STATE YOUTH POLICY IN UZBEKISTAN: MODERN APPROACHES AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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Abstract. This thesis analyzes the formation and development of youth policy in Uzbekistan, its legal foundations, main directions, and contemporary development trends. Particular attention is paid to increasing young people's social and political participation, ensuring access to quality education and employment, supporting youth entrepreneurship, promoting intellectual and moral development, and protecting the rights and legitimate interests of young people. The study examines modern mechanisms for implementing youth policy, cooperation between state and civil society institutions, support for youth initiatives, and existing challenges. Based on an analysis of legal documents and academic literature, the thesis proposes practical recommendations for further improving youth policy in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: youth, youth policy, youth rights, education, employment, youth entrepreneurship, social participation, moral education, public policy, youth initiatives.

Introduction. Young people constitute an important social group that determines the social, economic, political, and cultural development of any society. The future level of a society's development largely depends on the knowledge and potential, worldview, professional training, civic position, and social activity of the younger generation. Therefore, youth-related issues have emerged as one of the priority areas of modern state policy.

In Uzbekistan, youth affairs are regarded as an important area of state policy. Although the legal foundations of state youth policy began to take shape during the early years of independence, this area has been further improved in subsequent periods. In particular, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On State Youth Policy" adopted on September 14, 2016, represented an important stage in the legal regulation of youth policy [1]. The Law defines state youth policy as a system of socio-economic, organizational, and legal measures implemented by the state and aimed at the social development of young people and the creation of conditions for the development of their intellectual, creative, and other capacities [1].

Today, the content of youth policy is not limited solely to the social protection of young people. It encompasses numerous areas, including education, science, innovation, entrepreneurship, employment, culture, sports, information technologies, civil society, and ensuring youth participation in public administration.

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that, under conditions of globalization and digital transformation, the worldview, needs, and social activity of young people are changing rapidly. This requires the state to continuously improve its youth policy.

Research Methodology. The study employed the methods of historicity, systematic analysis, comparative analysis, analysis of normative and legal documents, generalization, and logical inference. The process of formation of state youth policy was examined on the basis of historical sequence.

In addition, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On State Youth Policy," government resolutions, state programs, and conceptual documents aimed at developing youth policy were analyzed [1; 2].

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The methodological foundation of the research consists of scholarly approaches concerning public policy, social development, youth sociology, and civil society.

The initial legal foundations of youth policy in Uzbekistan were established during the early years of independence. In 1991, the Law "On the Fundamentals of State Youth Policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan" was adopted, defining the creation of conditions for the social and spiritual development of young people as one of the important tasks of state policy [3]. Although this law was subsequently repealed in 2016 following the adoption of new legislation, it represented an important historical stage in the legal formation of modern youth policy in Uzbekistan.

The new law adopted in 2016 regulated youth policy in accordance with contemporary requirements. The law established such principles of state youth policy as openness and transparency, youth participation in the implementation of policy, support and encouragement of youth initiatives, and the priority of spiritual, moral, and cultural values [1].

Legislation also identifies ensuring the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of young people, protecting their lives and health, expanding opportunities for quality education, and ensuring employment and access to the labor market as key areas of state policy [1].

From this perspective, youth policy in Uzbekistan has a comprehensive character and encompasses various spheres of young people's lives.

One of the most important areas of youth policy is education. In the context of the modern economy, the quality of human capital is one of the main factors of national development. The acquisition of modern knowledge by young people, the development of professional competencies, and their involvement in scientific research contribute to increasing the country's innovation potential.

One of the main directions of state youth policy is to ensure accessible and quality education for young people [1]. This principle is closely associated with expanding access to education, supporting talented young people, increasing enrollment in higher education, and developing the vocational education system.

In the educational process, it is important not only to provide young people with knowledge but also to develop their abilities in independent thinking, critical analysis, information assessment, and the generation of innovative ideas.

In today's digital society, the development of electronic education, distance learning, digital libraries, and online educational platforms is creating new opportunities for young people. At the same time, reducing the digital divide and improving the quality and infrastructure of education in remote areas remain pressing tasks.

Ensuring youth employment is one of the most important socio-economic directions of state youth policy. Young people entering the labor market for the first time often face problems such as a lack of work experience, insufficient professional qualifications, and limited practical skills.

Therefore, vocational training, directing young people toward professions that correspond to the demands of the modern labor market, involving them in entrepreneurial activities, and creating new jobs are of great importance.

The Law "On State Youth Policy" identifies the creation of conditions for youth employment and access to work as one of the main areas of state policy [1].

The development of youth entrepreneurship not only contributes to the creation of new jobs but also promotes the economic independence of young people. Supporting youth startup projects, innovative ideas, and small business initiatives can have a positive impact on the diversification of the national economy.

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In this regard, it is important to develop knowledge and skills in financial literacy, business planning, marketing, e-commerce, and the use of digital technologies.

Active participation of young people in public life is one of the important conditions for the development of a democratic state and civil society. Young people can contribute to the development of society through active participation in public administration, public oversight, local self-government, non-governmental non-profit organizations, and various social projects.

Current legislation establishes youth participation in the implementation of state youth policy and support for youth initiatives as important principles of state policy [4].

This principle means that young people should be viewed not as passive objects of state policy, but as active participants in its implementation. Incorporating young people's views and proposals into public administration processes, establishing open dialogue with youth, and supporting their initiatives strengthen relations between the state and society.

From this perspective, increasing young people's legal awareness, developing their political knowledge, and strengthening their sense of civic responsibility are important tasks. Another important area of youth policy is the spiritual, moral, and cultural development of young people. Under conditions of globalization, the increasing flow of diverse information has a significant influence on the worldview of young people.

Therefore, it is important to develop among the younger generation respect for national and universal human values, patriotism, tolerance, respect for the law, and civic responsibility.

Current legislation identifies the education of young people in the spirit of patriotism, civic consciousness, tolerance, respect for laws, and national and universal human values as one of the important directions of state youth policy [1].

The effectiveness of spiritual and educational activities is determined by their ability to encourage young people not merely to accept ready-made ideas, but also to think independently, understand historical and cultural heritage, and recognize their responsibility to society.

The effectiveness of youth policy depends on cooperation among state bodies, educational institutions, local communities, civil society institutions, and young people themselves. Youth-related issues cannot be adequately addressed within the framework of a single organization or institution.

In 2021, Uzbekistan approved the Concept for the Development of State Youth Policy until 2025, which established tasks aimed at bringing youth policy to a new stage, protecting the rights and interests of young people, and increasing their participation in society [2].

This approach demonstrates the need to implement youth policy in a comprehensive and systematic manner. Studying the needs of young people according to regions, educational levels, professional orientations, and social circumstances can contribute to increasing the effectiveness of youth policy.

In addition, the use of digital technologies in working with young people, as well as the development of electronic appeals and online consultation services, is becoming increasingly important.

Although Uzbekistan has developed a significant legal and institutional framework for state youth policy, certain issues in practice continue to require constant attention.

First, it is necessary to reduce regional disparities in youth employment. It is advisable to formulate educational programs based on regular analysis of labor market demand and supply.

Second, alongside providing financial support for youth entrepreneurship initiatives, young people should be equipped with practical business management skills. The availability of financial resources alone does not guarantee business success.

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Third, young people's views should be more actively incorporated into public administration processes in order to increase their socio-political participation.

Fourth, it is important to improve information security and media literacy among young people in the digital environment. Young people should acquire the ability to critically analyze online information and distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources.

Fifth, when assessing the effectiveness of youth policy, attention should be focused not only on the number of activities implemented but also on their actual social outcomes. For this purpose, it is advisable to strengthen specific indicators, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms.

In the future development of state youth policy in Uzbekistan, it would be appropriate to focus on several priority areas.

First of all, based on the concept of "human capital," it is necessary to increase investment in developing young people's knowledge, skills, and competencies. In the modern economy, the digital, technical, and creative skills of young people are becoming important factors of national competitiveness.

Second, integration between education and the labor market should be strengthened in order to ensure youth employment. Higher and professional educational institutions should expand practice-oriented programs in cooperation with employers.

Third, special attention should be paid to innovative projects, startups, and digital businesses when supporting youth entrepreneurship.

Fourth, opportunities for youth councils, public discussions, and social projects can be expanded in order to strengthen youth participation in public administration and social governance.

Fifth, it is important to combine historical heritage, national culture, and achievements in modern science and technology in the spiritual and educational development of young people.

Conclusion. In conclusion, state youth policy in Uzbekistan has developed consistently throughout the years of independence and has now evolved into a comprehensive and multidimensional system. Protecting the rights and interests of young people, ensuring their access to education, professional development and employment, supporting entrepreneurial initiatives, and increasing their socio-political participation constitute the main directions of state youth policy [1].

The 2016 Law "On State Youth Policy" is one of the principal legal instruments regulating relations in this sphere. The law clearly defines the principles and main directions of youth policy, which are aimed at ensuring the active participation of young people in society [1].

The effectiveness of youth policy is primarily associated with recognizing young people as active participants in public policy, supporting their initiatives, and thoroughly studying their needs. Effective use of the opportunities created for young people also depends on their own initiative, commitment to education, and sense of responsibility for the development of society.

Therefore, in further improving youth policy, priority should be given to the quality of education, modern professions, employment, entrepreneurship, digital competencies, science, and innovation. At the same time, strengthening the spiritual, moral, and civic education of young people will remain an important task for the state and society.

In general, every investment made in youth policy represents an investment in the country's future human capital. Educated, proactive, patriotic young people possessing modern competencies constitute one of the key forces capable of ensuring Uzbekistan's sustainable development and competitiveness in the international arena.

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