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PRIORITY DIRECTIONS FOR DEVELOPING YOUTH SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article examines a number of reforms implemented in recent years to increase youth social engagement in the context of the ongoing transformation of Uzbekistan. It explores new innovative approaches to implementing youth policy in Uzbekistan, the effective use of information and communication technologies, and the development of leadership skills and competencies among young people. The article also highlights state policies aimed at supporting young people, the opportunities offered by the education system, and the key ways and factors contributing to increased youth engagement in modern society.

Keywords: New Uzbekistan, social engagement, youth policy, modern technologies, social responsibility, social development, educational reforms, information and communication technologies.

INTRODUCTION

It should be particularly emphasised that, in today's rapidly developing scientific and technological environment, the progress of every country is closely linked to the initiative, social engagement, and intellectual potential of its younger generation. Young people are an important driving force not only in the current socio-economic life of the country but also in its political, social, economic, and spiritual development.

From this perspective, improving social work practices, studying contemporary trends in this field, and introducing them into practical activities are of particular relevance. In recent years, innovative methods, volunteer movements, the effective use of information and communication technologies, and the development of leadership competencies have become priority areas in promoting youth social engagement. This, in turn, requires moving beyond traditional approaches to social work and adopting new methods and forms that meet the demands of the present day.

At the same time, fostering young people's social engagement is an important factor in their moral and ethical development, professional growth, and preparation for independent life.

As part of the large-scale reforms being implemented in New Uzbekistan, particular attention is being paid to developing young people's knowledge, worldview, initiative, and sense of social responsibility. The active participation of young people in social processes, their ability to express their opinions freely, their involvement in social projects, and their contribution to solving existing problems are among the key conditions for the country's development.

Main Section: Youth Social Activism and Its Role in the Development of Society

Social activism is the conscious, initiative-driven, and responsible participation of an individual in the life of society, the ability to influence social relations, and the commitment to working in the interests of the community. The social activism of young people is not limited merely to participating in various events. First and foremost, it is reflected in their ability to think independently, have their own opinions and positions, remain concerned about social problems, promote public initiatives, and demonstrate a sense of responsibility towards society. An socially active young person strives not only for personal development but also to make a positive contribution to the development of the people around them and society as a whole. Therefore, promoting youth social activism is considered one of the important responsibilities of both the state and society.

Main Areas of Focus and Reforms

Digital Literacy and Leadership: Particular attention is being paid to developing young people's digital skills, social responsibility, and leadership qualities in order to increase their social engagement.

Government Programmes and Initiatives: In our country, the state programme “Youth – Our Future”, the “Youth Register” system, and the activities of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan serve to address the socio-economic problems of young people and provide them with support.

The Mahalla System and Youth Leadership: The position of Youth Leader has been introduced in mahallas (local self-governing communities) throughout the country. Through the “Youth Balance” system and the electronic rating (KPI) system, measures have been established to promote youth employment and prevent offences among young people.

Social Partnership and Platforms: Platforms such as U-Report Uzbekistan and the nationwide Yuksalish Movement provide opportunities to study young people's opinions on socio-political processes and support their initiatives.

As is well known, the fourth priority area of the Action Strategy for the Further Development of the Country was defined as “Development of the Social Sphere.”

The reforms in the social sphere, which represent an extremely important direction of Uzbekistan's state policy, include the following objectives:

- Increasing employment levels and real incomes of the population;
- Strengthening social protection and improving the healthcare system;
- Increasing the social and political participation of women;
- Implementing targeted programmes for the construction of affordable housing;
- Developing and modernising road transport, engineering and communication networks, and social infrastructure to improve living conditions;

- Developing the education and science sectors;
- Improving state policy on youth affairs.

Within the system of comprehensive social development, the issue of providing young people with modern education and upbringing, as well as supporting them socially, is particularly important due to its urgency and relevance. Historical experience demonstrates that, in every period, enlightenment and education have served as driving forces behind social well-being and national development.

For this reason, the task of putting the wisdom of our people, expressed in the saying "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave," into practice and ensuring the effective implementation of the principle of lifelong education has been elevated to the level of state policy.

Over the past two years, large-scale measures have been implemented to bring the education system up to the standards of modern democratic states and to further strengthen the role of young people as the leading force of development in our society.

Further improvement of the higher education system has become one of the important priorities of social reforms. In particular, the Comprehensive Programme for the Development of the Higher Education System for 2017–2021 was adopted. Transparent mechanisms for admission to higher education institutions were introduced, and admission quotas were significantly increased.

New and modern educational institutions, including branches of prestigious foreign universities, are being established within the higher education system. As a result of the establishment of new institutes and university branches, the number of higher education institutions in the country reached 81, the number of regional branches reached 15, and the number of branches of foreign universities reached 7. Part-time and evening study programmes were also introduced at higher education institutions.

Developing Youth Activism within the New Uzbekistan Development Strategy

Comprehensive support for young people is one of the most important priorities of the state policy being implemented in Uzbekistan.

By Presidential Decree No. PF-66, adopted on 20 April 2026, the "New Uzbekistan Youth – 2030" Strategy, designed for the period 2026–2030, was approved.

The main objective of this strategy is to develop a competitive younger generation that is socially active, economically independent, innovative in its thinking, spiritually and physically healthy, and actively involved in the development of the country.

The strategy identifies several important areas aimed at promoting youth activism:

- Involving young people in public administration and strategic decision-making processes;
- Supporting the socio-economic initiatives of young people;
- Promoting youth employment and entrepreneurial activities;
- Encouraging innovative ideas and start-up projects;
- Increasing the intellectual, spiritual, and physical potential of young people;
- Supporting youth initiatives at the international level.

These objectives serve to shape young people not merely as ordinary participants in society, but as active individuals capable of making a meaningful contribution to the country's development.

The Role of the Education System in Developing Youth Social Activism

Educational institutions play a particularly important role in shaping the social activism of young people. This is because the educational process serves not only to provide knowledge but also to develop an individual's worldview, independent thinking, communication skills, and sense of social responsibility.

Discussions, round-table meetings, volunteering activities, research projects, student organisations, and various social initiatives organised within educational institutions create important opportunities for increasing youth engagement.

In particular, modern education should not be limited to providing students with ready-made knowledge. Instead, it is essential to encourage them to conduct independent research, find solutions to problems, and put their ideas into practice.

In this process, the responsibility of teachers is to develop young people not merely as learners, but as independent, proactive, and responsible individuals capable of making their own decisions.

Priority Factors in Developing Youth Social Activism

The development of youth social activism is based on several interconnected factors.

First, education and intellectual development. Quality education broadens young people's worldviews and develops their critical thinking and ability to make independent decisions.

Second, support for social initiatives. Creating opportunities for young people to implement their ideas and projects strengthens their sense of responsibility and initiative.

Third, the formation of civic awareness and responsibility. It is important for young people to remain concerned about events and developments in society, respect the law, and understand the importance of serving the common good.

Fourth, the development of digital literacy and information culture. Today, young people should use the internet and digital technologies not only as sources of information but also as tools for acquiring knowledge, organising social projects, and communicating effectively with society.

Fifth, expanding volunteering and community engagement. Such activities help young people develop cooperation, mutual assistance, and social responsibility skills.

Recommendations for Increasing Youth Social Activism

Based on the analysis of this topic, the following recommendations can be put forward:

1. Increase the number of projects supporting young people's social initiatives in educational institutions.
2. Expand intellectual events, debates, discussions, and activities dedicated to finding solutions to social problems among students.
3. Encourage young people's participation in volunteering and community activities.
4. Strengthen cooperation between educational institutions and various organisations to help put young people's innovative ideas into practice.
5. Improve approaches to working with young people by taking their interests, needs, and individual abilities into consideration.

The implementation of these recommendations will help expand young people's participation in social life and develop their independent thinking and sense of social responsibility.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasised: “Through all these efforts, we pursue one common goal. That is, Uzbekistan must be competitive at the global level in the fields of science, intellectual potential, modern human resources, and advanced technologies.”

In his Presidential Address, particular attention was paid to important practical steps aimed at ensuring that education and upbringing contribute more directly to human development. These included increasing preschool enrolment from 34 per cent to 44 per cent in 2019, establishing a modern general secondary education system, creating private schools and kindergartens based on public-private partnership principles, and further strengthening efforts to ensure equal opportunities for obtaining higher education.

In particular, over the previous two years, the level of coverage of graduates of higher and specialised secondary educational institutions by higher education had increased from 9–10 per cent to 15 per cent. In this regard, the Presidential Address set the objective of increasing the level of higher education coverage among graduates to 20 per cent in 2019 and continuing to raise it in subsequent years.

Indeed, an increase in the number of highly educated and professionally qualified young people has a significant impact on the pace of social development.

Furthermore, the President's programmatic speech put forward the following fundamentally new ideas and initiatives that could stimulate the development of the higher education sector:

- Strengthening competition in the training of highly qualified specialists by increasing the potential of higher education institutions and non-governmental educational establishments;
- Providing young people with the opportunity to apply to several higher education institutions simultaneously;
- Introducing a system that allows higher education institutions to independently determine admission quotas based on their actual capacities;
- Further expanding opportunities for undergraduate students to continue their studies abroad.

The Presidential Address also identified working with young people, who make up more than half of the country's population, as one of the most important priorities. This is no coincidence.

It should be emphasised that a state and society that have not defined their development goals and future prospects, lack strong moral foundations, and, most importantly, fail to establish a meaningful connection with their young citizens can hardly envision a prosperous future.

A state's attitude towards its youth is one of the indicators of the level of development of society, its openness, and its determination to move forward.

Young people are precisely the most active segment of civil society. For example, young people are generally more adaptable to introducing innovative projects and technologies in various fields. They bring new ideas and knowledge into society and possess a strong desire to build their own future [3].

From this perspective, the youth of Uzbekistan, as the owners of both the present and the future, represent one of the country's most important strategic resources in building the foundations of a prosperous life.

The progress of our country along the path of democratic renewal and the pace of its development largely depend on the position and level of engagement of young people in the socio-political life of society.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasised: “We need to communicate more with our young people, listen to their hearts, understand their concerns, and provide practical assistance in solving their problems. In this regard, we must pay special attention to working with unorganised youth.”

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On State Policy Regarding Youth”, adopted on 14 September 2016, clearly defines the social, economic, legal, and organisational measures that constitute the main areas of this policy.

According to the law, state youth policy in Uzbekistan is aimed at creating the necessary conditions for the social development of young people and the full realisation of their intellectual, creative, and other abilities.

In these processes, the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, which brings together the country's young people around constructive and progressive ideas, plays an important role.

The Youth Union of Uzbekistan is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation established by individuals in the organisational and legal form of a union. It brings together the youth of Uzbekistan with the aim of developing a physically healthy, spiritually mature, intellectually advanced, and independently thinking younger generation; protecting young people from external threats and the harmful influence of mass culture; promoting the protection of their rights and legitimate interests; and creating favourable conditions for their comprehensive development [6].

The main objectives of the Union include involving young people in further deepening the democratic, political, and economic reforms being implemented in the country; strengthening peace and harmony in society; engaging the younger generation in the process of bringing Uzbekistan into the ranks of the world's developed countries; ensuring the effective protection of young people's rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests; improving their spiritual and professional development; and supporting the full realisation of their intellectual and creative potential.

Research Methodology

In this study, a systematic approach, scientific analysis, comparative analysis, generalization, and theoretical research methods were used to examine issues related to the development of young people's social activity. In addition, regulatory legal documents governing state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan, strategic programmes, and scientific literature were analyzed. The methodological basis of the research consists of scientific approaches and theoretical perspectives concerning the development of young people's social activity, initiative, and civic engagement.

Literature Review

The development of young people's social activity has been studied as one of the important research areas in the scientific works of both domestic and foreign scholars. In particular, A. Giddens's views on social relations and societal development serve as a theoretical foundation for understanding the role of young people in society. V.M. Karimova's scientific perspectives on psychology are also important for understanding the formation and development of individuals

within the social environment. Furthermore, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On State Youth Policy" and the Youth Strategy for 2026–2030 establish the legal and practical foundations of the research topic.

Analysis and Results

The findings indicate that education, innovative technologies, social initiatives, and opportunities created by the state play an important role in developing young people's social activity. In particular, young people's participation in volunteer activities, community projects, scientific research, and various initiatives contributes to the development of leadership, responsibility, and independent thinking skills.

Based on the analysis, it was determined that expanding practical projects in educational institutions, supporting young people's innovative ideas, and actively involving them in social processes are essential for increasing youth engagement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as a result of the implementation of the state programme "Year of Supporting Youth and Strengthening Public Health", the "Youth Register" initiative, and various youth programmes in recent years, employment has been provided for 596,000 young people, while 25,700 young people with disabilities and those in need of medical assistance have been placed under continuous supervision.

A total of 382.8 billion soums has been accumulated in the "Youth Register" funds through 15 percent of the additional revenues of local budgets and funds collected through enforcement proceedings. Using these funds, social and financial assistance has been provided to nearly 140,000 young people.

In order to develop youth entrepreneurship and finance innovative, startup, and business projects based on new ideas, 3.3 trillion soums has been allocated, enabling 132,000 young people to receive preferential loans.

Young people appointed to leadership positions are selected from among candidates who have experience working with youth, possess the ability to inspire and lead others, demonstrate exemplary personal qualities, and are dedicated, loyal, and patriotic.

Developing young people's social activity in the progress of New Uzbekistan is one of the strategically important priorities. This is because the sustainable development of the country primarily depends on a knowledgeable, proactive, independent-thinking younger generation that recognizes its responsibility to society.

Cooperation among the education system, families, local communities (mahallas), and government organizations plays an important role in developing young people's social activity. In particular, the educational process should not be limited to providing young people with knowledge; it should also create the necessary conditions for their active participation in social life, free expression of opinions, and demonstration of initiative.

Therefore, transforming young people into active participants in the country's development is one of the most important tasks of today. In this process, the coordination of education and youth policy is of particular importance.

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