

STATE YOUTH POLICY IN UZBEKISTAN: FORMATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND OUTCOMES

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Abstract

This article examines the formation, evolution, and outcomes of state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan from the years of independence to the present day. The study analyzes the legal, institutional, and programmatic foundations of youth policy, with particular attention to the qualitative shift that occurred after 2016 within the framework of the “New Uzbekistan” development strategy. Using methods of analysis and synthesis, historical-comparative analysis, and generalization of statistical data, the article identifies the principal stages of youth policy development, evaluates the role of youth institutions, and outlines the socio-political and socio-economic results achieved. The findings show that youth policy in Uzbekistan has evolved from a fragmented, transitional framework into a comprehensive strategic mechanism integrating education, employment, civic engagement, and digital innovation, while several institutional and implementation challenges remain to be addressed.

Keywords: Youth policy, Uzbekistan, New Uzbekistan strategy, youth institutions, civic engagement, employment, education, digitalization.

Introduction

In conditions of globalization and ongoing socio-political transformation, young people constitute the most significant socio-demographic segment of society and a strategic resource for national development. The intellectual potential, civic engagement, and social responsibility of the younger generation play a decisive

role in ensuring sustainable development, strengthening democratic institutions, and safeguarding national security. For this reason, the formulation and consistent advancement of state youth policy has become one of the priority directions of modern public administration.

In the context of Uzbekistan, the relevance of this issue is heightened by the fact that young people make up a substantial share of the population. Demographic dynamics require a comprehensive and systematic approach to addressing youth-related challenges, including the quality of education, employment, vocational training, social protection, political participation, and moral upbringing. Over the years of independence, Uzbekistan has gradually built up the legal, institutional, and programmatic foundations of its youth policy; however, rapid societal change, the expansion of the information space, and growing competition in the labor market continue to demand its ongoing refinement.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the stages of formation and development of state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan, to provide a scholarly assessment of its legal, institutional, and programmatic mechanisms, and to identify the socio-political and socio-economic outcomes of the reforms implemented in this sphere.

Theoretical and Historical Foundations

State youth policy can be defined as a comprehensive system of measures through which the state protects the rights and interests of the younger generation, expands opportunities in education, healthcare, employment, and social support, and fosters civic consciousness along with active participation in public life. Theoretically, this policy rests on the principles of social protection, legal guarantees, education and professional development, the cultivation of civic and leadership skills, and the encouragement of social initiative.

From a socio-historical perspective, the formation of youth policy has always been conditioned by the political, economic, and legal circumstances of a given era. During the Soviet period, youth policy was centralized and largely propagandistic in character, with limited space for individual civic initiative; its primary function was the socialization of youth through mass organizations and their preparation as a labor force. After Uzbekistan attained independence in 1991, youth policy began to be shaped around national state interests, legal

freedoms, and democratic values, accompanied by the adoption of regulatory acts aimed at expanding youth's social engagement, legal protection, education, and employment opportunities.

Today, the state's approach to youth issues constitutes an integrated system oriented toward developing civic activism, enhancing educational and professional capacity, ensuring social protection and employment, and engaging youth in the life of society more broadly — an approach that increasingly draws on international experience and standards.

Formation of Youth Policy in Independent Uzbekistan (1991–2016)

The initial post-independence period was marked by the laying of the constitutional and legislative groundwork for youth policy, including the adoption of laws on employment and education and the establishment of the first state programs addressing youth welfare. Particular attention during this period was devoted to the development of youth organizations, which were strengthened as key actors responsible for implementing state policy at the grassroots level.

Youth institutions occupy an important place in the socio-political system of the country, serving as a channel through which the needs, concerns, and initiatives of young people are communicated to public authorities, thereby allowing state policy to be shaped in closer alignment with actual social demand. They also perform a vital function of social integration, helping young people adapt to the legal, cultural, and moral values of society and strengthening their civic consciousness.

Legally, youth organizations operate on the basis of the constitutional guarantees of freedom of association and the development of civil-society institutions, which has ensured their independent and stable evolution. During this period, structures such as the Youth Union of Uzbekistan were consolidated as practical mechanisms linking the state and society in matters concerning the younger generation.

The New Stage of Youth Policy after 2016

Beginning in 2016, youth policy in Uzbekistan entered a qualitatively new stage associated with the conceptual renewal pursued under the “New Uzbekistan” development strategy. This period was characterized by an intensified focus on

education, innovation, and entrepreneurship as core pillars of youth development, alongside the introduction of new digital and innovative approaches to working with young people.

Among the most notable trends of this stage is the digitalization of youth work: organizations increasingly communicate with young people through online platforms, mobile applications, and social networks, enabling real-time identification of their needs and initiatives and enhancing the transparency and effectiveness of governance. A second trend is the shift toward project-based approaches, with youth organizations increasingly organizing their activity around targeted social, economic, and innovative projects, including start-up support, volunteer programs, and social innovation initiatives.

A third direction concerns the expansion of international cooperation and youth diplomacy, allowing Uzbekistan's youth institutions to learn from the experience of other countries through international forums and exchange programs. A fourth trend is the strengthening of inclusiveness and equal opportunity, with youth policy increasingly oriented toward covering all social groups, including those in remote regions, youth with disabilities, and socially vulnerable categories. Finally, the support of innovative entrepreneurship — through start-up ecosystems and business incubators — has come to play a growing role in addressing youth employment.

Discussion of Outcomes

The cumulative effect of these reforms indicates a clear evolution from a largely declarative and centralized model of youth policy toward a comprehensive, multi-institutional system integrating legal, programmatic, and digital mechanisms. Youth organizations have moved beyond traditional educational and ideological functions to become innovative, communicative, and strategically oriented actors in their own right.

At the same time, the analysis suggests that further work is required to strengthen the institutional capacity for implementation, to ensure the consistent application of normative-legal acts at the regional level, and to develop reliable mechanisms for evaluating the socio-economic impact of youth programs on employment, education, and civic participation indicators.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that state youth policy in Uzbekistan has developed through distinct historical stages, from the centralized and propagandistic model inherited from the Soviet period, through the formative post-independence stage focused on building legal and institutional foundations, to the comprehensive and innovation-driven model that has taken shape since 2016 under the “New Uzbekistan” strategy. The policy today integrates legal guarantees, institutional mechanisms, and digital tools aimed at enhancing youth employment, education, civic activism, and entrepreneurship. Continued refinement of implementation mechanisms and evaluation tools will be essential for ensuring that the strategic goals of youth policy are translated into measurable social outcomes.

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