

Building Legal Awareness of Citizens Through Civic Participation Competence in Civic Education

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SUBJECT

Education

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Received: July 26, 2024

Accepted: August 21, 2024

Online version: August 31, 2024

Keywords: Legal awareness of citizens,
Civic participation, Civic education

Abstract

The development of citizens' legal awareness is a critical aspect of ensuring the sustainability and stability of a country. Therefore, efforts to build citizens' legal awareness are also fostered through education. Civic Education is viewed as a strategic platform to build citizens' legal awareness, as one of the competencies in civic education is oriented towards civic participation. This research explores civic education's role in building citizens' legal awareness by strengthening civic participation competence. This research uses the critical essay method to reveal that through Civic Education, legal awareness can be developed using Project Citizen, role-playing, and Debate teaching methods.

1. Introduction

Forming a civilized society that adheres to the rule of law is essential to building Indonesia towards its peak civilization, as citizens' legal awareness is critical in ensuring a country's sustainability and stability. Thus, efforts to build citizens' legal awareness are also fostered through education. In this context, civic education is seen as a strategic platform for building citizens' legal awareness because one of the competencies in civic education is oriented towards civic participation. As Winataputra and Budimansyah (2012) explain, in the 21st century, civic participation is one of the most crucial competencies in social studies. The dimension of civic participation is to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for participation, designed to strengthen learners' awareness of their abilities and outstanding achievements, and this is oriented towards the active participation of citizens (Quigley et al., 1991).

The legal awareness of its citizens is required to realize that a nation is becoming an advanced country. If a country has deficient legal awareness and participation, there will undoubtedly be many criminal acts such as murder, fraud, robbery, and actions by officials such as corruption (Kuncorowati, 2009). For example, the United States, which has a pattern of constitutional democracy, has higher levels of legal and political

participation (Suryo, 2015). This phenomenon causes developed countries like the United States to have a better quality of life, including education, infrastructure, and health. Additionally, as Hasibuan (2016) states, the importance of this legal awareness will build a society that upholds the rules, thus creating order in community life.

Civic education is oriented as a medium to convey knowledge about legal rules and should empower citizens to participate actively in society and the state. Civic participation, including involvement in decision-making processes and understanding legal mechanisms, is essential for developing legal awareness. Research studies by Hasugian (2022) and Putri (2022) mention the urgency of citizens' legal awareness – such awareness results in an orderly and peaceful national life. Further, research by (Farahdila Putri et al., 2020) mentions the importance of legal awareness, as it can prevent the spread of hoaxes, especially in the 21st century, which is digital-based as it is now.

Research on legal awareness and the perspective of civic education has been conducted previously, such as studies by Destikasari (2016) and Rizal (2020) on how Civic Education in its role increases learners' legal awareness, stating that its role is through the inculcation of knowledge from educators. Then, studies conducted by Nurgiansah and Widyastuti (2019) focus on building traffic awareness, stating that the role of lecturers or educators and the synchronization of civic education learning can significantly build legal awareness.

However, even though civic participation competence is fundamentally an integrated study in the civic education curriculum, not much research has holistically investigated the effectiveness and impact of this integration on the formation of citizens' legal awareness. Thus, this research aims to fill this knowledge gap by sincerely and comprehensively exploring the relationship between civic participation competence in civic education and the development of citizens' legal awareness. The focus on civic participation competence in forming legal awareness is the novelty of this research.

This research becomes relevant given the complexity of modern society's social, political, and legal developments. Through an in-depth exploration of how civic participation can be an effective tool in forming legal awareness, it can identify better and more effective educational strategies that can prepare legally aware citizens who actively and positively contribute to society based on justice and legal order. Indeed, this research has the aim and benefit of contributing to scientific studies that can provide broader insights and innovations regarding the development of legal awareness through civic participation competence in civic education. The results of this research are expected to contribute to other researchers and educators as a reference to improve civic education's effectiveness in developing students' legal awareness.

2. Research methods

This research is a critical essay study. This article chose this method to critically assess important aspects of citizens' legal awareness and the teaching approaches applied in civic education. The researcher presents data and facts through this approach and interprets and evaluates their relevance in context.

3. Result and Discussion

Analyzing the Current State of Citizens' Legal Awareness

Legal awareness encompasses aspects of life that involve acceptance and responsibility towards the legal system. If we separately define legal awareness with the words "aware" and "law," it essentially means knowing or understanding the law. Ewick and Silbey (Marsinah, 2016) define "legal awareness" as how people understand the law and legal institutions, involving an understanding that gives meaning to individual experiences and actions. For them, "legal awareness" is formed through actions and becomes the subject of empirical research. In other words, legal awareness is related to "law as behaviour," not as "law as a norm or principle."

Citizens who uphold rules, resulting in legal compliance and order, are the outcome of citizens' legal awareness. Soekanto (1983) explains at least four indicators of legal awareness. The first is legal knowledge, whether written or unwritten; the second is legal understanding; the third is attitudes or judgments towards the law; and the fourth is legal behaviour. This highest level results in law-abiding citizens.

The comparison of legal awareness between developed and developing countries shows significant differences when further examined based on data and facts. These differences are evident in citizens' understanding of the law and their level of participation in the law enforcement process. Legal awareness is generally very high in developed countries such as Germany, Japan, and Canada. Data indicate that most citizens in developed countries understand their legal rights and obligations and are more active in upholding the law.

The study by Sudarsih (2017) on the value of discipline in Japanese society states that Japan's history demands its people to rise and work hard, which eventually became a deeply rooted culture. The quality of human resources in Japan is undoubtedly high. Japan's approach to advancing the country involves focusing on education, science, and technology.

Similarly, Germany prioritizes the quality of education to advance the country through human resources. As discussed in a study by Handayani and Rani (2022), the German government views education as the primary capital to recover from economic and ideological downturns.

In contrast, legal awareness remains a challenge in many developing countries, such as India, Nigeria, and Indonesia. Research shows that lack of access to education and information and distrust in the legal system are the main obstacles. For instance, in Indonesia, according to a report from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 75,303 children in Indonesia dropped out of school in 2021 (Suprpto, 2022 in *kompasiana.com*), which is one of the contributing

factors to the low legal awareness among Indonesian citizens. Education plays a crucial role in shaping society's mindset, enhancing understanding of legal content, and directing public behaviour towards greater compliance with the law. With adequate education, it is easier for society to comprehend the importance of law and legal awareness.

From this explanation, legal awareness is a fundamental aspect that a citizen must possess because it involves understanding and accepting the legal system, which entails giving meaning to individual experiences and actions. Legal awareness includes knowledge about the law and understanding, attitudes, and behaviour towards the law. Citizens with high legal awareness tend to comply with the law, which creates legal compliance and order in society.

Analysis of Civic Participation Competence in Civic Education

In civic education, there are various competencies with the ultimate goal of shaping excellent and intelligent citizens in national life. Because civic education is multidimensional, as described by Wahab and Sapriya (2011), it includes education about citizenship, politics, moral values, character, society, human rights, democracy, and law. One of the competencies in the development of civic education is civic participation, which involves transferring and developing learners' understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens, building critical thinking skills, and encouraging motivation to be actively involved in various aspects of society.

In general, the goal of the state in developing Civic Education is to develop excellent and intelligent citizens (civic intelligence) intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually; to instil a sense of pride and responsibility (civic responsibility), and to enable participation in national life (civic participation), thus realizing Indonesia's civil society (Wahab & Sapriya, 2011).

Civic participation competence is the ability of citizens to participate in community and national life to foster a sense of nationalism and patriotism. Civic participation in civic education refers to the active involvement of citizens in decision-making, social activities, and positive contributions to community development. Therefore, this dimension emphasizes citizens' "participation" output, whether in legal, political, or other aspects, thus contributing positively to national life.

Reichert and Print (2017) explain that civic participation views participation in school activities as a crucial habit for students' social and political development. This means that when students engage in school activities related to the community, they learn about society and begin to develop habits and patterns of behaviour that will influence their future involvement, particularly in politics. This suggests that political activities in school or student organization activities help to socialize young people into political behaviour patterns that they carry into adulthood. It refers to the idea that early involvement in such activities will increase the likelihood of greater political engagement in the future. Students who participate in informal civic learning activities at school, such as debates, student elections, or social activities, can

develop essential skills such as leadership, which are helpful in societal decision-making. This applied civic learning provides theoretical knowledge and fosters a commitment to specific behaviours relevant to social and political life. The skills developed through these informal activities, such as leadership and organizational abilities, are directly related to the skills required to participate in future political activities. Through involvement in these activities, students also commit to specific behavioural patterns necessary for political participation, such as collaboration, communication, and decision-making.

One of the goals of civic education is to produce fully participating, competent, and responsible citizens who uphold the constitutional values of the state (Winataputra & Budimansyah, 2012). Quigley et al. (1991) mention that the dimension of civic participation is to provide the necessary knowledge and skills for participation, designed to enhance learners' awareness of their abilities and outstanding achievements, and this is oriented towards the active participation of citizens. According to Lichterman, civic participation stimulates a "social spiral" activity that equips citizens with the virtues and skills to participate in democracy and build broad and diverse social networks (Stekelenburg et al., 2016).

Therefore, civic participation competence emphasizes the involvement in transferring understanding of citizens' rights and obligations, constructing critical thinking skills, and motivation to participate positively. Civic participation in Civic Education includes involvement in decision-making, social activities, and positive contributions to community development. The goal of civic education is to create fully participating, competent, and responsible citizens who uphold the constitutional values of the state. Through learning civic participation, it is hoped that future generations can provide positive contributions, build broad social networks, and uphold democratic values, thereby realizing Indonesia's civil society. In this critical essay, the study of the level of legal awareness influenced by the education system is emphasized, as this study discusses education. Of course, education is one of many factors contributing to the high or low level of legal awareness in a society within a country.

Evaluating Teaching Methods in Enhancing Legal Awareness of Citizens Through Civic Participation

In Civic Education, which includes civic participation competencies, educators can use several teaching methods to enhance students' legal awareness. According to (Wiyono, 2016), strategic steps to legal awareness include three things: (1) Theoretical steps that align with the values of Pancasila; (2) Target group determination steps, for example, through the development of the target group's mentality, which in this case is students. Students, as a teenage group, comply with the law with the argument that the law can prevent harmful behaviour because the law is seen as an instrument that "prohibits"; (3) Determination of legal materials that are then presented to students, including textbook materials, learning methods, strategies, and learning media. Essentially, teaching methods that are active, participative,

collaborative, and enjoyable are effective in increasing citizens' legal awareness. Relevant Classroom Learning Methods to Enhance Legal Awareness:

Project Citizens

According to Muzaki et al. (2022), the project citizen method is helpful as a fundamental approach to classroom learning, providing substantial opportunities to enhance students' legal awareness. The steps include: First, students are invited to choose a legal project related to important social or political issues. The second step involves conducting field research, such as interviewing legal experts and stakeholders, allowing students to gain deeper insights into the law's implementation in real-world contexts.

Third, students analyze the social impact of existing regulations, providing a broader understanding of how the law affects society. This process enables students to formulate solutions and recommendations for legal changes to improve the current situation. Fourth, students are encouraged to prepare a presentation that is clear and persuasive and requires public speaking skills and the ability to exchange ideas with others (Muzaki et al., 2022).

This process involves understanding the law theoretically and honing students' analytical and communicative skills. Additionally, by reflecting on experiences and evaluating proposed solutions, students deepen their understanding of the law and recognize the essential role it plays in societal dynamics. Thus, the project citizen method opens a wide window to a deeper understanding and engagement with the law among students.

This project citizen model can develop civic knowledge, skills, and disposition. This method demonstrates its strength by transferring knowledge, skills, and attitudes through active learning strategies. By selecting legal projects related to social or political issues, students understand laws and regulations deeply and develop analysis, problem-solving, and communication skills (Mulyoto & Samsuri, 2017).

Role Playing

A role-playing learning model is an approach that involves students in role-playing, where they take on specific characters or positions to play out certain scenarios or situations. In civic participation, role-playing can be an effective tool to build an understanding of the citizenship system (Wijaya Aprianda, 2020).

Through role-playing, students can explore a deeper understanding of societal roles and responsibilities. By playing roles as community members, government officials, or activists, students can directly experience the complexity of decision-making and the consequences of community actions (Aprianda, 2020). This learning model allows students to see, understand, and experience situations from different perspectives and develop empathy for others with different views or interests.

The importance of role-playing in shaping civic participation lies in its ability to provide an interactive learning environment and trigger personal reflection. By directly experiencing the challenges and decisions faced in society, students can be more prepared and motivated to engage actively in community decision-making processes (Wijaya Aprianda, 2020). As a learning model that supports the development of citizenship skills and understanding, role-playing contributes positively to forming good civic participation.

According to Komalasari (2013), the steps to implement the role-playing model are: First, the teacher prepares a scenario. Second, select a few students to be involved in the scenario. Third, the teacher forms groups. Fourth, the teacher explains the scenario. Fifth, after the performance, each student is given a worksheet to discuss the group's performance. Sixth, each group presents their conclusions. Seventh, the teacher makes a general conclusion.

Debate

According to Komalasari (2013), debate is one of the most critical learning models to improve students' academic abilities. Using the debate learning model strengthens students' cognitive aspects and develops critical thinking, analytical, and speaking skills. Indirectly, this also provides opportunities for students to hone communication skills, understand various viewpoints, and improve analytical abilities in forming cohesive arguments (Nugraha, 2022).

In the context of civic participation, skilled students in debate can become agents of change who can embrace diversity of opinion and contribute to forming inclusive community policies. Therefore, debate is a learning tool that strengthens academic abilities and a medium for developing social and civic skills highly relevant to effective citizen participation.

According to Komalasari (2013), the steps to implement the debate model are as follows: First, the teacher divides students into two groups, pro and contra. Second, the teacher provides the material to be debated. Third, the teacher determines which group will be pro and which will be contra. Fourth, the teacher writes down ideas presented by both groups. Fifth, the teacher adds ideas that still need to be revealed. Sixth, the teacher invites students to write conclusions on the discussed topic.

Overall, the three discussed learning models – project citizen, role-playing, and debate – are approaches considered suitable for shaping students into active participating citizens. Project citizen provides a foundation for understanding legal concepts and policies through participation in projects requiring in-depth research, social impact analysis, and constructive solution development. Meanwhile, the role-playing model allows students to experience societal roles and responsibilities directly. The debate model enriches students' critical and analytical thinking skills, preparing them to contribute to dialogues and discussions effectively.

Together, these learning models build the foundation for public speaking skills, forming solid arguments, and embracing diversity of opinion. In the context of

civic participation, these models enable students to become not just consumers of information but also agents of change with a deep understanding of societal issues and means to make decisions.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above research, the researcher concludes that civic Education through civic participation competency plays a crucial role in shaping the legal awareness of citizens, in this case, students. This includes understanding, acceptance, attitudes, and behaviour towards the legal system, ultimately creating legal compliance and order. Through civic participation competency, students as young citizens are expected to understand their rights and obligations, build critical thinking skills, and be motivated to participate actively in community and national life. Effective methods to enhance citizens' legal awareness through civic participation include the Project Citizen, Role Playing, and Debate methods. These methods provide students opportunities to engage actively in learning, develop a deep understanding of law and civic responsibilities, and prepare them to become active agents of change in society.

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