The Quality of Population’s Life within the Russian Context

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Abstract: The article analyzes the nature and location of quality categories and living standard of the general system of social and economic ideas and concepts. The author examines the concept “life quality” as a socio-economic category, analyzes existing definition of "life quality" and its correlation with the concept “life quality”, identifies the components and structure of the concept "life quality". Definition of the relationship between the components of the life quality improves the efficiency of socio-economic researches in assessment the living standard. Life quality may be determined by analyzing the set of objective indicators and subjective assessments of the human needs implementation.

Keywords: standard of living, quality of life, objective and subjective assessment of the level and quality of life, material needs the development of human potential

Introduction

Improving the life quality of the population is the main target of any progressive society. The state must create appropriate conditions to a long, safe, healthy and prosperous life, promoting economic growth and social stability. Analysis of trends in changes of life quality of the population lets to discuss, how effective is social and economic policies, the intensity with which society deals with the given tasks.

1. The Concept of “Quality of Life” in the Scientific Literature

V.N. Bobkov, P.S. Maslowski-Mstislavsky interpreted life quality as the level of development and degree of satisfaction of the complex needs and people interests. Describing the nature of the life quality, they noted that this multi-faceted, multi-dimensional concept is broader than the level of life [3, 52-66].

In the last decades of the Soviet period our country had a number of studies in which a sufficient theoretical depth were analyzed the nature and categories of entrance of life level and quality in the general system of social and economic ideas and concepts.

There are different opinions about the use of the term "quality of life" in the Russian literature. For example, N.M. Rimashevskaaya considers appropriate introduction the concept of "quality of life": The concept of "life quality", which, in our opinion, has the objective is in a sense, the resulting measure in relation to the meaning given to the term "level" and "way of life" [9, 237].

K.V. Tolstyk notes that in determining the quality of life we mean such fugitive statistical value of human existence, as the people confidence in the future, the consciousness of their need for society and the ability to determine its own development, the ability and willingness of society to respond to the needs and requirements of the individual. B.V. Boytsov proposes to analyze the quality of life through a set of assessments which should be used for identifying the depth to meet the material and spiritual needs which don’t subject to the structure of the living standard.

A.B. Barisheva offers a rating system of socio-economic development through indicators of "quality of life". It includes the system "a broad range of social characteristics - the democratization of governance, the state of the human environment, health, access to education, working and living conditions, and more". Further, A.B. Barisheva notes that economic activity is increasingly determined by the direction of the person’s value orientations. Such measures should include the characteristics of personal security, guarantees of freedom, harmony with oneself and the world around them and other things. Consequently, at the forefront of complex economic analysis put forward the task of evaluating the phenomena and processes which don’t have cost nature [1, 25].
In this sense the "quality of life" is a complex integral characteristic direction of interaction between the individual and his social environment and the government, reflecting the degree of social human freedom, the possibility of its full development, and a collection of material, cultural and spiritual values presented to him. The primary measure of this characteristic is favor of subjective degree of satisfaction with their personal way of life in a particular social setting.

Also this interpretation of content and structure of the category of "life quality is met": "Obviously, we should talk about the quality and conditions of the food, the quality (...) of clothing, the quality and comfort of home, the quality of health care and the environment, the quality of communication, the functioning of social institutions, the quality of education, the quality of working and living conditions, culture and social life" [2, 66]. In all the above mentioned situations, one should operate such activities (...) not only as their own activities, but as activities of satisfaction, and at the same time, think about their conditions and results. If in the first part of the definition there is no doubt about the list of indicators (though, apparently, they may be ranked in some different way), one may raise some objections against the concept of life quality to the identification of satisfaction.

Subjective assessment of satisfaction of any kind needs (of any degree of urgency) in the topic, one may not consider it sufficient only because of the fact that life quality is the subject of regulation. That regulation demands measuring the quality of life in terms of the overall objectives of social development the clear and objective, independent of the fluctuations of opinion of individuals, fashion and prestige reasons.

This called the appearance of the position according to which the quality of life, considered from the point of view of society, expressed through terms of the objective characteristics of the human condition: "The indicators in this case may be life expectancy and mortality in different age groups, the level of disease and disability; duration of active working age, level of education, professional mobility and migration" [8, 420].

The concept of "quality of life" has a rather complicated structure. Several authors point out that there are quality of population health, quality of education, the quality of the environment and spirituality in it. The spirituality of the individual as a special way of personal existence appears in freedom from violence and pressure life situations and is revealed through a system of values: the good, the kindness, the meaning of life, the ideal, the truth, justice, beauty, faith, hope, love, happiness.

In its work R.F. Starkov says: "... the quality of life assessment contents meaningfulness of work and leisure, quality of food, clothing, living comfort, quality health care, education, the service sector, the environment, leisure activities, the degree of satisfaction of the needs in a meaningful dialogue, knowledge, creative work, the level of stress situations, settlement structure, etc." [10, 29].

The term "quality of life" in a "broad sense refers to the interpretation of the life satisfaction of the population in terms of the different needs and interests. It covers: characteristics and indicators of living, working and recreation, housing, social security and guarantee, the protection of the rule of law and respect for individual rights, the climatic conditions, indicators of environmental conservation, the availability of free time and opportunities to use it well, finally, subjective sense of peace, comfort and stability" [6, 13].

P.Y. Octyabrsky believes that the term "life quality" is used to reflect the concept of "life quality" in the broad sense of the word.

2. The Concept of "Life Quality" versus "Quality of Life"

Speaking of the relationship between the concepts of life quality and living standard, I emphasize that the latter, according to most scholars, refers to sufficient number of established concepts, which corresponds to significantly narrow and specific range of quantitative indicators. However, there are significant differences in the interpretation of this concept. Sometimes the living standard are encouraged to include such indicators, as: working conditions, the situation in social and natural environment, size and structure of free time, the conditions for private farming, the natural and the
mechanical movement of the population, the employment structure, the level of material and technical base of social infrastructure and etc.

One may observe in many works a direct reduction of the concept of "life quality" to the concept of "life level", as well as variants of correlation or association with this concept. This approach is characterized by an emphasis on the using of explicit quantitative gauges - objective indicators of living standards, among which performance differentiation of the population in terms of income, changes in income and consumption, etc. were the most widely adopted. The historical roots of this approach are connected not only with lack of the market provision with consumer goods that took place in the past, and with the lack of development of own needs especially social ones.

There is a genetic dependence, reflected in the fact that life quality is based on a certain level of material well-being and development of economy, science, culture, etc., which is reflected in the concept of living between the categories of the level and life quality. Life quality can be expressed as an index, removing limitations of the concept of quality of life by measuring the qualitative conditions to meet the not directly measurable needs. If the standard of living characterizes the implementation of the needs of society for the members benefit, the quality of life is the degree of satisfaction the needs with the achievement of a certain personality and psychological state, it is impossible to judge the real wealth in the country, to have an idea about the real state of human needs without adequate estimates of it.

In 1994 A. Kogut and B. Ronchin published a researchable work "Regional Monitoring: the quality of life of the population" [7]. The authors attempted to develop a regional socio-economic research with a focus on monitoring the quality of life of the population. In this article we consider the direction of monitoring the life quality in the context of its basic structural components (the level and way of life, the state of public health), a system of focusing on life quality in the region.

At the end of the twentieth century attempts of quantification of life quality as independent scientific concepts intensified. The nature of this phase was determined by pronounced tendency of building a system of indicators for measuring life quality in Russia in the period of transition to a market economy.

Life quality is extremely broad, multifaceted concept. Life quality is a category that is far beyond the economics of the economy, it is rather a socio-economic category. Meanwhile, the life quality is not clearly separated from other socio-economic categories, often unites them, including a qualitative aspect. The concept of life quality is intended to characterize the qualitative aspects of people's lives. The quality of life is characterized not only the objective conditions of life, but also the value people relation to the conditions of their life, their subjective perception.

Among the most interesting and contemporary works in the development of the concepts "living standard" and "life quality", as well from the point of view taken the review and development of systems, integrated and general indicators of the life level and quality are, in my opinion, the articles, created by B. Bobkov, P. Mstislavsky in which they analyzed quite thoroughly the methodological issues of life quality [4, 5].

The problem of life quality, caused by the change in the mechanism of social development, is changing with the social development. Instead of abstract goals (blurring the distinction between town and country, overcoming significant differences in terms of social groups, labor and capital) exact goals are formed: the growth of income, wages and better conditions of life: health, education, housing, etc. Criteria of life quality, and human development became a factor of economic growth came instead of a purely economic criteria development came. The traditional focus of social policy is for the benefit of society, the new orientation is for the benefit of man. Criteria and indicators of living standards were insufficient for the new example of social policy, and it includes a large range of needs, interests and values of people, including mood, expectations, social well-being.
Thus, the concept of "life quality" is broader than the concept of "life level". It is versatile and values characteristic of life, in contrast to the "standard of living", which characterizes only the financial situation of the people.

The quality of life is considered on the basis of the concepts "life quality" and "human development" keeping in mind theoretical baggage of national economic and social sciences and with some adaptation to Russian conditions. Life quality is understood as a socio-economic category, which characterizes the set of all material conditions of existence for the individual, empowerment and satisfaction of the complex human needs, correlated with social standards and resource capabilities of society. The conditions should be considered not only as given and immutable, but subject to assessment, so you can change them if the value is unsatisfactory.

3. The Structure of the Concept of "Quality of Life"

Life quality, interpreted in the work as the degree of satisfaction human needs and empowerment and is based on the concepts of life quality and human development includes the objective - improving the life quality through empowerment; structure as a form of integral components of life quality (quality of the population, the life level, the quality of social infrastructure and ecosystem components) and baseline (income, employment, education, health, life expectancy, access to basic goods and services), allowing you to develop methods for the quantitative measurement of life quality. Thus, the concept of life quality is filled with more structured goal setting and having a function of the content, including the basic elements in the current Russian economy and social science conceptual triad "conditions - the level - a way of life", while maintaining the continuity of approaches (Figure no. 1).

![Figure no. 1 Quality of life, its structure and relationships](image)

The components of life quality are interchangeable, but one may choose different priorities for the selection of components for specifically research tasks. In studies of the population quality are more important characteristics of longevity, education, health, in the assessment of living standards are important indicators of income, wages, and their differentiation, the provision of financial and non-financial assets.

There is interdependence between the individual components of life quality, which shows itself by means of comparability of trends of population quality, living standard, quality of social infrastructure and the environment. But often, these processes have different rates, and sometimes different directions dynamics. This is particularly true in countries and regions with economics in transition, so studying the factors differentiating the individual components of life quality is important for them.
Conclusions

Life quality brings together many aspects of living, the most important of which are the standard measures of economic welfare: incomes, social security, the consumption of material goods and services.

The living standard of the individual and the population as a whole depends on the degree of satisfaction its needs and is determined by its resources and capabilities. System-level basis concepts of life are a variety of human needs that arise and are realized in the form of consumption. Limitation of the categories of living area consumption is an important structural difference to the definition of quality of life, which embraces not only the current level of the population consumption, but also the circumstances that may have influenced him.

It is clear from the determination of the life quality, that it may be expressed through a plurality of objective parameters and subjective assessments of the human needs.

References

Supplementary recommended readings
Rimashevskaya N. and other, (1979), Needs, income, consumption: Analysis methodology and forecasting people’s welfare, Nauka Publishing House, Moscow