

EMPOWERING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES: ENHANCING COLLABORATIVE AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE THROUGH TRAINING INITIATIVES

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Abstract

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This research article explores the impact of training programs on non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, aiming to foster collaborative and participatory governance within the non-governmental sector. NGOs increasingly influence decision-making and the implementation of social programs through training programs designed for NGO workers, contributing to the creation of a sustainable and active civil society. Encouraging partners to actively share their knowledge and expertise is key to maintaining integration, trust, and equality in decision-making. This approach ensures greater integration, trust, and equality in decision-making. Ultimately, joint management and planning will only improve over time (Calò et al., 2024). The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining a survey conducted among 225 NGOs with secondary data analysis of education programs designed specifically for NGOs. The findings highlight the crucial role of training initiatives in equipping NGO representatives with the necessary skills, knowledge, and mindset to effectively engage in collaborative decision-making processes and promote inclusive governance practices. Through the analysis of survey responses and examination of education program outcomes, key factors contributing to successful capacity-building efforts are identified, including tailored training content, interactive learning methodologies, and ongoing support mechanisms. The research provides insights into the significance of investing in training programs for NGO representatives and offers practical recommendations for designing effective training initiatives that can enable the development of collaborative and participatory governance within the NGO sector.

Keywords: State Bodies, NGO, Governance, Decision-Making Process, Collaboration, Learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article examines educational initiatives as one of the mechanisms of interaction between the state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Republic of Kazakhstan. As part of this study, we came to the conclusion that, first of all, educational programs for NGO representatives contribute to the active development of the sector. Effective participation of NGOs in public processes depends on the level of professionalism and competence of NGO employees.

Empowerment is the ability of an individual to exercise social, political, economic, and psychological control through access to information, knowledge and skills, decision-making and individual self-efficacy, community participation, and perceived control. Looking ahead, the long-term goal of NGOs is to promote sustainable community development through activities that promote capacity building and self-sufficiency (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

The results of the study by Asogwa et al. (2022) showed that sustainability reporting is an important component of organizational learning and change in NGOs.

Along with this, the training program becomes the basis for joint management, ensuring the exchange of knowledge and experience between the state and NGOs. This exchange of views contributes to a better understanding and development of common strategies.

Edwards and Hulme's (2006) study suggests that strategies include changing laws, training, creating links between NGOs, and sharing information.

The study explores the dynamics of co-management in the design and commissioning of services involving the public sector and NGOs. It addresses gaps in the research. It also helps to understand how NGO participation in co-management arrangements can lead to improved services and outcomes, emphasizing the need for rigorous methods to evaluate these processes.

The main aim of the research is to find out how co-management arrangements involving NGOs function, for whom they are designed and in what contexts. Key issues are understanding the factors that determine effective cooperation between government and NGOs, and identifying methods that can improve the quality of services in co-management processes.

The study is important because it reveals the possible benefits of NGO participation in co-management processes and emphasises the importance of learning training for sustainable development.

To analyse the processes and outcomes of co-management, the research methodology includes a sociological survey of NGO representatives, a literature review and their synthesis, and reference materials of the authorized body.

To strengthen co-management mechanisms involving NGOs, long-term sustainability planning, knowledge sharing and contextual adaptation are vital components.

By exploring these aspects, the study provides important insights into how co-management processes involving NGOs are changing. It also adds to the existing literature on government-NGO engagement.

At the same time, participatory governance fosters the creation of a more active civil society made up of diverse groups that can cooperate with local authorities to address development issues and challenges, including training processes (Popoola, 2013).

The active involvement of different stakeholders in new partnership schemes is key to ensuring greater "cooperation" in solution design and project implementation. In addition, this approach contributes to ensuring high-quality discussions and the selection of the most effective methods, including the use of knowledge and dialogue to support and legitimize policy decisions (Gaventa, 2004).

NGOs engage in educational programs that help them overcome institutional and structural constraints, allowing the third sector to be more flexible, resilient and active in addressing social programs. Educational initiatives provide a platform to strengthen dialogue between government and NGOs, facilitating the formation of mutually beneficial relationships, as well as the development of policies that address important social issues.

This study reflects the results of the implementation of educational programs for representatives of NGOs and their impact on shared governance in interaction with public and government initiatives. The analysis shows the features of the Kazakh context and educational approaches that contribute to strengthening partnerships between the state and NGOs.

Overall, these results highlight not only the importance of education for NGOs but also its role in strengthening participatory governance. Empowerment through education is a strategic step towards creating sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships between government organizations and the non-governmental sector in Kazakhstan.

The article involves identifying modern trends in expanding the capabilities of NGO representatives through education and proposing constructive ways in the conditions of Kazakhstani reality.

Hence the research question is as below:

RQ: To what extent do educational programs influence the increase in interaction between the state and NGOs?

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 1 presents the research topic, problem statement, and statement of aims and objectives. Section 2 provides a review of previous studies and an introduction to the context. Section 3 describes the research methods. Section 4 presents the results of the study, which include statistics, graphs, tables, and other visual tools. Section 5 analyses and interprets the results according to the objectives; this includes a discussion of differences and comparisons with previous studies. Section 6 provides a brief overview of the main findings of the study, emphasizing the importance of the results and potential avenues for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Newman et al. (2004) and Gaventa (2004) emphasize the importance of understanding the limitations and opportunities of collaborative work, especially in the context of public participation. Meyer-Ueding (2013) stated the importance of having a theoretical framework for assessing the effectiveness of participatory and collective management, especially

in the field of resource management. Bingham et al. (2005) focus on the importance of new methods of governance, such as the democratic coalition system and participatory budgeting, to increase citizen and stakeholder participation in government. Following these studies, it can be concluded that there is a need for a comprehensive approach to NGO learning initiatives, which should include an understanding of the limitations and opportunities for joint action, as well as a theoretical basis for evaluating effectiveness and the application of new management methods to increase civil society participation.

Several studies highlight the potential benefits of collective and participatory governance, especially with NGOs. Caló et al. (2024) and Popoola (2013) emphasize the importance of trust, learning dynamics, and the involvement of local organizations in these processes. Thompson also emphasizes the importance of education in enhancing the capacity of government agencies and promoting civic participation (Thompson, 1995). These findings together suggest that educational initiatives can play an important role in empowering NGO representatives and improving participatory governance.

NGOs play an important role in promoting the sustainability of community development strategies, where effective networking and teamwork among stakeholders, capacity development or training for continuous improvement of quality of life, good financial planning, and ongoing consultation or facilitation and advocacy are greatly needed. As they face various challenges, stakeholders should focus on improving the effectiveness of NGOs in providing community development services and promoting economic growth, development and stability in the region (Abiddin et al., 2022).

Knowledge can be acquired in different ways, by different methods and specialists. Some NGOs, due to their typical grassroots expertise, have access to local knowledge and specific information that is often not available to other types of organizations. Such knowledge can be very useful in combination with knowledge generated by other organizations: NGOs are particularly good at conducting formative research (baseline research, needs assessment), activity research, process research, and impact assessments. This type of research is suitable for identifying priorities, justifying interventions, and identifying needs for further research.

Although knowledge creation is not usually the main activity of NGOs, there may be a special research niche for them in the field of "knowledge creation" (Delisle et al., 2005).

One of the most important aspects of social learning related to stakeholder engagement is the process of collective learning, the co-creation of knowledge, and the acquisition of extensive experience to create a broader knowledge base and evidence for decision-making. In particular, we consider social learning as a new form of management that promotes coordinated action by stakeholders (Collins et al., 2007).

NGOs play an important role in many different sectors, including education, business and the informal sector. Their effectiveness can be improved through training initiatives. Kieu and

Singer (2017) emphasize the need for collaboration between NGOs and universities when training future teachers on sustainable development. Harper (1996) offers a comprehensive course for NGO staff focusing on marketing, financial management, and gender issues of entrepreneurship development. Demeke and Amha (2000) emphasize the importance of public policy in creating an enabling environment for NGO participation in training programs for the informal sector.

To ensure long-term sustainability, staff must plan and scale learning initiatives. An educational development strategy is necessary to ensure continued success. By keeping these important elements in mind when implementing learning initiatives, government agencies and NGOs can work together with success, leading to positive outcomes and long-term results in their joint efforts to address societal challenges (Asogwa et al., 2022).

Pop (2012) explores the various training needs of think tanks and NGOs, including fundraising, networking, and ethical considerations. All these studies highlight the potential of educational initiatives to empower NGO representatives.

However, NGOs have the necessary resources, expertise, and public relations to have a significant impact on development. Through a constructive exchange of views, NGOs can shape policy and defend the interests and rights of oppressed groups (and thus promote inclusive growth). NGOs can have more influence and impact, while governments can also benefit from the same approach. This is especially beneficial for NGOs. Ultimately, the goal should be to create a collaborative partnership between Governments and NGOs where they can work together to achieve common development goals (Edwards & Hulme, 2006).

NGOs play a key role in knowledge development by providing the government with necessary state-of-the-art information, technical expertise and feedback. (Doucet et al., 2023). The ability of NGOs to communicate effectively with their target audiences requires the development of certain skills such as active listening, respectful communication, and responding effectively to the requests and needs of the target audience. NGO staff should receive training to improve their communication skills when working with State bodies and other organizations (Sanadgol et al., 2022). Participatory processes related to the empowerment of residents, including learning and changes in self-perception, are achieved through the development of social and technical skills, such as the use of rights-based language and leadership skills that promote community advocacy (Tuhkanen, 2023).

The two main methods by which organizations acquire knowledge based on their own experience are learning by doing and learning through research. The first method, learning by doing, involves a continuous process of trial and error. An organization tends to repeat a procedure that has proven successful in achieving a goal, and is not inclined to repeat a procedure that has led to failure (Ebrahim, 2005).

Learning is especially noticeable in stable environments where organizations are rewarded for improving what they are already doing. For example, as experience is gained in the production of specific products (such as computers or irrigation systems),

production efficiency increases. Using proven methods and, in some cases, improving them is also what Levinthal and March (1993) call "exploitation".

The second form of first-hand learning, "learning by research", occurs when an organization explores a new procedure or idea "without knowing or predicting all the consequences of this work" (Levinthal & March, 1993).

Single-circuit training focuses primarily on efficiency and finding the most effective ways to achieve current goals and objectives within the framework of existing values and norms of the organization. However, there are cases when correcting mistakes requires such training, which entails changing the values and norms of the organization itself.

The previously mentioned forms of learning in practice, through questioning and learning by imitation can be carried out at both single-circuit and double-circuit levels. Single-circuit training is aimed at improving the efficiency of the organization without compromising the established goals. This improvement is achieved through trial and error (learning by doing) and learning new approaches to achieving goals (Argyris & Schön, 1996).

NGOs and organizational change pursue the same goals and objectives, either by learning from experience or adopting concepts and methods used by other organizations. For example, an NGO that seeks to improve living conditions in rural areas through water development projects may seek to improve its performance in various ways: using past experience to improve project development procedures, experimenting with new, untested methods of managing irrigation systems (for example, distributing maintenance and water collection responsibilities among user groups) or by imitating the practices of more successful organizations. On the other hand, double-circuit learning occurs when an organization questions its values or the principles underlying its products, goals, and practices (Ebrahim, 2005).

Here, learning is defined as the detection and correction of errors, and error is defined as any feature of knowledge that makes an action ineffective. An error is a mismatch with a learning condition, and conformity is the second learning condition. Error detection and correction facilitate learning, and the absence of either hinders it.

It is difficult to understand how decision-making processes involving actions such as search, design and selection can work effectively without reliable information. It is assumed here that the more complex and poorly structured the problem, the greater the likelihood of ambiguity and, therefore, the greater the likelihood of error. Therefore, it is less likely that actions will effectively match the plans. Moreover, as problems become more complex and poorly structured, the need for training increases, but at the same time the difficulties in conducting effective training increase.

The three described models of decision-making processes suggest that complex decisions can be subdivided, and minor problems can be solved in some functional sequence (Argyris, 1976).

Another aspect of public education that Etheredge intends to reveal is the relationship between the learning individual and the learning

organization. Etheredge and Short (2006) clearly articulate the oft-accepted principle that organizational learning can be defined "similarly to individual learning". They further identify three levels of aggregation at which such learning can take place: the level of an individual decision-maker, the level of a team, and the level of a team. A characteristic feature of the latter type of training in an organization is that it cannot be reduced to the accumulated knowledge of "any of its constituent elements". It can be said that with this three-level concept, Etheridge and Short (2006) have outlined the contours of a comprehensive training program that has not yet been fully implemented. The separate levels correspond to the directions in the literature on organizational learning, each of which has its own analogues in the literature on the public sector (Etheredge & Short, 2006).

These programs can enhance the ability of NGOs to make consensus-based decisions and build trust with government authorities (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In addition, they can contribute to the joint creation, improvement and exchange of best practices within NGOs (Schümmer & Haake, 2008).

Cross-training is another useful practice for NGOs. Organizations can share experiences and knowledge to improve their work and increase their efficiency. This may include training seminars, trainings, or simply the exchange of experience and best practices between organizations. Interagency cooperation is also important to ensure sustainability. Interaction and cooperation between various organizations and government agencies make it possible to combine efforts and resources to solve complex problems. This may include joint projects, information exchange, and coordination of actions. Community engagement also plays an important role in ensuring sustainability. NGOs can work with the local population to understand their needs and provide them with the necessary support. This may include holding public hearings, creating platforms for dialogue and citizen participation in decision-making, and developing local capacities through training and skills development. Thus, NGO sustainability activities include a number of important practices that can be useful for other organizations as well. Regular monitoring of reports, planning and budgeting, cross-training, interagency collaboration, and community engagement are all ways to increase efficiency and achieve sustainable development (Asogwa et al., 2022).

NGO training programs aim to address key knowledge and skills gaps to promote collaborative and participatory governance. These gaps include the need to better understand and adapt participatory management theories (Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014), share best practices, identify and describe these experiences in organizations (Schümmer & Haake, 2008), and build capacity for participatory management through innovative community engagement models (Mendoza et al., 2007).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The empirical basis of the study was the practical results of joint activities of the state and NGOs to address socio-economic issues in Kazakhstan, materials from Kazakh and foreign scientists on

the study of the specifics of the development of civil society in Kazakhstan, presented in the methodology, statistical data. In total, more than 35 experimental studies have been conducted on the issues of improving the effectiveness of interaction between the state and NGOs.

The research approach based on mixed methods combines both qualitative and quantitative research. The combined approach used in this study is completeness, which implies the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a more complete answer to the research questions (Bryman, 2016).

The study is based on the analysis of literature, experience in the country and abroad, as well as on scientific methods of synthesis and generalization. The next step is to conduct a literature review of articles published in the scientific publications involved in the study and then analyses them. Secondary sources of information, including government documents and regulations, as well as previous research on the topic, form the basis of alternative research methods. A sociological survey was also conducted among the NGOs.

Sociological survey was conducted as part of the dissertation research "Transformation of the mechanism of interaction between the state and non-governmental organizations in the Republic of Kazakhstan".

The main objective is to develop proposals for improving the interaction between the state and non-governmental organizations, as well as to obtain an expert assessment of the state policy in the sphere of civil society.

In this regard, the surveys were officially sent to the state bodies (local and central) and the Civic Alliance of Kazakhstan on 18 October 2023. The survey period was from 18 October 2023 to 22 November 2023. The NGO survey was sent via email to organizations that had submitted reports to the NGO database for 2022.

In a survey conducted throughout Kazakhstan on the topic of transformation of the mechanism of interaction between the state and non-governmental organizations in the Republic of Kazakhstan¹, 225 respondents took part, of which 127 were women, and 98 were men.

Figure 1 shows the number of NGOs that received training. Only 26% of respondents completed training courses through the NGO Academy mechanism, 17% did something else, and 57% did not take advanced training courses at all.

Figure 2 shows the opinion of representatives of the third sector on the assessment of the training course in the regional context of the Republic of Kazakhstan. According to the survey results, 36.4% of respondents refrained from answering the question, ineffective – 17.3%, averagely effective – 8.4%, above average – 16.9%, effective – 20.9%.

Figure 3 shows assessments based on the results of the course and the involvement of NGOs by the state by region. According to the survey, it was revealed that 55 respondents took courses through the NGO Academy, 129 did not attend courses at all, and 36 took courses not at the NGO Academy.

Figure 4 shows the results of the question about the existence of an NGO mission, in which 158 of the respondents answered that the organization has a mission, 68 – no mission.

Figure 5 shows the areas of activity of NGOs in Kazakhstan based on the official data of the authorized body. According to Article 5 of The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 36 of 2005 on State Social Order, State Order for the Implementation of Strategic Partnerships, Grants and Awards for Non-Governmental Organizations in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the areas of activity of NGOs that receive state support from the state are fixed.

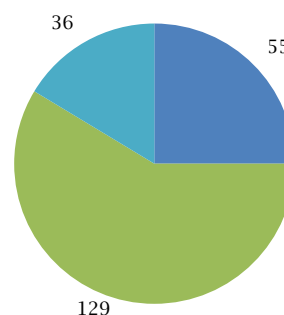
Figure 6 shows the organizational and legal forms that took part in the sociological survey.

The structure of the Academy of Public Organizations of Kazakhstan (NGO Academy) is shown in Figure 7.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

As a result of a sociological survey among representatives of civil society, the question "Have you received training through the NGO Academy mechanism?" The respondents' answers were distributed as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Quantity of NGOs surveyed on the issue of alienation



Source: Authors' elaboration.

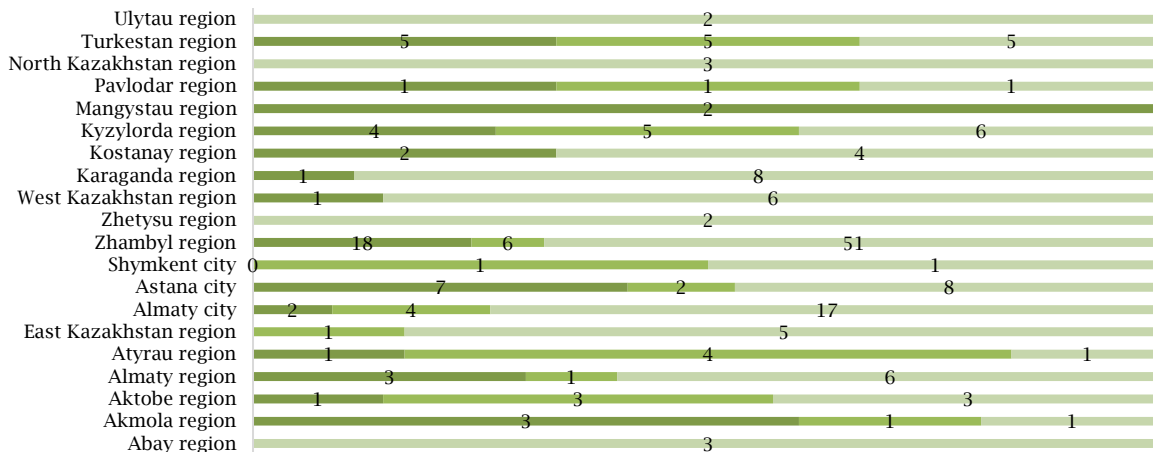
Opinions of representatives of the third sector on the evaluation of the training course were divided (Figure 2).

According to the survey results, only 42% of NGO representatives completed training courses, which indicates their low activity and lack of awareness of these courses. Fifty-three and two (53.2) percent of NGOs rated the programs positively, which indicates the level of the program is above average. Forty-six and eight (46.8) percent of respondents rated the program as "very mediocre", which indicates the need to update programs and train NGO representatives according to problematic issues.

The lowest rates of participation in the questionnaire were shown by representatives of NGOs in Abay, Mangystau, Ulytau, Pavlodar, and North Kazakhstan regions and the city of Shymkent. The highest participation rates are in the cities of Almaty and Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Turkestan, and Almaty regions.

¹ <https://forms.gle/3NorHmb1M42kcbnM9>

Figure 2. Number of NGOs surveyed on the training course by region in Kazakhstan



Source: Authors' formulation.

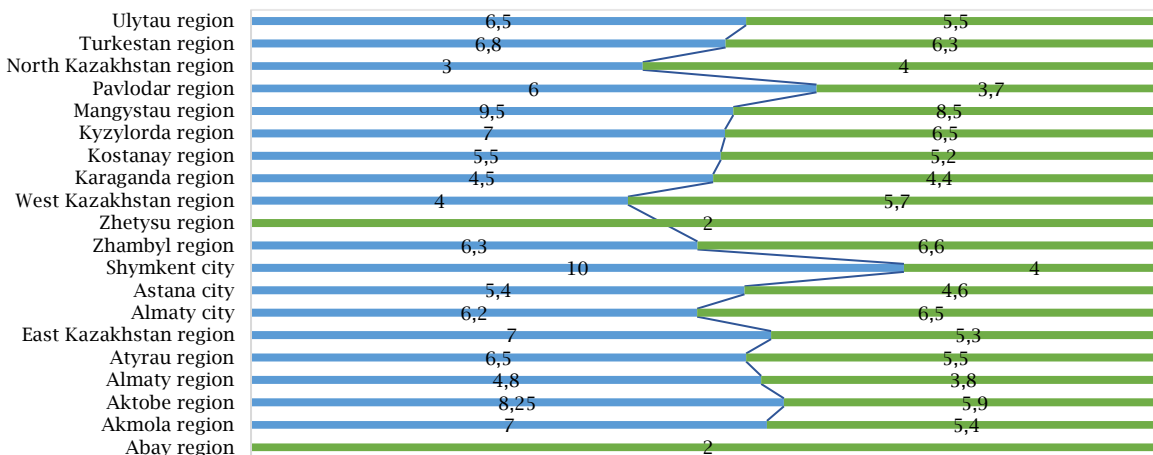
This is an indicator that in some regions there is low social activity of NGO representatives and a low culture of interaction with the environment.

Figure 3 displays the results of the assessment of training courses and the involvement of the third sector by the state in the context of regions of Kazakhstan. Those organizations that completed the courses rated highly the level of government

involvement with NGOs. Along with this, those organizations that did not attend any training at all missed the question of course evaluation or rated the level of involvement low.

This once again proves that educational trainings have a positive effect on the interaction between the state and NGOs and communication skills in general.

Figure 3. Number of NGOs surveyed on training course evaluations and state involvement in the regional context of Kazakhstan



Source: Authors' formulation.

In turn, NGOs need to use the goals of effective communication, which, according to Tschirhart and Bielefeld (2012), includes several important elements, to improve their skills and actively involve them in seminars and trainings.

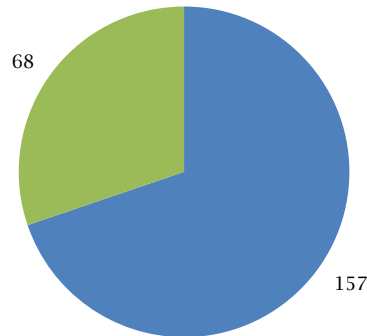
- 1) Determining the target audience or recipients of the message.
- 2) Determining the desired changes in the target audience, be it a change in knowledge, attitudes, or behavior.
- 3) Define specific and measurable indicators to evaluate the success of communication efforts.
- 4) Establishing realistic timelines for achieving the desired results.

Developing a comprehensive communications plan is based on these goals. The most important steps are conducting thorough research, formulating effective messages, creating persuasive materials, assessing available resources, and developing a detailed work plan.

Sixty-eight (68) respondents out of 217 do not have a mission, which is an important component of the existence of an NGO. It turned out that 30.2% of NGO representatives do not know what the mission» of the organization is. Six and six (6.6) percent of the missions do not coincide with the areas of activity that they have chosen according to the areas of activity.

This fact suggests that not all representatives of the non-governmental sector do not fully understand the essence of the organization as a whole.

Figure 4. Number of NGOs with and without missions



Source: Authors' elaboration.

NGOs differ not only in their mission and values but are perhaps a different type of organization in every respect. A nonprofit organization's effectiveness and competitiveness largely depend on how effectively it communicates with its stakeholders, especially its employees. Because employees and volunteers are the human capital of nonprofit organizations and a key component of social capital, the engagement required to achieve mission, strategy, and implementation is inextricably linked to the degree of employee engagement. Thus, employee engagement is an essential process in HR strategy and labor relations if nonprofit organizations are to be effective, achieve results on social issues, and adapt to change in a rapidly changing competitive environment (Akingbola et al., 2022).

This represents corporate governance where organizational human resources, processes, values, procedures, and structures must be well controlled and directed towards a purpose, vision, or corporate goals. The application of acceptable corporate governance standards can lead to better outcomes for organizations (Antwi et al., 2021).

Unlike for-profit organizations, where choices are largely based on the opportunity to make money, nonprofits essentially always start with their mission, and their choices come down to how best to make an impact. They need to ensure that they provide services that are needed and valued by their customers and stakeholders and that they are consistent with the organization's core values and principles. As an organization serves its customers and the public, management involves assessing how well or poorly the organization is performing and then deciding how to improve its performance to improve efficiency (Renz & Herman, 2016).

Analyzing the results of the work of the above-mentioned scientists and based on the results of sociological research, we offer the following recommendations for taking the interaction between authorities and NGOs to a new level:

- Development of specialized educational programs for representatives of government bodies and the non-governmental sector and their structuring. These programs may include courses

aimed at improving communication effectiveness, strategic planning, and project management skills.

- Organizing regular forums and seminars for representatives of government agencies and NGOs to exchange experiences and best practices. Such events promote mutual understanding and strengthen partnerships. Regular reviews of best practices in the field of interaction between government agencies and NGOs are also conducted, highlighting cases of successful cooperation with NGOs. Organizing training in effective dialogue and conflict management skills. This will help to establish positive communication between government and non-government actors, eliminating possible misunderstandings.

- Inclusion of modules on interaction between government and NGOs in educational programs for future civil servants. This will help you understand the importance of working with NGOs early in your career.

- Development of electronic learning resources available to representatives of both parties. These could include webinars, online courses, and self-paced resources.

- Organize an exchange program that will allow government and NGO staff to work together. This experience will allow you to better understand each other's work.

- Implement a feedback mechanism after training courses to evaluate and improve performance based on the needs of both parties.

5. DISCUSSION

In recent years, a growing body of research has emphasized not only the importance of NGO representatives' participation in governance, but also the need to train and build their capacity for effective participatory governance. Scholars note that training in participatory principles and methods is key to improving management effectiveness.

Beyond this, however, they also point to the importance of participatory mechanisms such as popular initiatives and co-governance councils. Participatory mechanisms such as popular initiatives allow citizens to actively participate in the decision-making process, propose their ideas and make changes to governance. They stimulate democratic dialogue and provide citizens with the opportunity to influence decisions made.

Such mechanisms help expand the range of stakeholders and strengthen trust between citizens and government authorities. In addition, co-governance councils provide platforms for exchange and cooperation between NGOs, government agencies and members of the public. These councils facilitate the development of joint solutions and allow participants to jointly determine priorities and development strategies. They are an important tool for creating a democratic and open system of governance.

However, for NGOs to participate effectively in participatory governance, they need to have the appropriate knowledge and skills. Training NGO representatives in participatory principles and methods of interaction can significantly improve their ability to make constructive contributions to governance.

This may include training in project management skills, communication skills and

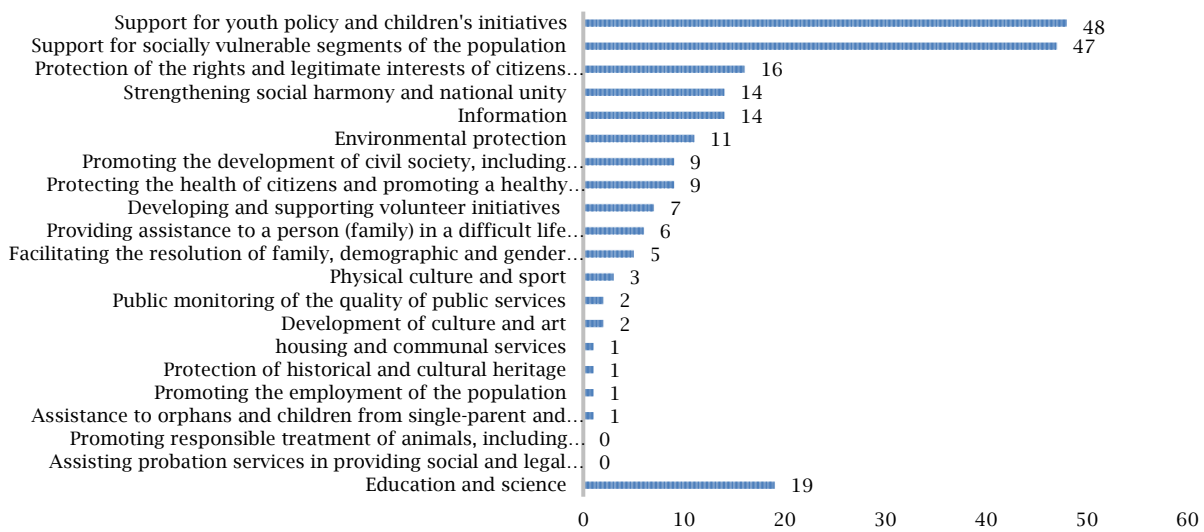
teamwork. In addition, training NGO representatives will also enable them to better understand their role in participatory governance and their responsibility to society. They can become active participants in the decision-making process, as well as effective intermediaries between citizens and government authorities.

Therefore, training and capacity building of NGO representatives is an integral part of participatory governance reform. They allow NGOs to actively participate in the decision-making process, contribute to the development of

democratic dialogue, and strengthen trust between citizens and government authorities. It is therefore important to continue research and develop training programs that will help NGOs effectively fulfill their role in participatory governance.

Thus, according to the authorized body for the development of civil society, more than 23 thousand NGOs are registered in Kazakhstan, of which more than 18 thousand are active, and the non-governmental sector is also divided into the following areas (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Spheres of NGO activities according to the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Republic of Kazakhstan



Source: Authors' formulation.

As part of the analysis of the scope of activity, the following actively took part in the survey: protection of rights, legitimate interests of citizens and organizations, education and science, support for socially vulnerable segments of the population, support for youth policy, and children's initiatives.

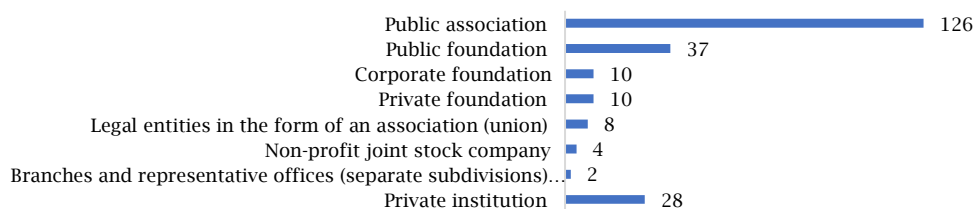
At the same time, the least activity was shown in the areas of assistance to probation services in providing social and legal assistance to persons on their register, formation of responsible treatment of animals, including support for animal shelters, assistance to orphans, children from single-parent families and large families, promoting employment

of the population, protecting historical and cultural heritage and others.

As part of the survey, active types of organizational and legal forms of the non-governmental sector of Kazakhstan were also identified, such as a private institution, public association, and public foundation, the results are displayed in Figure 6.

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Figure 6. Organizational forms of respondents



Source: Authors' formulation.

During the research of scientists with representatives of both NGOs and government agencies, it became clear that there was a lack of coordination and mutual understanding between them. It became clear that there was a lack of

coordination and understanding between government agencies and NGOs. Both government and NGO representatives accuse each other of lack of cooperation. Government representatives complain that NGOs do not attend their regular

meetings with the public and the elite, although NGOs are always invited to attend. In contrast, NGOs complain that government representatives hardly attend their seminars and information programs. If there is no coordination between the government and NGOs and they do not come out of a state of mistrust, there will be no proper work (Rahman & Tasnim, 2023).

Organizations use two key mechanisms to facilitate learning. The first is simplification. The goal of the learning process is to simplify perception, minimize interactions, and limit exposure to spatial and temporal proximity to the scene. The second mechanism is specialization. The learning process aims to focus attention and narrow down possibilities. Neither simplification nor specialization is unique to learning processes (Levinthal & March, 1993).

NGOs are often expected to act quickly without sufficient opportunity to gain knowledge and assess the situation. Their responses tend to be pushy and overly ambitious rather than practical. Centralized decision-making is often a problem, and true collaboration or partnerships with other organizations are rare. Often individual priorities overshadow the overall organizational goals of the NGO. Additionally, uncertain funding conditions hamper effective planning, forcing NGOs to rely heavily on grants rather than explore alternative resource mobilization strategies (Lewis, 2004).

With all this, think tanks and NGOs use a variety of methods and tools to achieve their educational goals. They organize seminars, hold round tables, use modeling of decision-making processes and other activities based on the experience of national, European and international organizations, as well as government agencies. They also engage experts and provide advisory services on citizen participation using consultation and facilitation techniques. They also provide research assistance and classes to develop collaboration and communication skills (Pop, 2012).

Today in the Republic of Kazakhstan there is a shortage of competent specialists, active leaders, trainers, and social entrepreneurs in the field of NGOs, and the percentage of active NGOs is too low; To improve the level of professional training and

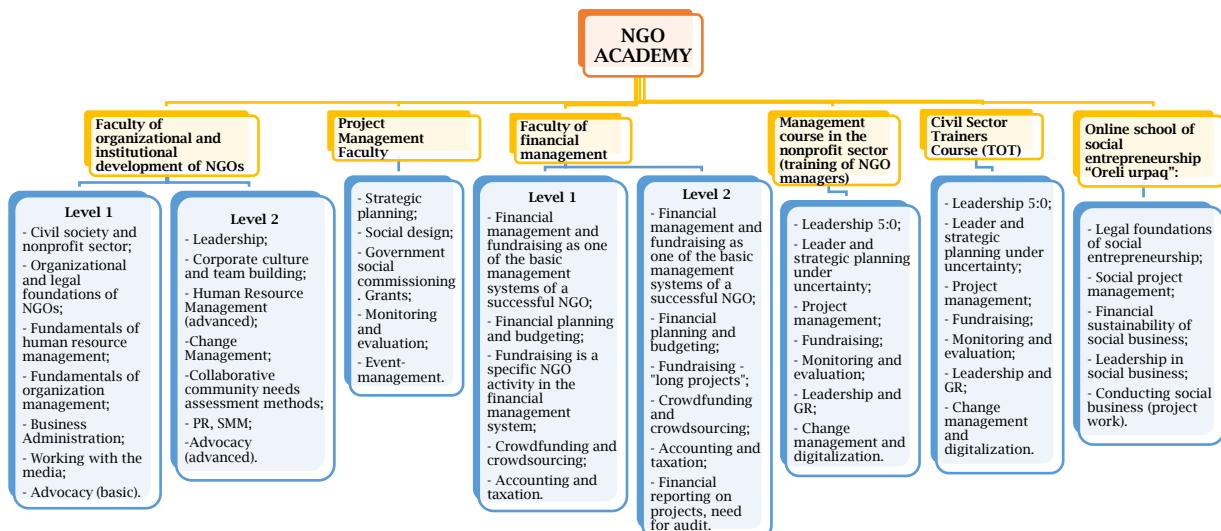
competence of NGO specialists, educational platforms that meet modern requirements are needed.

Public policy believes that a sustainable system of state regulation should be the foundation for citizen participation in improving their lives and achieving deep democratic reform throughout the country (Ismailova, Dussipov, et al., 2023).

To solve this problem, the Center for Civil Initiatives, a civil society organization, with the support of recognized organizations, developed the NGO Academy project for a total amount of 55.479 million tenge. The project is aimed at increasing professionalism in the work of NGOs by creating a training system for NGO representatives. The main goals of the project are to determine the level of professionalism and competence of NGO representatives, develop a schedule of recommendations for improving their professional level, and organize training groups in accordance with the level of training and learning preferences. For the effective organization and implementation of the project, an expert commission was created, which included representatives of public foundations, associations, independent experts on the development of nonprofit organizations, and deputies of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In 2021–2023, 800 NGOs received training. About 2,000 different socially significant projects are implemented annually. Ninety-five (95) percent of NGOs registered a significant increase in program absorption rates (<https://cisc.kz/projects/ueeu-akademiyasy>).

According to the special courses conducted within the framework of the NGO Academy, the training programs consist of six courses, such as: organizational and institutional development, project management, financial management, training of managers in the nonprofit sector, training of trainers for the civil sector and an online school of social entrepreneurship. These courses are aimed at developing the organizational and legal foundations of NGOs, human resource management, corporate culture, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, crowdfunding and crowdsourcing, accounting and taxation (Department of Community Development of the City of Almaty, 2022).

Figure 7. Structure of NGO Academy



Source: <https://academy-ngo.kz/struktura/>

Over the three years of the project's existence, only 800 representatives of NGOs were trained, which amounted to 4.4% of the total number of active NGOs. In this regard, it is assumed that the authorized body in the field of civil society will develop this project for the maximum number of NGO representatives.

In turn, NGOs should actively participate in the work of regional offices, since many of those who have not completed training work not at the national level, but at the territorial level.

Alongside this, local civil society institutions must be trained to be able to engage in constructive debate and actively participate in the decision-making process if this development is to be successful (Ismailova, Dussipov, et al., 2023).

Analyzing the research of scientists, we came to the conclusion that interaction between central government agencies and NGOs can be effective if specific recommendations are followed.

First, government agencies need to clearly understand the role and importance of NGOs in society. This includes recognizing their expertise, proximity to end users, and ability to respond quickly to social needs.

Secondly, ensuring transparency in relations with NGOs. This includes openness in the decision-making process, and providing information about available resources and opportunities for collaboration.

Thirdly, conducting training and advanced training for government officials on issues of interaction with NGOs. This will help raise awareness of the work of NGOs, their needs, and best practices for collaboration.

Fourth, apart from financial support through various mechanisms, access to resources such as information, research, and training should be provided.

Fifth, the creation of long-term relationships and partnerships for sustainable interaction and regular communication.

Sixth, the development of a mechanism to assess the social and public impact of cooperation with NGOs in order to improve the effectiveness and adjust the strategy in the future.

Seventh, the creation of a single platform for the exchange of experience, innovation, and knowledge between government agencies and NGOs.

6. CONCLUSION

This article examines educational initiatives as one of the mechanisms of interaction between the state and NGOs in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Within the framework of this study, we came to the conclusion that, first of all, educational programs for NGO representatives contribute to the active development of the sector's activities. The effective participation

of NGOs in public processes depends on the level of professionalism and competence of NGO staff.

Empowerment is an individual's ability to exercise social, political, economic, and psychological control through access to information, knowledge, and skills, decision-making and individual self-efficacy, community participation, and perceived control. In the long term, the long-term goal of NGOs is to promote sustainable community development through activities that promote capacity building and self-sufficiency (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

At the same time, the training program becomes the basis for joint management, ensuring the exchange of knowledge and experience between the state and NGOs. This exchange of views contributes to a better understanding and development of common strategies.

In this article, only eight types of organizational-legal forms of NGOs participated in the sociological survey, due to the fact that political parties, trade unions, and religious institutions do not receive state support from the state. This is a limitation of this study.

The study emphasizes the role of training sessions as one of the mechanisms for building trust and capacity for joint action in ensuring successful cooperation between government and NGOs.

It emphasizes the importance of long-term sustainability planning, knowledge sharing, and contextual adaptation in strengthening co-management arrangements involving NGOs.

NGOs participate in educational programs that help them overcome institutional and structural constraints that allow the third sector to be more flexible, sustainable, and active in solving social programs. Educational initiatives create a platform for strengthening dialogue between the Government and NGOs, contributing to the formation of mutually beneficial relations, as well as the development of policies aimed at solving important social problems.

By considering these aspects, the study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of co-management processes involving NGOs for future research and contributes to the existing literature on the interaction between the state and NGOs as equal partners.

Overall, these results highlight not only the importance of education for NGOs but also its role in strengthening collaborative governance.

Empowerment through education is a strategic step towards building a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership between government organizations and the non-governmental sector in Kazakhstan.

Future research will be aimed at assessing the level of interaction between government agencies and NGOs, as well as the index of civil society development in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

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