

ABSTRACT

to Tatyana Nikolayevna Pupysheva's dissertation on "Institutional conditions for the formation of a system of self-government in rural districts" for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty "8D04103 – Public and local governance"

Relevance of the research topic. In the context of reforming the public administration system of the Republic of Kazakhstan, issues of decentralization of power, and consequently the transfer of some governance functions from the center to local governments and self-government bodies, are becoming increasingly pressing. This process, in turn, leads to an increase in the powers of lower-level governments and self-government bodies at the expense of higher-level ones, an increase in the number of decision-makers, and broad public involvement in decision-making processes.

Local self-government is both a source of power and an indicator of its democratic character and openness. The French political figure Alexis de Tocqueville, one of the founders of sociology and political science in France, emphasizes in his work "Democracy in America" that: "Local self-government is the key to excessive individualism: equality places all people in a single rank, without creating any interconnectedness between them. Each territory should be allowed to live its own life, so that citizens have unlimited incentives to act together and feel their dependence on each other every day".

Local self-government is focused on addressing local issues and is closest to the population. Its development leads to effective solutions to socio-economic problems. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in his address to the people of Kazakhstan on March 16, 2022, stated: "We will continue to transfer real powers from the center to the regions. Above all, it is necessary to effectively delineate the functions of the state and local self-government institutions. We must understand that a strong local self-government system is the foundation for direct citizen participation in improving the quality of life in their communities".

Local self-government in modern conditions is a mechanism for implementing a new paradigm – a people-centered state focused on the rights, interests, and needs of its citizens. The development of self-government institutions increases the effectiveness and efficiency of addressing local socio-economic issues, due to the population's greater awareness of them than government agencies.

Despite the particular importance of local self-government, its constituent entities receive inconsistent attention. This attention is primarily focused on cities, which have greater development potential compared to rural areas. Addressing local self-government issues in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan remains under-recognized, despite its high relevance given the significant rural population (7.5 million people, or 36.9% of Kazakhstan's total population), living in a vast rural area and facing numerous socioeconomic challenges. All of the above necessitates research into a broad range of issues related to the institutional

conditions for the formation and development of self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The degree of scientific elaboration of the dissertation research. The issues of formation and development of the local self-government system are devoted to the works of many authors. Classical theoretical foundations of local self-government are presented in the works of C. Motesquieu, K. Gerber, J.-G. Touré, G. Arens, O. Laband, E. Meyer, A. Tocqueville, R. Mohl, O. Rössler, O. Gierke, R. Gneist, L. Stein, R. Redlich, P. Ashley, G. Jellinek, B.N. Chicherin, A.I. Vasilchikov, V.N. Leshkov, V.P. Bezobrazov, A.D. Gradovsky, O.A. Andreeva, G.S. Pratsko and others. Modern theoretical approaches to the study of local self-governance are presented in the works of foreign authors D. North, J. R. Commons, V. Ostrom, E. Ostrom, D. Rodrik, P. Lawrence, J. Lorsch, J. P. Scott, J. L. Jermier, J. Pfeffer, G. Salancik, G. Almond, S. Verba, R. Inglehart, H. A. Simon, S. R. Arnstein, D. K. Hart, R. A. Dahl, C. F. Karpowitz, C. Raphael, Curry N., G. Stoker, H. Wolman, S. Pollitt, G. Bouckaert, R. Berne, R. Schramm, T. R. Alter, D. K. McLaughlin, N.E. Melniker, P. Bourdieu, J. Coleman, R. Putnam and others.

Kazakhstani authors G.S. Sapargaliev, N.V. Yuvitsa, K.S. Mukhtarova, A.A.-K. Karybaev, N.K. Nurlanova, I.N. Dauranov, Zh.B. Aubakirova, E.B. Zhatkanbaev, and M.E. Zhumasheva also devote significant attention to the development of local self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Kazakh scholars A.T. Tleuberdinova, A.A. Satybaldin, V.B. Kulik, B.B. Kalykova, and A.K. Oralbaeva explore various aspects of rural development in Kazakhstan.

To date, the extent of research on this issue, taking into account Kazakhstan's specific context, is limited and therefore requires further study, primarily with a focus on modern theories and methodological approaches to local self-government. The above-mentioned circumstances determined the choice of topic, purpose and objectives of the study.

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop theoretical, methodological, and practical recommendations for improving the self-government system in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In accordance with this goal, the following **objectives** were set and achieved:

- to study the theoretical and methodological foundations of local self-government;
- to describe international experience in organizing local self-government in rural areas and the possibilities of its application in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- to analyze the administrative-territorial structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan as the basis of the local self-government system;
- to analyze the tools for developing local self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- to study the financial self-sufficiency and budget security of rural districts;
- to develop institutional measures aimed at improving the self-government system in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The object of this study is the local self-government system in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The subject of this dissertation is the set of institutional, organizational, and resource foundations that form the local self-government system in rural districts of Kazakhstan.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the study. The theoretical basis of the study was the main provisions of classical theories of free community, socio-economic theory, state theory, dualism theory, as well as modern theories of institutional design, decentralization, resource dependence, financial sustainability, political culture, social capitalization and public participation.

The dissertation research is conducted based on the institutional approach in the context of a set of methodological strategies. The use of a multimethodological strategy made it possible to combine theoretical approaches such as induction, deduction and abduction, analysis and synthesis, specification and analogy, with empirical methods: quantitative, qualitative and mixed (mixed method), solving specific applied issues. The study of documents, observation, comparison, and measurement were used as basic research methods in studying the theoretical aspects of local self-government, analyzing foreign experience, and analyzing the legislative framework of Kazakhstan on local self-government issues; PEST analysis – to identify factors influencing the local self-government system; SWOT analysis – to determine the strengths and weaknesses of local self-government, opportunities and threats; the case study method – to study specific successful examples of local self-government implementation; economic and statistical analysis – to analyze the state of the local self-government system; regression and correlation analysis – to assess the impact of socio-economic and demographic factors on the volume of revenues to the budgets of rural districts; Sociological surveys were conducted to study the problems and prospects for the development of local self-government. Microsoft Excel, Stata, and Loginom were used to process the statistical data.

The information base of the dissertation research was provided by normative legal acts of the international and national levels, strategic and program documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, laws, concepts, data from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, data from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan, reports of audit commissions, periodicals, including electronic publishing houses, and local community development programs.

The empirical basis of the study was formed by the results of a sociological survey of residents of rural districts and an expert survey of civil servants of rural akimats.

Scientific novelty of the dissertation research results. The following scientific results, defining its scientific novelty, were obtained during the dissertation research:

– a new research approach to local self-government theories was applied, and based on this approach, the concept of local self-government was clarified;

- a comprehensive "onion model" of Saunders's research in local self-government was proposed;
- measures for the institutionalization of local self-government and an improved model of the organizational structure of local self-government in rural districts of Kazakhstan were developed;
- deficiencies in the fiscal sustainability of rural districts of Kazakhstan were identified and measures to address them were proposed;
- measures to activate local communities were proposed to strengthen local self-government as a social institution in Kazakhstan.

The main provisions submitted for defense:

- the interrelationship between classical theories of local self-government and modern theories allows for consideration of the changing conditions of public administration and socio-economic sciences;
- a comprehensive methodological approach to local self-government research, based on Saunders' "onion model", allows for consideration of the diversity of principles, factors, and models of local self-government;
- the developed set of institutional measures and the proposed model of the organizational structure of local self-government in a rural district, including local self-government ombudsmen and representative bodies (Kenes), contribute to strengthening the foundations of local self-government and ensure a balance between executive and representative powers, as well as public oversight;
- recommended economic measures, as well as budget advocacy tools, contribute to ensuring the fiscal sustainability of rural districts as the foundation of local self-government;
- the developed measures to increase civic engagement through proactive actions by government agencies enhance the involvement of local communities in self-government processes in rural districts.

Theoretical significance of the research results. The findings obtained during this dissertation are significant for the development of theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of local self-government. The study provided new insights into local self-government, a comprehensive research approach to it, and modern interdisciplinary theories of local self-government. The findings of this dissertation may serve as the basis for formulating new research objectives.

Practical value of the research results. The findings obtained during this dissertation will contribute to the development of local self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Their practical significance lies in the potential application of the research results by the scientific community, Akims at all levels, government agencies, local community representatives, and non-governmental organizations. The conclusions, proposals, and scientific and practical recommendations can be considered and applied in legislative processes, as well as in the development, improvement, and implementation of strategies, programs, and concepts in local public administration and self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The materials contained in this dissertation can be used in the

educational process for training specialists in the following specialties: "Public and Local Administration" and "Political Science".

Validation of the research results. The main provisions of the dissertation were discussed at scientific and methodological seminars held by the Department of Economic Theory and Public and Local Governance at Karaganda University of Kazpotrebsoyuz. Certain scientific findings and proposals were implemented in the activities of government agencies and are part of a research project funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the topic: "Spatial development of rural areas in the context of sustainable development: indicators, growth poles, and strategic directions" (IRN № AP26102165).

The main results of the dissertation research were published in 15 scientific papers, of which 1 was published in a journal with a non-zero impact factor and included in the international information resources Scopus and Web of Science, 6 – in scientific publications recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1 – in periodicals of the Republic of Kazakhstan and 7 reports in the proceedings of international scientific and practical conferences, 6 of which were abroad (Italy, England, Poland, Russia).

The results of the dissertation research were reported and presented at the international scientific and practical conference "Socio-economic development of the state in the era of global challenges: priorities, problems, solutions" dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the East Kazakhstan University named after S. Amanzholov (Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan), the international scientific and practical conference "Topical issues of economic sciences and modern management" (Novosibirsk, Russia), the international scientific conference "Scientific Results" (Rome, Italy), the international scientific conference "Scientific Research and Experimental Development" (London, England), the international scientific conference "Research Retrieval and Academic Letters" (Warsaw, Poland).

Structure and scope of the dissertation. The structure of the dissertation reflects the logic, order of research, and algorithm for solving the stated problems. The dissertation consists of a table of contents, notations and abbreviations, an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and 4 appendices. The dissertation is 160 typewritten pages long, including 12 tables, 80 figures, and 2 formulas. The list of references contains 188 sources.

The first chapter of the dissertation "Theoretical and methodological substantiation of local self-government in rural areas" examines theoretical approaches to the study of local self-government, its factors, principles, and models. It describes international experience in organizing local self-government in rural areas and the potential for its application in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Modern methodological approaches and methods in the study of local self-government are analyzed.

Modern research shows that institutional conditions shape the local self-government system. These conditions are fundamental to the functioning of local

self-government and include the regulatory, organizational, administrative, and financial frameworks. The institutional approach aims to comprehensively analyze the legal framework of local self-government, organizational forms, interactions between levels of government, citizen engagement in local self-government processes, budgetary self-sufficiency, and financial sustainability. It places particular emphasis on ensuring the control and accountability of local authorities to the population and higher authorities.

In the socioeconomic sciences, there is no universal approach to studying local self-government issues. Currently, there are numerous theories that have developed over a long historical period. Classical theories are the theory of free community, socio-economic theory, state theory and the theory of dualism.

Contemporary theories are of particular interest in analyzing the institutional conditions for the development of self-government in rural districts. They explain the formation and functioning of this system on various grounds. Theories of institutional design and decentralization are based on administrative and organizational foundations. Theories of resource dependence and financial sustainability focus on the financial foundation of local self-government. Theories of social capitalization, political culture, and public participation focus on the development of human capital. Classical and contemporary theories complement each other.

The proposed integrating system of local self-government theories allows us to consider local self-government, first and foremost, as a social institution in the broad sense of the word. This institution is shaped by the dual nature of state and society, depends on available resources, and is oriented toward achieving specific results.

Studying the experience of foreign countries is important for Kazakhstan, as it allows us to identify the most suitable models and practices for our country. Their application allows us to create an effective system of local self-government in rural districts. Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Finland) and European countries (Germany and Switzerland) have the longest history of developing local self-government systems, with numerous successful examples of rural community governance. Therefore, their experience is valuable for Kazakhstan. The experience of Eastern European countries (Poland and Bulgaria) and post-Soviet countries (Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia) is not as long-standing. However, it is of interest to Kazakhstan due to the importance of territorial reforms and the development of a local self-government system. The experience of North American countries (Canada and the United States) can also be applied in the Republic of Kazakhstan. This is particularly true for the implementation of effective electoral processes, maintaining the autonomy of local communities, and creating partnerships between local authorities, civil society, and entrepreneurs to ensure sustainable rural development. The Chinese experience in local self-government development is of interest to Kazakhstan given its large rural population and significant rural areas. In this country, despite strict government regulation, trends toward decentralization are observed, extending to the rural level. Japan's experience with a mixed model of local self-government offers an

example of a balanced approach that can also be applied, taking into account country specifics. Of particular interest to our country is the experience of representative, elective forms of governance in rural areas, which is currently being successfully implemented in Germany, China, and Sweden.

A comprehensive methodological approach to studying local self-government is based on Saunders' "onion model". This approach allows for consideration of a variety of principles, factors, and models of local self-government. It utilizes an institutional paradigm. Local self-government is viewed as an established legal and regulatory system that organizes and ensures independent resolution of local problems by local self-government bodies and the population itself. The comprehensive methodological approach incorporates deduction, induction, and abduction. The methodological approach combines a range of theoretical and empirical methods, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed strategies. This multimethodological strategy is most optimal in the study of local self-government.

Chapter two "Analysis of the institutional conditions for organizing the local self-government system in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan" examines the administrative-territorial structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan as the foundation of the local self-government system. The tools for developing local self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan are analyzed. The financial self-sufficiency and budgetary security of rural districts are examined.

In the local self-government system of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a rural district is more of an administrative-territorial unit than a territorial community with governing bodies that make autonomous decisions. Significant changes have occurred in the administrative-territorial division of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This reform placed particular emphasis on consolidating rural settlements. As a result, their number has significantly decreased, as has the number of rural districts. Despite government measures, the share of the rural population in Kazakhstan's total population is declining. Under these conditions, the country's socioeconomic and political modernization is increasingly dependent on the local self-government system.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, the institutionalization of local self-government is being gradually implemented: a structural reform of the public administration system is underway, decentralization based on a mixed model of local self-government is being introduced, and the legal framework for local self-government is being gradually created and updated. International and national regulatory and legal acts, programmatic and strategic documents, are the most important tools for the development of local self-government.

Despite the creation of a significant legal framework, the modernization directions outlined within it have not been fully implemented. An analysis of the legal and regulatory documents of the state planning system revealed that they focus on the election of Akims, the formation and strengthening of fourth-level budgets, mechanisms for the development of rural districts, citizen engagement in local self-government processes, and many other issues. At the same time, the search for the proper form of the local self-government system is still underway.

Numerous theoretical and practical problems exist. Issues of ensuring the financial self-sufficiency of fourth-level budgets, the creation of mechanisms to enhance the transparency and effectiveness of interbudget transfers, and the creation of opportunities to attract investment to rural districts remain unresolved. Particular attention should be paid to the establishment of representative bodies in rural areas, issues of public involvement in local self-government, and the accountability and control of local government bodies and local self-government bodies to residents. A separate issue is the development of human resources for local self-government bodies. Overall, linearity and consistency in the local self-government system are essential. Given the diversity of rural areas in Kazakhstan, an integrated approach is required to ensure the financial self-sufficiency of rural budgets. Economic, social, and environmental factors, agriculture, land relations, infrastructure and services, tourism and recreation, government support, and funding are fundamental factors influencing this self-sufficiency. Transfers from higher-level budgets are particularly significant for fourth-tier budgets. To ensure sustainable development in rural areas, it is necessary to develop effective strategies and mechanisms for strengthening their own financial base. The Republic of Kazakhstan should continue to improve measures aimed at modernizing the local self-government system.

Chapter three "Improving the self-government system in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan" proposes measures to institutionalize local self-government and an improved model for the organizational structure of local self-government in rural districts of Kazakhstan. Based on the identified shortcomings in the budgetary and financial self-sufficiency of rural districts in Kazakhstan, measures to address them are proposed. An analysis of the specifics of local community involvement in rural district self-government processes is conducted, and measures to mobilize local communities are proposed to strengthen local self-government as a social institution in Kazakhstan.

This analysis demonstrates the need to introduce a unified and comprehensive regulatory framework in which the functions, powers, and responsibilities of local self-government bodies, including in rural districts, are more clearly and precisely defined. The adoption of a separate law "On Local Self-Government" is a necessary step in the institutionalization of local self-government. Its implementation will establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for local self-government, create conditions for public participation in local self-government, take into account the characteristics of local communities, and strengthen the property and financial foundations for the implementation of local self-government at the local level.

Currently, the existing local self-government system in Kazakhstan is administratively subordinate at all levels. This is exacerbated by the lack of representative local self-government bodies in rural areas and the weak role and influence of assemblies and meetings in decision-making. Therefore, it is necessary to institutionalize elected representative bodies (Kenes) at the rural district level, following the examples of Germany, Sweden, and China. These bodies should be empowered with decision-making, monitoring, and oversight

functions. Furthermore, a local self-government ombudsman institution is needed, serving as an advisory body on local self-government issues and an external oversight body. Taken together, the introduction of ombudsmen and local self-government ombudsmen, as well as a stronger role for non-governmental organizations, will ensure a balance between executive and representative authority and public oversight. The organizational model for the structure of local self-government in rural districts proposed in this dissertation promotes the development of local self-government in the interests of the population.

Digital transformation is one of the fundamental tools for strengthening local self-government. It expands public access and participation in local self-government, increases the transparency of government and local self-government bodies, strengthens the role of representative bodies, and creates open mechanisms for management and budgetary accountability. The optimal model for such a transformation is the integration of digital local self-government tools into the existing digital infrastructure of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This should be implemented by expanding existing government systems. This significantly reduces functional and financial barriers and ensures a unified standard. The integration of representative bodies, public participation tools, and public oversight mechanisms into this platform helps bridge the gap between urban and rural areas and promote greater equality within rural areas. Overall, the sustainable development of local self-government in rural districts is only possible with the simultaneous improvement of regulatory, organizational, and digital measures.

An analysis of fourth-level budget management reveals existing problems and challenges. The range of tax and non-tax revenues to budgets at this level is insufficient for rural district Akims to fulfill their functions and powers. The main problem is their low budgetary and financial self-sufficiency and high dependence on transfers from higher-level budgets. Further fiscal decentralization contributes to strengthening the foundations of local self-government. Based on a correlation and economic-statistical analysis, proposals have been developed to improve the budgetary and financial self-sufficiency of rural districts in Kazakhstan. To strengthen this, it is necessary to transfer a portion of tax and special revenues from regional and district (city of regional significance) budgets to the budgets of cities of district significance, villages, settlements, and rural districts. These measures contribute to expanding the tax base without placing additional pressure on businesses. Furthermore, it is necessary to revise the interbudgetary distribution mechanism, taking into account the system of regional standards in rural district centers and key rural settlements.

To engage local residents in the budget process, the need to develop budget advocacy in rural districts, as well as the activities of its ambassadors, has been substantiated. Budget advocacy is a strategic approach that enables the population to influence budget decisions and the financing of local issues. Training in its tools enables rural communities to participate in budget formation, make adjustments, and redistribute funds locally based on changes and emerging issues. The introduction of these measures will enable the greatest growth of local self-government in rural districts of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

A review and analysis of the existing forms and mechanisms for rural population participation in self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan reveals their limitations in practical implementation. A number of difficulties and problems associated with their implementation are observed. Local self-government presupposes the exercise of the rights of local residents to independently resolve existing problems under their own responsibility. In the local self-government system, citizens are not only the objects of management influence but also actors capable of promoting local development. The main forms of citizen engagement in local self-government are assemblies and meetings of local communities. Every rural resident has the right to participate in public hearings, election processes, appeal to government agencies and local self-government bodies, and more.

Public opinion surveys conducted as part of the dissertation research indicate that the majority of residents in rural districts understand the importance of developing local self-government. Rural residents are aware of the existence of local self-government in their areas of residence and are interested in this topic, but the majority do not participate in local self-government. This demonstrates the need for additional government measures aimed at engaging local residents in local self-government.

Involving the population in local self-government processes requires proactive action by local authorities. These efforts should be aimed at actively engaging rural residents in solving local problems. The creation of the "School of Local Self-Government and Local Budget" consultative and educational platform contributes to improving legal, civic, and budgetary literacy at the rural level. This school can contribute to improving the quality of community engagement in local government and budgeting, providing the opportunity to accurately and specifically formulate requests, initiatives, priorities, and recommendations. This school develops skills for genuine participation in the discussion of local issues and problems, and fosters the development of community initiatives at the rural level.

Therefore, the Republic of Kazakhstan must continue to improve measures aimed at transforming the local self-government system. Further modernization should focus on transforming the regulatory and organizational foundations of local self-government, ensuring the budgetary and financial self-sufficiency of rural districts, and strengthening public engagement in local self-government processes.

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