

“Youth is Potential”

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Citizenship: Kyrgyzstan

Category of essay: Citizenship in a Democratic Society

Current situation in my country

At present time my country undergoes transition period. This situation is expressed in a variety of meetings, demonstrations and protests. The participation of Youth in political reforms is very passive. It is interesting that in our meetings the attendance of urban students is rare. I do not consider inactive participation of students in oppositional meetings as a big problem.

The problem is that some of other representatives of youth, especially rural ones are easily going to oppositional meetings for money, becoming in this way political instrument for somebody.

The problem is that there are a lot of urgent issues (not to mention problems of the whole state) such as corruption at educational institutes, unemployment, and tribalism which prevent promotion of deserved young people, brain drain and youth does not take any initiatives to solve them as if these problems do not touch them.

The problem is that in governmental institutions high positions: managers, heads are taken by people in the age from 41 to over. Youth is only 11, 4%. Young people take high positions in NGOs. However, it is still non-governmental organization.

All this information indicates the problem of rolelessness of the youth in our country. In Kyrgyzstan young people are not doing responsible, socially necessary work. Youth is not involved in state development strategies, governance process or problem solution. There are unsolved, urgent issues; government is making effort to solve them, opposition is trying to change the government

(assuming that it is not successful) and youth is taking a part constructively neither in governmental nor in oppositional activities. Because of this rolelessness young people do not know their own meanings for state development. They see their own life separated from state's or nation's. In this way youth is losing the sense of citizenship, which is very significant for country's promotion.

Cause of the problem

Reasons of the rolelessness vary from situation to situation, person to person. However, there is a key reason and that is ignorance of the state the potential and meaning of the youth. State youth policy is based on the state program for development of Youth. Before 2005 year the acting program was "Jashtyk" The main goals were cultural, moral development and political and economic activities of the youth. This program had several weaknesses. The goals and purposes were very broad. There was not any kind of mechanism, strategy or the way of achieving stated aims. The budget was approximately 10 million soms (25000\$) there was not clear regulation of this budget.

After the revolution on 24th of March, "Jashtyk" was closed and there was created another program "Kyrgyzstan Jashtary" (which was intended for three years). Unfortunately, this program also could not manage with its tasks, since it has the same weaknesses as the first one. Actually, the content was not changed: common idea, common phrases, such as Youth is our Future, but no strategy and detailed plan for involving youth in decision making and problem solving processes. Moreover, "Kyrgyzstan Jashtary" was created without any social research for defining the needs and conditions of youth. The only difference was the budget: each year 10 million soms. By taking vague weak policy state does not let youth know their meaning –importance. Instead of giving role to Youth and using its potential, ideas and energy, state ignores youth and builds the ground for the problem of rolelessness. The consequences of this issue are very serious; they damage both youth and state. Having lost their roles and meanings for the country, youth seeks place for self-expression in any place, but governmental activities. (For this reason most of perspective young people work for NGOs) In rural places youth gets into used to use alcohol and drugs. Of course, without

receiving enough attention from state, youth loses the sense of citizenship, which is strongly damage the state. Why do I think that the sense of citizenship is crucial for the state?

The sense of citizenship is for me loving the country: feeling happiness and pain of it. Person, who has strong sense of citizenship, cannot look at problems without taking any actions. He or she will not always accuse government in failing some projects, and probably going to opposition meetings, which are in our case more destructive rather than constructive, but render assistance by promoting their own ideas, proposals and energy. For this reason the sense of citizenship is cooperation, not protesting state.

This feeling and knowing of citizenship is equal to responsibility: response ability: it is responding to situation, not ignoring it. It is being interested in flourishing of the country. Only when the person is interested in the development of the country and feels the responsibility, he or she can be potential and integral part of the country. Since he/she is interested in promotion of the state, this young person may own brilliant ideas and thoughts regarding the development. Since this citizen feels responsibility, he/she would not keep that ideas (or try to sell them for their own interests) but will take initiatives, act and gain results. It is impossible to buy the sense of citizenship. It is impossible to write agreement with youth to gain the sense of citizenship. The only way of gaining it is just deserve it.

So, ideas, devotion, energy are things given by the sense of citizenship. In order to get the “products” of it, state should invest and support it. Let us look at it from the paradigm of Steven Convey- the balance between product and production capacity. He stated that in order to get more and more golden eggs (products), we should invest, support and repair a goose (production capacity) the sense of citizenship, which provides with ideas and energy of the youth is a golden egg. Youth is a goose-production capacity. If state desires to get the devotion and ideas and energy of young people, it should invest into youth by providing with opportunities to participate in problem-solving processes.

By providing with such opportunities, we are solving the problem of rolelessness and achieving the sense of citizenship.

Solution of the problem

The solution, which I propose, consists of four steps. The main idea is to create Council of young leaders for state development.

The first step is *to conduct social research in order to learn the status quo; conditions of youth, their desires, needs, and regional problems, issues and obstacles, faced by young people.*

The second step is *to organize regular regional tournaments of political debates for the youth in order to involve them directly into the problem solving process.* Every young person should have an access to these tournaments. In each game there are two teams or sides affirmative and negative or government and opposition. [Three speakers per team]. Usually, 6 or 8 rounds are held in one tournament, each team has equal chance to play both of positions. Government (affirmative) must provide with the case, which consists of three parts. First, **status quo**- present situation, problem, urgency, reasons and consequences. Second, **mechanism**-a detailed plan of solving the problem, which addresses following questions: What to do? How to do? Who will be responsible and implement it? Where? When? How much money is needed? Third, **advantages** of a certain plan. The task of opposition is to find out weaknesses of the case of Government and reflect them by giving own suggestions and improving the plan in this way. Political debates are very effective in finding out most effective way of solving the problem. By arguing teams come to the best strategy toward a particular issues. As Karl Popper said: "Maybe you are right, I am wrong, maybe I am right you are wrong, but through arguing (debates and discussions) we will be closer to truth." In these political debates, young people research and learn more about the problem of their region and its roots. In addition to it, they will build their own solution. And during the tournament they will present their own ideas and proposals. Judges will be representatives of local government, since tournaments are regional and topic is about the local issues. Judges should define which solution is the best for a certain problem. The winning places are unlimited; it will depend on proposed ideas. *Winners will be awarded and will*

have an opportunity to realize their projects. They can combine the ideas or parts of different cases into one and organize common solution. In this way, young people will get experience in doing responsible, socially necessary work. By organizing political debates, supporting youth's ideas and giving opportunity to realize their ideas concerning the regional issues (which touch them), government builds bridge between state and youth. This meaningful involvement will cause the sense of citizenship as sunshine causes blooming of the flowers.

The third step is *to hold annual conference where all realized projects will be presented to the president of the country and Government (real!) in the White House.* The goal of this conference is to award "real citizens" for successfully implementing their projects and determine active, potential, creative and energetic leaders. Moreover, this kind of workshops highly motivates young people to get involved in debate tournaments and work with their own projects.

The fourth step is *to create a Council of young leaders for state development from noted active, potential, creative and energetic leaders.* The members of this Council will have the status of national advisers. And they will play the role of parliament duplicate by promoting their ideas and proposals and advises for the any discussed issue by executive and legislative branches.

Advantages of current mechanism:

- State will know the problems and obstacles of youth (by the first step)
- Thanks to political debates young people will develop their critical and analytical thinking skills and increase their potentials.
- State will gain not only clear mechanism for solving particular problem, but also human recourses for implementing proposed mechanism.
- Youth will get meaningful involvement into problem solving process and support from the side of government. Also young people will be highly motivated by the idea to become a member of the Council and become a national adviser.
- The problem of rolelessness will be solved.

To conclude my essay, I would like to say that youth being involved in problem solving process, they are growing not only personally, but also professionally. Through the activities, which were described beforehand, youth will develop their sense of citizenship, which is golden egg for the government. The presented plan is highly effective because it doesn't cost too much but will have a fruitful result as for youth so for the country's development. The most important thing is that in all steps the government is receiving ideas from youth. By implementing this plan the government can be sure that it is using the potential of youth as much as possible and youth can be sure that they are playing indispensable role in developing of the country. As Lao Tzi said: "Think about complicated things as they are simple and natural. Accept all great things as they are simple and available. Then the biggest difficulties will be immediately solved easily. The things, which seem the greatest one in the world, will certainly happen." By implementing stated steps we are a door of ideas for the government and a door of opportunities to changing to good for the youth.