THE ROLE OF THE MAHALLA INSTITUTION IN THE CIVIC EDUCATION OF SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract:
The article examines modern theoretical concepts of civic education and their adaptation to the context of Uzbekistan. Particular attention is paid to the "School–Mahalla" model as an integrative form of interaction between educational institutions, the family, and the local community. The key factors in the formation of civic identity are analyzed, including traditional values, digital transformation, and intercultural dialogue. It is shown that this model combines national educational traditions with universal democratic values and contributes to the development of socially responsible and civically mature individuals.
Keywords: civic education, identity, school, mahalla, values, tolerance, digital citizenship, youth, traditions, community.

РОЛЬ ИНСТИТУТА МАХАЛЛИ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ ГРАЖДАНСКОМ ВОСПИТАНИИ ШКОЛЬНИКОВ

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Аннотация:
В статье рассматриваются современные теоретические концепции гражданского воспитания и их адаптация к условиям Узбекистана. Особое внимание уделяется модели «Школа–Махалля» как интегративной форме взаимодействия образовательных учреждений, семьи и местного сообщества. Анализируются ключевые факторы формирования гражданской идентичности, включая традиционные ценности, цифровую трансформацию и межкультурный диалог. Показано, что данная модель сочетает национальные воспитательные традиции с универсальными демократическими ценностями и способствует подготовке социально ответственных и граждански зрелых личностей.
Ключевые слова: гражданское воспитание, идентичность, школа, махалля, ценности, толерантность, цифровая гражданственность, молодежь, традиции, сообщество.

Introduction

In the context of rapid global transformations and the transition toward a digital society, civic education is becoming a key mechanism for shaping a socially mature personality. It equips young people with the ability to participate consciously in public life, critically evaluate ongoing processes, and make informed decisions consistent with democratic and legal values. As scholars note, well-developed civic competencies enhance societal resilience during periods of cultural and political change [Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970].

For modern Uzbekistan, which is undergoing large-scale reforms, civic education acquires particular significance. Its relevance is determined by the renewal of national identity, the strengthening of statehood, the development of an open civil society, and the necessity of preparing youth for global competition. Digitalization, the expansion of the information space, and the transformation of social relations intensify the demand for effective educational models that cultivate responsibility, solidarity, and a culture of dialogue [Slastenin et al., 2005; Heater, 2004].

A special place in Uzbek society belongs to the mahalla—a unique institution of the local community that performs educational, cultural, and communicative functions. Today, its role is expanding: from traditional social support to the development of civic practices, youth initiative, and intergenerational cooperation. The interaction between school and mahalla forms a new pedagogical model that integrates formal and non-formal education.

The integrative "School–Mahalla" system strengthens the potential of civic education by involving students in real social processes, developing their collaboration skills, responsibility, and readiness for public participation. It combines national values, democratic principles, and the demands of the digital era [Khamroev, 2020; Abdurazakov, 2018].

The purpose of the study is to reveal the characteristics of civic education within the "School–Mahalla" system and to determine directions for its improvement.

The research objectives include analyzing international and national concepts, identifying factors that determine the relevance of civic education, assessing the potential of the mahalla, describing the structure of the model, and identifying its problematic aspects.

Thus, the introduction provides the theoretical and methodological foundation of the study and underscores the importance of the "School–Mahalla" model for forming a socially active and responsible young generation.

Literature Review

Modern scholarly literature views civic education as a complex and multi-component process that includes cognitive, value-based, motivational, and activity-oriented dimensions. Researchers emphasize that civic identity is formed not only through acquiring knowledge about the state and society, but also through the development of solidarity, responsibility, and participatory skills [Gutmann, 1999; Heater, 2004]. This reflects the global shift from traditional educational models toward concepts of civic competencies required in a digital and multicultural society.

The classical ideas of John Dewey on democratic education and the school as a "micro-model of society" remain highly relevant [Dewey, 1916]. Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy complements these ideas by emphasizing dialogue, reflection, and social engagement [Freire, 1970]. In the context of information saturation, these approaches are reinforced by the growing importance of media literacy, digital ethics, and critical information processing, as highlighted by S. Livingstone [Livingstone, 2019].

International experience demonstrates the diversity of civic education models. The French *éducation à la citoyenneté* promotes republican values and prevents discrimination [Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2018]; the German *Demokratie leben!* focuses on developing civic competencies and preventing extremism [BMFSFJ, 2020]; the Japanese model emphasizes collective responsibility and social harmony [Kawaguchi, 2015]. In the United States, Civic Education underscores legal literacy, participation, and critical thinking [NCSS, 2013].

In post-Soviet pedagogy, significant contributions were made by V.A. Slastenin, G.K. Selevko, and A.V. Yasvin, who emphasized the role of the sociocultural environment, technological methods, and school climate in the formation of civic identity [Slastenin et al., 2005; Selevko, 1998; Yasvin, 2001].

In Uzbekistan, there is a strong tendency to integrate traditional institutions—primarily the mahalla—with modern pedagogical and digital approaches. The mahalla is viewed as a unique space of socialization that transmits values, cultural norms, and supports youth participation in community life [Khamroev, 2020; Abdurazakov, 2018]. Recent studies highlight the increasing importance of digital culture, volunteerism, school self-governance, and electronic forms of learning [Aliyev, 2021].

International organizations (UNESCO, OSCE, UNICEF) also emphasize the importance of fostering a culture of peace, tolerance, legal awareness, and intercultural dialogue [UNESCO, 2022], thereby reinforcing both global and local significance of civic education.

Overall, the literature indicates that contemporary civic education develops at the intersection of democratic traditions, competency-based requirements of the digital age, and national–cultural specificity. For Uzbekistan, the synthesis of the mahalla system with modern innovative practices is key to forming a unique model of students' civic development.

Key Trends

The analysis of existing research makes it possible to identify several important trends that determine the development of civic education at both global and national levels:

• Interdisciplinarity.

Modern concepts integrate philosophical ideas of citizenship, pedagogical models of competency-based education, cultural theories of identity, and sociological interpretations of social cohesion. Civic education is viewed as an integral sociocultural phenomenon.

• Diversity of national models with a unified value foundation.

Despite differences in tools and formats, leading countries rely on shared principles—democracy, human rights, social responsibility, and a culture of peace. National variations (French, German, Japanese, American) reflect cultural specificity, while the unity of core values remains intact.

• The Uzbek model based on the mahalla institution.

The distinctiveness of Uzbekistan lies in its systemic reliance on the mahalla as a traditional institution of civic self-organization. Contemporary reforms strengthen the integration of school, family, and mahalla, creating a synergistic educational environment that combines tradition and innovation.

• Growing importance of digital citizenship.

Under conditions of information overload and digital risks, media literacy, critical thinking, online communication ethics, and the ability to counter misinformation and radical influences have become essential.

These trends form the theoretical and methodological foundation for further development of the "School–Mahalla" system and outline the directions of its adaptation to global challenges and national priorities.

Methods of the Study
The study has a theoretical and methodological character, which determined the use of a set of methods ensuring a systemic and multi-level analysis of the "School–Mahalla" model.
1. Analysis and synthesis of scientific literature.
Classical and contemporary concepts of civic education were examined, key trends were identified, and universal and national approaches were generalized [Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Heater, 2004; Slastenin et al., 2005]. The synthesis of materials made it possible to form the theoretical foundation of the study.
2. Comparative method.
Foreign models of civic education (USA, France, Germany, Japan) and international initiatives (UNESCO, OSCE) were compared. Shared humanistic values and differences in pedagogical instruments were identified [BMFSFJ, 2020; UNESCO, 2022].
3. Systems approach.
Civic education was considered as a holistic socio-pedagogical system integrating the school, family, mahalla, NGOs, state structures, and the digital environment. This made it possible to interpret the "School–Mahalla" model as an integrated educational ecosystem.
4. Axiological and cultural approaches.
The value foundations of civic education (justice, tolerance, patriotism, peace culture) and the role of mahalla traditions and spiritual heritage were analyzed in the context of globalization and digitalization [Gutmann, 1999; Yunusov, 2020].
5. Learner-centered and activity-based approaches.
The student was analyzed as an active subject of upbringing. Forms of civic engagement—self-governance, volunteerism, project activities, discussions, and initiatives contributing to the development of civic competence—were examined [Yasvin, 2001].
6. Content analysis of regulatory documents.
Key legislative and strategic documents were analyzed:
— the Law "On Education" (2020),
— the Strategy "Uzbekistan–2030" (2023),
— regulations on the development of the mahalla (2021–2023),
— and initiatives on digitalization of education (2024).
The legal foundation and institutional framework of the model were identified.
7. Expert evaluation method.
Expert opinions were synthesized, including those of specialists from the Agency for Mahalla Affairs, the Ministry of Public Education, UNICEF, and UNESCO. This strengthened both the analytical and applied components of the study.
Outcome
The combination of applied research methods provided a comprehensive theoretical and methodological justification of the "School–Mahalla" model, allowing the identification of its structural characteristics, value foundations, and the potential for integrating national traditions with modern educational innovations.
Structural and Functional Model of Civic Education (English Translation)

The structural and functional model of civic education within the "School–Mahalla" system reflects the complex nature of the educational process, its institutional connections, functional components, and mechanisms of interaction among key stakeholders. The model is based on the idea of a holistic learning environment that integrates formal and non-formal education, traditional social institutions, and contemporary pedagogical technologies.

At the center of the model is the student, viewed as an active subject of civic development, possessing needs, motivation, value orientations, and the potential for participation in community life.

Main Structural Components of the Model

1. School as the foundational institution of civic education.

The   school   ensures:
– the formation of knowledge about the state, law, and society;
– the development of critical thinking and media literacy skills;
– the organization of student self-governance and project-based activities;
– the involvement of children in social and volunteer initiatives.

The school serves as an educational, socially developmental, and integrative center.

2. Mahalla as a traditional institution of social cooperation.

The   mahalla   ensures:
– practical socialization within the local community;
– participation of families and the older generation in the educational process;
– intergenerational connection and transmission of cultural norms and ethics;
– organization of socially significant events and community initiatives.

In the model, the mahalla functions as a sociocultural space that fosters responsibility, respect, solidarity, and social activity.

3. Family as the primary educational environment.

The   family   shapes:
– moral attitudes and value orientations of the child;
– behavioral patterns and models of social interaction;
– support for the child's civic initiatives.

Through cooperation with the school and the mahalla, the family ensures continuity of educational influences.

4. Civil society institutions and NGOs.

Their   participation   includes:
– training in legal culture, media literacy, and the culture of peace;
– supporting children's projects and volunteer activities;
– preventing social and digital vulnerability.

NGOs serve as a channel for real civic participation of students.

5. Government structures (Ministry of Public Education, Agency for Mahalla Affairs).

They   perform   the   following   functions:
– regulatory and legal supervision;
– provision of resources;
– monitoring and methodological support of educational programs;
– development of digital infrastructure.

Functional Directions of the Model

1. Value-oriented function.

Ensures the formation of civic identity, patriotism, respect for the law, a culture of peace, and tolerance.
2. Cognitive–legal function.
Includes basic knowledge about the state and society, media literacy, legal education, and critical thinking.
3. Social–practical function.
Implemented through student participation in school and mahalla life: self-governance, projects, volunteer work, and community initiatives.
4. Communicative function.
Promotes the development of dialogue, cooperation, and constructive conflict resolution skills.
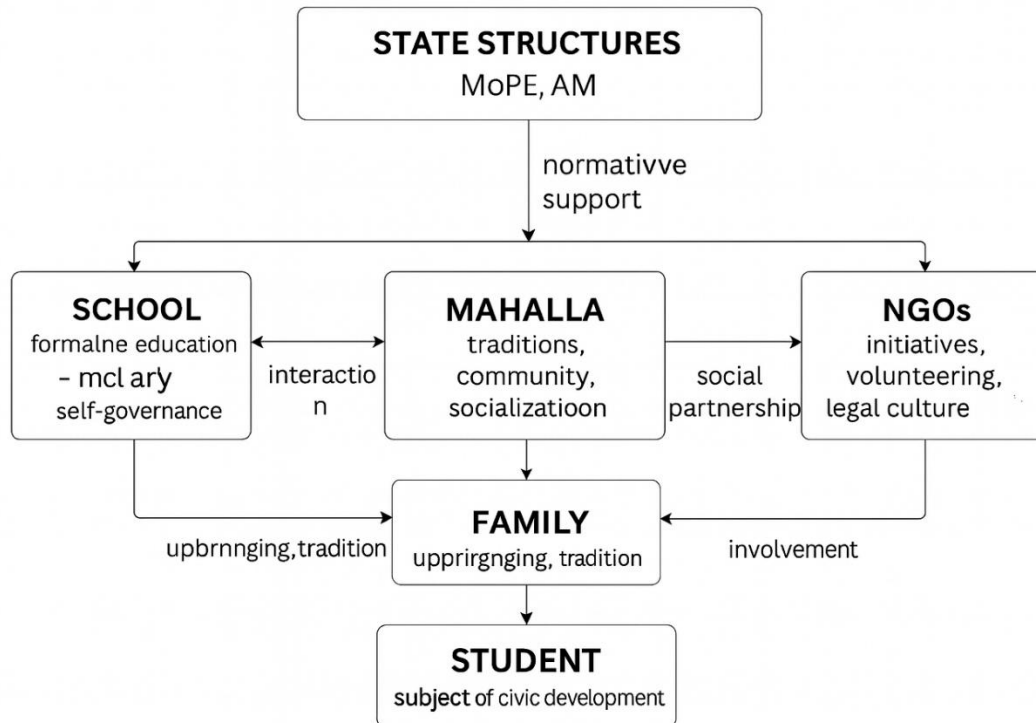5. Integrative function.
Ensures coordinated action among the school, family, mahalla, NGOs, and state structures.

Mechanisms of Model Functioning
– creation of a unified educational environment "school–family–mahalla";
– joint projects and activities (environmental campaigns, cultural programs, volunteer initiatives);
– digital platforms for civic participation (online courses, media clubs, media literacy projects);
– support for children's initiatives within local communities;
– regular interaction between teachers and mahalla institutions;
– involvement of the older generation in educational practices;
– integration of cultural traditions into modern educational formats.

Schematic Representation of the Model
It may be described as follows:
At the center is the student, surrounded by the key institutions: school – family – mahalla – NGOs – government structures, with functional links between them, including value-based, legal, social-practical, integrative, and communicative connections.

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Explanation of the Figure

The figure presents the structural and functional model of civic education for students within the "School–Mahalla" system. The diagram illustrates the interconnected activities of the main social institutions that jointly influence the formation of students' civic identity and social maturity.

At the center of the model is the student, viewed as an active subject of civic development. Their upbringing is carried out through the coordinated work of four key institutions:

• The school provides formal education, develops legal and political culture, and organizes student self-governance, project-based learning, and social initiatives.

• The mahalla serves as a traditional institution of the local community, transmitting cultural norms, collective values, and social experience, as well as creating conditions for practical socialization.

• The family performs the functions of primary socialization, shaping value orientations, the foundations of moral behavior, and supporting the child's participation in social activity.

• NGOs enhance the educational potential through volunteer programs, social projects, and initiatives aimed at developing legal literacy and civic engagement.

Above these institutions are state structures (the Ministry of Public Education and the Agency for Mahalla Affairs), which provide the regulatory framework, organizational support, and coordination of interactions among participants in the educational process.

The arrows in the diagram reflect multidimensional connections—joint programs, resource exchange, cultural and educational initiatives, and mechanisms of partnership cooperation.

Such integration forms a unified educational space that combines formal and non-formal learning, national traditions, and the modern requirements of civil society.

Overall, the model demonstrates that the effectiveness of civic education in Uzbekistan is achieved through close coordination among the school, family, mahalla, NGOs, and state structures, which reflects the essence of the contemporary "School–Mahalla" approach.

Discussion

The presented "School–Mahalla" model demonstrates a high degree of integrativity and adaptability, which makes it relevant for the contemporary socio-pedagogical context of Uzbekistan. Its key advantage lies in the combination of traditional institutions—family and mahalla—with modern educational practices, including digital technologies, interactive methods, and project-based forms of activity. Such a synthesis of formal and non-formal educational resources creates a stable developmental environment in which civic values are formed consistently and systematically.

The multilevel structure of the educational actors strengthens the complexity of the model: state structures determine strategic and normative directions; the school implements educational and developmental programs; the mahalla provides practical socialization; the family shapes primary value orientations; and NGOs contribute to the development of students' legal and social culture. The synergy of these elements creates a holistic civic identity that includes universal democratic values (human rights, tolerance, participation, responsibility) and national cultural priorities (respect for elders, collectivism, patriotism).

Along with its strengths, several limitations have been identified that must be considered during implementation.

First, differences among mahallas in terms of resources, staff training, and community involvement complicate the standardization of educational practices. Second, insufficient competence of some teachers and mahalla workers may lead to formal or superficial implementation of educational activities. Third, the risk of ideological bias may create tension with the principles of inclusivity, secularism, and human rights. Fourth, the digital dimension suffers from a lack of methodological materials, specialists, and technical infrastructure.

A comparison with international models of civic education (USA, France, Germany, Japan) reveals shared elements: civic education courses, student self-governance, volunteerism, service learning, and social projects. However, the uniqueness of the Uzbek model lies in the special role of the mahalla as a mediator between the school, family, and local community, providing the educational process with cultural depth and sociocultural rootedness.

The digital dimension of the model is two-sided: on the one hand, the online environment expands opportunities for civic participation, offering access to information and platforms (e.g., "ZiyoNET," "Mahalla–School Hub"); on the other hand, it increases risks of digital vulnerability, misinformation, and radical content. This emphasizes the necessity of implementing programs for media literacy and digital citizenship [Livingstone, 2019; Ribble, 2012].

The multicultural and confessional context also plays an important role: Uzbekistan's multiethnic and multireligious composition requires the cultivation of inter-cultural dialogue, interfaith tolerance, and the prevention of extremism. The involvement of religious leaders and

elders can enhance the value dimension of education, yet demands careful balance with secular principles.

For scaling the model, the following conditions are essential:
1. training teachers and social workers for interdisciplinary, interagency, and culturally sensitive work;
2. institutionalizing the role of the mahalla and forming professional educational teams at the local level;
3. developing indicators of civic maturity and mechanisms for monitoring learning outcomes;
4. state support for digital, methodological, and human resources.

Conclusion of the Discussion:
The "School–Mahalla" model serves as a strategically significant innovation that integrates traditional and modern pedagogical approaches. It is aimed at shaping a sustainable, just, and inclusive society in which young people possess a developed civic position and social responsibility.

Conclusion

The findings of the study confirm that civic education under modern conditions becomes a key factor in the sustainable development of society. It ensures the preservation of cultural traditions, strengthens national identity, enhances social cohesion, and promotes democratic values.

Despite the diversity of international models of civic education, they share common foundations: human rights, critical thinking, participation, a culture of peace, and social responsibility. The Uzbek "School–Mahalla" model effectively integrates these universal values with local traditions and the specifics of a multiethnic and multiconfessional society. This makes it unique compared to foreign systems.

The integration of the school, family, mahalla, and state structures creates a unified educational space in which the academic process is strengthened by students' practical involvement in community life. Volunteer initiatives, student self-governance, social projects, and digital platforms foster cooperation skills, responsibility, and civic maturity among young people.

Digital transformation opens new opportunities but also intensifies risks—informational vulnerability, radicalization, and superficial perception. Therefore, the development of digital citizenship and media literacy becomes an essential component of civic education.

For the further development of the model, the following are necessary:
1. systematic methodological training of teachers and mahalla workers;
2. creation of institutional mechanisms for "school–mahalla–family–NGO" partnership;
3. development of national indicators for assessing students' civic maturity;
4. regulatory and resource support from the state.

Final Conclusion:
The "School–Mahalla" model possesses significant potential for shaping socially active, culturally grounded, and civically mature individuals. Its practical value extends beyond the national context and may be considered an innovative example of adapting global approaches to civic education within the cultural traditions of Uzbekistan.

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