

UDC: 321 (54)

## YOUTH POLICY AS A PRIORITY AREA OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract.** The article considers the essence, legal foundation and main directions of the state youth policy, particularly in Uzbekistan. Features of effective interaction between state bodies, NGOs and other civil society institutions have been shown on the example of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan. Revealing the potential of young people and assisting them in effective socialization in society are considered as a priority of the state youth policy in Uzbekistan.

The article outlines the main measures for the further development of the social sphere in 2019. In particular, comments were given to initiatives and conceptual ideas for further improvement of science, modern and continuing education, further strengthening of state social support for young people.

The article widely describes the concept of “investment in human capital”. The article notes that investments in human capital include expenditures on health care, general and special education, employment, vocational training, raising children and others.

The article shows how the issues of modern education and upbringing of young people and their social support are important in the social development of the country. The article analyzed important practical steps taken to ensure that the sphere of education and training directly serves further human improvement.

**Keywords:** Strategy of Action; youth; state youth policy; Youth Union of Uzbekistan; innovative thinking; commitment to the national idea; human capital investment.

### Introduction

Youth is a strategic resource of any state, the basis of its vitality. But the prospects for the development of the state largely depend on how this resource will be mobilized and used. Uzbekistan has embarked on the construction of a modern democratic state with a strong civil society. This implies a qualitatively new level of relations between the state, society and the individual. In this context, youth is the driving force behind the development of the country and one of the important factors of social stability in Uzbek society.

Young people have always been recognized as an active part of society. Care for young people in Uzbekistan has always been in the priority of state policy. In the first years of independence, despite the presence of many social and economic problems inherent in the “transition period” in our republic,

this issue was given the highest priority. This is evidenced by the fact that one of the first laws signed by the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. Karimov was the Law “On the foundations of state youth policy”. The Law, adopted on November 20, 1991, was the first document that raised the issue of attention to the younger generation in our country at the level of state policy. For a long time, this law served as a legal basis for the upbringing of a healthy, harmoniously developed generation, the development of the education system, the social protection of youth, and the support of youth organizations in our country. (*The Law “On the foundations of state youth policy” became invalid after the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On State Youth Policy” of September 14, 2016.*)

Along with this, in the years of independence, special state programs were developed

in Uzbekistan that proclaims the social direction of the year. In particular, 2008 was declared the “Year of Youth”, 2010 – “The Year of Harmoniously Developed Generation”, 2014 – “The Year of a Healthy Child”, and 2016 – “The Year of a Healthy Mother and Child”. This fact testifies to the enormous attention of the state to the creation of an appropriate condition for the younger generation.

Uzbekistan is on an important demographic frontier. Currently, more than 60 percent of the population is young, that is, the country is home to a whole generation of people who have not reached 30 years of age. Over the next decades, today's children and young people will become the largest workforce in the history of Uzbekistan. With the right investments in the development of youth, it is they who can become the generation that will bring Uzbekistan to a new level of development. Therefore, the key priority of all social policy in Uzbekistan has been the concern for the upbringing of a harmoniously developed young generation.

#### **“Youth” and its age framework**

Youth – the socio-demographic group of the population, allocated on the basis of a combination of age characteristics, social status and the socio-psychological properties conditioned by both, which are determined by the social system, culture and laws of socialization.

At present, there are no exact age limits for the youth category. In different countries, not only age limits are important, but a set of individual or group characteristics. According to the UN, youth are people aged 10–24 [9].

In a number of countries, young people are not allocated to a separate group, but are united with children in the age range from zero to 25 years (UK, Netherlands). In Uzbekistan, according to the Law “On State Youth Policy”, young people (young citizens) are all individuals between the ages of 14 to 30 years.

In general, modern age boundaries of the concept of “youth”, adopted in most European countries, the USA and Japan, are determined in the range from 13–14 (the age at which physical maturity sets in) to 29–30 years (the time of independent, economically independent life). Although in some cases the upper limit may be pushed back (for example, for “young scientists” in our country and in some European countries – 33–35 years old, or “young farmers” in Spain – up to 39–40 years old) [4].

#### **Youth policy in the world**

Youth policy is one of the most important priorities of the state socio-economic policy. It is focused on the development of essential conditions and the necessary guarantees that contribute to the self-realization of a young man [5, p. 87].

In youth policy, it is necessary to consider the interests of young citizens, their formation in the social structure of society, the disclosure of the potential of the young generation in the interests of the whole society. It is necessary to support youth movements, associations, initiatives.

Recently, an approach has been advanced in the field of youth policy in developed countries, according to which it should be based on a clear understanding of new social changes and the way of life of young people [21, p. 265–275].

At the present stage in developed countries, state youth policy in its development has acquired quite definite forms and is being implemented according to several rather different models. Its common features are a departure from paternalism, the state's attitude to youth as a partner in social processes, the implementation of youth policies based on the principles of subsidiarity, etc.

At the global level, a universal approach to the implementation of youth policy is being formed, aimed at actively socializing and uniting the efforts of young people from different countries and regions in solving global

problems of our time together with representatives of other social groups.

Thus, the recognition of youth as an independent resource, the allocation of youth policy as a separate direction of state activity in the developed countries of the world is directly related to the awareness of the role of youth in solving socio-economic and political problems (global challenges – aging populations, demographic problems, migration, preservation of cultural identity, terrorism, environmental safety, energy security, etc.) [4].

Due to its global position, the United Nations is a platform for discussing and solving pressing problems of youth and strengthening its potential for the benefit of the whole world.

As the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres noted: “Ensuring peace, active economic growth, social justice, tolerance – all this and much more depends on the use of youth’s opportunities” [10].

Known that today an unprecedented number of young people in the world – 1.8 billion, which is still faced with many obstacles. About 90 percent of them live in developing countries. More than 70 million of them are unemployed. In many cases, unemployment and the extremely difficult living conditions of the younger generation in the world lead to an increase in violent extremism and radicalism among them. Moreover, this phenomenon requires joint efforts of the international community.

As President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev noted in his speech at the 72<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in September 2017, ensuring conditions for the self-realization of the youth will create a barrier to the spread of the “virus” of the ideology of violence. In order to develop multilateral cooperation for social support of the younger generation, protection of their rights and interests, the initiative on the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Youth was put forward by Uzbekistan [18].

This initiative is aimed at the formation of bases for the effective implementation of a

large-scale international mechanism to combat the propaganda of terrorism in the context of globalization. This, in turn, contributes to the development of national action programs and the development of youth policy.

### **Youth policy in Uzbekistan: main directions**

As 60 percent of the population of Uzbekistan is young people, which is considered to be a strategic resource of the state, a special policy has been developed and is being implemented with regard to young citizens of the country.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan has become a solid legal foundation in the sphere of youth. The provisions of the Constitution have created legal and legislative bases for the youth to receive modern education, to acquire a profession, to take their place in society.

In the Constitution, for the first time in the history of Uzbek legislation, the right of the country’s youth to engage in entrepreneurial activities on the basis of recognition of private property, social guarantees, including the right to work, free general education and qualified medical care, was assigned to state bodies [1].

In general, over the years of independence, Uzbekistan has developed a well-developed legal and regulatory framework, created legal and economic conditions to ensure the interests of young people, demonstrate their talent and potential. In more than 20 laws, decrees and regulations adopted during this period reflected the rules and regulations directly related to youth life.

Especially, the Law “On State Youth Policy” adopted occupies an important place in the life of young people.

The Law of “On State Youth Policy”, adopted on September 14, 2016 for the purpose of radical improvement of activities in this area, has created a solid legal basis for the upbringing of a developed, self-motivated, initiative and energetic young people who are able to take responsibility for the future of our country, to use their poten-

tial for the sake of the people's interests, as well as realize their intellectual and creative potential.

Under the state youth policy, the law means a system of measures implemented by the state and providing for the creation of conditions for the social formation and development of the intellectual, creative and other potential of youth [6].

According to the law, the main directions of the state youth policy of Uzbekistan are:

- ensuring the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of young people;
- protection of life and health of young people;
- assistance to the spiritual, intellectual, physical and moral development of youth;
- providing young people with affordable and quality education;
- creation of conditions for youth employment;
- education of the youth in the spirit of patriotism, civic-mindedness, tolerance, respect for laws, national and universal values, capable of resisting harmful influences and currents, with firm convictions and outlooks on life;
- protection of young people from actions that lead to the erosion of moral principles, the ideas of terrorism and religious extremism, separatism, fundamentalism, the cult of violence and cruelty;
- raising the level of legal awareness and legal culture of youth;
- support and stimulation of gifted and talented youth;
- creation of conditions for the development of youth entrepreneurship;
- formation of young people's desire for a healthy lifestyle, as well as the creation of conditions for organizing meaningful leisure for young people and the mass development of youth sports;
- implementation of an integrated system of measures for moral and material support of young families, creating decent housing and social conditions for them;

- development of cooperation with international organizations that carry out activities in the field of realizing the rights and freedoms of young people.

### **Instruments for implementing state youth policy in Uzbekistan**

Representatives of all branches of government are actively involved in the implementation of youth policy in Uzbekistan. In particular, the Youth Commission has been created and operates under the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis. The post of deputy heads of regions, cities and districts on social issues, spiritual education and youth has been introduced in the executive branch system, and the deputy head of the department of internal affairs for youth issues in the law enforcement system.

The Supreme Judicial Council and the Supreme Court have formed councils of youth leaders involved in protecting the rights and interests of the young generation. In addition, in each mahalla, the posts of deputy chairmen of citizens rallies on youth issues were introduced.

Positive results of the state youth policy find their embodiment in works on the full support, vocational guidance and employment of unorganized youth, the prevention of crime and offenses among the younger generation, the return to a healthy life of citizens affected by various religious extremist movements.

The competitiveness of each state and society in the conditions of dynamic development of science and technology, increasing competition in the world will depend on the intellectual development of youth and the attention given to the full realization of their talent and abilities.

According to a survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Public Opinion "Ijtimoiy Fikr", the social value of higher education among the country's youth is constantly growing. If in 2010 and 2011 only a third of young people would like to get higher education, in 2016 – 56.8 percent, then in

2017 – already 62.7 percent, and in 2018 – 65.6 percent. The youth called science and pedagogy, business, services and production, and medicine the preferred areas of higher education [8].

Therefore, this issue is reflected in the Strategy of Action on five priority directions of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021, aimed at ensuring long-term development of the state. In the Strategy, a separate section is devoted to the improvement of state youth policy. The Strategy identified a number of new important tasks to increase the social activity of young people in the process of deepening democratic reforms and the development of civil society in the country [14].

In this direction the accent was placed on employment and attraction in sphere of private business of graduates of secondary specialized, professional and higher educational institutions. Development has received the practice of targeted training of specialists, implying the formation of quotas for admission based on forecast indices of the development of economic sectors, concluding quadripartite agreements with college graduates for their further employment.

The work of the state on the social protection of youth, the creation of decent housing and social conditions for young families is being improved. Open dialogue with the youth of central and local legislative and executive authorities, leaders of the judicial and legal sphere is becoming a good tradition in Uzbekistan.

The main instrument for the participation of young people in youth policy is youth organizations. In this connection, on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, on 30 June 2017, a completely new organization – the Youth Union of Uzbekistan was formed on the basis of the previously functioning youth social movement “Kamolot”. In addition, June 30 declared the Day of Youth in Uzbekistan.

Should be noted that the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, uniting in its ranks 7 million 680 thousand boys and girls, is called upon to be-

come a structure that ensures effective interaction with state bodies, NGOs and other civil society institutions in the implementation of the state youth policy [16].

The development of civil society institutions significantly reduces the role of the state as a regulator of youth policy. Public organizations such as the Youth Union of Uzbekistan are actively involved in the formation and implementation of youth policy.

The efforts of state and non-state structures are aimed not only at solving the problems of certain youth groups, but also at helping those categories of youth who are focused on active work, study, professional growth.

At present, the deputies of regional and district khokims (*governors of regions*) on issues of youth policy, social development and spiritual enlightenment, deputy chiefs of the regional department of internal affairs on youth issues are appointed to their posts according to the recommendations of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan.

This organization, in cooperation with other public organizations, is conducting systematic work to provide support to children whose parents have come under the influence of religious extremist movements. In particular, only in 2017, about ten thousand young people from such families were employed [20].

As President Sh. Mirziyoyev emphasized: “The Youth Union of Uzbekistan should become a unique center for training leading cadres for the state and society, if we speak in modern language, a “social elevator” for young people. It needs to create a reserve of competent, enterprising and organizational, dedicated young leaders” [7, p. 520].

In this regard, a legal basis was the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan “On measures to improve the effectiveness of the state youth policy and support the activities of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan” on July 5, 2017 [2].

For this purpose, in 2017, Institute for the Study of Youth Problems and the Training of Prospective Personnel was established at the

Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Today young, promising personnel who have passed the school of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, possessing modern knowledge and skills, leadership qualities are being appointed to senior positions in ministries and departments, large companies and banks, business associations. As noted, only within a year on the basis of recommendations of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, banks allocated 216 billion sums of concessional loans to almost 4 thousand 300 young boys and girls, more than 184 thousand 300 young people were employed [17].

In order to stimulate active and energetic youth, serving as an example for all with their work, initiative and moral qualities, the state award “Mard uglon” (“Valiant Son of the Motherland”) and “Kelajak bunyodkori” (“Creator of the Future”) medal were established.

Should be noted that the next big step in revealing the potential of young people and assisting them in effective socialization in society became the State Program “Yoshlar – kelajagimiz” (“Youth – our future”), approved on June 27, 2018 by a separate Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The State Program “Yoshlar – kelajagimiz” is aimed at providing youth employment of young people through assistance and support in the implementation of youth business initiatives, start-ups, ideas and projects, training unemployed young people in demand in the labor market for specialties and business skills, as well as increasing social and economic activity of youth in whole [15].

According to the document, has begun the construction of “Yosh tadbirkorlar” (“Young Entrepreneurs”) co-working centers on the terms of public-private partnership. These centers will be established to provide young entrepreneurs with concessional lease of premises, office equipment and consumables, and assistance in the implementation of

youth business initiatives, start-ups, ideas and projects, etc.

Moreover, it is planned to build throughout the republic “Yoshlar mehnat guzari” (“Youth’s Work Quarter”) complexes in the labor-surplus areas for the creation of trade-household and small production sites.

To date, “Yoshlar – kelajagimiz” Fund has allocated soft loans to those wishing to start their own business for a total of 692 billion 400 million soums, about 25 thousand new jobs have been created, and 125 youth employment centers “Yoshlar mehnat guzari” have been commissioned throughout the republic, 19 co-working centers “Young Entrepreneurs” [3].

### **Improvement of the education system – state policy priority**

Growth rates and economic potential of the country in recent years have a direct impact on the development of the social sphere. The issue of modern education of young people is of particular importance and relevance in the social sphere.

It is known from history that in every age, enlightenment has given impetus to the welfare and development of society. In our country, great attention is paid to the practical implementation of the principle of continuous education.

In recent years, large-scale measures have been undertaken to modernize the education system and further enhance the role of youth as a driving force of development in our society.

Special attention is paid in the country to the system of pre-school education, which is the first stage of upbringing of a harmoniously developed generation. In 2017, this area was separated from the Ministry of Public Education and a separate Ministry of Pre-school education was evidence of this [13].

The main task of the state policy is to create new kindergartens throughout the country in the coming years, to raise the quality and level of education, to cover 100 % of kindergartens.

In the field of general education, special attention is paid to the construction and renovation of new educational institutions. In 2017 alone, 12 secondary schools were rebuilt in the country, 320 were reconstructed, and 152 schools were overhauled.

In addition, 11-year secondary education was restored in the country. Innovative schools under the auspices of Muhammad Khorezmi and Mirzo Ulugbek, President Schools have been established.

Further improvement of the system of higher education has become an important area of social sector reforms. In particular, the program of comprehensive development of the higher education system for 2017–2021 was adopted. Transparent enrollment mechanisms have been introduced in higher education institutions and quotas have been significantly increased.

In the system of higher education new, modern educational institutions, including the branches of reputable foreign universities are being established. The number of institutes of higher education in the country reached 81, new branches – 15, branches of foreign universities – 7. Correspondence and evening branches are opened in higher educational institutions.

As the President of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoyev noted: “Of all these, we pursue a common goal. In other words, Uzbekistan must be competitive in the world in the field of science, intellectual potential, modern human resources and high technologies” [12, p. 12].

It is worth noting that in our country, special attention is paid to the education and upbringing of the main period of maturity (from 3 to 22 years). After all, spending on a person, his potential, his knowledge and health is not really a cost, but a prospective investment.

Contemporary interpretation refers to the reserve of knowledge, skills, abilities and incentives of a person whose capital is of economic value. This capital will serve as a future source of income and benefits not only for the individual but also for the society.

Experience of developed countries shows that young people, who have reached the age of 22, with full knowledge and potential, will return this investment to society 15–17 times as much as their contribution to community development. In Uzbekistan, the figure is only 4 times.

Increasing the coverage of preschool education by 34 % to 44 %, establishing a modern system of general secondary education and establishing private schools and kindergartens on the basis of public-private partnerships as an important practical step towards further development of the education sector in Uzbekistan. The emphasis is placed on further enhancing efforts to create equal opportunities for higher education.

In particular, over the past two years the level of coverage of graduates of higher and secondary specialized educational institutions with higher education has been increased from 9–10 % to 15 %. In developed countries this figure is 60–70 %.

In 2019, our country managed to achieve raising the level of coverage of graduates with higher education to 20 percent. In the coming years, it is planned to gradually increase this indicator as far as possible. To achieve this goal, the following measures are taken:

- strengthening the competitive environment for the training of highly qualified personnel among universities and non-state educational institutions;
- providing young people with the opportunity to apply to several universities at the same time;
- introduction of the system of independent selection of admission quotas based on real opportunities for higher education institutions;
- expanding opportunities for undergraduate students to continue their education abroad [11].

These measures give a powerful impetus not only to the further expansion of educational opportunities for young people, but also for their formation as competitive personnel with high intellectual potential, mod-

ern knowledge and skills, to realize their innovative ideas and aspirations.

Contemporary youth policy in Uzbekistan is gradually being implemented on the basis of the *Five important initiatives by Sh.Mirziyoyev*, which envisage system-based policies in social, spiritual and educational areas, have marked the beginning of a new stage in the upbringing and education of young people, for the first time in the history of Uzbekistan.

The first initiative is to enhance the interests of young people in music, drawing, literature, theater and other kinds of arts.

The second initiative is the physical hardening of young people, creating an enabling environment for them to demonstrate their aptitudes.

The third initiative is ensuring an effective use of computer technologies and Internet by the population and young people.

The fourth initiative comes to organizing regular activities to raise spirituality of young people, and to widely promote the reading of books.

The fifth initiative is to ensure the employment of women.

These initiatives of the President of Uzbekistan were welcomed both by the people in general and by the youth, so in a short time they spread widely throughout the country [19].

### Conclusion

Uzbekistan has taken a course to increase the role of youth in the socio-political life of society. In this regard, emphasis is placed on the full support of youth initiatives, both from the state and from youth organizations.

The activities of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan are called upon to engage in the full support of the younger generation, and to fundamentally reform the system of protecting the rights and legal interests of this segment of the population.

Can be argued that main goals of the state youth policy in Uzbekistan is to educate physically healthy, spiritually and intellectually developed youth who are independent

and devoted to the Motherland, with firm life views.

Open dialogue with youth is becoming the main mechanism for increasing the social activity of young people, their involvement in the processes of forming a modern state. In current conditions in Uzbekistan, young people can become an active force in a society that can fully absorb new democratic values and in the future take responsibility for the country's development.

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