

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM IN MODERN RUSSIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The sociological study of youth volunteerism is determined by the need for theoretical understanding of volunteerism as a social institution, analysis of domestic youth volunteerism institutionalization practice, creation of the basis for volunteer policy improvement and overcoming barriers that hinder involvement of new representatives of the younger generation in volunteer activities. The objective of this paper is to identify the features of youth volunteerism institutionalization in modern Russian society. Sociological survey serves the main research method of this study, which allowed the authors to identify the features of youth volunteerism institutionalization in Russian society (in combination with secondary analysis of research materials conducted by the leading Russian sociological centers). The paper highlights the socio-economic and socio-psychological factors that hinder the effective development of youth volunteer movement in modern Russian society. It also identifies the current activity areas in the field of volunteerism, the nature of its development depending on the institutional mechanisms that produce and relay volunteerism as a social norm. The obtained sociological data on certain aspects of youth volunteerism is of interest to the authorities of various levels which manage volunteer projects, as well as to the heads of youth volunteer organizations and other subjects of volunteer activity. The theoretical and practical data presented in this paper can be applied in training courses on Sociology, Youth Sociology, Social Technologies of Working with Young People, Youth Movements, etc.

Keywords: youth, social institution, socialization, institutionalization, volunteerism, volunteer activity.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Russian Federation has seen a steady increase in the number of citizens participating in various volunteer projects. About 15% of Russians currently confirm their participation in volunteer activities, while at least 50% of respondents representing various social groups and segments of the population declare their willingness to work on a voluntary, free basis. All that shows a significant discrepancy between the number of people declaring their willingness to participate in activities of volunteer associations and the people who are actually involved in this activity (Malanichev, 2018). This circumstance

indicates the need to intensify the activities aimed at involving new volunteers, providing and expanding opportunities for self-realization of citizens in this area.

The youth voluntary movement in modern Russia is at the stage of institutional formation, while institutionalization of volunteerism is characterized by certain problems and contradictions. These problems are caused both by historical, social and cultural prerequisites for formation of the volunteer movement in Russian society and by the main trends of social functioning, basic social institutions and state policy regarding volunteerism.

Literature Review

In Social Science, volunteerism is studied as a social community, institution, or activity. Some scientists consider volunteering as an activity that is carried out individually or collectively on a selfless basis. We emphasize the altruistic nature of this activity, with a focus on social services to the people in need, providing them with support and protection. This approach is presented in the works of E.S. Azarova and M.S. Yanitsky (2008), M.N. Konygina (2018). In Russian Social Science, there is also a fairly large number of works devoted to certain aspects of youth volunteer movement, values and orientations of young volunteers.

Thus, the works of N.K. Grigorieva (2018), N.H. Gafiatulina, A.T. Latysheva, and S.I. Samygin (2020), A.A. Zadneprovskaya (2018), E.A. Karapetyan et al. (2020), V.V. Kasyanov, A.T. Latysheva and N.H. Gafiatulina (2020), L.F. Kozodaeva (2010), A.O. Lagutin, A.S. Pecheliev and N.A. Pechelieva (2013), A.A. Malanichev (2018), L.E. Sikorskaya (2009), N.F. Trofimova (2018), are devoted to the study of the role of volunteer activity in the process of youth personality formation, socialization and education in modern Russian society.

In the works of S.V. Igdyrova, E.V. Chiklyaukova, R.R. Mukminov (2013), O.A. Kulikova and N.I. Limanova (2018), S.Yu. Korolkova (2015), and E.V. Ulyanova (2018) they analyze the social activity and initiative of young people in the system of volunteerism. Quite a large number of Russian sociological studies is devoted to the value orientations of young volunteers, the attitude of Russian youth to volunteer activities and motivation of the volunteers themselves. This problem is analyzed in the works of E.A. Kogan (2014), A.A. Kuzminchuk (2018), I.N. Logvinov (2015), T. Nezhina et al. (2014), M.V. Pevnaya (2015), M.P. Sukharkova (2017). Despite the large number of publications devoted to various aspects of volunteerism (and youth volunteerism in particular), the formation factors and institutionalization features of youth volunteerism in modern Russian society (as well as the main problems and promising directions of youth volunteer movement development in our country) remain insufficiently studied in Russian sociological science. This study aimed at filling this gap.

Methodology

As a part of the study of youth volunteerism institutionalization in modern Russia, we use an array of sociological studies data (all-Russian and regional) and the results of our own sociological research conducted in the Rostov region. The aim of this study was to verify the evidence-based compliance of the organized volunteer assistance and services with expectations of its recipients in the context of institutionalization of volunteer activity in the Rostov region. The object of the study were the residents of cities and districts of this region (as recipients of gratuitous assistance from various voluntary organizations and individual volunteers). The subject of the study were the institutional conditions of organized volunteerism as an activity for providing gratuitous assistance to the population. The quota-stratified sampling (the sample size: 1,606 respondents) was calculated according to the three main quotas: gender, age and type of settlement.

Results

In order to identify the features of youth volunteer movement formation in modern Russian society and value orientations of its participants, we refer to the results of all-Russian and regional sociological studies on formation and development of Russian youth volunteerism. According to the materials of sociological studies, the total number of Russians who worked for free for the benefit of other people (at least on irregular basis) does not exceed a quarter in the total structure of the country's population: "very often" - 8% of respondents, "several times" - 14%, "once" - 2%. Most of the volunteers are engaged in their activities on non-repayable basis alone, while a certain part is involved in this work through various organizations, implementing it at their place of work, residence or as part of initiative groups. Among the prevailing value orientations of the considered category there were "future of children", "doing what you love", "freedom and independence" (Kulikova & Limanova, 2018).

The empirical data indicate that the majority of people involved in voluntary activity and their motives for participating in this movement are described by several factors (career, social

contacts, self-help, altruism), while none of the motives is unifying for all the volunteers. Each of the individuals involved in this area gets something from it. The most common motive for participation in a volunteer movement is the motive of expanding social contacts, which is most typical for young volunteers. Thus, 69% of respondents noted that participation in volunteer activities provides them with opportunities to communicate with interesting people, contributes to making friends, favorite things and hobbies. For the representatives of older age groups these motives are not so significant as for the young people (an old person's social circle is mostly formed, and there is no need to expand it); accordingly, such people participate in volunteer activities due to other factors.

The second most common motive for participating in voluntary activities is the career-related one: gaining working experience, obtaining prospects for building a successful professional career, engaging in interesting work, acquiring useful acquaintances, gaining access to the necessary information, new knowledge, qualifications, and respect for others. In general, the level of youth involvement in volunteer movement turned out to be lower in comparison with the similar indicators in other age groups. The only exception is pensioners, who participate in volunteer activities even less often than representatives of the younger generation. As for the most common types of youth voluntary activities, these include participation in environmental marches and various socially significant events (Gafiatulina, 2014).

Despite quite a large number of different volunteer organizations operating in modern Russia, a significant part of young people knows nothing about them. Only 28% of young respondents noted that they know such organizations operating in their city. Young women were more informed than young men. The highest level of awareness in this matter is characteristic of the younger group of youth (14-17 years old). According to the results of MAI INDSI (Municipal Autonomous Institution: the Institute for development of Strategic Initiatives) survey, the number of young people who regularly participate in volunteer projects is quite insignificant (2%), 16% participate in volunteer activities irregularly and 15% have no such experience, but are going to take part in

volunteer activities in the future. In general, the number of young people interested in volunteering, involved in various volunteer practices and potential future volunteers is about one third of the total number of youth (in this group, as already noted, there is a predominance of young women over young men). At the same time, most of the young people do not participate (and do not plan to participate) in volunteer activities. They identified their reasons for non-participation in volunteer projects as follows: the lack of free time (41%), public inactivity and indifference of citizens to social problems (24%), insufficient awareness of volunteer movement areas (19%). Although the majority of respondents (59%) do not plan to participate in volunteer activities, only a fifth (20%) believes that nothing can change their decision. Significantly more (39%) noted their readiness to respond to the volunteer calls if people need real help (Volunteer Activity in Perception of Modern Youth, 2018).

Sociological surveys have indicated that the problems associated with involvement of working youth in volunteer activity. It can be assumed that for this youth category, the priority values are those related to professional activity, career, family and children, excluding the possibility of participating in certain volunteer projects. According to the empirical data, about a half of young people (47.5%) can now be considered as "real" and "potential" volunteers, and the other half, respectively, has no motivation to volunteer activities. Despite this, theoretically, it can also be involved in the volunteer movement over time, if obstacles or barriers to joining various volunteer communities are removed. This circumstance makes it necessary to study these obstacles and determine the promising ways to overcome them.

Discussion

From our point of view, volunteerism can be considered as a civil society institution or as a social system characterized by interrelated actions of volunteers (members of this society). The functioning of volunteerism can be realized at various levels (local, national and international) within the framework of public sector (separate from the state and commercial structures). We can treat the high social

significance and positive nature as essential features of volunteering. Volunteering is a rather complex social phenomenon that has a certain practical benefit and is realized on the basis of social interaction in subjects' free time. The subjects of volunteer activity are characterized by certain common values, attitudes and orientations that can act as a basis for formation of volunteers' social identity. The youth, as the most active social and demographic group may become (and in some countries has already become) the basis of a future large-scale volunteer movement. This circumstance caused our interest in youth volunteering and its institutionalization in modern Russian society.

According to the empirical data, the youth volunteer movement in our country is at the stage of institutional formation, characterized by active involvement in various social and economic processes of modern Russian society. The formation and development of youth volunteerism in Russia is characterized by certain problems and contradictions, which are due to historical and socio-cultural prerequisites, as well as due to the main trends in social functioning, basic social institutions and the state policy regarding volunteerism. In order to identify the features of youth volunteer movement formation in modern Russian society and value orientations of its participants, we turned to the results of all-Russian and regional sociological studies devoted to formation and development of Russian youth volunteerism. According to the materials of sociological surveys the number of young people interested in volunteering, involved in various volunteer practices and future volunteers is about one third of the total youth number. At the same time, most of the young people do not participate and do not plan to participate in volunteer activities. The level of modern Russian youth involvement in volunteer activities is currently lower in comparison with the indicators of youth volunteer movement development in Western European countries.

Conclusion

The analysis of empirical data allows us to conclude that social, economic and psychological factors are the main ones in hindering youth volunteer movement in modern Russian society. Thus, development of

volunteerism in our country is largely hindered by the low standard of Russian citizens' living, which is also relevant to the youth (as a special social and demographic group). Despite the importance of social and economic factors which hinder the effective development of youth volunteer movement, social and psychological factors or "climate" play equally important roles here. Other problems include social attitude towards volunteers and their activities. The prestige and degree of volunteerism effectiveness depend on the nature of social perception (within which they formed a certain attitude to volunteerism). We note that one of the characteristic features of this attitude is a rather high distrust level of the organized forms of charitable and voluntary activities.

The results of sociological research indicate the expediency of youth volunteer activities popularization, primarily with the help of mass media. The effective development of youth volunteer movement as a whole is hindered by the social "volunteerism stereotypes". The lack of purposeful work at the system level, with the exception of individual one-time events, aimed at involving young people in volunteer activities and projects (which ideally should be carried out through the use of effective encourage mechanisms) also hinders development of youth volunteer movement. The effectiveness degree of volunteerism development depends on the nature of institutional mechanisms that produce and relay volunteerism as a social norm. Here, inclusion of various volunteer practices in the processes of youth education and upbringing (systematic educational policy, including promotion, popularization of youth volunteer activities and implementation of appropriate programs) is of great importance.

From our point of view, the experience of European countries can be used as a part of formation and practical implementation of the strategy for youth volunteer movement management in modern Russia. Volunteerism as a whole can be positioned as a national idea, providing for the development and implementation of coordinated information policy aimed at popularizing volunteer activities and comprehensive support for various volunteer initiatives. It is very important to recognize the embedding of volunteerism ideology in the processes of youth education and upbringing, promotion and practical

implementation of relevant ideas in cultural and educational institutions. To overcome the obstacles in the way of youth volunteer movement development in modern Russia they should also avoid excessive administration and bureaucratization of volunteering, creating positive image of young volunteers in combination with activities related to "youth volunteering fashion", implemented, in particular, in educational institutions.

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