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## Major issues of youth policy implementation in Kazakhstan

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**Abstract:** In this article the authors considered problems of the realization of youth policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. There are some factors which objectively complicate the realization of youth policy in Kazakhstan: the lack of social-political ideology which could be able to play the part similar to the role of communist ideology in the USSR or liberal-democratic one in the USA, the domination of ethnic identity over the civil one; the system of values, which unites community, must not only be a subject for general consensus in the society but gather the youth together emotionally, appealing to an irrational beginning in individual and massive psychology; the problem of social growth of the youth. Mostly, the youth in Kazakhstan can be divided into two groups: socially safe and socially unsafe. In the article analysis methods and content analysis were used as well as the results of sociologic researches.

**Keywords:** youth, youth policy, value orientations, youth's values.

The specificity of modern transformations occurring against the backdrop of increasing economic crisis; growth of extremism and terrorism would be the exacerbation of social youth gap and crisis of its identity; and as a result the spread of extremism and xenophobia; lack of strong civic position; and the development of deviant

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subcultures which affects the stability level and security of a society as a whole.

The slow implementation of youth policy and failures of young people encounter under this process, make us to consider some experts opinions who believes the youth policy implementation and active search for identity are not ideological.

There is a number of factors objectively *impede* the youth policy implementation in Kazakhstan:

- lack of *socio-political ideology* similar to the communist ideology back to the USSR or the U.S. liberal-democratic<sup>1</sup>;
- dominance of youth *ethnic identity* over general civil, which inherent to a variable degree to all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan;
- apparently, the *value system* that consolidate the community should not be just a subject of general consensus, but *emotionally* unite the youth including appealing to the *irrational* in the individual and the mass psychology;
- issue of youth *social growth*.

Basically, the Kazakhstani youth may be divided into two groups such as prosperous and disadvantaged. Primarily, means of social and professional mobility are locked for prosperous youth, thus preventing social growth. Young people living in rural areas may be considered as disadvantaged. This group is supposed to be the so-called «hot mass» able to use destructive political forces. The old environment has been destroyed while the new one was not established yet. Currently, the solution of the rural issues would mean the solution of the internal migration issues. To date, the issue of the rural areas development becomes acute. The rural areas should be developed while migration shall be provided only to those who have “an itch” to the science. Obviously, none of the post-Soviet countries including Kazakhstan has the socio-political values to really consoli-

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<sup>1</sup> It is notable that the final version of the «National unity doctrine» refer the *traditional values* as «the spiritual foundation of society», «the foundation to consolidate our unity and identity in modern world».

date ethnically and religiously heterogeneous young adults around the value system.

Finally, another consideration is that in the foreseeable future the formation of a strong national ideology to actually consolidate the Kazakhstani youth, is idealistic and impossible, in essence. Also, young adults who had believed in a certain socio-political program, would naturally expect its actual and obvious implementation in a short historical period, otherwise disappointment comes quickly.

The consolidating value system to develop the Kazakhstan's national ideology would be the balance of *socio-political* and *culturological* components of a future Kazakshtani identity. There are both components in the value system of any modern nation — the only difference is which one dominates. The essential issues would be the balance these two components might or should be combined.

Development of a “pure civil” ideological model would require a system of *socio-political values*, the certain socio-political ideal ambitious enough to mobilize the popular majority<sup>2</sup>.

Obviously, none of the post-Soviet countries including Kazakhstan has such a system of socio-political values. Furthermore, there's a reason to believe the ideology comparable in terms of power and attraction to communism or Western liberal democratic messianism, in principle, cannot be created on demand. This fact objectively leads to a conclusion the ideology in Kazakhstan can't be created without addressing the culturological *values* such as language; culture; and religion<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Т.А. Козырев, Языковая ситуация в современном Казахстане: на середине брода, in: Казахстанский опыт межэтнического и межконфессионального согласия: предложения для ОБСЕ, Алматы 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Our considerations of the prospects for civil integration of the *European* population of Kazakhstan in the event of such a model of ideology, in other words, carve an acceptable socio-cultural niche for the European population. In the event of establishment, a political nation in Kazakhstan based on the traditional values of the Kazakh ethnic group or, more broadly, the *Turkic-Muslim world*, the issue of the full integration of the European population is becoming unconditionally one of the most complex, but, nevertheless, would be solved and, moreover, fairly smooth contrary to popular belief.

From this perspective, the situation in Kazakhstan can be described as follows:

– on the one hand, the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional structure of the population obviously keeps up to date the role of socio-political component;

– on the other hand, a number of objective factors urges to search the cultural basis for the national civil consolidation of Kazakhstan<sup>4</sup>.

As has been said, all combined raise commonsensical concerns among the Russian population. This, in turn, make many experts including the ethnic Kazakhs to be extremely wary of idea to use the culturological basis for the ideology development in Kazakhstan.

According to Kazakhstan's experts, namely the *culture and traditional religion* (as a culture forming factor as well) in the most successful developing countries are:

- powerful *mechanism to consolidate the society*;
- inexhaustible source of *emotional* energy for the patriotic consciousness.

Thus, to make the socio-political values the cornerstone would *greatly increase the responsibility* of the ruling elite for actual and early fulfillment of social promises. Since to reach the Western welfare and social development in the short term is very problematic for Kazakhstan, the more appropriate would be to focus on the cultural values that spur the citizens to love their country, *not only for* its successes and prosperity, but sometimes *despite that* it leaves much to be desired.

Certainly, such presentation of this issue is debatable. Nevertheless, it is obviously, the *real set of options* to choose a particular model of ideology *is limited in each specific case*. Figuratively speaking, the nature of the construction material inevitably imposes a number of restrictions on the real opportunities of an architect, whatever talent

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<sup>4</sup> However, regarding the last point we have to admit that some of the publications on the “Russian” websites (such as [www.russians.kz](http://www.russians.kz) and others) sometimes give a real handle to such kind of speculation: the mere use of the term “Russian compatriots” in relation to the Kazakhstan's citizens of Russian origin already speaks for itself. That is, we can say that the radicals on both sides are in “tandem” jointly stir the pot and unhealthy sentiment.

and bold imagination he may have. In addition, at this time, the historical period for Kazakhstan to implement its model of ideologies is likely to be short. Thus, it is necessary to choose one from the available and very limited set of actual opportunities, that would be ideal for the majority and acceptable for minority, and implement it asap. We just have no time to chaise for the idealistic utopias.

It should be noted that most Kazakhstanis consider the *idea of integration into a common civil nation* in Kazakhstan as a kind of “threat” to their ethno-national identity. In other words, an obstacle to create the civic nation in Kazakhstan is not only Kazakh ethnic nationalism as such, but the politicization of ethnic identities inherent in varying degrees throughout the post-Soviet space<sup>5</sup>.

To form the ideology in Kazakhstan able to consolidate young people from all ethnic groups would largely depend on the successful solution of the *language issue* – in other words, to overcome the current cultural and linguistic separateness of Kazakhstan’s society.

The latter is possible only through the successful *implementation of the Kazakh language* as a functioning and, at least in the first instance as the common understandable state language.

This fact would specify the language issue as one of the strategic areas of the state ethnic policy.

To date, the two major implementation issues of the Kazakh language are the following: *first*, and most important is the lack of incentives to study the Kazakh language by the Russian-speaking youth. However, the lack of incentives should not be confused with the lack of a real need to solve this issue for society as a whole (ie, ultimately, as well as for the Russian-speaking youth), specifically in the mid – and long-term perspectives<sup>6</sup>, *second* cause is the lan-

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<sup>5</sup> Межэтническая ситуация в Казахстане: динамика и тенденции. Исследование проведенное 1 февраля 2010 г. // [zonakz.net/articles/28020](http://zonakz.net/articles/28020), 2.11.2015.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, please refer to T. Kozyrev “The language situation in modern Kazakhstan: in the middle of the ford//Conference Proceedings “Kazakhstan’s experience of inter ethnic and inter-religious harmony: proposals for the OSCE,” KISI under the RK President.

guage teaching environment, ie instrumental problems primarily of methodological character.

At this point it is evident that the language issue is the most sensitive group – is Russian. The expectations of a considerable part of the Russians (53.4%) with regard to the language issue rather negative, while one of the main factors is the current transition of office administration into the Kazakh language. The indicators of the “Asians” (29.6%) and the “Europeans” (30.7%) are slightly different from the responses of the Kazakhs (25%), and almost don’t differ from each other<sup>7</sup>.

In this regard, special emphasis should be made on a number of other issues. The indicators of the “Europeans,” on the contrary, are little different from the Russian positions, while significantly differ from that of the Kazakhs and the “Asians.” These data demonstrate that in the Republic of Kazakhstan the “language issue” is a problem of a *status, ie psychological*, and subjective nature of an extremely high degree.

In this regard, the critical task is the development and implementation of the relevant socio-political discourse, which “separate in different directions” the language issue and the inter-ethnic relations, yet aiming the objectives stated in the draft state program “The languages functioning and development for 2011–2020”.

As of today, we can say *the situation has been changed dramatically* in both directions: *first*, currently, Kazakhstani youth from different social strata has *disparate starting conditions*. The economic; social; property; and political interests of different youth groups are often contradict one another; *second*, urbanization generated by socio-economic and political crisis, as well as rural degradation resulted in the rural-to-urban migration of youth. Rural youth with low level of education and skills, being least of all adapted to the market economy and urban environment just can’t compete with urban peers, which inevitably creates the tension. With the deep-

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<sup>7</sup> These figures show the percentage of “yes” and “rather yes” to the question “Are you concerned with the language situation?”.

ening of the economic crisis, this situation could be the potential conflict factor<sup>8</sup>.

Another issue would be the «titular» nation status awarded to the Kazakhs. This status is just a declarative and shall not provide for any social or economic opportunities for the Kazakhs, *which specifically disappoints the rural youth.*

Appropriate socio-economic policy which excludes the projection of existing or emerging socio-economic issues in the inter-ethnic sphere plays a primary role to prevent conflicts between the titular youth and the youth of non-Kazakh Asian ethnic groups.

Similar issues have been repeatedly and very successful addressed in various states in the XX century. In Kazakhstan, the root of the problem is the severe socio-economic crisis as such: it is the one which generates the population' inertia with regard to the youth policy, which ultimately results in inefficient measures taken.

Thus, the measures taken to address the youth issues in Kazakhstan would be successful if only the socio-economic; educational; cultural; and linguistic issues to be solved at this stage.

So, in the short and midterm it is necessary to purposefully and precisely solve the socio-economic youth issues, which are the main lever to overcome the prevailing anxiety among youth. This would cope with potential latent threats generated in young ethnic groups since Kazakhstan got the independence.

In this case, it refers not only to the very necessity to solve the socio-economic issues of the youth, but also to the priority development of all youth policy areas.

## **The value system of Kazakhstani youth**

Creation of the Kazakhstani values for youth under the socialization is one of the main issues; objectives; and areas of youth policy. The basic socialization institutions would be the education system;

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<sup>8</sup> М.А. Мекебаева, *Положение молодежи в Республике Казахстан*, „Аналитическое обозрение” 2009, No 5 (51), p. 91–96.

family; army; media; and civil society institutions which are currently ineffective. The socialization ceased to be traditional, but didn't become innovative, yet it is unpredictable, spontaneous; and undermanaged. One of the transformation specificities of Kazakhstani society would be the value conflict, which has a number of differences: first, there is no hand down of the spiritual heritage from older generation to successors; second, it proceeds against the background of the radical change of values and hierarchies; third, the mechanism of the values creation ceases to be the major and yield the position to the adaptation. En masses, Kazakhstani youth doesn't adhere to the economic and political values, but pursues the economic interests and adapts to the socio – political realities.

The main challenge to normalize the effectiveness of the institutions to socialize the youth is the lack of the following: *first*, clear and immediate prospects for future development of our society as a holistic social organism; *second*, the lack of a single structure and understanding of activities to socialize the youth.

The consequence of this challenge is the growing impact of desocializing factors under the decreased social protection and the inevitable conflict of the youth innovative capacity with its institutional forms<sup>9</sup>.

Identity crisis in Kazakhstan results in the adoption of cultural values by young adults, which:

- strengthens the role of religion (see below);
- political nature of ethnic identities will gain separatist traits that may in some cases result in the inter-ethnic violence;
- will actually slow down the civic identity formation;
- social disorientation of young people in Kazakhstani socium;
- this process reestablishes the priority of ideal and spiritual values specific for the Kazakhstan's ethnic groups living in isolation, but retaining the archaic forms of social life.

According to the socio – political attitudes and values, in general, the youth *accepts the ideas of a democratic society; freedom*

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<sup>9</sup> Межнациональные и межконфессиональные отношения в Республике Казахстан (по результатам социологического исследования), Алматы 2010.

*of expression; and freedom to choose their own way.* In general, the Kazakhstani youth is in favor of continued changes to increase the social and economic welfare of the country; establish a civil society and a rule-of-law state<sup>10</sup>.

However, recently one can observe such phenomena as the “blurring” of social identity; the “persistence of uncertainty”; and the “cultural supermarket.” According to experts, to a greater extent, the modern Kazakhstani youth can be described as the “indifferent generation.” The key factors for youth self-actualization such as independence and commitment are underdeveloped. The dominant values are money; education and occupation; business career; hedonistic attitude (opportunity to enjoy their lives); and the pursuit of material well-being.

Kazakhstani youth associate the improvement of social well-being with the solution of such issues as vocational choice; possibility to self-actualize; and desired social and professional status. The youth top objectives would be the successful career; education; and material well-being.

Current social issues which mostly disturb young people would be the rise in crime; inflation; rise in prices; government agencies corruption; ecological situation; greater income inequality; cleavage of society into classes; passive citizens and their indifference to the developments.

Among personal concerns experienced by young people, financial security and health issues are in the forefront. But the focus on the healthy lifestyle is formed in actively.

The issue of the creation of youth social identity remains to be acute due to the *weak efficiency of mechanisms* to facilitate the integration of young people in the social structure.

At this point, the following values intrinsic to Kazakhstani youth: – for the “golden youth” representatives – utilitarian; hedonistic; consumerism; usability-based; and asocial values. These representatives of the traditional ethno-cultural norms and values are mostly

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<sup>10</sup> Two-thirds of young people highly appreciate the freedom of political expression, the ability to act in accordance with conscience.

rural and part of urban youth representing ethnic Kazakhs, ie most of the Kazakhstani youth;

– the representatives of simplified, rigid, however, socially in-demand, pragmatic value system reducing the value of the interests and the value rationality is the basic mass of urban and part of the rural youth, regardless of their ethnicity;

– the representatives of the asocial system attitude is the declassé and marginalized youth, which is a significant proportion of young people of all ethnic groups;

– the representatives of modern, post-materialistic value system – relatively small group in relation to the general totality sector of the “commoners” distinguished by a high level of intellectual, moral and spiritual development, and creative way of thinking.

Currently, the religious denominations and some non-governmental organizations are engaged in the promotion and propaganda of the traditional values of society. In the state youth programs prevails the maximum distancing of public institutions from the creation; promotion; and development of the traditional values of our society. In the course of youth socialization, public institutions don't have an impact on the creation of positive values and are not actually engaged in the youth education. Basically, the state has sidestepped the responsibility to educate the youth on the media and communication institutions, which in real life results in the formation of consumerism and growing negative factors among young people.

To narrow the generation gap and continuity in the value-motivational sphere it would be necessary to overcome the crisis of young people socialization focused on basic personal spiritual and moral values.

Improvement efforts of the public authorities to implement the youth employment programs; solve the housing issues; develop the versatile abilities of young people are ineffective due to their small and partial security. They reach just the “elite” and a small percentage of young adults, thus the share of housing; education; employment; and etc., administered under the relevant programs is extremely small and don't make a real social power and transparent and feasible methods of social action. Numerous experts specify the collapse and the lack

of implementation and the impracticability of several youth programs and projects, which adds further credence to this thesis.

However, regardless of the availability or lack of resources, all stakeholders of youth policy such as the state; religious denominations; political parties; public organizations; and corporations shall be involved in the creation of positive youth values.

A state has a special role in this process since it has the most resources and facilities to implement an integrated youth policy in coordination with its social component.

The youth value system shall be created on the basis of a single value system within an explicit and specific national idea; national development strategy (based on certain ideological attitudes determining the choice; values hierarchy; strategy selection; implementation arrangements; and tools and methods to create the values.)

Speaking conventionally, five basic mechanisms of the state youth policy implementation can be distinguished under the youth values creation:

1. Institutionalization of a single basic value system of modern youth. This mechanism shall be implemented through the statutory recognition and the creation of the value system selected in various fundamental regulatory legal acts; documents; and programs.
2. Legal and regulatory framework of various areas of our society; activities and interaction of various social institutions; education and training systems; governance; supervision; prevention and correction of social deviance. This mechanism shall be implemented through the adoption of various legislative and regulatory acts.
3. Establishment and improvement of institutional arrangements and implementation models of the state youth policy. This mechanism shall be implemented through a governance system to be established; supervision; prevention and correction of social deviance under youth policy implementation and effective coordination of various parties.
4. Implementation of targeted programs and projects aimed at socialization; education; and the creation of modern youth

value system. That is, the parties practical activities to succeed the goals set for youth policy.

5. Information onslaught and media propaganda of value systems.

Creation of the modern youth values as the most important mechanism of youth policy presupposes the existence of the state ideology. “Deideologization” of our society slows down the further implementation of institutionalization of a single values system of modern Kazakhstani youth.

## **Role of the media in the system of youth values**

*The specificity* of Kazakhstan’s media in the socialization process would be the assimilation of media information by young adults (as well as the influence of family; religion; school; and higher education) to a greater extent have an individual character, while their effectiveness is delayed in time: *first*, Kazakhstan’s media poorly covers the creation of traditional moral and spiritual values among young people; *second*, to a greater extent, Kazakhstani youth learns the values of the Russian and the Western lifestyles, standards of mass culture and consumption, through media.

In recent years, a number of factors that make to speak about the continuing threat of negative media impact on the consciousness of Kazakhstani youth have been specified in the development of the national information space: *first*, the level of the Kazakhstan’s ethno-cultural status is actually under control of the Russian state media companies and is provided with the calibrated marketing policy and by their media production distributors; *second*, the geographical position of Kazakhstan in the so-called “arc of instability”; technical achievements; and no boundaries for information have enabled the terrorist and extremist organizations to propagate their ideology on the territory of Kazakhstan.

In general, it can be noted that the above will result in the following risks:

- continuous single-vector cultural orientation of Kazakhstan on Russia;
- destruction of traditional cultural values of young Kazakhstanis and the abeyance of the issue of the national identity formation in Kazakhstan<sup>11</sup>;
- increased risk of inter-ethnic and religious conflicts;
- erosion of the fundamentals of the Kazakhstanis civic consciousness in general.

In addition, an overview of regional media regarding coverage of the crisis inter-ethnic phenomena reveals the critical publications in this public life area. The media of some northern regions of Kazakhstan top this list. The basic content of such publications is the local population disaffection of ethno-political policy of the Kazakhstan's leadership<sup>12</sup>. In other words, there is reason to speak about a hidden "latent" conflict. Kostanay region; North Kazakhstan region; Pavlodar region; and East Kazakhstan stir special concern in this regard<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, *Kazakhstan's etatist model of information security* is unable to fully ensure the Kazakhstani youth socialization. At this point, the state fails to establish effective public information policy in the area of spiritual security of an individual. Until now, Kazakhstan has not formed the state media – ; linguistic-; and ethno – cultural policies independent of Russia, which results in the following: first, the Russian-speaking population ignores to learn the Kazakh lan-

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<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, the struggle of any state for its independence dwindle, if subsequently it focuses on the historically distinctive norms and values.

<sup>12</sup> According to the study "Ethnic situation in Kazakhstan: the dynamics and trends", conducted by the Kazakhstan Center for Humanitarian and Political Conjecture. See <http://www.zonakz.net/articles/28020>, 1.11.2015.

<sup>13</sup> According to sociological research, in *Kostanai region*, there is a high level of political tensions including those based on the language issue. As for the *North Kazakhstan* and the *East Kazakhstan*, there are cities and districts with a predominantly Russian population and thus bordering with the Russian Federation. In the East Kazakhstan there is a latent conflict in the cities on the right bank of the Irtysh River, in the 1990s, there happen to be the precedents of separatist activities supported by the Russian radical nationalists.

guage; weak integration of the Russians and other ethnic groups in the Kazakhstani community; second, a simplified approach to the ideology role in the media and as a result the lack of clear political positions. Eventually, the Western value system with not some abstract freedom of information, but the freedom in accordance with the U.S. and the European national criteria, would win.

Therefore, it is necessary to actively pursue state propaganda through the media, as one of the most effective mechanisms to create the traditional, spiritual and moral value systems among modern young people, which is one of the priorities in the development of common strategies of youth policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The state propaganda should focus on the creation of traditional values of society; social consolidation; civic institutions; young people identity; civil and legal awareness; gradual positive social changes; surmount the crisis of social institutions; single cultural and educational policies; and etc. Media propaganda of traditional spiritual and moral values promoted by religious denominations and various public and governmental associations and institutions, should be used as an additional tool.

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## Główne problemy polityki młodzieżowej w Kazachstanie

**Streszczenie:** W niniejszym artykule autorzy omawiają problemy realizacji polityki młodzieżowej w Republice Kazachstan. Głównymi czynnikami utrudniającymi realizację kazachskiej polityki młodzieżowej są: brak społeczno-politycznej ideologii, która mogłaby odgrywać podobną rolę co w swoim czasie ideologia komunistyczna w Związku Radzieckim lub liberalna demokracja w Stanach Zjednoczonych, oraz prymat tożsamości etnicznej i niska rola tożsamości obywatelskiej. System wartości tworzący wspólnotę nie jest wyłącznie kwestią społecznego konsensusu, ale powinien również emocjonalnie spajać młodzież, apelując także do irracjonalnej podstawy indywidualnej i masowej psychologii. Zasadniczo kazachską młodzież można stratyfikować na zamożnych i potrzebujących wsparcia socjalnego. W niniejszym artykule wykorzystano metodę analizy zawartości, zastosowane są również wyniki badań socjologicznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** młodzież, polityka młodzieżowa, wartości, wartości młodzieży.