

DIDACTIC POTENTIAL OF USING NATIONAL DIGITAL CONTENT IN CHARACTER EDUCATION LESSONS TO DEVELOP CYBERETHICAL CULTURE AMONG STUDENTS IN GRADES 7-9

Saodat Ozod qizi Ibragimova
Researcher

Abstract. This article examines the theoretical foundations and didactic potential of developing cyberethical culture among students in Grades 7-9 through national digital content in Character Education lessons. Cyberethical culture is interpreted as an integrative personal quality that regulates students' conduct in digital environments on the basis of legal knowledge, moral values, empathy, a critical attitude toward information, personal-data protection, and reflective self-regulation. The article substantiates criteria for selecting national digital content, including reliability, age appropriateness, value orientation, interactivity, safety, and compliance with copyright. It clarifies the didactic functions of problem-based cases, digital storytelling, fact-checking, moral dilemmas, projects, role-based discussions, and reflective tasks. The proposed approach moves students beyond reproducing ready-made rules toward independently analysing digital situations, making ethical decisions, and evaluating their consequences.

Keywords: Character Education, cyberethical culture, national digital content, digital citizenship, cyberethics, media and information literacy, digital empathy, personal data, reflection, moral dilemma.

Introduction

Digital communication has become a routine environment in which adolescents learn, interact with peers, express their views, and display their social status. Therefore, the use of digital tools in school education cannot be limited to technical skills. In addition to finding information, students must be able to verify its reliability, respect the dignity and privacy of others, comply with copyright, refrain from aggressive or manipulative communication, and understand the long-term consequences of their digital footprints. Together, these qualities constitute cyberethical culture. Grades 7-9 are particularly important for addressing this task. During adolescence, sensitivity to peer evaluation increases, the desire for independence grows, and the need for online self-expression becomes more pronounced. However, the abilities to anticipate consequences, control emotional impulses, and identify the interests behind an information source are not yet stable. Educational content should therefore move beyond simple instructions about what is or is not permitted and should instead develop students' capacity to analyse authentic digital situations, recognise conflicts of values, construct arguments, and assume responsibility.

Character Education addresses human dignity, patriotism, responsibility, rights and duties, tolerance, communication culture, and national and universal values in an interconnected manner. It therefore allows ethical problems in digital space to be examined not as isolated technical issues, but as contemporary manifestations of everyday conduct, civic responsibility, and personal values. National digital content brings into the classroom historical figures, cultural heritage, neighbourhood and family relations, the experience of contemporary compatriots, and Uzbek-language media situations that are meaningful and familiar to students.

The purpose of the study is to identify and systematise the didactic opportunities that support the development of cyberethical culture among students in Grades 7-9 through national digital content in Character Education lessons and to substantiate the conditions for their effective use. In Uzbekistan, requirements related to cyberethical culture are not consolidated under this exact term in a single legal instrument. Nevertheless, legislation concerning education, children's rights, personal data, informatisation, cybersecurity, and moral education establishes the legal framework for this pedagogical task. Law No. O'RQ-637 "On Education" defines education as humane, democratic, continuous, and oriented toward the comprehensive development of learners [1]. These provisions justify treating ethical conduct in digital environments as an integral part of education. Law No. O'RQ-139 "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child" protects children's honour, dignity, legitimate interests, and right to information [2]. Digital cases used in lessons should make these rights understandable through situations such as online insults, the non-consensual distribution of images, cyberbullying, and fake profiles rather than presenting them only as abstract legal norms.

Law No. O'RQ-547 "On Personal Data" regulates the processing and protection of personal data [3]. Its pedagogical interpretation requires students to understand that telephone numbers, geolocation data, photographs, biometric identifiers, login credentials, and private correspondence are not merely "Internet materials". Law No. O'RQ-764 "On Cybersecurity" defines the principal concepts, principles, and institutional powers in the field of cybersecurity [4]. Although the Law mainly governs the security of systems and infrastructure, at school level it can serve as a conceptual basis for developing risk awareness, caution, and responsible digital conduct. Resolution No. PQ-3907 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated 14 August 2018, establishes the need to educate young people in loyalty to national and universal values, a sense of belonging to the Motherland, independent thinking, and ideological resilience against harmful ideas [7]. Although the Resolution does not discuss digital space in

detail as a separate didactic object, its value-oriented objectives can be applied to online behaviour and information choices in Character Education lessons. Thus, the pedagogical significance of the legal framework is manifested in three directions: protecting students' rights; developing awareness of responsibility for digital conduct; and ensuring that information and technology are used in accordance with national and universal values.

M. Ribble's framework of digital citizenship explains responsibility in digital space through interrelated elements such as access, communication, literacy, etiquette, law, security, and health [8]. Its strength lies in presenting digital conduct not merely as a discrete safety skill but as the unity of rights, responsibility, and culture. However, direct transfer of this framework to Character Education lessons in Grades 7-9 is insufficient; its elements must be adapted to the national curriculum, adolescents' developmental characteristics, and local communicative situations.

In her analysis of the scholarly literature on digital citizenship, M. Choi distinguishes ethical behaviour, media and information literacy, engagement and participation, and critical resistance [9]. This classification prevents cyberethical culture from being reduced to obedience or a set of prohibitions. In addition to following digital rules, students should be able to critically evaluate platform algorithms, manipulative content, stereotypes, and conflicts of interest.

The Council of Europe's Digital Citizenship Education Handbook treats digital citizenship competences as a combination of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding. Its domain of ethics and empathy identifies awareness of other people's emotions and perspectives as a condition for positive online communication, while media and information literacy requires the critical interpretation of information rather than mere technical use [10]. This approach supports the recognition of digital empathy and reflection as distinct learning outcomes in Character Education.

UNESCO materials on citizenship education in the digital age note that digital technology creates opportunities for civic participation while also intensifying the risks of misinformation, polarisation, hate speech, and inequality [11]. Accordingly, "a useful video" or "an interesting website" is not an adequate criterion for content selection. Content should enable students to verify evidence, compare different positions, and reach decisions that protect human dignity.

A cluster-randomised evaluation of a youth digital citizenship programme by L. M. Jones and colleagues found possible positive changes in some indicators of knowledge and understanding, while also showing that brief and general lessons have limited capacity to produce sustained changes in behavioural outcomes such as online

incivility, cyberbullying, and help-seeking [12]. This evidence is important for school practice: a one-off “Safer Internet” event is not equivalent to developing cyberethical culture. Sustainable results require regular practice, a whole-school approach, cooperation with parents, and reflection on authentic situations.

Uzbek pedagogical literature often addresses digital culture, information security, media literacy, and the moral education of young people as separate areas. A shared conclusion is that proficiency in using digital technology does not automatically ensure ethical responsibility. However, didactic solutions that integrate criteria for selecting national digital content, a system of ethical cases, and observable learning outcomes specifically for Character Education in Grades 7-9 remain insufficiently systematised. The present article seeks to clarify this theoretical and methodological gap.

Cyberethical culture is an integrative personal quality that enables students to recognise their own rights and those of others in digital environments, critically evaluate information and communicative situations, make ethical decisions grounded in national and universal values, act safely, and reflectively monitor the consequences of their actions.

National digital content refers to educational content created or digitised in Uzbek or representing Uzbekistan’s historical and cultural experience, national values, contemporary social life, and civic responsibility. It may include documentary footage, digital stories, animation, podcasts, electronic texts, virtual museum materials, interactive maps, infographics, local media reports, and simulated correspondence designed by teachers. The designation “national” does not isolate the content from other cultures; rather, it situates universal ethical criteria in linguistic and social contexts familiar to students.

Not every digital resource on a national theme automatically possesses didactic value. Content for classroom use should be selected according to the following criteria:

- reliability - the author, source, date, and supporting evidence can be verified;
- value orientation - the content supports human dignity, justice, responsibility, tolerance, and patriotism;
- age appropriateness - the language, conflict, and emotional intensity are appropriate for students in Grades 7-9;
- problem orientation - rather than supplying a ready-made conclusion, the content creates a situation for analysis and ethical choice;

- interactivity - it encourages students to ask questions, compare, argue, create, or reconsider their position;
- legal and technical safety - it does not violate requirements concerning personal data, images, copyright, or harmful links;
- inclusiveness - it does not reproduce discriminatory stereotypes and enables the participation of diverse learners.

The didactic potential of national digital content lies not in its external appeal but in how it transforms learning activity. A cyberethical learning outcome emerges only when content is converted from a resource to be watched into an object of analysis, decision-making, collaboration, and reflection.

Table 1.

Potential of national digital content for developing cyberethical culture in Character Education lessons

Didactic opportunity	Content and method	Student activity	Expected student outcome
Contextualising a legal and ethical situation	An anonymised case resembling local online communication; moral dilemma	Distinguishes rights, interests, and potential harm; justifies a decision	Applies criteria of consent, privacy, and accountability
Transferring national values to digital conduct	A digital story about a historical figure or neighbourhood life; comparative analysis	Connects respect, honour, justice, and belonging with an online situation	Explains a value as a criterion for action rather than a slogan
Critical information selection	Local media report, infographic, or short video; fact-checking	Checks the author, date, evidence, purpose, and indicators of manipulation	Justifies why unverified information should not be shared
Digital empathy and netiquette	Simulated chat, audio, or video situation; role-based discussion	Evaluates the situation from the perspectives of the sender and recipient; writes an alternative response	Chooses respectful communication instead of insult, sarcasm, or discrimination

Didactic opportunity	Content and method	Student activity	Expected student outcome
Understanding personal data and the digital footprint	Profile mock-up, geolocation or photograph case; risk map	Distinguishes public from private information; constructs a chain of consequences	Explains privacy settings, consent, and the principle of minimum disclosure
Copyright and ethical digital creation	Photographs, texts, and audio on national heritage; mini-project	Cites sources and distinguishes adaptation from copying	Complies with quotation, attribution, and permission requirements
Reflective self-regulation	Electronic journal and a “think before you send” algorithm; self-assessment	Records motives before a decision and consequences afterwards	Plans how to pause impulsive action, seek help, and correct a mistake

Commentary on the table. The opportunities presented in the table are not a sequence of separate topics; they are didactic functions that can be integrated within a single lesson or a series of lessons. For example, a localised case involving the non-consensual distribution of a photograph simultaneously activates legal knowledge, empathy, awareness of the digital footprint, communication ethics, and reflection. Importantly, outcomes should not be assessed by stating that “the student watched the video”, but through observable actions: the student verified the source, identified stakeholders, justified a decision, and proposed a safe alternative action.

A lesson based on national digital content should be organised according to the following logical sequence:

1. Activating the situation. The teacher presents a 60-120-second video, a simulated chat, a message, or an infographic. The material should contain at least one authentic ethical conflict.
2. Distinguishing facts from judgements. Students identify what is known with certainty, what is assumed, and what information is missing.
3. Identifying stakeholders and values. The rights, needs, responsibilities, and potential harm of each participant are analysed.
4. Developing alternative decisions. At least two or three courses of action are formulated and their legal, ethical, and social consequences are compared.
5. Evidence-based choice. The group justifies its chosen decision with reference to a legal norm, a value, and probable consequences.

6. Digital product. Students create safe-profile rules, a decision tree, a short podcast, a model ethical response, or a fact-checking card.

7. Reflection and transfer. Students develop a personal action algorithm in response to the question: “What would I do if a similar situation happened to me?”

In Grade 7, visual and concrete situations, short decision-making algorithms, and the distinction between safe and unsafe conduct should predominate. Cases involving familiar contexts such as group chats, gaming profiles, photographs, and passwords are effective.

In Grade 8, tasks should involve more complex cause-and-effect relationships, conflicts of interest, source reliability, and manipulation. Students compare different sources, formulate an ethical response to a provocative message, and model the chain of consequences arising from the disclosure of personal data.

In Grade 9, students should address more complex issues such as legal and ethical argumentation, copyright, digital reputation, influence on public opinion, and civic participation. They should resolve platform-related problems not only through personal caution but also from the perspective of community rules, reporting mechanisms, and social responsibility.

Tests alone cannot reveal the behavioural and reflective dimensions of cyberethical culture. A combination of criteria and evidence is therefore required:

- cognitive and legal criterion: knowledge of key concepts, risks, and legal boundaries; evidence - situational analysis and an explanatory test;
- value-based and empathic criterion: consideration of another person’s dignity, consent, and emotional state; evidence - a role-based response and ethical justification;
- practical and behavioural criterion: selection and performance of safe and responsible action; evidence - simulation, profile audit, and a fact-checking card;
- critical-information criterion: evaluation of the source, evidence, purpose, and manipulation; evidence - comparative analysis and a verification protocol;
- reflective criterion: analysis of one’s motives, mistakes, and the consequences of a decision; evidence - a reflective journal and personal action plan.

Levels may provisionally be described as high, medium, and low. At the high level, students independently apply the criteria in a new situation, make an evidence-based decision, and anticipate consequences. At the medium level, students understand the appropriate course of action but require pedagogical support in verifying a source or justifying a decision. At the low level, students reproduce a rule but cannot apply it in authentic situations because of impulses, peer pressure, or personal interest. In empirical

research, these descriptions should be operationalised through indicators and assessment rubrics.

The proposed didactic opportunities are effective when the following conditions are met:

- before the lesson, the teacher verifies the factual reliability, privacy implications, and copyright status of digital material;
- identifying details are removed from cases based on real events;
- students are not compelled to disclose distressing personal experiences during the lesson;
- psychologically safe rules are established for discussion: decisions and evidence, rather than individuals, are discussed;
- the activity does not end with content consumption; every resource leads to a practical decision or product;
- cross-curricular cooperation is established with parents, the class teacher, the school psychologist, and the information technology teacher;
- assessment serves to develop students' strategies for safe conduct rather than functioning as punishment or surveillance.

The use of digital content does not in itself guarantee a positive outcome. Videos of unknown provenance, fear-based materials that exert emotional pressure, public examination of students' personal accounts, or activities based solely on prohibitions may have counterproductive effects. Digital inequality must also be considered: students should not be required to possess a personal device or subscribe to a paid platform, and essential materials should be provided in an alternative format within the school.

In conclusion, developing cyberethical culture among students in Grades 7-9 is a broader pedagogical task than teaching discrete rules of digital safety. It integrates legal knowledge, value-based attitudes, critical information analysis, digital empathy, responsible conduct, and reflective self-regulation. Because Character Education enables students to apply human dignity, rights and duties, responsibility, patriotism, and communication culture to digital situations, it constitutes one of the principal integrative settings for this process. The didactic value of national digital content lies not only in depicting national themes but also in enabling students to make decisions according to universal ethical standards within familiar linguistic and social contexts. Problem-based cases, digital storytelling, fact-checking, moral dilemmas, role-based discussions, projects, and reflective tasks transform students from passive recipients of information into agents who analyse digital situations and make responsible decisions. Cyberethical conduct cannot be developed sustainably through one-off events. It requires systematic

lessons, a whole-school approach, cooperation with families, a safe pedagogical environment, and performance-based assessment. Future empirical research should use the proposed didactic matrix to develop grade-specific tasks, diagnostic rubrics, and an experimental programme and should separately measure their effects on knowledge, attitudes, and actual behaviour.

References

1. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. O'RQ-637 "On Education", 23 September 2020. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-5013007>
2. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. O'RQ-139 "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child", 7 January 2008. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-1297315>
3. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. O'RQ-547 "On Personal Data", 2 July 2019. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-4396419>
4. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. O'RQ-764 "On Cybersecurity", 15 April 2022. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-5960604>
5. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 560-II "On Informatisation", 11 December 2003. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-83472>
6. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-6079 "On Approval of the Digital Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy and Measures for Its Effective Implementation", 5 October 2020. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-5030957>
7. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-3907 "On Measures to Raise the System of Moral, Ethical and Physical Education of Young People and Their Education and Training to a Qualitatively New Level", 14 August 2018. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/-3864155>
8. Ribble, M. Digital Citizenship in Schools: Nine Elements All Students Should Know. 3rd ed. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education, 2015.
9. Choi, M. A Concept Analysis of Digital Citizenship for Democratic Citizenship Education in the Internet Age. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 2016, 44(4), 565-607. DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2016.1210549. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2016.1210549>
10. Richardson, J., & Milovidov, E. Digital Citizenship Education Handbook. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2019. URL: <https://rm.coe.int/digital-citizenship-education-handbook/16809382f9>
11. UNESCO. Citizenship Education in the Global Digital Age. Paris: UNESCO, 2022. URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381534>
12. Jones, L. M., Mitchell, K. J., & Beseler, C. L. The Impact of Youth Digital Citizenship Education: Insights from a Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial Outcome Evaluation of the Be Internet Awesome (BIA) Curriculum. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 2024, 28, 509-523. DOI: 10.1007/s40688-023-00465-5. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-023-00465-5>

13. Abdug'Aniyev O.T. Analysis of the essence and logical aspect of development of competence in universal human values in students //Science and innovation. - 2023. - T. 2. - No. Special Issue 10. - P. 434-438.
14. Abdug'Aniyev O.T. Factors of pedagogical cooperation affecting the development of competence in universal human values in students in the conditions of new uzbekistan //Science and innovation. - 2023. - T. 2. - No. Special Issue 12. - P. 52-56.
15. Abdug'aniev O.T. Pedagogical possibilities of developing socially active citizenship competence in students //Eurasian Journal of Academic Research. - 2022. - T. 2. - No. 13. - P. 25-29.
16. Abduganiyev O.T. Development of socially active citizenship competences in students-as a social pedagogical need //prospects of development of science and education. - 2022. - T. 1. - No. 5. - S. 78-83.
17. Abduganiyev O. Formation of legal training aimed at competitiveness in pupils of secondary schools //European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences. - 2019. - T. 9. - No. 7.
18. Tursunboyevich OA Pedagogical and psychological opportunities for the development of socially active civic competences in students // ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal. - 2021. - T. 11. - No. 3. - S. 1888-1897.
19. Oglu AOT Pedagogical Conditions And Mechanisms Of Development Of Socially Active Civil Competence In Students //Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education. - 2021. - T. 12. - No. 7. - S. 433-442.