

Herkes İçin Bağlayıcı Bir Gençlik Politikası Nasıl Uygulanır: Dünyada İzlenen 'Uluslararası' Gençlik Politikasının Kökenleri Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz

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Özet

Bu çalışmada farklı bölgelerdeki gençlik politikalarının doğasının ve dahil olan politik süreçlerin karşılaştırmalı olarak değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu makale dünya çapındaki gençlik politikalarının sınırları üzerine genel bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Çalışmanın birinci bölümünde, gençlik politikası genel bir konsept olarak açıklanmıştır. Sonrasında ise gençlik politikalarının oluşturulması ve uygulanması açısından bir başarı hikayesi olarak görülen Avrupa Gençlik Politikası ile Orta Asya'daki gençlik politikasının temeli (Rusya ve Kazakistan örnekleri üzerinden) öne çıkan politikaların bölgesel gerçekliklerini anlayabilmek adına tarihsel bağlamda incelenmiştir. Son olarak, küresel bir kuruluşun dünya gençliğini ilgilendiren konulara nasıl parmak bastığını görmek için BM'nin gençlik politikalarına dair eylemsel yaklaşımı analiz edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın temel bulguları, gençlik uygulamalarında Avrupa metodolojisinin baskın olmasına rağmen, farklı bölgelerdeki politika boşluklarının küresel bir kurum tarafından etkin bir gençlik uygulamasıyla giderilmesi için yerel ve bölgesel ihtiyaçların benzersiz olduğunu ve özel yaklaşımlarla ele alınması gerektiğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Gençlik politikası • Avrupa Gençlik Politikası • Asya'da Gençlik Politikası
• Uluslararası Gençlik Politikası Standartları

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How to Implement a Cohesive Youth Policy for All: A Comparative Analysis of the Origins of 'International' Youth Policy in the World

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the nature of youth policy comparatively in different regions and the political process involved in it. In this regard, this paper provides a general framework regarding the contours of youth policy throughout the world. In the first part of the study as an overall concept, youth policy has been introduced. Then, the European Youth Policy, which has been presented over the years as a success story for youth policymaking and implementation, and the foundation of the youth policy in Central Asia- on the examples of Russia and Kazakhstan- have been subjected to investigation through a historical context to understand the regional realities of the prominent policies. Lastly, the UN's operational style on youth policy has been analyzed to see how a global agency touches upon the issues related to the world youth. The major findings of this study assume that although the European methodology is dominant in youth implementation, the local and regional necessities are unique and should be addressed through specialized approaches to hinder policy gaps in a different regions to implement an effective youth by a global institution.

Keywords

Youth policy • European Youth Policy • Youth Policy in Asia • International Standards of Youth Policy

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Introduction

What makes a youth policy globally effective? Or is it possible to determine a standard set of rules for ‘international’ youth policy? Why European methodology of youth policy-making, and implementation comes to mind when someone mentioned youth policy? And how a global institution can conduct a cohesive youth policy for all? Indeed, an investigation of the historical background and trends around the globe on youth policy-making carries enormous importance in creating an effective youth policy for all, specifically if someone is a youth worker internationally.

In recent decades, youth policy has been one of the distinguished policy themes in international fora. The youth-related issues constitute a dynamic platform for countries and international organizations to operate in a multilateral and positive environment.

Specifically,

Europe-centric youth policies have become dominant in the international sphere by advocating definite standards for national youth policies with the consolidation of non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. Indeed, it was a result of the first systematic efforts that have been pioneered by a number of European international institutions, notably the European Council, and the European Union who produced the first blueprint

of national youth strategies (Denstad, 2009). It can be said that the literature on youth policy is mostly created by European institutions, which includes a set of resolutions and decisions offering criteria, indicators, and a list of areas that are to be covered by a standard youth policy.

However, the leading role of European Institutions in youth policy making and the implementation process in the international arena brings out the question for the rest of the world to what extent European international standards can be effective to address the problems of youth in different regions. To assess all these questions since the beginning of this article, I reviewed the origins and domains of current youth policies on a regional and global scale. It outlined the contours of youth policy in Europe and Asia as well as the history of the political process involved that allows us to evaluate what is called international standards, and to demonstrate how different regions naturally deviate from them. United Nations youth policy strategy was also assessed, which provides another perspective to understand the contours of youth policy on a global scale, which can give an insight for us, ICYF youth workers, how a global institution operates for international policy-making and implementation. I touched upon the key policy domains and key policy actions that youth policy builds upon

in different regions, which eventually demonstrates how the scope of the youth policy varies from regional to international scale.

What is Youth Policy?

Youth policy is a multi-disciplinary phenomenon rooted in sociology, psychology, and politics that primarily are expected to address the challenges of young people and bring together the available sources to reveal opportunities for them (Silvan, 2019). In this regard, youth policy is basically a set of policies and coordination of them to make them an active part of society (Lonean, Braziene and Taru, 2020).

Youth policies vary starting from local to expanding international policies. National youth policies are considered to reflect the national priorities, challenges, and opportunities of each country in a local context. In return, national youth policy is supposed to be detailed in government programs and includes the establishment of new institutions and partnering with the existing ones, as well as the creation of specific implementation tools by taking the unique position of each target area into consideration.

Considering the unique position of the youth population in different countries, youth policies are expected to be well-tailored to the needs of youth with a specifically designed methodology. To effectively address youth-related matters,

generally, youth policies are established through strategic papers, also these papers can be articulated and rooted in a wide range of documents related to government policies and practices that demonstrate how policymakers handle the issues related to the youth (Denstad, 2009).

Recent decades have witnessed the importance of creating effective youth policy to contribute to the quality of the young generations. The effectiveness of youth policy through the effective implementation of the policies are attached to the different aspects, respectively, social, economic, organizational, moral, and legal aspects in each country (Rystina and Kussainova, 2014). In line with the different realities of each country, youth policies’ aim and the tools of implementation vary, as a result, the quality of the generations is obtained differently. The effectiveness of a youth policy also is directly related to its extent, in this regard, a comprehensive youth policy is expected to a wide variety of actions, including formal and informal education, training, youth welfare through employment, cultural programs, and providing active participation of youth to the society (Rystina and Kussainova, 2014).

Since 1969, the UN General Assembly has endorsed significant resolutions on national youth policy, and from that time, UN Secretariat supports the implementation of such decisions

for youth policies. However, the idea of determining standards for youth policy has developed recently. The institutionalization of the youth ministerial conferences throughout the world and the creation of regional bodies have strengthened the idea that good practices can be applied to different issues pertaining to the youth. (Youth Policy, 2022) In this regard, special attention has been given to the European example of youth policy currently around the world.

The fact that European policies with tangible results have a great effect on this. Indeed, the first systematical, in the scope of both national and international efforts in a collective youth policy, the formulation is observed in Europe. In parallel to the increasing multilateralism through Europe, it is also reflected in the youth policy area, which resulted in the production of systematical methodology and international approaches for youth issues in the region. To track these needs and methodologies for international youth policy in the world, the rest of the article will deep into the evolution of youth policy in Europe, the UN, and Asia.

The Contours of 'International' Youth Policy: The Origins of Youth Policy in Europe

The evolution of youth policy in Europe has several milestones. First and foremost, as a reaction to the social unrest of 1968 across Europe and its peripheries, the youth-related issues, concerns, and

interests of young people gained the attraction of world opinion. The cross-border movements that stem from the social unrest across Europe revealed the significance of youth activism and the special necessity to direct this activism in a concrete way. The new occasions triggered the establishment of local and regional youth centers supported by international-scale institutions to foster the voluntary sector with a specific focus on human rights throughout Europe. As another significant milestone, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism, youth policy trends changed the track in Europe by increasing their focus on multinational activities, and intercultural learning as a response to the crisis popped up after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The latest track in youth policy across Europe was emboldened after 2001, the year that the terrorist attack in the United States led the way for voicing up for the supporters of Islamophobia.

Through these milestones, the Council of Europe (CoE) pioneered the field of youth policy in Europe, indeed, it "was the first among the international institutions to develop an agenda focusing on the interest of young people and youth participation" (Denstad, 2009). Yet, with the establishment of a co-managed sector through bringing the intergovernmental sector and non-governmental sector together, CoE has reached an effective level of operation in

creating, implementing, and monitoring youth policy throughout Europe.

When it comes to the main themes of political actions; mobility, intergeneration, and intercultural cooperation themes come to the front. In this regard, the resolution of the 8th the Council of Europe Conference on Ministers responsible for Youth adopts a new and long-term strategy in 2008, titled "The future of the Council of the Europe Youth Policy: Agenda 2020", determined their prioritization of three crucial action areas, respectively, human rights and democracy, living together in diverse societies and social inclusion of young people (CM/Res (2008) 23). Indeed, it was the pillars of a value system that is significant to create an effective policy.

On the other hand, the millennium has created a new dynamic for youth policy efforts in the world. The United Nations gathered the first ever Conference of the Minister of Youth and Sports in 1998, which resulted in significant steps in youth policy (WCMRY, 2008). Following this important occasion, European Commission launched a specific "White Paper on Youth" in 2001 paving the way for the establishment of a new partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth. It was followed by the establishment of a new mechanism to evaluate the national youth policies, as an effective tool to promote the development of national

youth strategies. Indeed, a 'Stability Pact Working Group on Youth' consisting of regional and national organizations and established in 2000 was aiming to address this agenda as a key priority (Denstad, 2009).

The gradual developments in Europe to create and implement a holistic youth policy led the way to discuss the criteria and standards for youth policy. This resulted in the special gatherings of experts to determine the standards for a coherent, inclusive, and 'universal' youth policy. The experts' group was effective in setting up objectives, identifying important components, and cross-cutting themes to standardize the policy-making process related to the youth. According to this, an effective youth policy is shaped around the following themes (European Youth Centre, 2003):

1. Investing in youth with a mutuality by ensuring an opportunity-focused approach rather than a problem-oriented perception,
2. Including the young population in the policy-making process youth, especially to formulate strategic papers to be utilized in the long term,
3. Including youth people in the monitoring process of the youth policies to assess the operational effectiveness of policy practices, Providing opportunities to learn and gain experience to support their skills and competencies through their educational

and labor life, as well as ensuring their active participation in the society,

4. Committing to raising awareness of policy gaps in the youth-related matter and tackling them.

It should be noted that these criteria create a valuable list of what should be covered by a national youth policy at the 'European level'. As result, policy priorities and actions are set up with the following topics in Europe: active participation, social inclusion, information, mobility, voluntarism, training, and exchange programs. The overall assumption in designing such a policy is to meet the needs of youth despite the 'policy gaps' that somehow decrease the effectiveness. What is striking at this point is the increasing and hard-to-fill policy gaps beyond Europe that cause deviation from the global assumptions of the Europe Youth Center Report because of the regional necessities.

In the same report, the reasons for the policy gaps were recognized as 'resource constraints, inappropriate structures, an absence of a suitably skilled workforce, a poorly designed policy, unrealistic objectives, or an absence of a sufficiently broad range of measures.' (European Youth Centre, 2003) In this case, applying the tools and strategies as in the European example may cause an ineffective and failed initiative in the different regions. In this regard, although the political rationale

may comply with different regions, the packages of tools designed in youth policy should be unique and tailored to the specific needs of the related regions in order to hinder the greater policy gaps.

Searching for an Identity: The Origins of Youth Policy in Middle Asia

At this point, the assessment of youth policy trends in Asia can be a significant demonstration to see how policy gaps can occur if the tools and methodologies of 'so-called' international standards of European youth policy are applied to a different region. Although there is not a holistic approach determined by an inter-governmental and supra-governmental authority does not exist as in the example of Europe and each country has its unique approach to the youth policy, tracking the youth policy in specific countries in Asia gives a satisfactory insight to understand the key policy domains in youth policy in recent years.

The first milestones for youth policy in Central Asia occurred after the dissolution of the USSR which created layered problems in the post-Soviet states. Significantly, it was the announcement of globalization that led the way for cultural fragmentation toward a world of possibilities in a society consisting of a big portion of youth (Blum, 2006). The post-Soviet countries underwent a period of state-formulation in which they cope with

serious socio-political and economical problems. In contrast to the European experience in the meantime, which responded to the crises by increasing the mobility, exchange, and multiculturalism programs in youth policy actions, post-Soviet states perceived the new phenomenon as a catalyzer of the identity crises that popped up after the dissolution of the USSR.

Economic deprivation was the first among the most urgent issue to be addressed in post-Soviet states in most cases. Secondly, the political and sociological transition reflected as identity crises in the countries. What is observable in these countries, notably Russia, political regulations have reflected the concerns on demand for modernity and another demand to remain culturally unique in the international fora (Blum,2006). All this political conjuncture brought fairly new challenges for youth in this region; atomized individualism, economic deprivation, emigration, inter-ethnic relations and physical and mental health issues were among the ones which are significant.

As in the example of Russia, this predicament of youth in the country echoed in one of the first youth policy strategies drafted in October 2005; "Strategy of State Youth Policy in the Russian Federation (2006-2016)" which recognizes three goals for youth policy (Podchayev and Khaliy, 2020). What is the laid down foundation in the

document were the tensions in Russian society for the reformulation of the state and youth after the Soviet Union. Thus, it contained the empowerment of civil society and participation, alongside creating a normative and patriotic order that allows new identification of youth in the new state (Blum,2006). The resulting policy recommendation combined all these aspects to determine the ideal youth by Russian youth policy.

As another example to the post-Soviet countries, Kazakhstan, which underwent considerable formulation in state policy including youth policy, focused on the socio-political programs shaped around the cultural and developmental programs to build a new Kazakhstan identity, as in the Russian example. At that time, Kazakhstan was struggling with the lack of socio-political ideology, and the dominance of ethnic identity over the civil one, while aiming to address culturological values such as providing youth social growth (Maigul, Seylbek, 2015). Kazakhstan has been one of the most active countries in Central Asia regarding youth policy, chronologically having youth strategic papers; "Kazakhstan Strategic Development Plan 2030" (1997), "State Youth Concept" (1999), "Kazakhstan Youth Program" (2001), "2005-2007 Youth Program" (2005), "Kazakhstan Strategic Development Plan 2020" (2010), "Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy" (2012), "Kazakhstan Youth Policy Concept until

2020” (2013) and “Kazakhstan State Youth Law” (2015) (Beylur, 2020). In addition to these strategic papers, youth has been placed in a very special context to realize the goals as a guarantor to the national development. However, “Who are we?, Where is our direction? Where will we be by 2050?” questions were addressed to young people and the goal of “being among the 30 most developed countries” is assigned to young people as a mission” (Beylur, 2022). In this regard, it can be said that all these efforts were carrying particular attention to addressing the formulation of the country and its place in the world with a focus on sustaining “Kazak identity”, which is still a striking theme that comes to the front. As of today, although the trends have been changing in the global agenda; economic and political prosperity of youth in the country, socio-economic crisis, changings in rural and urban youth population, the origins of youth policy still address the key policy domains differ from the rest of the world in line with its foundation basis.

Similarly in Russia, in line with the political conjuncture, the youth policy mainly shapes around the sense of patriotism and civic responsibility through the NGOs mostly supported by the state to contribute to the moral and intellectual rhetoric of the country, which shows the fact that the laid foundation of the youth policy is still valid and need to be understood by

the youth workers to produce tangible sources and implementation plans. What is observable in the Asian example is that the response to the crisis in the region has been given in a different direction than in the European example. The economical and socio-political structure is completely different to utilize the same tools, which, may be resulted in big policy gaps. In this regard, a detailed assessment of the problems and challenges young people face is important to develop local-specific and direct-to-point policies and tools.

At the Global Level: The Efforts of the United Nations in Youth Policy

As a major international body engaging with global politics, understanding the United Nations’ unique position while handling youth-related issues gives an important perspective regarding the global operating model for large-scale institutions which conduct programs in different continents of the world. First of all, UN bodies differ from the existing regional inter-governmental organizations working on youth policy with their political nature. In this regard, the UN approach is more global, prudent and goal- oriented not having purely value-oriented rhetoric.

To track the historical record of the UN efforts; although the efforts of UN supporting national youth policies goes back to the mid of 1960’s, it should be noted that the specific focus of the UN on youth policy developed after the

end of the 1980s. UN General Assembly announced 1985 as International Youth Year by voicing up for the youth participation in the countries as a means to UN Goals identified in UN Charter. Following this, the UN adopted the ‘World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond’(UN,1996) which is one of the early papers that comprehensively handle the issues related to the youth. WPAY has remained the key strategic paper of the UN on youth issues and is still operative and the UN has a specific mandate to monitor the implementation of this adoption (UN, 1996).

Through the years, different priority areas were added to the formulation in line with the timely necessities, for example, the youth issues that have been formulated previously with WPAY were reformulated as a part of the Millenium Development Goals in 2005. At this point, it should be noted that the implementation agencies of the formulated policies within the UN differed from the European example by not defining a single unit to interact with Youth. Although there is a Youth Unit -previously UN Programme on Youth, UN Youth Unit, now UN Youth Envoy-, this unit is not given full authorization on the youth policy implementation in UN System and in this regard, this unit has financial and authority deficiencies to conduct youth activities around the world (Denstad, 2009).

Two main approaches identified in Envoy’s Work Plans contains advocating the empowerment and participation of youth specifically the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, and recognizing the contributions of youth to sustainable development, and facilitating and strengthening human rights (Envoy’s Work Plan, 2022). In this regard, three main pillars have been determined as follows; 1. Increasing youth participation in the Inter-Governmental Space, 2. Realizing the potential of the young people within the UN system and 3. Engagement and mobilization of young people through advocacy, participation, partnerships, and coordination. (Envoy’s Work Plan, 2022). It can be said UN Youth Unit has been carried a harmonizer and coordinator role rather than being an implementation agency by having national offices and representatives in the related countries. To promote, develop and straighten youth strategies at the global level among different stakeholders. In that vein, the main pillar of the UN’s tackling of youth-related issues has been the promotion of youth participation in the government decision-making process and society as well (Denstad, 2009)

One of the causes that impact the operational style of the UN is the institutional scope in which the UN engages the broader issues pertaining to youth in member states, such as

education, employment, hunger and poverty, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, and girls and young women. The priority actions identified by the UN and the member state are expected to commit to further actions to be taken through different UN agencies in collaboration mainly with the government authorities. In this regard, there is no single authority to implement UN Youth Strategy. For example, the Youth Coordination Unit of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) addressed the challenges and mobilize youth through youth forums and other organizational activities. Similarly, UN Environmental Program, UN Program for Human Settlements, UN Population Fund, UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, and United Nations Children's Fund have special coordinating bodies for the issues related to the youth (Denstad, 2009).

However, the youth policy experience of the European Union, European Commission, and United Nations have carried the same participatory paradigm that enables the stakeholders of the youth policymakers and practitioners in a concrete way. While European Commission and European Union have been utilizing civil society and non-governmental organizations to realize the youth policy priorities set by the strategic paper, UN Youth Unit has been conducted as a 'harmonizer role'

between different UN agencies to achieve the youth policy goals. Indeed, the scope of the organizations and the targeted audience has been the significant determinant of this differentiation.

At this point, it should be also noted that the recent development regarding the establishment of the UN Youth Unit which integrates and consolidates all existing efforts of the UN in different agencies is important. On September 2022, with the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution, the importance of youth engagement and development has been highlighted. With a financial budget dedicated to broader activities, the establishment of the UN Youth Office addresses the need for consolidating global efforts throughout the world for tangible result and will be an important example to ponder upon international standards.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to comparatively assess the nature of youth policy in different regions and the political process involved in it. In this regard, this paper provided a general framework regarding the contours of youth policy throughout the world. First of all, as an overall concept, youth policy has been introduced. Secondly, the European Youth Policy, which has been presented over the years as a success story for youth policy-making and implementation, has been subjected to investigation through a historical context to understand the

regional realities of the prominent policies. Secondly, the foundation of the youth policy in Russia and Kazakhstan has been discussed to understand different political considerations attached to the youth policy in Central Asia. Since the assessment of a regional policy requires a huge set of academic backgrounds, due to the limited scope of this paper, Russia and Kazakhstan have been selected as case countries. Eventually, a general insight into youth policy in this region has been obtained. Lastly, the UN's operational style on youth policy has been analyzed to see how an international agency touches upon the issues related to the world youth.

The overall findings of this paper assume the following points: (i) the European Youth Policy specifically laid down in the European Council and European Union efforts represent a relatively successful example in the field of youth policy which is tried to be imitated by calling the 'international standard' for the rest of the world. However, although the youth policy objectives and governing ideas contain a reliably similar set of intentions to the rest of the world when it comes to the policy implications, the policy gaps – the practicality and feasibility of the youth policy- demonstrably exist beyond Europe. In this regard, the efforts taken in Europe stayed more European-centric rather than 'universal'. The local and

regional necessities are unique and should be addressed through specialized approaches to hinder policy gaps, (ii) institutional youth policy actions should be undertaken by determining the unique and clear place of the organization through regular policy papers from the implementers of the youth policy, in that vein, a global organization should have a mechanism to produce the up-to-date policy papers of youth status and related political conjecture through academic and statistical data as well as the field reports to create direct-to-point initiatives and programs (iii) after having this knowledge background, specifically designed projects, tools, and methodologies should be utilized to address the local and regional necessities to hinder potential policy gaps and boost the effectiveness and visibility of youth activity. In this regard, for a global institution, rather than, imitating European examples, it would be a better option to create regional desks to produce different activities in line with the necessity of the different regions. While it would allow addressing the local necessities and contribute to the betterment of the targeted population, it may also contribute to the negotiation of the organization with partners by producing tangible outcomes in line with their needs. (iv) Also, a global institution can be placed itself in a 'harmonizer' position among the entities to facilitate the existing activities related to the youth in a broader context. It would be

a more moderate way to organize the relations with the existing entities, like in the example of the UN while providing a leverage power in the international arena.

It also should be kept in mind that the scope of this paper needs a broader investigation. The comparative analysis of the implementation agencies and mechanism of youth policy also can be searched to support the ideas in this paper and can serve as a provide discussion to understand the current trends and how to navigate them. These further investigations would advance this topic by decreasing the lack of research in this field.

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