

Rights of Russian Children in Risk Society

The society is considered to be risk due to transition period in economics and politics. We believe that these factors determine the situation with children and adolescents in contemporary Russia to a considerable extent.

Russia may be also characterized as a risk society for rising generation and due to total changes of childhood or alternations of childhood in terms of Berger and Luckmann. The most significant factors of alternation of childhood in Russia are: informational (interaction of childhood and media), institutionalization of ideas of children's rights and beginning of realization process of Child's Rights Convention.

The ideas of child's rights are gradually spreading into Russian society. Laws on children's rights protection have been adopted on federal and regional level.

For many children the realization of their rights (the right for health protection, the right for full-bodied education and aptitudes' development) in modern Russia is problematic.

In 1997 in Russia a special report on realization of Child's Rights Convention was prepared. Authors of the report had to ascertain heterogeneous character of new processes and concluded: children became sacrifices of economical and political reforms. The report was based on state and departmental statistics and so can not spread all over the full picture of rights realization in Russia. In our research in 1998 we tried to study the real opinions of children belonged to various age groups.

The sampling comprised 961 respondents of 10-16 years from 38 territories of Russia and represented 50,7% of boys, 49,3% of girls - and the type of territory: village- 24,2%, town - 47,6%, city (regional center)- 27,8%. The representational error in the first case was minimum, in the second one was 4 %.

The adoption of laws is not enough for child's rights protection, a certain period of time is to pass for establishment of conditions of culture of human rights, culture of refuse from authoritarian style of attitude of adults to children.

In many cases the notions "child's right in a family" and "child's rights for a family" are equivalents. Describing the content of child's rights protection, as a rule, material or any other aid to a family is stressed on.

The youngsters are aware of their rights in the society, they are being informed about their right on education. They know about the duty of the state to support the families. But it was difficult for a kid to answer the question: "What rights do I have in my family?".

More than 25 % of respondents did not know the document where the rights were fixed, 61,3% mentioned Constitution or Human Rights Declaration, 7,7% - Criminal or Family Codes or separate laws . A few of them wrote about Convention on Child's Rights or Child's Rights Declaration.

They learn about the rights from their parents, more often about the duties then about the rights- 81,5% and 59,7%. About 1/4 of respondents got such information from school teachers.

Senior respondents primarily mentioned juridical literature, junior ones mentioned their parents. Mass media ranked the fourth.

30 % of young respondents were refused in true and full information, especially it concerned the school cases. So the role of specially formed children social associations and their representation in local power bodies is very important.

A traditional attitude towards childhood is still prevailing in Russia, in major cases the child's opinions are being ignored by the parents. It may lead to violation of their human rights. It was evident during campaign of voucher privatization and very acute if the case concerns the right for housing.

86,2 % answered that their rights in the family were respected, 5,9 % of them gave negative answers and 7,9 % did not give any answer. But many respondents were sure that physical punishment did not violate their rights. 40 % of them confirmed their physical punishment in the family.

The stereotype of girls bringing up in Russian families is the basis for possible future discrimination in education, profession and power participation.

Gradually alongside with changing the ideas on childhood the paradigm of family bringing up will be changed, but it is too early to note the changing of generational relations in Russian families.

Two from each five respondents confirmed conflicts with parents. The number of conflicts usually increases among 12-13 aged adolescents- 53 % of respondent gave positive answer, the number of conflicts lowers among elder adolescents.

The results of the studies show that the children wish to have additional rights in a family: absence of physical punishment, right to choose what to wear, what to eat, to look after own body, to choose kind of leisure, friends and partners etc.

We believe that relations "parents-children" will alter gradually-from authoritarianism to mutual agreement.

Parents usually pay attention to needs of a child but only in terms of consumption. Child's autonomy, selfregulation and self-control are not being appreciated at all.

40% of respondents came across with cases, when teachers call them offensive and rude words Children in Russian schools remain rightless, they are not participating in school life. 61,6% of respondents wanted to take part in school life.

Secondary education is considered to be free of charge in Russia, but more than 15% of respondents wrote that their parents paid for their lessons.

CONCLUSIONS:

- The extension of research of various aspects of child's rights realization is necessary, changing from the concept of survival towards all other rights of a child.

- Together with active state policy active propagation among parents and children is needed as conservative ideas on rights of children still dominate in russian society.

- Special literature is also needed alongside with audio-visual and

computer aids for bringing up in the spirit of democracy, rights of a person and a child teaching.