

Management of Student Associations: Socio-Cultural, Economic and Legal Aspects

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Abstract: The study tells about the mechanisms of constructing social and cultural reality in the process of socialization of young people on the example of the student self-government. The research base is represented by the activities of the student self-government at the Mari State University. Organization of student self-government is viewed from three perspectives: socio-cultural, legal, economic. The study also examines the structure of student self-government, the target audience (students and graduates of vocational educational institutions), the form (public organization, public movement, body of public initiative), the dynamics of development. The analysis of the Development Program of Activities of Student Associations shows economic aspects of this program within the Mari State University and Kazan Federal University. The study notes that one of the conditions for successful implementation of the student self-government programs could be registration of student associations as a legal entity.

Key words: Student, education, student associations, management of student associations, socio-cultural aspects, education expenditures, student's self-government, social leadership, personal qualities, socialization

INTRODUCTION

Problem of the existence of the education system in the communicative space of modern civilization gains particular relevance because of the changing opportunities and prospects of transformation of social and cultural reality in the conditions of information civilization and knowledge society. The term "knowledge society" is increasingly being used in modern scientific and philosophical literature for a concrete volume of quantitative and qualitative changes in the social environment under the influence of the realities of the post-industrial civilization. In this process, there is a strengthening the role of universities as centers of science and culture which construct images of social reality with new positions.

In practice, the individual and society cannot exist without gaining experience of communicative behavior which is formed mainly in the educational space. But in the face of the new challenges of time, people, especially young people, found themselves in a difficult situation of not always successful search for new mechanisms of adaptation to the contemporary

socio-cultural conditions. In addition, it is necessary to take into account one of the most important aspects of the historical and cultural development of human society, the experience in design of communicative reality which has accumulated over the centuries. In the absence of new mechanisms of social relations regulation between people it is the duty of the institutions of education and spiritual and moral principles of human to preserve historical and cultural continuity (Savrutskaya, 2014).

The complex processes of cross-cultural interaction, especially among young people, are provoked in particular, by the weakening of the moral and normative regulation of human behavior (Luescher, 2013). There is the question how to overcome the devastating influence of anomie on person within a modern educational environment. This point in our opinion, reveals opportunities of the education system. One of the ways out of the crisis in the Russian educational space may be the introduction of the student self-government. One of the objectives of the introduction of such system should be legitimation, i.e., the creation of the transmission process of new institutionalized objectifications by new generations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Mechanisms for construction of social and cultural reality in the process of socialization of young people are feasible in today's educational environment. Firstly, the educational environment gives the variety of activities and communication capabilities in the educational and training processes (Obidina *et al.*, 2015) and secondly, it has institutionalized links with other social institutions.

Even Durkheim (1996) wrote about the mechanisms of construction of social reality, considering the problem of the relationship between society and the individual. He was followed by R. Merton who thinking about the origin of anomic situations was talking about certain conditions of the human environment which he understood as public and at the same time as the cultural structure. Toffler (2001) sees the problem from a new point of view in the context of a comparative analysis of different societies. Toffler determines the destruction of the old forms of human adaptation to environmental conditions and the growth of the internal conflict as "on the one hand, the gap between the images, mental models of reality and what it really is." The research of G. Berger and N. Lukman on the establishment of certain social structures based on repetitive patterns of interaction and mechanisms of social and cultural construction of reality in training and educational activities have allowed us to assume that the student self-government can change the meaning and significance of collective facilities in the changing reality. New meanings and values have a chance to become actual, institutionalized and to be transmitted to future generations in particular within the educational space. At the same time they must become moral and legally established patterns of communicative behavior.

Russian Philosopher (Novgorodtsev, 1991) believed that "self-governance of the people was not an empty fiction, it should be the nation ripened for self-control, conscious of their rights and respecting the others, understanding their responsibilities and the ability to self-restraint." Since, the educational potential of these capabilities is formed in the educational environment, we turn to the practice of the student self-government, emerging in Russian universities.

In the socio-philosophical aspect of self-government is seen as a trait of highly integrated systems because the municipality is related to self-regulation and self-development of social and cultural institutions belonging to the system (Nemina, 2009).

Historically, the self-government has been widely developed in Russia. However, the studies mainly deal with the administrative and territorial administration which is a form of public authority. We believe that this

model cannot be applied to the concept of the student self-government as the student self-government needs special philosophical rethinking and theoretical development. The theory considers three approaches to the definition of student self-government.

Student self-government is a special form of initiative, independent and responsible social activities of students which is aimed at dealing with the important issues of life of student's youth, development of its social activity.

Student self-government as a form of educational work in high school-activities aimed at personal development, creating conditions for self-learning and socialization based on socio-cultural, spiritual and moral values and socially accepted rules and norms of behavior in the interests of the person, the family, society and the state.

Student self-government as a form of youth policy of the Russian Federation, carried out in order to consolidate the students' social movement, to take full advantage of the students potential in socio-economic transformation of society, to solve students' problems.

Features of the student self-government organization can be considered from three different aspects: social and cultural, legal, economic.

Personal social activity of the person is formed within the activities of student associations. This task updates the question of their legal status. In accordance with the Russian legislation, as a general rule, student associations can act as a kind of independent public associations functioning in the status of a legal entity or without such registration as such. The legal personality is a cornerstone in the life of the student association. It is connected with the organization peculiarities of student life. Interests of young people are largely realized in the extra-curricular life and they spread to a wide social space, including volunteering and socially useful initiatives (Rochford, 2014).

There are two main directions of impact on the object in the activity of student unions such as development of the institutions of the student self-government and the formation of personal qualities of the participants (Murtazin, 2011).

The stability of society depends largely on the responsibility of its members. From the ontological and axiological aspect responsibility is a selection of the most useful and successful position of the individual, group, community, society and even civilization (Sharov, 2009). Instilling in young people the desire to behave responsibly has a great importance in this aspect. Social and cultural practice involves the interaction of spiritual culture in its cognitive aspect as a means of knowledge of reality with the methods of interaction between

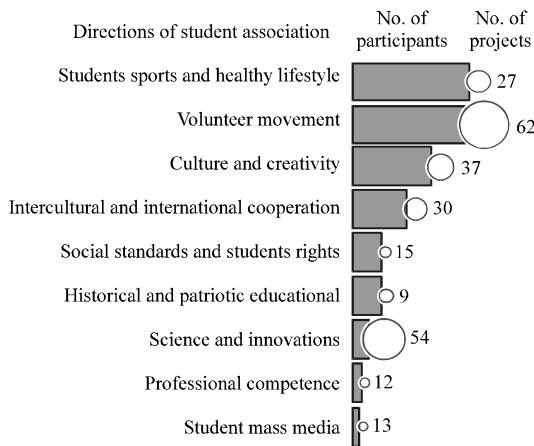


Fig. 1: Main areas of social work where the Mari State University students are involved

individuals on the creation and distribution of spiritual and material goods (Malakhova, 2004). Strengthening of practical skills and self-responsible behavior of young people will ensure the transfer of experience from one of social practices to the others.

A person whose social status is the student has a connection with the socio-cultural environment of the university while implementing and developing in it their self-organization skills and responsibility, basic skills for start of work, realization of their civil rights and liberties such as to vote and to be elected. These skills play a key role in changing the social status from student to employee status while being aware of their civic responsibility to the society and the state. Currently, there is a problem of development of student activities and student self-government, the revitalization of the student associations in order to achieve the objectives of the educational institution and the state which at the same time provide the development of civil society.

Today, the council of students or student councils are established in 80% of vocational education institutions of the Russian Federation. The federal program “student self-government” is being implemented since 2006 and is aimed at creating conditions for the organization and providing equal opportunities for students to participate in the management of professional educational organizations and educational institutions of higher education. The target audience of the program is presented by students and graduates of vocational educational institutions and educational institutions of higher education, student self-government, student associations, professionals working with students.

Social and cultural of student unions covers all spheres of society life. It does not have completely certain forms and is constantly changing, depending on the

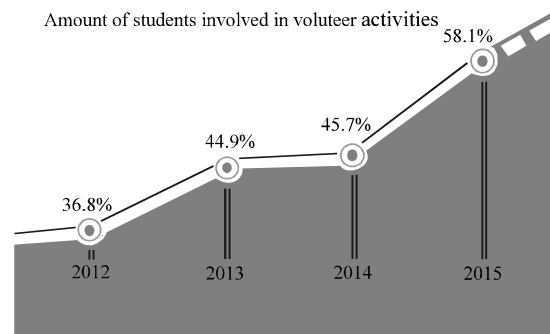


Fig. 2: Dynamics of changes of the number of Mari State University students involved in volunteering

needs of society, the state, student associations and their members. We conducted a study of the main areas of social work where the Mari State University students are involved in order to get an idea of the directions of student unions activities (Fig. 1).

The student council of Mari State University consists of 11 faculty and institution student councils as well as student associations in the following spheres:

- Culture and creation
- Volunteering
- Student sport and healthy lifestyle
- Historical and patriotic education
- Professional competence
- Cross-cultural dialogue and international cooperation
- Science and innovations
- Student informational sources
- Social standards and students rights

Every sphere is a system of interconnected student associations that implement the development program in the relevant field (Shigapova, 2008). The work is conducted in the form of development and realization of student projects.

Thus, the student associations have the status of a public association which may be either registered as a legal entity or not registered. The forms of these associations may be different have different sets of the legal rights and obligations. For example, there are different types of student unions in Mari State University such as a public organization, social movement, body of public initiative.

Social movement and public initiative body do not mean membership which leads to a non-permanent quantity of participants. The dynamics of the increase of the volunteer movement participants shows that in 2015 had a sharp increase in the number of volunteers due to the massive participation of students in the activities of “Volunteer Corps of 70 Years of Victory” and patriotic events (Fig. 2).

However, students work primarily within the framework of project activities, gathering for the realization of specific initiatives and after having realized the project they tend to leave it. On the other hand, the time of student's participation in the project is limited by his university studies period. These circumstances determine the instability and fluidity of the student associations members (Park *et al.*, 2014).

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State sources are the main providers of funds for the development of educational work (Kulikova and Gafieva, 2014). There is a comparative analysis on the expenses of the student government universities. The analysis covers two universities of the Russian Federation: the first one is Mari State University which is a regional one and Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University which has the status of a federal university.

In Mari State University, where there are 3521 students studying with federal funds in 2015/2016 academic year, the expenses of 2015 are equal to 10.3 million rubles which is 55% over the previous year. The sharp increase in spending is connected with the increase in the scholarship fund. However, since the activity of the student government and educational work does not differentiate students depending on the source of financing for their training and the right to qualify for the scholarship, we can say that these funds are spent on all students enrolled in Mari State University (4353 students). So, for a student Mari State University has 2.3 thousand rubles per year for the organization of cultural, athletic and sport and recreation activities and this is a fairly high rate.

Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University where there are about 44,000 students in the 2015/2016 academic year, also provide funds for the development of student life, both of budget and off-budget sources, the total expenditure in 2015 is equal to 40.56 million rubles which is >10% in 2014. The increase is connected with the provision of funds from extra budgetary sources when

budgets are reduced because of the unfavorable economic situation in the country (Faizrahmanova and Kozlova, 2015). For a student Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University has about 1 thousand rubles per year on average. Despite significantly higher number of total funding this figure is lower than that of Mari State University. In order to reveal the influence of this parameter on the performance of the student government, we collected data on the involvement of students in the work of student associations of two comparable universities. As expected, the percentage of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University students involved in realization of development programmes of student associations is lower than that of Mari State University: 19050 students (43.3%) against 3415 students (78.5%). Mari State University is also a leader in the number of student associations: 166 against 140 associations. Thus, there is the connection between the amount of funding for student education with development of their social activity.

Analyzed trends (cultural, physical education and sports and health work) are component of extracurricular activities with students and encourage public civic activity. Cultural work is aimed at the formation of moral, general cultural qualities of the person, at identification and development the talents and skills of the student. Athletic and sports and health works are means of formation and improvement of the physical and moral health of students, the development of their physical abilities. Thus, the purpose of these forms of educational work coincides with the respective directions of the student government. The survey of Mari State University students revealed a curious pattern that the satisfaction of quality of cultural and sports activities is correlated with job satisfaction of the student government (Fig. 3). This demonstrates the close interpenetration of educational work and student self-government and in the students perception, they are inextricably linked.

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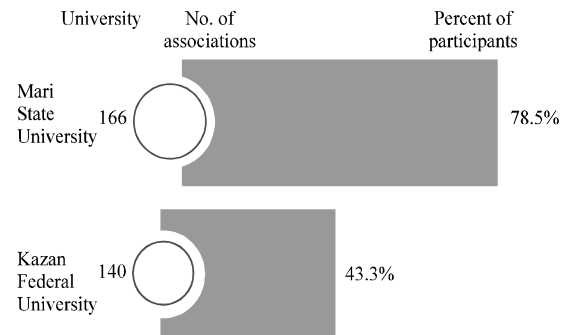


Fig. 3: Indicators of student associations

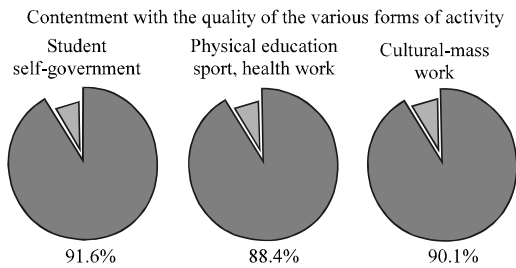


Fig. 4: Satisfaction of the student self-government

students, they are carried out in free of classroom time and encourage public civic activity. Cultural work is aimed at the formation of moral, general cultural qualities of the person, identification and development of the talents and skills of the student. Physical education, sport and health activities are means of formation and improvement of the physical and moral health of students, the development of their physical abilities. Thus, the purpose of these forms of educational work coincide with the respective directions of the student self-government. The survey of Mari State University students revealed a curious pattern that the satisfaction of quality of cultural and sports activities is correlated with job satisfaction of the student self-government (Fig. 4). This demonstrates the close interpenetration of educational work and student self-government and in the students perception, they are inextricably linked.

In view of the fact that Russia joined the Bologna process the student self-government has become part of the organizational structure of the university (Lezhmina and Shishkovsky, 2007). In accordance with the Federal Law of 29.12.2012 number 273-FL "On Education in the Russian Federation" (Federal law, 2012), students have the right to participate in and create students associations in accordance with established federal law. Student associations are created at the initiative of the students in order to take into account the views of students in adopting local regulations of educational organization which affect their rights and interests. The realization of such rights of student associations, we can find, for example in the fact that the head of the Joint Council of students match Development Program of Activities of Student Associations.

Regulation on the competitive selection of development program of activities of student associations indicates that "the responsibility for the realization and outcomes of the program shall be taken by the head of the educational organization and the head of the council in accordance with Russian law and section 4 of the programme." However, the conflict arises here. Since, the funds for the program are the financial support of the

state order for educational institutions of higher education, they spend the funds strictly in accordance with the financial and economic order of the educational institution. In the structure of expenses KFU grant for support Development Program of Activities of Student Associations initially included in the total expenditure on the organization of educational process in the direction of cultural work with students. In Mari State University this grant have particular financial management. However in accordance with the law the responsibility for the funds management is taken by the university self-governing bodies and officials but the head of the joint council does not have such status. It is also about the legal nature of the funds from the state budget for the organization of cultural, athletic and sport activities of the students. The lexical wording of this norm indicates that the student acts as the object to which the activity is directed, funded by the state but not as the subject of this activity.

Thus, the student associations are the executors of university self-government decisions and having no financial autonomy they lack self-governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The problem raised in the article can possibly be decided by the registration of the student association as a legal entity. This status would give to the student associations civil legal personality necessary for financial and economic activities, transactions, incurring civil liability. Just being able to dispose of the funds for the realization of socially useful initiatives in extra-curricular activities, students can effectively manifest and develop their civil qualities and responsibility in the wider social space.

Terms of development of modern civilization set, new challenges for education and training institutions caused by the whole complex of humanistic problems of our time. Obviously, the fact that socio-cultural mechanisms of youth adaptation to the new conditions are not developed aggravates the problem of choice of value orientations and behavior. But the education system itself is unable to keep up with the changing socio-cultural processes and to develop mechanisms of youth adaptation to the realities of the modern world because of its conservatism. A system of student self-government with legal personality might be the condition for the creation of these mechanisms. Within the current model of existence it is rather declarative activity based on the game elements which does not allow young people in general and students in particular to take an active part in social activities. Realization of innovative education management model requires the development of new

methodological approaches to the study of management problems of the educational process and the student self-government as its integral part.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that the conditions for the development of modern civilization set for education and training institutions new tasks aimed at the humanization of social and cultural space.

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