

The Role of Civic Education in Developing Critical Thinking Skills among English Language Education Students: A Literature Review

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Abstract

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Critical thinking is one of the essential competencies that university students must possess to face the challenges of 21st-century learning. For students of the English Language Education Study Program, critical thinking plays an important role in supporting academic success, decision-making, and the ability to analyze various information and issues objectively. Citizenship Education, as a compulsory course in higher education, has a strategic role in developing critical thinking skills through learning activities that emphasize the analysis of national issues, democracy, citizens' rights and responsibilities, law enforcement, and social problem-solving. This study aims to analyze the existing literature on the role of Citizenship Education in developing the critical thinking skills of students in the English Language Education Study Program. The method employed in this study is a literature review, involving the collection and analysis of relevant scholarly articles, national and international journals, and other academic sources related to the research topic. The findings indicate that Citizenship Education contributes significantly to the enhancement of students' critical thinking skills through learning activities that encourage analysis, evaluation, argumentation, reflection, and evidence-based decision-making. Furthermore, the critical thinking skills developed through Citizenship Education support learning processes in the English Language Education Study Program, particularly in understanding, evaluating, and communicating ideas in a logical and systematic manner. Therefore, Citizenship Education plays a significant role in fostering students' critical thinking skills as an essential competency for academic achievement and active participation in society.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, critical thinking, university students, English Language Education, literature review.

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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of science, technology, and information in the twenty-first century requires university students to possess a wide range of competencies that support both academic achievement and active participation in society. One of the most essential competencies is critical thinking. Critical thinking enables individuals to objectively analyze information, evaluate arguments, identify problems, and make decisions based on evidence and rational consideration.

Within the context of higher education, critical thinking has become one of the key indicators of successful learning, as it contributes to the development of students who are capable of addressing diverse challenges wisely and responsibly.

Students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program constitute one of the academic groups that require critical thinking skills throughout their learning process. In addition to mastering language skills, they are expected to analyze information critically, evaluate various sources of knowledge, and express their opinions logically and systematically. These competencies are indispensable in a wide range of academic activities, including classroom discussions, presentations, research projects, and scientific writing.

The significance of critical thinking skills among English Language Education students has been demonstrated in numerous studies. Jumiarti et al. (2024) found that students' critical thinking abilities were reflected in their capacity to analyze problems, construct logical arguments, propose relevant solutions, and employ valid evidence to support their viewpoints. These findings indicate that critical thinking is one of the determining factors contributing to students' academic success. Similarly, Darwin et al. (2024) emphasized that critical thinking encompasses the ability to analyze contextual issues, evaluate evidence, question underlying assumptions, and make rational decisions. These competencies have become increasingly important in the digital era, which is characterized by the overwhelming abundance of information from diverse sources.

One of the university courses with substantial potential to foster students' critical thinking skills is Civic Education. As a compulsory general course in higher education, Civic Education aims to develop intelligent, democratic, and responsible citizens who are committed to the values of *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Through learning activities that address issues related to nationalism, democracy, citizens' rights and obligations, the rule of law, and national resilience, students are encouraged to understand various societal issues critically and comprehensively.

Critical thinking within Civic Education is cultivated through various learning activities that require students to analyze problems, evaluate information, consider multiple perspectives, and formulate solutions to issues encountered in society. Consequently, Civic Education functions not only as a medium for instilling national values and character but also as a platform for developing higher-order thinking skills.

Research conducted by Sukmayadi et al. (2024) demonstrated that citizenship literacy integrated into Civic Education learning effectively enhances students' critical thinking skills. Through cooperative learning approaches and case-based learning, students are encouraged to actively analyze social issues while developing reflective thinking abilities. These findings suggest that Civic Education makes a tangible contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills.

Similarly, Wulandari and Tanjung (2023) reported that citizenship practices implemented in Civic Education learning create a more active, engaging, and meaningful learning environment. Students' participation in various citizenship-related activities promotes the development of creativity and critical thinking

skills, enabling them to better understand and resolve issues associated with social and civic life.

Furthermore, Harahap et al. (2023) argued that Civic Education plays a crucial role in fostering constructive critical awareness among university students. Through learning experiences centered on democracy, human rights, and civic participation, students are trained to express criticism responsibly, respect differing opinions, provide constructive feedback, and develop collaborative and problem-solving skills. These competencies constitute essential attributes in both academic settings and broader social contexts.

Although numerous studies have established the relationship between Civic Education and students' critical thinking skills, the majority of previous research has primarily focused on the effectiveness of specific instructional models or teaching methods in improving critical thinking among university students in general. In contrast, studies specifically examining the role of Civic Education in fostering critical thinking among students of the English Language Education Study Program remain relatively limited. This gap is particularly important because English Language Education students possess distinct academic characteristics and learning needs compared to students from other disciplines, including the necessity to develop critical thinking skills for effectively understanding, processing, and communicating information.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to analyze the existing literature concerning the role of Civic Education in developing the critical thinking skills of students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program. This review is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of Civic Education to the enhancement of students' critical thinking abilities while serving as a valuable reference for the development of more effective instructional practices in higher education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a literature review method using a qualitative approach. A literature review is a research method conducted through the examination, analysis, and synthesis of relevant scholarly sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a particular research topic. In this study, the literature review was utilized to analyze the role of Civic Education in developing the critical thinking skills of students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program.

The data sources consisted of various relevant scholarly publications, including national and international journal articles, conference proceedings, and other academic references addressing Civic Education, critical thinking skills, and English Language Education students. The selected articles were published between 2020 and 2024 to ensure the recency of the data and their relevance to current research developments.

Data were collected through a documentation study by systematically searching scholarly publications in academic databases, including Google Scholar, Garuda, and both national and international journal portals. The keywords used in the literature search included "*Civic Education*," "*critical thinking*," "*critical thinking skills*," "*English Language Education*," "*EFL students*," and "*English*

Language Education students." Subsequently, the retrieved articles were screened based on their thematic relevance, research objectives, and alignment with the focus of the present study.

The data were analyzed through four sequential stages: identification, classification, evaluation, and synthesis. During the identification stage, the researcher collected literature relevant to the research topic. The classification stage involved organizing the selected literature into relevant thematic categories, including Civic Education, critical thinking skills, and the characteristics of English Language Education students. The evaluation stage was conducted by examining the principal findings of each study to identify the contributions of Civic Education to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Finally, the synthesis stage involved integrating the findings from the analyzed studies to generate comprehensive conclusions that addressed the objectives of the present research.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study relied exclusively on sources obtained from accredited scientific journals and other scholarly publications relevant to the research focus. The findings of the analysis were subsequently presented descriptively to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of Civic Education in fostering the critical thinking skills of students in the English Language Education Study Program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Nature of Civic Education

Civic Education is a university course that plays a fundamental role in developing citizens who possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes aligned with the values of *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Magdalena et al. (2020) explain that Civic Education is designed to develop students' civic competencies by strengthening their understanding of democracy, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and social responsibility in both societal and national life. In line with this perspective, Hidayati et al. (2022) argue that Civic Education is an educational endeavor that equips students with fundamental knowledge and competencies regarding the relationship between citizens and the state, thereby enabling them to fulfill their civic roles responsibly.

Within the context of higher education, Civic Education functions not only as a medium for delivering knowledge concerning the constitutional system, the constitution, and national values but also as a platform for character formation and the development of students' intellectual capacities. Through learning activities that address various social, political, legal, and national issues, students are encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of societal realities while enhancing their ability to think logically and reflectively.

2. The Nature of Civic Education as a Foundation for the Development of Critical Thinking Skills

One of the primary objectives of Civic Education is to cultivate citizens who are capable of thinking critically, rationally, and responsibly when confronting various issues related to national and civic life. Therefore, the

development of critical thinking skills has become an inherent component of the very nature of Civic Education.

Throughout the learning process, students are not merely passive recipients of information; instead, they are encouraged to identify problems, analyze information from multiple perspectives, evaluate arguments, and formulate solutions to issues encountered within society. Such learning activities provide valuable opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills that are essential for both academic and social life.

For students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program, critical thinking skills play a particularly significant role because they facilitate the comprehension of complex information, the evaluation of knowledge sources, and the construction of logical arguments. Consequently, Civic Education serves as an important educational medium that supports the comprehensive development of students' intellectual abilities.

3. The Importance of Civic Education for University Students

Civic Education occupies a strategic position in higher education as one of the compulsory general courses required of all university students. The implementation of this course reflects the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the importance of Civic Education in fostering students' character and personal development.

Through Civic Education, students acquire an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, the importance of tolerance within a pluralistic society, and democratic values that serve as the foundation of national life. Furthermore, Civic Education strengthens students' national identity, enabling them to confront global challenges without losing their identity as Indonesian citizens.

From an academic perspective, Civic Education provides opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills through the examination of diverse social, political, legal, and civic issues. Learning activities involving discussions, case studies, and problem-solving exercises encourage students to evaluate information objectively and construct arguments based on rational reasoning.

4. The Role of Civic Education in Developing Students' Critical Thinking Skills

Based on the findings of numerous studies, Civic Education makes a significant contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking encompasses the ability to analyze information, evaluate multiple perspectives, construct logical arguments, and make decisions based on relevant evidence.

Sukmayadi et al. (2024) found that the implementation of civic literacy within Civic Education significantly enhanced students' critical thinking skills. Students who participated in case-based learning and collaborative group activities demonstrated greater proficiency in identifying social problems, evaluating information, and expressing their opinions rationally.

These findings are consistent with those reported by Wulandari and Tanjung (2022), who demonstrated that citizenship practices incorporated into Civic Education increased students' engagement in analyzing various societal

issues. Through contextual learning experiences, students were encouraged to think more reflectively and critically about the social phenomena they encountered.

Furthermore, Harahap et al. (2023) argued that Civic Education plays an essential role in fostering students' constructive critical awareness. Learning activities focusing on democracy, human rights, and civic participation enable students to express criticism responsibly, appreciate differing viewpoints, and collaboratively seek solutions to various social issues.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that Civic Education functions not only as a means of cultivating responsible citizens with strong moral character but also as an effective educational instrument for developing students' critical thinking skills.

5. The Implementation of Civic Education Learning in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills

The effectiveness of Civic Education in developing students' critical thinking skills is closely associated with the instructional approaches employed. One instructional model that has proven to be particularly effective is *Project Citizen*, a student-centered learning model that focuses on identifying and resolving real-world civic issues within society.

Rohani and Nurhadianto (2023) found that implementing the *Project Citizen* model progressively improved students' critical thinking skills. Within this instructional framework, students actively participated in identifying problems, collecting data, developing portfolios, and presenting their findings. Each stage of the learning process required students to engage in analysis, evaluation, and evidence-based decision-making.

This instructional model enables students to connect theoretical concepts of citizenship with the social realities they encounter. Consequently, the learning process becomes more meaningful while providing authentic learning experiences that strengthen students' critical thinking abilities.

6. The Relevance of Critical Thinking Skills for English Language Education Students

The critical thinking skills fostered through Civic Education are highly relevant to students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program. Throughout their academic learning, students are expected not only to master language proficiency but also to comprehend information critically, evaluate diverse sources, and communicate ideas logically and systematically.

Jumariati et al. (2024) demonstrated that English Language Education students with strong critical thinking skills were more capable of analyzing problems, constructing coherent arguments, proposing relevant solutions, and utilizing valid evidence to support their viewpoints. These competencies constitute important factors contributing to students' academic achievement.

Similar findings were reported by Fajaryani et al. (2025), who explained that critical thinking is an essential competency for EFL students. Their study revealed that critical thinking skills are influenced by various factors, including individual competence, language proficiency, and students' psychological conditions. Furthermore, supportive learning environments, technology

integration, and effective lecturer guidance also contribute significantly to the development of students' critical thinking abilities.

For students in the English Language Education Study Program, critical thinking skills support not only the overall learning process but also their ability to comprehend diverse sources of information, construct academic arguments, conduct research, and communicate ideas effectively across various educational contexts.

7. Synthesis of the Literature Review Findings

Based on the studies analyzed in this literature review, it can be concluded that Civic Education consistently contributes to the development of university students' critical thinking skills. Although the reviewed studies employed different instructional approaches and learning models, all of them reported a positive relationship between Civic Education learning and improvements in students' critical thinking abilities.

Studies conducted by Sukmayadi et al. (2024), Wulandari and Tanjung (2022), Rohani and Nurhadianto (2023), and Harahap et al. (2023) consistently demonstrate that the enhancement of critical thinking skills occurs because students are actively engaged throughout the learning process. Civic literacy, citizenship practices, and the *Project Citizen* model share common characteristics, namely encouraging students to identify problems, evaluate information, consider multiple perspectives, and formulate rational solutions.

On the other hand, the studies by Jumariati et al. (2024) and Fajaryani et al. (2025) indicate that critical thinking constitutes an essential competency for students in English Language Education. These competencies enable students to comprehend information more effectively, evaluate evidence critically, construct logical arguments, and optimize their academic performance.

Overall, the findings of this literature review demonstrate that Civic Education serves not only as a compulsory course aimed at instilling national values and cultivating responsible citizenship but also as an effective educational medium for developing the critical thinking skills required by students of the English Language Education Study Program to successfully address both academic challenges and the demands of contemporary social life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the literature review, Civic Education plays a significant role in fostering the critical thinking skills of students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program. Numerous studies indicate that Civic Education learning enhances students' abilities to analyze problems, evaluate information, construct logical arguments, and make rational decisions. The development of these competencies is facilitated through various instructional approaches, including civic literacy, citizenship practices, classroom discussions, case-based learning, and the *Project Citizen* model, all of which encourage students' active engagement throughout the learning process.

For students of the English Language Education Study Program, the critical thinking skills cultivated through Civic Education are highly relevant to both their academic and professional development. These competencies enable students to understand information objectively, communicate ideas systematically, and

respond critically to a wide range of social and global issues while upholding the values of *Pancasila* and responsible citizenship.

Therefore, Civic Education functions not only as a compulsory course for instilling national values but also as a strategic educational instrument for developing English Language Education graduates who are critical, democratic, responsible, and capable of actively participating in social, national, and civic life.

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