Arabian Journal of Science

ISSN:2308-5703

Impact factor:13.5 *International Multidisciplinary Online Journal* July, 2026

PEDAGOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING SOCIALLY ACTIVE CIVIC COMPETENCE IN SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21708294

Abstract: This article analyses the theoretical foundations and pedagogical opportunities for developing socially active civic competence among general secondary school students. Socially active civic competence is interpreted as an integrated unity of cognitive-legal, value-motivational, social-communicative, and activity-reflective components. The pedagogical opportunities that support its development are systematised under the following areas: interdisciplinary integration; problem-based and dialogic education; social projects and service-learning; student self-governance; school–family–mahalla cooperation; digital citizenship and media literacy; a democratic and inclusive environment; and competence-based assessment. The article argues that integrating knowledge with practice, ensuring student agency, taking account of age-related characteristics, maintaining legal and ethical safety, and providing regular reflection are the principal pedagogical conditions that convert these opportunities into educational outcomes.

Keywords: socially active civic competence, civic education, pedagogical opportunity, competence-based approach, social project, student self-governance, school–family–mahalla cooperation, digital citizenship, reflection.

At the heart of the reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan's education system lies the priority of raising a socially active, morally mature, enterprising, and responsible younger generation. The accelerating flow of digital information, the increasing complexity of public problems, and young people's earlier exposure to social decisions require schools to educate not only legally informed individuals, but also people who understand the public good, rely on evidence, respect the rights of others, and can take initiative through lawful means.

In his address to the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2020, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasised that "young people make up more than half of our country's population" and identified the creation of conditions in which every young man and woman can find a worthy place in society and realise their potential as an important direction of state policy [13]. The address referred to Youth Parliaments, the Agency for Youth Affairs, the Samarkand International Forum held under United Nations auspices, and the initiative to adopt a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Youth. These ideas reinforce the need to support student voice, legal literacy, and social initiative in educational institutions.

The Five Important Initiatives put forward on 19 March 2019 aim to engage young people in art and culture, physical education and sport; promote the effective use of information technologies and the internet; encourage reading; and support women's employment [14]. These areas extend beyond the meaningful organisation of students' leisure time. They provide practical pedagogical settings for developing such civic qualities as creative initiative, teamwork, digital responsibility, respect for gender equality, and service to the public good.

In the Address to the Oliy Majlis of 24 January 2020, the President stated that turning Uzbekistan into a developed country requires a new generation of knowledgeable and qualified professionals who

think strategically and act as "proactive reformers" [15]. This requirement makes it necessary, beginning in general secondary education, to develop students not as passive executors of ready-made instructions, but as agents capable of understanding a problem, proposing a solution, and accepting responsibility for the results of their actions.

Article 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees citizens' right to participate in the management of public and state affairs directly or through their representatives [1]. The Law "On Education" identifies the integration of national and universal values into education and upbringing, as well as the humanistic and democratic character of education, among its fundamental principles [2]. The competence-based requirements approved by Resolution No. 187 of the Cabinet of Ministers, dated 6 April 2017, associate socially active citizenship with a sense of involvement in public events and processes, active participation in them, knowledge of civic rights and duties, and legal culture [3]. As an educational outcome, this competence therefore requires an integrated unity of legal knowledge, value-based attitudes, and practical participation.

In this sense, socially active civic competence is not limited to students' future political participation; it also encompasses their ability to make responsible decisions in school life, the classroom community, the family, the mahalla, and the digital environment. In practice, civic education is sometimes reduced to memorising concepts, repeating dates and legal norms, or participating in one-off spiritual and educational events. Such an approach does not create sufficient conditions for students to identify a real problem, listen to stakeholders, evaluate alternative solutions, make a collective decision, and accept responsibility for the outcome. The issue must therefore be framed not only as "Which topics should be taught?" but also as "Which pedagogical opportunities can introduce students to lawful, ethical, and socially beneficial participation?"

The purpose of the article is to identify and systematise the pedagogical opportunities for developing socially active civic competence among school students and to substantiate the pedagogical conditions that ensure their effectiveness.

Since Uzbekistan gained independence, the scope of pedagogical research into education and upbringing has expanded. Within national pedagogy, Sh. Shodmonova has studied the development of independent thinking in the educational process; O. Musurmonova has examined the formation of young people's spiritual culture; and G. Makhmutov has investigated the principles of teaching and upbringing, the formation of political and ethical qualities, moral norms, and a culture of interpersonal conduct. The works of Sh. E. Qurbonov, Sh. Majidova, Z. Soliyeva, and B. Khodjayev address various aspects of preparing young people who possess high intellectual potential, social engagement, initiative, and strong moral qualities.

Studies by A. Redjaboyev, D. Ro'ziyeva, M. Mamajonov, O. Jamoldinova, A. Isimova, S. Jo'rayeva, and B. Shermuhammadov analyse healthy lifestyles, patriotism, youth participation, moral education, and the development of socio-pedagogical abilities in the spirit of national progress. These lines of research provide an important theoretical basis for studying socially active civic competence. For general secondary school students, however, integrating legal knowledge, values, communication, practical social participation, and reflection into a single pedagogical system requires separate and systematic examination.

In higher education, courses such as "Uzbekistan's Development Strategy: Civil Society," "Political Science," "Social Pedagogy," and "The National Idea: Basic Concepts and Principles" help students acquire ideas related to a democratic state, civil society, patriotism, national identity, respect for the law, and public welfare. In general secondary education, this content can be incorporated on an

interdisciplinary basis into Upbringing and Values Education, history, fundamentals of state and law, the native language and literature, geography, and information technology.

The study is theoretical and methodological in nature. It employs content analysis of the regulatory documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan concerning education, youth policy, and civic participation; comparatively examines UNESCO's approach to global citizenship education, the Council of Europe's model of competences for democratic culture, and scholarly views on civic education [4–7]; and uses analysis and synthesis to clarify concepts, systematisation to group pedagogical opportunities, and pedagogical modelling to define components and implementation mechanisms. No empirical experimental results are presented; the conclusions are based on a logical analysis of theoretical sources and regulatory requirements.

The methodological framework integrates competence-based, axiological, activity-based, learner-centred, and sociocultural approaches. The competence-based approach evaluates an outcome not by knowledge alone, but by the ability to apply knowledge in a particular situation. The axiological approach makes human dignity, justice, responsibility, respect for the law, and solidarity criteria for action. The activity-based approach regards students as genuine participants in social tasks, while the sociocultural approach recognises that competence develops through cooperation and dialogue.

Interpreting civic competence solely as knowledge of rights and duties narrows its action-oriented nature. J. Dewey regarded education as a process of learning through experience and of living together in a democratic community [8]. L. S. Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective establishes that higher mental functions develop through communication and cooperation [9]. A. Bandura's social learning theory, in turn, demonstrates the importance of observation, modelling, and self-efficacy in student behaviour [10]. Merely talking about citizenship at school is therefore insufficient: students must see and practise fair rules, responsible communication, and collective decision-making in their everyday environment.

UNESCO defines the outcomes of global citizenship education across cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural domains [5]. The Council of Europe model groups the 20 competences required for democratic culture into values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding [6]. J. Westheimer and J. Kahne distinguish personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented models of citizenship education [11]. These approaches show that social activity should not be equated solely with discipline or participation in charitable activity; it must also include the ability to understand problems critically and develop collective solutions.

On the basis of this analysis, the following authorial definition is proposed: socially active civic competence is an integrative personal quality that expresses a student's awareness of belonging to and having a stake in social life; acceptance of rights and duties as values; evidence-based evaluation of issues concerning the public good; ability to make lawful and responsible decisions; and readiness and capacity to take initiative cooperatively in the school and mahalla environment.

The cognitive-legal component encompasses knowledge of constitutional rights and duties, social institutions, the local community, public problems, and lawful forms of participation, as well as the ability to verify sources and evidence and analyse cause-and-effect relationships.

The value-motivational component is manifested in respect for human dignity, justice, patriotism, solidarity, and national and universal values; a sense of commitment to community well-being; and an intrinsic need to engage in socially beneficial action.

The social-communicative component integrates the skills of listening to others, supporting one's views with evidence, engaging in respectful dialogue, resolving disagreements non-violently, allocating responsibilities, and cooperating with people who hold different perspectives.

The activity-reflective component expresses the ability to identify a problem, set goals, plan and implement a social initiative, assess results and possible consequences, and accept responsibility for one's contribution and mistakes.

In international education systems, civic competence is developed through a combination of a dedicated subject, an interdisciplinary principle, and democratic participation in school life. In Austria, "political education," or civic education, has been established since 1978 as an interdisciplinary educational principle for all school types, grade levels, and subjects. At certain stages it rests on three pillars: a separate or integrated subject, school partnership and student representation, and an interdisciplinary principle [16]. This experience demonstrates the importance of turning civic education into a feature of the entire school culture rather than assigning it to a single lesson.

In the Netherlands, civic education became a statutory requirement for primary and secondary education in 2006, while schools retained a degree of autonomy in developing local curriculum content. Research indicates that an extensive and integrated approach requires teachers' professional competence in civic content, curriculum design, and socio-political dialogue, as well as support from school leadership [17]. Civic competence therefore depends not only on a predetermined list of topics, but also on a school's capacity to design a programme appropriate to its own environment and local needs.

In England, citizenship education entered the recommended framework for primary education in 2000 and became a compulsory subject in the national curriculum for students aged 11–16 in September 2002 [18]. Its content connects knowledge of democracy, government, and law with the critical study of social and political issues, evaluation of evidence, debate, and reasoned conclusions. The recommended primary framework introduced in 2000 should consequently be distinguished from the compulsory status granted to secondary education in 2002.

In Ireland, Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) became part of the lower-secondary core curriculum in 1997. The course is grounded in human rights and social responsibility and integrates knowledge, a sense of involvement, and practical action; student participation in action projects has a prominent place [19]. A common conclusion from the experience of Austria, the Netherlands, England, and Ireland is that socially active citizenship develops not only through the acquisition of knowledge, but also through experience of participation, communication, cooperation, and evaluation of outcomes.

Pedagogical opportunities are understood as the content-related, methodological, organisational, social, and digital resources present in the educational process that can produce an expected change in the student when activated through purposeful pedagogical conditions. An opportunity does not automatically produce an outcome. For example, the mere existence of a student council does not develop civic participation if the council has no genuine influence on decisions. Resources, activation mechanisms, and observable outcomes must therefore be examined as interrelated elements.

Table 1. Opportunities for Developing Socially Active Civic Competence

Pedagogical opportunity	Implementation mechanism	Expected outcome
Interdisciplinary integration	Connecting topics from Upbringing and Values Education, history, law, the native language and literature, geography, and information technology around local and nationwide public issues.	Integrated analysis of a problem from legal, ethical, historical, and informational perspectives.

Pedagogical opportunity	Implementation mechanism	Expected outcome
Problem-based and dialogic education	Using cases, debates, ethical and legal dilemmas, simulated hearings, decision trees, and evidence-based discussions.	The ability to substantiate a view, listen to an alternative position, and make responsible decisions.
Social projects and service-learning	Investigating a real problem in the school or mahalla, developing a solution plan, engaging partners, producing a practical output, and reporting publicly.	Initiative, socially beneficial action, and responsibility for results.
Student self-governance	Class and school councils, open proposal meetings, election or allocation of responsibilities, and discussion of implementation.	Experience in developing rules, representation, consensus-building, and accountability.
School–family–mahalla cooperation	Projects, discussions, consultations, and joint initiatives with parents, mahalla representatives, specialists, and civil-society organisations.	Transfer of school knowledge to real-life settings and development of social partnership.
Digital citizenship and media literacy	Source verification, distinguishing fact from opinion, digital rights and responsibilities, cyberethics, safe online discussion, and production of socially relevant digital content.	Critical evaluation of information and understanding of the legal and ethical consequences of online participation.
A democratic and inclusive environment	Safe expression of opinions, equal participation, non-discrimination, consistent application of rules, and teacher modelling of respectful dialogue.	A sense of belonging, trust, mutual respect, and civic courage.
Competence-based assessment and reflection	Portfolios, observation rubrics, self- and peer assessment, project outputs, reflective journals, and public presentation.	Analysis of one's contribution, evidence-based self-assessment, and identification of further development goals.

The Five Important Initiatives provide ready sociocultural resources for activating these pedagogical opportunities. Art clubs can foster creative cooperation and a sense of connection to cultural heritage; sport can develop collective responsibility and fair competition; information technology can support digital citizenship; reading can strengthen critical thinking and moral reflection; and initiatives concerning women's employment can promote equal opportunities, social justice, and respect for professional participation. To achieve these outcomes, the success of a club or event should be assessed not only by the number of participants, but also by student initiative, cooperation, and benefit to the community.

Conditions for Activating Pedagogical Opportunities

The first condition is continuity and age appropriateness. In primary school, civic experience begins with following shared rules, helping peers, carrying out classroom responsibilities, and participating in small environmental or charitable activities. In Grades V–IX, priority is given to analysing public problems, debate, school self-governance, small projects with the mahalla, and media literacy. In Grades X–XI, students may undertake more complex tasks, including working with legal sources, simulating public hearings and appeals, conducting social research, managing projects, and reporting publicly on results.

The second condition is student agency. If students are given a ready-made slogan, a ready-made problem, and a ready-made solution, they remain mere executors. To develop competence, their voice must have genuine significance in selecting the problem, defining goals and criteria, distributing responsibilities, collecting information, and evaluating results. Rather than acting as a controller, the teacher functions as a facilitator who defines legal and ethical boundaries and helps students verify the quality of their sources.

The third condition is the activity's genuine social value. An initiative staged solely for appearances or reporting does not strengthen students' sense of agency. Knowledge becomes action when a project addresses a specific, age-appropriate, and measurable problem, such as saving water and electricity at school, exchanging books, promoting road safety, preventing cyberbullying, preserving cultural heritage, or improving inclusion.

The fourth condition is legal and ethical safety. Civic education is not a means of compelling students to adopt a particular political view, disclosing their personal information, or involving them in conflictual activities inappropriate to their age. Discussions must distinguish evidence from the individual presenting it, prohibit discriminatory speech, and observe child-rights and digital-safety requirements. UNESCO's recommendations for citizenship education in the digital age likewise connect critical evaluation of information, ethical decision-making, and safe digital participation [12].

The fifth condition is alignment between school culture and the values being taught. Discussing equality and participation in class while disregarding student opinion in school life produces the opposite result through the "hidden curriculum." Consistent application of rules, explanations of decisions, safe channels for expressing opinions, and teachers' culture of communication make the school an everyday laboratory of civic competence.

The sixth condition is regular reflection and multi-source assessment. After every social activity, students should move beyond the question "What did we do?" and consider: "Whose interests were taken into account?", "Which evidence changed our decision?", "What unexpected consequence emerged?", and "What would we do differently next time?" Such reflection prevents initiative from turning into irresponsible activism.

The analysis also reveals the need to avoid three one-sided approaches to socially active civic competence. The first is equating citizenship solely with knowledge of law and state structure. The second is treating every form of social activity as a positive outcome; activity that disregards legal norms and consequences is not responsible citizenship. The third is assessing civic education by the number of events conducted. A large number of events does not automatically demonstrate that students have gained experience in decision-making and accountability.

The distinctive feature of the proposed system is that it does not set national constitutional values and the mahalla's experience of collective solidarity in opposition to the principles of critical thinking, human rights, intercultural dialogue, and sustainable development found in global citizenship education. Instead, it integrates them. Target 4.7 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

likewise calls for global citizenship, human rights, a culture of peace, and cultural diversity to be incorporated into education policy, curricula, teacher education, and assessment [7].

Digital citizenship is not a separate element of this system, but a cross-cutting dimension. When students search for information on public issues, take part in online discussions, or create digital content with social significance, they must evaluate source reliability, copyright, personal data, algorithmic influence, cyberethics, and the consequences of speech. Digital skills taught in information-technology classes contribute fully to civic outcomes when connected with the value-based and social content of Upbringing and Values Education, history, and law.

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