

**THE ROLE OF THE CLUSTERING MODEL IN THE MODERNIZATION
OF LEGAL EDUCATION**

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Annotation: The article analyzes the essence of the clustering system in legal education, its role in the integration of education and practice, and its impact on the modern educational process. Clustering unites higher legal education institutions, judicial and law enforcement bodies, the bar, notary offices, and legal clinics into a single system, serving to prepare students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. The study proposes new approaches to the development of legal education clusters in Uzbekistan, highlighting issues such as the development of a national concept, the formation of regional clusters, and the integration of digital technologies into the educational process. In addition, based on a comparative analysis with the experiences of countries such as the USA, the UK, and Germany, ways to improve the efficiency of clustering are presented. The findings contribute to improving the quality of legal education, training competitive specialists in the labor market, and raising the legal culture of the population. The article also broadly covers the importance, advantages, and prospects of implementing clustering in legal education in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: legal education, clustering, pro bono, legal clinic, education model, integration of education and practice.

ANNOTATSIYA: Maqolada huquqiy ta'limda klasterlash tizimining mazmun-mohiyati, uning ta'lim va amaliyot integratsiyasidagi o'rni hamda zamonaviy ta'lim jarayoniga ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Klasterlash oliy yuridik ta'lim muassasalari, sud-huquq organlari, advokatura, notariat va yuridik klinikalarni yagona tizimda birlashtirib, talabalarni nazariy bilimlarni amaliyotda qo'llashga tayyorlashga xizmat qiladi. Tadqiqot O'zbekiston sharoitida huquqiy ta'lim klasterlarini rivojlantirish bo'yicha yangi yondashuvlarni taklif etadi. Unda milliy konsepsiyani ishlab chiqish, hududiy klasterlarni shakllantirish va raqamli texnologiyalarni ta'lim jarayoniga integratsiya qilish masalalari yoritiladi. Shuningdek, AQSH, Buyuk Britaniya va Germaniya kabi davlatlar tajribasi bilan qiyosiy tahlil asosida klasterlash samaradorligini oshirish yo'llari ko'rsatib beriladi. Olingan xulosalar huquqiy ta'lim sifatini oshirish, mehnat bozorida raqobatbardosh mutaxassislar tayyorlash hamda aholining huquqiy madaniyatini yuksaltirishga xizmat qiladi. Maqolada huquq ta'limida klasterlashning ahamiyati, afzalliklari va uni O'zbekistonda joriy etish istiqbollari ham keng yoritilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: huquqiy ta'lim, klasterlash, pro bono, yuridik klinika, ta'lim modeli, ta'lim va amaliyot integratsiyasi.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье анализируются сущность системы кластеризации в юридическом образовании, её роль в интеграции обучения и практики, а также влияние на современный образовательный процесс. Кластеризация объединяет в единую систему высшие юридические учебные заведения, судебно-правоохранительные органы, адвокатуру, нотариат и юридические

клиники, что способствует подготовке студентов к применению теоретических знаний на практике. В исследовании предлагаются новые подходы к развитию кластеров юридического образования в Узбекистане, в том числе разработка национальной концепции, формирование региональных кластеров и интеграция цифровых технологий в образовательный процесс. Кроме того, на основе сравнительного анализа с опытом США, Великобритании и Германии показаны пути повышения эффективности кластеризации. Полученные выводы направлены на повышение качества юридического образования, подготовку конкурентоспособных специалистов на рынке труда и повышение правовой культуры населения. В статье также широко освещаются значение, преимущества и перспективы внедрения кластеризации в юридическом образовании Узбекистана.

Ключевые слова: юридическое образование, кластеризация, pro bono, юридическая клиника, модель обучения, интеграция обучения и практики.

In today's conditions of globalization and rapid technological progress, improving the quality of education is one of the urgent issues, and in this regard, there is a need to introduce new approaches to the education system. Training personnel and adapting them to the needs of the time. Preparing them as competitive personnel in the conditions of a market economy is one of the main issues facing educational institutions. Especially in the field of legal education, the introduction of a clustering system is gaining great importance. Clustering is an approach aimed at improving the quality of education by strengthening the links between educational institutions, government agencies and business sectors.

"Cluster"— derived from the English word cluster, which literally means “collection”, “group”, “complex of objects located close to each other”. Initially, this term was used in the natural sciences, computer technology and economics to denote a set of objects with the same properties.

The "cluster" model was initially formed in the European and American economic systems, developed by Michael Porter and proposed for the development of industrial sectors. Later, this system was also introduced into the educational and scientific spheres, and in the field of legal education, it has been formed in Uzbekistan in recent years as an element of a legal education cluster [1].

In the legal system of Uzbekistan, the concept of a “cluster” was first mentioned in official documents in Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s decree No. PF-5987 dated April 29, 2020, directly within the framework of the modernization of legal education [2]. Paragraph 3 of this decree provides for the organization of training of specialists (educational clusters) on a contractual basis with potential employers as a procedure for forming an order for the training of legal personnel.

Based on the above decree, the goal is to form legal education clusters, involve students in the practical work process and provide free legal services to the population, introduce practice-based educational programs in higher legal education institutions, improve the quality of legal training, integrate practice and scientific activities, systematize scientific research, encourage research aimed at solving modern legal problems, and ultimately develop it as an effective model that fulfills the tasks of competitively preparing graduates for the labor market.

Legal education clusters— is a systematic cooperation model that combines training, retraining, advanced training of legal personnel, scientific research and practical legal specialists. In this model, higher educational institutions, scientific centers, judicial and law enforcement agencies, legal clinics and representatives of other sectors cooperate closely. In the

process of studying this area, educational clusters in the field of law are divided into the following 2 main types:

Research clusters– Unites centers and institutes where scientific research in law is conducted.

Practical and legal clusters– Organized in cooperation with judicial bodies, law firms, and government agencies.

Legal education clusters will strengthen cooperation between public and private educational institutions and other organizations. This system will create an opportunity for students to test theoretical knowledge in practice. In particular, by introducing legal education clusters in Uzbekistan, it will be possible to connect students' knowledge of legal issues with practical situations. Such an approach will not only increase the quality of education, but also serve to train qualified specialists who are in high demand in the labor market.

By developing clustering in legal education, students' practical knowledge and job preparation can be effectively organized.

In the decree “On further increasing the responsibility of justice bodies and institutions within the framework of administrative reforms and the formation of a compact management system”, signed by Shavkat Mirziyoyev on May 24, 2024, this clustering approach was mentioned among the works aimed at improving the legal personnel training system. According to it, it is envisaged to introduce the “school - lyceum - technical school - university” system in the training of legal personnel by organizing “Law Class” and in-depth training in legal subjects in schools [3].

This understanding of the legal cluster implies the interaction and cooperation between educational systems for the successful transformation of the educational system. In order to successfully organize this process, the integral integration of the “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches put forward by the Canadian educational theorist Michael Fullan is of great importance [4]. That is, the effectiveness of reforms implemented in the educational system directly depends not only on the strategic decisions and initiatives set by the highest management bodies, but also on the active participation and level of interaction of educational institutions, teachers, students and the public. In the activities of the legal education cluster, based on these two approaches, it becomes possible to improve the quality of education, train professional personnel and strengthen the capacity of practicing lawyers by forming mutual synergies between institutions within the system. This reform towards clustering legal education will be useful not only in training personnel, but also in the theoretical and practical integration of all institutions in the cycle from preschool education to higher education, in order to form the legal awareness and improve the culture of the population.

The use of a cluster approach in education can be a solution to the problems of quality education and achievement as a result of effective actions in the future. R. Skornyakova noted that an educational cluster is a flexible network structure that includes groups of interconnected objects (educational institutions, public and political organizations, scientific institutes, universities and scientific research organizations). These groups unite to solve urgent problems and achieve a certain result (product) through innovative educational activities [5]. As a result of applying the ideas of this scientist, synergy can be created in the education system. What is the synergy effect?

The concept of synergy is derived from the Greek language and means unity, joint activity, cooperation, working together [6]. If we apply it in the field of education, it is a process that occurs as a result of the joint activities of two or more organizations and institutions, which gives a higher and more effective result than their separate activities. That is, the “1+1=11” effect. For example: In legal education clusters, this effect is effective, that is,

when a university, a legal clinic, a bar association, judicial bodies, etc. cooperate, their joint effect is more effective than what they do separately. This is a synergy effect. Synergy acts here as the principle of the cluster model. YV Kalinyuk, LG Smyshlyaeva, DM Matveev, as scientific evidence for our opinion in this regard, emphasized that the relevance of the cluster approach in the development of education systems is determined, first of all, by the advantages of this format in achieving a synergistic (jointly reinforcing) effect on various educational outcomes, so to speak, in educational clusters the common goal is considered the central point, and it is the common goal that guides the cluster participants to choose the content, communication and technology aspects in cooperation and thereby achieve results [7]. According to many experts, clustering of educational sectors is an important factor in solving the issues of modernization of education, changing its content and organizational and technological formats.

Within the framework of the Decree of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev “On additional measures to radically improve legal education and science in the Republic of Uzbekistan”, a mechanism for identifying the needs for legal personnel and forming orders for them is being introduced within the framework of the development of the legal education system. Legal education clusters are of particular importance in this process, since these clusters allow organizing a system of training specialists on a contractual basis with potential employers. Through this, educational institutions are directed to training highly qualified legal personnel in accordance with the requirements of the legal market and social needs. The legal education cluster also contributes to establishing close ties between education and practice, which not only improves the quality of education, but also serves to develop legal disciplines in our country. The development of clustering in legal education in accordance with the implementation of this regulatory legal act will serve not only to strengthen the national legal system, but also to train competitive specialists in the international arena. The reforms underway in Uzbekistan in this regard are creating a solid foundation for improving the quality of legal education and introducing innovative approaches.

The importance of clustering in legal education is that the clustering system serves to establish close cooperation between legal educational institutions, judicial bodies, the bar, notaries, and other legal service organizations. This:

- preparing students for the labor market;
- improve practical skills;
- joint implementation of research and innovation projects;
- expands the possibilities of providing quality legal services to the population.
- The educational process is carried out by combining theory and practice.

The cluster approach in legal education is widely used worldwide. In particular, in the USA, Great Britain, Germany and other developed countries, legal education institutions operate in an integrated manner with the judiciary, the bar and legal clinics. For example, the Legal Aid Bureau at Harvard Law School is a student-run organization that provides free legal aid to the underprivileged [8]. Through this model, students have the opportunity to test their knowledge in practice and develop a sense of professional responsibility. In the UK, legal education institutions are implementing large-scale pro bono programs to involve students in practice. For example, at the University of Surrey, students work with real clients, provide free legal advice and actively participate in solving legal problems in society by preparing legal documents [9]. Also, at the University of Sheffield, students provide free legal advice to the public through the

“FreeLaw” program [10]. These experiences help reinforce their theoretical knowledge in practice.

In Germany, for example, legal education consists of two stages: theoretical education at the university and a two-year internship called “Referendariat”. During this internship, students work in courts, prosecutors’ offices and the bar, which improves their professional skills. This system allows students to consolidate their theoretical knowledge in practice [11]. Since 2008, student-run legal clinics have been operating in Germany. These clinics play an important role in meeting the legal needs of the population, especially in the area of migration law. Students work in these clinics on a voluntary basis, which allows them to test their theoretical knowledge in practice. For example, the Refugee Law Clinic Hamburg allows students to gain practical experience and feel a sense of social responsibility. Through these clinics, students provide free legal advice on migration law [12].

The introduction of the “pro bono” (free voluntary legal aid) institute was an important step in the integration of legal education with practice in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Some reforms in this regard are also being implemented in the national experience. In particular, the Presidential Decree No. PF-5987 of April 29, 2020 established additional measures to radically improve legal education and science, which provided for the development of socially oriented legal clinic activities (Pro bono) and clinical education of students to further improve the activities of Tashkent State Law University on a “pro bono” basis, as well as the active implementation of the “Street Law” project. Also, the Decree No. PF-5618 of January 9, 2019 approved the concept for radically improving the system of raising legal awareness and legal culture in society, which also set the task of developing a system of providing free legal aid to the population [13]. Within the framework of these initiatives, by involving students of legal education institutions in “pro bono” activities, they serve to consolidate their theoretical knowledge in practice, form a sense of professional responsibility, and increase the legal literacy of the population. This creates the basis for the development of an integrated system in cooperation with legal clinics and judicial bodies, as in foreign experience.

Legal education clusters and their common structural elements include:

- Legal higher education institutions and research centers;
- Court, prosecutor's office, bar, notary and other legal service providers;
- Legal clinics and legal advice centers;
- Partner organizations in the public and non-governmental sectors;

The cooperation of these elements will allow us to improve the quality of legal education and train legal personnel based on modern requirements.

Some of the following elements of legal education clusters are being implemented in Uzbekistan:

In particular:

At the initiative of Tashkent State University of Law, a cluster system was established to integrate education and practice. The activities of legal clinics have been effectively established, and students are directly involved in providing free legal advice to the population, preparing legal documents, and providing legal assistance in civil and economic disputes. At the same time, students are undergoing internships in the courts, prosecutor's offices, and bar associations within the framework of the “Young Prosecutors”, “Young Lawyers”, and “Young Judges” clubs.

Legal clinics, legal advice centers, courts, bar associations, and other legal institutions are actively participating in these processes, cooperating within the cluster system and preparing students for practical skills.

Based on the above, it is appropriate to put forward the following proposals and recommendations for the legal education system of Uzbekistan:

- Development of a national concept of legal education clusters and strengthening their theoretical and legal foundations;
- Establish regional legal education clusters and integrate them with judicial authorities, law firms, and civil society institutions;
- Establishing schools for lawyers, judges, and prosecutors to operate within legal education clusters;
- Introducing approaches based on digital technologies and artificial intelligence into the legal education system;
- Pay special attention to the requirements of professional ethics and international law when training students on a cluster basis.

In conclusion, one of the main tasks facing the education system of Uzbekistan today is to organize the process of training competitive and highly qualified personnel on the basis of systematic and modern approaches. It is from this perspective that the development of a legal education cluster is gaining urgent importance as a requirement of the time. It is precisely through the clustering system that an effective mechanism is created that will ensure close ties between higher education institutions, research institutes, judicial bodies, the bar and other practicing organizations, harmonize theory and practice, and ultimately improve the quality of education.

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