



PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPING LEGAL COMPETENCE IN STUDENTS BASED ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article investigates the pedagogical conditions that are necessary and sufficient for the systematic development of legal competence in secondary school students within the framework of the "Education" (Tarbiya) subject in Uzbekistan. Drawing on curriculum analysis, pedagogical theory, and empirical observations from general secondary education institutions, the study argues that legal competence cannot be cultivated through incidental or implicit instruction alone. Rather, it requires a deliberately structured, values-integrated, and methodologically diverse pedagogical environment. The article identifies six core pedagogical conditions — curricular integration, value coherence, interactive methodology, digital augmentation, institutional partnership, and systematic assessment — and examines how each condition, and their combined synergistic effect, contributes to the formation of legally conscious, civically active, and morally grounded young citizens. Practical recommendations for curriculum designers, subject teachers, and educational administrators are offered, grounded in the realities of the Uzbek educational context.

Keywords: Legal competence, pedagogical conditions, Education subject, civic upbringing, legal consciousness, secondary school, Uzbekistan, competency-based approach, legal culture, values-based education.

Introduction

Contemporary societies demand that their citizens possess not merely abstract knowledge of laws, but a deeply internalized legal culture: the capacity to recognize one's rights and responsibilities, to reason through legal and ethical dilemmas, and to participate constructively in the civic life of a democratic state. This understanding has gained particular urgency in Uzbekistan, where the ongoing reform of the state and society has placed legal literacy and civic education at the center of national educational policy. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No.



PF-5618 (January 9, 2019) "On Radical Improvement of the System for Raising Legal Consciousness and Legal Culture in Society" explicitly calls for the formation of citizens who know their rights, respect the law, and apply legal knowledge in everyday life — starting from childhood.

Within general secondary education, the "Education" (Tarbiya) subject has been identified as a key vehicle for this mission. Introduced and conceptually grounded by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 422 (July 6, 2020), the subject aims to cultivate morally mature, socially responsible, and civically engaged young people. However, a critical gap exists between this ambitious mandate and the actual pedagogical practice in classrooms: while the "Education" subject contains significant potential for legal education, that potential remains largely unrealized because the necessary pedagogical conditions — the specific organizational, methodological, and environmental prerequisites that would make legal competence formation systematic and effective — have not been explicitly defined, theorized, or operationalized.

This article addresses that gap. It asks: What pedagogical conditions are necessary for the "Education" subject to serve as a genuine driver of legal competence development in students? In answering this question, the article contributes to both pedagogical theory — by elaborating a model of conditions for legal competence formation — and to educational practice, by offering actionable guidance for teachers, curriculum designers, and school administrators in Uzbekistan and comparable contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Legal Competence: Conceptual Foundations

The concept of legal competence has been approached from multiple disciplinary perspectives in the scholarly literature. In the jurisprudential tradition, legal competence refers primarily to formal knowledge of normative legal frameworks — the ability to correctly identify applicable rules and apply them to specific factual situations (Hamroyev, 1993). In pedagogical and psychological research, however, the concept has been substantially broadened. Legal competence is now widely understood as a complex, integrated personal quality that encompasses not only cognitive knowledge of laws, but also affective orientations (respect for law, a sense of justice, civic identity), and behavioral skills (the ability to act lawfully, to defend



one's rights, and to recognize and resist unlawful behavior) (Safarov, N.; Karimova, 1999).

Ziyomammedov and Abdullayeva define legal education as the process of "raising legal knowledge, properly mastering laws, and forming the habit of fully abiding by them" (Ziyomammedov & Abdullayeva). This definition highlights the process dimension: legal competence is not a static possession but a developmental achievement, built through sustained educational engagement over time. From a competency-based education perspective, this means that legal competence must be explicitly targeted in curriculum design, instructional methodology, and assessment — it cannot be assumed to emerge spontaneously from general moral or civic education.

2.2 Legal Education in the Secondary School Context

Research on legal education in secondary schools consistently underscores two themes: the importance of age-appropriate, experientially grounded instruction, and the necessity of interdisciplinary integration. Khojaye (2017) argues that legal knowledge is effectively internalized by students only when it is presented in developmentally appropriate ways, connected to real-life situations and social contexts, and reinforced across subject areas through interdisciplinary coordination. This finding aligns with constructivist pedagogical theory, which holds that new knowledge is acquired most durably when it is linked to students' existing frameworks of understanding and when it is applied in meaningful, problem-solving contexts.

Kudaybergenova (2005) emphasizes that effective legal education requires creating genuine interest and need in students: learners who are internally motivated to understand law and justice are far more likely to engage deeply with legal content and to transfer that engagement to behavior outside school. This has important implications for the "Education" subject: if legal content is presented in a dry, declarative manner, it is likely to be forgotten; if it is connected to students' real concerns, social relationships, and lived experiences, it is likely to be internalized and acted upon.

International comparative research further illuminates the conditions for effective legal education. Studies from Germany, Finland, and Singapore — countries that consistently achieve high levels of civic and legal literacy among youth — point to the centrality of active learning methodologies (role play, simulations, deliberative



discussion), the integration of legal education with ethics and social studies, and the involvement of community partners (law enforcement, legal professionals, community organizations) in school-based legal education programs (Schulz et al., 2018; Losito et al., 2018). These findings provide important reference points for understanding what effective legal education might look like in the Uzbek context

2.3 The "Education" Subject as a Site for Legal Education

The "Education" subject (Tarbiya) in Uzbekistan is a distinctive curricular initiative, occupying a unique interdisciplinary space between ethics, civic education, social studies, and psychology. The subject's Concept (2020) explicitly designates the cultivation of respect for the Constitution and laws as one of its core objectives. Yet empirical analysis of the subject's actual curriculum — topic sequences, lesson plans, and assessment instruments — reveals that legal content appears episodically and indirectly, embedded within broader discussions of personal values, social responsibility, and civic culture, rather than being systematically and explicitly developed as a distinct competency strand.

This situation reflects a broader challenge in integrated subjects: the risk that important but specialized competencies are nominally included but practically underdeveloped because they lack a clear pedagogical infrastructure — explicit learning objectives, targeted methodologies, appropriate assessment tools, and teacher preparation. Addressing this challenge requires identifying and creating the pedagogical conditions that would transform the "Education" subject's latent potential for legal education into a systematic, reliable, and effective developmental process.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, theoretically grounded research methodology, combining curriculum analysis, pedagogical modeling, and synthesis of empirical observations from general secondary education practice in Uzbekistan. The research involved three main analytical steps.

First, a systematic analysis of the 7th-grade "Education" subject curriculum was conducted, examining topic sequences, lesson content, stated learning objectives, and assessment requirements across all thematic units. The purpose was to map the current landscape of legal content within the curriculum and to identify both the opportunities and the gaps in current provision.



Second, a review of national regulatory and policy documents was undertaken, including the Presidential Decree PF-5618 (2019), the "Education" Subject Concept (Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 422, 2020), the National Concept for Raising Legal Culture in Society, and the national educational standards for general secondary education. This analysis clarified the normative framework within which legal education in the "Education" subject is expected to occur.

Third, the findings from curriculum analysis and policy review were integrated with theoretical frameworks from pedagogical science — specifically, competency-based education theory, values-based pedagogy, and the theory of pedagogical conditions — to construct a model of the conditions required for systematic legal competence development through the "Education" subject. This model was then refined through consultation with practicing "Education" subject teachers and school administrators in Navoi region.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Current State: Curriculum Analysis Findings

Analysis of the 7th-grade "Education" curriculum reveals a rich thematic landscape with strong potential for legal education, but without the systematic pedagogical architecture needed to realize that potential. The curriculum is organized around seven thematic clusters: personal development and universal values; responsibility toward nature and the environment; ethics and personal character; happiness and the value of life; awareness and safety; communication and social competence; and family and community values.

Each of these clusters contains genuine points of connection with legal content. The cluster on personal development addresses personal responsibility — which connects directly to concepts of legal duty and civic obligation. The cluster on awareness and safety deals with recognizing dangers and making informed decisions — skills directly relevant to understanding legal boundaries and consequences. The cluster on communication and social competence develops the interpersonal and institutional engagement skills that are prerequisites for effective legal participation. The cluster on family and community values engages with concepts of belonging, solidarity, and shared norms — the social foundation on which legal culture is built.

However, none of these clusters explicitly names legal competence as a learning objective, specifies the legal knowledge content to be developed, or identifies the



assessment criteria by which legal competence growth would be measured. Legal concepts such as constitutional rights and responsibilities, the principles of rule of law, the legal consequences of specific behaviors, and the mechanisms for legal redress appear, if at all, as illustrative examples rather than as substantive learning objectives in their own right. This finding confirms that the current curriculum, while containing significant latent potential, requires deliberate pedagogical structuring to become an effective vehicle for legal competence development.

4.2 Pedagogical Conditions for Legal Competence Development

On the basis of curriculum analysis, theoretical review, and engagement with educational practice, six core pedagogical conditions for the development of legal competence through the "Education" subject have been identified. These conditions are understood not as independent variables but as mutually reinforcing elements of an integrated pedagogical environment.

Condition 1: Systematic Integration of Legal Content into the Curriculum

The first and most foundational condition is the deliberate, systematic integration of legal content into the "Education" subject curriculum. This means going beyond the current situation in which legal concepts appear incidentally, and instead identifying specific legal knowledge and understanding objectives for each thematic cluster and lesson. The minimum core of legal knowledge that students should develop through the "Education" subject includes: the structure and significance of the Constitution of Uzbekistan; the fundamental rights and responsibilities of citizens; the basic principles of democratic governance and the rule of law; the legal framework regulating key aspects of students' lives (family law, education law, youth protection legislation); and the mechanisms available for the legal protection of rights.

Integration should not mean turning "Education" lessons into law classes. Rather, it means that teachers systematically draw out the legal dimensions of the ethical, social, and civic topics already addressed in the curriculum, making explicit the connections between the values discussed and the legal norms that protect and embody those values. For example, a lesson on honesty and integrity naturally connects to the legal prohibition of fraud and the constitutional principle of equality before the law; a lesson on environmental responsibility connects to environmental legislation and citizens' duties under law to protect natural resources.



Condition 2: Values-Law Integration — Building Coherence between Ethics and Legality

A second essential condition is the deliberate cultivation of coherence between ethical values and legal norms in students' thinking. Research on legal socialization consistently shows that individuals are most likely to comply with and actively support legal norms when they perceive those norms as aligned with their own moral values and social commitments (Tyler, 2006). Conversely, when law is experienced as external, imposed, and disconnected from personal values, compliance tends to be instrumental and conditional rather than genuine and principled.

The "Education" subject is uniquely positioned to address this challenge because it operates simultaneously in the domains of values education, social education, and civic education. Teachers can explicitly help students understand how laws give formal expression to shared ethical values — that prohibitions on theft and violence protect the dignity and security that every person deserves; that freedom of expression protects the intellectual and personal development that every person needs; that environmental regulations protect the natural world on which all life depends. By building this understanding, the subject can develop what might be called "value-grounded legal consciousness": a sense that laws are not arbitrary external constraints but meaningful social agreements that embody and protect the values that students themselves hold.

Condition 3: Active and Interactive Teaching Methodology

The third condition concerns teaching methodology. Legal competence, as a complex, behavioral, and values-laden achievement, cannot be effectively developed through passive, transmission-oriented instruction. Students need opportunities to encounter legal concepts in action — to reason through legal dilemmas, to argue different positions, to practice the skills of legal reasoning and civic participation in safe, structured contexts.

The most effective methodologies for this purpose include case-based learning (presenting real or realistic legal scenarios and asking students to analyze them, identify the relevant legal principles, and propose responses); role-play and simulation (enacting courtroom proceedings, community council meetings, or conflict resolution processes); deliberative discussion (structured debate on ethically and legally complex questions, developing students' capacity for reasoned argument



and perspective-taking); and project-based learning (engaging students in community-relevant projects that require them to identify, research, and respond to legal questions in their own social environment). These methodologies are consistent with the pedagogical principles articulated in the "Education" subject Concept, which emphasizes student activity, critical thinking, and connection to real life.

Condition 4: Digital and Multimedia Enrichment

The fourth condition is the integration of digital and multimedia resources to extend and deepen legal learning beyond the classroom. Young people today consume information primarily through digital channels, and legal education that fails to engage with this reality misses a crucial opportunity. Digital resources for legal education include interactive legal knowledge platforms; video materials presenting legal scenarios, courtroom procedures, and interviews with legal professionals; online simulations of legal processes; and digital assessment tools (interactive quizzes, scenario-based assessments) that provide immediate feedback and allow students to track their own legal knowledge development.

The use of digital resources also serves another important pedagogical function: it allows students to access current, real-world legal information rather than being limited to textbook representations of law. Students can look up actual provisions of the Constitution, read summaries of significant legal cases, and explore the work of institutions such as the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of Uzbekistan. This connection to living legal reality helps counter the tendency, common in legal education, for law to appear as an abstract, static system disconnected from the dynamic realities of social life.

Condition 5: Institutional Partnerships and Community Involvement

The fifth condition moves beyond the classroom to encompass the broader institutional and community environment in which legal education occurs. Research consistently demonstrates that legal education is most effective when it involves authentic engagement with the institutions and professionals of the legal system — not only because this provides access to expert knowledge, but because it makes law tangible, real, and humanly meaningful for students.

Concretely, this condition calls for the "Education" subject to be supported by a systematic program of partnerships between schools and legal institutions: regular



participation of police officers, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, and human rights advocates in "Education" lessons as guest speakers and discussion facilitators; organized visits by student groups to courts, prosecutor's offices, and legal aid centers; and participation in community-based legal awareness events. In Uzbekistan, the institutional framework for such partnerships already exists: the system of mahalla (community self-governance) organizations, the national human rights institutions, and the recently expanded network of legal aid centers provide a rich set of potential community partners for school-based legal education.

Condition 6: Systematic Monitoring and Feedback

The sixth condition concerns assessment and quality assurance. Legal competence development, like all competency development, requires ongoing monitoring and feedback to be effective: teachers need to know how students' legal knowledge and attitudes are developing in order to adjust their instruction, and students need formative feedback to understand their own progress and to identify areas for further development.

Systematic monitoring of legal competence through the "Education" subject should include periodic structured assessments of legal knowledge (using scenario-based questions rather than simple recall items, so as to measure competence rather than mere information); regular observation and documentation of students' attitudes toward law and civic participation (through reflective writing, discussion analysis, and portfolio assessment); and end-of-year summative assessment that captures growth across all three dimensions of legal competence (knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral skills). The results of this monitoring should inform both individual teacher practice and institutional curriculum planning, creating a feedback loop that drives continuous improvement.

4.3 The Synergistic Effect: Why Conditions Must Work Together

A critical insight from the analysis is that the six pedagogical conditions identified above do not operate independently: their effectiveness depends significantly on their interaction and mutual reinforcement. A well-designed curriculum integration (Condition 1) will have limited impact if it is delivered through passive, transmission-oriented methods (violating Condition 3). Interactive methodologies (Condition 3) will produce only surface engagement if they are not anchored in a coherent value-



law framework (Condition 2). Digital resources (Condition 4) will remain supplementary rather than transformative if they are not connected to authentic community engagement (Condition 5). And all five preceding conditions will produce inconsistent and unmeasured outcomes if they are not supported by systematic monitoring and feedback (Condition 6).

The pedagogical model being proposed here is therefore not a checklist of independent interventions but an integrated system in which each condition supports and amplifies the others. The cumulative, synergistic impact of all six conditions operating together is substantially greater than the sum of their individual effects — a principle consistent with systems-theoretical approaches to educational improvement. This systemic understanding has an important practical implication: partial implementation of the model (implementing two or three conditions while neglecting others) is likely to yield disappointing results, and schools and teachers should be supported to develop all six conditions in a coordinated way.

4.4 Teacher Preparation as a Cross-Cutting Requirement

Underlying all six pedagogical conditions is a cross-cutting requirement that has received insufficient attention in the literature: teacher preparation. "Education" subject teachers are typically trained as pedagogues with expertise in ethics, psychology, or social studies — they are rarely specialists in law or legal education. Developing the pedagogical conditions described above requires that teachers have at minimum: foundational knowledge of the constitutional and legal framework of Uzbekistan, sufficient to integrate legal content accurately into their lessons; pedagogical skills in active, interactive, and case-based teaching methods; and awareness of the community legal institutions and professional networks that can support school-based legal education.

This means that teacher professional development for the "Education" subject should be explicitly expanded to include legal literacy components, delivered in partnership with legal institutions (the Ministry of Justice, the Human Rights Ombudsman's office, and the bar association are natural partners for such training). Without attention to teacher preparation, even the most carefully designed curriculum reforms and pedagogical frameworks will struggle to reach students in effective ways.



5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study point to both the substantial promise and the real challenges of developing legal competence through the "Education" subject. On the positive side, the analysis confirms that the "Education" subject is, in principle, exceptionally well-suited to serve as a vehicle for legal competence development. Its interdisciplinary character allows for the integration of legal content within meaningful ethical, social, and civic contexts. Its emphasis on student activity and real-life connection creates the pedagogical environment in which legal competence can be genuinely — not just nominally — developed. And its positioning as a required subject across the secondary school curriculum ensures universal reach.

At the same time, realizing this potential faces genuine challenges. Teacher capacity is a real constraint: most "Education" teachers have not been trained in legal content or legal education methodology, and sustained professional development investment will be needed. Curriculum reform processes are slow and require careful coordination between subject specialists, curriculum designers, and policy makers. And the culture of legal education in Uzbekistan — still in many respects oriented toward compliance rather than rights-conscious citizenship — means that some of the more ambitious goals of legal competence education (developing students' capacity to question authority, to assert their rights, and to hold institutions accountable) may encounter resistance.

These challenges are real but not insurmountable. Uzbekistan's recent history demonstrates a sustained national commitment to legal reform and legal culture development, providing a supportive policy environment for the kind of educational reform proposed here. The "Education" subject's relative newness and flexibility — it has not yet accumulated the institutional inertia of longer-established subjects — creates an opportunity for systematic innovation that should be seized.

Comparison with international experience is instructive. In countries that have successfully developed legal literacy among young people, the key drivers have not been any single intervention but the consistent pursuit of multiple reinforcing conditions over time: curriculum integration, active methodology, teacher development, and community partnership working in concert. This is precisely the model proposed in this article, adapted to the specific cultural, institutional, and pedagogical context of Uzbekistan.



6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article has argued that the development of legal competence in secondary school students through the "Education" subject requires not merely the inclusion of legal content in the curriculum, but the deliberate creation of a set of interlocking pedagogical conditions. Six such conditions have been identified and analyzed: systematic curriculum integration; value-law coherence; active and interactive methodology; digital enrichment; institutional partnership; and systematic monitoring and feedback. When these conditions work together as an integrated system, supported by adequate teacher preparation, the "Education" subject can become a genuinely transformative site for the development of legally conscious, civically active, and morally grounded young citizens.

These findings carry clear implications for practice. For curriculum designers and educational policy makers, the key recommendation is to initiate a structured process of curriculum revision for the "Education" subject that explicitly incorporates legal competence objectives, content specifications, and assessment criteria into all thematic clusters, in line with the pedagogical model developed in this article. For school administrators, the priority should be to develop institutional partnerships with legal and community organizations that can enrich classroom legal education with authentic professional expertise and real-world connection. For "Education" subject teachers, the central professional development need is foundational legal literacy combined with skills in active, case-based, and discussion-oriented teaching methodology.

Further research is needed to test and refine the pedagogical model proposed here through empirical study. Specifically, comparative studies of schools that implement the full set of six conditions against schools that implement partial versions would help to validate the synergistic model and to identify which conditions have the greatest individual impact. Longitudinal studies tracking students' legal knowledge, attitudes, and behavior from the early secondary years through to young adulthood would help to assess the sustained impact of school-based legal education. And participatory action research with "Education" teachers — developing, testing, and refining specific lesson designs, case scenarios, and assessment instruments — would help to translate the general pedagogical framework into practical classroom resources.



The development of legal culture is not merely an educational goal but a civic and democratic imperative. Every young person who leaves school with a genuine understanding of their rights, a real respect for law, and the skills to participate constructively in civic life is both a personal and a national achievement. The "Education" subject, properly developed and pedagogically structured, has the potential to make a substantial contribution to this imperative — and the time to begin realizing that potential is now.

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