STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SOCIALLY ACTIVE CIVIC COMPETENCE IN SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract. This article systematises strategies for developing socially active civic competence among general secondary school students through competence-based, activity-based, axiological, and social-capital approaches. Civic competence is interpreted as an integrated combination of socio-legal and economic knowledge; the skills required to perform diverse social roles; democratic communication and critical thinking; the lawful protection of rights and interests; values oriented towards the public good; and reflection. The article proposes a mechanism for implementing these strategies through the stages of diagnosis, design, practical participation, public presentation, and reflective assessment.

Keywords: socially active civic competence, pedagogical strategy, competence-based approach, cognitive domain, activity-based component, axiological component, social capital, student participation, social project, critical thinking, digital citizenship.

In contemporary society, civic competence cannot be reduced to knowledge of the structure of the state or of legal norms. A civically competent person is distinguished by the ability to act responsibly in different spheres of social life, balance personal and collective interests, participate in decision-making and oversight, and engage lawfully with citizens and with social, economic, and political institutions. Social roles such as voter, candidate for election, consumer, entrepreneur, partner, family member, neighbour, community representative, or participant in a civic initiative are therefore particularly important. General secondary school students cannot yet perform all these roles with full legal status. Schools should consequently model them progressively through age-appropriate situations, simulations, self-governance, and social projects.

Article 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan establishes citizens' right to participate in the management of public and state affairs directly and through their representatives; Article 79 states that the state shall encourage young people's

active participation in public and state life [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]. These provisions establish a legal foundation for the systematic development of civic competence at school. The pedagogical challenge is that providing information about citizenship does not, by itself, turn a student into an active citizen. Unless knowledge is connected with value-based choice, social communication, practical action, and an assessment of its consequences, competence remains merely declarative. A competence-based approach must therefore answer not only the question "What does the student know?" but also "In what situation, how, and for what purpose can the student act?"

The purpose of this article is to clarify the theoretical foundations for developing socially active civic competence in school students, systematise pedagogical strategies corresponding to the cognitive, activity-operational, and axiological domains, and propose a mechanism for introducing these strategies into school practice.

The study employed content analysis of the current regulatory and legal documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a comparative review of theoretical sources on competence and social capital, the systematisation of international civic-education models, and pedagogical modelling.

Its methodological framework integrates competence-based, activity-based, and axiological approaches with experiential learning, dialogic education, and social-capital theory. J. Raven interprets competence as the integration of cognitive, emotional, and volitional elements that enable effective action [3]. J. Dewey links education and democratic life through experience and cooperation [13], while D. Kolb substantiates a cycle comprising experience, reflective observation, conceptualisation, and experimentation through new action [14].

The international criteria used in the analysis were drawn from UNESCO's cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural domains of global citizenship education [6]; the Council of Europe's model of competences for democratic culture, which encompasses values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding [7]; and the European Union's recommendations on citizenship competence for lifelong learning [11].

Socially active citizenship is not synonymous solely with participation in political events. It encompasses citizens' ability to make decisions in everyday social, economic, cultural, environmental, and legal relations; lawfully defend their own rights and interests; recognise the rights of others; propose solutions to community problems; and assume responsibility for the outcomes.

In civil society, individuals perform several roles at the same time. As consumers, they verify information and protect their rights; as partners, they honour agreements and obligations; as community members, they contribute to resolving shared problems; and, in the future, as voters, they evaluate candidates and programmes on the basis of evidence. Civic competence is therefore not the memorisation of a list of roles, but the ability to meet their legal and ethical requirements appropriately in a given situation.

Legal boundaries must be observed when working with students. Partisan campaigning at school or pressuring a student to adopt a particular political position is not a legitimate aim of civic education. Political institutions should be studied from neutral, legal, and comparative perspectives. The roles of voter and candidate may be modelled in age-appropriate ways through class or student-council elections, draft decisions, and simulations of public hearings.

Social capital expands an individual's capacity for action through trust, cooperation, reciprocal obligations, information exchange, and shared norms. J. Coleman regards social capital as a resource for action and distinguishes such forms as obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms [4]. The OECD defines social capital as the networks, shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups [5].

By synthesising the approaches presented in the source literature, this study interprets socially active civic competence as an integrated unity of cognitive, activity-operational, and axiological domains. Reflection functions as the cross-cutting mechanism that connects all three.

1. **Cognitive domain:** systematic knowledge of society and its structure; the state and the political system; rights and responsibilities; mechanisms for protecting human rights; elections; economic relations; social-project design; history and culture; and moral categories such as good and evil, justice, humanism, and generosity.

2. **Activity-operational domain:** skills in performing social roles, analysing situations, exercising and lawfully protecting rights, participating in democratic

procedures, communicating and negotiating, thinking critically, evaluating information, making social choices, planning projects, and working in a team.

3. **Axiological domain:** a value-based relationship to national culture and the state, human dignity, the rule of law, justice, tolerance, solidarity, integrity, work and collective ethics, the public good, and responsibility for the consequences of one's decisions.

On this basis, the following authorial definition is proposed: socially active civic competence in school students is an integrative capacity and readiness that combines knowledge of social life and legal relations with democratic values, the performance of social roles, evidence-based communication, lawful initiative, service to the public good, and reflective evaluation of one's actions. A pedagogical strategy is not a single method; it is the long-term logic of action that coordinates content, participants, methods, resources, stages, and assessment criteria in order to achieve a defined outcome.

Strategies for developing civic competence should be based on the following principles:

1. **Legality and age appropriateness:** every activity must correspond to the student's legal status, safety, and developmental characteristics.

2. **Unity of knowledge, values, and action:** theoretical content must culminate in practical application and reflective assessment.

3. **Meaningful participation:** students must receive relevant information, genuine choice, an opportunity to influence decisions, and feedback on outcomes.

4. **Neutrality and pluralism:** rather than transmitting a particular political position, the teacher should facilitate discussion on the basis of evidence, law, and human dignity.

5. **Inclusion:** every student must have an opportunity to participate regardless of gender, place of residence, language, social status, or special educational needs.

6. **Cooperation and social capital:** the resources of the school, family, mahalla, and civic institutions must be connected in the student's interests.

7. **Evidence and reflection:** decisions must be assessed with reference to the source of information, likely consequences, and the public good.

8. **Continuity:** recurring experience, progressively greater responsibility, and long-term observation should replace one-off events.

Strategies for Developing Socially Active Civic Competence

1. Cognitive-Integrative Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to transform civic knowledge from a collection of isolated facts into a functional system for understanding social situations and making decisions. The content of history, law, upbringing and values education, the native language and literature, geography, fundamentals of economics, and information technology is organised around a common problem-based question.

For example, when addressing the question "How can safe movement around the school be ensured?", students simultaneously examine legal rules, the responsibilities of local authorities, statistical data, budgetary constraints, public opinion, and methods for presenting information. As a result, knowledge of social structures, human rights, and economic literacy is connected with practical decision-making.

Core methods include problem-based questions, interdisciplinary cases, comparative analysis of documents and sources, concept maps, legal scenarios, information-search algorithms, and short analytical writing. The strategy primarily develops the cognitive domain, but every topic concludes with the question: "What responsible action can be taken on the basis of this knowledge?"

2. Social-Role Modelling Strategy

Students understand the demands of different social roles more deeply in simulated situations than through theoretical definitions alone. Simulations such as class-council elections, consumer complaints, public hearings, mediation, family budgeting, social enterprise, mock trials, or project teams develop the activity-operational domain.

A role-play is organised in four stages: understanding the situation and its legal boundaries; defining the role's purpose and responsibilities; acting through evidence and negotiation; and reflectively analysing the outcome and its ethical consequences. Merely performing the role is insufficient. Students must explain which right they exercised, whose interests they considered, and which decision was more just.

According to A. Bandura's social cognitive theory, individuals also learn by observing the actions of others and understanding their consequences [17]. The teacher

should therefore model lawful, respectful, and evidence-based conduct in the simulated situation, while students rotate roles and learn to view the same problem from different perspectives.

3. Participatory Democratic Governance Strategy

This strategy seeks to transform the school into a democratic environment in which civic competence is learned through practice. Through student councils, class meetings, the "Student Platform," a proposal system, and small initiative budgets, students gain experience in setting an agenda, substantiating proposals, electing representatives, monitoring implementation, and discussing reports.

The OECD links children's participation in decisions that affect them with rights, opportunities, and positive developmental outcomes [9]. Participation, however, may become purely symbolic. If adults determine the issue, candidates, decision, and report in full, a student council becomes a formal event rather than a civic experience.

Meaningful participation has the following criteria: students receive understandable information; they can express their views safely; their proposals genuinely influence decisions; accepted or rejected proposals receive reasoned feedback; and elected representatives are accountable. The OECD distinguishes student voice in education systems as expressed through governance, consultation, and complaint mechanisms [18].

4. Social Capital and Networked Cooperation Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to create a social network around the student that connects resources of trust, information, support, and cooperation. Depending on the nature of the issue, school–family–mahalla cooperation may include libraries, youth organisations, non-governmental non-profit organisations, entrepreneurs, lawyers, environmental specialists, and volunteers.

Practical mechanisms include mentoring; meetings focused on professional and civic experience; intergenerational dialogue; joint projects addressing neighbourhood problems; initiatives implemented by several schools; and resource mapping. The responsibilities of every partner, student-safety requirements, information confidentiality, and accountability for outcomes must be defined in advance.

In addition to strengthening close ties, the strategy should bring students into contact with groups whose experiences and views differ from their own. Trust can

thereby grow beyond one's immediate group and develop into civic solidarity. R. Putnam identifies the interrelationship among civic engagement, mutual trust, and collective networks as a central aspect of social capital [16].

5. Social Projects and Service-Learning Strategy

A social project transforms the student from the executor of a predesigned event into a responsible participant in solving a problem. The project begins with a real, safe, and age-appropriate issue in the school or neighbourhood, such as book exchange, waste sorting, cyber-safety awareness, an inclusive environment, road safety, or information and support services for older people living alone.

The project cycle comprises identifying the problem through evidence, studying stakeholders, setting goals and indicators, allocating tasks, securing resources, implementation, public presentation of results, and reflection. The OECD emphasises that effective civic education moves beyond one-way transmission of knowledge towards experience, student-centred activity, and learning connected with the community [8].

Unless service to the community is connected with an educational aim, it remains ordinary volunteer work. Every practical activity must therefore be integrated with subject content, legal and ethical analysis, and a reflective report. In addition to "What did we do?", students should answer: "Who benefited and how?", "Which right and value guided us?", and "What did not change, and why?"

6. Dialogic-Communicative and Critical-Thinking Strategy

Differences of interest and opinion are natural in civil society. Students must therefore learn to express their views clearly and persuasively, listen to others, separate an argument from the person presenting it, ask questions, identify common ground, and maintain a lawful position without yielding to pressure.

P. Freire presents dialogue as a means of transforming learners from passive recipients into subjects who understand reality and participate in changing it [15]. The strategy employs Socratic seminars, debates, round-table discussions, mediation, the "claim–evidence–reasoning" formula, source comparison, and discussion of ethical dilemmas.

Critical thinking does not mean rejecting information; it is the ability to examine its source, purpose, evidence, logical connections, and possible interests. Students

should distinguish fact from opinion, a legal norm from a personal view, and the common good from a group interest. Assessment should focus not on a "correct political opinion," but on the quality of evidence, respect for human dignity, and a culture of dialogue.

7. Axiological-Reflective Strategy

The axiological strategy reveals the moral basis—the "why"—of knowledge and action. National culture, belonging to the homeland, human dignity, justice, tolerance, generosity, diligence, and integrity are studied not as ready-made slogans, but as criteria for decision-making.

Methods include value hierarchies, ethical dilemmas, analysis of literary and historical texts, a "consequences of decisions" matrix, essays on personal civic experience, reflective journals, peer feedback, and social-project portfolios. Students analyse the consequences of a decision for themselves, for others, and for the community.

Compelling students to accept a value may produce only outward conformity. The teacher should therefore pose value-related questions openly, enable students to compare different arguments, and require them to justify conclusions with reference to law, human dignity, and the common good. This process connects the axiological domain with personal meaning and responsibility.

8. Digital Citizenship Strategy

A significant share of civic activity has moved into the digital environment. Students search for information about social issues, express opinions, promote initiatives, and communicate with different groups online. At the same time, they face risks such as disinformation, manipulation, hate speech, disclosure of personal data, and digital harassment.

This strategy encompasses checking the source and date of information, locating primary documents, distinguishing facts from opinions, evaluating images and statistics, managing one's digital footprint and privacy, and lawfully organising an online appeal or public-information campaign. The Council of Europe recommends applying competences for democratic culture to digital citizenship education as well [7].

Practical tasks include verifying a report against three sources, preparing an evidence record for a public-service announcement, analysing a case involving risks to personal data, drafting rules for online communication, and simulating an electronic appeal. Digital engagement should be assessed not by the number of "likes" or reposts, but by the reliability of the information, legality, standards of communication, and tangible social outcomes.

Developing socially active civic competence in school students is a broader process than merely providing information about citizenship. It requires integrating students' knowledge of society and the state, law, economic relations, and moral criteria with social roles, evidence-based communication, lawful action, the public good, and reflection.

This study systematises cognitive-integrative, social-role modelling, participatory democratic governance, social-capital and cooperation, social-project, dialogic-critical, axiological-reflective, and digital-citizenship strategies. Their effectiveness depends not on applying any one strategy in isolation, but on aligning the three domains and embedding democratic practice in the school's daily life.

Reliable evidence of civic competence emerges not when a student can recite a legal norm, but when the student can find trustworthy information in a new situation, consider different interests, substantiate a position, propose a lawful solution, work with others to create a tangible outcome, and responsibly assess the consequences of his or her actions.

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