

STATE POLICY AND STRATEGY FOR PREVENTING YOUTH MARGINALIZATION: SOCIAL- PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS

Nuriddin Maksudov Nasiriddinovich

Researcher of Fergana State University, Fergana, Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes policies and strategies aimed at reducing youth marginalization in Uzbekistan from a socio-philosophical perspective. The study evaluates the impact of programs such as the “Five Initiatives,” the “Youth Register,” and the “Development Strategy” on social inclusion, economic participation, and cultural integration. Drawing on Amartya Sen’s “capabilities approach,” É. Durkheim’s concept of “social solidarity,” and the theories of social capital by R. Putnam and P. Bourdieu, the author interprets Uzbekistan’s youth policy as an inclusive model against marginalization.

Introduction

In the political discourse of Uzbekistan, youth are regarded as a central factor in societal development. President Sh. Mirziyoyev emphasized this priority by stating: “We will continue to mobilize all our strength and opportunities so that our youth can find their rightful place in life. You are the trust and support of our country, the builders of our future.” This statement underscores the centrality of youth policy. In this context, the following analysis explores the socio-philosophical foundations of state policies and strategies aimed at reducing youth marginalization, particularly in labor market participation, education, and social networks [1].

Youth marginalization is a complex social phenomenon associated with exclusion from social, economic, and cultural life, preventing individuals from realizing their potential. This condition arises from unemployment, limited educational opportunities, social inequality, negative influences in the information environment, and disruptions in socialization and upbringing. Consequently, preventing youth marginalization is one of the top priorities of both the state and civil society.

Firstly, the development and inclusivity of the education system are critical. High-quality general and vocational education, retraining programs, and guidance toward modern professions increase youth competitiveness in the labor market and protect them from social exclusion. Integrating life skills, critical thinking, and civic responsibility within educational institutions serves as an important measure against marginalization.

Secondly, ensuring employment and economic activity is essential. Supporting youth entrepreneurship, financing startups and innovative projects, and providing preferential

loans and subsidies expand opportunities for independent income generation. This reduces the risk of youth entering the informal sector or deviant environments.

Thirdly, social protection and targeted assistance mechanisms must be enhanced. Systems such as the “Youth Register” and the “Iron Register” help identify young people in need of social support and provide assistance, addressing the root causes of marginalization. Support should include not only material aid but also psychological, legal, and social counseling.

Fourthly, promoting cultural-educational activities and civic engagement strengthens youth integration into society. Participation in sports, arts, volunteer movements, and youth organizations expands social connections and reinforces self-confidence.

Results and Discussion

Youth marginalization is multi-layered: economic (unemployment, NEET — Not in Education, Employment, or Training), social (disconnection from resources and networks), cultural (exclusion from normative spheres), and political (low participation). Globally, the NEET rate in 2023 was approximately 20.4%, with significant gender disparities: 28.1% for young women and 13.1% for young men [2]. In Uzbekistan, youth unemployment (ages 15–24) was estimated at ~10.94% in 2024 [3]. These figures highlight the need to place the triad of “inclusion—employment—competence” at the center of policy design.

Since 2019, the “Five Key Initiatives” have focused on culture, sports, ICT, reading, and female employment, organizing youth leisure activities meaningfully and enhancing social capital [4]. In 2020, the Youth Affairs Agency was established, with its legal status and functions defined by Presidential Decree PF 6017 and Resolution PQ 4768 [5]. The 2022–2026 “Development Strategy” prioritizes youth employment, entrepreneurship, and quality education [6]. Furthermore, in recent years, more than 100 laws and decrees concerning youth and over 200 benefits have been adopted, as highlighted in official meetings.

Through the “Youth Register”, it was publicly reported that in 2024, 180,000 young people received targeted assistance totaling 345 billion UZS [7]. These figures demonstrate that targeting and social justice principles hold a central place in the state’s youth policy.

On average, each young person received approximately 1.9 million UZS, and this support was primarily directed toward low-income, socially vulnerable, unemployed youth, or those seeking vocational skills. Assistance was provided in various forms, including financial aid, coverage of educational and vocational training expenses, support for entrepreneurial initiatives, healthcare, and social adaptation measures.

Thus, the “Youth Register” mechanism functions not only as a means of short-term financial support but also as an important institutional tool to enhance the socio-economic activity of young people, ensure employment, and prepare them for independent living in the future.

At a meeting under the President, it was noted that 1 million young people gained employment through “Family Entrepreneurship” loans, and 1,200 projects were launched across 205 “Youth Industrial Zones” [8]. In addition, among 4 million youth in difficult circumstances who were targeted, 420,000 had their problems resolved, and 65,000 were employed [9]. These mechanisms bring the “monitoring–diagnosis–intervention” chain to the community level.

Demographically, Uzbekistan is a young country: approximately 55% of the population is under 30 years of age, and as of January 1, 2025, there are 9.63 million people aged 14–30, representing 25.7% of the population [10]. Such a demographic profile requires simplification of the transition from education to employment, reduction of regional inequalities, and narrowing the digital divide to activate the demographic dividend. The infrastructures established under the “Five Initiatives” (cultural and sports facilities, ICT centers) strengthen the “bridging” networks of social capital, creating connections across different social strata.

The content of these measures aligns with the “capabilities approach” proposed by Amartya Sen and M. Nussbaum: expanding individual freedom of choice through credits, grants, education, and skills softens structural barriers that lead to marginalization. According to E. Durkheim’s concept of social solidarity, cohesion is reinforced through community institutions; from the perspective of social capital theory (Putnam/Bourdieu), the “Five Initiatives” and “Youth Register” accelerate youth inclusion into society’s normative domain.

The policy design emerging in Uzbekistan to reduce youth marginalization corresponds to the concept of inclusive development: the “Five Initiatives” strengthen social capital, the “Youth Register” and credit-grant packages alleviate economic constraints, and the Development Strategy ensures systemic coordination. The President’s statement clearly reflects the substantive core of this policy.

Conclusion

In summary, the political, social, and institutional measures aimed at reducing youth marginalization in Uzbekistan are being developed in line with the country’s inclusive and sustainable development strategy. As President Sh. M. Mirziyoyev emphasized, youth occupy a central place in state policy as the trust and support of the nation. Recent programs such as the “Five Key Initiatives,” “Youth Register,” “Youth Industrial Zones,” and “Family Entrepreneurship” are based on principles of social justice and equal opportunity, ensuring the economic, moral, and cultural integration of young people.

This policy design, in line with the capabilities approach proposed by Amartya Sen and M. Nussbaum, aims to expand real choice opportunities for youth, reduce structural barriers, and create the necessary social environment for active participation in society. From the perspectives of E. Durkheim’s social solidarity and the social capital concepts of R. Putnam and P. Bourdieu, Uzbekistan’s policy represents a systemic approach that covers all layers of society, starting from the community level through “monitoring–diagnosis–intervention” mechanisms.

The multi-layered economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of youth marginalization are addressed through state policy that strengthens social cohesion, expands equal opportunities, and reinforces moral resilience. In this way, Uzbekistan’s youth policy has become a socio-philosophical model operating on the triad of inclusion—employment—competence..

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