

Needs Analysis for Collaborative and Experiential Civic Education in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Civic Education in higher education is expected to develop reflective, critical, and socially responsible citizens. However, its implementation often remains conventional and less connected to real-life civic experiences. This study aims to describe the current state of Civic Education learning at the university level and identify the need for transformation toward a more collaborative and experiential model. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through non-participatory classroom observations in eight Civic Education classes at Universitas Sriwijaya, supported by lecturer and student questionnaires. Thematic analysis revealed four major issues: limited collaboration with external stakeholders, lecture-dominated teaching methods, minimal use of contextual learning resources, and assignments that lack participatory engagement. These findings highlight a gap between the ideal vision of Civic Education and its practical application. The study underscores the urgency of redesigning Civic Education to emphasize student collaboration, contextual relevance, and experiential learning. It recommends developing innovative learning models that align Civic Education with 21st-century civic challenges and learner needs.

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Introduction

Civic Education plays a pivotal role in addressing various national challenges while simultaneously shaping the character of citizens. Its core objective is to foster national awareness and instill a sense of responsibility among Indonesian citizens regarding their identity and role in sustaining the nation. Somantri [1] underscores that Civic Education centers on political democracy, which is expanded by integrating other knowledge domains, positive influences, and formal and informal educational channels. The ultimate goal is to cultivate critical and analytical thinking, along with democratic action, in preparing students for life guided by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Nurdiansyah et al. [2] further state that Civic Education aims to nurture citizens who are knowledgeable, virtuous, skilled, and aware of their rights and responsibilities within society. Achieving these goals requires the support of all components of the learning process. Ideally, Civic Education should not be delivered merely in a textual format. Still, it should embrace a contextual approach to render its concepts more applicable and realistic within the everyday lives of citizens.

Designated as a compulsory course in the higher education curriculum, under Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, Civic education reflects its critical function in strengthening national identity and fostering character development, particularly among university students as the nation's future leaders. Somantri and Winataputra [3] argue that Civic Education, within the formal education framework, embodies the essence of Article 31, Paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which mandates the government to implement a national education system that enhances faith, piety, and noble character in the pursuit of national enlightenment. Thus, Civic Education in higher education should transcend mere transmission of knowledge about political systems, legal structures, and governance. It should instead serve as a learning space that facilitates the internalization of democratic values, tolerance, justice, and social responsibility.

In this context, university students should be prepared as skilled professionals and active, reflective, and critically aware citizens. To ensure that Civic Education aligns with contemporary challenges, it is essential to internalize collaborative competence in students and leverage diverse learning resources beyond the classroom. This would allow students to gain contextual experiences directly linked to the concepts covered in Civic Education.

Collaborative competence, coupled with the ability to learn from one's environment and engage in real-life experiences, nurtures students' reasoning, critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills, while encouraging active participation in societal life. These attributes ultimately contribute to the development of strong character. Therefore, it is crucial for Civic Education in higher education to consistently promote collaborative skills, provide access to extra-classroom learning resources, and offer meaningful, real-world learning experiences.

This, in turn, will help shape critically minded citizens who possess strong character and are equipped to contribute meaningfully to their nation.

However, implementing Civic Education as a mandatory university course still faces numerous challenges. A dominant reliance on textual teaching methods, insufficient contextualization of concepts, and often irrelevant academic backgrounds of instructors have all contributed to a diminished impact of Civic Education on character formation and engagement. In many higher education settings, students perceive Civic Education merely as a normative, complementary course, without gaining the intended civic understanding and internalization. As a result, their active participation and engagement with citizenship values remain weak. Zuriah's [4] research highlights that current university Civic Education instructional methods often result in student boredom, exacerbated by uninspiring assignments that make students feel burdened rather than engaged. This reflects a gap between the ideal vision of Citizenship Education in higher education to produce intelligent and ethical citizens and the actual learning practices that fail to support such outcomes effectively.

A transformative approach to university Civic Education is necessary to respond to these challenges. This involves pedagogical innovations that bridge theoretical concepts with practical applications. Such transformation aims to offer students meaningful and contextual learning experiences while honing their collaborative skills through interaction with diverse stakeholders.

This study explores the necessity for transformative approaches in university-level Civic Education by emphasizing the development of collaborative competencies and the provision of experiential, contextually grounded learning. Through this needs analysis, a comprehensive understanding of how current pedagogical models foster student engagement and contextual learning experiences will emerge. The findings will be a foundational reference for designing participatory learning models closely aligned with societal realities. Ultimately, Civic Education should evolve from being a mere curricular formality into a vital platform for cultivating civic character and skills relevant to the complexities of modern life.

Material and Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design, a methodological approach chosen for its capacity to provide in-depth explanations of complex phenomena and uncover the underlying meanings embedded within ongoing educational processes [5]. Data was collected through non-participatory observation of eight Civic Education classes, complemented by questionnaire responses from 22 lecturers and 451 students enrolled in the course. The observed classes spanned various academic programs, including Indonesian Language

Education, Civic Education, Economic Education, History Education, Bilingual Information Systems, Public Health, Law, and Accounting. The research took place at Sriwijaya University, specifically at the Center for Personality Development Courses (*Pusat Penyelenggaraan Mata Kuliah Pengembangan Kepribadian – PP MPK*), and eight classes were carefully chosen to represent all the faculties that offered Civic Education courses during that semester.

The observations focused on several key aspects: the instructional models employed by lecturers, the nature of student assignments, levels of student engagement, and the extent to which the learning processes fostered collaboration and connected civic concepts to students' real-life experiences. Several key indicators were included in both the observation checklist and the questionnaire instruments, particularly focusing on the instructional practices of Civic Education lecturers. These indicators included:

- the extent to which lecturers employed instructional models that enabled collaboration between students and external stakeholders (such as practitioners, private sector actors, or community members);
- the integration of concepts and learning resources derived from contexts beyond the classroom environment;
- the provision of group assignments that encouraged students to work collaboratively with external parties;
- the use of course assignments that addressed real-life societal issues as the basis for problem-based learning; and
- the active involvement of lecturers and students in identifying potential external partners who could serve as co-learners in understanding Civic Education concepts.

Instrument development in this study was conducted through a collegial process involving extensive discussions among research team members. The observation sheet and the questionnaire instrument were refined through peer review to ensure content relevance, clarity, and validity. The same rigorous process guided the questionnaire design to ensure alignment with the thematic goals of the study. In addition to observation and questionnaire data, document analysis was conducted by reviewing syllabi and lesson plans developed by the lecturer. This document analysis provided contextual insights into instructional planning and pedagogical alignment with Civic Education goals. However, interviews were not conducted in this preliminary study, as the researchers deemed that the non-participatory observations yielded sufficiently rich data to meet the exploratory objectives of the research.

The data analysis adopted a thematic analysis technique as outlined by Braun and Clarke [6], involving a systematic and iterative process consisting of the following phases: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification and organization, thematic interpretation, and conclusion drawing based on the interrelations among themes. During the initial coding

phase, all research team members independently reviewed the observational notes, open-ended questionnaire responses, and relevant documents (e.g., syllabi and lesson plans) to generate preliminary codes. These codes were then discussed collaboratively through peer debriefing sessions to refine and consolidate coding categories, ensuring consistency and minimizing individual bias.

Triangulation was achieved by integrating multiple sources of data (classroom observations, questionnaire responses, and document analysis) to corroborate findings and enhance the validity of interpretations. Discrepancies or divergent patterns identified across data sources were discussed in joint analytic meetings to refine thematic categories and draw nuanced conclusions. Additionally, the researchers ensured analytic rigor by maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions and regularly revisiting initial interpretations as part of a reflective thematic refinement process.

Additionally, quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics in the form of percentages. This quantitative analysis was not intended to yield inferential statistical conclusions but to support and reinforce the thematic interpretations derived from observational and documentary data.

Results

This section is organized around four major themes that illustrate the gap between current teaching practices observed in the field and the transformative needs of Civic Education at the higher education level. These four themes highlight prevailing issues in the delivery of Civic Education courses: limited collaboration with external stakeholders, text-based and teacher-centered learning approaches, underutilization of contextual learning resources, and assignments that inadequately stimulate students' active participation.

A. Limited collaboration with external stakeholders

In today's complex and interconnected world, solving societal issues increasingly requires multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. Collaboration between academics, practitioners, government agencies, the private sector, and the community becomes essential. Such collaboration fosters a diversity of perspectives that can be integrated to produce more comprehensive and holistic solutions. Collaboration with external actors, including communities, practitioners, government institutions, and the labor market, is key in Civic Education. This approach enables learning to become more participatory and contextually relevant, moving beyond conceptual understanding to real-world civic engagement.

However, observational data from this study indicate that none of the eight observed classes explicitly encouraged or facilitated authentic collaboration between students and external parties during the learning process. In the Civic Education class, although the lecturer

incorporated a community project assignment and introduced podcasts as an innovative medium, students were not provided with systematic guidance to engage with community members or professional practitioners during the implementation of the project. Observational data revealed that students were primarily involved in internal group discussions, without explicit instructional scaffolding to establish external collaboration. One field note recorded, *"Students were asked to create a podcast about social issues, but they only discussed the topic among themselves; there was no direction to involve people outside the class."*

In the Accounting class, the concept of collaboration in civic life was addressed in the course content; there was no pedagogical emphasis on identifying or involving external stakeholders to deepen students' understanding of civic-related economic issues. Observers noted that classroom discussions remained abstract and theoretical, with no practical component. As pointed out in the observation log, *"Students discussed factual issues, but they remained theoretical; there was no effort to engage with professionals or communities involved in the issue."*

The Indonesian Language Education class included a task requiring students to produce a video-based case study on contemporary social realities. However, there was an absence of instructional direction encouraging students to engage with resource persons or directly interact with the communities depicted. Observation notes indicated that students completed the assignment independently, without seeking insights from those directly affected. One entry noted, *"The video assignments helped students see social issues, but they simply recorded and interpreted them themselves; they didn't interact much with the people affected."*

In the Law class, students were assigned to analyze real-world legal cases from their communities. However, the lack of structured guidance to facilitate sustained engagement with the subjects or communities involved resulted in reports lacking balanced perspectives. As documented in the observation notes, *"Students took cases from the news, but they never spoke to anyone involved. It felt like a typical paper"*. No collaborative components were observed in the Economics and History Education classes. Instruction was primarily lecturer-centered, with minimal student participation or interactive learning strategies. The instructional delivery was characterized as didactic, with students assuming passive roles. Observational records describe the learning environment: *"The lectures were informative, but very monotonous and not interactive."*

The lecturer is committed to applying project-based and problem-based learning approaches in the Bilingual Information Systems class. Nonetheless, the classroom implementation lacked operational mechanisms to facilitate engagement with external actors, such as industry practitioners or community stakeholders. According to the lecturer's reflection, *"I encourage critical thinking through projects, but I haven't explored how students*

engage with stakeholders in the real world."

In the Public Health class, although the content addressed the civic roles of individuals within society, there were no pedagogical strategies to support real-world collaboration with relevant community entities. This resulted in a gap between conceptual understanding and experiential application. As the observation field notes summarized, *"The lessons on public health are inspiring, but students never get out of class to apply them."*

Questionnaire data from university members reinforced these observational findings. Approximately 45.5% of lecturers reported "rarely" and 22.7% "never" involving external stakeholders (practitioners/private sector/community) as part of students' learning resources. Similarly, 31.8% of lecturers "rarely" and 22.7% "never" employed learning models that integrated external actors as project partners. Student responses mirrored these trends, with 16.9% indicating "rarely" and 14.6% "never" encountering learning models that involved outside parties in Civic Education. Furthermore, 16.2% "rarely" and 9.5% "never" experienced collaborating opportunities with external stakeholders during Civic Education coursework. Table 1 presents a summary of the questionnaire findings.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Responses Related to External Collaboration in Civic Education

Question Item	Response Option	Lecturers (n=22)	Students (n=451)
Involvement of external stakeholders as part of learning resources	Rarely	10 (45.5%)	76 (16.9%)
	Never	5 (22.7%)	66 (14.6%)
Use of learning models that involve external stakeholders as project partners	Rarely	7 (31.8%)	73 (16.2%)
	Never	5 (22.7%)	43 (9.5%)

These results indicate the weak implementation of civic engagement principles in Civic Education courses. Kerr [7] emphasizes that effective Civic Education imparts knowledge and fosters social skills through active societal participation. Banks [8] similarly asserts that Civic Education should offer learning experiences that directly engage students with communities and social institutions. Learning models such as community-based and service learning have proven effective in enhancing students' understanding of their roles as active, reflective citizens [9].

The ability to collaborate should be nurtured early, and one practical approach is through collaborative learning. Barkley, Cross, and Major [10] define collaborative learning as a process where students work in groups to achieve shared academic goals. This model is grounded in the principle that group learning can be more effective than learning in isolation. Educated citizens who embrace collaboration bring tremendous value to national development. Prayitno and Manulang [11] argue that civic character and mindset are crucial to a nation's vitality, serving as key elements for sustaining a democratic state. Hence, Civic Education must go beyond textual instruction and offer students the contextual tools needed for real-life

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participation. When students lack cross-sector interaction, learning becomes disconnected from social realities and fails to foster character and civic responsibility. The absence of partnerships with community actors or practitioners in the eight classes observed signals a disjuncture between the normative vision of Civic Education as a democratic educational platform and the prevailing insular, socially detached instructional practices.

B. Text-based and teacher-centered learning approaches

Contextual and student-centered learning approaches are widely regarded as more effective in helping students grasp abstract concepts. When learning is grounded in contexts that are familiar and accessible to students, it fosters more profound understanding and more meaningful engagement with the material. However, observational data from this study indicate that lectures remain the dominant instructional method in six out of eight observed classes. This points to a predominantly unidirectional learning process in which the lecturer functions as the primary source of knowledge, while students assume passive roles as recipients of information.

Economics Education and History Education classes exhibited clear characteristics of text-based, teacher-centered learning. It was noted that "Lecturers used PowerPoint slides as the primary delivery method, with minimal room for discussion or critical student engagement." Learning materials were limited to lecture-provided content, and students were not encouraged to explore additional resources or engage with external perspectives. Similarly, Public Health and Law classes were largely lecture-based, although student assignments were included. Observations found that *"In the Law class, students were assigned to analyze legal cases; however, these assignments were conducted individually and lacked opportunities for collective discussion or guided reflection."* The focus remained on content delivery rather than dialogic learning.

Indonesian Language Education and Citizenship Education classes exhibited some pedagogical variation through the inclusion of real-life examples and project-based assignments. However, lectures remained the dominant teaching approach. It was noted that *"Student participation was largely reactive, limited to responding to predetermined directions."* We adopted a slightly more contextual approach in the Bilingual Information Systems class. Observations showed that *"The lecturer attempted to connect the course material to real-world issues and encouraged participation. However, the class dynamics still reflected the conventional lecture model."* Finally, the Accounting class demonstrated limited efforts to incorporate project-based learning. Observations noted, *"Although the lecturer emphasized citizenship issues in economic life, student engagement was limited. Activities were largely structured around the lecturer's explanations, with little emphasis on student-led inquiry or collaboration."*

Questionnaire data support these observational findings. Among lecturers, 40.9% reported

“rarely” and 9.1% “never” identifying external stakeholders who could serve as learning partners to help students better understand civic concepts. Additionally, 31.8% of lecturers stated they “rarely” and 22.7% “never” utilized instructional models that allowed practitioners, private sector actors, or community members to participate in student project teams. Student responses mirrored these trends. Approximately 43% of students indicated that their lecturers “rarely” and 1.6% “never” encouraged them to identify potential external learning partners. Furthermore, 52.1% of students reported that their lecturers “rarely” and 9.5% “never” implemented learning models involving external parties in project-based assignments. Table 2 presents a summary of the questionnaire findings.

Table 2. Summary of Key Questionnaire Responses on External Stakeholder Involvement

Question Item	Response Option	Lecturers (n=22)	Students (n=451)
Lecturer identifies potential external learning partners.	Rarely	9 (40.9%)	194 (43.0%)
	Never	2 (9.1%)	7 (1.6%)
Lecturer uses learning models involving practitioners or the community in project teams.	Rarely	7 (31.8%)	235 (52.1%)
	Never	5 (22.7%)	43 (9.5%)

The observations and questionnaire data reveal a persistent reliance on textual and lecturer-centered approaches in Civic Education courses. While lecture remains a standard instructional method in higher education, its dominance in six of the eight observed classes suggests that the shift from a teaching-centered paradigm to a student-centered one has yet to materialize meaningfully in Civic Education classrooms. Vygotsky [12] emphasized that knowledge is constructed through social interaction, real-world experience, and active learner engagement. Similarly, Freire [13], through his critical pedagogy framework, rejected the “banking model” of education wherein students are treated as passive containers of information and instead called for dialogic, problem-posing education. Silberman [14] further argued that learners must go beyond merely processing facts and concepts to experiencing and applying them, enhancing skill acquisition and motivation. While experience can be a robust foundation for learning, Beard and Wilson [15] caution that experience alone does not automatically lead to learning. Reflection is essential, learners must consider how and why experiences occur to derive meaningful lessons and achieve personal growth.

In the context of Civic Education, a model that relies heavily on lecturing and textual materials risks alienating students from the essential competencies needed to analyze, critique, and respond to the socio-political realities of their everyday lives. As a result, students may become disengaged from national issues and adopt a pragmatic, indifferent stance toward their civic responsibilities. The continued predominance of lectures and PowerPoint-based content undermines the praxis dimension of Civic Education. Students may grasp theoretical concepts of citizenship but lack the skills necessary for dialogue, social empathy, and collective decision-

making, core competencies in Civic Education [16].

C. Underutilization of contextual learning resources

Learning resources should not be limited to textbooks or lecturer handouts. A broad range of educational resources, including those outside the classroom, such as social experiences, field data, and community engagement, can be leveraged to enhance the practical dimensions of Civic Education. These contextual sources support the development of character and responsible citizenship. However, classroom observations reveal that most classes have not yet fully optimized contextual learning resources.

The Bilingual Information Systems class was the only class that explicitly emphasized the pedagogical value of leveraging students' lived experiences. Observations indicated that *"Lecturers actively encouraged students to reflect on their social environments to understand civic concepts better."* The Law class also demonstrated efforts to bridge theoretical learning with real-world contexts through legal case analysis assignments. However, observations noted that *"these assignments were conducted individually and lacked structured guidance to support field engagement."* The Civics Education, Indonesian Language Education, and Accounting courses incorporated assignments such as podcast production, social issue videos, and case studies, demonstrating potential for addressing real-world issues. However, observations indicated that *"these assignments were generally framed as classroom exercises, rather than as opportunities for community-engaged learning."* In contrast, the History Education, Economics Education, and Public Health classes relied almost entirely on lecture slides (PowerPoint presentations) as their primary teaching materials. Observational data indicated that *"none of the assigned assignments encouraged students to explore or investigate their immediate social environments."*

Questionnaire data reinforces these findings. Among lecturers, 27.3% reported that they "rarely" used learning models that integrate out-of-classroom concepts as part of the instructional resource base. Additionally, 31.8% of lecturers stated they "rarely" and 13.6% "never" used instructional models that enabled students to gain learning experiences through interaction with external parties (such as practitioners, private sector actors, or community members). Student responses reflected similar trends. Approximately 11.5% of students reported that their lecturers "rarely" and 5.3% "never" used learning models that provided experiential learning opportunities involving external stakeholders. Furthermore, 30.2% indicated that their lecturers "rarely" and 9.1% "never" invited external parties to participate as part of the students' learning experience. According to the lecturer, 45.5% "rarely" and 22.7% "never". These findings suggest that contextual learning sources remain underutilized in PKn instruction. This is despite the well-established belief that contextualized learning facilitates

more meaningful comprehension of abstract concepts. Table 3 presents a summary of the questionnaire findings.

Table 3. Summary of Key Questionnaire Responses on Contextual and Experiential Learning

Question Item	Response Option	Lecturers (n=22)	Students (n=451)
The lecturer uses learning models integrating out-of-classroom concepts	Rarely	9 (40.9%)	194 (43.0%)
	Never	2 (9.1%)	7 (1.6%)
The lecturer uses models enabling interaction with practitioners or the community.	Rarely	7 (31.8%)	235 (52.1%)
	Never	5 (22.7%)	43 (9.5%)
The lecturer invites external stakeholders as part of the learning experience.	Rarely	10 (45.5%)	136 (30.2%)
	Never	5 (22.7%)	41 (9.1%)

Contextualizing instructional content is a critical principle of contemporary education, especially in value-based courses like Civic Education. Kolb's experiential learning theory [17] posits that meaningful learning occurs when learners are actively involved in direct experience, followed by reflection and real-world application. Kolb further asserts that learning is central to human adaptation, indicating that learning is not confined to the classroom but occurs in all facets of human life, from schools to workplaces, and from laboratories to meeting rooms. Therefore, learning resources must extend beyond textbooks and lecture slides to include social phenomena, lived experiences, and environmental interactions. Current higher education curricula also explicitly encourage the expansion of learning sources beyond classroom settings through pedagogical models such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, entrepreneurship activities, and internships in off-campus institutions. This pedagogical shift aligns with the demands of 21st-century skills. As Trilling and Fadel [18] assert, individuals in the 21st century must possess diverse competencies, including life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information, media, and technology literacy. Consequently, educational design must be oriented toward producing graduates who meet these competencies and can compete effectively in the global landscape.

D. Assignments that inadequately stimulate students' active participation

Assignments in Civic Education courses should ideally foster students' engagement in real-life experiences, enhance critical thinking skills, and strengthen their sense of social responsibility. However, observations indicate that most of the assignments in the classes studied remain predominantly textual and report-oriented, with limited opportunities for students to participate in meaningful social action. For example, History Education and Public Health classes primarily assigned students to produce written papers for group discussion. These assignments were text-based principally and did not include instructions for students to interact with real-world environments or community contexts. *"Students worked in groups, but only to summarize theories and readings, not going beyond what was already on the slides."* The

lack of field-oriented or investigative components limited opportunities for applied civics learning.

Economics Education demonstrated a more limited approach, *“with instruction being entirely lecture-based and lacking exploratory or project-based assignments.”* In contrast, Indonesian Language Education and Civics Education classes introduced more expressive and creative assignment formats, such as video projects and podcasts. *“These assignments allowed students to engage with social issues through media production.”* Law assigned students to analyze legal cases, theoretically connecting the curriculum to social reality. However, *“students were not instructed to validate their findings through direct engagement with affected individuals or primary sources.”* Accounting initially attempted to implement project-based learning; However, *“the learning lacked structure, clarity, and adequate follow-up mechanisms.”* Only the Bilingual Information Systems class demonstrated initiatives toward participatory and context-based learning. *“Lecturers encouraged students to connect their coursework to social issues. However, this intention was not routinely translated into structured community interaction assignments.”*

Supporting these qualitative findings, quantitative data from lecturer questionnaires showed that 22.7% of lecturers “rarely” and 27.3% “never” assigned students to collaborate with external parties (e.g., practitioners, private sectors, or communities) as part of their group assignments. Additionally, 18.2% “rarely” and 9.1% “never” required students to design group projects related to course content. From the student perspective, 9.3% indicated real-world problem-based assignments were “rarely” given, and 2.9% stated they were “never” assigned. Furthermore, 9.8% of students reported that lecturers “rarely” and 2.9% “never” asked them to design a project connected to course topics collaboratively. These data explicitly reveal that current Civic Education assignments are often misaligned with the developmental needs of contemporary students and do not adequately cultivate the essential skills they require. Table 4 presents a summary of the questionnaire findings.

Table 4. Summary of Questionnaire Responses on Collaborative and Real-World Project Assignments

Question Item	Response Option	Lecturers (n=22)	Students (n=451)
Assign students to collaborate with external parties in group assignments	Rarely	5 (22.7%)	47 (10.4%)
	Never	6 (27.3%)	36 (8.0%)
Require students to design group projects related to the course content	Rarely	4 (18.2%)	42 (9.3%)
	Never	2 (9.1%)	13 (2.9%)
Ask students to design projects connected to course topics collaboratively.	Rarely	7 (31.8%)	44 (9.8%)
	Never	5 (22.7%)	13 (2.9%)

Assignments in Civic Education should go beyond assessing students' cognitive understanding. They must also be designed to build reflective, collaborative, and social skills while providing students with experiential opportunities that connect theoretical concepts to

real-life situations, making learning more contextual and meaningful. According to Silberman's concept of experiential learning [14], two core elements are essential: engaging learners in concrete activities that immerse them directly in the subject matter and offering opportunities for critical reflection on those activities. Through active participation and reflective processes, students can turn lived experiences into valuable learning resources and foundational insights for understanding civic issues.

Bloom [19] emphasized that affective and psychomotor domains in learning cannot be effectively developed through passive tasks such as papers or written reports alone. In the context of Civic Education, assignments must be both applicable and participatory, enabling students to internalize civic concepts through responsible and experiential practices. Project-based learning (PjBL) and problem-based learning (PBL) approaches have been shown to improve student engagement and reinforce conceptual understanding through direct action [20]. These assignments encourage collaboration, resource management, real-world problem solving, and reflection on process and outcomes. However, observations across eight classes suggest that assignments are still primarily dominated by papers, internal group discussions, and classroom presentations. Even in innovative assignments like video and podcast projects, students were not encouraged to engage with communities or address real social problems. As a result, the potential of Civic Education as a reflective and contributive learning platform remains underutilized.

The four themes discussed above reveal weaknesses in implementing Civic Education at the tertiary level and offer opportunities for developing more progressive, responsive, participatory, and collaborative instructional models. Models such as project-based learning (PjBL) and problem-based learning (PBL), which are designed to cultivate students' practical skills, can be further optimized in classroom implementation. Developing instructional models that integrate other approaches to foster collaboration and provide broader learning experiences presents a viable alternative for addressing the current challenges in Civic Education.

The simplest form of collaboration can be facilitated in classroom settings through group work strategies, allowing students to interact and cooperate in completing collective tasks. Educators can assign these groups to collaborate with external stakeholders beyond the classroom at a more advanced and complex level, enabling students to develop more diverse and transferable collaborative skills. Loes et al. [21] found that interactions during cooperative learning can promote cognitive development through socio-cognitive conflict and knowledge sharing. Real-life experiences gained through navigating group dynamics during collaboration better prepare students for future civic and professional life complexities.

The 21st century, often characterized as a knowledge-based society, demands that learners be prepared to navigate real-world complexities using knowledge competencies as tools for action. As Cho et al. [22] assert, students must be equipped to confront these challenges. However, a significant issue in current educational practice is that learning remains rooted in decontextualized knowledge, detached from real-world activity and relevance. Jonassen [23] argues that the problem-solving processes typically presented in formal education are overly structured, resembling logic-based word problems. At the same time, real-life issues are often far more complex, requiring comprehensive and multifaceted approaches. In this context, classroom learning models must be designed to provide students with direct opportunities to interact with their surrounding communities. Gredler [24] emphasizes that the meanings of previously acquired (textual) concepts can change when situated within real-world contexts; thus, learning must incorporate direct, contextualized experience to be meaningful.

Zaff et al. [25] further highlight that both in-school and out-of-school programs and experiences have been proven to support the development of multiple civic engagement components. Therefore, learning models that encourage collaborative problem-solving within real-life contexts are urgently needed. Civic Education at the higher education level must move beyond the confines of the classroom into the public sphere, transitioning from text to participation and from lectures to collaboration. Only by doing so can higher education meaningfully contribute to forming young citizens who are active, reflective, and socially responsible.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the implementation of Civic Education courses at Sriwijaya University has not yet fully reflected a collaborative and contextual learning approach as demanded by 21st-century education. Through classroom observations conducted in eight different classes and supported by questionnaire data, it was found that instructional practices remain primarily text-based, dominated by lectures, and lacking in active student engagement with real-life societal contexts. In general, students' collaborative competencies have not been comprehensively developed due to limited opportunities for interaction with external actors such as professionals, communities, or social institutions. Moreover, learning resources are still confined to lecture materials and internally sourced references, while the assigned tasks fail to stimulate students' creativity, social involvement, or contextually grounded critical thinking. These findings highlight the urgent need to transform Civic Education instruction in higher education by adopting more collaborative, participatory, and experiential learning approaches. Developing such models would strengthen the role of Civic Education as a platform for character building, the internalization of national values, and the cultivation of

students' competencies in navigating complex social, political, and cultural dynamics in the era of globalization. Ultimately, this transformation is essential for fostering smart and good citizenship.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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