



“EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS’ SOCIO-ETHICAL COMPETENCIES: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES”

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the issue of developing socio-moral competences among students. It analyzes the theoretical foundations, practical mechanisms, and ways to enhance the effectiveness of fostering these competences. The study emphasizes the significance of socio-moral competences in the context of globalization, digital transformation, and rapid social change. The research methodology is based on a comprehensive approach that includes observation, questionnaires, interviews, testing, and experimental trials. The findings highlight interactive teaching methods, the personal example of educators, students’ involvement in social activities, and the cultivation of digital ethics culture as key factors in developing socio-moral competences. The paper presents specific conclusions regarding the challenges and opportunities of developing such competences in higher education. It stresses the necessity of integrating theoretical knowledge with practical life situations.

Introduction. In the context of contemporary globalization processes, digital transformation, and rapid social changes, the education system faces the pressing task of preparing not only professionally competitive graduates but also individuals with strong socio-moral values. The holistic development of a person is measured not only by their professional competence but also by their commitment to socio-moral principles, namely the ability to adhere consistently to ethical norms.¹ Therefore, fostering socio-moral competences among students has become one of the strategic objectives of the educational process.

¹ Calancea, M. (2020). *Integrity as a personal, professional and moral value. Journal for Ethics in Social Studies*, 3(1), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.18662/jess.19>



The concept of socio-moral competences is broad in scope, encompassing such aspects as self-regulation, adherence to social norms of behavior, social responsibility, and a culture of positive communication.² Socio-moral competences encompass skills such as self-regulation, adherence to social norms, establishing positive relationships with others, and adapting to social environments, thereby reflecting an individual's adaptive social functioning.³

In the education policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, fostering a well-rounded personality and enhancing the moral and ethical maturity of young people are recognized as state priorities. In particular, the Law "On Education"⁴ and the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to raise the system of educating young people to a qualitatively new stage, ensuring their moral, ethical, and physical development" emphasize the importance of educating students to become socially active, patriotic, and morally mature individuals.

In recent years, this issue has attracted significant scholarly attention. For instance, Hasanova⁵ analyzed technologies for enhancing teachers' moral and aesthetic worldview, Musayeva⁶ philosophically substantiated the role of hadiths in shaping individuals' moral and ethical values, and Assomiddinov⁷ examined the nature of moral culture and its development, suggesting mechanisms for applying it in the moral education of youth under modern conditions.

The relevance of this study lies in the necessity of thoroughly examining the theoretical and practical aspects of developing socio-moral competences among students and implementing them through effective mechanisms within the educational process. Therefore, this article seeks to elucidate the scientific foundations of socio-moral competences, analyze existing scholarly perspectives, and develop effective pedagogical and psychological mechanisms for fostering these competences in students.

The purpose of the study is to explore the theoretical foundations of developing socio-moral competences among students and to design effective mechanisms that can be applied in the educational process.

Methodology. In this study, a comprehensive methodological approach was employed to identify the mechanisms for developing students' socio-moral competences and to evaluate their effectiveness. The research was based on both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, utilizing the following methods: observation, surveys, interviews, testing, experimental trials, and statistical analysis.

² Oberle, E., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2017). Social and emotional learning: Recent research and practical strategies for promoting children's social and emotional competence in schools. In *Handbook of Social Behavior and Skills in Children* (pp. 175–197). Springer.

³ Semrud-Clikeman, M. (2007). Social competence in children. Springer.

⁴ Qonun hujjatlari ma'lumotlari milliy bazasi, 24.09.2020-y

⁵ Hasanova, Z. D. (2020). *Developing moral-aesthetic worldview in vocational education teachers through pedagogical technologies* [Doctoral dissertation, Tashkent State Pedagogical University].

⁶ Musayeva, N. M. (2021). *Insonning ma'naviy-axloqiy fazilatlarini shakllantirishda hadislarning roli* [Doctoral dissertation, National University of Uzbekistan].

⁷ Assomiddinov, E. A. (2019). *Axloqiy madaniyat va uning rivojlanish xususiyatlari* [Doctoral dissertation, National University of Uzbekistan].



First, the observation method was applied to examine students' socio-moral behavior and interactions in the educational process. Through this method, the communication between teachers and students, students' participation in group activities, and their attitudes toward social values were observed.⁸

Second, surveys and interviews were conducted to identify the perspectives of students and educators regarding socio-moral competences and their attitudes toward the process of their formation. These methods made it possible to collect qualitative data and to determine the existing challenges in this area.⁹

Third, experimental trials were organized and conducted in two stages:

Diagnostic stage – the initial level of students' socio-moral competences was identified.

Practical stage – intervention mechanisms were introduced through the application of specific pedagogical technologies, training sessions, and interactive methods such as role-playing, case studies, and debates.

Fourth, statistical analysis was employed to ensure an objective evaluation of the results. The quantitative data obtained were processed in the SPSS software and interpreted on the basis of percentages, variance, and arithmetic mean values.¹⁰

The integrated application of methods made it possible to thoroughly investigate the process of developing socio-moral competences, to identify effective mechanisms, and to demonstrate their practical significance. Furthermore, the methodological basis of the study was defined by the principles of learner-centered, competence-based, and activity-oriented approaches.¹¹

Results. The study involved 120 students (aged 18–22), mainly second- and third-year undergraduates from various higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. The sample was relatively balanced in terms of gender, with female students comprising 54% and male students 46%. The research was conducted anonymously and in accordance with international ethical standards.

General diagnostic results.

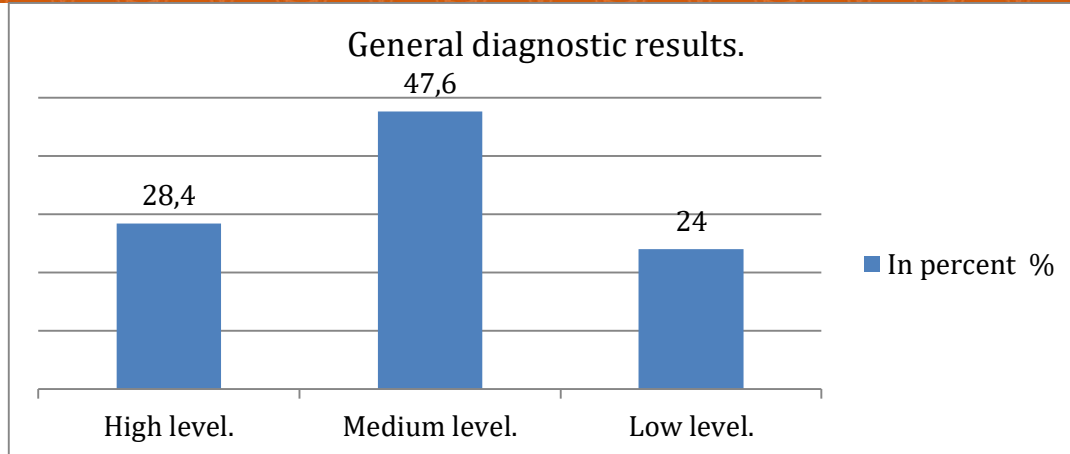
Based on the survey and test assessments, students' socio-moral competences were manifested at three levels:

⁸ Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

⁹ Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

¹⁰ Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

¹¹ Hutmacher, W. (1997). *Key competencies for Europe: Report of the symposium Berne, Switzerland 27–30 March 1996*. Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC), Council of Europe. Zimmaya, I. A. (2004). *Key competencies: A new paradigm of education result*. Moscow: Research Center for Quality Training Problems.



This distribution indicates that nearly half of the students possess a medium level of socio-moral competences, reflecting a gap between their theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Students with a high level of competences (28.4%) were distinguished by a deep sense of responsibility, effective teamwork skills, tolerance, empathy, and the ability to make moral decisions, which set them apart from their peers. Their positive qualities were largely shaped by family upbringing, a learning environment rich in interactive methods, and strong personal motivation for self-development. These aspects correspond to Kohlberg's¹² theory of moral development, particularly the stage of moral reasoning based on higher-level principles.

The largest group, consisting of students with a medium level of competences (47.6%), demonstrated a good understanding of social norms; however, they faced difficulties in consistently applying them in practice. Their moral decision-making process was largely situational, and they struggled to maintain balance between personal interests and collective values. This situation is close to Erikson's stage of "identity crisis" in psychosocial development, indicating that additional pedagogical support is needed to help students clearly define their social roles.

Twenty-four percent of the students fell into the low-level group. Although they possessed a general understanding of moral values, they often prioritized individual interests, showed passivity in social activities, and were unable to reach compromises in conflict situations. This highlights the need for a systematic approach to developing their socio-moral competences. Miller¹³ likewise emphasized that the uneven formation of moral competences among university students requires thorough empirical investigation.

The results obtained are consistent with the findings reported in UNESCO¹⁴ and OECD¹⁵ reports. In particular, these documents emphasize that among 21st-century competences, social and moral skills occupy a central place, and their development is identified as a priority task for global education systems. Similarly, the study conducted

¹² Kohlberg, L. (1981). *Essays on moral development: Vol. 1. The philosophy of moral development*. Harper & Row.

¹³ Miller, C. B. (2021). *Moral character: An empirical theory*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ UNESCO. (2023). *Education for sustainable development: Learning objectives*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>

¹⁵ OECD. (2022). *Future of education and skills 2030: OECD learning compass 2030*. OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/>



by Leganés-Lavall and Pérez-Aldeguer¹⁶ in the European higher education system revealed that students' socio-moral competences were distributed at comparable levels.

Empirical research findings indicate that the effective development of students' social-ethical competencies should not be confined to traditional knowledge delivery. Instead, it necessitates the integrated implementation of interactive teaching methods, project-based activities, and principles of digital ethics.

Discussion. The research findings indicate that social-ethical competencies among students in higher education institutions are developed at varying levels. The results showed that 28.4% of students possess high-level competencies, 47.6% possess medium-level competencies, and 24% possess low-level competencies. These figures suggest that the majority of students do not have sufficiently developed social-ethical competencies, highlighting the necessity to develop effective mechanisms for their enhancement.

Students with high-level competencies (28.4%) are distinguished by their sense of responsibility, empathy, tolerance, and collaboration skills. These students typically come from groups where interactive teaching methods were employed, and the teacher's personal example had a positive influence on them. This finding supports Bandura's¹⁷ social learning theory, which posits that moral behavior is largely developed through observation and imitation.

Students with medium-level competencies (47.6%) are generally well-versed in social norms, yet they lack consistency in applying them. This group requires learning activities that provide opportunities for active participation in social situations. For instance, case studies, debates, role-playing exercises, and service-learning technologies help develop their social-ethical decision-making skills.

Students with low-level competencies (24%), on the other hand, often prioritize individual interests over collective values, exhibit low social engagement, and demonstrate inflexibility in conflict situations. This highlights the need to implement specialized psychological and pedagogical support mechanisms within the educational process. Mentorship, psychological counseling, and involvement in social projects are effective strategies to bring low-level students closer to social-ethical values.

Moreover, the study results underscore the significant impact of the digital environment. While some students strive to maintain ethical norms in online interactions, others display impulsive behaviors. This finding indicates the necessity of educating students based on the concept of "digital citizenship" (OECD, 2022). Thus, integrating digital ethics into the educational process represents one of the crucial mechanisms for developing social-ethical competencies.

Key Points Identified During the Discussion:

1. Theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for developing students' social-ethical competencies; interactive learning activities based on real-life situations are necessary.

¹⁶ Leganés-Lavall, A., & Pérez-Aldeguer, S. (2016). Social competence development in higher education: An international perspective. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 228, 336–341. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.07.050>

¹⁷ Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.



2. The teacher's personal example and communication culture are among the most effective factors in fostering social-ethical values in students.
3. Involving students in social projects, volunteer activities, and cultural events strengthens their sense of collective responsibility and civic duty.
4. Regulating behavior in digital environments, teaching information security, and promoting proper online communication culture are currently among the most relevant mechanisms.

Thus, based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the most effective mechanisms for developing social-ethical competencies in students include interactive teaching technologies, the teacher's personal example, engaging students in social activities, and fostering digital ethics.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Empirical research findings indicate that social-ethical competencies among higher education students are unevenly developed: 28.4% of students demonstrate high-level competencies, 47.6% medium-level competencies, and 24% low-level competencies. These figures highlight the necessity of implementing effective mechanisms within the educational system to foster these competencies.

Based on the analysis, the key factors for developing social-ethical competencies include:

- The use of interactive methods (debates, role-plays, case studies, discussions),
- The teacher's personal example and pedagogical ethics,
- Students' independent activities and participation in social projects,
- Ethical behavior in digital environments.

These findings are consistent with international experience; in particular, UNESCO¹⁸ and OECD¹⁹ reports emphasize the necessity of developing social-ethical competencies as one of the key directions of 21st-century education.

Key Conclusions:

1. Social-ethical competencies are of strategic importance for students' personal development and professional readiness.
2. Empirical research results demonstrate that interactive methods and modeling real-life situations are effective in developing social-ethical competencies.
3. Strengthening ethical values in the digital environment is an integral part of contemporary social-ethical education for students.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement specialized, integrated pedagogical mechanisms to foster social-ethical competencies in the educational process.
2. Expand students' engagement in social projects, volunteer programs, and cultural events to enhance their social-ethical competencies.
3. Prepare students for online communication culture and information security through the teaching of digital ethics.

¹⁸ UNESCO. (2023). *Education for sustainable development: Learning objectives*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>

¹⁹ OECD. (2022). *Future of education and skills 2030: OECD learning compass 2030*. OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/>



4. Strengthen teachers' competencies in pedagogical ethics and role modeling through professional development programs.
5. Broaden the scope of empirical research by conducting comparative studies across various higher education institutions and regions.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the implementation of effective mechanisms for developing social-ethical competencies can significantly enhance students' sense of social responsibility, empathy, collaboration, and ethical decision-making skills.

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