



From Classroom to Social Action: The Effectiveness of Integrating Project Citizen and Project-Based Learning in Enhancing Students' Civic Engagement

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Abstract: *From Classroom to Social Action: The Effectiveness of Integrating Project Citizen and Project-Based Learning in Enhancing Students' Civic Engagement.* This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of integrating Project Citizen and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in enhancing students' civic engagement, which includes civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition. The novelty of this research lies in the quantitative examination of the effectiveness of integrating both approaches using a quasi-experimental design with a control group, which differs from previous studies that tend to examine only one approach or employ action research designs without comparison groups. Furthermore, this study measures the impact of integration on civic engagement comprehensively and simultaneously across all three dimensions (civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition), rather than focusing solely on one or two specific aspects such as critical thinking or attitudes alone. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design using a nonequivalent control group design was employed, involving 60 students from the Civic Education Study Program at FKIP Universitas Lampung, divided into experimental and control groups. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using validity and reliability tests, normality and homogeneity tests, t-tests, and Normalized Gain (N-Gain) calculations. The results revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with a significance value of 0.018 ($p < 0.05$). The experimental group achieved a higher mean score (78.43) than the control group (74.20), with an N-Gain of 0.57 (medium to high category). The integration of these two approaches fosters participatory, contextual, and applicable learning, effectively bridging the gap between classroom learning and real social action. These findings provide an innovative contribution to civic education practices by positioning students as social change agents and offering a strategic learning model relevant to the challenges of the Society 5.0 era.

Keywords: Project Citizen, Project-Based Learning, civic engagement, innovative learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Civic Education (PKn) in higher education plays an important role in shaping students as citizens who not only have an understanding of rights and responsibilities but also participate actively in national and community life. The concept of civic engagement encompasses several aspects: civic knowledge, civic skills and disposition, and real participation in social or public issues (Murdiono, 2018; Nashoha et al., 2025). However, many studies and reports show that students' socio-political participation remains low (Ibrahim, 2024; Muhazzir, 2025; Mühleck & Hadjar, 2025; Yang et al., 2018) and that there is a gap between classroom learning and real action in the community (Filges et al., 2022; Resch & Schrittmesser, 2023).

One approach that is considered capable of bridging this gap is Project Citizen, which encourages students to identify and investigate public problems, propose policy solutions, and engage in advocacy, as well as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), which emphasises learning

through the implementation of real projects relevant to the social context. The integration of these two approaches is systematically designed within the classroom learning process by combining the Project Citizen framework as learning content and PjBL as the implementation methodology. The integration of Project Citizen and PjBL in this study is systematically designed to maximise students' civic engagement through contextual and participatory learning experiences. Conceptually, Project Citizen functions as a content framework that guides students towards a deep understanding of public issues and policy processes, while PjBL serves as a methodological framework that organises the collaborative implementation of the project.

Technically, this integration is implemented through several stages: first, students identify public problems in their surroundings as the initial stage of Project Citizen; second, they conduct an in-depth investigation of the problem through field research, interviews with stakeholders, and relevant policy

analysis in accordance with PjBL principles; third, students collaboratively design a policy portfolio consisting of problem analysis, alternative solutions, and an evidence-based action plan; fourth, they present and advocate the policy proposal to relevant parties (government, communities, or public institutions); and fifth, they reflect on the entire learning process and the social impact of the completed project. Thus, this integration does not position students as passive learners but as researchers, policy designers, and agents of change who actively engage in solving real social problems. The integration of these two approaches has great potential to stimulate not only cognitive aspects (such as critical thinking) but also social action and civic responsibility.

Recent research highlights various relevant findings. The Project Citizen model proves effective in improving students' critical thinking skills and their awareness of public issues. A study conducted in Pontianak shows that the implementation of Project Citizen in Civic Education courses fosters students' critical thinking skills and strengthens their understanding of public policy issues within their community (Rohani & Nurhadianto, 2023). In addition, the development of a Project-Citizen-based practical module in Pancasila courses also proves effective in instilling anti-corruption values and strengthening students' attitudes and skills to engage actively in social and political issues in society (Mulyoto, 2020; Mulyoto & Samsuri, 2017).

Meanwhile, research on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) also shows positive results in enhancing civic engagement. For example, the study "Implementation of PjBL in Pancasila Courses" finds that the PjBL model not only improves students' participation in academic discussions but also strengthens national awareness, collaboration skills, and reflective abilities regarding contemporary social issues (Nasution et al., 2022). The implementation of the PjBL learning model also increases students' creativity (Wicaksana & Sanjaya, 2022). Thus, both Project Citizen and PjBL have significant potential to be applied integratively as learning strategies that foster students' civic engagement more comprehensively.

Nonetheless, there remains a research gap in quantitatively examining the overall effectiveness of integrating Project Citizen and Project-Based Learning on students' civic engagement. Many studies focus on only one approach or on a single dimension (such as critical thinking or attitude), while aspects of real action and social impact do not always appear empirically. In addition, existing studies are often conducted through small-scale experiments or classroom action research without control groups, limiting the generalisability of their findings. In this context, the present study aims to fill this gap by quantitatively examining the effectiveness of integrating Project Citizen and PjBL on the civic engagement of students in the Civic Education Study Programme at the Faculty of

Teacher Training and Education, University of Lampung.

Based on these gaps, the study seeks to formulate several main problems: first, what is the current level of students' civic engagement in terms of knowledge, attitude, and real participation in social issues; second, how effective Project Citizen is in enhancing critical thinking, awareness of public issues, and student involvement; third, how effective PjBL is in improving academic participation, collaboration skills, national awareness, and students' reflections on social issues; and fourth, to what extent the integration of Project Citizen and PjBL can improve students' civic engagement comprehensively.

The aim of this study is to describe the level of students' civic engagement, to examine the effectiveness of Project Citizen and PjBL separately in improving critical thinking, social awareness, and student involvement, and to assess the extent to which the integration of both approaches can enhance civic engagement holistically, thereby producing a learning strategy that is effective, practical, and impactful. The findings are expected to enrich the civic education literature in Indonesia as well as serve as a reference for lecturers and programme managers in designing learning models relevant to the challenges of the Society 5.0 era and digitalisation, in which students face cultural diversity, massive information flows, and global competition demands.

2. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, which aims to determine the extent of the influence of the integration of the Project Citizen model and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on students' civic engagement. The research design employed is the non-equivalent control group design, involving two groups that are similar in all aspects of academic characteristics, namely the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group receives treatment in the form of learning that integrates Project Citizen and PjBL, in which students engage in all stages starting from identifying public problems, investigation and data collection, policy analysis, portfolio development, presentation and public advocacy, to reflection and evaluation. Meanwhile, the control group receives conventional learning based on lectures, classroom discussions, and individual assignments without direct involvement in an integrated public policy project.

The research subjects consist of 60 students of the Civic Education (PPKn) Study Programme at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), University of Lampung, divided into two classes: Class A as the experimental group and Class B as the control group, each consisting of 30 students. The selection of these two classes is carried out purposively by considering the equality of student characteristics in terms of academic level, socio-economic background, and previous

learning experiences, so that any differences in results may be attributed to the treatment provided, rather than to initial differences in participant characteristics.

The data collection techniques include three main instruments. First, a closed questionnaire using a Likert scale of 1–5 consisting of 20 statement items to measure the level of students' civic engagement, covering the dimensions of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition. The Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing for a gradual and measurable assessment of students' perceptions and behaviours. Second, an observation sheet is used to observe student activities during the learning process, including levels of participation, group collaboration, and involvement in discussions and presentations. Third, documentation in the form of photos of activities, presentation videos, and students' project portfolios serves as supporting data to strengthen the quantitative analysis.

The data analysis technique includes several stages of statistical testing to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. First, a validity test is conducted to ensure that each instrument item measures the intended construct, namely civic

engagement, as well as a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. Second, classical assumption tests are carried out, consisting of normality tests using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk to ensure the data are normally distributed, and a homogeneity of variance test using Levene's test to verify that the variances of both groups are homogeneous. Fulfilling these assumptions is an essential prerequisite before conducting parametric tests.

Third, once the assumptions are met, an Independent Samples *t*-test is carried out to examine the difference in mean civic engagement scores between the experimental and control groups. The use of the *t*-test aims to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in learning outcomes between the group receiving the integrated Project Citizen and PjBL treatment and the group receiving conventional learning. Fourth, a Normalised Gain (*N*-Gain) calculation is conducted to measure the effectiveness of improvement in students' learning outcomes before and after the treatment. The *N*-Gain is calculated using the formula:

$$N - Gain = \frac{Post - test Score - Pre - test Score}{Maximal Score - Pre - test Score}$$

3. Results and Discussions

This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of integrating Project Citizen and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in improving students' civic engagement. Quantitative data analysis is carried out to examine the differences in learning outcomes between the experimental class, which receives the integrative treatment, and the control class, which receives conventional instruction.

Based on the validity test of the 20 statement items, all items are declared valid, with calculated *r*-values greater than the table *r*-value (0.361). This indicates that each instrument item is capable of

measuring the intended construct, namely the level of students' civic engagement. In addition, the reliability test produces a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.947, which falls into the very high category, indicating that the research instrument has strong internal consistency and can be used reliably to measure civic attitudes and behaviours.

Classical Assumption Test and Hypothesis Test

The results of the classical assumption tests and hypothesis testing are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Summary of the Classical Assumption Tests and Hypothesis Test Results

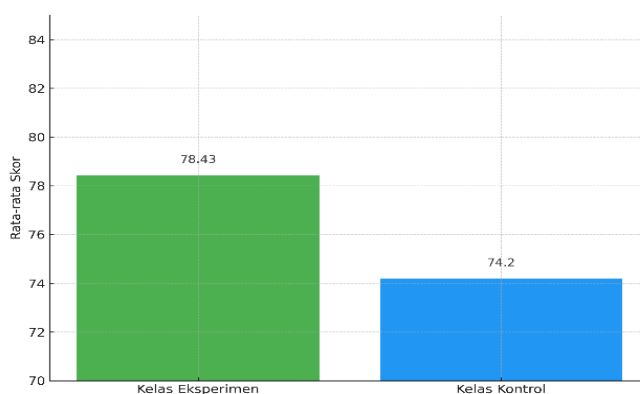
Types of Test	Group	Value	Description
Normality Test			
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Eksperimental	0,124	Normal (p > 0,05)
	Control	0,200	Normal (p > 0,05)
Shapiro-Wilk	Eksperimental	0,315	Normal (p > 0,05)
	Control	0,268	Normal (p > 0,05)
Homogeneity Test			
Levene's Test	Both Groups	0,276	Homogeneous (p > 0,05)
Uji-t (Independent Sample t-test)			
t-value		2,142	
Significance		0,018	Significance (p < 0,05)
Mean Eksperimental		78,43	
Mean Control		74,20	
Difference		4,23	

Based on Table 1, the research data meet all the prerequisites required for conducting parametric tests. The results of the normality test show that the data distribution of both groups is normal, which means that the data are evenly distributed without extreme values that could disrupt the analysis. The homogeneity of variance test indicates that the variances of both groups are homogeneous, meaning that the variability of data between groups is relatively similar; therefore, comparisons between groups can be carried out validly. The fulfillment of these two conditions ensures the appropriateness of using the Independent Samples t-test for comparative analysis.

The results of the *t*-test show a *t*-value of 2.142 with a significance level of 0.018 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference between the learning outcomes of the experimental and control classes. The average learning outcome score of students in the experimental class is 78.43, whereas the control class obtains an average score of 74.20. The difference of 4.23 points suggests a meaningful improvement in learning outcomes

following the implementation of the integrative learning approach based on Project Citizen and PjBL. These findings strengthen the assumption that a learning approach emphasising social participation and contextual experiences is capable of enhancing students' understanding of civic education content while simultaneously expanding their social awareness.

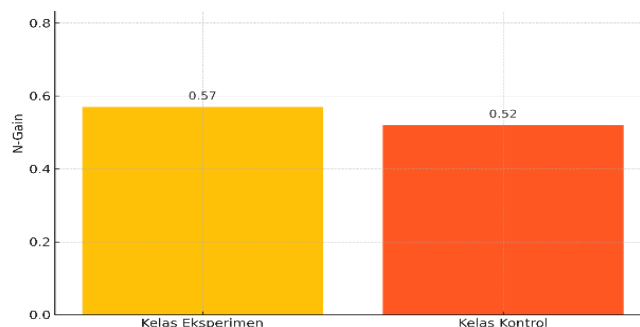
This improvement in learning outcomes is also reflected in the analysis of the Normalised Gain (*N*-Gain). The average *N*-Gain of the experimental class is 0.57, which falls into the medium category, whereas the control class obtains an average *N*-Gain of 0.52, also categorised as medium. However, the individual distribution shows that the experimental class has a higher proportion of students in the high-gain category compared with the control class. This indicates that the social project-based learning model more effectively encourages active engagement, increases learning motivation, and fosters a deeper understanding of public issues.



Picture 1. Comparison of Students' Civic Engagement Scores

In picture 1, the comparison of the average civic engagement scores between the experimental and control classes after the implementation of the learning model is presented. The graph shows a significant increase in the scores of the experimental class, which applies the integration of

Project Citizen and PjBL, compared with the control class that receives conventional instruction. Furthermore, to observe the improvement in understanding more comprehensively, an *N*-Gain analysis is carried out and presented in picture 2.



Picture 2. Comparison of the average *N*-Gain

The comparison of the average *N*-Gain between the experimental and control classes shows that the experimental class records a higher

N-Gain value, indicating greater improvement in students' understanding and engagement through public project-based learning.

From these quantitative findings, it can be concluded that the integration of Project Citizen and PjBL has a positive effect on enhancing students' civic engagement. Theoretically, this aligns with the views of Dewey (1938) and Nugroho et al. (2022) regarding the importance of direct experience (learning by doing) as part of the democratic educational process. Dewey emphasises that education should connect learners with their social environment through meaningful activities. In this context, Project Citizen serves as a platform for students to identify real social issues, analyse their causes, and formulate rational public policy solutions. As concrete examples, students raise various public issues found in their surroundings, such as issues of nationality and religious harmony, equitable law enforcement, national resilience through civic defence, and efforts to foster good citizenship.

Meanwhile, Project-Based Learning offers a methodological framework that enables students to learn collaboratively, conduct research, and produce intellectual outputs that reflect their understanding of civic issues. The combination of these two approaches creates learning that is active, reflective, and applicable. Students not only understand civic concepts cognitively but also internalise their values through authentic social experiences.

These findings also support Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which asserts that effective learning occurs when learners experience a concrete cycle-experiencing, reflecting, conceptualising, and applying. In the context of this study, students engage in a learning process that begins with identifying social problems and progresses to the implementation of real solutions, which ultimately strengthens their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Furthermore, the increase in civic engagement encompasses three key areas:

a. Civic Knowledge

Students demonstrate improved understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities, governmental structures, and public policy mechanisms. This improvement is reflected in their enhanced comprehension of fundamental civic concepts, the rights and duties of citizens, as well as governmental structures and the policymaking process. Through project-based learning, students do not merely receive information passively from lecturers, but actively explore social issues in their environment, analyse relevant regulations, and relate them to the political and legal systems in place.

Activities such as identifying public problems, drafting policy proposals, and presenting the results of their analyses allow students to understand how public policies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated in real contexts. This contributes to an increase in civic literacy, including their ability to interpret legal and policy documents, understand the roles of state institutions, and critically examine

public policies. Thus, students' cognitive aspects develop significantly, encompassing substantial understanding and analytical skills related to the governance system.

b. Civic Skills

Students develop critical thinking, public communication, and teamwork skills. The process of preparing policy projects requires analytical abilities and evidence-based argumentation. Civic skills improve through a series of collaborative and analytical activities that form the core of the integration of Project Citizen and PjBL. Students are trained to systematically identify social issues, design problem-solving strategies, and formulate evidence-based policy recommendations.

Collaboration within the four project themes demonstrates structured and productive teamwork. For the project on nationality and religious harmony, students divide strategic roles ranging from teams conducting surveys and interviews with religious leaders, policy analysis teams reviewing regulations on interfaith harmony, to teams designing interfaith dialogue concepts. In the project on national resilience through civic defence, collaboration requires cross-disciplinary roles, including content development teams creating educational videos, research teams analysing patterns of misinformation on social media, digital marketing teams managing campaigns, and partnership teams negotiating with the Communication and Information Office and schools.

These processes require critical thinking to evaluate information, filter relevant data, and construct logical and structured arguments. Meanwhile, presentation and public advocacy activities provide direct experience in developing oral communication skills, persuasion, and effective rhetoric. Group discussions and project task divisions strengthen collaboration, leadership, and conflict management skills. In this context, students function not merely as learners but as solution designers and public policy communicators. Thus, the civic skills developed include higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), strategic public communication, and productive collaboration in both academic and social contexts.

c. Civic Disposition

There is an increase in social empathy, concern for environmental and community issues, and a sense of responsibility as active citizens. Students' involvement in real projects positions them not only as recipients of knowledge but as social change agents trained to think systematically and act constructively. The experimental class shows increased participation in campus and community social activities after the project concludes, indicating that the impact of learning extends beyond the classroom.

These findings reinforce those of (Iriansyah, 2020; Rosyad & Zuchdi, 2018; Sopianingsih, 2016, who state that the implementation of Project Citizen can enhance students' political and social participation through contextual learning. Likewise,

(Hannam & Shin, 2018; Markula & Aksela, 2022; Zhang & Ma, 2023) affirm that Project-Based Learning has a positive influence on learning motivation, personal responsibility, and problem-solving skills. Thus, the integration of these two approaches can be regarded as a strategic innovation in civic education in higher education.

Practically, these findings imply that lecturers need to design learning that encourages students' direct engagement with social realities around them. Public issue-based project activities are proven to increase engagement, strengthen the connection between theory and practice, and foster critical awareness of societal problems. Furthermore, this model aligns with the direction of higher education in the 5.0 era, which demands learners who are independent, collaborative, and oriented towards social solutions.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the integration of Project Citizen and Project-Based Learning significantly enhances students' civic engagement in terms of knowledge, skills, and disposition. Learning that begins in the classroom is successfully transformed into real and meaningful social action, affirming that civic education in higher education should not remain at the conceptual level but should extend to lived citizenship practices within society.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the integration of Project Citizen and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has a significant positive effect on enhancing students' civic engagement in the domains of knowledge, skills, and civic dispositions. This instructional innovation successfully bridges the gap between conceptual learning in the classroom and real social experience by engaging students in projects based on public issues. The statistical tests indicate significant differences between the experimental and control groups, confirming the effectiveness of this integrative approach in encouraging students not only to understand civic concepts cognitively but also to internalise these values through social action.

The integration of these two approaches enriches civic education practices by positioning students as active subjects in the learning process who are capable of identifying societal problems, formulating policy-based solutions, and conducting social advocacy collaboratively. The novelty of this research lies in its quantitative and structured application of an integrative learning model, which has been rarely implemented in the context of civic education in Indonesia. Therefore, it contributes both theoretically and empirically to the development of participatory learning models that are relevant to the demands of the Society 5.0 era.

Practically, the findings of this study provide new direction for curriculum development and instructional strategies in Civic Education at the higher education level. Lecturers and programme managers may adopt the Project Citizen and PjBL

approaches as a learning framework to connect course materials with social realities, strengthen students' critical awareness of public issues, and enhance their capacity as active citizens. Public issue-based project activities may be integrated into course assignments, community service programmes, and campus activities to create authentic and impactful learning experiences.

Furthermore, future research may focus on examining the effectiveness of this model in various disciplinary contexts, developing more comprehensive civic engagement assessment instruments, and exploring its long-term impact on students' social behaviour and public participation after graduation. Thus, Civic Education learning through this integration has the potential to serve as a golden bridge for students to refine critical thinking, cultivate deep empathy, and promote real action as resilient and inspiring citizens.

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