

Artículo de investigación

Formation of Civic Consciousness Among Young People in Germany**Формирование Гражданственности в Молодежной Среде в Германии**

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Abstract

The paper explores the influence of state youth policy in Germany, which creates favorable institutional, infrastructural and financial conditions for the formation of civic consciousness among young people. It describes the role of public organizations, the activities of which expand the opportunities for civic participation of young people in the life of their community at the local level. Germany pays special attention to civic education and work opportunities for young people to develop at the mental and practical level the civic and social qualities necessary for young people to participate in civic and social practices.

Keywords: Citizenship, civic participation, youth policy, civic education, work for young people, civic engagement, civic responsibility, civic practices, volunteering.

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается влияние государственной молодежной политики в Германии, создающей благоприятные институциональные, инфраструктурные и финансовые условия для формирования гражданственности в молодежной среде. Раскрывается роль общественных организаций, деятельность которых расширяет возможности гражданского участия молодежи в жизни общества на местном уровне. Особое значение в Германии придается гражданскому образованию и молодежной работе, закладывающим на ментальном и практическом уровнях гражданские и социальные качества, необходимые для участия молодых людей в гражданских и социальных практиках.

Ключевые слова: гражданственность, гражданское участие, молодежная политика, гражданское образование, молодежная работа, гражданская активность, гражданская ответственность, гражданские практики, волонтерство.

Introduction

In developed European countries, including Germany, young people have been considered a resource for future social development for a long

time. However, in the era of globalization, two social trends have emerged among young people. On the one hand, young people, being at the

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forefront of social innovation, have become, as researchers note, an active agent of social change in society (Furlong, Cartmel, 1997), (Miles, 2000). On the other hand, in modern society, there is such a social phenomenon as "kidults" associated with the presence of a significant number of young people with a low level of civic consciousness, who are prone to infantilism and withdrawal from social responsibility.

In this regard, young people are now perceived as a social group with their special interests, values and problems that need to be addressed to avoid, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, the emergence of a "lost generation" (Merkel: Uchites borotsya s bezrabortitsei u Germanii, chtoby ne poluchit "poteryannoe pokolenie", n.d.). Therefore, today young people are viewed not only as a social resource for future development but also as a social group that can already make a significant contribution to social transformation in society. This contribution depends to a large extent on the social activity of young people, due to the availability of the necessary social and human capital. In academic literature, researchers distinguish two types of social activity among young people. The first type is connected with direct participation in social transformations (Headley, 2002), the second one – with civic participation, the purpose of which is to promote the common good and the solution of socially significant problems in society (Zimmer, 2005).

The civic consciousness among young people in Germany today is greatly influenced by the country's youth policy aimed, on the one hand, at the social support of young people, increasing their social and human capital (Siurala, 2005, p. 8) and, on the other hand, at the formation of civic consciousness among young people as a condition of their civic activity. In this regard, the youth policy in Germany is exemplary within the European Union and, therefore, its experience can be implemented, according to experts, in other countries (Youth participation in Finland and in Germany, n.d.).

Critical analysis of academic literature

In academic literature, scholars have already addressed some issues related to the civic consciousness among young people in Germany. In this regard, it should be noted that in Germany a synonym of civic consciousness is civic participation, which refers to the social practices of young people that have a voluntary, morally motivated and public nature (Youniss, Yates, 1999, pp. 361-376). Researchers also focus on

issues related to the civic participation of German youth in the social and political life of their society (Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung in Deutschland, n.d.), (Youth participation in Finland and in Germany, n.d.). At the same time, researchers note that in recent years in Germany there has been a drop in civic activity of young people (Zimmer, 2002, pp. 89-100). In this regard, they draw attention to the need to increase the participation of young people in civic, primarily volunteer, practices (Volunteering in Germany: Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr., n.d.) and also attach special importance to the civic education of young people and youth work aimed at enhancing social and civic practices in the youth environment (Thimmel, 2017, pp. 71-80). Various aspects of youth policy in Germany have also been the subject of research. The focus of researchers has primarily been on issues related to the features of youth policy in Germany in the context of the development of youth policy in the European Union (Grachev, 2019). Researchers note that in some European countries, youth policy is based on the leading role of the state and in others – on the parity of the state and civil society structures (Doklad Instituta Evropy RAN No. 163, 2005). However, today, according to experts, "there is a tendency in the leading EU states to strengthen state control over youth policy to the detriment of the non-state component" (Grachev, 2019). One of the countries where youth policy is based on the dominant role of the state is Germany, where "the basic principle of European state 'paternalism' or 'guardianship' of 'unreasonable' youth" is, as researchers note, the leading "guideline for practical youth work" (Popov, n.d.). Some researchers have also studied the normative foundations of youth policy in Germany, the problems of its institutionalization, the principles, directions and "mechanisms" of implementation, including in comparison with other countries (Lupacheva, 2019, pp. 58-71; 30).

However, the academic literature has not yet addressed issues related to the impact of youth policy on the formation of civic consciousness among young people in Germany.

Methods

Methodological difficulties associated with the study of civic consciousness among young people in Germany are conditioned by the existence of different ideas about civic consciousness in the academic discourse, filled with different connotations depending on the socio-cultural context and real civic practices

that have developed in different countries. Official European Union documents have established the notion that civic consciousness is "a comprehensive concept, not just a legal and political one. On the one hand, civic consciousness implies that all citizens, women and men, must fully enjoy human rights and feel protected by a democratic society. On the other hand, civic consciousness also implies that everyone should be involved in issues related to life in society and active throughout their life as an active and responsible citizen who respects the rights of others" (European Year of Citizenship through Education, 2004).

Currently, the understanding of citizenship in the foreign literature is dominated by the activity approach, where civic consciousness is understood as civic participation, or "voluntary service", defined "as individual and collective actions aimed at identifying and solving issues of public interest" (Youth Development through Civic Engagement: Mapping Assets in South Asia, 2010, p. 6). At the same time, researchers note that for civic participation citizens need to have the necessary social capital (competencies, awareness, social ties) (Putnam, 2000, p. 3).

In the foreign academic literature, civil participation is interpreted quite widely, including work in public organizations, volunteer movements, participation in local government, the electoral process, as well as various political actions, including protest. In this regard, the academic literature describes political and non-political types of civic participation (Putnam, 2000, p. 4), distinguishing between individual ("volunteer") civic participation and collective (local self-government, public organizations and associations, civic initiatives, institutional practices of direct and representative democracy) (Ekman, Amnå, 2012, pp. 283-300).

Civic participation presupposes the existence of appropriate mental prerequisites. Therefore, civic consciousness in the youth environment can be understood, on the one hand, as the mental attitude that determines the civic participation of young people in the life of society and, on the other hand, as the civil practices aimed at solving social problems at different levels of social organization.

Youth policy has a great influence on the formation of civic consciousness among young people. As researchers note, there is no generally accepted definition of it in the academic discourse and, therefore, the study of this policy is associated with certain methodological

difficulties (Ashing, 2010, p. 6), (Smirnov, 2014, pp. 72-79). In general, foreign discourse is currently dominated by several paradigms of understanding youth policy. Within the framework of one of them, youth policy is considered as a mechanism of controlled socialization of youth, the purpose of which is its integration into the social structure of society (France, 2007). In another paradigm, youth policy is a mechanism for the social development of young people in conditions of social risks (Case, 2006) and creation of a positive environment for the younger generation (Damon, 2004), (Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2004). Within the third paradigm, youth policy is a policy of social inclusion of young people associated with the activities of the state to create comfortable social conditions for young people, generating, on the one hand, the state loyalty of the young generation and, on the other, its social and civic activity (Denstad, 2009, p. 11).

In general, the youth policy can be understood as the activities of public authorities and non-governmental organizations aimed, first, at solving the problems of young people associated with the transit of the younger generation into adulthood and, second, at creating conditions for self-realization of young people and their integration into modern society. Taking into account the subjects of youth policy, one can divide it into three types: 1) state youth policy, 2) public youth policy, 3) youth policy based on the partnership of state and public organizations. In the academic literature, one distinguishes different models of youth policy: youth social policy, youth policy of social control, mobilization youth policy and youth policy of social education (Smirnov, 2014, pp. 72-79).

Results

The formation of civic consciousness among young people in Germany is greatly influenced by the youth policy, which takes into account, on the one hand, the recommendations adopted in the framework of the European Union and, on the other hand, the national features of the country's civil society. In the framework of the European Union, in addition to education, professional training and retraining, information technology, employment and social mobility, bridging the gap between youth of different countries on the basis of intercultural dialogue, one can also name the protection of human rights, the increase of civic engagement and volunteer work (volunteering) as the priorities of youth policy. It is emphasized that in the process of implementation of youth policy young people

should, first, acquire social skills and social confidence and, second, see that their civic engagement in public life brings results (A New Impetus for European Youth – White Paper, 2001, p. 5). Moreover, youth policy in Germany is determined by the national characteristics of the country's civil society, which is characterized, on the one hand, by the political activity of citizens associated with participation in the processes of political expression, political decision-making, and civil control. On the other hand, civil society in Germany is characterized by civic activism, which involves the collective participation of citizens united in various social corporations in solving common social problems with the assistance of the state as a partner.

The practical implementation of youth policy in Germany is governed by different regulations, based on the Children and Youth Services Act adopted in 1991 (Youth Policies in Germany, 2017, p. 8). The main subject of youth policy in Germany is the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), which is primarily responsible for the development of youth policy and its implementation at the federal level (Youth Policies in Germany, 2017, p. 7). Non-governmental associations play a large role in the implementation of youth policy at the local level: "From youth organizations, charitable institutions and churches operating throughout Germany to unions, organizations, legal associations and self-help groups working in only one land, one city or urban area" (Molodezh Rossii 2000–2025: razvitie chelovecheskogo kapitala, 2013, p. 66). These associations, operating in the framework of partnership with the state, on the one hand, are the link between young people and state and municipal authorities and, on the other hand, act as the guides of the main ideas of state youth policy.

Recently, in the context of a growing crisis in German society, due to increased migration flows and distrust of citizens, including young people, in the migration policy of the government, the state seeks to take control of the young generation, preventing it from joining the opposition forces, often radical ones. In this regard, in the field of German youth policy, on the one hand, the role of the state is strengthening and, on the other, the cooperation of the state with non-governmental associations is decreasing, and the government is increasingly taking on the functions previously performed by non-governmental organizations (Grachev, 2019).

Currently, Germany predominantly uses the social-state model of youth policy, in which the government not only develops its principles but also oversees all areas of youth policy, taking on the obligation associated with the solution of various social problems of the youth by implementing youth programs on the basis of state funding, primarily through regional budgets (Lukov, 2013, p. 37). In this regard, this model of youth policy is called paternalistic at times. Nevertheless, even though it fulfills paternalistic functions, the youth policy in Germany is characterized by a wide involvement of young people themselves united into various youth organizations, whose activities are financed by the state budget but who seek to perform their work independently without being influenced by the state. All this indicates a gradual transition from paternalism to the creation of conditions for youth-self organization in the German youth policy, forming civil mechanisms for the protection of social interests, civil rights and freedoms of young people, promoting their civic engagement and encouraging various forms of civic participation of young people in the life of their community.

In this regard, youth policy in Germany is primarily based on the idea of young people as a social problem and the need to increase its participation in social and political life. Therefore, the main fields of youth policy in Germany are the following: 1) resolution of issues associated with the youth, 2) prevention of social problems of the young generation, 3) integration of young people in public life, 4) support of various forms of youth participation in public life, 5) increase of youth involvement in state affairs and local government, the involvement of young people in decision-making processes, 6) development of the principles of democracy and tolerance in the youth environment, 7) education of the young generation in the interests of the state based on the current culture (Samokhvalov, 2016, pp. 143-150).

Within the framework of youth policy in Germany, much attention is paid to the development of various forms of civic consciousness among young people. At the same time, civic consciousness, or civic participation, includes all social and political practices of citizens that are allowed by normative legal acts and have a voluntary, morally motivated and public character. In this regard, official documents emphasize that civil participation "is a voluntary, mostly joint activity aimed not at achieving material benefits for oneself, but

focused on the public good" (Bericht der Enquete - Kommission, 2002, p. 400. Civic participation aims to promote the common good, improve the quality of life of society and solve socially significant problems (Zimmer, 2005).

Particular importance in the German youth policy is given to the development of volunteer movements in the youth environment, which are considered, on the one hand, one of the voluntary activities of young people seeking to show their civic consciousness and commitment to civic values, and on the other hand, a civic duty of young people, forming their civic responsibility. In 2016, the BMFSFJ adopted a civic participation strategy, an important component of which is the development of the youth volunteer movement as the civic responsibility without material compensation. The BMFSFJ, known as the "Ministry of Civil Duties", is primarily responsible for creating infrastructure aimed at supporting and developing youth volunteering and financing various national and international youth volunteer services. In this regard, state funding of educational programs aimed at the personal and professional development of volunteers is of great importance for the development and promotion of youth volunteering. The development of such educational programs aimed at improving the professional competence of volunteers is mandatory for them and the time spent on training is counted as work time in the volunteer organizations that send them to the programs. Such educational programs are implemented, as a rule, by non-profit organizations, which are structures of civil society (Youth Policies in Germany, 2017).

In Germany, there are many volunteer programs, in which young people are directly involved in areas, such as social welfare, environmental conservation and nature protection, refugee support, geriatric care, preservation of cultural monuments, sports, etc. Some of the volunteer programs are covered by the law, such as the Voluntary Social Year and the Voluntary Environmental Year. These programs not only stimulate the social activity of young people but also form citizenship among young people associated with the participation of young people in solving socially significant problems. Moreover, participating in the implementation of such programs, young people gain practical experience that affects their professional choice (Volunteering in Germany: Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr., n.d).

In connection with the reduction of civic activity of youth in Germany, they began to pay great attention in the framework of youth policy to the creation of a favorable institutional environment by the state to attract young people to the state and local government, to involve it in decision-making processes. At the same time, special attention has recently been given to the development of the so-called youth control, which allows, on the one hand, to assess the impact of national legislation on the lives of young people and, on the other, to verify how young people were involved in the development and implementation of socio-political projects (Youth Policies in Germany, 2017). Youth control expands the possibilities of the most active part of youth for civic self-realization in the political sphere, allowing them to learn to bear civic responsibility for their activities aimed at solving socially significant problems in society, as well as stimulate the civic activity of another part of youth.

The civic education of young people has a great influence on the formation of citizenship as a mental attitude that determines the civic participation of young people in public and political life. This education, partly funded by the state, includes various forms: from compulsory disciplines in educational institutions to informal seminars and training sessions organized by non-governmental organizations. At present, special attention is being paid to the civic education of youth in Germany in connection with the decline in its civic activity, due to, as researchers note, miscalculations in the civic education of young people (Zimmer, 2002, pp. 89-100).

It should be noted that civic education in most European countries, including Germany, today does not boil down to civic education of young people, but is considered in the context of promoting and developing democracy and human rights and the formation of democratic citizenship (Suslov, 2012, pp. 117-127). In this regard, at present, it is not so much about civic education aimed at the formation of ideas about civil society and democracy among young people, but about education in the field of citizenship, which means the formation of young people with civic qualities necessary for their effective and democratic participation in public life (Duerr, 2010, pp. 35-50). Therefore, in the context of the formation of democratic citizenship, special importance in civic education is given to holding various kinds of discussions, organizing practical activities that introduce young people into a real civic context and allow them to form civic activism and civic

responsibility in a democratic society (Council of Europe, 2014).

The development of citizenship among youth in Germany is also influenced by youth work, or work with young people, which, as recorded in the Children and Youth Services Act, should be based on the interests of the youth, contribute to the development of young people, expand their capabilities and promote social responsibility and social activity (Kinder- und Jugendhilfe: Ahtes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch, n.d., p. 83). The responsibility for creating the necessary infrastructure for the development of youth work and its coordination in Germany lies with the state. Direct work with young people is mainly organized by public and religious organizations, whose activities are carried out by paid staff and volunteers. The priorities of youth work aimed at all young people in Germany are out-of-school education (Thimmel, 2017, pp. 71-80).

In youth work in Germany, the emphasis is on its social component, aimed at helping young people in solving their social problems and their personal development. However, this work, introducing young people to democratic and solidarity values, also contributes to strengthening such mental attitudes that are directly related to the civic motivation and civic responsibility of the youth among young people. Therefore, as some researchers note, youth work in Germany, contributing to the individual self-realization of young people, strengthens their will and develops the ability to participate in state and public life (Kalinkina, 2006, p. 118).

Conclusion

In Germany, civic consciousness, or civic participation, of young people is understood as their social practices which, having a morally motivated, voluntary and public character, contributing to the common good, influence the solution of generally significant problems in society. A great influence on the formation of civic consciousness among youth in Germany is provided by the state youth policy, which, under the Children and Youth Services Act and other normative legal acts, creates favorable institutional, infrastructural and financial opportunities for civic participation of young people in the public and political life of society. A large role in the implementation of youth policy and the formation of civic consciousness in the youth environment, primarily at the local level, is played by non-governmental associations acting independently but based on principles developed by the state.

At the same time, various types of civic participation, both political and non-political, have become widespread among young people, including, on the one hand, institutional practices of direct and representative democracy and, on the other, social practices connected to civil society, civic initiative and voluntary practices.

The formation of civic consciousness among young people in Germany is greatly influenced by civic education and youth work. Civic education in Germany today is aimed primarily at the formation of young people of such civic qualities that are necessary for their democratic participation in public and political life. Youth work, which, on the one hand, contributing to the development of young people, expands their social opportunities and on the other hand, introducing young people to democratic and solidarity values, encouraging their social activity, also affects strengthening civic motivation and civic responsibility among young people.

At the same time, the political apathy of young people and the occasional involvement of young people in the work of municipal institutions have a negative effect on the formation of civic consciousness among young people. In this regard, experts believe that Germany needs to develop special regulatory legal acts that guarantee the right of young people to participate in the democratic life of local communities.

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