

Pedagogical innovations and structural barriers in cultivating participatory civic skills in Indonesian higher education

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Abstract

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature on cultivating participatory civic skills in higher education in the digital era. While the importance of such skills is widely acknowledged, little is known about how educators practically conceptualise and assess them. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research collected data through open-ended questionnaires completed by Civic Education lecturers from diverse higher education institutions across Indonesia. The data were analysed using reflective thematic analysis. The findings show that lecturers demonstrate a robust theoretical understanding of participatory civic skills; this conceptual grasp does not systematically translate into assessment practices that effectively measure participatory learning outcomes. Although pedagogical innovations such as project-based learning and digital platform integration are being adopted to create more authentic learning experiences, their implementation is hindered by structural barriers. These include excessive administrative workloads, inflexible curricula, and inadequate technological infrastructure. Theoretically, this study contributes by highlighting the critical disconnect between pedagogical theory and assessment praxis in civic education. In practice, it underscores that fostering participatory skills necessitates not only classroom-level innovation but also institutional reforms, specifically rationalising workloads, increasing curricular flexibility, and developing authentic assessment models tailored for digital-era civic learning.

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Introduction

Digital environments increasingly shape Indonesia's democratic landscape. The rapid expansion of internet access, particularly among young people and university students, has transformed digital media into a central arena for social interaction and political expression. National data indicate that students are among the most active internet users in Indonesia, with social media platforms playing a dominant role in everyday communication (APJII, 2023).



However, the growth of digital connectivity has not been accompanied by a proportional strengthening of democratic participation. Recent assessments continue to classify Indonesia as a Partly Free democracy, reflecting persistent challenges related to civil liberties and political rights (Freedom House, 2023). In practice, digital participation often takes the form of brief, individualised, and low-commitment engagement, offering limited opportunities for sustained deliberation or collective action (Cin et al., 2025; Giugni & Grasso, 2025).

The problem in this context is that the quality of Indonesia's digital democracy depends not only on technological infrastructure but, more fundamentally, on its citizens' civic capacity, particularly participatory citizenship skills. Research in civic education consistently emphasises that the quality of democracy depends not only on access to information and channels of participation, but also on citizens' ability to engage critically, ethically, and responsibly in public life (Hoskins & Crick, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). In the digital context, these skills include the ability to assess the credibility of information, articulate arguments coherently, and engage constructively on mediated public discussion platforms (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013; Pangrazio et al., 2023). Without these skills, digital participation in Indonesia risks remaining superficial and disconnected from constitutionally protected democratic practices.

In addressing this challenge, higher education, specifically Civic Education courses, plays a strategic role. Pedagogically, Civic Education in higher education is expected to go beyond the transmission of normative knowledge and serve as a space for democratic learning, where students practice dialogue, critical reflection, and public engagement (Biesta, 2022; Priestley et al., 2015). Such an orientation positions civic education as a formative process that prepares students to navigate complex social and political issues, including those emerging in digital public spheres (Spaltani, 2022).

However, this transition from a normative function to a strategic role faces significant obstacles. Empirical studies show that university-level civics is often still dominated by a transmissive teaching approach and a content-intensive curriculum, with limited opportunities for participatory, deliberative, and hands-on learning (Hoskins et al., 2008; Knowles & Suganda, 2023). As a result, civic learning may produce forms of citizenship that are compliant and reactive rather than critical and participatory, corresponding to Kahne et al. (2016) and Sunarso et al. (2024) describe as "thin" citizenship. In digitally mediated environments where students encounter disinformation, polarisation, and ethical dilemmas, such limitations become increasingly consequential.

Theoretically, participatory skills have long been recognised as a core dimension of civic competence. The tripartite framework of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions, articulated by Branson and institutionalised through the Crick Report, emphasises the interdependence of these components in democratic education (Crick, 1998; Habermas, 1999). This framework is strengthened by the concept of critical digital citizenship, which emphasises critical digital literacy, ethical engagement, and awareness of power relations in digital platforms (Hidayah et al., 2022; Ihsan et al., 2025; Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013).

The synthesis of these two frameworks provides a powerful conceptual lens for analysing efforts to foster participatory skills in the digital age. However, implementing these frameworks does not occur in a pedagogical vacuum. Teaching practices are shaped by institutional governance, curriculum regulations, assessment regimes, and the administrative demands that shape academic work. Moreover, Patrick (2002) distinguished participatory civic skills as the capacities that enable citizens to engage actively in public decision-making and collective problem-solving. As civic participation increasingly unfolds in digital spaces, these frameworks have been extended through the concept of critical digital citizenship, which foregrounds critical digital literacy, ethical engagement, and awareness of power relations embedded in digital platforms.

Despite their conceptual robustness, these frameworks are not implemented within neutral or frictionless educational environments. Pedagogical practices are shaped by institutional governance, curriculum regulation, assessment regimes, and administrative demands that structure academic work (Fullan, 2019; Pradana & Sundawa, 2023). Studies in higher education governance show that the growing emphasis on accountability and audit-based performance measurement can constrain pedagogical innovation, as academic work is increasingly evaluated through administrative indicators rather than the quality of teaching and learning processes (Rizalia et al., 2025; Shore & Wright, 2015). In Indonesia, these pressures intersect with structural inequalities in institutional resources and digital infrastructure across regions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Sundawa & Dahliyana, 2022). Therefore, understanding civics pedagogy in the digital era requires an analysis that aligns the dimensions of lecturer agency with the structural constraints that frame it.

A review of the literature points to three interrelated gaps. *First*, while civic education research offers rich normative and conceptual discussions, empirical studies examining how lecturers design and enact participatory civic learning, particularly in digitally mediated contexts, remain limited (Knowles & Suganda, 2023). *Second*, pedagogical innovation is often discussed at the level of classroom techniques, without adequate attention to the structural conditions that shape its sustainability, even though educational change is tied to the interaction between agency and structure (Insani et al., 2025; Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). *Third*, the experience of lecturers as key actors in implementing Civic Education in higher education remains underrepresented in studies that focus on students or policy frameworks.

Responding to these gaps, this study uniquely adopts a phenomenological approach to investigate how Civic Education lecturers at Indonesian universities experience and interpret their efforts in fostering students' participatory citizenship skills in the digital age. Unlike previous research that often focuses on student learning outcomes or policy evaluations, this phenomenological approach centres the lived experiences of lecturers as subjects actively navigating pedagogical demands and structural constraints. Thus, this study not only makes an empirical contribution to digital citizenship pedagogy from a Global South perspective but also highlights the conditions necessary to support more substantive and sustainable forms of citizenship learning in Indonesian higher education.

Method

This study used a qualitative research design informed by transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of Civic Education lecturers in cultivating participatory civic skills in digital learning contexts. A phenomenological approach was adopted to capture how lecturers interpret, enact, and give meaning to their pedagogical practices within everyday institutional settings (Duarte et al., 2013; Hess & McAvoy, 2014).

Participants were 18 civic education lecturers selected through purposive maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002). This strategy aimed to reflect diversity across institutional types (public and private universities) and geographical regions in Indonesia, including Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and selected provinces in Eastern Indonesia (Nusa Tenggara Timur and Nusa Tenggara Barat). The inclusion criteria were: (1) a minimum of three years' experience teaching undergraduate Civic Education courses; (2) evidence of using participatory or digitally mediated learning approaches; and (3) willingness to provide reflective written responses.

Data were collected asynchronously using a semi-structured, open-ended online questionnaire. This method was chosen to accommodate participants' professional schedules and to allow time for reflective responses, particularly given Indonesia's geographically dispersed higher education context. The questionnaire focused on three domains: lecturers' conceptual understanding of participatory civic skills, pedagogical strategies and digital integration, and perceived structural constraints affecting implementation.

Data analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). The analysis was supported by ATLAS.ti software (version 23) and proceeded through iterative stages of familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation. Throughout the process, the researcher engaged in reflexive analysis to examine assumptions and analytic decisions.

Trustworthiness was addressed through several strategies. Credibility was enhanced through limited member checking with selected participants. Transferability was supported by providing contextual descriptions of participants and institutional settings. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened by maintaining an audit trail documenting key analytical steps. Ethical principles were strictly observed. All participants provided informed consent electronically, anonymity was ensured with pseudonyms (D1–D18), and data were stored securely.

Results and Discussion

Lecturers' Understanding of Participatory Civic Skills

Thematic analysis of responses from Civic Education lecturers reveals a relatively consistent pattern in their understanding of participatory civic skills. Of the eighteen lecturers involved, most referred, explicitly or implicitly, to elements aligned with established civic competence frameworks that emphasise the integration of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions (Crick, 1998; Subkhan et al., 2023). This finding suggests that lecturers' interpretations are not situational or incidental but are grounded in long-standing conceptual traditions within civic education scholarship.

From the lecturers' perspectives, participation is not narrowly defined as formal involvement in political procedures or ceremonial activities. Instead, it is understood as the capacity to engage actively and responsibly in socio-political life, particularly through reflective dialogue and actions oriented toward the public good. Lecturer D15, for example, described participatory civic skills as the ability to "*engage in constructive dialogue and contribute to social change.*" Similarly, D2 emphasised "*responsible active engagement,*" while D4 highlighted "*awareness of how to participate effectively.*" These accounts suggest that lectures conceptualise participation as a normative and ethical civic practice rather than as merely instrumental involvement.

Analytically, these accounts indicate a shared understanding of participation as a normative and ethical civic practice rather than merely instrumental involvement. This suggests a shift from participation as activity toward participation as civic agency, requiring contextual judgment, critical awareness, and the capacity to navigate social differences. This orientation aligns with critical perspectives on democratic participation in civic education, which position citizens as reflective actors rather than passive participants within existing political structures (Mazid & Hidayah, 2024; Yosef-Hassidim, 2020).

Constructive dialogue emerges as a central element in lecturers' understanding of participatory civic skills. Dialogue is not regarded as a value-neutral exchange of opinions, but as a deliberative process that demands rational argumentation, active listening, and respect for divergent viewpoints. This emphasis reflects the adoption of deliberative democratic principles in civic education pedagogy. As demonstrated by Nurohmah (2025) structured discussions of public issues play a crucial role in fostering students' argumentative competence and democratic dispositions, such as tolerance and empathy.

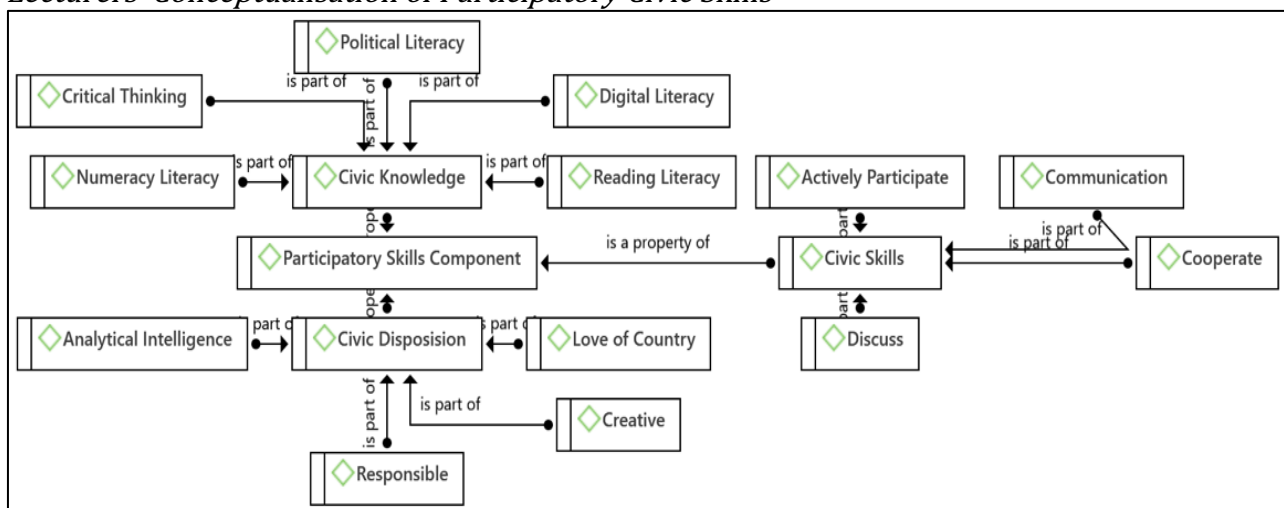
Further analysis shows that lecturers' conceptualisations converge across several theoretical traditions. The emphasis on civic knowledge aligns with civic literacy frameworks; the focus on dialogue resonates with deliberative democratic theory; and references to social change align with justice-oriented conceptions of citizenship. Rather than operating as separate frameworks, these perspectives intersect in practice, forming a unified understanding of

participatory civic skills as the integration of critical judgment, collaborative action, and ethical responsibility.

Further analysis indicates that constructive dialogue is understood as part of an integrated configuration of civic competence. The dimension of civic knowledge is evident in lecturers' emphasis on understanding citizens' rights and obligations, as well as mechanisms of participation within democratic systems. Civic skills are reflected in the importance placed on critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration, and leadership as prerequisites for meaningful public engagement. Meanwhile, civic dispositions are articulated through references to social responsibility, empathy, and orientation toward the common good. The integration of these three dimensions underscores that participatory civic skills are viewed as a holistic civic construct, rather than as a collection of discrete technical abilities (Abuzaid, 2025; Sharma et al., 2022).

This integrated understanding is illustrated in Figure 1, which positions constructive dialogue and engagement in social change as the core of participatory civic skills, supported by civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions as foundational elements. Pedagogically, this pattern indicates that lecturers possess a relatively mature understanding of the substantive aims of civic education. Their perspectives closely resemble the model of justice-oriented citizenship, which emphasises citizens' capacity to identify public problems and participate in efforts toward social transformation (Danke, 2023; Mazid et al., 2025).

Figure 1.
Lecturers' Conceptualisation of Participatory Civic Skills



Source: Data Analysis, 2025.

However, a notable contradiction arises between the lectures' conceptual understanding and their instructional implementation, particularly in assessment. Despite this conceptual strength, the findings indicate that this understanding is not fully translated into instructional practice, particularly in assessment. Only a small number of lecturers reported using assessment instruments specifically designed to evaluate students' participatory civic skills. Most continue to rely on written tests that are easier to administer and primarily measure civic knowledge. This indicates a structural misalignment between pedagogical intentions oriented toward meaningful participation and evaluative practices that remain cognitively focused. Rather than reflecting individual deficiencies, this gap suggests the influence of institutional assessment cultures that prioritise measurable cognitive outcomes over complex democratic competencies. Similar concerns have been raised by Retnasari et al. (2025) and Sunarso et al. (2024), who argue that civic education is often constrained by assessment approaches that oversimplify the complexity of democratic practice.

Taken together, these findings suggest that, for lecturers, participatory civic skills are conceptualised as an integrated form of civic agency rooted in deliberation, ethical

responsibility, and social transformation. At the same time, the persistence of conventional assessment practice highlights how institutional structures mediate pedagogical agency, indicating that participatory civic education must be understood not only as a pedagogical project but also as a governance issue shaped by broader structural logics. Therefore, the relationship between pedagogical agency and structural governance emerges as a key explanatory lens for understanding the development of participatory civic skills in contemporary civic education.

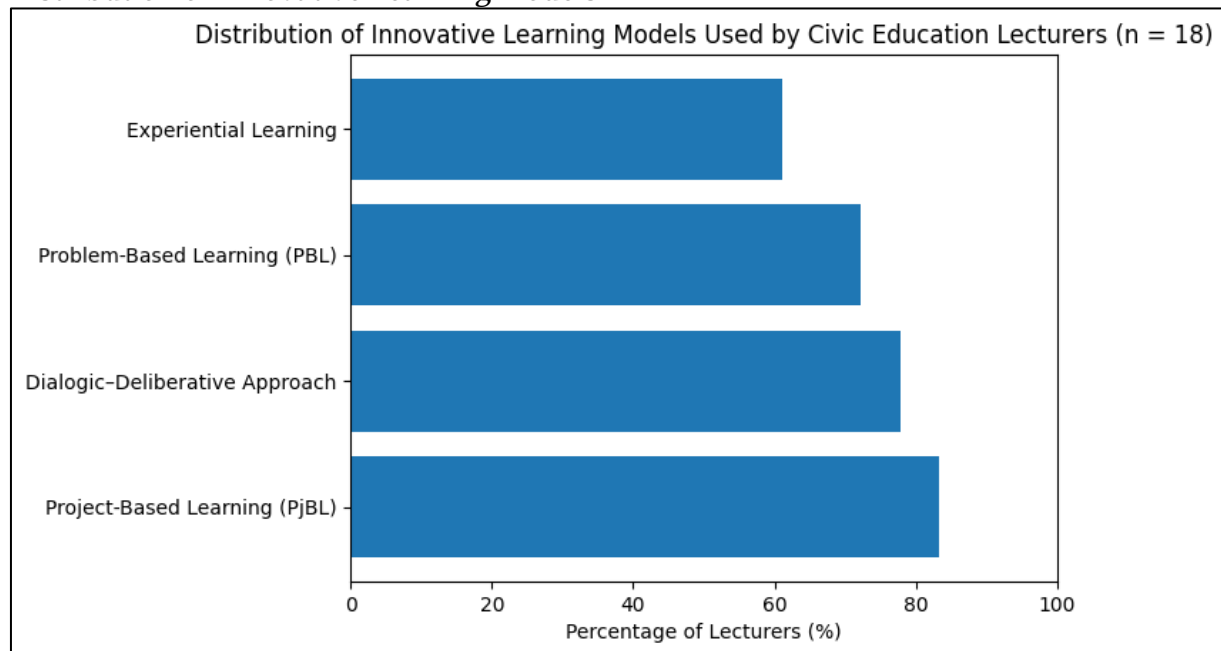
Pedagogical Innovation and Digital Integration in Civic Education Learning

Lecturers' understanding of participatory civic skills is not confined to the conceptual level but is articulated in concrete pedagogical practices that prioritise active student engagement. The findings indicate a clear shift away from lecture-dominated instruction toward learning strategies that position students as civic actors rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Of the 18 Civic Education lecturers involved, 15 (83.3%) reported employing project-based and problem-based learning, while 14 lecturers (77.8%) consistently incorporated dialogic–deliberative approaches into their course design. These figures indicate not merely methodological variation but a broader pedagogical reorientation toward experiential and participatory models of civic learning.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Civic Education lecturers do not rely on a single pedagogical model. Instead, they combine multiple approaches that complement one another. The integration of problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL), as practised by D10 and D11, creates a coherent learning trajectory that begins with the identification of public issues, proceeds through social problem analysis, and culminates in the development of solutions or civic products. D10, for example, explained that they “*use PBL for problem analysis and PjBL to produce tangible outcomes.*” At the same time, D11 emphasised that both approaches are oriented toward “*concrete action, particularly in relation to local environmental issues.*”

Figure 2.

Distribution of Innovative Learning Models



Source: Data Analysis, 2025.

Analytically, this pedagogical pattern reflects the convergence of action civics, experiential learning, and deliberative democratic traditions, suggesting that lecturers integrate multiple pedagogical logics simultaneously rather than adopting a single instructional paradigm.

This pedagogical pattern reflects an *action civics* orientation that places students' direct engagement with social issues at the centre of civic learning. The connection between public issue analysis and social action has been shown to foster students' sense of civic efficacy (Japar et al., 2022). In this study, PBL and PjBL function not merely as instructional techniques but as pedagogical frameworks that bridge civic knowledge with participatory practice. This finding aligns with Nurjanah et al. (2024) evidence on the effectiveness of project-based learning in developing higher-order thinking skills. It is further supported by Insani et al. (2025) and Sakban and Sundawa (2023), who argue that PjBL in Civic Education strengthens students' civic agency. Normatively, these approaches resonate with the notion of *justice-oriented citizenship*, which emphasises critical engagement with public problems.

Beyond project- and problem-based learning, the widespread use of dialogic–deliberative approaches demonstrates lecturers' efforts to position the Civic Education classroom as a space for democratic practice. D6 highlighted the importance of students' direct experience in "*organising collective activities*," while D16 described structured debates as a "*means of strengthening participatory skills*." Such practices reflect deliberative democratic principles that foreground reasoned argumentation and reflective dialogue as the basis for collective judgment. Empirical research similarly shows that structured discussion of controversial public issues contributes to the development of democratic dispositions, including openness, tolerance, and the ability to manage disagreement (Retnasari et al., 2025). This suggests that dialogic practices function not only as communication exercises but as mechanisms through which students rehearse democratic reasoning and collective decision-making.

Alongside pedagogical innovation, the findings also highlight the strategic use of digital technologies in Civic Education learning. Lecturers do not treat digital tools merely as administrative supports but as media for civic expression, deliberative engagement, and reflective learning. Thematic analysis identified three primary civic functions of digital platforms in participatory Civic Education, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.

Functions of Digital Platforms in Participatory Civic Education

No	Digital Platform	Description	Illustrative Use	Illustrative Evidence
1	Social media	Public expression and civic activism	Environmental issue campaigns on TikTok	"Instagram and TikTok are used to create videos promoting environmental change" (D5:12)
2	LMS	Structured deliberative space	Asynchronous discussion of Public Policy Cases	"The LMS is used for case-based discussion on political and social issues" (D9:16)
3	Youtube		Analysis of Political Content for Discussion	"YouTube is used as an additional reference for civic knowledge" (D3:14)

Source: Data Analysis, 2025.

These findings indicate that lecturers consciously differentiate the pedagogical functions of each digital platform. Social media serves as a public space for civic expression, particularly through issue-based campaigns addressing social and environmental concerns. Through such assignments, students are encouraged to communicate civic messages to real audiences, extending learning beyond classroom simulations. This indicates a shift from simulated participation toward mediated public engagement, where students experience civic communication within authentic digital environments. This practice aligns with the concept of

participatory culture, in which young people act as producers of public messages rather than passive consumers of information (Nurjanah et al., 2024). At the same time, such forms of participation require strong critical digital literacy to avoid remaining at the level of superficial or symbolic expression.

In contrast, learning management systems (LMS) serve as more structured and relatively protected deliberative spaces. These platforms support asynchronous discussion, written reflection, and the development of digital portfolios. This functional differentiation reflects lecturers' awareness of the importance of pedagogical scaffolding, providing stages that allow students to develop arguments and reflective capacities before engaging in more open and contested digital public spaces.

However, the integration of digital technologies also reveals important contradictions. While digital platforms expand opportunities for participation, they may simultaneously encourage performative engagement in which visibility outweighs critical depth. The integration of digital technologies also expands learning spaces from the physical classroom into hybrid environments that blur the boundaries between academic and public spheres. Such expansion creates opportunities for authentic civic learning, in which students interact directly with real issues and audiences (Bria & Lam, 2022).

The findings further suggest that increased participation does not automatically translate into meaningful deliberation; unequal access, varying levels of digital literacy, and platform logics may reproduce existing inequalities and limit substantive engagement. These dynamics echo Pangrazio et al. (2023) critique of technological solutionism in digital civic education.

From a theoretical perspective, these results show that pedagogical innovation in civic education operates within a dynamic interplay between pedagogical agency and digital infrastructure. Lecturers strategically adapt pedagogical models to digital contexts, yet the affordances and constraints of platforms shape the depth and quality of participation that can emerge. This insight positions participatory civic learning as a socio-technical process rather than solely a pedagogical design issue, contributing to broader debates on democratic education in digitally mediated environments.

Furthermore, the persistence of structural limitations—such as infrastructure disparities, institutional evaluation systems, and accountability pressures—suggests that pedagogical innovation is mediated by governance logics characteristic of contemporary higher education. In this sense, the challenges identified here resonate with discussions on performativity and audit culture, where measurable outputs may constrain the cultivation of complex democratic competencies.

Taken together, the findings indicate that Civics lecturers have developed innovative and responsive learning practices in the digital context by integrating projects, problem-solving, deliberative dialogue, and digital platforms. However, the effectiveness of these innovations remains conditioned by structural constraints that extend beyond individual pedagogy.

Accordingly, the transformation of civic education requires not only pedagogical innovation but also systemic reconsideration of institutional structures that shape how participatory citizenship is taught, assessed, and valued within higher education.

Structural Constraints in the Transformation of Civic Education Learning

Although Civic Education lecturers have developed various participatory learning practices and strategically integrated digital technologies into their courses, implementing these innovations occurs within structural conditions that do not yet fully support pedagogical transformation. The findings show that 16 of the 18 lecturers (88.9%) experience systemic constraints that limit their pedagogical agency. Rather than isolated barriers, these constraints operate as an interconnected ecosystem that collectively shapes teaching practices.

Thematic analysis identified four interrelated dimensions: administrative workload, curriculum rigidity, technological limitations, and assessment systems in Table 2.

Table 2.

Structural Constraints Affecting Participatory Civic Education Pedagogy

No	Type of Constraint	Observed Features	Pedagogical Implications	Illustrative Evidence
1	Administrative workload	An average of 22–35 hours per week devoted to non-academic tasks; dominance of audit culture in performance evaluation	Reduced time for designing complex learning; innovation perceived as an additional burden	<i>“I spend more time completing administrative tasks than accompanying students in discussion” (D7)</i>
2	Curriculum rigidity	Content-heavy national curriculum with minimal flexibility; excessive standardization limits contextualization	Learning becomes coverage-oriented; limited responsiveness to contemporary socio-political issues	<i>“Learning must be relevant to current social, political, and cultural developments” (D12;7)</i>
3	Technological limitations	Unequal infrastructure across regions; uneven digital literacy among lecturers and students	Digital innovation deepens inequality; lecturers must act as both educators and technicians	<i>“Students at regional campuses often cannot join online discussions due to infrastructure constraints” (D9)</i>
4	Assessment system	Dominance of cognitive testing; limited instruments to assess participatory skills	Teaching to the test; reduction of pedagogical complexity	<i>“How do we assess empathy in online discussion? The system only recognizes numerical scores” (D6)</i>

Source: Data Analysis, 2025.

These findings suggest that obstacles to participatory civic education are primarily structural rather than individual. Participatory innovations are enacted within institutional frameworks still governed by conventional administrative, curricular, and evaluative logics. This aligns with higher education scholarship emphasising that pedagogical practice is deeply influenced by institutional ecosystems (Biesta, 2022; Roberts, 2024)

At the administrative level, the dominance of accountability systems reflects what higher education research describes as audit-oriented governance. Research by Shore and Wright (2015) argues that excessive audit regimes tend to redirect academic labour away from pedagogical development toward compliance with administrative indicators. The present findings corroborate this tendency in the context of Civic Education, where lecturers’ time and

energy are disproportionately absorbed by reporting requirements rather than by the design of participatory learning that demands sustained mentoring and reflection. This indicates a tension between institutional demands for measurable accountability and pedagogical approaches that require time-intensive dialogue, mentoring, and reflection. As a result, civic education risks becoming procedural rather than transformative.

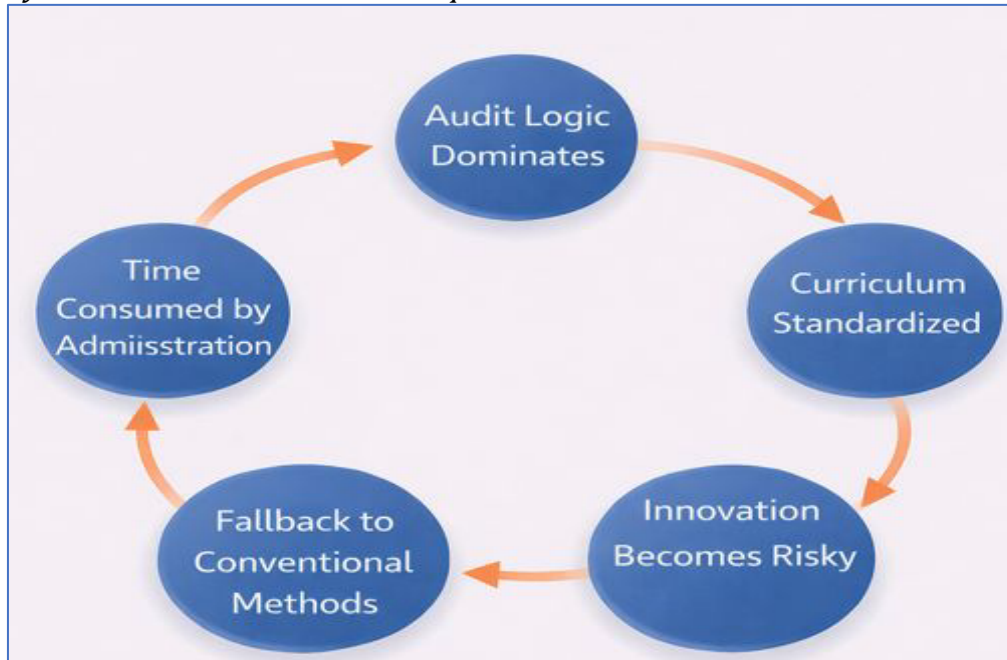
At the curricular level, rigid and content-heavy structures limit responsiveness to contemporary socio-political issues. This suggests that curriculum standardisation not only narrows content flexibility but also constrains lecturers' ability to facilitate context-sensitive civic engagement. Such rigidity undermines participatory civic skills that depend on critical discussion and real-world relevance (Komalasari et al., 2024).

Technological constraints further complicate innovation. Unequal infrastructure and uneven digital literacy create differentiated learning experiences across institutions. Digital integration, therefore, functions simultaneously as an enabling mechanism and a source of inequality, challenging optimistic assumptions about technology-driven transformation. This finding resonates with scholarship emphasising that digital participation depends not only on technological access but also on institutional pedagogical capacity (Dahliyana et al., 2024; Ester et al., 2024).

Further analysis reveals a circular pattern of constraint reproduction (Figure 3). Audit pressures intensify administrative workload, encourage curriculum standardisation, and discourage pedagogical risk-taking, ultimately reinforcing conventional teaching practices. This pattern can be interpreted through institutional governance perspectives, where performativity and efficiency logics shape pedagogical possibilities by privileging measurable outputs over complex democratic learning processes.

Figure 3.

Cycle of Structural Constraint Reproduction



Source: Data Analysis, 2025.

Despite these limitations, lecturers demonstrate agency through adaptive strategies, including micro-innovations, selective curricular flexibility, and informal practitioner networks. These practices illustrate that agency is enacted through negotiation with structural conditions rather than complete autonomy from them.

Taken together, the findings reconceptualise participatory civic education as a dynamic interaction between pedagogical agency and institutional governance. While lecturers actively

pursue innovative civic learning, structural configurations determine the extent to which such innovation can be sustained and scaled. This shifts the analysis from individual pedagogical competence toward a systemic perspective, positioning civic education transformation as an institutional and policy issue as much as a pedagogical one.

Viewed alongside the preceding discussion on pedagogical innovation and digital integration, the findings suggest that the central challenge in transforming Civic Education lies in balancing lecturers' agency with institutional structures that simultaneously enable and constrain practice. Accordingly, the following section synthesises the study's conclusions and implications for theory, pedagogy, and policy to strengthen civic education in Indonesian higher education. This study, therefore, contributes to ongoing global debates on democratic education by showing how pedagogical agency is co-constructed within institutional governance structures.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the development of participatory civic skills in Civic Education courses in Indonesian higher education is supported by lecturers' strong conceptual understanding and the adoption of innovative pedagogical practices, including project-based learning, deliberative dialogue, and the integration of digital technologies. However, the findings show that the implementation of these innovations remains constrained by structural factors, including administrative workloads, curriculum rigidity, unequal access to digital infrastructure, and assessment systems that are not fully aligned with participatory learning goals. These results indicate that the transformation of Civic Education cannot rely solely on individual pedagogical initiatives but requires institutional support and systemic alignment. The study highlights the importance of understanding participatory civic learning as a dynamic interaction between lecturers' pedagogical agency and structural conditions within higher education governance. Pedagogically, the findings emphasise the need for learning designs and assessment approaches that capture participatory processes, dialogue, and reflective engagement. At the policy level, reducing administrative burdens, increasing curricular flexibility, and strengthening technological and pedagogical support are essential to enable Civic Education to contribute more effectively to the development of critical, participatory, and responsible citizens in the context of digital democracy.

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The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest.

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Ethics Approval

The study employed an anonymous, open-ended questionnaire involving university lecturers and focused exclusively on professional teaching practices. No sensitive personal data or identifying information was collected. In accordance with Indonesian national research ethics guidelines and relevant institutional policies, this study was exempt from formal ethics

committee review. All participants provided informed electronic consent after receiving clear information regarding the study's purpose and data management procedures.

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