

INSTITUTIONAL CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY AND YOUTH POLICY: A GOVERNANCE AND OPPORTUNITY FRAMEWORK FOR UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This article investigates how institutions shape the conversion of educational attainment, social protection, labour-market participation and civic inclusion into opportunities for upward social mobility among young people, with Uzbekistan as the principal policy setting. The paper addresses a persistent analytical gap between the formal expansion of youth-policy instruments and the practical capacity of young people from different social backgrounds to convert those instruments into durable life chances. A qualitative, documentary research design integrates institutional theory, social stratification scholarship, and a structured analysis of published policy documents and international development reports. The materials include Uzbekistan's youth-policy legislation, selected World Bank analyses of higher-education financing, skills formation and gender inequality, OECD research on intergenerational mobility, and ILO evidence on youth labour markets. The findings are analytical rather than the results of an original survey. Five interrelated institutional mechanisms emerge: unequal access to quality education and finance; segmented transitions from schooling to decent employment; gendered care obligations; territorially uneven access to services and networks; and implementation gaps between centrally articulated rights and local administrative practice. The analysis develops a framework distinguishing policy access, effective participation, conversion of support into employment and agency, and the longer-term distribution of mobility outcomes. It argues that counting programme beneficiaries is an insufficient test of youth-policy success unless institutions also monitor who is excluded, how opportunities are distributed, and whether benefits persist. The paper concludes with recommendations for equity-sensitive programme targeting, longitudinal evaluation, coordinated local delivery and participatory governance. Its contribution is a transparent institutional framework that can support future survey-based and mixed-method research without claiming causal effects not established by the reviewed evidence.

Keywords: social mobility; youth policy; institutional capacity; inequality of opportunity; Uzbekistan; education-to-work transition; gender; governance; policy evaluation.

1. Introduction

Social mobility is simultaneously an individual experience and an institutional outcome. Young people may appear to possess similar formal rights to education, employment or participation, yet their pathways to valued social positions differ according to family resources, school quality, place of residence, social networks, gender norms and exposure to administrative systems. Mobility is therefore not adequately explained by

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personal aspiration or educational effort alone. It depends on the arrangements through which societies allocate learning opportunities, recognize qualifications, recruit workers, distribute public support and enable young citizens to influence collective decisions. When these arrangements operate unevenly, a policy designed to extend opportunity can also reproduce disadvantage.

This challenge has become particularly visible in countries experiencing rapid demographic, educational and labour-market transformation. International research distinguishes absolute mobility, or an improvement in living standards across generations, from relative mobility, which asks whether young people can change their position within the social hierarchy. The distinction matters for policy: a society may expand higher education and raise average incomes while preserving strong advantages for children from better-resourced households. The OECD's analysis of the 'broken social elevator' demonstrates how constraints at the bottom of the distribution and advantages retained at the top can coexist with economic development (OECD, 2018). It is analytically unsafe to treat increasing enrolment, training participation or registration in youth programmes as direct proof of intergenerational mobility.

The global employment context reinforces this concern. The International Labour Organization estimated that 20.4% of the world's young people aged 15–24 were outside employment, education or training in 2023, with young women accounting for approximately two thirds of this group (ILO, 2024). These figures describe global rather than Uzbek conditions, but they illuminate a general policy problem: access to education does not automatically generate an equitable transition into decent work. Many young adults confront unstable employment, qualifications mismatch or the unpaid responsibilities that prevent consistent labour-market participation. Institutional performance must therefore be studied across transitions rather than within isolated ministerial programmes.

Uzbekistan offers a valuable setting for such analysis because it combines an articulated legal framework for state youth policy, dedicated youth-policy institutions and substantial expansion of educational opportunities. The Law on State Youth Policy adopted in 2016 establishes principles and responsibilities for public authorities and relevant organizations, while the 2020 presidential decree established a Youth Affairs Agency with an explicit coordinating role (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016; President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020). In 2025 the World Bank reported that higher-education enrolment increased from approximately 8% in 2017 to 48% in 2024, while drawing attention to limits in student-financing mechanisms and the connection between loans and labour-market demand (World Bank, 2025a). This expansion represents a meaningful increase in formal access, although the implications for relative mobility require further examination.

The issue is not whether educational and youth-policy reforms matter; rather, it is what institutional conditions allow their benefits to reach those with the weakest starting positions. Expansion may widen opportunity when costs fall and previously excluded groups enter higher education. It may also heighten competition for scarce high-quality positions if credential growth outpaces skill-intensive job creation. Similarly,

entrepreneurship support may build autonomy for well-networked graduates while leaving disadvantaged participants with financing barriers or informal market risks. The outcomes depend on the whole chain connecting eligibility, access, service quality, completion, employment and subsequent advancement.

This article pursues three objectives. First, it identifies the principal institutional mechanisms linking youth policy to the distribution of social mobility opportunities. Second, it interprets recent evidence on Uzbekistan's educational transformation, labour-market preparation and gender disparities within a coherent opportunity framework. Third, it proposes an evaluation agenda capable of distinguishing administrative outputs from socially meaningful outcomes. The core research question is: Through which institutional channels might youth-policy arrangements improve or restrict young people's capacity to convert resources and programmes into durable upward mobility? Three supporting questions address distributional differences among young people, coordination failures across sectors, and the measurement of mobility-sensitive policy performance.

The paper is deliberately presented as a documentary and conceptual analysis. It contains no original respondent survey, interview transcripts or administrative microdata from the Republican Center for the Study of Public Opinion 'Ijtimoiy Fikr'. Consequently, references to social attitudes, organizational mechanisms and causal pathways are framed as interpretations or propositions rather than verified findings from a new representative sample. Such transparency is especially important for international journal review, where methodological claims must match the evidence actually collected.

2. Theoretical background

An institutional analysis begins with the distinction between formal rules and the practices through which they operate. Formal laws, programme descriptions and funding commitments establish the architecture of youth opportunity, but the lived effects of these commitments are mediated by organizational routines, local capacity, informal expectations and accountability mechanisms. Institutions shape incentives and access costs; they also define which qualifications are recognized, which forms of knowledge count and which applicants are considered credible. A young person's apparent 'choice' of educational or occupational path is consequently made within a differentiated institutional landscape.

The conceptual vocabulary of social mobility needs equal care. Intergenerational mobility concerns differences between parents' and children's social outcomes, whereas intragenerational mobility follows an individual's position across the life course. Absolute mobility can increase even when relative mobility remains low. Occupational mobility, educational mobility and earnings mobility are related but not interchangeable. A university diploma may represent educational advancement without producing an equivalent occupational gain; a first job may represent labour-force entry without economic security. A strong youth policy should thus define the exact domain of mobility it seeks to influence and the period over which progress should be observed.

The life-course perspective is especially helpful because transitions accumulate rather than occur once. Early childhood services influence school readiness; school

resources affect entry into tertiary education; financing and family obligations affect persistence; the quality of professional training influences employer perceptions; and recruitment practices determine whether a certificate becomes an employment opportunity. A disadvantage at one stage may trigger later disadvantages, while timely interventions can interrupt the cumulative process. An evaluation restricted to a single year or service contact overlooks these sequences.

Social capital is another mechanism. Educational achievement does not guarantee access to internship placements, recommendation networks, information about vacancies or professional mentors. When such resources are distributed through informal personal connections, individuals from well-connected families may transform similar qualifications into better employment outcomes. Conversely, transparent recruitment, career guidance, publicly accessible internships and credible certification can reduce dependency on inherited networks. This is why an institutional approach examines the transparency and accessibility of transitions, not merely the number of places offered in a programme.

A capabilities perspective further distinguishes the formal availability of a resource from the effective freedom to use it. A tuition loan may legally be accessible to a student but practically unattractive because of expected repayment risk, information shortages or the need to contribute to household income. A training centre may exist within a region but remain inaccessible to someone with a disability or responsibility for childcare. The conversion of a nominal opportunity into a usable capability depends on individual circumstances and the surrounding environment. Although this article does not measure capabilities directly, the distinction informs its analytical model.

Finally, the concept of policy feedback draws attention to how public programmes shape trust, expectations and engagement. Transparent procedures and successful transitions may encourage confidence in public institutions; opaque selection or promises disconnected from outcomes may weaken it. Youth-policy programmes can therefore affect both material mobility and civic inclusion. These effects cannot be assumed from programme design. They require survey evidence on perceived fairness, administrative experiences and political or civic efficacy, ideally linked to objective indicators of educational and employment trajectories.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Research design. The article applies a qualitative, theory-informed documentary synthesis. It is neither a conventional systematic review with an exhaustive database search nor an econometric impact evaluation. The analysis draws on a purposively selected body of public materials directly relevant to mechanisms of youth opportunity and social mobility. This design is appropriate for generating conceptual propositions and policy-evaluation criteria but not for assigning causal effect sizes to particular Uzbek reforms.

3.2. Source selection. The documentary corpus contains the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On State Youth Policy' (2016), the 2020 decree establishing the Youth Affairs Agency, the OECD report *A Broken Social Elevator?* (2018), the ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth (2024), the World Bank Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment (2024),

the World Bank study *The Road Home and Abroad: Enhancing TVET for Youth and Migration in Uzbekistan* (2025), and the World Bank announcement on student-financing reform (2025). These sources were selected to cover formal institutions, conceptual mobility research, global comparative benchmarks and specific dimensions of Uzbekistan's skills and inclusion agenda. Journal literature on inequality and institutional theory provides additional analytical context. Since documents differ in population definition, publication purpose and observational timeframe, numerical values are attributed to their original sources and are not combined into an artificial aggregate dataset.

3.3. Analytical procedure. The synthesis followed four interpretive steps. First, the author separated institutional inputs, such as legislation, mandates and finance, from intermediate outputs, such as access to courses or services. Second, documentary statements were organized into five pre-defined domains: education and financial access, transition to work, gendered constraints, territorial accessibility and policy coordination. Third, each domain was examined for potential mechanisms of advantage reproduction or advantage reduction, using the counterfactual question: what would need to change for a young person with fewer family resources to obtain a comparable opportunity? Fourth, a policy-evaluation matrix was constructed linking each mechanism to an observable indicator and an implementation risk. The categories are analytical constructs, not themes validated by a formal inter-coder reliability exercise.

3.4. Evidentiary boundaries. The World Bank's institutional announcements may report programme targets or institutional assessments rather than verified long-run effects. International ILO rates refer to their specified age groups and geographies; they must not be reported as Uzbek-specific figures. The 2024 country gender assessment documents a marked disadvantage for young women, but without household-level reanalysis this article does not estimate how much of that disadvantage is attributable to any one cause. Legal provisions demonstrate institutional intent and responsibilities, not automatically implementation fidelity. Where the article proposes a possible mechanism, that mechanism is labelled as an interpretation requiring empirical testing.

3.5. Research ethics and reproducibility. All materials are publicly available documents; no individuals were recruited, interviewed or profiled and no personal data were processed. Reproducibility is supported by identifying source titles, dates and web addresses in the reference list, and by keeping reported statistics attached to their respective sources. A future extension could collect public-opinion microdata, administrative indicators and longitudinal follow-up subject to access permissions and research-ethics approval. Such a study could test the associations advanced here with explicit sampling, missing-data handling and sensitivity analyses.

4. Results: institutional pathways and observed policy tensions

4.1. Education expansion and unequal conversion into advancement. Uzbekistan's rapid higher-education expansion is one of the clearest institutional changes relevant to youth trajectories. According to a World Bank statement issued in December 2025, the higher-education enrolment rate increased from 8% in 2017 to 48% in 2024 (World Bank,

2025a). These figures suggest that considerably more young people can formally enter tertiary education than in the preceding period. Access growth is nonetheless conceptually separate from increased relative social mobility. A fair test would require information on the parental socio-economic background of newly enrolled students, their institution and field of study, completion and debt outcomes, and their subsequent occupational and earnings positions.

The financing system illustrates a second layer of institutional design. The World Bank's 2025 support for a modernized student-financing system envisaged improved access to tuition loans for an estimated 600,000 young people over three years, with approximately 80% of programme funds directed toward loans for low-income students and women (World Bank, 2025a). This is a reported programme objective rather than an achieved result. In mobility terms, targeted finance can lower entry barriers; however, loan design, repayment expectations, application literacy and geographic accessibility affect take-up and long-run advantage. A low-income borrower who completes a programme but cannot access adequately remunerated work may face a different mobility trajectory from an otherwise comparable borrower in a high-demand field.

The allocation of places across disciplines is equally important. A system that expands overall enrolment without sufficient information on graduate employment, employer demand and training quality may generate qualification inflation or mismatch. The World Bank explicitly noted limitations in the labour-market orientation of the student-financing scheme, including inadequate prioritization of some high-demand fields (World Bank, 2025a). That observation should not be transformed into a blanket claim that graduates lack skills. Rather, it points to a coordination issue: financial assistance, institutional capacity and sectoral workforce planning must be assessed jointly.

4.2. Skills institutions and segmented school-to-work transitions. The transition from education to employment is a central mobility bottleneck because credentials create potential rather than realized occupational positions. The World Bank's 2025 report on technical and vocational education and training, youth and migration in Uzbekistan emphasizes the need to examine skills-development systems and opportunities for prospective migrants (Nakata et al., 2025). Its scope itself underscores the institutional interdependence of training, employment services and mobility across borders. The quality of labour-market transitions varies with access to employers, recognized credentials, practical experience, career guidance and legal protections.

ILO findings provide a broader reference point. Across the world, roughly one fifth of youth were NEET in 2023 and many young workers remained in insecure forms of work (ILO, 2024). These observations do not establish Uzbekistan's local outcome rates; instead they help explain why a national youth agenda should monitor decent-work quality alongside participation counts. An employed young person may still be unable to accumulate savings, develop transferable competencies or move into a higher occupational category if work is informal and unstable. Similarly, temporary foreign employment may generate household income without offering a predictable domestic career ladder. The

relevant institutional question is whether skills, certifications and work experience remain portable across jobs and jurisdictions.

Programmes offering training, job placement or enterprise support should accordingly be judged by sequential outcomes. An enrolment indicator documents service reach; course completion documents persistence; certification documents a formally recognized skill; placement documents initial labour-market entry; sustained earnings and occupational development are closer to the target of durable mobility. Each stage can reveal differential attrition by gender, rural residence, household income and prior educational achievement. Institutions capable of tracking that attrition can redesign services for those facing the largest barriers rather than simply rewarding providers for high registration numbers.

4.3. Gendered opportunity and the constraints of unpaid care. The World Bank's 2024 Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment reports substantially higher shares of youth not in employment, education or training among young women than young men: 42% and 8.8%, respectively, within the assessment's reported indicators (World Bank, 2024). The same assessment documents differences in young women's employment and earnings outcomes and discusses the importance of care responsibilities and social norms. These findings establish a major distributional concern, though they do not, by themselves, identify a unique causal coefficient for care work, discrimination or education.

A gender-sensitive institutional analysis looks beyond equal eligibility criteria. Young women may formally qualify for identical training programmes but have different available hours, travel freedoms, care obligations and exposure to workplace discrimination. Programmes scheduled only during conventional full-time working hours or located far from affordable transport can systematically disadvantage those with unpaid care responsibilities. Conversely, accessible childcare, flexible training, safe transport, transparent recruitment, employer engagement and credible grievance mechanisms may reduce such barriers. These are testable institutional propositions, not confirmed effects of one specified intervention in Uzbekistan.

Young men's vulnerabilities also require attention: insecure work, early labour-market entry, migration risks and educational disengagement can create distinct disadvantages. A robust policy approach therefore avoids treating youth as a uniform age category or reducing gender analysis to a single comparison of women and men. It explores interactions among gender, disability, care demands, education, location and family resources. Disaggregation is necessary for identifying who actually benefits from policy support.

4.4. Territorial access and hidden costs. National legislation establishes rights and policy principles, but territorial institutions mediate access. Training facilities, universities, public employment offices, career counsellors, internet infrastructure and employer networks are not necessarily distributed evenly between the capital, regional centres and remote communities. Even without a harmonized district-level dataset in the reviewed corpus, the institutional mechanism is clear: transport costs, application information,

accommodation requirements and proximity to internships can convert geographic distance into unequal opportunity. It would be methodologically inappropriate to claim a measured national rural–urban mobility gap from these documents alone.

Administrative decentralization can improve responsiveness to local needs when local offices possess adequate funding, staff and decision authority. Yet it can also produce variable service quality when implementation capacities differ. This creates a design tension between national guarantees and local discretion. The 2016 youth-policy framework assigns responsibilities across public bodies, including implementation and coordination tasks at multiple levels (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016). The institutional challenge is to make that allocation sufficiently clear that a vulnerable applicant knows where to apply, whom to contact if assistance fails, and how decisions can be reviewed.

4.5. Governance, coordination and accountability. Youth-policy problems often cross the boundaries of education, labour, social protection, housing, health and local administration. A programme managed within one portfolio may achieve a narrow output while failing to resolve the constraints controlled by another. Uzbekistan's 2020 presidential decree established the Youth Affairs Agency and gave it responsibilities for developing and implementing unified state youth-policy directions and programmes (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020). Such a coordinating architecture creates an institutional possibility for integrated services, but a decree alone cannot demonstrate cross-agency data exchange, continuity of case management or improvements in personal mobility.

Coordination quality can be assessed through several observable questions. Do institutions agree on the definitions of youth eligibility and vulnerability? Can an individual move from career counselling to skills training and job placement without restarting a complex application? Are outcomes tracked after the end of a programme? Are local offices accountable for inclusion as well as numerical throughput? Can young beneficiaries contest decisions and participate in programme redesign? Answers to these questions are necessary for establishing whether an administrative structure is merely comprehensive on paper or substantively inclusive in practice.

4.6. Synthesis of results. The reviewed evidence supports three descriptive conclusions and two analytical inferences. Descriptively, the policy framework articulates national youth priorities and dedicated institutional responsibility; tertiary education has expanded; and international assessments identify persistent gender and skills-related concerns. Analytically, differences in conversion from policy access to durable opportunity are likely to be shaped by the interaction of finance, service quality, social norms, local access and coordination. Moreover, a monitoring system organized only around inputs and beneficiaries risks overstating mobility success. Neither inference is an empirically estimated impact. They are propositions to be tested with individual-level and administrative data.

5. Discussion

5.1. Why institutional consequences exceed programme outputs. The strongest implication of the analysis is that youth-policy effectiveness should be defined as a

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distributional transformation rather than a tally of activities. Administrative systems naturally record what they deliver: loans approved, courses completed, consultations provided, business grants issued or meetings held. These indicators are necessary for financial accountability, but they cannot reveal whether the underlying social hierarchy has become more permeable. A programme may serve many young people and still disproportionately benefit those who already possess educational credentials, confidence, urban networks and the capacity to navigate application procedures. In such a case, service expansion and unequal opportunity may advance at the same time.

This possibility resembles the OECD's distinction between persistence at the bottom and advantage preservation at the top (OECD, 2018). When higher-income families purchase supplementary education, obtain better information or support unpaid internships, formally equal programmes may result in unequal outcomes. The relevance to Uzbekistan is a hypothesis derived from comparative theory, not a claim that identical mechanisms have been measured to the same extent locally. A research design that follows young people from different family backgrounds is required to estimate the relative contribution of schooling, parental occupation, region and institutional intervention.

5.2. From equality of access to equality of effective opportunity. Formal equality grants comparable eligibility rights, while effective opportunity additionally requires the ability to take advantage of those rights. Consider a training scholarship made available online. The programme may be formally open to all eligible young adults, but submission requires digital literacy, a stable internet connection, time away from care work and knowledge of deadlines. The resulting applicant pool is shaped before any merit-based assessment begins. The policy remedy is not necessarily to abandon competitive selection; it is to identify unnecessary administrative barriers, provide accessible information and evaluate whom the selection process systematically misses.

This conversion perspective also clarifies the place of targeted finance. Student loans can broaden educational participation, particularly when scholarship places are limited, but indebtedness may alter the risk calculations of low-income households. The design question is whether repayment rules, field-of-study incentives, career guidance and graduate earnings are jointly considered. A financing system that is accessible but disconnected from employment demand may extend formal schooling without improving long-run security. Equity therefore requires both inclusion at entry and attention to outcomes after exit.

5.3. Youth agency and the legitimacy of institutions. Treating young people only as policy recipients neglects their role as knowledgeable actors capable of evaluating the barriers they face. Participatory needs assessments, youth advisory bodies and confidential grievance channels can expose implementation problems that aggregate statistics conceal. Such feedback is especially important when service providers have incentives to report successful delivery. Experiences of arbitrary selection, disrespect, inaccessible premises or burdensome documentation may reduce participation even when a programme is widely publicized.

Public-opinion research has a distinctive role here. A carefully sampled survey can capture perceived fairness, trust in institutions, aspirations, expectations for mobility and personal experience with programmes. However, perceptions should not be equated with objective outcomes: individuals may evaluate prospects through comparison with peers, changing aspirations or media narratives. Combining attitude measures with independent data on completion, employment and earnings would produce a stronger account than either perspective alone. For a research centre concerned with public opinion, this combination offers a concrete agenda connecting social perception to policy performance.

5.4. Policy design under uncertainty. Evidence-based design should acknowledge that the best intervention may differ by subgroup and region. For unemployed graduates in large cities, employer-linked internships and transparent recruitment could be relevant. For rural young women with care responsibilities, flexible provision, childcare and transport may be more binding. For young people considering migration, internationally usable credentials and pre-departure information may matter. These possibilities suggest a portfolio rather than a universal programme. They also show the importance of piloting and comparing interventions instead of assuming that a widely promoted initiative will affect all participants similarly.

Methodologically, causal identification would require more than comparing enrolled participants with non-participants, since selection into programmes is likely non-random. Stronger designs could use staggered rollout, eligibility thresholds, randomized outreach where ethical, or matched longitudinal administrative records coupled with sensitivity analysis. Qualitative interviews would still be needed to explain why identical formal support yields divergent trajectories. Results should be reported by gender, region, disability, household background and prior attainment, with careful attention to small-cell confidentiality.

5.5. Implications for comparative scholarship. Uzbekistan should not be interpreted solely through external benchmarks. OECD studies often concern different welfare states, labour-market institutions and national income levels, while ILO global statistics combine highly diverse contexts. Their value here lies in the concepts they provide—mobility persistence, labour-market insecurity and educational mismatch—not in supplying directly transferable causal coefficients. The country-specific contribution emerges from examining how those questions intersect with Uzbekistan's legal youth-policy architecture, educational expansion, skills agenda and local administrative conditions. Comparable research in Central Asia may eventually identify which institutional arrangements travel across contexts and which require place-specific adaptation.

5.6. Limitations. This analysis is constrained by a selective documentary corpus, differences in measurement across reports and the absence of original survey or longitudinal microdata. The evidence does not support a quantitative estimate of the effect of the Youth Affairs Agency, a legal reform or student-finance expansion on intergenerational earnings mobility. Some institutional mechanisms are inferred from established theory rather than directly observed in Uzbek administrative settings. Nor can

all types of youth—school students, students in tertiary education, employed young adults and non-participants—be assumed to face identical trajectories. The article therefore offers an analytically structured set of claims and a measurement agenda, not a definitive causal ranking of policies.

6. Policy recommendations and proposed measurement framework

The first recommendation is to build an integrated yet privacy-protective youth opportunity dashboard. It should connect the policy process from application to follow-up without conflating distinct outcome types. For example, a student-financing programme should record eligible population, applications, approvals, enrolment, persistence, completion, debt burden and graduate employment at appropriate intervals. Such information would allow administrators to identify where vulnerable groups are lost along the pathway. The system should publish disaggregated aggregate indicators while restricting access to identifiable records and observing legal safeguards.

Second, agencies should conduct explicit equity audits. Routine reports should compare application, acceptance and completion rates by relevant socio-demographic categories, rather than reporting only the total number of beneficiaries. Care must be taken to measure disadvantage respectfully: the purpose of disaggregation is to detect structural barriers, not to label particular groups as deficient. Where gaps are identified, programme administrators should test changes such as simplified documentation, assisted applications, accessible transport or flexible scheduling and determine whether participation and completion improve.

Third, education finance and skills policies should be aligned with credible labour-market information without narrowing education to immediate employer demand. Graduate tracer studies, sectoral workforce forecasts and employer consultations can improve the relevance of curricula and career services. Nevertheless, mobility also depends on transferable critical thinking, communication, digital skills and public-sector opportunities, so policy should not reduce the value of learning to short-term vacancy counts. High-quality evaluation requires observing job stability, earnings progression, working conditions and career changes after graduation.

Fourth, gender-responsive support must address barriers beyond admission criteria. Evaluations should examine the availability of care arrangements, course timing, the safety and cost of travel, selection practices and opportunities for advancement. Rather than assuming every young woman faces the same circumstances, providers should consult differentiated groups and design flexible support. Programmes addressing young men's educational disengagement or occupational risks can be evaluated within the same equity framework.

Fifth, territorial coordination needs operational standards. National agencies can specify service-access guarantees and minimum reporting requirements while enabling local adaptation. Case management could help young applicants navigate multiple forms of support, provided that information sharing is consent-based, proportionate and secure. The accountability system should include appeals procedures, feedback mechanisms and

periodic independent evaluation. Administrative reporting should complement—not replace—participatory assessment by young people.

Sixth, policymakers should commission longitudinal and mixed-method mobility research. A baseline survey might gather parents' education and occupation, respondents' educational histories, work experience, family responsibilities, place of residence, service use and perceptions of procedural fairness. Follow-up waves could record employment quality, earnings, further training and changes in personal agency. Such studies require rigorous sampling and ethical oversight; the present article makes no claim that they have already been conducted. Linking these measures to policy exposure would illuminate which institutional pathways are most consequential and where the evidence remains uncertain.

A mobility-sensitive evaluation matrix can distinguish four levels of performance: (1) formal availability, measured by eligibility and geographical coverage; (2) effective access, measured by take-up and inclusion; (3) successful conversion, measured by completion, employment quality or civic participation; and (4) sustained mobility, measured by multi-year occupational, earnings or educational advancement relative to background. Failure at any level should trigger a different response. Low coverage suggests infrastructure deficits, low take-up may indicate information or trust barriers, poor conversion may reveal quality mismatch, and weak persistence may point to insecure jobs or continued care burdens. The matrix is a proposed tool, not a validated index.

Finally, youth participation should be built into policy learning rather than added as symbolic consultation. Well-designed feedback panels can reveal barriers hidden by aggregate numbers, and public reporting on how such feedback changes programmes can strengthen institutional legitimacy. Researchers should triangulate self-reported experience, administrative records and independent evaluations, resisting both purely optimistic reform narratives and reflexively pessimistic interpretations. The substantive question is whose life chances improve, by what route, and for how long.

7. Conclusion

Youth policy produces institutional consequences through the way it redistributes access, reduces or reinforces transaction costs, connects educational achievement to decent employment, and affords young people meaningful influence over decisions. The documentary evidence considered here points to an important juxtaposition in Uzbekistan: a more extensive formal opportunity structure coexists with unresolved questions about effective conversion of access into equitable outcomes. The rapid expansion of higher education and a dedicated youth-policy architecture are relevant institutional changes; gender disparities and skills-to-work coordination concerns demonstrate why the existence of programmes does not settle the question of social mobility.

The central contribution of the article is a four-stage framework linking formal availability, effective participation, opportunity conversion and sustained advancement. It provides a disciplined basis for differentiating administrative outputs from mobility outcomes. It also suggests that successful youth policy should combine universal institutional guarantees with targeted attention to obstacles experienced by particular

groups, including care responsibilities, geographic distance, unequal information and fragmented service delivery.

These conclusions remain interpretive. No original microdata were analyzed, and the article does not estimate causal policy effects. Future research should test its hypotheses through representative public-opinion surveys, graduate follow-up data, administrative records and qualitative investigation, with careful separation of subjective expectations and objective trajectories. Such an agenda would move debate beyond the quantity of programmes toward a more demanding criterion: whether institutional reforms expand the realistic possibility of upward mobility for young people whose social origins otherwise constrain their opportunities.

Table 1. Proposed mobility-sensitive policy evaluation framework

Evaluation level	Illustrative indicators	Interpretive question
Formal availability	Eligibility, number and geography of services	Can eligible youth theoretically participate?
Effective access	Application, take-up and completion by subgroup	Who is excluded before benefits are delivered?
Opportunity conversion	Graduation, stable placement, earnings quality	Does support translate into usable opportunity?
Sustained advancement	Multi-year outcomes relative to family background	Are advantages sustained and less origin-dependent?

Note. This matrix is a proposed analytical framework, not a validated statistical instrument.

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