

Conceptual Approaches to Moral and Ethical Education of Internal Affairs Personnel

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Abstract. *This article develops a competency-based framework for the moral and ethical education of internal affairs personnel. It addresses a practical problem: codes of conduct and periodic educational events can define expected behaviour, but they do not by themselves ensure sound judgment in situations involving discretion, pressure, conflicting duties, or citizen vulnerability. The study uses qualitative document analysis and conceptual synthesis. Its corpus consists of three Uzbek legal and policy documents governing internal affairs bodies, four international policing and integrity standards, and five scholarly sources on moral reasoning, police socialization, organizational justice, procedural justice training, and the author's earlier research. The analysis identifies four capacities that education should develop: moral attention, reasoned judgment, public interest motivation, and responsible action. It also identifies four institutional conditions required to sustain those capacities: clear standards, scenario-based learning, ethical supervision, and evidence-based feedback. These elements are integrated into a continuous five-stage model comprising diagnosis, dilemma analysis, guided reflection, supervised practice, and review. The article proposes observable indicators for each capacity while warning against reducing moral character to attendance records or a single numerical score. The framework offers a basis for curriculum design and later empirical evaluation in internal affairs institutions.*

Keywords: *internal affairs personnel, moral education, professional ethics, ethical competence, police training, organizational justice, procedural justice*

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Daxili işlər orqanları əməkdaşlarının mənəvi-əxlaqi tərbiyəsinə konseptual yanaşmalar

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Xülasə. *Məqalədə daxili işlər orqanları əməkdaşlarının mənəvi və etik tərbiyəsi üçün səriştəyə əsaslanan konseptual çərçivə hazırlanır. Tədqiqat praktik bir problemi araşdırır: davranış kodeksləri və dövrü maarifləndirici tədbirlər gözlənilən davranışı müəyyən edə bilər, lakin mülahizə azadlığı, təzyiq, ziddiyyətli vəzifələr və ya vətəndaşın həssas vəziyyəti ilə bağlı hallarda düzgün qərarı özlüyündə təmin etmir. İşdə keyfiyyət yönümlü sənəd təhlili və konseptual sintezdən istifadə edilmişdir. Mənbə korpusuna daxili işlər orqanlarının fəaliyyətini tənzimləyən üç Özbəkistan hüquqi və siyasət sənədi, dörd beynəlxalq polis və dürüstlük standartı, həmçinin mənəvi mühakimə, polis sosiallaşması, təşkilati ədalət, prosedur ədaləti təlimi və müəllifin əvvəlki tədqiqatı üzrə beş elmi*

mənbə daxildir. Təhlil tərbiyənin inkişaf etdirməli olduğu dörd qabiliyyəti müəyyən edir: mənəvi diqqət, əsaslandırılmış mühakimə, ictimai maraq motivasiyası və məsuliyyətli fəaliyyət. Bu qabiliyyətləri davamlı edən dörd institusional şərt də ayrılır: aydın standartlar, situasiya əsaslı öyrənmə, etik rəhbərlik və sübuta əsaslanan geribildirim. Elementlər diaqnostika, dilemma təhlili, istiqamətləndirilmiş refleksiya, nəzarətli təcrübə və qiymətləndirmədən ibarət beşmərhələli modeldə birləşdirilir. Təklif olunan göstəricilər mənəvi keyfiyyətləri yalnız tədbirlərdə iştirak və ya vahid rəqəmlə qiymətləndirməyin düzgün olmadığını nəzərə alır.

Açar sözlər: *daxili işlər orqanları, mənəvi tərbiyə, peşə etikası, etik sərəştə, polis hazırlığı, təşkilati ədalət, prosedur ədaləti*

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Introduction

Internal affairs personnel exercise public authority in situations that frequently require discretion. A rule may define the lawful boundary of an action, yet the officer must still recognize relevant facts, weigh competing duties, communicate a decision, and remain accountable for its consequences. Moral and ethical education therefore concerns professional judgment as well as knowledge of rules. It should prepare personnel to protect rights, maintain public order, and use authority proportionately in routine and difficult encounters.

International standards treat ethics as part of professional policing rather than as an optional addition. The United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials requires respect for human dignity and the protection of human rights (United Nations, 1979). The European Code of Police Ethics connects legality, accountability, professional conduct, and public confidence (Council of Europe, 2001). The OSCE and UNODC likewise place training within a wider system that includes supervision, complaint handling, oversight, and institutional integrity (OSCE, 2008; UNODC, 2011). Uzbekistan's national framework provides a comparable legal basis. The Law on Internal Affairs Bodies defines the protection of citizens' rights, freedoms, lawful interests, public order, and security as core duties (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016). The 2021 concept for organizing spiritual and educational work within internal affairs institutions emphasizes continuous personnel development, while the 2023 Code of Professional Culture and Service Discipline specifies requirements for conduct during and outside service (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021, 2023). These documents create a clear normative expectation. The unresolved methodological question is how that expectation should be translated into learning processes and observable professional capacities.

Professional culture, legal consciousness, respect, integrity, and responsibility are central themes in moral and ethical education. A recurring methodological risk, however, is to treat educational activities as evidence of educational effectiveness. Attendance at a lecture, cultural event, or awareness campaign does not demonstrate improved ethical judgment. A defensible framework must specify the mechanism between educational input and professional conduct, identify evidence that can test the mechanism, and acknowledge alternative explanations.

Research on police education supports this caution. De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2015) found that differences in integrity training were reflected in knowledge of ethics codes, but not clearly in the

development of recruits' moral reasoning. This distinction matters because knowing a code and applying it under pressure are separate achievements. Organizational conditions also matter: Wolfe and Piquero (2011) found that perceived organizational justice was relevant to understanding police misconduct, which suggests that institutions cannot demand fairness externally while tolerating arbitrary treatment internally.

Training can nevertheless change conduct when it targets specific interactional skills and is implemented at scale. Wood et al. (2020) reported that procedural justice training for Chicago police officers was associated with fewer complaints and lower use of force over the study period. The result does not prove that every ethics programme will work. It shows that a defined curriculum, observable behavioural expectations, and outcome data can make evaluation possible.

This article asks three questions. Which capacities constitute moral and ethical competence for internal affairs personnel? Which institutional conditions help convert those capacities into stable professional conduct? How can an education cycle be assessed without reducing moral character to a single score? The purpose is to construct a secular, professionally focused framework that can guide curriculum design and subsequent empirical testing.

Materials and Methods

The study used qualitative document analysis and conceptual synthesis. The corpus was deliberately limited to twelve sources so that each source had a defined analytical function. Three Uzbek documents supplied the national normative framework: the Law on Internal Affairs Bodies, the 2021 decision and attached concept on spiritual and educational work, and the 2023 decision and Code of Professional Culture and Service Discipline (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016, 2021, 2023).

Four international sources supplied professional and institutional benchmarks: the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, the European Code of Police Ethics, the OSCE Guidebook on Democratic Policing, and the UNODC handbook on police accountability, oversight, and integrity (Council of Europe, 2001; OSCE, 2008; United Nations, 1979; UNODC, 2011). Five scholarly sources supplied explanatory and evaluative concepts: Rest's model of moral action, research on moral reasoning in police recruits, research on organizational justice and misconduct, a large procedural justice training evaluation, and Melikulov's earlier theoretical analysis (De Schrijver & Maesschalck, 2015; Melikulov, 2026; Rest, 1986; Wolfe & Piquero, 2011; Wood et al., 2020).

Sources were selected because they addressed at least one of four questions: expected conduct, ethical decision making, institutional conditions, or evaluation of training. The analysis did not attempt a systematic review of all police ethics literature. It focused on sources that could connect Uzbekistan's normative requirements with a testable educational model. Political speeches and journalistic commentary were excluded because they do not provide stable analytical criteria for professional competence.

The coding procedure had three stages. First, statements were coded under the categories of dignity, legality, impartiality, responsibility, professional discipline, communication, supervision, accountability, and learning. Second, the codes were grouped by level: individual capacity, learning process, organizational condition, or observable outcome. Third, relationships among the groups were reconstructed as a process model. A proposed relationship was retained only when the documents supplied a normative basis and at least one scholarly or international source supplied an explanatory basis.

Rest's four component account of moral action was used as a heuristic rather than a diagnostic test. The components were adapted as moral attention, reasoned judgment, public interest motivation, and

responsible action (Rest, 1986). The adaptation avoids claiming that inner character can be measured directly. Each capacity is linked to observable conduct and to several possible evidence sources. No surveys, interviews, experiments, or personal records were used. The results are therefore conceptual findings derived from the corpus. They do not estimate the prevalence of ethical problems or the causal effect of current educational activities in Uzbekistan.

Results

The first result is a four capacity model of moral and ethical competence. Moral attention is the ability to notice that a routine situation contains an ethical issue, such as unequal treatment, a conflict of interest, humiliation, unnecessary coercion, or inaccurate information. Without attention, an officer may follow familiar procedure while overlooking the citizen's rights or vulnerability. Reasoned judgment is the ability to identify applicable law and professional standards, distinguish relevant from irrelevant considerations, examine alternatives, and explain why a chosen action is proportionate. This capacity is especially important when several lawful options exist or when speed, hierarchy, and fairness pull in different directions. It converts general values into reasons for a concrete decision.

Public interest motivation is the commitment to use authority for its authorized purpose rather than for convenience, personal benefit, group loyalty, or avoidance of responsibility. Motivation links judgment to willingness. An officer may know the correct course but fail to take it when the organizational cost is high. Ethical education must therefore address professional identity and duty while institutions protect lawful refusal and good faith reporting.

Responsible action is the ability to carry out a decision with self-control, respectful communication, accurate documentation, and readiness for review. It includes the capacity to correct an error. This component prevents ethics from remaining an abstract discussion detached from behaviour.

The second result is that these capacities require four institutional conditions. Clear standards define the lawful and professional baseline. Scenario-based learning allows personnel to practise interpretation where duties conflict. Ethical supervision connects classroom learning with real work and makes reasons discussable. Evidence-based feedback uses case review, complaints, service records, and structured observation to identify patterns and improve practice. International guidance consistently treats accountability and supervision as part of integrity, not as substitutes for education (Council of Europe, 2001; OSCE, 2008; UNODC, 2011).

The third result is a continuous five-stage education cycle. Diagnosis identifies recurrent dilemmas and gaps in knowledge, judgment, communication, or organizational support. Dilemma analysis uses anonymized cases to separate legal requirements, ethical risks, stakeholder interests, and available options. Guided reflection requires participants to state and defend their reasons. Supervised practice applies the reasoning in simulations, mentoring, or reviewed service situations. Review compares expected and observed conduct and feeds lessons back into the next cycle.

This cycle differs from event-based education. A calendar of lectures and cultural activities records inputs, while the proposed model traces a path from a diagnosed problem to learning, practice, and evidence. Cultural and educational activities may still support professional identity and shared values, but their contribution should be stated as a hypothesis and assessed through relevant evidence rather than assumed.

The fourth result is an assessment matrix that combines multiple forms of evidence. No indicator is sufficient by itself. Complaint numbers can change because access to complaint channels changes. A low number of reported incidents may reflect good conduct, weak detection, or reluctance to report.

Training tests measure knowledge but do not necessarily measure action. A sound assessment therefore triangulates records, observation, case reasoning, and feedback while protecting due process.

Table 1

Assessment framework for moral and ethical competence

Capacity	Observable conduct	Possible evidence	Required safeguard
Moral attention	Recognizes dignity, fairness, conflict of interest, and harm	Case vignettes and structured observation	Context and alternative explanations recorded
Reasoned judgment	Identifies rules, weighs options, and explains proportionality	Written case analysis and supervisory review	Evaluation rubric disclosed in advance
Public interest motivation	Resists improper influence and seeks lawful guidance	Advice requests, disclosures, and anonymized case records	Protected reporting and no retaliation
Responsible action	Acts respectfully, documents accurately, and corrects errors	Record review, citizen feedback, and observed simulations	Multiple evidence sources and right to respond

The fifth result concerns alignment across the personnel system. Selection should assess the ability to recognize and reason about ethical problems rather than invite rehearsed statements of values. Initial training should connect rules with recurring dilemmas. Field mentoring should model explanation, restraint, and correction. Performance review should consider the manner in which lawful results are achieved. Leadership should apply standards consistently inside the organization because perceived internal unfairness can weaken commitment to external fairness (Wolfe & Piquero, 2011).

The resulting framework does not replace discipline or legal control. It clarifies the role of education within them. Codes define minimum expectations; learning develops the capacities needed to interpret and apply them; supervision reinforces conduct; and accountability responds when standards are breached. The 2023 national code provides the formal conduct baseline, while the proposed cycle supplies an educational mechanism for internalization and review (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023).

Discussion

The findings show why moral and ethical education should be treated as professional competence rather than as a sequence of ceremonial or informational events. The relevant outcome is not exposure to a value statement. It is the officer's ability to recognize an ethical issue, justify a lawful response, act with restraint, and accept review. This interpretation preserves the normative purpose of spiritual and educational work while making its professional meaning more precise.

The four-capacity model also explains why code knowledge is necessary but insufficient. De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2015) observed that ethics training differences could appear in knowledge without corresponding differences in moral reasoning. An institution that measures only

attendance and test recall may therefore overestimate educational success. Scenario-based assessment and supervised practice are needed to examine how personnel handle ambiguity.

At the same time, it would be equally weak to assume that personal morality alone determines conduct. Organizational justice, leadership, workload, peer norms, and reporting safety affect whether an officer can act on ethical judgment. Wolfe and Piquero's (2011) findings support attention to internal fairness. If supervisors apply rules selectively or punish good faith questions, formal ethics instruction sends a contradictory message.

The procedural justice training evaluated by Wood et al. (2020) demonstrates the value of a narrower and testable intervention. The programme focused on concrete behaviours related to voice, neutrality, respect, and trustworthy motives, and the evaluation used administrative outcomes over time. The study occurred in a different legal and organizational context, so its effect sizes should not be transferred to Uzbekistan. Its methodological lesson is transferable: define behaviours, specify the intervention, identify a comparison or baseline, and measure outcomes that could falsify the claim of effectiveness.

The national legal framework can support this shift. The 2016 law establishes rights protection and public safety duties. The 2021 concept gives educational work an institutional basis. The 2023 code specifies professional culture and discipline. Together they cover mandate, development, and conduct (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016, 2021, 2023). The proposed model links these levels without treating any policy document as proof that practice has already changed.

Moral and ethical education should also remain secular and professionally bounded. Terms such as spirituality, patriotism, or moral immunity are too broad to function as assessment criteria unless they are translated into lawful and observable conduct. For personnel decisions, the defensible criteria are impartiality, respect for dignity, honesty, responsible use of authority, accuracy, and accountability. Private belief, identity, or conformity to an undefined worldview must not become a proxy for professional ethics.

Implementation should begin with a limited pilot. One institution can identify two or three recurring service dilemmas, develop anonymized cases, train facilitators, and test a common reasoning rubric. Baseline and follow-up evidence should include code knowledge, written reasoning, observed simulation, and relevant administrative data. Results should be interpreted cautiously and reviewed with participants before wider adoption.

The framework also changes the role of educational staff. Their task is not limited to organizing events. They should diagnose recurring ethical problems, design cases with legal and operational specialists, facilitate reasoned discussion, support mentors, and analyze evidence. This requires training in adult learning, qualitative assessment, and research ethics.

Limitations

This study is a conceptual analysis of a selected corpus. It does not establish how frequently particular dilemmas occur, how current programmes are implemented across units, or whether the proposed model improves conduct. The international sources come from different legal and organizational settings, and their recommendations require adaptation rather than direct transfer. The framework identifies observable indicators but does not validate a measurement instrument. Administrative data can be incomplete, complaints can reflect unequal access, and supervisors can introduce bias into observation. Any future assessment must combine evidence, protect confidentiality, permit explanation, and avoid automatic personnel decisions based on one measure.

Future Research

Future research should map the most common ethical dilemmas encountered by internal affairs personnel through anonymized interviews, document review, and focus groups. A pilot instrument can then test whether the four capacities are distinct, reliable, and understandable to trainees and supervisors. The design should receive ethics approval and protect operationally sensitive information. A subsequent evaluation should compare baseline and follow-up performance and, where feasible, use a comparison group or phased implementation. Researchers should report implementation fidelity, attrition, missing data, and unintended effects. Longer follow-up is necessary because immediate knowledge gains may not persist or translate into conduct.

Conclusion

Moral and ethical education of internal affairs personnel should develop four linked capacities: moral attention, reasoned judgment, public interest motivation, and responsible action. These capacities become stable only when clear standards, scenario-based learning, ethical supervision, and evidence-based feedback reinforce one another. The article converts this relationship into a five-stage cycle of diagnosis, dilemma analysis, guided reflection, supervised practice, and review. The model provides a more credible basis for curriculum design than attendance-based reporting because it specifies expected conduct and the evidence needed to examine change. It remains a framework for empirical testing, not proof that existing activities are effective.

Declarations

Ethics approval: Not applicable. The study used publicly available documents and did not involve human participants or personal data.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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