

Enhancing civic intellectual and participation skills through interactive learning strategies

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Abstract

Interactive learning strategies are increasingly recognised as central to civic education, yet their contribution to civic intellectual and participation skills remains underexplored. This article examines how interactive learning strategies enhance university students' civic intellectual and participation skills in an Indonesian higher education setting. Using a qualitative, single instrumental case study design, the study gathered data through participant observation, semi-structured interviews and documentation involving one lecturer and five students at a state Islamic university in Jakarta, and analysed them using Miles, Huberman and Saldaña's interactive model of data analysis. The findings show that interactive learning strategies foster active, meaningful and enjoyable learning by shifting students from passive recipients to active participants, thereby strengthening civic intellectual skills such as critical thinking, analysis and argumentation, alongside civic participation skills including collaboration, communication and democratic engagement. Unlike previous studies that emphasise the acquisition of civic knowledge alone, this article demonstrates that interactive strategies simultaneously cultivate the intellectual and participatory dimensions of civic skills. The findings contribute to civic education pedagogy by offering an empirically grounded account of how interactive learning translates into meaningful civic competence, with implications for curriculum design and lecturer training in higher education.

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Introduction

In the contemporary era, learning is increasingly framed by an educational paradigm that focuses on enhancing digital skills and literacy to prepare students for the information age, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0 (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022; Purwanto et al., 2023). Twenty-first-century learning aims to develop lifelong learners with strong metacognitive skills, deep conceptual understanding and adaptability to change



(Grokholskyi et al., 2020). Civic skills are essential for fostering public participation, democracy, social cohesion and civic education itself (Ernita & Suyato, 2026; Mavalvala, 2024).

Civic Education (CE) is a compulsory subject in Indonesian universities and is therefore not merely a matter of theoretical memorisation. Broadly speaking, CE educates citizens to live responsibly in society, the nation and the state (Mickovska-Raleva, 2019; Nurdin, 2015). In the learning process, CE helps to foster smart and good citizenship (Martelli, 2017; Prasetyo et al., 2025), and through it citizens learn the goals and direction of the nation (Suyato et al., 2024). Civic skills are vital in preparing young citizens to face complex and dynamic challenges, as well as the educational challenges of globalisation. These skills include civic intellectual and participation skills (Adha et al., 2018; Oluwagbohunmi & Alonge, 2023).

These skills support problem-solving (Wong, 2020). Intellectual skills involve the ability to analyse information (Tursynkulova et al., 2023), which individuals need in order to construct rational arguments and make reasoned decisions (Chung et al., 2022). Active and effective participation, moreover, requires mental readiness, concrete action and environmental support (Mulia et al., 2025). Individuals need these skills to function as citizens in democratic societies (Afifah & Mukhlis, 2024), and the skills can deepen their understanding of relevant public, economic and political issues (Grad & Van Der Zande, 2022). They are crucial to sustaining democracy and national progress amid global challenges and digitalisation (De Carvalho et al., 2025), and strengthening them is therefore essential in shaping future generations. Traditional learning that focuses solely on civic knowledge while neglecting civic intellectual and participation skills hinders this goal (Nababan et al., 2025). To build these skills, schools and higher education institutions have adopted interactive learning strategies.

One of the main benefits of interactive learning strategies is that they increase student engagement, motivation and learning outcomes through two-way communication and active participation (Franklin & Harrington, 2019; Tholibon et al., 2022). Through such strategies, students not only understand theories of diversity but also practise direct interaction, build empathy and break down prejudice (Chen, 2024; Sierra-Huedo et al., 2024). Interactive learning strategies also enable students to apply civic knowledge and skills to current real-world issues such as social inequality, intercultural conflict and climate change (Booth, 2021).

Interactive learning strategies aim to increase active engagement, conceptual understanding and motivation to learn, to build critical and independent thinking skills and to create multidirectional communication (Baharudin et al., 2024; Fitria & Umam, 2024). They emphasise the importance of students' skills in participation, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity (Adeoye et al., 2024; Fauziah, 2025). They enable students to apply their knowledge and skills to social, environmental and educational issues (Blyznyuk & Kachak, 2024), and help them to develop scientific abilities through exploration, observation and experimentation (Resvania et al., 2025).

In civic education, interactive learning strategies provide opportunities for students to participate actively (Omojemite, 2025; Siregar, 2024). Through interactive learning, students learn to respect differences of opinion, work in teams and achieve a deeper understanding of complex civic issues (Daryanes et al., 2023). Such strategies enable students to participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning (Zitha et al., 2023), enrich the learning experience, provide broad access to resources and facilitate adaptive learning (Aggarwal et al., 2024).

One way of identifying learning strategies that enhance civic intellectual and participation skills is to investigate the learning process itself. Various learning strategies continue to be developed for this purpose. Examining the relationship between learning strategies and these skills is an effort to understand the learning approaches capable of fostering them, without restricting the analysis to any single strategy, since diverse and flexible strategies are required to meet students' varied needs (El Galad et al., 2024).

Research on interactive learning strategies for enhancing civic intellectual and participation skills is important, given its relevance to current demands, its impact on education, its potential to open avenues for further research, its broadening of perspectives and its bearing on educational quality. Several studies have examined interactive learning strategies in this regard. Hidayat et al. (2021), for example, found that interactive learning strategies can increase students' active participation, engaging their thinking, sight, hearing and psychomotor skills. Senthamarai (2018) showed that such strategies make students more engaged, better able to retain information and more satisfied with the learning experience. Lukita et al. (2017) found that interactive learning stimulates students' critical thinking and awareness and encourages them to take responsibility for their learning, while Omojemite (2025) found that interactive learning significantly improves students' academic achievement.

However, existing research has not yet examined the application of interactive learning strategies to enhance university students' civic intellectual and participation skills. This study therefore addresses the following question: how do interactive learning strategies enhance students' civic intellectual and participation skills?

Method

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive case study design (Yin, 2019). The case study approach was used to provide an overview of students' understanding of civic intellectual and participation skills and of interactive learning strategies. Specifically, a single instrumental case study design was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of university students' civic intellectual and participation skills through the implementation of interactive learning strategies (Creswell, 2022). Participants were selected according to four criteria: setting, actors, events and process. The setting criterion refers to the research location; the actors criterion refers to the lecturer and students at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta in the 2024–2025 academic year; the events criterion refers to the interactive learning process in Civic Education designed to enhance civic intellectual and participation skills; and the process criterion refers to the interview stages through which the researchers elicited participants' opinions and perspectives on their experiences and understanding of the research issue. Participants were selected on the basis of their understanding of, and ongoing engagement with, the topic. The study involved one lecturer and five students. To uphold research ethics, participants were anonymised using codes: the lecturer (AR) and the students (AN, IP, RFN, AS and NK).

Data were collected through interviews, observation and documentation. The research began with observation of Civic Education learning activities during the second session, conducted through the researchers' direct monitoring of classroom activities. The resulting observations served as a guide for in-depth interviews. A semi-structured interview format was employed to explore openly various aspects of students' understanding of civic intellectual and participation skills and of interactive learning strategies, as well as their experience of implementing these strategies. The data were coded concurrently using open, axial and selective coding, with the aim of generating the key themes of the findings.

Documents were assessed on the basis of participant records and the results of the evaluation of the interactive learning strategy. The trustworthiness of the data was established through source triangulation and validation procedures. Triangulation involved comparing findings from interviews, observations and instructional documents to ensure consistency. Validation was conducted through member checking, thick description and an audit trail (establishing dependability and confirmability). Member checking was carried out at the conclusion of the analysis by verifying the findings with two key informants who are experts in learning and civic education.

The data were analysed using Miles et al.'s (2014) interactive model. First, the data were reduced by selecting, focusing, simplifying and transforming the raw field notes into a

structured format. Second, the data were displayed as patterns and narratives integrating the information gathered. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the displayed data and identifying meanings, patterns, explanations and causal flows.

Results and Discussion

Interactive Learning Strategies Create Active, Meaningful, and Enjoyable Learning

In an interview, the Civic Education lecturer, AR, explained: "Interactive learning strategies are crucial in the civics education learning process, which must provide active, meaningful, and enjoyable learning. These steps include preparation, then revealing students' prior knowledge of the topic to be studied, exploring students' basic knowledge of the topic to be studied, exploring activities, asking questions, investigating, gaining final knowledge, and reflecting." Ningsih (2023) identifies the advantages of interactive learning strategies as encouraging active inclusion; utilising multimedia and advanced technology; encouraging teamwork and peer learning; providing illustrations and practical applications; providing formative assessment; developing a conducive learning environment; personalising educational experiences; and setting clear goals and outcomes for the learning process.

This statement demonstrates that interactive learning strategies are implemented systematically and are aligned with the learning materials set out in the semester learning plan. In this way, lecturers can achieve the aim of improving students' civic intellectual and participation skills while creating a more active, meaningful and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. The lecturer further added: "Students will understand the material more easily because they can see, hear, and interact directly with the learning objects or simulations."

This explanation makes clear that the implementation of interactive learning strategies significantly enhances students' understanding of the learning material. This step aims to hone critical thinking skills and to foster active participation grounded in an in-depth understanding of the material.

The researchers' observations showed that interactive learning activities begin with preparation. The lecturer and students select and research background information on the topic and gather sources related to the material to be discussed. In the next stage, students attempt to articulate their prior knowledge of the topic, which the lecturer then explores. The lecturer subsequently explains the aspects of the topic to be examined, and students are encouraged to ask questions. All students are then supported in generating questions about the topic, and the lecturer and students select those to be answered through inquiry. The knowledge generated by each student or group is compiled and compared with their initial answers. In the final stage, the lecturer helps students to reflect.

Several students shared their experiences of interactive learning strategies. AN stated: "I was motivated to participate actively and have the courage to express my opinions" (Saya termotivasi berpartisipasi aktif dan berani menyampaikan pendapat). IP stated: "I am more confident in expressing opinions and answering questions" (Saya lebih percaya diri dalam mengemukakan pendapat dan menjawab pertanyaan). RFN stated: "I am motivated to exchange ideas" (Saya termotivasi bertukar gagasan). AS stated: "I take the initiative in formulating questions and seeking answers" (Saya berinisiatif merumuskan pertanyaan dan mencari jawaban). NK stated: "I am involved in discussions and problem-solving" (Saya terlibat dalam diskusi dan pemecahan masalah). These interview results indicate that interactive learning strategies foster active learning. As Senthamarai (2018) observes, interactive learning strategies involve both facilitators and students, encourage and expect students to participate, use questions to stimulate discussion, emphasise the value of answers, provide hands-on experience, engage students in learning, are designed to meet objectives, develop skills, accommodate a variety of learning styles, foster independent learning and use engaging, thoughtful learning aids.

The researchers' observations indicated that interactive learning strategies can create active, meaningful and enjoyable learning. The strategy shifts students' roles from passive recipients of information to active participants who construct their own understanding through social interaction, discussion and the application of concepts. It connects learning with real-life contexts, in-depth understanding and personal experience, and these interactions help students to associate new information with their prior knowledge. Furthermore, the strategy provides an enjoyable learning experience by engaging students actively, using digital technology and creating two-way dialogue between lecturers and students and among students, thus changing the dynamics of the classroom, increasing motivation and focus and facilitating conceptual understanding.

Interviews with several students indicated that interactive learning strategies link new material with prior experience, help students to understand the function and benefits of the material for their lives and enable them to apply what they have learned to solve problems. AN shared that, in this strategy, "The material was linked to real-life situations relevant to daily life" (materinya dikaitkan dengan situasi nyata kehidupan sehari-hari). According to IP, through this strategy, "I formulated questions and found the answers myself" (saya merumuskan pertanyaan dan menemukan jawabannya sendiri). RFN added, "With this strategy, I was able to enhance my in-depth understanding of the concepts" (Saya mampu meningkatkan pemahaman konsep secara mendalam). AS said, "I was able to answer questions by providing explanations, reasons, and logical arguments" (saya mampu menjawab pertanyaan dengan memberikan penjelasan, alasan, dan argumen logis). According to NK, the strategy "built my knowledge through group and class discussions" (membangun pengetahuan saya melalui diskusi kelompok dan kelas). Interactive learning creates meaningful learning by connecting new material to students' real experiences and contexts through two-way communication (Roldán et al., 2021). It facilitates the processes of assimilation and accommodation, enabling students to reconstruct their own knowledge independently (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

The lecturer, AR, also stated that "interactive learning strategies create enjoyable, lively, and not boring learning atmosphere". Why, then, is interactive learning perceived as enjoyable? According to the lecturer, the strategy (1) increases engagement, as students become more confident in expressing opinions and participating in discussions, making the class more dynamic and lively; (2) incorporates game-based learning, as interactive quizzes, simulations and interactive videos make complex material easier to understand and increase students' enthusiasm; (3) reduces boredom and tension, creating an enjoyable atmosphere that helps to increase motivation; (4) uses interactive digital media, as technologies such as digital whiteboards and educational applications allow students to interact directly with learning objects, enhancing creativity and information retention; and (5) creates a learning community, as interactive learning encourages collaboration among students, builds self-confidence and fosters healthy social interaction.

Interviews with students further revealed that the strategy made the "classroom atmosphere more dynamic and lively" (suasana kelas menjadi lebih dinamis dan hidup; AN). IP said that it "created a more cheerful classroom atmosphere—one that was neither overly pressured nor boring" (menciptakan suasana kelas yang lebih ceria, tidak terlalu menekan, dan tidak membosankan). RFN noted that it "eliminated boredom and reduced tension" (menghilangkan kebosanan, dan mengurangi ketegangan). For AS, the strategy "transformed the classroom atmosphere into one that was lively, engaging, and enjoyable" (mengubah suasana kelas lebih hidup dan tidak monoton, serta menggembirakan). NK added that it "fostered a classroom atmosphere that was fun, conducive, and supportive" (menciptakan suasana kelas yang menyenangkan, kondusif, dan suportif). Interactive learning is a way of organising students' cognitive activity in which teachers must facilitate comfortable learning for every student (Blyznyuk & Kachak, 2024). It counters boredom by motivating students to engage actively in discussion, question-and-answer sessions and direct participation. This

atmosphere stimulates curiosity, making learning enjoyable and the material easier to appreciate (Wati et al., 2024).

Enhancing Students' Civic Intellectual and Participation Skills Through Interactive Learning Strategies

Observations showed that the implementation of interactive learning strategies can improve students' civic intellectual and participation skills. The civic intellectual skills improved through the strategy include critical and analytical thinking, in-depth conceptual understanding and the ability to express opinions. The civic participation skills improved include active participation in discussions and group work, collaboration and empathy, and participation in democratic simulations.

The lecturer, AR, stated in an interview: "Interactive learning strategies in civic education have proven effective in improving students' civic intellectual and participatory skills. Improved civic intellectual skills through this strategy include critical thinking skills, problem analysis, and a deep understanding of democratic concepts. Meanwhile, civic participation skills improved through this strategy include participation skills, the ability to carry out obligations, communication skills, and leadership skills."

Students also described the impact of interactive learning strategies. AN stated, "I was able to participate in the learning process" (Saya mampu berpartisipasi dalam pembelajaran). IP said, "I was able to collaborate, participate, and communicate within both groups and the class" (Saya mampu berkolaborasi, berpartisipasi, dan berkomunikasi di dalam kelompok maupun kelas). RFN reported, "I was able to evaluate, compare, and integrate information" (Saya mampu mengevaluasi, membandingkan, dan mengintegrasikan informasi). AS said, "I was able to analyse arguments more deeply" (Saya mampu menganalisis argumen secara lebih mendalam), and NK stated, "I was able to engage both emotionally and cognitively" (Saya mampu terlibat secara emosional maupun pengetahuan).

Documentation in the form of photographs of learning activities and screenshots of students' quiz results supports the finding that interactive learning strategies can enhance students' intellectual and participatory skills. Interactive learning strategies transform civic skills in two main respects: first, by enhancing civic intellectual skills, namely decision-making, critical thinking and problem-solving (Nurma'ardi et al., 2025); and second, by developing civic participation skills, namely communication, collaboration, decision-making, active discussion of public issues, problem analysis, leadership, support and commitment, as well as mutual respect and understanding (Tavip & Muthali'in, 2023).

Discussion

The application of interactive learning strategies in civic education can provide conscious, meaningful and enjoyable learning, thereby enhancing students' civic intellectual and participation skills. As components of civic skills, civic intellectual and participation skills are integral to education, and mastering them prepares students for their future (Herlinawati et al., 2024; Jayadiputra et al., 2023). The findings show that interactive learning strategies are effective in enhancing civic intellectual skills, including the analysis of public issues, critical thinking, synthesis and evaluation, and civic participation skills, including active participation, skilled discussion and expression of opinion, collaboration and responsibility for learning. Applying these strategies can therefore increase students' knowledge, encourage the sharing of ideas and the consideration of diverse perspectives, and foster collaboration in an inclusive and heterogeneous environment. These findings are supported by previous research indicating that interactive learning strategies immerse students in authentic learning experiences, prepare them to meet the challenges of an ever-expanding world and enhance the skills essential in the contemporary era (Vu, 2025). Interactive learning strategies also reinforce tolerance, diversity and justice, which are civic virtues (Amin & Ritonga, 2024). In an increasingly interconnected

environment involving cross-functional teams, the communication and collaboration skills that these strategies develop are vital.

Previous research has shown that interactive learning strategies can enhance respect for diversity (Tutunaru, 2024). Discussion activities within these strategies can foster openness and enhance problem-solving skills. The strategies also enable students to tackle complex challenges in groups, value each individual's contribution and achieve better results. This conclusion is supported by previous findings that interactive learning strategies increase student participation (Sinaga, 2024). Appropriate teaching strategies must be based on learning objectives, and a combination of strategies can be used to create a holistic and effective learning experience (Zha & Liu, 2023). Learning strategies comprise planned activities, comprehensive approaches and systematic procedures chosen by lecturers to facilitate learning and achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently, including methods, techniques and materials tailored to students' characteristics (Romero et al., 2017).

In interactive learning strategies, the lecturer's role is crucial and encompasses a range of supporting activities. Lecturers act as facilitators, encouraging interaction and collaboration among students. They provide direction and guidance, organise group activities and facilitate discussions that encourage the exchange of ideas and problem-solving. They also offer individual and group guidance and constructive feedback to help students enhance their civic intellectual and participation skills effectively. With the active involvement of lecturers, students feel well supported and receive the guidance they need to succeed. Civic education can thus enhance civic skills – communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity, which are inherent in civic intellectual and participation skills – through interactive learning strategies. These results support previous findings that interactive learning strategies can foster interactive classrooms (Lin et al., 2025) and increase student engagement (Ullah & Anwar, 2020). Through such strategies, students can apply intellectual and participation skills in relevant contexts and connect course material to real-world situations. Previous research has found that interactive learning strategies not only help students to acquire new knowledge but also enhance civic skills and prepare them for future challenges (Cheung et al., 2021), enriching the learning experience and improving learning outcomes (Chen, 2024). As the choice of learning strategy must align with the intended learning objectives, interactive learning strategies provide a solid foundation for enhancing civic intellectual and participation skills to meet the challenges and demands of the 21st century.

Interactive learning not only supports students in acquiring new knowledge but also develops their cognitive, behavioural and emotional skills, and has proven effective in enhancing civic intellectual and participation skills. Previous research has found that interactive learning strategies provide students with opportunities to socialise within groups, through which they learn teamwork, social skills and competences (Gan et al., 2015; Lopes et al., 2021). To enhance their civic skills, students need the ability to interact with diverse individuals and communities (Hillygus & Holbein, 2023).

Interactive learning strategies play a significant role in transforming students into participatory citizens. They go beyond the passive transfer of knowledge by directly cultivating civic intellectual and participation skills through problem-based learning experiences. They stimulate students' civic intellectual capabilities by fostering critical thinking, developing argumentation skills and facilitating contextual learning, and they directly hone students' civic participation skills by training them in effective communication and collaborative teamwork. The findings of this study thus reinforce those of previous research.

Conclusion

This study has examined the implementation of interactive learning strategies to enhance students' civic intellectual and participation skills. The findings highlight the value of these strategies in fostering cross-cultural interaction, valuing diversity and preparing students to

deal with global challenges. They also underline the need for lecturers to apply innovation and creativity in implementing interactive learning strategies. The study offers four key recommendations: integrating civic intellectual and participation skills into the higher education curriculum, providing lecturer training, promoting mindful, meaningful and joyful learning, and establishing partnerships with external stakeholders.

These recommendations aim to ensure that students are equipped with the civic intellectual and participation skills necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing society. Future research should examine the direct and indirect effects of interactive learning strategies on civic intellectual and participation skills and explore active, innovative, creative, effective and enjoyable learning strategies that respond to the evolving needs of society.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there are no competing financial interests or non-financial relationships that could be construed as influencing the research presented in this article.

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Ethics Approval

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