

Conceptual Foundations For Developing Legal Consciousness And Legal Culture In Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article examines the conceptual foundations for developing legal consciousness and legal culture in Uzbekistan within the logic of the human-centred reforms of New Uzbekistan. The research problem is that legal awareness cannot be reduced to the formal transmission of statutes; it must become a stable social habit through which citizens understand rights, respect obligations, participate in public life and evaluate state activity by the standard of legality. The study uses the works and speeches of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Constitution, presidential decrees and national laws as its documentary basis. Methodologically, the article applies normative-legal, axiological, institutional and modelling approaches. The results show that the national concept rests on six interconnected pillars: constitutional dignity, the rule of law, service-oriented public administration, continuous legal education, open access to legal information, and anti-corruption integrity. The discussion argues that these elements become effective only when they are connected by practice-oriented legal education, accessible digital communication, public participation in law-making and accountable implementation. The proposed socio-legal model interprets legal culture as a dynamic unity of knowledge, value, behaviour and institutional trust. The article concludes that Uzbekistan's legal culture policy should move from episodic legal propaganda to measurable civic competence and everyday legality.

Keywords: legal consciousness; legal culture; rule of law; New Uzbekistan; constitutional values; public legal education; civic competence.

INTRODUCTION

The development of legal consciousness and legal culture is one of the decisive conceptual tasks of contemporary Uzbekistan. The expression “legal consciousness” denotes the way citizens understand, evaluate and internalize law, while “legal culture” refers to the practical quality of behaviour, institutional interaction and social communication built on legality. These two notions are not identical. A person may know a legal rule but fail to act according to it; conversely, a social environment may encourage lawful behaviour without deep reflection. A mature rule-of-law society requires the unity of both dimensions: knowledge must be supported by conviction, and conviction must be expressed in daily practice.

In Uzbekistan this issue has become especially relevant after the constitutional and administrative reforms associated with the idea of New Uzbekistan. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev describes the new stage of national development as a process in which democratic statehood, a free civil society and the foundation of a new Renaissance are formed through active responsibility, modern knowledge and social solidarity [1.paras. 24–26]. This approach gives the development of legal culture a broader meaning: it is not a narrow professional task of lawyers, but a condition of social modernization, public trust and human dignity.

The renewed Constitution gives the highest normative status to the human being, his or her life, freedom, honour and dignity; it also establishes that democratic rights and freedoms are protected by the Constitution and laws [3. Arts.13–15]. Therefore, legal culture should be understood as the social mechanism that makes constitutional values effective. When people know the law but do not trust its implementation, legal consciousness remains abstract. When state bodies act formally but do not communicate law clearly, legal culture becomes fragile. The conceptual problem is thus the transformation of legal norms into a living civic environment.

A direct policy framework for this transformation is the Presidential Decree No. PF-5618 of 9 January 2019. The decree defines the idea “High legal culture is a guarantee of the country's development” and requires the systematic organization of work according to the principle “person - family - mahalla - educational institution - organization - society” [4. 2–3-p]. This is important because it treats legal culture as a continuum

rather than a single campaign. Legal consciousness begins in early moral education, develops through school and professional life, and is strengthened by the behaviour of public institutions.

The same logic appears in the President's emphasis on the rule of law, judicial independence and the struggle against corruption. In 2020, the President underlined that the success of reforms depends on four factors: ensuring the rule of law, fighting corruption, strengthening institutional capacity and forming strong democratic institutions [2. 1–2 p.]. In conceptual terms, this statement connects legal culture with institutional ethics. Citizens cannot be expected to respect the law if public officials treat law as a formal instrument rather than as a standard of service and accountability.

The aim of this article is to analyse the conceptual foundations of the development of legal consciousness and legal culture in Uzbekistan and to formulate an integrated socio-legal model. The research question is: which constitutional, presidential and legislative principles form the basis of legal culture policy, and how can they be organized into a coherent model suitable for academic and practical use?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is based on qualitative analysis of official and normative sources. The documentary corpus includes the book "Yangi O'zbekiston strategiyasi" by Shavkat Mirziyoyev; the official presidential statement on the rule of law and anti-corruption policy; the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Decree No. PF-5618 on radically improving the system for raising legal consciousness and legal culture; Resolution No. PQ-4551 on strengthening constitutional supremacy, public control and legal culture; the "Uzbekistan - 2030" Strategy; the Law "On Normative Legal Acts"; the Law "On the Dissemination of Legal Information and Ensuring Access to It"; the Law "On Education"; and the Law "On Combating Corruption". These sources were selected because they define both values and mechanisms of legal culture policy.

The first method is normative-legal analysis. It identifies how constitutional provisions, presidential documents and laws define the rights, duties, institutions and procedures relevant to legal awareness. This method is necessary because legal culture is not created outside the legal system; it grows from the clarity, accessibility and authority of norms. For example, the Law "On Normative Legal Acts" regulates preparation, public discussion, expert review, adoption, publication and implementation of normative acts [7. Arts.1–2]. Such procedures shape public confidence in law as much as the text of the laws themselves.

The second method is axiological analysis. It examines the value hierarchy behind legal reforms. The Constitution's orientation toward human dignity, social justice, solidarity and legality is treated as the value basis of legal culture [3.arts.13–14]. In this sense, legal consciousness is not merely the memory of rules; it is the ability to recognize law as an instrument of justice, dignity and social responsibility.

The third method is institutional-functional analysis. It considers which institutions are responsible for transforming legal knowledge into social practice. The 2019 decree assigns the Ministry of Justice a coordinating role in raising legal consciousness and legal culture [4. 5-band]. The Law on legal information obliges public bodies to ensure access to legal information and to organize explanatory work aimed at strengthening legality [8. 5–7-moddalar]. The Education Law and anti-corruption legislation also support this institutional chain by linking learning, prevention and public ethics.

The fourth method is conceptual modelling. On the basis of the sources, the article constructs an integrated model that connects constitutional values, legal education, information access, participation, institutional accountability and anti-corruption culture. The model is socio-philosophical because it does not stop at formal regulation; it interprets the relationship between law, values and human behaviour.

RESULTS

The analysis shows that the conceptual foundations of legal culture in Uzbekistan can be systematized through six pillars. The first pillar is constitutional dignity. The Constitution recognizes human dignity and rights as supreme values and requires the state to act on the principles of legality, social justice and solidarity [3.arts.13–14]. This means that legal education should not be presented as obedience to authority alone. It must teach citizens to understand the law as a guarantee of human worth and as a boundary against arbitrariness.

The second pillar is the rule of law as a practical criterion of reform. Presidential discourse links reform effectiveness with legality, institutional capacity, democratic institutions and anti-corruption action [2. P.1–3]. This creates a conceptual bridge between the citizen's legal consciousness and the conduct of state bodies.

A citizen’s respect for law depends on observing that officials are also bound by law. Therefore, legal culture is inseparable from fair administration, transparent courts and predictable procedures.

The third pillar is service-oriented statehood. The idea that state bodies must serve the people is repeatedly expressed in the President’s works and has become a core element of the New Uzbekistan paradigm [1.p.24–25]. The “Uzbekistan - 2030” Strategy develops this approach by setting the task of building a just and modern state in the service of the people and by digitalizing public administration processes [6. 74–78-goals]. The conceptual result is that legal culture becomes two-sided: citizens learn rights and duties, while institutions learn responsiveness and responsibility.

Table 1. Conceptual pillars of legal consciousness and legal culture in Uzbekistan

Pillar	Normative source	Socio-philosophical meaning
Human dignity and rights	Constitution, arts. 13-15	Law is evaluated by its service to human dignity and justice.
Rule of law	President’s 2020 statement; PQ-4551	Reforms require legality, judicial independence and public control.
Continuous legal education	PF-5618; Law on Education	Legal culture begins from early education and continues through life.
Open legal information	O’RQ-443; PQ-2761	Access to legal texts and explanations is a civic right and state duty.
Participatory law-making	O’RQ-682	Public discussion and expert review increase trust in norms.
Anti-corruption integrity	O’RQ-419	Legal culture requires intolerance toward corruption and ethical public service.

The fourth pillar is the continuity of legal education. PF-5618 stresses systematic and organic legal education from preschool education to all groups of the population, including the promotion of balance between personal interests and public interests [4.paras1–2]. This point is conceptually significant. A society cannot raise legal culture only through punitive measures after violations occur. It must form the ability to foresee legal consequences, respect the dignity of others and solve conflicts by lawful means. In this regard, legal education should combine constitutional knowledge, practical rights protection and ethical responsibility.

The fifth pillar is accessibility of legal information. Legal consciousness cannot develop where legal information is late, unclear or available only to specialists. The Law “On the Dissemination of Legal Information and Ensuring Access to It” guarantees the right of citizens to search, receive and disseminate legal information and establishes openness, timeliness and free access as basic principles [8. Arts 4–5]. The 2017 presidential resolution on improving the dissemination of legislative acts also stresses the need to deliver legal texts and explanations to executors and the population without obstacles [11. paras 1–2]. Thus, legal culture requires not only laws but also understandable communication about their meaning.

The sixth pillar is participatory and preventive legality. The Law “On Normative Legal Acts” requires public or expert discussion of draft acts, legal and anti-corruption expertise, official publication and implementation arrangements [7. arts24–26, 38–48]. These mechanisms show that a citizen is not merely the object of regulation. He or she can participate in discussion, assess the quality of draft norms and demand reasonable implementation. Participation is therefore an educational practice: through it, society learns the language of legality.

A separate but closely connected result is the anti-corruption dimension. The Law “On Combating Corruption” obliges state bodies and other organizations to take measures to raise public legal consciousness and culture, to form intolerance toward corruption, and to conduct explanatory, educational and scientific-practical activities [10. arts16]. In socio-philosophical terms, corruption damages legal consciousness because it teaches people that informal benefit is stronger than law. Anti-corruption education is therefore not an auxiliary issue; it is one of the moral foundations of the rule of law.

The integrated model that follows from these findings may be expressed as a four-level chain. At the value level, human dignity, justice and social solidarity define the purpose of law. At the cognitive level, citizens receive accessible knowledge about rights, duties, procedures and remedies. At the behavioural level, this knowledge becomes habits of lawful conduct, conflict resolution and civic participation. At the institutional level, public bodies prove the authority of law by transparency, service orientation and accountability. If one level is weak, the whole model becomes unstable. For instance, legal knowledge without institutional trust may become cynicism; institutional reform without public understanding may remain invisible; values without practical skills may stay rhetorical.

DISCUSSION

The results confirm that the conceptual foundations of legal consciousness and legal culture in Uzbekistan are not limited to one branch of law. They arise at the intersection of constitutionalism, presidential strategy, education policy, information openness, anti-corruption prevention and public administration reform. This multidimensional character is a strength, because legal culture cannot be produced by a single institution. At the same time, it creates a coordination challenge: different state bodies, educational institutions, mahallas, media organizations and civil society actors must work according to a shared logic rather than isolated plans.

The most important conceptual distinction is between legal information and legal internalization. Information is necessary, but it is only the first stage. A citizen may read a statute yet remain passive if the rule is not connected with personal experience. For this reason, the 2019 decree's "person - family - mahalla - educational institution - organization - society" principle should be interpreted as a social route of internalization [4. paras3]. Each level has a specific educational function. The family forms respect and responsibility; the mahalla connects law with neighbourhood solidarity; schools and universities provide systematic knowledge; organizations teach labour, administrative and professional legality; society turns lawful behaviour into public expectation.

Another discussion point concerns the relationship between rights and duties. In some environments legal culture is wrongly reduced to discipline or fear of punishment. The constitutional model of Uzbekistan does not support such a narrow understanding. Since human dignity and rights are supreme values, legal culture must protect the individual from arbitrariness and strengthen the ability to use lawful remedies. However, rights cannot be separated from respect for the rights of others and from responsibility before the community. The balance between personal and public interests, emphasized in PF-5618, therefore represents a key ethical foundation of legal consciousness [4. paras 1–2].

Digitalization provides a new opportunity for the development of legal culture. The "Uzbekistan - 2030" Strategy includes the transition to a new stage of electronic and digital government, simplification of procedures and reduction of unnecessary formalities [6. 76–78 goals]. From the viewpoint of legal consciousness, digital government is valuable not only because it saves time. It also makes the relationship between citizen and state more predictable. When a service is transparent, traceable and accessible, citizens learn that law can work without personal dependence, informal mediation or arbitrary discretion.

Nevertheless, digital legal culture should not deepen inequality. Rural residents, elderly citizens, socially vulnerable groups and people with limited digital skills may face obstacles in using online legal resources. Therefore, the digital model must be supplemented by human assistance through mahallas, public legal reception offices, libraries, educational institutions and mobile legal counselling. The Law on legal information already allows the participation of self-governing bodies, non-governmental organizations and citizens in disseminating legal information and exercising public control [8. Arts 10–12]. This provision can be used to build a socially inclusive legal information ecosystem.

The proposed model also requires a shift from event-based propaganda to competence-based education. Traditional lectures, meetings and slogans may raise attention, but they rarely produce durable skills. Practice-oriented approaches such as case analysis, moot court, street law, legal clinics and problem-solving workshops can teach citizens how to identify a legal issue, find a relevant rule, apply to a competent body, prepare a complaint and evaluate the response. PF-5618 directly supports innovative methods, web technologies and street law-style projects [4. Paras 20]. This makes it possible to transform legal education into an active civic technology.

Public participation in law-making is another educational instrument. When draft normative acts are discussed publicly, citizens see that law is not a closed language of bureaucracy. The Law "On Normative

Legal Acts” requires that participants in public or expert discussion be introduced to the draft text in advance and that proposals be considered by the developer [7. Art 24]. Even when suggestions are advisory, the process has cultural value because it teaches argumentation, responsibility and respect for procedure.

Finally, anti-corruption culture must be treated as a moral test of legal consciousness. The President’s statement that corruption must be prevented by involving all layers of society and by forming a social “vaccine of honesty” reflects the idea that legality is not secured by punishment alone [2. P 4–5]. People should perceive corruption not only as a risk of liability but as a violation of dignity, equality and public trust. Educational programs, public service ethics and transparent procedures should therefore be integrated, not separated.

CONCLUSION

The conceptual foundations for developing legal consciousness and legal culture in Uzbekistan are formed by a coherent set of constitutional values, presidential strategic ideas and legislative mechanisms. Their common centre is the human being: dignity, freedom, honour, rights and lawful interests determine the purpose of the state and the meaning of public reform. Legal culture is consequently not a decorative element of civic education; it is a condition for the real operation of the Constitution, the rule of law and public service.

The article has shown that six pillars structure the national concept: constitutional dignity, the rule of law, service-oriented statehood, continuous legal education, accessible legal information and anti-corruption integrity. These pillars work effectively when they are connected through a practical model: values define purpose; knowledge gives orientation; behaviour demonstrates internalization; institutions confirm public trust. The core recommendation is to develop legal culture through measurable civic competence rather than episodic legal propaganda.

For future policy, three priorities are especially important. First, legal education should be practice-based and continuous, beginning with simple rights and duties in early education and reaching professional and community contexts. Second, legal information should be accessible in both digital and non-digital forms, with special attention to vulnerable groups. Third, public participation, anti-corruption ethics and institutional accountability should be integrated into all legal culture programs. Only under these conditions can legal consciousness become a stable civic habit and legal culture become a real foundation of democratic development in Uzbekistan.

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