



EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION: YOUTH INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY AT THE TASHKENT BRANCH OF GUBKIN UNIVERSITY

Abdulla Makhmudovich Magrupov

Executive Director of the Branch of Russian State University of Oil and Gas (National Research University) named after I.M. Gubkin in Tashkent

Abstract *This article examines the transformative youth policy initiatives underway in Uzbekistan and their implementation at the Branch of Russian State University of Oil and Gas named after I.M. Gubkin in Tashkent. Drawing on the author's experience as Executive Director, the article analyzes how recent presidential directives and national programs create unprecedented opportunities for students to develop entrepreneurial skills, access startup funding, and engage with global professional communities. The discussion focuses on practical applications at the branch level, including the integration of business skills development, support for student startups, expansion of dual education partnerships, and enhancement of foreign language instruction. The author argues that higher education institutions must serve not merely as centers of academic learning but as launchpads for student success in an increasingly competitive global economy.*

Keywords: *youth policy, higher education, entrepreneurship education, student startups, dual education, Uzbekistan, Gubkin Branch*

Introduction

In February 2026, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev convened an open dialogue with more than 60000 young people from across Uzbekistan at the Kuksaroy Residence. This gathering, connecting students from Karakalpakstan to Tashkent through video-link studios, was not a ceremonial address but a deeply personal conversation about the future of the nation's 22 million young citizens. The President's message was clear: Uzbekistan's youth represent an enormous economic, social, and political force, and state policy must evolve to match this potential.

As Executive Director of the Gubkin Branch of the Russian State University of Oil and Gas in Tashkent, I have spent decades in education, each year bringing new questions about whether we are truly preparing our students for the lives they will lead after graduation. The recent policy initiatives emerging from the highest levels of government provide clear answers. They articulate a vision of higher education that extends far beyond lecture halls and examination grades - a vision where universities become engines of innovation, incubators of entrepreneurship, and bridges to global opportunity.

This article examines what this transformed youth policy means in practice at our branch. It analyzes the concrete programs, funding mechanisms, and institutional changes now taking shape, and discusses how we are implementing these initiatives to ensure our graduates leave not only with diplomas but with the skills, networks, and resources to build successful professional lives.

Analysis

The achievements of Uzbekistan's young people in recent years provide the foundation for current policy directions. On international science Olympiads, Uzbek students have secured 66 gold, 147 silver, and 221 bronze medals - demonstrating intellectual capacity that competes at the highest global levels. More than 500 young Uzbeks now study at Ivy League institutions including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, and Cornell, while over 3500 attend the world's top 100 universities. These are not merely statistics; they represent the global reach of Uzbek talent and the expanding horizons available to today's students.

The entrepreneurial energy of young Uzbeks is equally remarkable. Sixty-three startup projects launched by youth have already entered international markets in the United States, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates. Young entrepreneurs now constitute 35 percent of the country's business community. These numbers reflect a generation that does not wait for opportunities but creates them.

Uzbekistan's recognition as the fastest-growing country in the Global Youth Development Index confirms what these achievements suggest: the nation's youth policy is producing tangible results. This year, Tashkent will host the headquarters of the World Youth Movement for Peace, while Samarkand welcomes the 12th Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, the "Take Off" International Startup Summit, and the 46th World Chess Olympiad. Uzbekistan's youth are not merely participating in global conversations - they are hosting them.

The most significant policy developments concern the financial architecture supporting young entrepreneurs. President Sh.Mirziyoyev announced an additional 200 million USD allocation for youth entrepreneurship support, building on the 400 million USD provided last year that enabled 15000 young people to launch businesses employing 50000 others.

The expanded financing framework addresses entrepreneurs at every stage. For self-employed youth, maximum loan amounts increase from 100 million to 300 million UZS. Established entrepreneurs with projects can access loans up to 10 billion UZS - double the previous ceiling. Innovative startups may now attract investments up to 100 000 USD, recognizing that breakthrough ideas often require patient capital beyond traditional lending.

The newly launched "Future Entrepreneur" program provides seven-year loans at 15 percent annual interest, with graduated support levels matching business maturity. Those taking first steps with existing skills can access up to 300 million UZS. Entrepreneurs seeking expansion qualify for up to 2 billion UZS. Most significantly, those who employ at least five graduates become eligible for loans up to 10 billion UZS - creating direct incentives for successful entrepreneurs to create opportunities for others.

Beyond lending, the government is establishing Youth Business Incubators in Karakalpakstan, Jizzakh, Namangan, Surkhandarya, Khorezm, and Tashkent. These centers provide comprehensive services: entrepreneurship training, business idea

development, accounting support, marketing guidance, and assistance accessing domestic and international markets. They address the reality that 30 percent of young entrepreneurs struggle not with their core ideas but with the practical skills of running a business.

These national initiatives find concrete expression in educational institutions across Uzbekistan, including our branch. Several programs directly shape how we prepare students for entrepreneurial and professional success. The “New Generation Entrepreneurs” program aims to train at least 40 000 young people in business skills drawing on international best practices. The top 1 000 participants completing the program will receive three-year loans up to 200 million UZS at just 7 percent interest - significantly below market rates - enabling immediate transition from training to business launch.

The annual “Young Entrepreneurs” competition, operating through the newly established Yoshlar Ventures fund, will select up to 100 projects for investment up to 1 billion sums each. This mechanism transforms the traditional competition model: rather than symbolic awards, winners receive genuine venture funding to build sustainable businesses.

For students seeking international experience, the Work and Travel program - previously available only to university students - now extends to technical college students as well. Participants receive loans covering travel expenses and can work abroad for up to six months, earning income while gaining exposure to international workplace cultures. At our branch, we are actively counseling students on how these opportunities can complement their petroleum engineering education with global professional experience.

Technical colleges and universities may now establish spin-off enterprises, with up to 1 billion UZS allocated to support student startup projects. This provision fundamentally transforms the institutional relationship to entrepreneurship: universities become not merely places where students learn about business, but

platforms from which they launch actual businesses, with institutional investment backing their ideas.

President Sh.Mirziyoyev emphasized that equipping youth with foreign language skills remains a national priority. The results of recent efforts are substantial: more than 600 000 young Uzbeks now hold foreign language certificates, supported by a corps of 72 000 trained instructors, while private training centers have tripled to exceed 38 000.

New incentives further strengthen language education. Training centers operating in remote areas receive interest-free loans up to 300 million UZS. Centers providing free education to students from low-income families qualify for land and property tax exemptions, 50 percent utility compensation, and cashback reimbursements for teacher salaries and social taxes. An Association of Private Training Centers will be established, with property owners leasing to member centers exempt from rental income and profit taxes.

For our students, these developments mean expanded access to quality language instruction precisely when English proficiency has become essential for petroleum professionals. The specialized terminology of reservoir simulation, drilling operations, and production optimization is overwhelmingly English. International partnerships, technical documentation, and global career mobility all require sophisticated English competence. The national investment in language education directly supports our students' professional trajectories.

The President also highlighted the remarkable growth of volunteerism, with participant numbers increasing fivefold to exceed 100000. A new Volunteer Support Fund, receiving 20 billion UZS annually from the state budget plus additional regional contributions, will provide grants up to 100 million UZS for volunteer projects. A "social activity card" will track participation through a point-based system, recognizing volunteer engagement in ecological, medical, educational, and emergency assistance activities.

At our branch, we see volunteer engagement as integral to professional development. Petroleum engineers work in complex social and environmental contexts. Understanding community perspectives, contributing to local development, and engaging with environmental challenges are not extracurricular activities but essential professional competencies. The national emphasis on structured volunteerism aligns with our commitment to producing graduates who are not only technically excellent but socially responsible.

One of the most profound initiatives announced addresses young people in difficult circumstances. The “Second Chance” project provides intensive 8-to-12-month courses in programming, web design, computer engineering, and foreign languages for young people returning from correctional facilities. Beginning in Navoi, Kashkadarya, and Tashkent regions, the program will expand nationwide, offering genuine pathways to employment and social reintegration.

This initiative embodies the principle that no young person should be abandoned to circumstance. It reflects a youth policy concerned not only with the already successful but with those facing the greatest barriers. For educators, it reminds us that our responsibility extends beyond those who easily find their way to our classrooms.

Discussion

These national initiatives create a framework within which our branch must actively operate. Several implementation priorities emerge from the analysis above.

First, we are integrating entrepreneurship education across our curriculum. The “Skills and Business Hour” sessions now required for students will be tailored to petroleum industry contexts. Students will learn not generic business principles but specifically how to identify commercial opportunities in oil and gas services, how to structure startups addressing industry needs, and how to navigate the regulatory environment for energy-sector entrepreneurship.

Second, we are positioning our students to access available funding. The expanded loan programs, competition mechanisms, and venture funding opportunities require students to develop bankable proposals. Our faculty are incorporating business plan development into appropriate courses and offering specialized workshops on accessing youth entrepreneurship programs. We aim for our students to be not merely aware of these opportunities but prepared to seize them.

Third, we are strengthening dual education partnerships with industry. The emphasis on aligning education with labor market demands requires continuous engagement with employers. We are expanding our network of industry partners, developing work-based learning components across our programs, and ensuring that students graduate with practical experience complementing theoretical knowledge.

Fourth, we are intensifying language instruction with particular attention to English for Specific Purposes. The petroleum industry's technical vocabulary, documentation practices, and communication norms require targeted instruction beyond general English. We are developing specialized modules addressing the language demands of reservoir simulation software, drilling reports, and international technical negotiations.

These initiatives collectively suggest a reimagined mission for higher education institutions. We are no longer solely purveyors of knowledge transmitted from faculty to students. We are becoming platforms connecting students to opportunities - opportunities for funding, for international experience, for entrepreneurship, for social engagement, for second chances.

This shift carries implications for how we measure success. Student enrollment and graduation rates remain important, but they are insufficient. We must also track how many students launch businesses, how many access startup funding, how many gain international experience, how many achieve language certification, how many engage meaningfully with their communities. These outcomes better capture whether we are fulfilling our expanded mission.

The shift also demands new institutional capabilities. Faculty need professional development in entrepreneurship education. Administrative systems need flexibility to support student startups. Industry partnerships need deepening beyond traditional internship arrangements. International connections need cultivation to enable student mobility. These capabilities do not emerge automatically; they require intentional development and sustained investment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The youth policy initiatives emerging from Uzbekistan's leadership represent a comprehensive vision for empowering the next generation. They combine financial mechanisms, educational transformation, international connectivity, and social inclusion into an integrated framework recognizing young people as the nation's most valuable resource.

For the Gubkin Branch in Tashkent, this framework provides both mandate and opportunity. Several recommendations guide our continued development:

First, we must ensure every student understands the opportunities available. Many students, particularly those from less-connected backgrounds, may not know about loan programs, competition funding, or international exchange possibilities. Systematic communication and proactive counseling are essential.

Second, we must embed opportunity-seeking skills throughout the curriculum. The ability to identify opportunities, develop proposals, and navigate funding mechanisms should be cultivated alongside technical competencies. These skills serve students whether they pursue employment or entrepreneurship.

Third, we must strengthen partnerships with financial institutions, industry partners, and international organizations. The complexity of available programs requires collaboration beyond what any single institution can provide. Banks, employers, and global networks bring complementary expertise and resources.

Fourth, we must document and share success stories. When students launch businesses, gain international experience, or achieve recognition, these stories

inspire others and demonstrate what is possible. They also provide evidence for continuous improvement of our programs.

The investments being made in Uzbekistan's youth - the 22 million young people who represent the nation's future - are unprecedented in scale and scope. For those of us leading educational institutions, the responsibility is equally unprecedented. We must ensure that within our walls, these investments translate into transformed lives. We must ensure that every student who enters finds not only knowledge but opportunity, not only instruction but inspiration, not only a diploma but a launching pad.

The President's words to Uzbekistan's youth resonate deeply: "In your faces, we see an enormous economic, social, and political force". Our work as educators is to ensure that force is realized - that every young person discovers their capacity, develops their talent, and contributes their gifts to the nation's future. At the Gubkin Branch in Tashkent, we embrace this work with renewed commitment and expanded vision.

References

1. Ministry of Digital Technologies of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Presidential Resolution Sets Target to Increase Startup Projects to 5,000 and Venture Investment to \$2 Billion. *Davlat.uz*. Access date: February 13, 2026.
2. Kun.uz. President Mirziyoyev sets new mandates for officials to support youth startups and education. *Kun.uz*. Access date: February 27, 2026.
3. Kun.uz. Uzbekistan expands work and travel program to technical college students. *Kun.uz*. Access date: February 26, 2026.
4. Youth Affairs Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan. A program has been adopted to educate youth in the spirit of loyalty to national values and patriotism. *Davlat.uz*. Access date: February 27, 2026.

5. Ministry of Digital Technologies of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Turn Your Idea into a Project - and Your Project into Results! *Gov.uz*. Access date: February 7, 2026.
6. Dunyo Information Agency. President of Uzbekistan Expands Support for Youth Initiatives. [Dunyo.info](https://dunyo.info). Access date: February 24, 2026.
7. Government Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The New Youth Policy of Uzbekistan in Action: An Open Dialogue in Karakalpakstan Focused on the Development of Human Capital and a Safe Society. *Gov.uz*. Access date: February 24, 2026.
8. Bright Uzbekistan. Additional opportunities to support youth initiatives have been identified. *Buzb.uz*. Access date: February 27, 2026.
9. World Bank Modernized Student Financing System to Expand Access to Education for 600,000 Young People in Uzbekistan. *World Bank*. Access date: February 28, 2026.