

## **THE ROLE OF THE MAHALLA AS A SOCIO- PEDAGOGICAL ENVIRONMENT IN SHAPING STUDENTS' CIVIC CULTURE**

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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 МАХАЛЛИ КАК СОЦИАЛЬНО- ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ ГРАЖДАНСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ 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.

**THE ROLE OF THE MAHALLA AS A SOCIAL AND PEDAGOGICAL SPACE IN  
THE FORMATION OF STUDENTS' CIVIC CULTURE**



## Introduction

Contemporary challenges—rapid digitalization, increasing global mobility, and the growing complexity of social communication—present new demands to the education system. Today, society requires young people who are not only able to acquire knowledge, but also capable of actively engaging in community life, understanding social processes, and developing a responsible civic stance. Therefore, issues of civic education are becoming central in the national educational strategies of many countries [Dewey, 1916; Heater, 2004].

In Uzbekistan, the civic education of schoolchildren is viewed as a key mechanism for shaping an independent, initiative-driven, and open-minded personality prepared to live and work under conditions of reforms and global competition. The growing influence of digital media, the expansion of public participation spaces, and the shift toward the model of a “strong society — strong statehood” intensify the need to reconsider traditional approaches to educational and upbringing practices [Slastenin et al., 2005].

Against this background, the institution of the mahalla becomes particularly significant — an ancient yet dynamically modernized social mechanism. Historically, the mahalla has fulfilled functions of mutual assistance, moral support, and regulation of community relations. Today, it is transforming into a full-fledged environment for civic socialization, where schoolchildren can observe real examples of public participation, a culture of dialogue, and collective responsibility.

The modern model of cooperation between the school and the mahalla creates a new pedagogical space that integrates academic learning with real-life practice. Within this framework, the child not only studies civic norms theoretically but also masters them through action — participation in local initiatives, communication with community representatives, and an understanding of social problems and ways to address them [Khamroev, 2020; Abdurazakov, 2018].

This study aims to reveal the pedagogical potential of the mahalla as an environment for the civic formation of schoolchildren. Its purpose is to determine how the local community influences the development of students’ civic culture and how the interaction between the “School–Mahalla” can be strengthened under modern conditions.

<b>The</b>	<b>research</b>	<b>objectives</b>	<b>include:</b>
—	analyzing	contemporary	approaches to civic education;
—	examining	the potential of	the mahalla as an educational space;
—	identifying	factors that	promote students’ civic engagement;
—	determining	the problems and	barriers in school–mahalla integration;
—	developing	directions for	improving this model.

The updated introduction emphasizes that civic education today cannot be considered outside the context of the local community. The mahalla, as a unique cultural and social institution of Uzbekistan, is becoming a vital resource for forming an active, socially mature, and responsible young generation.

## Literature Review

Contemporary research on civic education demonstrates that this field is evolving as a complex and multidimensional domain that integrates cognitive, value-based, motivational, and activity-oriented components. Scholarly literature emphasizes that the formation of civic identity cannot be reduced merely to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge about the state and



society—it requires the development of stable value orientations, a culture of social interaction, and readiness for public participation [Gutmann, 1999; Heater, 2004].

In international pedagogical thought, the ideas of John Dewey played a foundational role. He viewed democratic education as a key mechanism for developing an active civic stance. His concepts of participation, experience, and practice-oriented learning continue to influence many contemporary educational models [Dewey, 1916]. Parallel to this, Paulo Freire proposed a critical pedagogy based on dialogue, reflection, and the learner's ability to understand their social role and responsibility toward society [Freire, 1970]. Dewey's and Freire's approaches acquire renewed significance in the context of digitalization and global information pressures, where critical thinking becomes the cornerstone of civic resilience [Livingstone, 2019].

In European countries, civic education develops within national educational systems. The French model of *éducation à la citoyenneté* aims to strengthen republican values and prevent social exclusion [Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2018]. Germany's *Demokratie leben!* program focuses on developing civic competence and preventing extremism and radicalization among youth [BMFSFJ, 2020]. The Japanese system fosters civic awareness through traditions of collective responsibility, social harmony, and interpersonal agreement [Kawaguchi, 2015]. In the United States, the concept of Civic Education is oriented toward the development of legal culture, critical thinking, and readiness to participate in public governance. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) highlights the importance of intercultural communication, digital civic engagement, and students' practical involvement in school community life [NCSS, 2013].

In post-Soviet pedagogy, civic education has received renewed theoretical interpretation. V.A. Slastenin conceptualized it as a process of developing a humanistic orientation of the personality, emphasizing the role of the sociocultural environment and the family [Slastenin et al., 2005]. G.K. Selevko classified civic education technologies, including project-based learning, collective forms of interaction, and discussion methods [Selevko, 1998]. A.V. Yasvin demonstrated how school climate and the educational environment influence the development of students' civic activity and responsibility [Yasvin, 2001].

In Uzbekistan, recent years have seen increasing interest in integrating traditional institutions with modern pedagogical approaches. The mahalla occupies a special place as it plays a key role in socialization, the transmission of moral norms, and the development of a sense of belonging among youth. Researchers emphasize that the combination of mahalla traditions with digital and innovative educational practices forms a unique national model of civic development among students [Khamroev, 2020; Abdurazakov, 2018; Aliyev, 2021].

International organizations also make a significant contribution to the development of civic education. UNESCO and OSCE implement programs aimed at fostering a culture of peace, intercultural dialogue, tolerance, and legal awareness, including projects in Central Asia [UNESCO, 2022]. UNICEF places particular emphasis on children's rights, participation in decision-making, and the development of civic competencies as a foundation for sustainable development.

The analysis of the literature allows several key patterns to be identified:

- civic education is developing as an interdisciplinary field that integrates philosophy, pedagogy, cultural studies, and digital research;
- international experience demonstrates diverse models, yet all are grounded in the principles of democracy, human rights, and social responsibility;



- Uzbekistan is forming its own model based on the mahalla as a unique social and educational space;
- the importance of digital citizenship is growing, including media literacy, critical thinking, and resilience to destructive influences.

These theoretical positions create a scientific foundation for further conceptualizing civic education within the “School–Mahalla” system and for developing effective practical mechanisms that correspond to Uzbekistan’s cultural context and the challenges of contemporary society.

## Methods

Since the study has a theoretical and methodological orientation and does not involve empirical experimentation, it is based on a set of scientific methods that ensure a systemic understanding of civic education within the “School–Mahalla” model. The methods applied made it possible to conduct an in-depth analysis of conceptual foundations, regulatory documents, and scientific approaches that shape this model.

### 1. Analysis and synthesis of scientific literature.

The works of international and national scholars in philosophy of education, general pedagogy, sociology, cultural studies, and social psychology were examined [Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Heater, 2004; Slastenin et al., 2005; Selevko, 1998]. The analysis made it possible to identify the main trends in the development of civic education in both global and national contexts, while synthesis enabled the integration of diverse theoretical approaches into a coherent scientific concept reflecting the specifics of the Uzbek educational model.

### 2. Comparative method.

To determine the distinctive features of the “School–Mahalla” model, its conceptual foundations were compared with international models of civic education. Programs from the United States (Civic Education, NCSS), France (*éducation à la citoyenneté*), Germany (*Demokratie leben!*), Japan (Moral and Civic Education), as well as UNESCO and OSCE initiatives aimed at strengthening intercultural dialogue and legal culture were analyzed [UNESCO, 2022; BMFSFJ, 2020]. This allowed the identification of universal values and the definition of nationally specific features of civic education in Uzbekistan.

### 3. Systems approach.

Civic education was considered as an integrated sociocultural system, comprising the school, family, mahalla, public organizations, state institutions, and digital infrastructure. Systemic analysis enabled the interpretation of the “School–Mahalla” model as an integrative mechanism uniting formal, non-formal, and family-based education into a single educational environment.

### 4. Axiological and cultural approaches.

The study emphasized the value foundations of civic education: justice, tolerance, civic responsibility, a culture of peace, and patriotism [Gutmann, 1999]. The cultural approach made it possible to identify the significance of local traditions—particularly the mahalla institution and Islamic spiritual culture—and to reveal the mechanisms of their adaptation under conditions of digitalization and globalization [Yunusov, 2020].

### 5. Learner-centered and activity-based approaches.

These approaches made it possible to analyze students’ involvement in real forms of civic engagement: school self-governance, volunteer initiatives, socially significant projects, and



discussion practices. The student is viewed as an active subject of civic formation, capable of initiative and responsibility [Yasvin, 2001].

#### 6. Content analysis of regulatory documents.

Key strategic documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan were examined:

— the Law “On Education” (2020);

— the “Uzbekistan–2030” Strategy (2023);

— regulatory acts on the development of the mahalla institution (2021–2023);

— state programs on digitalization of the educational environment (2024).

Content analysis revealed the legal and institutional foundations of the “School–Mahalla” model, defining its place within national educational policy.

#### 7. Expert assessment method.

The study incorporated conclusions from specialists of the Agency for Mahalla Affairs, the Ministry of Public Education, as well as analytical materials from UNICEF and UNESCO. Expert opinions expanded the theoretical analysis, revealing practical challenges and prospects for the model’s development.

The combined application of these methods resulted in the formation of a multidimensional theoretical and methodological basis for analyzing civic education within the “School–Mahalla” system, as well as identifying the patterns, tendencies, and specific features of its functioning under the conditions of modern Uzbekistan.

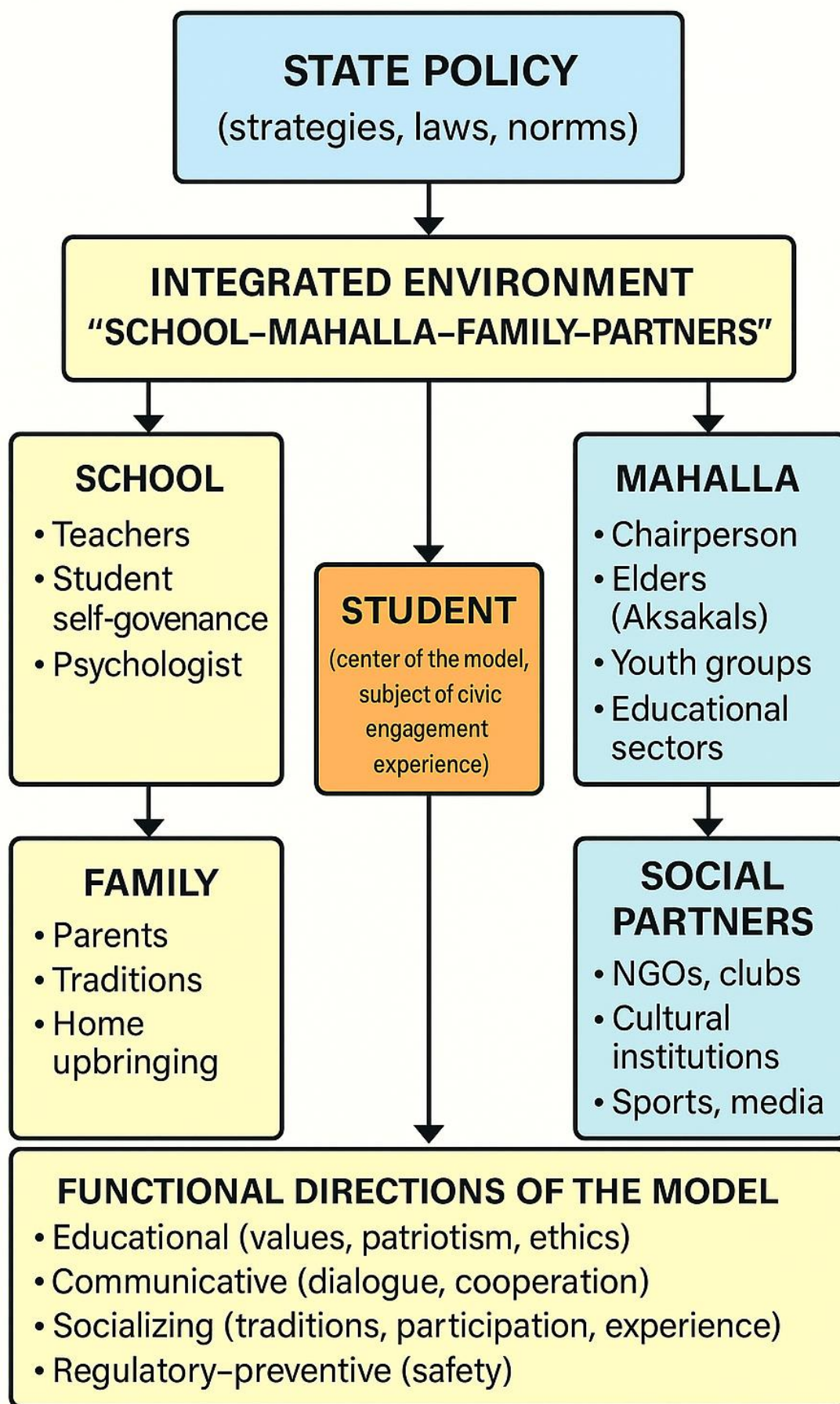
### Results

The findings of the study highlight the key features of civic education within the “School–Mahalla” model. The theoretical analysis, comparison of international approaches, examination of national regulatory documents, and expert assessments demonstrate that the Uzbek model possesses pronounced integrative potential. It unites the school, family, and mahalla into a single educational ecosystem that shapes civic culture by combining traditional values with modern pedagogical innovations.

#### 2. Structural and functional model of civic education

Below is a schematic representation of the “School–Mahalla” model, reflecting the key actors and the main directions of educational interaction:







### Explanation of the Figure

Figure 1. Structural and Functional Model of Civic Education in the “School–Mahalla” System. The diagram illustrates the holistic architecture of interaction among the main social institutions involved in the civic education of schoolchildren. The upper block represents state policy, which defines the regulatory and strategic guidelines for educational activities. At the center of the model is the integrated environment “School–Mahalla–Family–Partners,” ensuring the unity of formal, non-formal, and family-based education.

The four key blocks—school, mahalla, family, and social partners—represent the participants in the educational process, each contributing through pedagogical, cultural-traditional, social-organizational, and educational activities. The student occupies the central position as a subject of civic activity and a bearer of personal experience in community participation.

The lower block reveals the functional areas of the model: value-based and educational, communicative, socializing, regulatory-preventive, and project-activity components. Their interaction ensures the formation of civic culture, the development of responsibility, initiative, and readiness for public participation among schoolchildren.

### Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the “School–Mahalla” model represents an effective civic education system based on the integration of traditional and modern approaches. Its key advantage lies in uniting the school, family, and local community, which strengthens educational influence and supports the formation of a holistic civic identity among students.

The model exhibits several strengths:

- the combination of mahalla and family values with innovative and digital educational practices;
- the involvement of a wide range of actors (school, family, mahalla, social partners), ensuring synergy of efforts;
- the cultivation of responsibility, tolerance, patriotism, and legal culture among the younger generation.

However, certain limitations were also identified:

- variations in resources and activity levels of mahallas, complicating unified implementation;
- the risk of formalization of activities if teachers and mahalla workers lack proper training;
- the need for methodological support for digital initiatives;
- the potential conflict between traditional practices and the principles of inclusivity.

Comparisons with international models (USA, Germany, France, Japan) show that the Uzbek system is distinguished by deep cultural rootedness: the mahalla institution acts as a unique intermediary between the school and society. At the same time, digital transformation requires the development of media literacy and digital citizenship, consistent with global trends.

Thus, the “School–Mahalla” model possesses significant potential for further development, yet requires institutional support, professional training, expansion of digital capabilities, and the creation of a national system for monitoring students’ civic maturity.

### Conclusion

The study has made it possible to determine the key features of civic education within the “School–Mahalla” system and to demonstrate its relevance under contemporary conditions.



The model confirms that civic education extends beyond the school and becomes a factor of sustainable social development, strengthening cohesion and shaping democratic values.

Comparative analysis shows that international approaches rely on universal principles—human rights, critical thinking, and social engagement. The Uzbek model stands out due to its unique synthesis of mahalla traditions and modern pedagogical strategies, making it especially relevant in the country’s multiethnic and multireligious context.

The integrated environment “School–Mahalla” facilitates interaction among the main actors of education—the school, the family, the local community, and social partners. The involvement of students in projects, initiatives, and social practice contributes to the development of responsibility, patriotism, tolerance, and legal culture.

The digitalization of education creates new opportunities but also introduces risks, requiring the development of media literacy and digital citizenship. An important element of the model is maintaining a balance between national traditions and the demands of the contemporary digital society.

Thus, the “School–Mahalla” system can be regarded as a promising platform for fostering a civically mature, socially responsible, and open personality. Its further development requires methodological, regulatory, and resource support, as well as the creation of national mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of educational work. The model has the potential to be presented internationally as a successful example of adapting global approaches to the unique cultural context of Uzbekistan.

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