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**ECOLOGICAL-PATRIOTIC VOLUNTEERSHIP AS A MEANS OF**  
**FORMING THE CIVIC POSITION**

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*Abstract*

One of the areas of patriotic education is the inclusion of the younger generation in volunteering. The article presents the phenomenon of ecological-patriotic volunteering as an effective tool for consolidating the patriotic and environmental areas of educational work. The possibilities of ecological-patriotic volunteering as a means of patriotic education and forming the civic position of the young generation are revealed. The essential characteristics of this type of volunteer activity are considered, as well as its forms (ecological-patriotic education, environmental protection activities, organization of ecological leisure) and principles of organization of ecological-patriotic volunteering (the subjective position of the participants, educational and entertaining-educational nature of the activity, nature and culture, eventfulness, etc.). The article analyzes the results of a diagnostic study of young people's ideas about patriotic education at school, as well as its connection with environmental activities. The authors present the experience of the volunteer group "Dobry Novgorod", analyze the results of the ecological-patriotic work of volunteers from the perspective of their personal changes, as well as in the assessments of citizens participating in volunteer events. The most effective forms of ecological-patriotic volunteering have been identified, including family holidays, the territory cleanup combined with leisure activities. The characteristics of ecological-patriotic volunteering that contribute to the formation of civic activism and patriotic feelings of volunteers are revealed: universality and accessibility for people of different ages and physical abilities, comprehensibility and aesthetic value, educational nature of the activity, integration with various types of leisure, developing pride in their work and country.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the Russian Federation has embarked on the development of public interest in volunteering. In 2018, the Federal Law No. 15-FZ “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation on the Issues of Volunteering” was adopted. In the near future, all regions of the country should introduce the Volunteer Support Standard, as well as report on events that took place within the framework of the Year of Volunteering (Standards of Volunteering Support in Regions, 2017).

Volunteering becomes a means of active patriotic education of the younger generation. According to V.V. Putin, “Volunteers have become partners of the state” (Ivanova, 2018). Significant support is received by state movements aimed at developing patriotism, such as Victory Volunteers, Yunarmia (Young Army), and the civic direction of the Russian schoolchildren movement.

In a situation of active public involvement in volunteering, there naturally arises an interest in considering volunteering as a means of patriotic education and the formation of a civil society.

## 2. Problem Statement

Currently, in Russia there is a tendency to unite civic and patriotic education, which is reflected in the state program “Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for 2016-2020”. However, this document broadcasts a rather “militarized” understanding of patriotism, excluding such important direction of development of civil society as a transition to an environmentally responsible lifestyle. On sixty pages of the program’s text, there is not a single word with the root “eco” and not a single mentioning of nature as part of homeland (Government program “Patriotic Education of Citizens of Russian Federation for 2016-2020”, 2015). The inclination to military-patriotic education is confirmed by the active development of Yunarmia (Young Army) and the Victory Volunteers movement. Thus, the idea that patriotism is, above all, protection of homeland from the enemy, military merit and educational activities related to the preservation of the historical memory of the former glory of Russia, prevails among young people.

The analysis of state documents in the field of patriotic education is presented in the research work by Sanina (2016). The author indicates a strong militarization of Russian patriotic education that prevents the formation of constructive patriotism and “cultivates the unconditional love for homeland, devotion to the supreme power, unquestioning positive assessment of the activities of the authorities, rejection of critical evaluation, readiness to protect the state right up to self-sacrifice” (Sanina, 2016, p. 52). In this situation, the relevant question is what values, except for the militaristic ones, can become the focus of patriotic education.

Reflecting on the place of patriotic education in the state educational system, Golunov (2012) considers three strategies for the development of patriotic education, including the preservation of the dominant role of patriotic education, its equality with other areas of educational work, as well as its replacement by education in civic activity, humanism, tolerance, and general moral principles.

In our opinion, it is possible to integrate the above-mentioned strategies in terms of that various areas of educational work (moral, aesthetic, environmental, etc.), as well as fostering civic activism can

transmit patriotic values, thereby reducing the resistance of young people to straight-forward slogans and traditional “passive” methods and means of patriotic education.

The most suitable way seems to be the unification of patriotic and ecological areas of educational activities, since the natural, cultural and historical wealth of a country is sometimes not separable (monasteries and natural parks, architectural monuments and the surrounding natural landscapes, etc.). In addition, the integration of environmental and patriotic areas of educational work correlates with the trend of greening, i.e. the penetration of environmental knowledge, practices and values into various spheres of public life (Titov & Cherkashin, 2017).

The importance of greening the education and the formation of ecological culture for sustainable development is underlined by Zakharov (2011), Monakhova (Monakhova & Agalarova, 2007) and others. Autleva (2013) develops the idea of the need to create a system of environmental socialization. Environmental competence is becoming increasingly important for an individual nowadays (Demyankov, Pavlov, & Smirnov, 2017).

At present, the ecological and patriotic areas of upbringing and education are closely related to the concept of sustainable development; its goals include clean water and energy, the preservation of the ecosystems of the sea and land, the fight against climate change, responsible consumption and production (Sustainable Development Goals, 2018). At the same time, the patriotic component becomes a kind of moral foundation that lands global goals of sustainable development in local, native conditions.

According to Lyubimov (2013), “the key condition for the formation of a citizen is participation, active involvement in social life”. The researcher notes that the key condition for the formation of a civil society and the active participation of the younger generation in its social and political life is the inclusion in the activities, as far as possible, from an early age. The author calls for the restoration and consolidation of the meanings of citizenship, culture and identity at school and in the family environment, where such social competencies as ability to choose, adaptability to change, responsibility and ability to keep a word, desire for self-development, etc. should be formed and developed. In our opinion, it is volunteering that allows developing these skills, as well as forming the active position and dedication of a young person.

Being the most characteristic tool of civic participation, volunteering in the world research has long been viewed as a tool for building civil society (Salamon, Sokolowski, Haddock, & Tice, 2013; Van den Bos, 2014; Dreyfus, 2018). In this article, it is important to dwell on the volunteer activities of an ecological-patriotic nature; these activities currently do not receive broad support from the state, whereas, in our opinion, they are one of the most important tools for shaping patriotism and citizenship of young people.

### **3. Research Questions**

- What are the ideas of young people about patriotic and ecological-patriotic education?
- What are the essence and features of ecological-patriotic volunteering?
- What are the forms of organization of ecological-patriotic volunteer work? Which ones are most interesting to young people and why?

- What are the possibilities of ecological-patriotic volunteering in solving the problems of patriotic education and the formation of the civic position of the young generation?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study of ecological-patriotic volunteering allows revealing and describing the essential characteristics, as well as the pedagogical capabilities of this type of activity in the organization of patriotic education and civic education, which is the purpose of this study.

The article presents an attempt to prove the effectiveness of ecological-patriotic volunteering in educational work in the urban community using the example of the “Dobry Novgorod” (“Kind Novgorod”) informal volunteer group, as well as by studying the opinions of the participants of the city’s volunteer events organized in 2017 and 2018.

The results of the research can be further used to organize pedagogical work with schoolchildren and students, as well as in formulating a sustainable development policy for urban communities.

#### **5. Research Methods**

- In order to study the essence of ecological-patriotic volunteering and its characteristics, the pedagogical literature on the topic of patriotic and environmental education, as well as research on the problems of volunteering was studied.
- To identify students’ ideas about the relationship between ecological and patriotic education, a survey was conducted in Yaroslav the Wise Novgorod State University (NovSU), in which 60 first-year students of various majors took part. The questionnaire was offered to first-year students, as they could, in our opinion, assess educational work at secondary school where they studied for 11 years.
- Participant observation to study the organizational aspects of ecological-patriotic volunteering was used during the process of organizing environmental-patriotic events on the territory of Veliky Novgorod from 2017 to 2018.
- The method of individual interview was used to study the civic position of the participants of the “Dobry Novgorod” volunteer group, as well as changes in their value orientations and attitudes in the course of ecological-patriotic volunteering.
- To study the forms of organization of ecological-patriotic volunteering, an online survey was conducted in the social network VKontakte.

#### **6. Findings**

##### **6.1. Ideas of youth about patriotic education and its relationship with ecological activities**

At the initial stage of the study, a survey was conducted among first-year students of NovSU. Analysis of the answers of 60 first-year students showed, first of all, that students consider themselves patriots (more than 80% of respondents).

For respondents, the term “patriotism” is associated with such words as: pride (20 answers), homeland (23), love (13), loyalty / devotion (10), respect (9), duty (5), faith (3), history (3), nationality (2), people (3), country (3), honor (3), memory (2), knowledge (2), help (2), willingness to protect (2), truth (2), family, city, serving for the good, citizen, laws, truth, beauty, army, tolerance, veterans (1 reference). Among the negative associations, the following were mentioned: “stupid pride”, “blind love”, “imposing against the will”, “no more”, “propaganda”, “fanatics”, and “meaninglessness”.

In our opinion, such results indicate that school leavers (current first-year students) are more familiar with the external manifestations of patriotism; they associate this word with feelings, rather than with activity and responsibility. The word “pride”, as it seems to us, indicates that the younger generation is taught in many ways to be proud of the past and not to create the present.

When answering the question “Was it interesting for you to participate in patriotic events at school?” only 47% of respondents answered positively.

Students named rallies, processions, greetings to veterans, contests of song marching, etc. among patriotic events. Only 4 students (7%) mentioned “environmental actions, landscaping, and maintaining cleanliness around monuments.”

The direct question “Do you think it is possible to attribute the territory cleanup to patriotic events?” received over 80% positive answers with various explanations (“yes, if this work brings people together”, “yes, since you act for the good of your city, and accordingly, the country”, “yes, it teaches us to respect the nature of our country”, etc.).

Of interest were the answers of the respondents to the question about ways and measures most effectively cultivating a sense of patriotism. Some respondents believe that it is not necessary to foster patriotism and that no events will help with this (15%). Forced participation of schoolchildren in rallies and processions, cleaning the area only increases the negative attitude to such events. At the same time, voluntary participation based on the unity of aspirations (for example, the action “Immortal Regiment”) can evoke truly strong feelings, a desire to be involved in the history of the nation.

Respondents also wrote about the importance of raising patriotism from early childhood in a family (5 people), mentioning both traditional events (a song contest, a musical evening, processions, visits to veterans, conversations, class meetings), and more modern methods (flashmobs, watching movies).

Of the proposed options for activities that would be interesting for schoolchildren, the respondents most often chose games and quests on knowledge of culture and history of the country / city (48 people), guided tours in native places (36 people), landscaping, creating art objects (29 people), participation in youth policy (25 people), participation in social projects with people of different ages (22 people). Ecological actions were noted only by 13 respondents. However, it might be due to the fact that the existing formats of environmental education are mostly imposed on children and are not interesting for them.

Based on the data presented in the research we have studied, as well as the results of the ascertaining study, it can be concluded that environmental patriotic education is an important area of educational work. It fully reflects the activity approach in education, relying on the understanding of

patriotism as a desire to take care of homeland, to take care of the country, to strengthen its well-being with concrete actions.

## **6.2. Essential features of ecological-patriotic volunteering**

Based on the analysis of the existing definitions of patriotic and ecological education (Shitikova, 2002; Kukushkina, 2017), as well as on the phenomenon of volunteering, ecological-patriotic volunteering can be defined as practical activities to protect and restore the natural, cultural and historical values of homeland on a voluntary and gratuitous basis. This is an active love for the native land, manifested in the acquisition of knowledge about native places, their history and modernity, participation in environmental activities for the improvement and protection of nature and the cultural and historical heritage of the local native place and the country as a whole.

Analyzing the development of volunteering in present-day Russia, Khvorostianova (2017) notes the preservation of many patterns of the Soviet model, which is characterized by “compulsory volunteering”, the use of volunteer resources to save the state budget, and the integration of the volunteer movement into the state structure, which makes it impossible for volunteer organizations to act as a counterweight to power, thereby supporting the values of civil society.

Pevnaya (2016) dwells on the paradoxes of volunteering management, noting that government policy on volunteer work is characterized by a contradiction between “a large number of declarative statements about the importance of volunteering in the life of the country and practices of selective support for volunteering,” this policy also contributes to the emergence of quasi-volunteering.

Sharing the position of above-mentioned researchers, we chose to study an informal volunteer group which is less prone to bureaucratization and the influence of state structures, both in organizing its work and in terms of encouraging and supporting volunteers.

From April 2017 to September 2018, the authors of the article and a group of volunteers “Dobry Novgorod” held more than 20 urban environmental and patriotic events, including four family festivals “Kind Sunday”, eco-bags decor classes, a series of meetings to clean the territory surrounding the historical sites of the city, the ecological cycle quest “The City of Green Color”, a costume walk dedicated to the Day of Ecological Knowledge, a family eco-quest, etc.

Summarizing the work done, as well as research materials on the issues of ecological-patriotic education, the following forms of ecological-patriotic volunteering can be identified:

- ecological-patriotic education (making stands, conducting lessons, quests, open lectures, etc.);
- environmental protection activities (environmental research, collection of data on hometown, cleaning and gardening of territories, organization of separate collection of garbage in a school / yard / neighborhood);
- organization of environmental leisure activities (cycle quests; costumed processions; games-competitions; yard holidays; environmental workshops; festivals; the area cleanup followed by a guided tour, photo exhibitions, open-air, the creation of art objects, picnics, games and other.

Based on the analysis of theoretical sources and practical work, the principles of organization of ecological-patriotic volunteering were defined:

- subjective position of the participants;
- nature and culture;
- educational nature of the activity;
- entertaining-educational nature of the activity
- social orientation of activities;
- consideration of ethno-cultural values and regional features of the environment;
- eventfulness;
- consistency (Kukushkina, 2017).

### **6.3. Ecological-patriotic volunteering as a tool for patriotic education and civic development**

As shown by the results of interviews conducted with participants of the “Dobry Novgorod” volunteer group, ecological- patriotic volunteering can be an effective tool for the formation of value orientations and attitudes, skills and behavioral models aimed at solving environmental problems, studying and preserving native nature as part of homeland.

Most of the volunteers went beyond the framework of one volunteer group and joined other environmental projects: organizing a separate collection of raw materials, animal protection projects, etc. According to the “Dobry Novgorod” group members, informal volunteer activities “allowed them to see practical results with no budget spent”, “helped getting organizational and communication skills”, “helped forming the position on environmental issues”, and “gave new knowledge about the native city and its history”. Volunteers-organizers noted a big influx of positive emotions from the feedback of participants in the events – city-dwellers. “It was very nice to see how people celebrate the importance of our work, thank for festivals and cleaning the territory”.

At the moment, members of the “Dobry Novgorod” group are planning consistent educational work with schoolchildren. In the future there is the forming of an ecological community at the city level.

The most effective forms of ecological-patriotic volunteering, according to survey respondents in the social network VKontakte, are family holidays, as well as the area cleanups, combined with leisure activities – making art objects, games in the open air, a picnic, etc.

On the basis of the data obtained, it can be concluded that ecological-patriotic volunteering has a positive effect not only on the organizers of actions and events, but also on participants who are beneficiaries. At the events, many people thank the organizers for starting a more sustainable lifestyle (separating garbage, saving food, etc.), and also learning more about their city (on assignments from a cycling quest or cleaning with a guided tour).

The effectiveness of ecological-patriotic volunteering as a means of developing the civic position of young people is related to such characteristics of volunteer work in this area as universality and accessibility for people of different ages and physical abilities, comprehensibility and aesthetic value, educational nature of the activity, integration with various types of leisure, forming the feelings of pride for the work done and for the country.

## 7. Conclusion

In the world of global processes and the erasure of borders, the formation of the civic-patriotic position of the young generation is becoming one of the conditions for the stable development of the state. At the same time, effective patriotic education and the formation of civic consciousness presupposes the inclusion of an individual in active activities, the participation of an individual in the public life of the country and region.

We consider the inclusion of the young generation in volunteering activities aimed at protecting and preserving the natural, cultural and historical values of their homeland – ecological-patriotic volunteering – to be one of the most important areas of patriotic education. Ecological-patriotic volunteering is an activity that is understandable and accessible to both a child and an elderly person; it allows people unite, regardless of religious, national and economic differences. The practical results can inspire further collaboration.

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