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Means, Mechanisms and Stages in the Politicisation of Youth: General Theoretical Foundations

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Abstract. The article defines the term “political socialisation”. It takes into account different approaches in order to acknowledge the importance of the political socialisation for the young people.

Keywords: politicisation; socialisation.

An analysis of the literature shows that by the process of political socialisation some authors understand the totality of its organisational methods, forms and institutions while others, when examining the process of socialisation, focus on the factors, that is, the conditions in which the socialisation takes place, and propose various typologies [1].

It can be asserted that the traditional institutions of political socialisation are, as a rule, multifunctional. Their functions have changed over the course of their historical development and have superimposed themselves on one another. Each of the institutions of socialisation is undergoing a complicated, contradictory evolutionary process. Using Weber’s typology of power we can distinguish different types (styles) of socialisation in which each institution occupies a certain position. In legal power the main institution of socialisation is the school characterised by strict rules. In traditional power the family holds the leading position and is based on the strict observance of traditions. In charismatic power the main reference point is the ‘chief’ figure or leader and the person undergoing socialisation identifies with them emotionally.

The main institutions of socialisation do not fit into a single hierarchical system. The multiplicity and certain mismatch of the intentional influences of the different institutions of political socialisation objectively increase an individual’s autonomy in relation to each of them. Alongside the official institutions there are also spontaneous channels of political socialisation: individual political events and a particular socio-political situation among others. Their influence increases greatly when societal development enters a crisis period.

All the means of political socialisation function within the framework of a certain institutional mechanism defined by the system and whose effectiveness is, in turn, determined by the level of development of the counter subject. This predetermines the choice of concrete methods of influence used by the subject.

When examining this aspect of political socialisation we proceed from the following principles: 1). Political socialisation is a complicated mechanism, having a definite progression and stability to its development. 2). The elements of this process are the individual and the factors socialising him or her. 3). The main content of the political socialisation mechanism is the transfer of demands from the subject to the structure of the person (counter subject). 4). The political socialisation mechanism is comprised of means

and methods by which the subject translates its demands to the counter subject and the latter assimilates them. 5). The mechanism of political socialisation takes place on various levels: the social, the socio-psychological and the psychological. 6). The political socialisation problem is resolved on the social level within the dichotomy of 'political system – person'. The political system is the main subject. Therefore its social mechanisms (unlike other levels) are defined by the specifics of the subject, which in order to have successful influence must consider the particularities of the counter subject. Consequently, the main mechanism here is social control exerted over the actions of the individual, who acts as the counter subject.

Social control is based on the regulatory actions of the political system towards the individual; these can take various forms. Firstly, there can be the exertion of direct control using social sanctions that compel the individual to construct his or her political relations in accordance with officially accepted political norms that have, as a rule, legislative form. Secondly, there is indirect control through the many non-political social institutions in which an individual is objectively involved during the process of upbringing, teaching, education and the like. Thirdly, there is control based on the availability of various methods for achieving political aims defined by the system (participation in the electoral process, political groups, etc.).

Social control as a mechanism of political socialisation is defined by the qualities of the subject itself and the methods of social action it has chosen. Among the leading methods for the implementation of the will of the state authorities are in particular: coercion, manipulation, persuasion and authority.

Coercion is a direct method of social control linked to organisational-administrative influence over the counter subject using laws, decrees and orders and the fulfilment of which is compulsory. This method is closely linked to the use of the authorities' resources (economic, sanctionary and social).

The persuasive method is based on the transferral of the system's normative-value attitudes. It is linked to the psychological sphere – the formation of a person's firm emotional preferences in the field of politics. Unlike coercion it has an indirect rather than a direct nature. In this mechanism a special role is allocated to the figures of political leaders whose authority functions to legitimise the existing political regime.

The level of societal control, like other mechanisms of social influence, depends, in turn, on both general social factors (for example, global problems linked to the threat of war, environmental disasters and others) and the level of development of the person undergoing socialisation.

Political socialisation, like the general socialisation process has stages that are linked to changes in the person as they get older. As a rule, the criteria for identifying the different stages are the specific stages of a person's development. However, there is no single approach to defining the chronological framework of the entire process or its individual stages. In Russian and foreign literature various models for dividing this process into periods are proposed. These differ in content and the number of stages isolated. Such discrepancies, in our opinion, can be explained by the outstanding complexity of the object studied – the person, and also the specificities of the tasks and methods for its investigation.

The question of stages of political socialisation can be approached from various standpoints: psycho-physiological, psychological and social-psychological. Some authors limit the process to the stages of early childhood and youth – the main stages of the formation of a person. After this, in their opinion, one can only speak of re-socialisation [2]. Some researchers from this school link certain stages in socialisation to their dominant institution. Thus, the early stage of political socialisation is called the 'family' [3; 4], the period of school education the 'school' [5] and the youth stage is the phase of 'youth sub-

cultures' [6] and others. Perhaps this is why a number of social theories reduce the mechanisms of socialisation to a unidirectional, asymmetric interaction as they limit the socialisation process to the stages of early childhood and youth. Here the person is only given the role of the recipient, the 'passive object of upbringing' [7].

A different approach examines political socialisation as a continuous process encompassing almost the entire life path from early childhood to death. Its stages correspond to the phases of growing up, the process of taking on new social roles and acquiring political experience [8].

In our opinion, the most well-founded approach is that which distinguishes qualitatively different stages in the political development of a person on the basis of several changeable factors of one's political character. Such an approach was first proposed by D. Easton [9] and despite some discrepancies in terminology found many followers among his compatriot researchers [1; 10; 11].

Following this tradition, we distinguish between three main indicators that are linked firstly to the subjective state of the person (age, psychological specificities, and similar), secondly to the presence of some kind of experience of political activities and one's own political role (sideliner, leader, outsider and others) and thirdly to the level of influence of social environmental factors (institutions, agents, events and others) on the person. The influence of these three changeable factors predetermines the distinction of the qualitatively different stages of political socialisation: primary and secondary.

Primary socialisation is the period needed for the individual to become an active political subject and is when the development of political knowledge takes place and there is a cognitive, but at the same time primarily emotional, acquisition of the main political values and trends characteristic of the society. This coincides with the periods of early childhood and youth and is linked to the emergence of political thought in accordance with the general process of the maturing of the brain.

Studies of the stages of the maturing of a child's reasoning, among which the works of J. Piaget [8] take a leading role, have allowed us to distinguish a series of particularities of the mechanism of political socialisation. The main one of these is the direct emotional-psychological upbringing of a child in political life through the information received from the assessments, relations and reactions of parents and other family members. Here upbringing plays the most important role. Upbringing is linked to direct methods of action – suggestion, on the basis of which a non-critical acceptance by the individual of the canons of the political system; emulation, which arises from absorption of clear models of normative behaviour. Political upbringing is characterised by its psychological orientation and serves the aim of forming a lasting emotional preference in the political sphere. Among the methods of psychological effect based on persuasion, suggestion and absorption, the verbal (spoken) has a special role. Spoken influence is aimed at forming a certain value system [12]. Given that first impressions about the political life of a society play an important role, the political system purposefully creates a positive image of the authorities using those means of upbringing that are suitable to childhood education: books, animated films, comics, cinema and festivals. Here not only verbal means, but also non-verbal means linked for example to graphic state symbolism have exceptional significance. On this basis a 'personalisation' of politics takes place during which a single political figure becomes a distinctive, symbolic image of contact with state power and the whole political system. By evaluating their behaviour the child acquires a plan for conduct towards the authorities and becomes a participant in the 'political game'. Later an 'idealisation' of political images takes place as a result of which a certain lasting relationship to politics is formed. The data from contemporary research shows that children's main political orientation is formed and consolidated at the age of 11-13 years. In this period relations to the political system and feelings of attachment to a country take

shape. However, these tendencies are still lacking a rational basis and bear a distinctly emotional colouring in their manifestation [13]. Gradually the ability to evaluate phenomena linked to politics and their significance not only for a single person, but for society as a whole develops. This in the end leads to the 'institutionalisation' of the acquired qualities and is already linked to an independent, transpersonal vision of politics. A definite understanding of the activities of individual social institutions is reached and the nature of reasoning about politics changes: from the sensual, obvious and pragmatic reflection of reality characteristic of childhood thinking to an autonomous system of moral-political principles. Dependent on the aims of the political system and its level of interest in mobilising new members into political participation, the internalisation of social trends, arrangements and values can either slow down or speed up.

Thus, during the primary stage of socialisation a person travels the path from being the object of purposeful education whose task is to adapt to the political system, its demands and norms, often without understanding their essence and significance, to being an independent subject of political relations, whose social position is not defined by age but by the social roles he or she fulfils on completing the primary stage of political socialisation. It can be asserted that in practice this almost coincides with the age limits set out in legislation for voting rights and the right to be elected to public office (18-23 years).

Secondary political socialisation is chronologically linked to the start of the social maturity stage of a person-citizen and continues throughout life. V. A. Shchegortsov defines it as a period from "the lasting and holistic periods of the active phase" (that is primary socialisation) to "stabilising-corrective periods" [14]. In this period the correcting of the person's system of views, representations and arrangements takes place in accordance with changing conditions, their own age-related changes and also with the acquisition of new political roles, the gaining of experience of political participation and, as a result, the complication of a person's political makeup.

At this stage of political socialisation new mechanisms of involvement in the political process (for example political participation – in election campaigns and political groups) take on particular significance and permit the acquisition of a certain experience of political activity and, as a result, an electoral relationship to existing norms and values.

The main distinguishing particularity of this stage is the inverse process of the person's influence on the political system (inverse socialisation) through participation in the political process as an independent subject selectively assimilating the political traditions of the system and consciously choosing definite methods of political behaviour and manners of interacting with the authorities. The influence of external environmental factors and their means and methods are significantly limited by the person's internal beliefs.

A consequence of an individual's autonomy towards official channels of socialisation is different behaviour in a concrete situation: on the one hand creative independence and activity is possible, as is on the other passivity and all possible forms of deviant behaviour.

Under the conditions of macro-system crisis and a consequent crisis in the channels of formal political socialisation, social control over the individual weakens and the influence of spontaneous factors rises. These include isolated political events and the concrete situation among others.

With changes to the political map of the world a person's fundamental impressions of politics can be adjusted and changed, but their main parameters are fixed within the person's makeup. Therefore, in the event of the system malfunctioning when there is a failure in the translation of its political traditions, disorientation arises among citizens in relation to this, and as a rule a return to the earlier, fundamental impressions formed in the primary socialisation period is observed. L. Ya. Gozman and Ye. V. Shestopal link the crisis in political socialisation in Russia to re-socialisation where a shift in the 'symbol' of

political values is taking place both at the level of society as a whole and at the level of individual societal groups [15]. Re-socialisation is conditional upon a whole range of factors. Firstly, new official democratic values are not sufficiently systematised, which makes their translation from the system to the person harder. Secondly, very different age groups participate in the political process in Russia today. Their primary socialisation took place in specific social conditions and defined hugely important particularities in their behaviour and consciousness. These are such cohorts as 'post-Soviet children', 'children of perestroika', 'the generation of the late depression', 'children of the Brezhnev period' and 'of the Khrushchev thaw', the post-war generation, 'the people of the sixties' and the contemporaries of the revolution and civil war [15]. It is clear that the process of re-socialisation of these groups is a multi-level one, sometimes refracting childhood experience several times. The data from empirical studies shows that the older age cohorts are finding the crisis particularly difficult and are less well adapted to the new political conditions than others and are therefore inevitably returning to the impressions that they formed during their primary stage of socialisation [16].

The characteristics of the main stages of political socialisation that we have studied allow us to draw several conclusions:

- ✓ Political socialisation is a dialectical process of a person acquiring and losing political qualities, values, traditions and impressions, that is, the synthesis of a person's socialisation and re-socialisation in the process of their development.

- ✓ The level of political socialisability changes over the course of a person's whole life and depends of an individual's age, their social qualities, external environmental factors, and primarily the institutions and agents of the political system.

- ✓ Each political system develops specific mechanisms to attract a person to politics, regulating citizens' roles and functions.

- ✓ In this interaction the presence of a value orientated unity of subject and counter-subject is a decisive factor and is defined by the level of congruence between expectations and demands and the communality of their basis and whether this is shared by the predominant system of values.

Thus, the mechanisms of political socialisation act as a single system regulating the interaction of the person and the political system of society at various stages of development and having the aim of mutual adaptation. The main purpose of the mechanism of political socialisation is the translation of the system's demands to a person's makeup that is their internalisation in the form of values, norms and demands.

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**Средства, механизмы и этапы политизации молодёжи:
общетеоретические основания**

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Аннотация. В статье определяется понятие «политическая социализация». Применяются различные подходы для раскрытия важности политической социализации для молодёжи.

Ключевые слова: политизация; социализация.