

Project Citizen as a Vehicle for Transforming Civic Disposition into Ecological Citizenship

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Abstract

The escalating environmental crisis requires a reorientation of civic character from passive environmental awareness toward the development of citizens who are actively engaged in ecological responsibility. This study examines the capacity of the Project Citizen learning model to facilitate the transformation of civic disposition into ecological citizenship. The distinctive contribution of this study is its positioning of Project Citizen, which has conventionally been applied to broader public policy issues, as a pedagogical instrument for strengthening environmental awareness and responsibility. A literature review was employed as the research method by examining relevant scholarly articles, books, and academic documents, followed by critical analysis to formulate theoretically grounded conclusions. The findings suggest that the sequential learning activities embedded in Project Citizen, beginning with the identification of public problems and extending to the formulation of proposed solutions, provide substantial opportunities for translating environmental concern into concrete practices of environmental preservation. The literature synthesis further generates a conceptual framework that connects character development with environmental literacy. Thus, Project Citizen offers an important contribution to the expansion of Pancasila and Civic Education scholarship by demonstrating that contemporary citizenship education should extend beyond legal and political concerns to incorporate citizens' ethical responsibility for global environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Project Citizen, Civic Disposition, Ecological Citizenship, Civic Education.

Introduction

Environmental degradation has emerged as a multidimensional challenge that increasingly shapes the conditions of human life in the twenty first century. The manifestations of this crisis, including climate change, biodiversity decline, forest loss, air pollution, ecosystem deterioration, and the growing occurrence of hydrometeorological disasters, indicate that environmental problems can no longer be understood exclusively as ecological phenomena. Their consequences extend into social, economic, political, public health, and sustainable development domains. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023) identifies human activity as the principal factor contributing to the

acceleration of global climate change. This process has been accompanied by increasing global surface temperatures, shifts in precipitation patterns, declining agricultural productivity, heightened disaster risks, and escalating threats to food security and human well being. The environmental crisis therefore represents more than a technical problem that can be delegated to governments or environmental experts. It has become a citizenship issue that requires meaningful involvement from members of society.

The Indonesian context illustrates the persistence of these ecological pressures, particularly through continuing deforestation and the deterioration of environmental quality in various regions. Data from the Ministry of Forestry indicate that Indonesia possessed

approximately 95.5 million hectares of forest in 2024, equivalent to 51.1% of the country's total land area. At the same time, net deforestation during the same year reached 175.4 thousand hectares. Although this figure reflects a decrease relative to previous periods, it nevertheless indicates that forest ecosystems remain under substantial pressure. Such pressure threatens the ecological functions of forests as carbon sinks, reservoirs of biodiversity, regulators of water systems, and life support systems for surrounding communities. Persistent forest loss also contributes to greater exposure to ecological hazards, including floods, landslides, and droughts, with consequences that ultimately extend to people's quality of life (Ministry of Forestry, 2025).

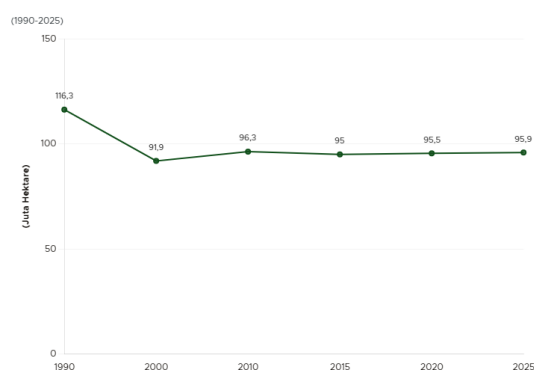


Figure 1. Development of Indonesia's Forest Area (1990-2025), Source: FAO UN GoodStats

Deforestation is not the only indication of Indonesia's environmental vulnerability. Air pollution has likewise become an important manifestation of the country's increasingly complex ecological crisis. Air quality information reported by IQAir and the Air Pollutant Standard Index (ISPU) issued by the Ministry of Environment shows that Jakarta and several other major Indonesian cities have periodically experienced air quality classified as Unhealthy to Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups. In these locations, concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) have reached approximately 7 to nearly 20 times the annual guideline established by the World Health Organization (WHO). Exposure to such concentrations is associated with elevated risks of respiratory illness, cardiovascular disorders, and declining public health and quality of life. These circumstances demonstrate that patterns

of economic development that are not accompanied by sustainable environmental governance can generate ecological risks whose effects are experienced directly by citizens.

The persistence of these environmental problems suggests that ecological degradation cannot be attributed exclusively to technological deficiencies or inadequate public policy. Human behavior in relation to the utilization of natural resources constitutes an equally important dimension. Excessive consumption, exploitation of natural resources beyond ecosystem carrying capacity, insufficient ecological awareness, and weak public involvement in conservation activities have collectively contributed to environmental deterioration. Accordingly, ecological problems cannot be addressed adequately through technological innovation or regulatory mechanisms alone, particularly when regulation is implemented predominantly through top down approaches. A more fundamental response requires changes in citizens' values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior so that their relationship with the natural environment becomes more responsible.

Within citizenship scholarship, this transformation is articulated through the concept of ecological citizenship. Dobson (2003) conceptualizes ecological citizenship as a form of citizenship in which ecological responsibility becomes an essential element of citizens' identity. In contrast to conventional citizenship perspectives that tend to concentrate on relations between citizens and the state, ecological citizenship emphasizes moral responsibility for environmental sustainability, justice between generations, and the ecological consequences arising from individual and collective actions. Citizenship is consequently understood in a broader sense, extending beyond the exercise of political rights and fulfillment of civic obligations toward an ethical commitment to maintaining the Earth as a shared living space.

This conceptual shift carries significant consequences for the orientation of citizenship education in the twenty first century. Civic education can no longer concentrate exclusively on the transmission of civic knowledge and compliance with legal norms. It also needs to nurture ecological awareness, environmental concern, social responsibility, and the capacity

to participate directly in responding to ecological problems. In this sense, the environmental crisis requires civic education to move from an exclusive emphasis on producing good and smart citizens toward cultivating ecological citizens. Such a transformation establishes an important basis for Pancasila and Civic Education to formulate learning models that simultaneously strengthen civic competence and develop students' ecological character as preparation for confronting sustainability challenges in the twenty first century.

Previous scholarship has established Project Citizen as an instructional model capable of strengthening civic competence through learning that is participatory, contextual, and oriented toward public problems. Its implementation has been associated with the development of civic knowledge, civic skills, critical thinking, political participation, public problem solving, and democratic culture within educational settings (Center for Civic Education, 1998; Budimansyah, 2009; Knowles, 2018). More recent scholarship likewise indicates that participatory learning can increase students' involvement in public decision making while developing their collaborative capacity in responding to social problems (Trisiana, 2022; Winarno et al., 2023).

Alongside these developments, citizenship scholarship has increasingly positioned ecological citizenship as an important paradigm within contemporary civic education. A number of studies emphasize that twenty first century citizenship requires ecological awareness, environmental responsibility, and the ability to participate actively in resolving environmental problems (Dobson, 2003; Hadjichambis & Reis, 2020; Hadjichambis et al., 2024). Nevertheless, environmental education and civic education are still frequently treated as relatively distinct fields of inquiry. This separation leaves an important conceptual question concerning how environmental responsibility can be developed through a specific civic education learning model.

The review of previous scholarship therefore indicates a conceptual gap concerning the potential role of Project Citizen as a pedagogical mechanism for transforming civic disposition into ecological citizenship.

Research on Project Citizen has generally emphasized cognitive outcomes and the development of civic skills, whereas the affective dimension represented by civic disposition has received comparatively less attention as a mechanism for developing students' ecological character. Conversely, scholarship concerning ecological citizenship has predominantly examined environmental values, behavior, and responsibility without systematically connecting these dimensions to a particular instructional model within civic education. As a consequence, the conceptual relationship between Project Citizen, civic disposition, and ecological citizenship remains insufficiently explored, particularly in the context of Pancasila and Civic Education in Indonesia.

In response to this gap, the present study proposes a conceptual synthesis that brings Project Citizen, civic disposition, and ecological citizenship together within a unified analytical framework. Whereas previous studies have generally treated Project Citizen as a means of improving civic knowledge and civic skills, this study positions civic disposition as the mediating construct connecting participatory learning experiences with the development of ecological citizenship. Project Citizen is consequently conceptualized not simply as a participatory teaching strategy, but as a transformative pedagogical process through which environmental concern, responsibility, collaboration, participation, and sustainability can be internalized.

Conceptually, the present study proposes the following relationship:



Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework emphasizes that ecological citizenship is not formed instantaneously merely through the delivery of environmental knowledge. Rather, its development involves a process in which civic disposition is progressively internalized through participatory learning experiences. This conceptualization is expected to enrich scholarship in Pancasila and Civic Education by providing a theoretical basis for developing instructional models that respond to sustainability concerns and the broader global environmental crisis.

Drawing upon the research background, theoretical perspectives, and identified research gap, this study seeks to examine the conceptual relationship between Project Citizen, civic disposition, and ecological citizenship through a literature review. More specifically, the study aims to: (1) examine the potential of Project Citizen as a participatory learning model for strengthening students' civic disposition; (2) analyze the relationship between civic disposition and the development of ecological citizenship from the perspective of Pancasila and Civic Education; and (3) formulate a conceptual synthesis that explains how Project Citizen can facilitate the transformation of civic disposition into ecological citizenship, thereby contributing to theoretical development and instructional practice within Pancasila and Civic Education.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach through a literature review design. The sources analyzed comprised scholarly journal articles, books, and academic documents addressing Project Citizen, civic disposition, and ecological citizenship. The literature was selected according to predetermined inclusion criteria, with priority given to peer reviewed sources that were relevant to the field of Pancasila and Civic Education. Several seminal publications were also incorporated to establish a substantive theoretical foundation for the conceptual analysis.

Data collection was conducted through documentation by locating, selecting, and examining literature that satisfied the established criteria. Each selected source was

subsequently categorized according to its research identity, objectives, methodological characteristics, and major findings concerning Project Citizen implementation, civic disposition development, and ecological citizenship. The resulting body of literature was then subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, conceptual connections, and theoretical syntheses across the reviewed studies in accordance with the objectives of the research.

Result and Discussion

Civic Disposition in Pancasila and Civic Education

Pancasila and Civic Education (Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan/PPKn) is fundamentally oriented not only toward the development of civic knowledge and civic skills, but also toward the cultivation of civic disposition as a fundamental educational objective. This paradigm suggests that the success of civic education should not be measured solely by students' academic achievement, but also by their ability to internalize civic values, attitudes, and responsibilities as democratic citizens. Consequently, civic disposition represents the affective dimension that bridges civic knowledge and actual civic behavior in social, national, and civic life. From this perspective, civic education is expected not only to produce citizens who understand their rights and obligations but also to foster individuals who are willing to promote the common good through responsible civic behavior.

The concept of civic disposition was first systematically developed by Quigley, Buchanan, and Bahmueller in *CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education*. They defined civic disposition as “those attitudes and habits of mind of the citizen that are conducive to the healthy functioning and common good of the democratic system.” This definition positions civic disposition as the moral foundation that enables citizens to apply their civic knowledge and civic skills responsibly. In other words, understanding democratic principles alone is

insufficient unless it is accompanied by personal character that supports democratic life.

Branson further strengthened this concept by arguing that civic disposition encompasses both private character and public character, both of which are indispensable for maintaining and strengthening constitutional democracy. Private character includes moral responsibility, self discipline, respect for human dignity, and personal integrity. Public character, on the other hand, comprises concern for the common good, respect for the rule of law, tolerance, critical thinking, willingness to listen to others' opinions, and the ability to negotiate and compromise in resolving public issues. Branson also emphasized that civic disposition is not developed instantaneously; rather, it evolves gradually through learning experiences within families, schools, communities, and social organizations. Therefore, education plays a strategic role in facilitating the internalization of civic character.

Within the context of Pancasila and Civic Education in Indonesia, civic disposition has been adopted as one of the three essential dimensions of civic competence, alongside civic knowledge and civic skills. Winataputra and Budimansyah argue that this dimension is intended to develop citizens who not only understand democratic systems but also possess the moral commitment to exercise their rights and responsibilities responsibly. Consequently, PPKn learning is designed to integrate cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains in order to cultivate democratic character in students' everyday lives. This perspective reinforces the view that civic character formation constitutes an integral part of Indonesia's national educational goals, which emphasize the development of democratic, responsible, and morally grounded citizens.

Conceptually, Quigley identified several key indicators of civic disposition, including civility, individual responsibility, self discipline, civic mindedness, open mindedness, compromise, tolerance of diversity, patience and persistence, compassion, generosity, and loyalty to the nation and its constitutional principles. These eleven indicators demonstrate that civic disposition extends beyond individual attitudes and reflects a broader social orientation that encourages citizens to

participate actively in sustaining democratic life.

The theoretical development of civic disposition has expanded in response to increasingly complex global citizenship challenges. Initially, the concept was primarily associated with democratic character formation, legal compliance, and political participation. However, the rapid transformations of the twenty first century, characterized by environmental crises, digital transformation, globalization, and increasingly complex public issues, have necessitated a reinterpretation of civic disposition. Citizens are now expected not only to demonstrate democratic character in their relationship with the state but also to assume broader social responsibilities for addressing global challenges that transcend traditional notions of citizenship.

This theoretical reorientation has broadened civic disposition into a foundation for developing citizens who are adaptive, collaborative, and committed to the sustainability of shared human life. Within this framework, values such as caring, responsibility, empathy, collaboration, critical thinking, and active participation in solving public problems have become increasingly significant. These characteristics are no longer viewed merely as prerequisites for democratic governance but also as forms of social capital that enable societies to respond effectively to global challenges, including environmental degradation. Accordingly, civic disposition has evolved from a democratic civic virtue into a broader conception of sustainability oriented citizenship.

This theoretical evolution carries important implications for the transformation of Pancasila and Civic Education. Civic education should no longer be limited to teaching constitutional principles, human rights, and political systems. Instead, it must provide authentic learning experiences that enable students to internalize values of caring, responsibility, collaboration, and active participation in addressing real world social problems. In other words, the development of civic disposition requires contextual, participatory, and experiential learning processes that encourage students not only to understand civic concepts but also to apply them meaningfully in their everyday lives.

From the perspective of the present study, the evolution of civic disposition represents a conceptual bridge between Pancasila and Civic Education and the emerging paradigm of ecological citizenship. Values such as concern for the common good, moral responsibility, self discipline, collaboration, and active participation closely correspond to the characteristics of environmentally responsible citizens. Therefore, civic disposition should no longer be regarded merely as the ultimate objective of civic education but rather as a transformative process that connects students' learning experiences with the development of ecological citizenship. This perspective provides the conceptual foundation for the present study in examining how the implementation of Project Citizen can function as a pedagogical vehicle for transforming civic disposition into ecological citizenship by fostering environmental awareness, responsibility, and active civic participation in promoting environmental sustainability.

Ecological Citizenship as a New Paradigm of Citizenship

The emergence of increasingly complex environmental challenges in the twenty first century has prompted a paradigm shift in citizenship studies. For decades, civic education has primarily focused on developing citizens who understand their rights, responsibilities, democratic values, and political participation as the foundations of democratic society. This paradigm emerged from the need to cultivate democratic communities that respect constitutional principles, the rule of law, and human rights. However, the growing complexity of global challenges, including climate change, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss, natural resource exploitation, and energy crises, demonstrates that contemporary citizenship issues extend far beyond the relationship between citizens and the state. These challenges transcend geographical boundaries and political jurisdictions, thereby requiring a citizenship paradigm that integrates social, moral, and ecological responsibilities into citizens' everyday lives (Dobson, 2003).

The concept of ecological citizenship emerged in response to the limitations of conventional citizenship paradigms, which tend to emphasize political and legal dimensions. From this perspective, citizenship is no longer understood merely as a set of rights and obligations exercised within the public sphere of the nation state, but also as an individual's moral commitment to environmental sustainability. This paradigm positions the environment as an inseparable component of citizenship practice, implying that every action undertaken by citizens carries ecological consequences for which they must be held accountable. Consequently, the quality of citizenship is measured not only by political participation or legal compliance but also by individuals' ability to maintain a balance between human interests and ecosystem sustainability.

Among the leading scholars who have comprehensively developed the concept of ecological citizenship is Andrew Dobson. He argues that environmental problems cannot be resolved solely through government regulations or market mechanisms because their root causes lie in human behavior toward the exploitation of natural resources. Therefore, citizenship must be reoriented to place ecological responsibility at the core of citizens' identities (Dobson, 2003). Unlike liberal conceptions of citizenship, which primarily emphasize the fulfillment of individual rights, Dobson conceptualizes ecological citizenship as being fundamentally grounded in responsibility toward the environment, the global community, and future generations.

According to Dobson (2003), ecological citizenship possesses three defining characteristics. First, ecological responsibility is non reciprocal, meaning that individuals remain morally obligated to protect the environment regardless of whether they receive direct personal benefits. Second, citizenship is practiced not only through formal political institutions but also through everyday behaviors, including consumption patterns, waste management, energy use, and sustainable lifestyle choices. Third, ecological citizenship is based on the principle of intergenerational justice, recognizing that each generation has an ethical obligation to preserve natural resources so that future generations may also benefit from

them. Consequently, ecological citizenship places ethical responsibility at the center of the relationship between humans and the natural environment.

Dobson's perspective was further enriched by Barry, who argues that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without transforming civic culture. Barry maintains that a sustainable society can only be realized when citizens actively engage in environmental protection through both individual behavioral change and participation in public policymaking. Accordingly, education plays a strategic role in cultivating citizens who are capable of critically reflecting on environmental issues while actively participating in their resolution (Barry, 2006).

Barry further emphasizes that ecological democracy extends beyond citizens' participation in political processes by fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility for environmental sustainability. Within this perspective, citizens are viewed as agents of change capable of influencing development through concrete actions such as advocating environmental policies, promoting sustainable resource management, and participating in environmental social movements. Thus, ecological citizenship is not confined to environmental awareness alone but is realized through collective actions directed toward the public good.

This perspective is further complemented by Hayward, who associates ecological citizenship with the principle of environmental justice. According to Hayward, every individual's right to a healthy environment must be accompanied by the responsibility to preserve environmental quality. Consequently, environmental issues involve not only the conservation of natural resources but also the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and risks across society. This perspective highlights the ethical dimension of ecological citizenship by positioning social justice and environmental sustainability as inseparable principles.

Taken together, the perspectives of Dobson, Barry, and Hayward demonstrate that ecological citizenship is a multidimensional concept integrating ecological awareness, moral responsibility, social participation, and environmental justice. In other words, an

ecological citizen is not merely an individual who understands environmental problems but also one who is committed to translating such knowledge into concrete actions in everyday life. Characteristics such as environmental concern, responsibility, collaboration, critical thinking, and the willingness to advocate for environmental protection therefore become essential indicators of ecological citizenship.

Within the context of Pancasila and Civic Education, the ecological citizenship paradigm offers a new direction for redefining educational objectives. Traditionally, Pancasila and Civic Education has focused on developing good and smart citizens who possess civic knowledge, civic skills, and democratic character. Although this orientation remains relevant, the challenges of the twenty first century require a broader conception of citizenship that explicitly incorporates ecological dimensions. This implies that civic education should no longer be limited to fostering students' understanding of constitutional principles and democracy but must also cultivate ecological awareness, environmental responsibility, and the capacity to participate actively in addressing environmental challenges as integral components of citizenship practice.

Based on the theoretical synthesis of Dobson, Barry, and Hayward, the present study conceptualizes ecological citizenship as the ultimate goal of sustainability oriented civic education. However, the development of such citizenship cannot be achieved merely through the transmission of environmental knowledge. Instead, it requires instructional models that provide students with authentic opportunities to identify environmental problems, analyze public policies, collaborate with communities, and develop implementable solutions. In this regard, Project Citizen is viewed as a promising pedagogical approach capable of transforming civic disposition into ecological citizenship. The mechanism underlying this transformation is discussed in the following section, which examines Project Citizen as a participatory learning model.

Project Citizen as a Participatory Learning Model

The evolution of educational paradigms in the twenty first century has shifted the focus of instruction from teacher centered learning to student centered learning. This transition has been driven by the need to equip learners with competencies that extend beyond cognitive achievement, including critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, and active participation in civic life. Within the context of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn), this paradigm shift requires learning models that connect citizenship concepts with real social realities, enabling students to acquire meaningful learning experiences. One instructional model developed to address this need is Project Citizen, which positions students as active participants in the learning process through the investigation of public policy issues within their communities (Center for Civic Education, 1998).

Project Citizen is a project based civic learning model developed by the Center for Civic Education (CCE) in the United States during the mid 1990s as part of the We the People program. The model was designed to improve the quality of civic education by providing authentic learning experiences that engage students in identifying, analyzing, and proposing policy alternatives for various public issues. Unlike conventional civic education, which primarily emphasizes conceptual understanding and memorization of political systems and constitutional principles, Project Citizen integrates civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions through experiential learning that is oriented toward problem solving (Center for Civic Education, 1998).

The philosophical foundation of Project Citizen is rooted in constructivist learning theory, which views knowledge as being actively constructed through authentic experiences and social interaction. From a constructivist perspective, students are not passive recipients of information but active learners who construct knowledge based on experiences gained throughout the learning process. Consequently, learning occurs not only through teachers' instruction but also through

observing, discussing, investigating, analyzing, and reflecting on real issues within the surrounding environment. This approach aligns Project Citizen with the principles of contextual learning, as it connects classroom instruction with real life situations encountered by students in their daily lives.

In addition to constructivism, Project Citizen is grounded in the principles of democratic education, which regard schools as spaces for practicing democratic life. Democratic education seeks not only to increase students' understanding of political systems but also to cultivate their capacity to participate responsibly in society. Accordingly, civic education extends beyond conceptual learning to provide participatory experiences that enable students to express opinions, respect diverse perspectives, collaborate with others, make collective decisions through deliberation, and assume responsibility for agreed outcomes (Branson, 1998). Within this framework, Project Citizen serves as an instructional model that bridges the gap between citizenship theory and democratic practice.

Operationally, Project Citizen is implemented through six interconnected learning stages. The first stage involves identifying public policy issues within the local community. At this stage, students observe various issues affecting their schools or communities, such as waste management, river pollution, urban green spaces, traffic congestion, or other public concerns. The purpose of this activity is to foster social awareness while developing students' ability to recognize public issues requiring collective solutions.

The second stage is selecting a public issue to become the focus of the class project. The selection process is conducted through discussion and deliberation, allowing all students to participate democratically in decision making. During this stage, students learn to respect differing opinions, present rational arguments, and build consensus. Such experiences contribute significantly to the development of democratic character by demonstrating that public decisions are achieved through dialogue and compromise among diverse interests.

The third stage involves collecting information related to the selected issue.

Students conduct literature reviews, field observations, interviews with community members, and consultations with relevant stakeholders. Through these activities, they develop the ability to locate and evaluate information, distinguish facts from opinions, and formulate evidence based arguments. This process simultaneously strengthens critical thinking, one of the essential competencies required in twenty first century education.

The fourth stage is the development of a class portfolio. Information gathered during the investigation is analyzed to formulate alternative policy solutions to the selected public issue. Students prepare a portfolio containing a description of the problem, findings from their analysis, proposed policy alternatives, and recommendations that may be implemented by government agencies or community organizations. Portfolio development not only enhances students' academic competencies but also promotes collaboration, communication, and collective decision making.

The fifth stage consists of the portfolio presentation (showcase) before teachers, classmates, community members, and relevant stakeholders. This presentation provides students with the opportunity to defend the results of their investigation while receiving constructive feedback from the audience. Such experiences enhance self confidence, communication skills, and the ability to express aspirations respectfully and persuasively. More importantly, students learn that meaningful participation in democratic life requires presenting ideas supported by reliable evidence and sound reasoning.

The final stage of Project Citizen is reflection on the entire learning process. Reflection is conducted to evaluate students' learning experiences, identify both achievements and challenges encountered during the project, and foster awareness of the importance of citizens' participation in addressing public issues. This stage plays a crucial role because it enables students to internalize the civic values acquired throughout the learning process as part of their personal character. Consequently, learning extends beyond project completion and results in meaningful changes in students' ways of thinking, attitudes, and behaviors.

The distinguishing characteristics of Project Citizen lie in its participatory, collaborative, contextual, and problem based orientation. Learning occurs through continuous interaction between students and their social environment, making the learning experience more authentic than traditional lecture based instruction. Students not only learn the theoretical concepts of public policy but also directly engage in identifying public issues, collecting and analyzing data, developing policy recommendations, and presenting their proposals to the community. These characteristics enable Project Citizen to simultaneously integrate civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions within a single instructional framework.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the implementation of Project Citizen makes significant contributions to the development of students' civic competencies. The model has been shown to enhance critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, information literacy, and participation in democratic life. Moreover, students' involvement in addressing authentic public issues strengthens their sense of responsibility, social concern, and commitment to the common good. In other words, Project Citizen contributes not only to cognitive learning outcomes but also to the development of civic character, which represents one of the primary objectives of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn).

Within the context of environmental issues, the strengths of Project Citizen become even more relevant. Environmental problems are fundamentally public policy issues that require the active participation of multiple stakeholders. Consequently, issues such as waste management, river pollution, flooding, deforestation, climate change, and limited public environmental awareness can all serve as authentic learning topics within Project Citizen. Through this process, students not only gain an understanding of the causes and consequences of environmental problems but also learn to formulate alternative solutions that can be implemented in real life. Such experiences enable students to connect environmental knowledge with authentic civic practice.

Furthermore, Project Citizen possesses considerable potential for fostering ecological

character, as each stage of the learning process embodies values consistent with the indicators of civic disposition. Identifying environmental problems cultivates environmental awareness and concern. Collecting data promotes responsibility and academic integrity. Group discussions strengthen democratic attitudes and collaborative skills. Developing policy recommendations enhances critical thinking and responsible decision making. Meanwhile, public presentations encourage students to confidently express their ideas and advocate for community interests. Collectively, these learning experiences demonstrate that Project Citizen is not merely a project based instructional model but also an effective pedagogical approach for cultivating civic character oriented toward meaningful civic action.

Based on the synthesis of the existing literature, it can be concluded that the primary strength of Project Citizen lies not only in its ability to enhance students' civic knowledge and civic skills but also in its potential to transform their values and character. This transformation occurs through participatory, reflective, and contextual learning experiences that enable students not only to understand what they should do as citizens but also to develop the willingness and commitment to act accordingly. Therefore, this study positions Project Citizen as a pedagogical mechanism that links the strengthening of civic disposition with the development of ecological citizenship. The transformational relationship among these concepts is examined in greater depth in the following section.

Transforming Civic Disposition into Ecological Citizenship through Project Citizen

The escalating complexity of environmental problems in the twenty first century necessitates a reorientation of citizenship education. The educational objective should no longer be restricted to preparing individuals who understand their rights and obligations, but should encompass the formation of citizens capable of assuming ecological responsibility for environmental sustainability. From this standpoint, citizenship

education needs to move beyond the development of civic knowledge and civic skills by placing greater emphasis on civic disposition as the foundation of sustainability oriented civic behavior and, ultimately, ecological citizenship. Thus, the central task of Pancasila and Civic Education is not merely to communicate democratic values, but to facilitate their embodiment in concrete forms of civic action, particularly in confronting contemporary environmental problems.

The literature synthesis demonstrates that Project Citizen contains pedagogical features capable of supporting such a transformative process. In contrast to conventional instructional practices that predominantly rely on the transmission of verbal knowledge, Project Citizen engages students directly in identifying public issues, undertaking investigations, examining public policies, formulating alternative solutions, and communicating recommendations to communities and relevant stakeholders (Center for Civic Education, 1998). Such participation provides students with authentic social experiences through which learning moves beyond conceptual comprehension and contributes to the formation of civic character.

From a constructivist standpoint, learning experiences have a substantial role in shaping the ways students interpret and respond to their surroundings. Knowledge is not simply transferred from educators to learners; rather, it develops through interaction between learners and their social environment. When students encounter environmental problems that exist within their own communities, therefore, their learning extends beyond acquiring factual information concerning ecological degradation. They are also encouraged to critically reflect on the origins of environmental problems, their consequences, and their own responsibilities as citizens. This experiential process constitutes an initial basis for the formation of civic disposition, understood as a configuration of values, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies that guide individuals to act in accordance with democratic citizenship principles (Branson, 1998).

The transformation develops gradually through a series of mutually connected stages. At the outset, students become aware of environmental concerns by identifying public

problems occurring within their surrounding communities. Such engagement develops their capacity to observe environmental conditions while simultaneously encouraging empathy toward ecological degradation. Ecological awareness consequently becomes an important foundation for nurturing caring, which represents one of the fundamental indicators of civic disposition and refers to the capacity to understand the interrelationships between human activities and ecosystem sustainability.

The subsequent learning process requires students to examine alternative public policy responses to environmental problems. At this point, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking, consider competing interests, and formulate decisions based on considerations of justice and sustainability. The learning process consequently extends beyond recognizing environmental problems toward understanding the complexity inherent in public policy formulation. Through this experience, students come to recognize that environmental problems cannot be resolved through individual efforts alone, but require cooperation among governments, communities, and other relevant stakeholders.

The development of a class portfolio further reinforces students' capacities for collaboration and communication. Students collectively organize the findings of their investigations and transform them into coherent policy recommendations. This collaborative process provides opportunities to cultivate mutual respect, shared responsibility, and conflict resolution through deliberative dialogue. Within an ecological citizenship perspective, such collaboration is fundamental because environmental challenges involve collective interests and therefore require coordinated action among diverse social actors.

The public presentation of the portfolio constitutes another important stage in the transformative learning process. Students are given opportunities to communicate their arguments respectfully, substantiate their positions with empirical evidence, and respond constructively to criticism and feedback. These experiences gradually strengthen the confidence required for participation in the public sphere, which is an essential dimension of democratic citizenship. Within the framework of ecological citizenship, the same

competencies can develop further into environmental advocacy because students learn to communicate and defend ecological interests as an expression of civic responsibility.

Reflection represents the final stage and provides a space for students to internalize the learning experiences acquired throughout the project. Students are not only required to assess the outcomes of their projects but are also encouraged to reconsider how their perspectives toward environmental problems may have changed. At this stage, knowledge, experience, and values are brought together, creating the basis for a stronger moral commitment to environmental sustainability. Reflection therefore enables learning outcomes to extend beyond cognitive attainment by incorporating affective and behavioral dimensions that may sustain the impact of the learning process over a longer period.

The synthesis of the reviewed literature indicates that Project Citizen facilitates transformation through a developmental sequence consisting of several interconnected stages. Ecological citizenship is not generated immediately through the implementation of Project Citizen. Rather, the model initially strengthens students' civic disposition, which subsequently provides the psychological and moral basis for environmentally responsible civic behavior. Accordingly, Project Citizen, civic disposition, and ecological citizenship should not be viewed as three unrelated constructs. Their relationship is sequential and causal in character, with the strengthening of civic disposition functioning as an intermediate process between participatory learning and the emergence of ecological citizenship.

This conceptual relationship positions civic disposition as the mediating mechanism through which participatory learning experiences are translated into ecological citizenship. Project Citizen should consequently be understood not solely as a project based instructional model, but as a transformative pedagogical approach that can cultivate citizens equipped with the values, attitudes, and commitments necessary to respond to the sustainability challenges confronting society in the twenty first century.

Project Citizen Stage	Civic Disposition Developed	Indicators of Ecological Citizenship	Transformation Outcomes
1. Identifying Public Issues	Caring	Ecological Awareness	Sensitive to environmental issues
2. Selecting the Issue	Democratic	Participatory Decision-Making	Determining environmental issue priorities collectively
3. Gathering Information	Responsible, Honest	Environmental Literacy	Understanding the causes and impacts of environmental degradation
4. Analyzing Policy	Critical Thinking	Evidence-Based Decision-Making	Developing sustainable solutions
5. Developing the Portfolio	Collaborative	Collective Action	Designing environmental solutions together
6. Presenting to the Public	Participatory	Environmental Advocacy	Communicating recommendations to the public
7. Reflecting on Learning	Moral Commitment	Ecological Responsibility	Formation of the character of an ecological citizen

Table 1. Transformation of civic disposition into ecological citizenship through Project Citizen

At the conceptual level, this study positions civic disposition as the mediating construct that connects the learning process with the development of ecological citizenship. Such a perspective differs from the dominant orientation of previous studies, which have more commonly emphasized Project Citizen as a model for improving civic knowledge, civic skills, and political participation. The present analysis instead indicates that the deeper potential of Project Citizen lies in its capacity to cultivate civic character that can subsequently develop into ecological responsibility.

Project Citizen may therefore be conceptualized as a transformative learning model in which authentic learning experiences, character formation, and civic action are integrated within a coherent educational process. Through this process, students are expected not merely to comprehend environmental problems but also to develop dispositions characterized by care, responsibility, collaboration, advocacy, and sustained commitment to environmental sustainability. These characteristics constitute essential dimensions of ecological citizenship within contemporary Pancasila and Civic Education.

Moreover, the transformative capacity of Project Citizen extends beyond the development of students' environmental awareness because it simultaneously strengthens social responsibility as a central element of civic character. This relationship indicates that concern for ecological conditions

and concern for other members of society cannot be treated as separate dimensions of citizenship. Dobson (2003) emphasizes that ecological responsibility encompasses obligations toward nature, communities experiencing the consequences of environmental degradation, and future generations who possess an equivalent entitlement to a healthy environment. Environmental responsibility should therefore be understood as an expression of social responsibility because ecological decisions inevitably generate consequences for collective well being and the sustainability of social life.

This interpretation is reinforced by scholarship in environmental education demonstrating that learning experiences involving direct engagement with nature can encourage empathy, social concern, collaborative competence, and participation within communities. Chawla (2020) argues that students' direct encounters with natural environments contribute to the formation of ecological identity, which can subsequently encourage prosocial behavior. Consistent with this position, UNESCO (2020, 2023), through its Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework, stresses that environmental education should not be limited to ecological literacy. It should also develop solidarity, collaboration, social responsibility, and active civic participation in addressing shared public challenges. Environmental education thus has broader implications because it contributes to the formation of citizens who are committed simultaneously to the sustainability of social life and the natural environment.

From this perspective, Project Citizen, civic disposition, and ecological citizenship can be understood as components of a sequential transformative process. Participatory learning experiences within Project Citizen strengthen students' civic dispositions, and these dispositions subsequently provide the moral and psychological foundation for ecological citizenship. This conceptual sequence demonstrates that environmentally responsible citizenship cannot be established merely by transmitting environmental information. Its development depends on the internalization of civic values and dispositions that encourage individuals to translate those values into

meaningful civic action oriented toward sustainable development.

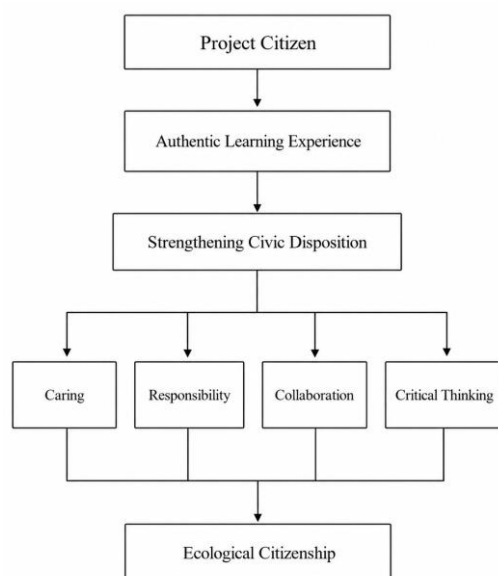


Figure 3. Flow of Transformation through Project Citizen

Based on the integration of Branson's theory of civic disposition, Dobson's conceptualization of ecological citizenship, and the Project Citizen instructional model developed by the Center for Civic Education, this study proposes that the transformation of citizenship character takes place through a hierarchical mechanism. Project Citizen initially exposes students to participatory learning through public issue identification, field investigation, policy analysis, and the formulation of alternative solutions. These authentic experiences then facilitate the development of civic disposition indicators, including caring, responsibility, critical thinking, collaboration, and participation. Once these values become progressively internalized, students can demonstrate characteristics associated with ecological citizenship, including ecological awareness, environmental literacy, policy advocacy, collective action, and commitment to sustainable development. Civic disposition therefore functions not only as an educational outcome but also as a transformative mediating mechanism connecting the learning process with the development of ecological citizenship.

Implications for Pancasila and Civic Education

The transformation of citizenship in the twenty first century carries important consequences for the future direction of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn). Traditionally, PPKn has been oriented toward developing citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities, possess constitutional awareness, and participate actively in democratic life. Although these objectives remain essential, they are increasingly insufficient for responding to contemporary global challenges, particularly the environmental crisis whose effects now extend across social, economic, political, and humanitarian dimensions. PPKn therefore needs to expand its educational orientation from the development of good and smart citizens toward the formation of ecological citizens who possess ecological awareness, social responsibility, and commitment to environmental sustainability (Dobson, 2003; Barry, 2006).

The literature synthesis further demonstrates that ecological citizenship cannot be developed adequately through the theoretical transmission of environmental material alone. Knowledge concerning climate change, pollution, and environmental conservation constitutes an important element of civic knowledge, but possession of such knowledge does not necessarily result in changes in behavior. Previous studies have identified a continuing discrepancy between environmental knowledge and pro environmental conduct. Individuals may understand the significance of environmental protection while remaining unable or unwilling to consistently translate that understanding into everyday practice. This condition indicates that the effectiveness of citizenship education depends substantially on its capacity to develop civic disposition as the moral basis of responsible civic action (Branson, 1998).

In this context, Project Citizen provides a more relevant pedagogical alternative to conventional teacher centered instruction. Through project based learning and authentic public problem solving, students directly

encounter democratic processes by identifying environmental problems in their communities, engaging with stakeholders, gathering and interpreting information, and constructing feasible policy alternatives. Such authentic experiences enable learners to establish meaningful relationships between knowledge, values, and action. Consequently, learning is not confined to cognitive achievement but contributes to the formation of citizenship character.

The first implication concerns the need to reconstruct the objectives of Pancasila and Civic Education. Conventional assessments of learning achievement have generally emphasized students' understanding of constitutional principles, democracy, human rights, and governmental institutions. These competencies remain important elements of citizenship education, but the findings indicate that ecological character should receive stronger recognition as an integral dimension of citizenship competence. Educational achievement should therefore be considered not only in terms of students' capacity to explain citizenship concepts, but also in relation to their development of environmental concern, social responsibility, collaborative capacity, advocacy skills, and active engagement with public issues.

The second implication concerns instructional design. The findings indicate that participatory learning has greater potential for strengthening civic disposition than instruction dominated by exposition and verbal transmission. PPKn teachers therefore need to employ strategies that allow students to engage directly with authentic citizenship problems. Project Citizen constitutes a promising alternative because its learning sequence integrates field observation, collaborative discussion, policy analysis, portfolio construction, and public presentation within a systematic process. Through this approach, students can develop an understanding that environmental problems are fundamentally citizenship issues whose resolution requires active participation from members of society.

The third implication relates to the strengthening of character education within PPKn. The literature synthesis indicates that Project Citizen can cultivate important dimensions of civic disposition, including

caring, responsibility, critical thinking, collaboration, and participation. These dispositions provide a moral basis for ecological citizenship because environmentally responsible citizens require more than ecological knowledge. They also require sustained moral commitment to acting consistently in ways that support environmental sustainability. Character development should therefore not be treated merely as an incidental or secondary consequence of instructional activities, but should occupy a central position among the intended educational outcomes.

The findings further demonstrate that environmental concern is closely connected to the development of social responsibility. Dobson's (2003) conception of ecological citizenship places ecological responsibility within a broader moral obligation toward society and future generations. This understanding is consistent with UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework (UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO, 2023), which emphasizes that environmental education should promote not only environmentally responsible behavior but also solidarity, collaboration, social awareness, and active civic participation in responding to shared societal challenges. Environmental learning consequently strengthens the social dimension of Pancasila and Civic Education at the same time as it develops ecological responsibility.

These findings are also consistent with research concerning nature based education, which indicates that students who engage directly with natural environments tend to develop stronger empathy, collaborative abilities, and social responsibility than students whose learning experiences remain exclusively classroom based (Chawla, 2020). Direct encounters with nature enable students to understand more concretely that environmental sustainability constitutes an important condition for human well being and community resilience. Environmental concern consequently develops simultaneously into concern for other people because ecological degradation ultimately affects the quality of life experienced by society as a whole.

Another implication concerns curriculum development. Civic environmental issues should not be positioned as isolated curricular material detached from existing citizenship

themes. Instead, they should be integrated into established areas of learning such as citizens' rights and responsibilities, democracy, public policy, civic participation, and sustainable development. Such integration enables students to understand that environmental challenges are inseparable from the practice of citizenship. PPKn should consequently prepare students not only to become citizens who comply with laws and regulations, but also citizens who possess an enduring commitment to protecting the sustainability of shared life.

At the theoretical level, this study contributes to the development of Pancasila and Civic Education scholarship. Previous studies have generally conceptualized Project Citizen as an instructional model intended to strengthen civic knowledge, civic skills, political participation, or critical thinking. The present study extends this understanding by demonstrating its potential as a transformative pedagogical mechanism through which civic disposition can be strengthened and ecological citizenship developed. Within this conceptualization, civic disposition operates as a mediating mechanism that connects participatory learning experiences with the formation of environmentally responsible citizenship character. This synthesis broadens the theoretical foundation of PPKn while opening an alternative direction for developing citizenship education models that are responsive to contemporary global challenges.

On the basis of these implications, strengthening Pancasila and Civic Education in the twenty first century requires an orientation that goes beyond the reinforcement of democratic values and constitutional literacy. Citizenship education needs to develop into a transformative process that integrates political, social, and ecological responsibilities into citizens' everyday practices. Through Project Citizen, students can be encouraged not only to participate actively in democratic processes but also to develop ecological awareness, social responsibility, collaborative competence, and sustained commitment to sustainable development. Ecological citizenship can consequently be positioned as an emerging educational orientation within Pancasila and Civic Education that responds to the challenges of environmental sustainability and sustainable development.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the substantial potential of Project Citizen as a participatory learning model for facilitating the transformation of civic disposition into ecological citizenship through authentic, contextual, and public problem oriented learning experiences. The literature synthesis indicates that this transformation is not immediate but occurs through the strengthening of civic disposition as the foundation of citizenship character. Each stage of Project Citizen, encompassing public issue identification, data collection, policy analysis, portfolio development, public presentation, and reflection, contributes to the cultivation of civic values such as caring, responsibility, critical thinking, collaboration, participation, and moral commitment. These values can subsequently develop into important dimensions of ecological citizenship, including ecological awareness, environmental literacy, sustainability oriented decision making, collective action, environmental advocacy, and ecological responsibility.

The findings extend existing scholarship in Pancasila and Civic Education by demonstrating that the significance of Project Citizen is not confined to improving civic knowledge, civic skills, and political participation. Its pedagogical potential also lies in cultivating citizenship character oriented toward environmental sustainability. In this process, civic disposition functions as a transformative mediating mechanism connecting participatory learning experiences with ecological citizenship. The conceptual synthesis advanced in this study consequently enriches citizenship education theory through the proposed relationship **Project Citizen → Civic Disposition → Ecological Citizenship**, an association that has received relatively limited attention in the existing literature on Pancasila and Civic Education.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that Pancasila and Civic Education needs to broaden its educational orientation from the formation of good and smart citizens toward the development of citizens who possess ecological responsibility. The integration of environmental issues into

citizenship learning through Project Citizen represents a relevant pedagogical strategy because it can enable students not only to comprehend environmental challenges but also to participate actively in developing solutions, advocating public policies, and contributing to sustainable development. Project Citizen can therefore be considered an innovative instructional model within Pancasila and Civic Education for responding to the citizenship challenges of the twenty first century.

Nevertheless, this study has an important limitation because it relies on a literature review approach, meaning that its findings remain conceptual and interpretive rather than empirically verified. Future research should therefore employ qualitative or mixed methods approaches to investigate more comprehensively the effectiveness of Project Citizen in developing civic disposition and ecological citizenship across different educational levels and sociocultural contexts. Empirical studies of this kind would provide opportunities to validate the conceptual model proposed in this study while simultaneously strengthening the theoretical and practical development of Pancasila and Civic Education.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to their academic supervisors for their invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, continuous encouragement, and insightful suggestions throughout the completion of this research. Their academic support and mentorship have been instrumental in the successful completion of this study.

The authors also wish to thank their colleagues for their encouragement, thoughtful discussions, and constructive contributions, which have enriched the development of this article. Finally, appreciation is extended to everyone who provided direct or indirect support throughout the research process. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge, particularly in the field of Pancasila and Civic Education.

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