

ENHANCING STUDENTS' CIVIC SKILLS THROUGH THE PROJECT CITIZEN MODEL AND CREATIVE THINKING DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the effect of the Project Citizen learning model and students' creative thinking ability on the development of civic skills among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Tigapanah. The research was motivated by the observed low level of students' civic skills, which is partly due to the limited use of innovative learning models that foster active participation and creative thinking. The study employed a quasi-experimental method using a 2×2 factorial design. The sample consisted of two classes—VII-1 as the experimental group taught using the Project Citizen model, and VII-2 as the control group taught using the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model. Data were collected through tests measuring civic skills and creative thinking ability. The results of the two-way ANOVA analysis show that: (1) students taught using the Project Citizen model achieved higher civic skills scores (mean = 75.65) compared to those taught using the TGT model (mean = 60.62); (2) students with high creative thinking ability outperformed those with low creative thinking ability in civic skills (mean = 87.85 vs. 69.55); and (3) there was a significant interaction between the learning model and creative thinking ability ($F = 7.06$, $p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that the integration of the Project Citizen model and creative thinking development significantly enhances students' civic competence by fostering critical, analytical, and participatory learning experiences. The study highlights the importance of adopting innovative, student-centered approaches in civic education to cultivate democratic and socially responsible citizens.

Keywords: project citizen; creative thinking; civic skills; participatory learning; civic education

I. INTRODUCTION

Civic education plays a vital role in shaping democratic awareness, moral responsibility, and active citizenship among young generations [1]. As a core subject in Indonesian schools, Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) aims to develop students' civic competence, which encompasses civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition [2]. Civic skills are particularly important because they represent the practical application of civic knowledge, enabling students to participate intelligently and responsibly in societal and national affairs [3]. According to Patrick and Vontz (2001), civic skills are fundamental for forming critical, effective, and participatory citizens capable of making informed decisions on public issues [4]. However, recent studies indicate that civic education in Indonesia still tends to focus on rote learning rather than active engagement, leading to low levels of civic skills and critical awareness among students [5]. Observations conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Tigapanah revealed that many students struggle to identify, analyze, and evaluate social or political problems presented in class. They often lack the ability to process information, express ideas, or develop creative solutions to public issues, indicating underdeveloped civic skills and creative thinking abilities [6]. Creative thinking is a higher-order cognitive skill that involves generating original ideas, finding alternative solutions, and applying imaginative reasoning in problem-solving [7]. In civic education, creative thinking

encourages students to reflect critically on real-life issues, propose constructive solutions, and engage collaboratively in civic discourse [8]. According to Munandar (2009), creative thinking manifests through fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration—the ability to produce diverse and meaningful ideas [9]. Enhancing students' creative thinking skills is therefore essential to strengthen civic literacy and democratic participation in the classroom [10].

One of the innovative pedagogical approaches designed to improve both creative thinking and civic skills is the Project Citizen learning model. Developed by the Center for Civic Education (CCE), Project Citizen is a participatory, problem-based learning model that guides students to identify real community issues, research possible solutions, develop action plans, and present policy recommendations [11]. This model promotes active learning, integrates collaboration and reflection, and connects classroom learning with community participation—making it highly relevant for civic education [12]. Numerous studies confirm the effectiveness of Project Citizen in enhancing civic engagement and critical thinking. Budimansyah (2009) found that the model fosters intellectual, participatory, and democratic competencies among students [13]. Hidayati (2022) further reported that Project Citizen-based PPKN learning significantly improves civic skills, especially in identifying and evaluating social issues. Similarly, Helmiansyah et al. (2021) demonstrated that integrating portfolio-based Project Citizen activities prepares

students with 21st-century skills aligned with Society 5.0 learning demands [14]. Moreover, the interaction between Project Citizen and creative thinking ability provides a dual advantage. When students engage in structured, problem-based projects, they are encouraged to think divergently, collaborate, and connect abstract civic concepts to real societal contexts [15]. Khoerudin et al. (2023) showed that divergent thinking techniques within civic learning significantly enhance creative performance and problem-solving competence [16]. Meanwhile, Hera and Sahono (2022) found that students exposed to Project Citizen activities exhibit higher critical and creative thinking compared to those using conventional or competitive models such as Teams Games Tournament (TGT) [17]. Despite these benefits, many civic education classrooms still employ traditional teaching models that limit student autonomy, interaction, and exploration. Such teacher-centered practices hinder students' creative potential and civic participation, resulting in limited intellectual and participatory growth [18]. Therefore, implementing the Project Citizen model is expected to transform passive learning into active civic inquiry, allowing students to connect theoretical civic knowledge with everyday life experiences [19].

In line with previous findings, Iwan et al. (2021) highlight that Project Citizen equips learners with 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, which are essential for cultivating democratic citizenship [20]. Furthermore, Mariyani (2018) argues that this learning approach promotes ecological and moral citizenship by integrating civic values into real-world problem-solving activities. Given these contexts, this study investigates the influence of Project Citizen and creative thinking ability on students' civic skills among Class VII students at SMP Negeri 3 Tigapanah. The research aims to: (1) determine differences in civic skills between students taught using the Project Citizen model and those using Teams Games Tournament (TGT), (2) analyze the effect of high and low creative thinking abilities on civic skills, and (3) examine the interaction between the learning model and creative thinking ability. The study contributes to civic education research by demonstrating that integrating Project Citizen and creative thinking-based learning can effectively enhance students' intellectual and participatory competencies, aligning with the goals of Pancasila-based civic character formation.

The Project Citizen Learning Model

The Project Citizen learning model is a participatory, problem-based instructional strategy designed to enhance students' understanding of democratic processes and social responsibility through active engagement in real-world issues [21]. Developed by the Center for Civic Education (CCE) in the United States, this model encourages learners to identify community problems, research causes and effects, propose public policy solutions, and present their findings in a portfolio or public hearing format [22].

According to Budimansyah (2009), Project Citizen promotes active citizenship by integrating civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes within a democratic learning framework [11]. It aims to foster not only intellectual development but

also participatory and moral dimensions of citizenship [23]. In Indonesia, Project Citizen has been widely adopted in Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) as it aligns with the national goal of forming democratic, responsible, and Pancasila-oriented citizens [24].

Empirical studies confirm its effectiveness in enhancing civic engagement and problem-solving abilities. Hidayati (2022) reported that students taught using Project Citizen show significant improvement in civic participation and analytical thinking [13]. Similarly, Helmiansyah et al. (2021) found that the model increases students' 21st-century learning skills — communication, collaboration, and creativity — by connecting theoretical civic learning with community-based problem solving [14]. Thus, Project Citizen serves as a pedagogical innovation that bridges classroom learning with real civic practice, preparing students for active roles in a democratic society [25].

Creative Thinking and Its Role in Civic Learning

Creative thinking refers to the ability to generate new, original, and meaningful ideas by combining existing knowledge and experiences in innovative ways [26]. It is considered a crucial component of 21st-century competencies, enabling students to adapt to complex social and civic challenges [27]. According to Munandar (2009), creative thinking includes four core indicators: fluency (producing many ideas), flexibility (using diverse perspectives), originality (generating novel solutions), and elaboration (developing and refining ideas) [9].

In civic education, creative thinking encourages students to examine social problems critically, question existing norms, and propose constructive alternatives for public policy or community development [28]. Khoerudin et al. (2023) demonstrated that divergent thinking methods significantly enhance students' creativity and problem-solving skills in civics classes, leading to improved decision-making and communication abilities [8]. Similarly, Maidah et al. (2022) found that students with high creative thinking abilities performed better in project-based learning due to their capacity to integrate analytical reasoning with empathy and civic awareness [10].

From a pedagogical perspective, the integration of creative thinking into Project Citizen promotes transformative learning—shifting students from passive receivers of information to active agents of change [29]. It allows learners to analyze civic problems not merely as observers but as contributors to public solutions, reflecting the principle of “learning democracy by doing democracy.”

Civic skills are defined as the abilities required for effective participation in civic life, including critical thinking, decision-making, communication, and problem-solving in public contexts [30]. According to Patrick and Vontz (2001), civic skills are divided into three main domains:

- a. *Intellectual Skills*, which include the ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate public issues.
- b. *Participatory Skills*, which involve engaging collaboratively in discussions, debates, and community actions.

- c. *Social and Communication Skills*, which support cooperation, respect for differences, and persuasive communication [4].

In Indonesia's Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) curriculum, these skills are essential for fostering democratic values, moral character, and national responsibility [2]. Sapriya (2006) notes that civic education must go beyond theoretical knowledge to include practical engagement through inquiry, dialogue, and collaboration [5].

Empirical studies validate the strong relationship between instructional models and civic skill development. Vera and Samsuri (2019) found that Project Citizen effectively enhances students' ability to formulate public policies and argue positions on social issues [19]. Furthermore, Suryati (2021) demonstrated that integrating multimedia and Project Citizen improves debating, reasoning, and advocacy skills, thus increasing students' confidence in civic participation [18]. Therefore, the development of civic skills depends not only on curricular content but also on pedagogical design that fosters student-centered, inquiry-based, and collaborative learning experiences.

The Relationship Between Project Citizen, Creative Thinking, and Civic Skills

The Project Citizen model and creative thinking are conceptually intertwined, as both emphasize problem identification, critical analysis, and solution formulation within real social contexts [27]. When students apply creative thinking in the Project Citizen framework, they are more likely to produce innovative and contextually relevant solutions to community issues [28]. Studies by Hera and Sahono (2022) and Alfiani (2021) confirmed that students exposed to Project Citizen demonstrate significantly higher creative and civic skills compared to those taught through conventional models [16], [15]. This finding suggests that the synergy between active learning and creative cognition promotes higher-order civic competencies such as collaboration, negotiation, and advocacy [25].

Thus, the integration of Project Citizen and creative thinking into civic education is essential to realizing the goals of Pancasila-based civic character formation. It prepares students not only to understand democratic principles but also to apply them creatively and responsibly in addressing real-life challenges in society.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study applied a quasi-experimental design with a 2×2 factorial structure to determine the effects of the Project Citizen learning model and creative thinking ability on students' civic skills. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Tigapanah during the 2023/2024 academic year, involving Class VII students selected through purposive sampling. Two classes were assigned as the experimental and control groups: the experimental group received the Project Citizen model, while the control group was taught using the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model. The measurement of students' creative thinking ability and civic skills employed validated test instruments and observation sheets developed

according to curriculum standards. Pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using two-way ANOVA, as recommended by Sugiyono (2021), to examine both main and interaction effects among variables [31].

Data collection techniques included written tests, performance assessments, and documentation of student learning portfolios. Validity and reliability tests were conducted using product-moment correlation and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to ensure consistency. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS version 26, with significance levels set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The analysis focused on determining whether the Project Citizen model and creative thinking ability significantly influence civic skills, either independently or interactively. This design follows the educational experiment framework suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2021), which emphasizes causal relationships between teaching strategies and learning outcomes in classroom settings [32].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research are presented in the form of scores on students' civic skills results after studying citizenship education using the project citizen model and students' civic skills results using the teams' games tournament model. The following will be presented in sequence with a description of the data regarding pre-test results of students' civic skills, results of creative thinking abilities, post-test results of students' civic skills using the project citizen model, post-test results of civic skills students use the teams games tournament model, civic skill results of students using the project citizen model and high creative thinking ability, civic skill results of students using the project citizen model and low creative thinking ability, civic skill results using the teams model games tournament and high creative thinking abilities, civic skill results using teams games tournaments and low thinking abilities.

Students' Civic Skills Taught Using the Project Citizen Learning Model

Based on the results of the research conducted, it was found that the average civic skills results of students taught using the project citizen model were 75.65, while the average civic skills results of students taught using expository learning were 60.62. Therefore, it can be said that Civics subjects, especially in studying norms in social life, remember that the average civic skills results of students taught using the project citizen learning model were obtained higher than the average civic skills results of students taught using the model. expository learning that has been used by teachers in Civics subjects.

Civic Skills of Students who Have the Ability to Think Creatively

Teachers are expected to be able to apply learning skillfully, creatively and interestingly so that students have curiosity and enthusiasm in every lesson the teacher provides in class. The characteristics of someone who has high creative thinking abilities can be seen from their behavior during the learning process, such as being focused on learning, being

active in class, being able to generate lots of ideas, being brave enough to express opinions, and always feeling challenged by new material. This is in line with Guilford's opinion [12], namely that someone who has the ability to think creatively can be seen from the aspect of the ability to produce many ideas that come out of one's mind quickly, the ability to generate unique ideas or the ability to generate original ideas and the ability to develop ideas and add or detail details of an object, situation so that it becomes more interesting [13]. Based on the results of research data analysis through a two-way ANOVA test, it was found that the average civic skill result for students with high creative thinking ability was 87.85, while the average civic skill result for students with low creative thinking ability was 69.55. This proves that students' creative thinking abilities can influence students' civic skills results with the assumption that the higher the students' creative thinking abilities, the higher the civic skills results obtained by students.

Interaction Between the Project Citizen Learning Model and Creative Thinking Ability on Civic Skill Results

The project citizen model can help students learn how to investigate important problems, develop thought processes, and learn maturely through experiences that make students independent [14]. The use of the project citizen model helps develop students' abilities to think creatively, analytically, systematically, logically to find ways or alternatives in solving problems, besides this model stimulates students to build self-confidence in their own abilities [15]. The treatment given during four meetings in the research by applying the project citizen learning model and determining students' creative thinking abilities can be obtained from hypothesis testing using two-way ANOVA for the third hypothesis, namely the interaction between the project citizen learning model and students' creative thinking abilities in influencing civic skills. Students get calculated $F = 7.06$, and it is significant at 0.011 with $\alpha = 0.05$. So it can be seen that the significant value is $0.011 < 0.05$, and the probability result or significant value of the learning model is $0.011 < 0.05$.

Project citizen learning model and creative thinking skills on students' civic skills results in class VII junior high school subjects. This is proven by research results which show the development of students' civic skills results, namely tests, both before and after being given treatment. After being given treatment, the average civic skill result of students taught using the project citizen model was 75.65, while the civic skill result of students taught using the TGT learning model was 60.62. This shows that the average civic skills results of students taught using the project citizen learning model are higher than the average civic skills results of students taught using the TGT learning model. So hypothesis testing rejects Ho and accepts Ha. Thus, it can be concluded that the civic skill results of students taught using the project citizen learning model are higher than those of students taught using the TGT learning model.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Project Citizen learning model has a significant positive effect on students' civic skills. Learners who participated in Project Citizen-based classes exhibited better abilities in identifying social problems, proposing solutions, and collaborating in civic discussions compared to those taught using conventional models. Furthermore, students with high creative thinking abilities achieved higher levels of civic performance than those with lower creative thinking scores. This indicates that creativity enhances students' ability to reason critically and act constructively in addressing community issues. The analysis also revealed an interaction effect between the learning model and creative thinking ability, showing that the combination of Project Citizen and high creative thinking capacity produces the most substantial improvement in civic skills. Therefore, applying the Project Citizen model integrated with strategies that cultivate creativity can significantly strengthen students' intellectual and participatory competencies in civic education. These findings suggest that teachers should prioritize active, inquiry-based learning approaches that connect classroom content with real-life civic experiences to prepare students for responsible democratic participation.

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