policy

Saltanat Altaevna Mulikova<sup>1</sup>, Sanija Kuzairovna Kenzhebayaeva<sup>1</sup>, Madina Kochkarovna Abdakimova<sup>1</sup>, Anatoly Mykhailovich Zatyneyko<sup>2</sup>, Dinara Ashubasarovna Kazimova<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Karaganda Economic University of Kazpotreboysuz, Academicheskaya Street, 9, Karaganda, 100009, Kazakhstan

<sup>2</sup>Karaganda State University named after academician E.A. Buketov, Universitetskaya Street, 28, Karaganda, 100028, Kazakhstan

**Abstract.** In the sociological research conducted using focus group method took part representatives of school and university youth, graduate students, leaders of youth organizations. Such selection of respondents allowed authors of the article to investigate the problem thoroughly. The content of the article presents opinions of participants of discussion concerning state youth policy. The discussion revealed that modern young people support and approve the Concept of youth policy of the state, and consider that the state makes maximum efforts for development of youth initiatives and youth involvement as eligible members of society and state administration.

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### Introduction

The youth of modern Kazakhstan is actually the first generation which was born and raised in the independent Republic of Kazakhstan. The generation which grew up in a difficult situation with change of stereotypes, prompt and not always smooth political and economic transformations. As the reforms were carried out basic principles of society life in the country also changed. Therefore nowadays new realities cause inconsistent tendencies in youth development closely connected with each other.

For today's Kazakhstan the particularly relevant questions are the following: what is the modern youth? And what is its potential? At the same time, the experience of participation of youth in society life shows that the young generation managed to adapt to modern realities. However the share of socially deprived young people is also great, therefore the risk groups spring up. And certainly it is an enormous problem.

It is customary for society to understand that problems of youth are inseparable from problems of society itself. Considering an important role of youth for development of this or that country, of all world community as a whole, one of the state activities is youth policy making.

During the expert survey conducted by policy department of "Kazakhstanskaya pravda" together with Institute for comparative social research "CESSI-Kazakhstan" when answering the question "what priorities must youth policy have?", no one of the experts bearing a direct relation to youth policy participating in the multiple-choice survey decided in favor of the answer which provided youth guardianship by the state by means of introduction of new social benefits, payments of

privileges. On the contrary, as the majority of respondents (64,5 %) consider, youth themselves have to learn earning a living, but in this case of course authorities should provide the creation of appropriate conditions. The remained 35,5 % of experts gave their own answers. In particular, such offers were made: to support youth, without encouraging "dependency", "to create conditions for self-realization of the young", "youth policy making must be of investment nature" [1].

The direct purpose of the state youth policy is the full development of potential of youth which in its turn must promote achievement of long-term goals, i.e. social, economical, cultural development of the country, ensuring its international competitiveness and strengthening of national security.

The common goal of youth policy can be specified as assistance of conflict-free integration of young people into society and increase of their independence.

The main priorities of the state youth policy were put in the Concept of the state youth policy d/d August 28, 1999 [1]. The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "About the state youth policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan", adopted in 2004, allowed to allocate youth in a separate social and demographic group, to vest them with certain social rights and state guarantees [2]. Since 2010 the youth policy is implemented within the State program of education development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 [3]. In the State program of education development the purpose of educational work and youth policy is formulated in the following way - fostering in youth active civic stand, social responsibility, feeling of patriotism, high moral and

leadership skills. For achieving the purpose of the Program the following task was set - implementation of range of measures on patriotic education and fostering of civil activity, social responsibility and mechanisms of eliciting youth's potential.

### Main part

On February 27, 2013 the Resolution of the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved the Concept of the state youth policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan till 2020 "Kazakhstan 2020: way to the future" [4]. The concept is focused on the new principles of social policy based not only on guarantees of the state, but also on personal responsibility of everyone. The concept includes the questions of youth's employment, their reeducation and retraining, providing affordable housing, fare and food subsidizing. As a whole, the concept is directed on youth support, possibility of their self-realization.

Youth as a sociodemographic group is the main strategic resource of the country and by right takes a special place in social structure of society.

The most important particularity of modern Kazakhstan youth is the circumstance that it is comprised of the generation (from 14 to 29 years old) born in the most difficult historical period of our country when one political formation was replaced with another, when certain life attitudes and values were replaced with different ones, which undoubtedly affected provision of information. Youth of Kazakhstan aged from 14 till 29 years comprises over 26% of the country population. At the beginning of 2013 the number of youth at the age of 14-29 years in Kazakhstan comprised 4656,5 thousand people. The city youth comprised 55,3%, the rural youth was 44,7%.

According to the Concept of the state youth policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan till 2020, the modern youth isn't rather ready to relevant challenges and changes in social, economic, political, cultural spheres of society life. It was manifested in the following:

- high mortality rate among youth in active age of 25-29 years, connected with social reasons (accidents, poisoning, injuries, mortality caused by abuse of alcohol, various diseases);

- unemployment rate among youth in the medium-term period (since 2005) was ranging from 13,4 to 4,6% (at overall unemployment rate of 8,1 – 5,4%);

- one third of the youth today has the income less than 15000 tenge, about 80% - from 15000 to 60000 tenge. 10,6% have the income from 60000 to 90000 tenge, only 4,1% have from 90000 to 120000 tenge, 2,6% - more than 120000 tenge;

- the majority of crimes (89,0%) are committed by youth of majority age (from 18 to 29 years) and more than 11,0% by those aged from 14 till 17 years;

- the share of drug-addicted persons aged from 14 till 30 years from total number of persons abusing drugs and psychotropic substances, comprises 49,2%, i.e. 23036 people, and 20423 of them are aged from 18 to 30 years;

- the housing needs of young citizens, including those who have a family, aged from 21 till 29 years, comprises 85%, etc.

According to the author of the article "Youth as Resource for Development of Civil Society and Social Capital of Kazakhstan" the potential of modern youth of Kazakhstan is in many respects underestimated because of weak participation in political life due to a number of internal and external reasons [5].

Generally speaking the use of potential and opportunities of youth can become an effective mobilization resource used both for positive, and for negative purposes.

Experience of the last period shows that considerable part of youth was capable to fast perception of values of democracy and market economy, and they managed to adapt to modern social, economic and political realities. However this fact shouldn't be absolutized too. In relation to the carried-out transformations youth, on the one hand, shows high extent of adaptation, mastering new social and professional niches, seeks to work in the private sector, on the other hand there is a considerable part of young people, not ready to social mobility, which are committed to consumer values.

As already mentioned above the role of youth in establishment of Kazakhstan statehood is mentioned practically in all strategic documents of the country. This points the fact that the state pays attention to youth as to an important sociodemographic class.

Studying foreign sources allows noting that the integrated approach to education and formation of young generation is typical for world practice. This approach is connected, as a rule, with youth training in certain types of professions and main life skills, training in business schemes, informing, consultation, financial incentives and other types of support [6-10].

Within the framework of implementation of youth policy in Kazakhstan and relevant problem of formation of spiritually, physically and psychologically strong and healthy youth, the authors of the article conducted the sociological research using focus group method among representatives of university youth and leaders of youth associations of Karaganda.

During the research the plan was to study the role and the place of social policy subjects in implementation of the state youth policy and the extent of interaction between them and youth. It was also planned to examine the conditions of passing and participation of youth in social projects aimed at providing employment and practical support of business ideas. The prospective result of the research had to become an identification of positions, opinions, views and attitudes of youth to Kazakhstan model of the state youth policy.

At the beginning of work of focus group targeting to solve the problems of sociological research moderators asked the respondents a number of questions aimed at finding out the general idea of youth about the youth policy under implementation in the state.

- "I don't read newspapers, they are boring and have the form of reports".

- "Kazakhstan television channels aren't interesting, they are sheer ideology".

- "The state discriminates the city youth with rural quotas. We need the contract with the state about surrendering the credits by youth for provided quotas".

- "It is necessary to increase prestige of the professions demanded in the state".

It should be noted that all respondents participating in the work of focus group have a fair idea of the role of moral values in youth education. For example, such answers were given:

- "I am the patriot of the university. I take pride in studying at Bolashak university. I like our teachers".

- "I am the patriot of the state, of the city".

- "I am brought up as cosmopolitan. I have friends of different nationalities. And it doesn't make any difference to me what their nationality is, they are interesting for me".

The respondents realize merits and demerits of modern youth clearly enough. The following statements of the respondents are typical:

- "Youth is spiritual, free, perspective, ambitious, full of ideas, creative".

- "Youth is irresponsible, passive, not hardworking, physically unhealthy, legally illiterate, not reading".

- "Aggression is a characteristic of time".

In addition the respondents found it hard to answer such questions as: "Who can you call youth? Who would you refer to youth?". The following statements of those who took part in discussion can serve as examples:

- "People aged from 25 years ..."

- "Youth is the population aged from 14 to 29 years".

Practically none of the respondents possess the information of who exactly of the government makes the youth policy. But at the same time the participants of focus group had some idea of the existence of youth organizations in the republic and the city, among the few they called: "Zhasotan", "Zhasyl yel", "Alliance of students of Kazakhstan". Participants of focus group were divided into two parts, one part of the interviewees had experience of participation in youth organizations of the city, and this experience had formal character, other part didn't get this experience and they aren't sorry about it as they don't see any real need in it for themselves. They stated the following judgments:

- "Our participation in "Zhasotan's" youth wing had formal character. We hanged posters. Played "mafia";

- "They, youth leaders of organizations, don't know what they should give us to do";

- "I brought friends into "Zhasotan", it was boring for them, they still reproach me".

The respondents call the main problems and difficulties of efficient youth policy making:

- "Mistrust to public authorities";

- "Corruption";

- "Formalism, i.e. absence of substantial part and bigger emphasis on economic interest in youth organizations. Youth leaders and administrative authorities of youth organizations are detached from a whole lot of youth";

- "Absence of available information about opportunities for youth given by the state";

- "I don't know, where and in what government authority I can ask for help, where and how it is possible to devote interests and creativeness".

The vast majority of interviewees called the following as the actions directed on the involvement of youth into the state youth policy making:

- "It is necessary to conduct the round-tables with focus groups on the neutral side";

- "Advertizing on websites is necessary, as we are young and mostly we use and trust the Internet";

- "Why is there no youth social advertizing containing information about youth initiatives, programs and projects?";

- "It is necessary to change the format of the actions, to replace official forms with purposeful aspect".

Respondents are unanimous in opinion about the need to join the efforts of all government bodies and public organizations for efficient youth policy making. The following of their statements serve as illustration of that:

- "It is necessary to establish cooperation of Committee for Youth Affairs (CYA) and Department of Youth Policy (DYP) of Karaganda region";

- "It would be desirable to have support of youth initiatives from DYP of Karaganda region. Initiatives from lower class do not always find support from upper one";

- "It is necessary to raise the prestige of youth organizations".

The considerable part of the respondents don't consider that republican and regional mass media cope with the problem of propaganda and promotion of the state youth policy and informing youth about the state activity towards youth. Participants of discussions expressed their estimates in the following form:

- "Mass media don't provide the information in a proper way".

- "Information in mass media has post factum character, i.e. mass media report about the performed actions, but don't advertize them".

- "We don't read the leading Kazakhstan newspapers and we don't watch Kazakhstan channels, it isn't interesting".

- "It would be desirable to see in mass media more social trailers activating youth initiatives".

- "Mass media must propagandize youth social projects and programs through their pages and screens".

- "I consider the Internet to be the only source of information".

What attracts attention is that respondents are insufficiently well informed about the purport of social youth projects and programs realized by the state. From a large number of projects and programs they called only some of them, for example: "The program "Bolashak", "Zhasyl yel", "Zhasotan", "Youth practice", "With diploma - to village!", "Employment", "Affordable housing". In some cases they couldn't reveal the essence of these or those programs or projects. Respondents referred their lack of knowledge to the absence of available and full information.

Answering the question "Do you or your friends (acquaintances) have an experience of participation in youth projects?" the interviewees told ambiguously and their statements prove that:

- "I don't belong to youth organizations";

- "I didn't participate";

- "I didn't hear anything about youth programs".

At the same time respondents expressed mistrust to social youth programs and projects implemented in the state and that is referred to corruption in the state; formalism; lack of information.

Results of the research allow to draw a conclusion that modern youth is passive as eligible participant of state policy, dependant positions are typical for them – they need to have necessary information brought, told, explained, took away, shown, at the same time they aren't able and don't wish to show civil independence and creativity.

The most known projects for participants of the research became "With diploma – to village!", "Youth practice". As the poll showed, youth understands the necessity of such project as "With diploma – to village!", however the answers varied in content:

- "I don't want and I won't go to the village. Let those go there who studied in the city with rural quota";

- "I am a citizen, I won't go to the village, I don't see myself there";

- "I want to go to the village, and I would go there to work";

- "I will return to the village, I came from there";

- "I would go to the village, if the infrastructure for decent housing were developed there";

- "In the city the labor market is overfull, but there are no conditions for life in the village. If conditions were created in the village, probably I would go...".

As a result of the conducted research it has to be stated that youth wish to see the state fulfill paternalistic function, e.g. "the state must", "if the state creates", "if the state has ...".

Answering the question "What do you think of the need to open mother and child education centers in each higher education institution and organization" every respondent without exception gave positive reply. Answers of the disputants were the following:

- "The centers should be opened in higher education institution";

- "The centers should be opened outside higher education institution";

- "The centers must carry out educative work";

- "The centers must help with family planning";

- "The centers must render legal, psychological advice, give social help to young parents";

- "The centers must be located in universities as the families are usually made in young years, years of studying at university".

Replying the question about youth labor exchanges the respondents found it hard to answer

which allows to state that they have lack of necessary information.

Representatives of youth participating in the research answered the question about sports activities and physical culture ambiguously. None of those who were present go in for sports seriously, that is proved by the following answers:

- "I go in for sports from time to time. When I have time";
- "I don't have enough time";
- "No, I don't go in for sports";
- "I don't go to gyms";
- "Sports is an expensive pleasure";
- "Knowledge is more important than health".

Interesting is the indicator - in spite of the fact that participants of the research aren't admirers of sports, all of them realize the need to take exercises, understand the role of sports in formation of healthy lifestyle, that is indicated by their statements:

- "Sport becomes fashionable among youth, especially after the victory of Kazakhstan citizens in the last Olympic Games";
- "It is good that sports complexes were opened in Karaganda. We got interested in hockey";
- "It would be desirable to have paths for running in the city, it is necessary to develop bicycle sports";
- "We have no culture of a healthy lifestyle, it is necessary to propagandize it";
- "There is a low level of development of sports in the state".

Respondents disagreed with the statistics that by 2015 the share of those who daily take physical exercises no less than 30 minutes increased to 24,9%.

As a recommendation about optimization of the state youth policy directed on increase of competitiveness and formation of patriotism of young Kazakhstan citizens the following offers were made:

- "It is necessary to establish financial funds for supporting youth";
- "Interaction of all branches of power is necessary for efficient youth policy making in the state";
- "P.R. of youth initiatives, social projects and programs is required";
- "State youth institutions need to be with youth, the initiative from lower class has to be heard";
- "The youth don't have only to listen, they want and like to be listened";
- "It is necessary to gather more often in different formats, in different places, to discuss youth initiatives, to bring up them for public hearing".

Thus, we can note that youth support and approve the Concept of youth policy of the state, and considers that the state makes maximum efforts for development of youth initiatives and youth involvement as eligible members of society and state administration. The youth show the desire to participate in state policy, to be its members; they understand the necessity of events held by the state.

At the same time the leaders of youth organizations realize and admit their own passion for power and their isolation as men in charge from the youth majority. There is a certain parallelism in life of youth leaders, youth organizations and the youth not involved in vigorous activity of youth organizations. Therefore, youth leaders need to improve forms and methods of work, for attraction of youth into youth organizations; otherwise this movement will work itself out.

Young people realize that work of youth organizations has to include an interaction at all levels, continuity in work, mutual awareness, understanding of their being united by common idea. As the analysis of answers showed, youth not participating actively in youth organizations aren't well informed about content of the Concept of the state youth policy, about the existing youth organizations and social youth projects, about activities of youth organizations, about the opportunities given by the state to youth regarding support and development.

## Conclusions

The results of the sociological research showed that there is a need of systematic and continuous informing through mass media and Internet sources about implementation of the Concept of youth policy, about upcoming events, actions, forums.

The modern youth understand the importance of development of volunteer movement as a means of self-realization and interaction. Volunteer movement is considered by them as an opportunity to try various positions and roles, to participate in movements different from each other.

Leaders of youth organizations need to learn to hear and listen to youth according to the principle "it is hard with them, but impossible without them". They need to support initiatives from lower class, to teach to develop initiative and creativity.

The result of the discussion can be considered the need of broad propaganda of the content of the Concept of youth policy and purpose of social youth projects and programs in higher education institutions.

**Corresponding Author:**

Dr. Mulikova Saltanat Altaevna  
 Karaganda Economic University of Kazpotrebsoyuz  
 Akademicheskaya Street, 9, Karaganda, 100009,  
 Kazakhstan

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