



## Citizenship Education as a Means of Developing Citizens' Understanding of Politics and Democracy

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the role of Citizenship Education in shaping citizens' understanding of politics and democracy. The method used is study descriptive qualitative with approach studies library. Data collected from various source relevant literature, such as books, journals scientific, document law, and publication related. Data analysis techniques are carried out in a way descriptive qualitative for dig relatedness between Citizenship Education and understanding political as well as democracy. Research results show that Citizenship Education own role strategic No only as means delivery knowledge about politics and democracy, but also as a medium for to form character and awareness political participant educate. Through understanding values democracy, rights and obligations as Citizenship, Citizenship Education capable increase thinking critical, participation active, and not quite enough answer social students. Learning This support realization the concept of "good citizen," as put forward by Westheimer and Kahne, which includes not quite enough answer personal, participation active, and orientation towards justice. Conclusion of the study This is that Citizenship Education play role important in build active, critical, and democratic citizens. Through systematic and integrative approach, Citizenship Education can become means effective in create a generation with integrity and capability contribute positive in life society and state.

**Keywords:** *Civic Education; Politics; Democracy*

### **Introduction**

Understand politics and democracy is a crucial element in effort to advance political awareness of citizens. With an increased understanding of this, individuals can be actively involved in the democratic process, forming a view based on information, and taking decisions that have a positive impact in society. Civic Education (PKn) plays an important role in developing citizens' understanding of politics and democracy. Civics aims not only to convey knowledge about the political system and government but also to shape attitudes, values, and skills that support active involvement of citizens in political and democratic life. Civic Education (PKn) plays a central role in shaping intelligent, active, and responsible citizens.

Civic education is not limited to a series of lessons, but rather is an effective means to build political awareness and citizens' involvement in political life. With a deep understanding of basic political concepts and strengthening citizenship values, citizenship education becomes a vital instrument in forming quality citizens. Civic Education plays a crucial role in forming individuals as quality citizens (Hemafitria, 2015). The quality of a citizen can be reflected in involvement and active participation in political aspects. Civic Education does not only discuss the cognitive realm, nor is it limited to knowledge of political theories. Civics provides a pathway for participants to understand the government structure, rights as well as citizens' obligations, and the role of each element in political life. With an understanding of basic political concepts, students can develop critical and analytical thinking to address various social and political issues faced by the public.

Civics also plays an important role in forming active citizens' participation in political life. Civic Education is a form of democracy education that aims to prepare members of society to have the ability to think critically and act in a democratic manner. This is done through purposeful activities that plant awareness in the new generation about the importance of democracy as a model of community life that guarantees society's rights (Saidurrahman, 2018). By giving a deep understanding of democratic rights and the freedom to speak up, civics provides a strong foundation for developing participatory awareness. Students are given the chance to play an active role in simulations, discussions, and participatory projects, helping them apply knowledge gained in real-life contexts.

In the article entitled "What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy," written by Westheimer and Kahne in 2004, this article describes the importance of the diversity of ideas about the draft of good citizenship in the context of educational programs for democracy. Over a period of two years in the United States, the authors conducted a deep analysis of educational programs to investigate the meaning of citizens who are considered "good." They explained that the conception of citizens who are considered "good" includes not only personal responsibility, active participation, and principles oriented toward justice (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). In this concept, there is an emphasis on personal responsibility, where citizens are expected to have an awareness of their role and contribution in the community. In addition, active participation is considered a key aspect, where involvement in social, political, and cultural activities becomes the main pathway to form positive citizenship.

The importance of orientation toward principles of justice is also emphasized, with the authors identifying that citizens who are considered good must have a deep understanding of the values of justice and equality. Thus, the educational programs for democracy in the United States are expected to produce individuals who are not only superior in academic knowledge but also possess the skills and attitudes of responsible and progressive citizenship. Westheimer and Kahne revealed that a large part of the efforts to teach democracy at this moment reflects a narrow and sometimes conservative ideological conception of citizenship. This limited conception can negatively impact citizens' understanding and participation in the democratic context. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that a change in the approach to democratic education is important to reflect broad democratic values, such as pluralism, social justice, and respect for diversity. This limited conception is not solely an arbitrary choice but reflects a political choice that can have a significant impact on shaping citizens' views on democracy.

It is important for citizens to understand and implement politics and democracy in the right way. Politics, as a complex system adapted to social contexts in which public values and goals are organized and maintained (Easton, 1953), is not only a mechanism for making decisions, but also a container in which public values and goals are organized and maintained. Politics reflects the dynamic connection between individuals and groups in efforts to reach balance and harmony in society. This process involves policy formation, the allocation of power resources, and the distribution of power, which plays a crucial role in maintaining social stability. As a complex entity, politics involves dynamic and constant interaction, connecting individuals with shared objectives in an organized social structure.

Apart from understanding politics, citizens' understanding of democracy is also crucial. Because between politics and democracy, there is of course a connection. Ebenstein and Fogelman define democracy as a commitment to a series of freedoms, which they explain in conceptual criteria. The criteria involve empirical rationality, the importance of the individual, the instrumental theory of the state, the principles of voluntariness, legality, emphasis on process, deliberation, and consensus in human connections, as well as the equality of basic rights for all humans (Ebenstein & Fogelman, 1994).

Gwendolen M. Carter and John H. Herz provide a comprehensive definition of democracy. According to them, democracy is a system of governance characterized by the implementation of the following principles: first, restrictions on government action through the orderly and peaceful change of leadership via institutions that effectively represent the people. Second, the acceptance of tolerance towards differing opinions. Third, the implementation of equality before the law, with the rule of law upheld without regard to political position. Fourth, the implementation of free elections with an effective representation system. Fifth, providing freedom for political parties, social organizations, communities, and individuals to participate and oppose, including the mass media and the press as channels for societal expression. Sixth, acknowledging the people's right to state their views, even if the views are considered controversial or unpopular. Seventh, strengthening the protection of the rights of minorities and individuals, with an emphasis on a persuasive and deliberative approach rather than using force or repressive actions (Carter & Herz, 1982).

In Indonesia, the national education curriculum at the elementary and middle school levels does not yet include specific lessons on political education and democracy. Therefore, Citizenship Education plays the role mentioned. Civic education is a learning process that helps students understand and appreciate the fundamental values of democracy, engage in the political process, and respect individual rights and responsibilities (Patrick, 2002). Within this framework, students are encouraged to value democratic principles, including individual rights and responsibilities in the context of society. This process involves the development of critical thinking skills, participation in social dialogue, and strengthening an understanding of the importance of human rights. Civic education, as put forward by Patrick, is not just about knowledge but also about forming positive attitudes toward a pluralistic society and instilling a participatory spirit in building a democratic community.

Political education invites the public to participate, as well as to be members of society with sufficient understanding of state affairs and politics (Kantaprawira, 2006). By understanding democratic values, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the dynamics of political processes, political education provides knowledge and skills to individuals to be able to participate actively. This includes stimulating concern for social and political issues, motivating citizens to understand and contribute to public policies, and strengthening the foundation for public involvement in shaping the direction and development of the nation as a whole.

In order to achieve the concept of a good citizen, as explained by Westheimer and Kahne, a deep understanding of the meaning of politics and democracy becomes the key. Education becomes an essential means to realize this goal. In Indonesia, the existence of specific lessons on political education and democracy has not yet been fully implemented, which is why Citizenship Education takes on a central role in instilling this understanding in the younger generation. Civic education functions as a means to teach basic concepts of politics and democracy, form participatory attitudes, and provide understanding about rights and responsibilities as members of society. Through practical and interactive learning, students can develop the required skills to participate actively in political life. By incorporating democratic values into the curriculum, civic education creates a solid foundation for forming a generation that understands and is involved in building a democratic and responsible society. Thus, the emphasis on the role of Citizenship Education becomes even more important in guiding the public toward becoming good citizens.

## **Research Methods**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a library study approach. The library study approach is conducted by collecting data from various relevant sources of literature, which is then analyzed and interpreted (Moleong, 2017). The data in this study were obtained through a search of related sources on topics such as books, legal documents, scientific journals, and other supporting publications.

Data collection techniques were carried out through library studies, namely identifying, collecting, and reviewing information from various references, including books, articles, research journals, regulatory documents, and other related publications. The collected data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative analysis method, which involves compiling information based on related themes with the concept of the welfare state, or welfare state as outlined in the Indonesian constitution. The analysis will continue by examining the relationship between the constitutional provisions and the concept of the welfare state, as well as exploring the challenges and opportunities that arise during the implementation process.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Civic education as a Means of Political Education**

Westheimer and Kahne highlight that understanding politics can form participatory citizens. Therefore, there is a need for the development of political understanding among citizens. One of the efforts to instill political understanding in citizens is through education. In general terms, education is considered the main foundation in building a nation, as outlined in Constitution Number 20 of 2003, which discusses the national education system in Indonesia. Education not only plays the role of a knowledge transfer tool, but also as a planned effort to create an atmosphere and environment conducive to learning for students, enabling them to actively develop aspects of themselves. Thus, involving the development of the spiritual dimension, character formation, self-control, moral practice, intellectual improvement, and skill development becomes very important to contribute positively at the individual, societal, national, and state levels.

Raharjo (2020) defines education as an investment in forming the character and potential of students, with the hope of having a positive impact on both a personal and collective level. This confirms the important role of education in forming individuals with good intellectual strength, ethics, and meaningful contributions to social development. According to Fauzan & Arifin (2022), education is considered a complex system that requires support from various elements to achieve success. These elements include vision, mission, goals, curriculum, teaching staff, management, learning strategies, approaches, methods, and evaluation.

Political education, as a form of citizenship education, aims to provide understanding about political rights and obligations, as well as to form democratic attitudes (Carruthers, 2019). Political education plays a central role in forming citizens who are aware of their political rights and obligations. The main goal is to provide a deep understanding of democratic principles, basic human rights, and individual responsibilities in the context of political life. Through this approach, students are not only armed with theoretical knowledge, but also empowered to implement democratic values in everyday actions. Political education creates a platform for discussion, reflection, and active participation in the political process, forming a democratic, open attitude toward plurality, and strengthening public involvement in building a just and inclusive society.

Political education is an effort to develop individuals' skills and sensitivity to politics, so that they can become more effective participants in the political system (Lasswell, 1936). Political education

functions as a systematic effort to develop skills and individual sensitivity to political realities. With a focus on individual empowerment, political education provides a foundation for the development of critical thinking skills, policy analysis, and political information assessment. Additionally, this education deepens the understanding of political system dynamics, decision-making processes, and participation mechanisms. Through this approach, individuals are empowered to become effective participants in the political system, capable of contributing actively, voicing their views, and playing a role in shaping policy. Political education, therefore, plays a key role in forming conscious and effective citizenship in public political life.

The purpose of political education is to provide guidelines, provisions, and understanding to Indonesian society to increase awareness of national and state life, particularly in the field of politics (Christina et al., 2015). With a focus on politics, political education aims to provide in-depth guidance, adequate knowledge, and preparation so that the Indonesian people can become more aware and actively involved in national and state life. Through an understanding of political concepts, rights and obligations of citizens, as well as the dynamics of the political system, political education creates a solid foundation for active participation in the democratic process. The goal is not only to provide information but also to form a positive attitude toward political involvement, stimulate a sense of responsibility, and encourage constructive participation. Therefore, political education becomes a crucial instrument in building a society with integrity, awareness, and activity in managing state politics.

Civic education is often considered a key element in honing the political abilities of young people. It means providing knowledge and skills to the next generation to actively play a role in political and civil life (Alscher et al., 2022). This statement highlights the significant role of citizenship education in forming the political skills of young people. The goal is to equip the younger generation with knowledge, useful skills, and active involvement in political and civil life. By understanding democratic principles and individual responsibility, civic education is expected to empower the younger generation to contribute positively to society. This is in line with research by Afriadi et al. (2023), which highlights the importance of citizenship education and civil involvement as key elements in building the belief that citizenship education plays a strategic role as a powerful tool with the capacity to influence the future.

Civic education has the potential to function as political education because it covers an in-depth understanding of citizens' rights and obligations, democratic principles, and the dynamics of the political process. Within this framework, citizenship education plays a role in promoting effective political participation. By incorporating democratic values, critical thinking skills, and instilling a sense of social responsibility, citizenship education forms individuals who not only understand the political structure but are also capable of contributing positively to society. By integrating political concepts into the curriculum, citizenship education plays an important role in forming conscious and active citizens who participate in political life.

The material in citizenship education is, of course, closely related to political education. Civic education not only provides an understanding of citizens' rights and obligations but also integrates political concepts and democratic values into the curriculum. Some of the frequently used materials in citizenship education that simultaneously contribute to political education include:

1. Democracy Draft: Civic education discusses the basic principles of democracy, including an understanding of freedom, justice, and equality.
2. Government System: This material covers explanation about How system government work, including understanding about institutions governance, legislative process, and elections general.
3. Participation Politics: Civic education push participation active in the political process, teaching student method contribute through election general, discussion, and action social.
4. Rights and Obligations of Citizens: This material discuss rights and obligations citizens, including understanding about not quite enough answer to society and state.

5. Issues Social and Political: Civic Education often includes discussion issues contemporary, such as right basic humans, inequality, and global problems.

With embrace materials said, education citizenship in a way effective merge elements education political to in the curriculum, helps to form informed, aware and active citizens in life political and social.

### **Civic Education as a Means of Democracy Education**

Democracy education is an effort made in a planned way by the state and society, with the goal of providing facilitation to individuals or citizens so that they can understand, feel, apply, and develop concepts, principles, and values of democracy in accordance with their roles and positions in the structure of society. This is an obligation of the government, as confirmed in Constitution Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, especially in Chapter III, Article 4, Paragraph 1, which stipulates that education must be conducted in a democratic, fair, and non-discriminatory manner, while honoring basic human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national diversity (Ministry of National Education, 2003).

In the context of democracy education, the hope is for the community to have an awareness of their obligations as obedient citizens to the rules and policies, as well as to love peace without distinguishing between the minority and the majority. The importance of democracy education is especially felt in countries undergoing a transition to democracy, such as Indonesia, or in countries where democracy has already been established. Some experts identify citizenship education as "democracy education," because its coverage includes topics such as governance, constitution, rule of law, democratic institutions, and citizens' rights and obligations. However, other experts refer to it as "citizenship education," focusing on democratic mechanisms, active participation, and citizens' involvement in the development of public civil society (Azra, 2005).

Democracy education needs to be planned carefully by various stakeholders, including democracy experts, school heads, teachers, parents, religious leaders, and community leaders. The democracy educational process must pay comprehensive and universal attention to values. The success of democracy education is measured by the outcome: the creation of students with democratic and dynamic personal and social competencies, thereby producing good citizens. In introducing democratic values, good leaders, whether formally or informally, must be aware that realizing democracy in all aspects of life—state organization, civil society, and market institutions—is a key responsibility. Every state and government official has an obligation to make their position a means of learning democracy education (Kusrahmadi, 2013).

Civic education plays an active and central role in realizing democratic principles within the schooling environment. The civics curriculum is arranged in such a way as to reflect these values, not only as a knowledge transfer tool but also as a means of character formation for students and the creation of an inclusive, engaging, and democratic learning environment. Every aspect of this curriculum aims to provide a holistic learning experience, involving students' active participation in citizenship values. One of the steps that can be taken to prepare the ideal citizen is through the educational process, particularly in the Civic Education domain (Syarif, 2019). Civics does not only provide information but also serves as a base for an educational approach that values diversity, promotes open dialogue, and encourages students' active participation. Civics focuses on creating an inclusive atmosphere, empowering every student so that they feel valued and empowered to voice their views and thoughts without fear of discrimination or limitations. This makes Civics not only a subject but also a life guide that helps students become democratic citizens, always ready to share and contribute to a harmonious and inclusive society.

Civic education is considered a powerful instrument to form attitudes, knowledge, and active citizens in social and political life. This research can be interpreted as encouragement for incorporating the concepts and practices of citizenship education into the design of democracy education. This includes

emphasizing the development of knowledge and understanding about citizenship values, active participation in society, and the implementation of intercultural principles. According to Juanda & Rahayu (2019), the implementation and formation of democratic behavior most directly occurs in the formal school environment, starting from kindergarten through high school. This effort is implemented by applying a cross-curriculum approach through subjects such as social studies, language education, and the arts, as well as involving extracurricular and co-curricular activities. The main objective of this democracy education implementation is to prepare society with the ability to think critically and adopt a democratic attitude. Through the civics curriculum, the application and formation of democratic behavior can be integrated through various subjects. The cross-curriculum approach supports the development of students' critical thinking skills related to democratic principles.

Civic education cannot be separated from the fact that the majority of Indonesian society today still has a limited understanding of democracy. Although it is generally known as Democracy Education, Citizenship Education has its own dimensions and special orientation in creating citizens with the capacity to engage in democratic practices. Therefore, the main goal of citizenship education is to educate young generations to be democratic, active, critical, and civilized citizens of Indonesia. This means students must be aware of their rights and obligations in daily life as part of the state and ready to become part of the global society (Ubaedillah & Rozak, 2015).

Civic education has become an integral part of the national education system in Indonesia for a long period. In Indonesia, citizenship education has undergone various changes in terms of the models implemented by the government in its effort to carry out the mission of democracy education and basic human rights. The main goal of citizenship education is to form a superior Indonesian nation with the ability to participate, be responsible, and be smart and active in a critical and democratic way. Furthermore, the purpose of citizenship education covers the development of a commitment to maintaining national unity and integrity while promoting a democratic culture that prioritizes values such as manners, freedom, tolerance, equality, and social responsibility. It is expected that students can apply changes in public life through the process of transferring learning (transfer of learning), values (transfer of values), and principles (transfer of principles) in the context of democracy, human rights, and civil society in everyday life (Nasution, 2016).

Democracy education essentially guides and teaches students to achieve maturity in democracy by spreading democratic values, so that their behavior reflects democratic life. In the context of democracy education, two main aspects that need to be emphasized are democracy as a concept and democracy as practice. As a concept, this relates to understanding, meaning, and attitudes appropriate to democratic principles, while as practice, democracy becomes the system that has been applied. To promote democratic values, involvement and commitment from political elites, community figures, teachers, parties involved with democracy education, and society as a whole become very important.

Civic education not only aims for its citizens to have theoretical understanding but also emphasizes the practical implementation of concepts as effectively as possible. The main goal of citizenship education is to form a democratic and responsible society, with the hope of preparing citizens who have the ability to think critically and adopt democratic attitudes (Dewi, 2018). Therefore, the role of citizenship education becomes very important in forming a society that has the capacity to support democratic values.

Through Citizenship Education lessons, students can obtain knowledge about democratic values, human rights principles, and the responsibilities of citizens. This, of course, can help in the creation of good citizens in accordance with the criteria presented by Westheimer and Kahne. Citizenship Education can be used as a tool to practice students' ability to communicate effectively, understand diverse perspectives, and participate in open dialogue, all of which are important skills in the context of democracy. Moreover, involving students in extracurricular and co-curricular activities related to Civics

can become a means of forming democratic behavior. For example, through activities like debates, discussion forums, or citizenship projects, students can experience firsthand how to think critically and actively participate in the democratic process.

### **Conclusion**

The draft of a good citizen, according to Westheimer and Kahne, can become a reality with a deep understanding of politics and democracy. Therefore, an effort is needed to develop this understanding within citizens. Education becomes an effective means to achieve this objective, particularly through citizenship education in Indonesia. Through this subject, individuals can understand the principles of democracy, citizens' rights and obligations, as well as participation in the political process. The development of political and democratic understanding in citizenship education becomes the main pathway to form an active, critical, and responsible generation to build an inclusive public democracy.

Civic education is a subject that focuses on the effort to form citizens who have the understanding and ability to carry out their rights and obligations, with the aim of becoming intelligent, skilled, and moral Indonesian citizens in accordance with the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. This subject is mandatory at all levels of education, starting from elementary school to high school. The approach in citizenship education not only seeks to achieve theoretical understanding but also emphasizes the practical implementation of concepts as effectively as possible. The main goal of citizenship education is to form a democratic and responsible society, so that it can prepare citizens with the ability to think critically and behave democratically.

Political education, as a form of citizenship education, aims to provide an understanding of political rights and obligations, as well as to form a democratic attitude. Political education plays a central role in forming a conscious citizen who understands their political rights and obligations. The main goal is to provide a deep understanding of democratic principles, basic human rights, and individual responsibilities in the context of political life. Political education is an effort to develop individuals' skills and sensitivity to politics, so that they can become more effective participants in the political system.

Civic education is a learning process that helps students understand and appreciate the fundamental values of democracy, engage in the political process, and respect individual rights and responsibilities. Civic education can play a role in political education because it covers a deep understanding of citizens' rights and obligations, democratic principles, and the political process. In this context, citizenship education serves as a means to develop effective political participation. Through learning democratic values, critical thinking skills, and instilling a sense of social responsibility, citizenship education forms individuals who not only understand the political structure but are also capable of contributing positively to society.

In addition, citizenship education also plays a role as democracy education, both theoretically and practically. The goal is to create a democratic and responsible public. Through understanding democratic values, human rights principles, and active participation, citizenship education functions as a crucial instrument to prepare individuals to think critically and act democratically. By merging theory and practice, this subject not only provides knowledge but also essential social and participatory skills to build an inclusive and dynamic society.

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