

The Youth Policy of Uzbekistan in the Period of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis: Overview and Results

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Abstract

For the last years many countries of the world were experiencing the global financial and economic crisis and the most economies had negative impact from its consequences. Uzbekistan, while undertaking measures for prevention, overcoming and neutralizing of the consequences of this crisis, at the same time pursued active and all-round youth policy, having paid much attention to social, economic, legal, financial, organizational conditions of the youth development in a country. In this paper we describe all measures undertaken by the Government of Uzbekistan in crisis period on implementing strong youth policy in the country. The paper analyzes some results of implementing priority areas of the youth policy in Uzbekistan: education, youth employment, support of young families. A special attention is also paid to the concept of harmoniously developed generation as the main instrument for human capital accumulation process of young people in Uzbekistan.

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Introduction

For the last years an anxious situation emerged in the world economy when many countries were experiencing the global financial and economic crisis. The world community and certain governments were trying to find ways to stabilize situation in the world financial and commodity markets, support banking systems and enterprises of real economy sector. Alongside with other countries in Uzbekistan the anti-crisis measures on prevention and neutralization of the negative consequences of the global financial and economic crisis were also carried out. At the same time, in the period of crisis Uzbekistan not only actively participated in overcoming of negative consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, but also pursued active and all-round youth policy, having paid much attention to social, economic, legal, financial, organizational conditions of the youth development in a country. In this paper we consider all measures undertaken in crisis period on maintenance of a youth policy in Uzbekistan.

The **youth** is the social-demographic group experiencing the period of becoming social maturity, of adapting to the adults' world and the future changes. The policy aimed at youth is basically implemented by the government, and the governmental activity in pursuing youth policy consists in creation of social and economic, legal, organizational conditions and guarantees for social formation and development of the young citizens, for full actualization of youth's creative potential in the interests of a society, regardless of what crisis situation is in the country.

And therefore, even in crisis situations, the youth policy should be aimed at creation of conditions for youth's self-actualization and social activity, for upbringing of patriotism and civicism, for preventive maintenance of socially-negative phenomena.

The basis of Uzbek youth policy

In Uzbekistan the youth policy, from the first days of independence, has been raised to a level of the state policy, and in present days, it is one of the priority courses of policy. Today in Uzbekistan the youth makes up the most considerable part of Uzbek society. At present, there live more than 10 million young people at the age of up to 18, or about 40 % of all population of a country, and more than 17 million people at the age of up to 30, or 64 % of the population.

The youth policy is formed on principles of general involvement of the youth in the formation processes of the constitutional state and the fair civil society; in establishment of the youth's recognized public status; in comprehensive support of its legal, social, political and ideological rights; in development of various public formal and informal associations and organizations.

In a country the youth policy is secured by the Law "On Foundations of the State Youth Policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan" (1991) which has been enacted for the first time in the CIS. This law fixes the purposes and tasks of a youth policy, provides the legal and social protection of young people, and the youth's direct participation in formation and implementation of society development policy and

programs. According to this law the youth policy is a priority course of activity of the government of Uzbekistan, and it is based on the following principles:

- care for youth regardless of their national, racial, language, religious belonging, social position, gender, education and political convictions;
- legal and social protection of the youth;
- succession of national, cultural traditions, spiritual relations of generations;
- support of youth initiatives, guarantee for freedom of choosing by youth the ways of realization of their interests to be done within the limits of the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- youth's direct participation in formation and implementation of policy and programs for development of society, particularly of youth life;
- unity of the rights and duties, freedom and civil liability.

It is necessary to note that the strong legal base for full-valued development, protection of legitimate rights and freedom of young generation has been created in the country for years of independence. Besides the Law "On Foundations of the State Youth Policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan", for development of young generation the country has also enacted the Law "On Education", the National Personnel Training Program, the State National School Education Development Program. The step-by-step implementation of tasks stated in the laws above gives positive results.

Formation of institutional system of protection of underage rights in the country deserves special attention. Commissions on underage affairs actively work in this direction. Creation of the centers of "Youth social services" was made timely. Young men and girls visiting them have an opportunity to receive qualified consultations of experts on problems, to master additional trades, to increase their legal knowledge.

In Uzbekistan it has been a kind tradition to devote every year to a certain course of a social policy. Last years, in the period of the global financial and economic crisis, years were devoted exclusively to issues for ensuring interests of rising generation. Thus, 2008 was declared as "**Year of Youth**". The main goal the government pursued in it was to give a powerful impulse, to open ample opportunities and conditions for formation of physically and morally healthy rising generation, for successful mastering by them the state-of-the-art knowledge and achievements of technological progress, to ensure protection of their rights and interests, to create all necessary in order for the youth entering into life to become the real decisive force in society renewal.

Reforms on education of physically healthy and spiritually mature youth are carried out on a systemic, stage-by-stage basis in indissoluble link with other spheres of a life. In 2009 when this year was declared as "Year of Development and Improvement of Countryside", work in this area was raised to a new, higher level.

As we know, consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, which broke out in 2008 and acquired greater scales in the next years, had negative impact on an economy of all countries of the world, including of Uzbekistan. However, we would like to underscore that the strong youth policy implemented by the Government of Uzbekistan within 2008-2010 takes a special place in overcoming of

the consequences of crisis in the country. For these purposes, first of all, the spheres like education, youth employment, support of young families come out as its priority areas. Here, we consider it necessary to pay attention to some results of implementation of these priority areas.

Education

Uzbekistan gives the most steadfast attention to the youth's all-around development. First of all, this is education of youth in higher educational institutions and vocational colleges. At present, 65 higher educational institutions and 1536 vocational colleges and lyceums function in the country. Besides, there established a variety of educational and business centers where the youth acquire skills for organizing own entrepreneurship and business. In the crisis situations the education serves as the important factor of development of the national economy as hundreds of thousands of young people are involved in this sphere of economy.

In 2008, in a year of youth when the global financial crisis had just start and burst out in the middle of year, in Uzbekistan the special attention was given to the further deepening of reforms in the system of lifelong education, to providing demand for the young specialists, trained by educational institutions, in the country's real economy and spheres of life activity.

Only within the year of youth, for absolutely fulfillment of the national state educational programs adopted before, more than 265 mln. US dollars^[1] were expended and 184 upgraded lyceums and colleges were constructed. Along with it the great work was carried out on strengthening material and technical base of the secondary schools, for it within a year 261 mln. US dollars were expended, 1875 schools were constructed and reconstructed.^[2]

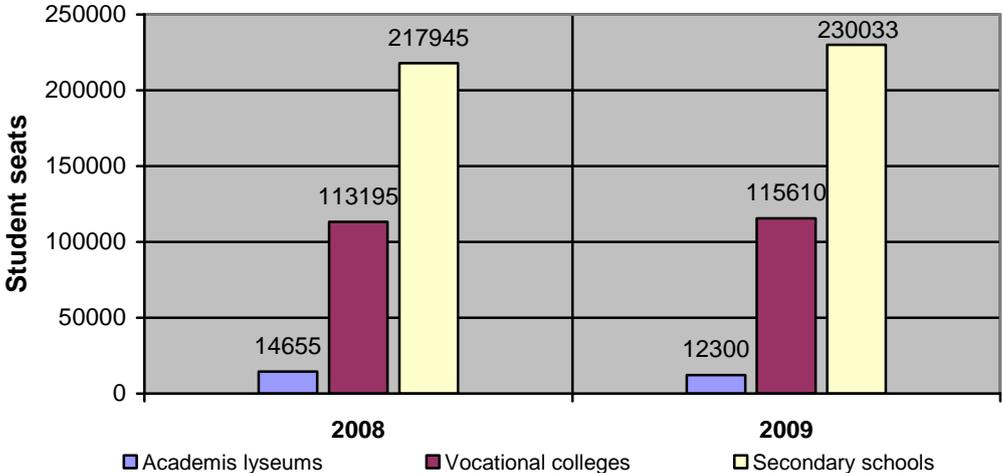
The official statistics^[3] gives full information on what scale of works was carried out, and how much investments were disbursed for construction and reconstruction of educational establishments in crisis (table 1).

Table 1. Statistics of construction and reconstruction of the educational establishments for 2008-2009

Educational establishments	Students seats commissioned			Investments disbursed, mln. US dollars		
	Total	Including:		Total	Including:	
		New const- ruction	Reconst- ruction		New const- ruction	Reconst- ruction
2008						
<i>Academic lyceums</i>	14655	9990	4665	37.2	25.1	12.1
<i>Vocational colleges</i>	113195	105090	8105	254.8	241.6	13.2
<i>Secondary schools</i>	217945	23430	194515	194.3	56.3	138.0
2009						
<i>Academic lyceums</i>	12300	8895	3405	40.0	30.6	9.4
<i>Vocational colleges</i>	115610	96165	19445	312.8	278.8	34.0
<i>Secondary schools</i>	230033	18956	211077	238.7	64.0	174.7

Following the construction and reconstruction of educational establishments in the country more number of student seats were commissioned in 2009, especially in vocational colleges and secondary schools (graph 1).

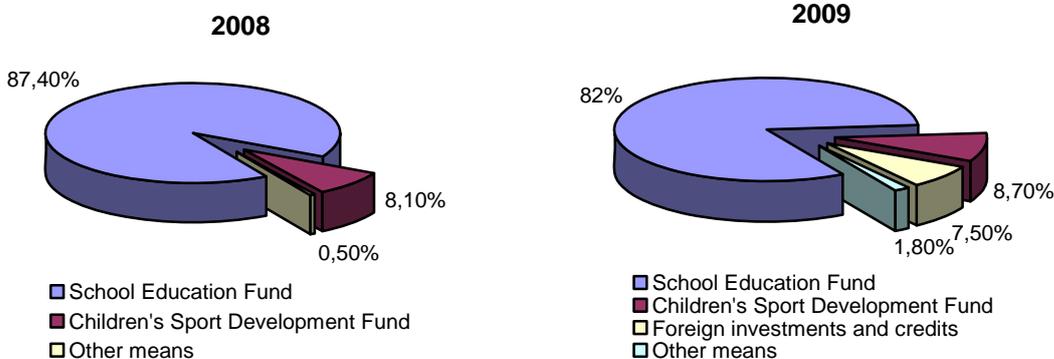
Graph 1. Difference in a number of student seats commissioned in educational establishments for 2008-2009



The statistics also confirms that in 2008 for construction and reconstruction of academic lyceums and vocational colleges 292.0 mln. US dollars of investments were disbursed but in 2009 - 352.9 mln. US dollars of investments, and it made up 54.3 % and 52.7 % accordingly of the investments put in the sphere of education.

In 2008 for new construction and capital reconstruction of secondary schools 194.3 mln. US dollars of investments were used but in 2009 – 238.7 million US dollars of investments, and it made up 36.1 % and 35.6 % accordingly of the investments put in the sphere of education. For new construction and capital reconstruction of secondary schools there were mainly used the funds of the School Education Fund, Children’s Sport Development Fund, and beginning from 2009 for these purposes the foreign investments and credits were also attracted (graph 2).

Graph 2. Percentage and sources of investments used for new construction and reconstruction of secondary schools for 2008-2009



When pursuing a youth policy the great attention is also paid to the issues of spiritual and moral education of the youth in spirit of respectful attitude to national and universal values; of education of future citizens who have strong conviction and opinions on life and is capable to resist to the harmful effects and movements which are extrinsic to Uzbek mentality.

It is necessary to note that implementation of large-scale projects within the limits of only “Year of youth”, and also during the pre-crisis period, testifies the priority of social sector in the country’s internal policy.

Following the implementation of the National Personnel Training Program and the State National School Education Development Program, for the last few years totally 1536 academic lyceums and vocational colleges, about 9 thousand, or practically all, secondary schools, more than 1800 sports halls have been constructed or capitally reconstructed.^[4]

Youth employment

For last years the close attention has been given to the issues related with solution of rather critical problem - youth employment. In 2008 there was introduced into practice a new system of statistical reports as well as monitoring system of actual state of affairs on employment of graduates of the colleges and lyceums.

Improvement of the labour legislation since 2008 has served for full ensuring and guarantee of the labour rights for youth.

Henceforth, according to amendments in the labour legislation^[5] of Uzbekistan, the employer is obliged to employ persons under 18 years old referred by local labour authorities and other state agencies by way of job placement towards established minimum number of workplaces. The labour legislation of Uzbekistan secures guarantee for working hours of the young persons who have not reached 18 years old. Thus, for working youth at the age from 16 to 18 years the working hours are established at no more than 36 hours per week, and for persons at the age from 15 to 16 years, students at the age from 14 to 16 years labouring in vacation time - no more than 24 hours per week. And the remuneration for persons under 18 years old, at reduced duration of daily work, is paid in the same size as well as for employees of the relevant categories at full duration of daily work.

Much attention in Uzbekistan is given to health protection of the rising generation. Labour legislation forbids exploitation of persons under 18 years old in works with adverse working conditions, in underground and other works which can be injurious to health, safety and morality of the youth.

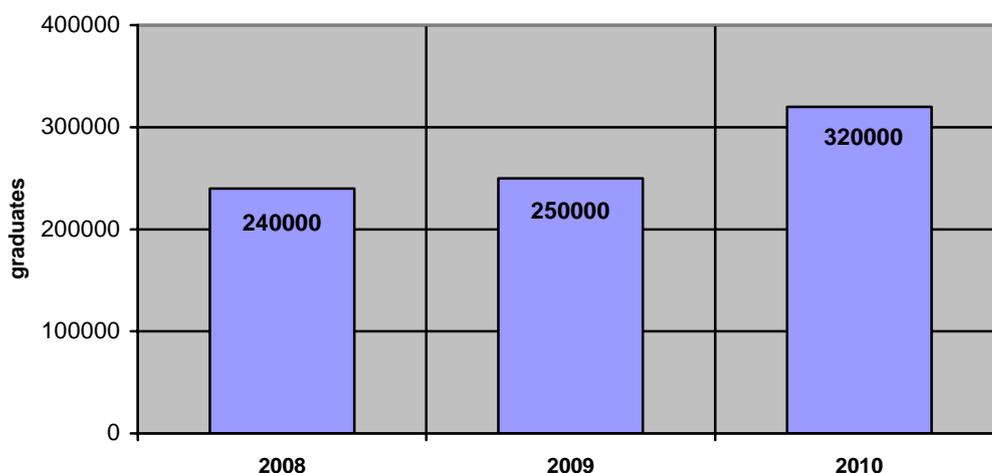
All persons under 18 years old are employed only after medical inspection, and subsequently, before achieving 18 years old, annually they should undergo a medical examination. It is prohibited to involve employee under 18 years old in the works at night, overtime works as well as in the works in the days off.

The growth of youth employment in a small-scale business was favored by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan «On Additional Measures for Involving Graduates of Educational Institutions in Business Activity» (2010) which provides for, when employing the graduates of vocational colleges, academic lyceums

and higher educational institutions of the country, retention of privileges, guarantees and rights for micro-firms and small-scale enterprises, in cases, when the limiting norm of average annual quantity of employees established by legislation is exceeded no more than for 20 percent.

Following the measures undertaken for youth employment, in 2008 over 240 thousand, in 2009 over 250 thousand and in 2010 over 320 thousand graduates of vocational colleges and academic lyceums were provided with jobs (graph 3). Besides, more than 81.2 thousand young people, including 12.3 thousand ones discharged from the Armed Forces and 20.2 thousand invalids were also employed.

Graph 3. Trends of employment of the vocational colleges and lyceums' graduates for 2008-2010



Support of young families

In the period of global financial and economic crisis a special attention in the country were also given to the issues of social provision for young people. A minimum of social provision, ensuring free health services and education, visits to sport & health and cultural & enlightening establishments on preferential terms, soft credits for construction or acquisition of housing habitation and other privileges have been established for the youth on a legislative level.

Today in Uzbekistan there about one million of young families that makes up 17 % of all families in the country. And therefore, material and moral support of the young families which are the basis of the Uzbek society, takes a special place when pursuing youth policy.

In the framework of the state program for the year of youth (2008) the banking establishments carried out activity on comprehensive support of young families and provision of their life welfare. Young families, at the expense of soft credits, succeeded to start a small-scale business and private entrepreneurship, to build or repair their houses, to acquire new houses, to improve their life welfare by purchasing furniture and other long-consumed essential goods. For example, in 2008 the credits in amount of 33 mln. US dollars were allocated for young families to build houses, 67 multi-storey houses were commissioned, and 2430 young families acquired living apartments.^[2]

Also, the anti-crisis program of Uzbekistan developed by the government in 2009 was not only aimed at overcoming of financial distress and further increase of the people's welfare but it considered solving of problems the young families face, in particular, problems on expanding the scales of house construction for young families, including on the basis of preferential bank credits.

Support of young families also proceeded in 2010 within the state program for the year of harmoniously developed generation. In respect of strengthening the youth's social position the preferential mortgage credits were committed to young families for construction, reconstruction and acquisition of houses. Thus, within 2010 for solving of housing problems and equipping of houses of 2.5 thousand young families, 65.6 mln. US dollars of mortgage and consumer credits were allocated by commercial banks as well as provided assistance in carrying out wedding and family celebrations for 2320 needy young families.^[4]

Harmoniously developed generation

Despite continuing global financial and economic crisis, in 2010 in Uzbekistan the new concept of a youth policy - ***the concept of harmoniously developed generation*** - was established and this year was declared as "Year of harmoniously developed generation". The main priority areas of this concept are:

- improvement of standard and legal base for ensuring protection of the rights and interests of children and youth;
- fulfillment of measures on formation of healthy generation;
- improvement of educational quality in schools, vocational colleges and lyceums, higher educational institutions of the country;
- development and introduction of modern information and communication technologies;
- development of youth sport;
- further development of science and active attraction of the talented and gifted youth to the scientific activity;
- involving of graduates of the vocational colleges and higher educational institutions in the sphere of small-scale business and private entrepreneurship;
- providing of young families with legal and social protection.

At present, education of harmoniously developed young generation in Uzbekistan is found among the major priorities, and consequently, it is important that upbringing and education of a rising generation is based both on national traditions and values, and on the advanced international experience.

It should be noted that in the names and purposes of the last years declared by the government - Year of protection of human interests (1997), Year of family (1998), Year of healthy generation (2000), Year of mother and child (2001), Year of health (2005), Year of youth (2008), Year of development and improvement of countryside (2010) - the priority point was also assigned to the issues of education of the harmoniously developed generation, to ensuring their interests.

Today the youth policy is being implemented and further will be implemented by means of embodying the target program "Harmoniously developed program is a

basis of Uzbekistan's progress". It includes solving problems which disquiet the youth: education, employment, recreation, housing for young family. The program provides for solving problems of formation of a legislative and normative base, elaboration and stage-by-stage introduction of a system of long-term crediting and other forms of financial support for youth to have education and build house. Besides, there developed a system of agencies taking care of the problems of youth employment, development and support of youth entrepreneurship. Here, a special attention is given to support and development of the various forms of youth's artistic creativity, to creation of conditions for spiritual and moral education for becoming citizens and patriots, system of educational centers for training and retraining the youth specialists.

Saying about results of the youth policy in Uzbekistan achieved in the period of the global financial and economic crisis, it would be desirable to show also the results of the recent sociological researches carried out by the Center for Study of Public Opinion "Ijtimoiy Fikr" on topic "Youth of Uzbekistan: life position, morality, social references".^[6] This survey has been carried out to study the opinion of the country's young generation about increase of social and political activity of the country's youth, strengthening of their material and moral support. Respondents from all regions of Uzbekistan, students of higher educational institutions, students of schools, lyceums, colleges as well as the youth who begun labour activity took part in the survey.

The results of sociological surveys show that purposefulness of the country's youth is expressed in the tendency to raise the educational level. Thus, every second young Uzbek would like to raise his/her educational level, 81.6 % of them are students of schools, lyceums and colleges, 55.4 % - students of higher educational institutions, 61.5 % - having secondary specialized education and 47.7 % - having secondary education. 70.1 % of youth select for themselves the higher education as a desirable educational level. Among the specialties which young Uzbeks would like to gain, the most attractive ones are pedagogical, economic, medical as well as professions of engineer and lower. The sociological research has shown that the majority of young men and girls of Uzbekistan is satisfied by their profession, earnings and working conditions.

Every second young man aspires to career and professional growth (50.5 %), however every tenth (10.9 %) met difficulties of career growth. The survey revealed high interest of youth to business activity, its directivity to market structures, occupation of high position in a private sector. Herein the young men and girls are ready to show creative activity and initiative, to be improved and self-asserted. More than 90 % of young men highly appreciate a policy of the government on developing spirituality and morality in rising generation. The principal merits which young respondents connect with morality are honesty, good knowledge of own people's history, cleanliness of soul, respect of the national traditions, improved feeling of national pride, modesty, national and religious tolerance, full rejection of extremism.

Conclusion

Today it can be stated that in Uzbekistan the new generation has been formed. The state youth policy serves as a moving force in integrating efforts of the various youth governmental and non-governmental organizations, in creating legal, economic and organizational conditions and guarantees for self-actualization of the young man as a whole person and in developing youth associations and movements. And in this regard, the active youth policy of Uzbekistan is aimed to create the foundation on the basis of which the builders of the country's future should solve problems on its further modernization and construction of a modern democratic society. Of course, this paper covers only some results of the youth policy of Uzbekistan, but surely, the results can be also seen in other spheres of its priority areas.

Undoubtedly, the youth is the major labour and economic potential of a society on which its progressive development depends. Therefore the policy of any government should be structured so that to provide the most effective upbringing, high-grade education, successful specialization of the youth, even in crisis situations.

[1] All the US dollars expressions in this paper were converted from the Uzbek sums

[2] Presidential Report on grand meeting dedicated to the 16th anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 06/12/2008

[3] As per the leading statistical indicators of social and economical development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2008-2010 – www.stat.uz

[4] Presidential Report on grand meeting dedicated to the 18th anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 07/12/2010

[5] Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 21/12/1995 enacted, 22/12/2010 last amended

[6] The data of the information portal www.press.uz