Protection of the Youth Interests in Social Conflicts: Potential of Social Institutions

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*Abstract***:** *The problem of involvement of the main social institutions in implementation and protection of the youth interests in social conflicts has been analyzed. At that, the social institutions are thought of as the conventionally accepted group behaviour rules, which structure the social interactions in the sociocultural environment. It has been indicated that the ability of social institutions to implement and protect the youth interests in social conflicts is determined by their juvenile potential, representing the willingness and ability of the social institution to adequately reflect the nature of the youth interests in the minds of their representatives; to understand the way to create conditions for implementation thereof without detracting from the interests of the other social groups and society as a whole; to set the conditions and mechanisms for the protection of the youth interests in the event of hazards or threats. The juvenile potential structure, including cognitive, informational, motivational, axiological and praxeological elements, has been considered. The state of these elements has been empirically assessed as of the main social institutions in Russia.*

*Keywords***:** *youth, social conflict, social institute, social institution, the juvenile potential of the social institution.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Involvement in social conflicts is a natural element of modern youth life [1]. At that, the youth conflictogenity is due to the specific nature of the status, which is expressed in the constant development of agency, and consequently, independence and self-reliance in decision-making and doings [2]. This has to cause the reaction of the counterparties, affected by the desire of youth to implement and to protect their own interests [3]. On the other hand, the conflicts of youth are provoked by specific social conditions, which are characterized by the rise of competition for resources [4].

The involvement of youth in various conflicts is usually accompanied by an awareness of own resources deficiency, preventing from successful acting under confrontation [5]. Turning of youth to existing social institutes for support is quite natural [6]. However, the latter's reaction and ensuring

the implementation and protection of the youth interests in conflicts is quite confusing and not always adequate to the challenges posed by youth.

This article is devoted to identifying the causes thereof. It is based on the idea of the juvenile potential of social institutions, defining their strategy and tactics in relation to youth.

II. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

A. General description

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The work is based on the results of original sociological researches: "Social conflicts in the Russian region" (2012) with a questionnaire survey of population (n=1488) and public administration officers (n = 300) in the Volgograd, Rostov and Saratov regions; "Problems of youth involvement in regional social conflicts" (2014), with a questionnaire survey of population (n = 1500) and public administration officers, media professionals, heads of public organizations, deputies of various levels (n = 500) in the Belgorod and Volgograd regions; "Youth conflicts in the risk society" with a questionnaire survey (n = 502) in the Volgograd region; "Interests of modern youth" with a questionnaire survey in the Volgograd region (n = 501) and in-depth interviews of youth (n = 30) and government officials (n = 25) in the year 2016. The paper is based on the idea of the need to distinguish between social institutes and social institutions [7-9]. Here we agree with O.V. Inshakov, that institutes are "solid structures" in economic systems, and institutions are "soft", they "are transmitted and preserved just having got hard in the social structures of organizations" [10].

Institutes are usually considered as "historically established and regularized, sustainable, self-renewing types of social interactions meant to meet particular human needs" or "a system of well-ordered statuses and roles that provide self-renewability, regularity of the accepted (expected) nature of the process of meeting the needs of people in a forceful and non-compelling way" [11], and we read the social institutes as organized systems with regularized socially significant functions. We should note that, according to E. Durkheim, institutes are "functional forms of social organization, which are associated with the general conditions of collective life" [12]. In distinction from social institutions, as T.

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Veblen reasonably believed, "the institutions are, in substance, prevalent habits of thought with respect to particular relations and particular functions of the individual and of the community" [13].

In fact, D. North wrote about institutions when he argued that "institutions are the' rules of the game 'in society, or, more formally, a man – made restrictive framework that organizes relationships between people" [14]. A social institution, as long as they are formalizing, can transform into a social institute. However, its characteristics can significantly change.

In terms of matter, institution in the Russian context: a) is a universal and necessary characteristic of any social institute; b) is a complex of patterns, born by the typical representatives thereof; c) combines the requirements of formal and informal norms in these patterns more or less organically; d) determines the actual practice of the institutes functioning, which never coincides with the regularized one; e) suggests patterns of behaviour to the social institute and to its counterparties; f) determines not only the institute representatives' consciousness intentions, but also crucially affects the distribution and use of the resources under control.

At that, we believe that the degree of institution representatives' involvement in the implementation and protection of the youth interests in social conflicts, involved in, is determined by the juvenile potential, which is one of the forms of social potential.

It is known that science interprets the problem of social potential within the framework of the most diverse approaches: acmeological, structural, personality-oriented, personal-professional. Each one has its own strong and weak points [15, 16]. Our research considers juvenile potential as willingness and ability of social institution representatives to 1) adequately reflect the youth interests in their minds; 2) understand the way to create conditions for their implementation without harming the interests of other social groups and society as a whole; 3) determine the conditions and mechanisms for protection of the youth interests under the terms of danger or threat.

B. Algorithm

The juvenile potential of any social institution is a complexly structured formation. We consider it includes several elements (components) as follows.

Cognitive and informational: actors of the institutions clearly understand the youth interests' structure, the degree of their implementation and readiness of youth to defend such interests.

Motivational: represents the willingness of institution representatives to participate in the implementation and protection of the youth interests, which are constructive as of value-normative systems, dominant in the society.

Axiological: acceptance of the independent significance of the youth interests by not imposing own interpretation on youth.

Praxeological: the institution subjects have the practical skills to create conditions for the implementation and protection of the youth interests, both under stability and emergency.

As a part of the study, we tried to empirically verify the theoretical ideas of the conflictological component of the structural elements of this potential (cognitive and informational: the idea about the structure of the youth interests, the degree of their implementation; motivational: willingness of institution representatives to participate in the implementation and protection of the youth interests; axiological: acceptance of the independent significance of the youth interests; praxeological: the institution subjects have the practical skills to create conditions for the implementation and protection of the youth interests.

Despite the limits of sociological diagnostics, it gives at least some general ideas about each component of the juvenile potential of the main social institutions within the problem of involvement of youth in social conflicts.

III. RESULT ANALYSIS

Cognitive and informational component. The studies have revealed that most representatives of social institutions know little about the conflicts in Russian society. In the year 2012, only 41.33% and 36.47% of state and municipal officers respectively, whose professional activities involve participation in conflicts prevention and regulation, declared themselves competent in the personal interests' protection during conflicts. The officials knew about the regulation of rights less of all (19.67% and 18.02% respectively of those who admitted their lack of competence), rights guarantees (15.00% and 11.64%), prevention of social conflicts (10.67% and 6.04%), technologies for participants interests protection (10.67% and 6.04%). The awareness among media professionals was a bit better (58.14%). The awareness of representatives of other institutions ranged from 20 to 30%

In this context, the problem of the adequacy of institutional ideas about conflicts under the involvement of youth is actualized. It includes understanding of their main causes, reasons, and the degree of protection of the interests of participants. In the year 2014, the research showed the following:

Respondents determined four groups of reasons, with two predominant ones. Conventionally, they can be defined as "managerial" and "cultural". The first one includes negative tendencies of the authorities and citizens relations: alienation of the authorities and the population (46.50%), corruption (44.07%). The representatives of civil society, social networks, media, and intellectual community indicated these reasons most often. State and municipal officers indicated them less of all. The second one includes peculiarities of mass consciousness featuring low culture of the population (48.63%) and lack of tolerance (36.78%). Such an interpretation was most characteristic for state and municipal officers, confessional institutions and intellectual community.

The ambiguity of thoughts not only reveals a variety of ideas about conflicts in general and their influence on youth in particular but lack of objective information about the specifics of conflicts with the youth involvement. Undoubtedly, first of all, this results from insufficient attention to the problems of this type of conflicts on the part of most social institutions.

We think it is associated with a number of reasons.

First, most probably, it is an adequate reaction to the behaviour of youth, adopting the strategy of conformism. Such a choice is usually forced and depends on the social situation, particularly in the labour market, resulting in "youth usually gets the job in case of conformism position and good personal relations to enter such structures".

Second, poor attention to youth conflicts is determined by the fact that intergenerational conflict – the leading trend of youth and adults relations, popular in the 1990s, has not been confirmed [17]. Intergenerational relations, although not trouble-free, caused no serious clashes in Russia.

Third, as it has been noted above, most youth conflicts are of micro level. Meanwhile, this level of interaction is often ignored by the main social institutions, primarily by the state. Government officials are yet (despite the attempts to alter the situation through an administrative reform) more focused on macrosocial problems, which affect comparatively large groups of the population.

Motivational component. Despite the fact that many representatives of social institutions tend to consider the protection of the youth interests in conflicts as almost an exclusive matter of the youth, most of them still understand that this problem deserves attention and inclusion in the decision-making process. 64% of the participants of the in-depth interview made that decision.

The research, made in the year 2012, shows that 49.67% of state and municipal officers think that the main social institutes in their region cannot handle social conflicts, which is caused by the reason that: the task is not of priority (31.67%); a responsible structure is not clearly known (29.33%); there are no required recommendations (26.00%); there is lack of qualified specialists (20.67%).

The research of the year 2014 included a question that implied an assessment of non-state social institutes' readiness to realize and protect the youth interests in conflicts. As a result, 22.80% of respondents stated that they were involved in full, 35.60% - involved not enough, 41.60% - not involved, or did not answer the question.

At that, the involvement of civil society institutes (26.56% noted full involvement) was low rated by public officers and journalists (media institutions) - 22.18% and representatives of religious organizations (religious institutions) (15.80%), institutions of the intellectual community (12.86%), the social networks cluster (10.84%).

We can say that any institution makes an image of the competency limits. The results let us assert that not only the problem of implementation and protection of the youth interests in social conflicts but also the problem of conflict management is on the periphery of public consciousness in general. The reasons for the existing situation are quite diverse but are mostly connected with underestimation of its importance, showing deformation of the axiological component of the institutions potential.

Axiological component. Its subject is rather contradictory. On the one hand, the representatives of various institutions realize the importance of the problem of implementation and protection of the youth interests in conflicts. In particular, in the research of the year 2012, 87.14% of state and municipal officers accepted its significance.

However, representatives of almost all institutions believe youth being able to solve the problems of own interests protection. During the in-depth interview, 19 out of 25 participants took that position. The following ideas were typical. "The level of proneness to conflict among today's youth is very high, and over several years it has not decreased, but increased. The today's youth is characterized by maximalism, the desire for quick solutions of social problems [18, 19].

This way, the importance of the problem of implementation and protection of the youth interests in conflicts is usually not transformed in the institutional space into accepting of the need for real decisions and actions, which ultimately negatively affects the state of the praxeological component of the potential.

Praxeological component. An in-depth interview with representatives of various social institutions showed that they have a low opinion of the practical activity of these formations in implementation and protection of the youth interests in conflicts, especially when it is not about their institute.

Against the general background, public officers are most complimentary as of their institution. Their arguments are usually quite declarative. Judging by the answers, the position of public officers is characterized by the idea of the absolute importance of state involvement in solving youth problems, which is provided by the fact of the state bodies' availability.

Municipal officers, in their turn, said that "local governments, more than other organizations (including the state), protect the youth interests in conflicts, as they are closer to youth and understand them better" (a man, a municipal officer). It is noteworthy that representatives of other institutions did not assess the position of the local authorities as of the protection of the youth interests in conflicts, during the interview. Probably the reason is that even those who are directly involved in working with youth know very little about it.

Representatives of the NPO institution have quite realistically assessed the experience of civil society institutions, in particular - of political parties, referring, as a rule, to the declarativeness and excessive politicization of party projects.

The analysis gives us the grounds to assert that almost all social institutions have no significant experience in ensuring and protecting the youth interests in conflicts. This is not only because of the lack of attention to youth problems but also by the general lack of conflict competencies. They are not even formed by the majority of public officers who, as it might seem, should have such skills.

The lack of practical skills results (one of the reasons) from the fact that Russia has been making considerable administrative efforts to prevent open conflicts, recently. The idea of the conflict being undesirable is becoming more and more confirmed again. If it cannot be prevented through sanctions, then, at least, information dissemination should be minimized. This results in the illusion of formal well-being; but the conflict at the same time becomes latent, prolonged and can take a different turn any time.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the assessment of the social institutions potential as of ensuring the implementation and protection of the youth interests in conflicts gives grounds to state the following:

− all social institutions have no clear (conceptual) understanding of their way of action, should it be necessary to create conditions for the implementation and protection of the youth interests in conflicts;

− at that, the ability to critically assess the potential of the represented social institute in solving the task of the youth interests protection is just insufficient;

− it goes with increased criticality as of other social institutes, which makes their cooperation in this area problematic;

− at assessing the importance of the problem of protection of the youth interests in conflicts, representatives of almost all institutions attribute this task to the competence of youth.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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