



Repositioning Legal Logic in the Civic Education Curriculum to Build Critical Citizens

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Abstract

Rapid socio-political change and the spread of disinformation demand that Citizenship Education move beyond the rote memorisation of legal norms and instead foster citizens who are capable of critical legal reasoning. This article proposes the repositioning of legal logic as a key epistemic framework within the Citizenship Education curriculum so that learners do not only know what the law states, but also understand why and how law operates in practice. Using a juridical-normative approach combined with qualitative content analysis of curriculum documents, textbooks, and teaching guidelines, this study examines the extent to which dimensions of legal logic—such as deductive–inductive reasoning, juridical argumentation, the distinction between legality and legitimacy, and the assessment of justice in legal norms—are integrated into teaching and learning processes. The findings indicate that the curriculum and learning materials remain dominated by a descriptive-dogmatic approach that positions law as a fixed text rather than as a field of public rationality open to argumentative debate. The proposed repositioning involves a shift from normative pedagogy to critical-argumentative pedagogy by incorporating case analysis exercises, mock trials, and constitutional debates grounded in legal logic into students' learning experiences. Theoretically, this article strengthens the bridge between legal theory and citizenship education theory, while practically it offers recommendations for curriculum developers, teachers, and education policymakers to design learning that cultivates citizens who are critical, reflective, and responsible both legally and ethically.



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INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the landscape of citizenship in Indonesia and around the world has been changing at a much faster pace than the education system has been able to adapt. Sunarso (2009) states that the dynamics of Civic Education in Indonesia from one regime to the next have always been influenced by the configuration of state power and ideology, so that the orientation, curriculum, and content of Civic Education tend to follow the dominant political interests rather than consistently facilitating the formation of critical and reflective citizens.

Citizens are inundated with new regulations, policies, and legal discourse amid an explosion of digital information, political polarization, and the strengthening of rule by law practices rather than rule of law. In the public sphere, law no longer exists only as normative text, but as a tool of legitimacy, an instrument of control, and a space for contesting the meaning of justice. According to Santoso, M. A. (2014), the scale of justice varies greatly from one place to another, because each scale is defined and entirely determined by the community in accordance with the public order that prevails in that community, so that what is considered fair in one social context may not necessarily be perceived the same way in another context. However, at the same time, Civic Education (PKn/PPKn) in schools still tends to teach law as a list of articles that must be memorized, rather than as a field of public rationality that demands reasoning, the courage to ask questions, and the ability to test legal claims circulating in the digital space.

This is where legal logic or legal reasoning becomes an absent yet most needed element. Legal logic is not merely a syllogistic technique between facts and norms, but rather an ecosystem of reasoning that includes deductive-inductive reasoning, the ability to construct and refute legal arguments, the sensitivity to distinguish between legality and legitimacy, and reflection on substantive justice behind positive rules. In line with this, Sinaulan (2018) asserts that Legal Theory seeks to explain law from the perspective of non-legal factors at work in society using an interdisciplinary approach, thus requiring broad and deep knowledge of positive law. Without this foundation, various studies on law, including the development of legal logic in Civic Education, risk becoming superficial and irrelevant to social reality. In the tradition of legal theory, the ability to reason legally is at the core of legal professionalism; in the contemporary perspective of civic education, this same ability should be the foundation for the formation of critical citizens, not the privilege of the legal elite. When legal logic is never explicitly taught, the younger generation risks becoming citizens who are formally compliant but critically fragile in the face of legal manipulation and regulatory disinformation.

This gap becomes even more apparent when we examine the current civics curriculum. Learning outcomes, materials, and assessments are still dominated by a cognitive-descriptive orientation: students are asked to “mention,” “explain,” or “identify” legal provisions, but very little space is allocated for “testing,” “criticizing,” or “arguing” a norm based on systematic legal logic. Classroom learning practices often stop at the transfer of normative information and rote-based testing, while case analysis exercises, constitutional debates, court simulations, or case-based learning are still sporadic and unstructured as part of the core curriculum. As a result, Civics operates as a pedagogy of normative compliance, rather than a pedagogy of critical citizenship that equips students to deal with the complexities of constitutional democracy and the digital ecosystem. This condition has the potential to reproduce passive citizens who tend to tolerate violations of democratic norms by the political elite, as shown by Saikkonen, I., & Christensen, H. S. (2023), that some citizens in established democracies are willing to ignore violations of democratic norms when it is considered beneficial to their political interests.

Based on this tension, a study entitled “Repositioning Legal Logic in the Civic Education Curriculum to Develop Critical Citizens” was proposed to intervene in the way we understand and redesign civic education at the curriculum level. This study positions legal logic as an epistemic framework that must be lifted from the implicit to the explicit, from the periphery to the center, by critically examining how legal logic has been represented in curriculum documents, textbooks, and learning guides, and formulating a repositioning model that enables civic education to truly become a space for training young citizens in legal reasoning. Thus, the key question this study seeks to answer is: how can the repositioning of legal logic in the Civic Education curriculum be designed so that it effectively builds citizens who are critical, reflective, and legally and ethically responsible?

Changes in the socio-political landscape and the rise of disinformation require civic education to go beyond the memorization of legal norms and encourage the emergence of citizens who are able to think critically about the law. In an information ecosystem filled with “facts” and expert authority that are often manipulated, as shown by the findings of Hameleers, M., & van der Goot, E. (2024) on how disinformation uses expert references and claims of objectivity to legitimize misleading messages, critical thinking and digital legal literacy are prerequisites for citizens to sort out legitimate and problematic claims of truth.

This article proposes repositioning legal logic as the main epistemic framework in the Civic Education curriculum so that students not only know “what the law says,” but also understand ‘why’ and “how” the law works in practice. This research is based on the issue that the Civic Education curriculum in Indonesia still tends to place law as a set of norms that must be memorized rather than as a field of rational reasoning that trains students to think critically about justice, legality, and legitimacy. While on the other hand, the demands of the digital age, the prevalence of legal disinformation, and the complexity of constitutional democracy require citizens who have strong legal logic skills. This condition creates a gap between the normative goal of civic education to shape critical citizens and the descriptive-dogmatic design of the curriculum, materials, and learning practices, so that dimensions of legal logic such as deductive-inductive reasoning, legal argumentation, the distinction between legality and legitimacy, and the assessment of the fairness of norms have not been adequately integrated into the educational process.

The Civic Education curriculum in Indonesia still tends to treat law as a set of norms that must be memorized rather than as a field of rational reasoning that trains students to think critically about justice, legality, and legitimacy. This has resulted in a gap between the normative goal of Civic Education to shape critical citizens and the curriculum design, material, and learning practices that remain descriptive and dogmatic. Amidst the complexity of constitutional democracy and the prevalence of legal disinformation in the digital age, this condition creates an urgent need to reformulate the position of legal logic in the Civic Education curriculum. Based on this background, the research question is: how can the repositioning of legal logic in the Civic Education curriculum be designed so that it effectively builds citizens who are critical, reflective, and legally and ethically responsible?

METHOD

This research method uses a legal-normative approach combined with qualitative content analysis to map in depth the existence and depth of the legal logic dimension in Civic Education. According to Hanitijo, R (1988), the normative juridical approach is research that focuses on examining the application of rules or norms in positive law, based on a logical-positivist conception that views law as

identical to written norms created and enacted by authorized institutions or officials. In this perspective, law is understood as a normative system that is independent, closed, and relatively detached from real life in society, so that analysis is directed at the consistency, hierarchy, and internal rationality of norms. Departing from this framework, this study places curriculum documents, textbooks, and Civic Education learning guides as “normative texts” that are analyzed through qualitative content analysis techniques to identify the extent to which the dimensions of legal logic—such as deductive-inductive reasoning, juridical argumentation, the distinction between legality and legitimacy, and the assessment of the fairness of norms—are explicitly or implicitly integrated into the design and practice of learning.

A legal-normative approach was used to examine the legal norms and principles that formally serve as references in the Civic Education curriculum, including laws and regulations, national curriculum documents, and education policies related to citizenship education. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis was applied to curriculum documents, textbooks, modules, and learning guides that were purposively selected based on their relevance, normative position, and level of use in educational units. The analysis process was carried out in several stages, as shown in Figure 1 below:

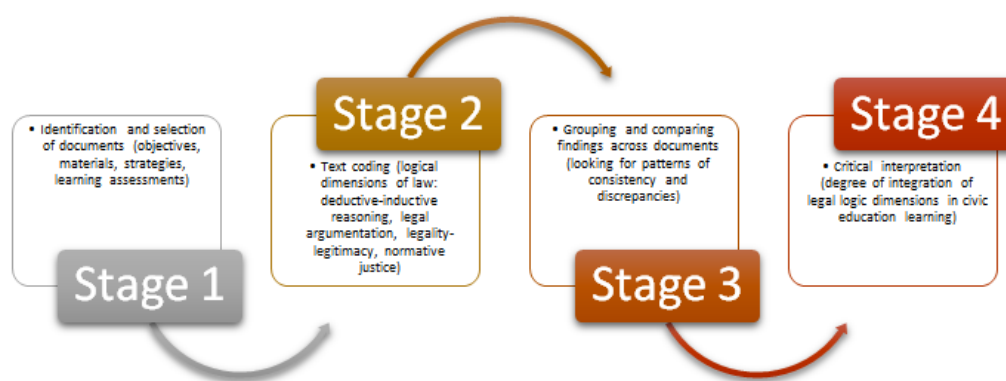


Figure 1. Research analysis process

To enhance the credibility of the findings, researchers conducted repeated readings, peer discussions, and triangulation between document types so that the analysis results were not only descriptive but also provided an argumentative assessment of the position of legal logic in the applicable curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings show that the curriculum and teaching materials are still dominated by a descriptive-dogmatic approach that treats law as a final text, rather than as a field of public rationality that can be debated argumentatively. The proposed repositioning includes a shift from normative pedagogy to critical-argumentative pedagogy by incorporating case analysis exercises, mock trials, and constitutional debates based on legal logic into the students’ learning experience (Lee & Givens, 2012). The theoretical implications of this article lie in strengthening the bridge between legal theory and civic education theory, while the practical implications target curriculum designers, teachers, and education policymakers to develop learning designs that shape critical, reflective, and legally and ethically responsible citizens (Lawal, 2025).

This study found that the curriculum and teaching materials for Civic Education are still dominated by a descriptive-dogmatic approach that treats law as a final text that must be accepted, memorized, and reproduced, rather than as a field of public rationality that is open to questioning and argumentative

debate. In this context, the views of Nainggolan, B. (2023) are relevant, as he states that the legal science paradigm is essentially a basic framework of thought that forms the basis for approaches to the study of law; in other words, how we position law—whether merely a collection of positive norms or as a space for critical reasoning—will determine how law is taught, understood, and lived in civic education practice. In this configuration, students are positioned more as “consumers of norms” than as subjects of citizenship who are able to test the coherence, consistency, and fairness of a rule.

As a result, civics classrooms fail to function as laboratories of constitutional democracy; they resemble spaces for confirming state doctrine rather than spaces for dialectics of law and justice. This pedagogical pattern, which places students in the passive role of recipients of knowledge, is consistent with the findings of Wong, Y.-L. (2022) on student alienation in the neoliberal higher education regime, where studies are perceived instrumentally as a means of obtaining credentials and social mobility, so that students tend to be stuck in surface learning and pragmatic career orientation that does not necessarily shape them into caring and critical citizens.

These findings emphasize the urgency of repositioning legal logic as the heart of civic education pedagogy. The shift offered is not merely a methodological cosmetic change, but a paradigm shift from normative pedagogy that emphasizes compliance to critical-argumentative pedagogy that emphasizes reasoning (Pradanna & Irawan, 2024). This repositioning is realized through the systematic integration of case analysis exercises, mock trials, and constitutional debates based on legal logic into the students’ learning experience. In it, students are trained to operate deductive-inductive reasoning, formulate and critique juridical arguments, and sharply distinguish between legality and legitimacy as well as between formal compliance and substantive justice. In line with this, Nugroho, H. (2008) emphasizes that the paradigm shift in legal science is also marked by increased attention to issues of human rights, social justice, the environment, and community empowerment, where law is understood not only as a normative text but as an instrument that must contribute significantly to social development and the welfare of the wider community.

Theoretically, the results of this study strengthen the bridge that has long been strained between legal theory and civic education theory. The integration of legal logic into civic education shows that civic studies can no longer be understood solely as a normative-ideological domain, but must be based on a rich tradition of legal reasoning, including thoughts on justice, rights, obligations, and the legitimacy of power (Prakoso dkk., 2024). Indonesia’s official state ideology, serves as a guiding framework for the nation’s governance and legal systems. As the country continues to grapple with challenges related to corruption, inequality, and legal inefficiencies, there is an increasing recognition of the need to integrate Pancasila’s principles into legal reforms. This study evaluates the impact of civic education, grounded in Pancasila, on the effectiveness and legitimacy of Indonesia’s legal system. It argues that embedding Pancasila’s values—such as justice, democracy, and social welfare—into civic education can foster a more law-abiding, ethically responsible society, which in turn strengthens the rule of law and enhances legal reforms. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing civic education programs and their influence on public understanding of legal rights and obligations, this research highlights the role of education in shaping legal consciousness and promoting societal trust in legal institutions. The urgency of this research lies in Indonesia’s ongoing efforts to modernize its justice system while addressing systemic corruption and inefficiency. By situating Pancasila at the core of civic education, the study advocates for a holistic approach to legal reform, one that aligns legal practices with broader societal values. This research contributes to the discourse on legal reform by proposing a model in which education, ethical values, and legal practice are interconnected to create a more robust and transparent legal framework in Indonesia.”;”container-

title": "Journal of Law and Legal Reform", "DOI": "10.15294/jllr.v5i3.16498", "ISSN": "2715-0968, 2715-0941", "issue": "3", "journalAbbreviation": "jllr", "license": "https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0", "page": "1429-1468", "source": "DOI.org (Crossref. Thus, civic education shifts from being merely a vehicle for transmitting state values to a field where legal theory, legal philosophy, and democratic theory are tested pedagogically through concrete learning practices. Hidayah, Y., Arpanudin, I., & Ulfah, N. (2025) emphasize that civic education is not enough to instill normative compliance, but must be designed as a reflective-critical learning space that integrates the dimensions of law, ethics, and democracy in the direct and contextual learning experiences of students.

The practical implications of these findings are immediate and challenging. Curriculum designers are encouraged to formulate learning outcomes, materials, and assessments that explicitly incorporate legal reasoning and juridical argumentation competencies; civics teachers are challenged to leave their comfort zone of normative lectures and switch to case-based learning designs, simulations, and analytical tasks that require consistent use of legal logic; while education policymakers are urged to provide regulations, training, and resources that enable this transformation to take place in the classroom (Ashley & Lynch, 2010). Without these structural measures, the call to shape critical, reflective, and legally and ethically responsible citizens will remain merely curricular rhetoric, rather than a living educational practice.

These results also suggest that the success of the proposed shift cannot be assessed solely through changes in lesson plans or classroom techniques; it requires evaluative indicators that capture whether students actually develop the capacity for legal reasoning and civic judgment (Boud dkk., 2018). In other words, the “output” of a critical-argumentative civics pedagogy should be measurable in students’ ability to (i) identify legal issues, (ii) apply norms through coherent deductive–inductive reasoning, (iii) argue with evidence and legal principles, and (iv) justify positions ethically within democratic constraints. This implies the need to redesign assessment architectures—moving beyond recall-based testing toward performance-based assessments (e.g., structured case briefs, reasoned judicial opinions, debate rubrics, and reflective memos) that make students’ reasoning visible, contestable, and improvable. Without such measurement and feedback loops, the repositioning risks being reduced to “activity-based” learning that looks innovative but does not reliably transform students’ jurisprudential competence or civic agency (Zabar dkk., 2025).

Finally, the findings open a research agenda that is both empirical and normative. Empirically, future studies should test the proposed pedagogical model across institutional types and learner backgrounds to determine what contextual conditions (teacher capacity, school governance, political climate, and access to legal resources) facilitate or hinder the transition from dogmatic instruction to argumentative constitutional learning (Abildinova dkk., 2024). Normatively, the repositioning invites deeper inquiry into the boundaries between civic education and political indoctrination, particularly in plural societies where legal controversies intersect with identity, religion, and state ideology (Kennedy & Brunold, 2015). In this sense, legal logic must be framed not as a tool for merely “winning arguments,” but as a civic discipline for deliberating disagreement under rules of fairness, evidence, and constitutional limits. Strengthening this orientation would make civic classrooms more credible as democratic micro-publics—spaces where students learn to dispute, reason, and decide without abandoning ethical responsibility or the commitment to justice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that legal logic has not been strategically placed in the civic education

curriculum, because learning is still dominated by a descriptive-dogmatic approach that emphasizes memorization of norms rather than critical legal reasoning, resulting in students being weak in analyzing cases, distinguishing between legality and legitimacy, and reflecting on the substantive justice of a rule. Therefore, it is necessary to reposition legal logic as an epistemic framework for learning through a shift from normative pedagogy to critical-argumentative pedagogy by integrating case analysis, mock trials, constitutional debates, and assessments based on legal arguments. In this context, curriculum designers are advised to revise learning outcomes and material structures to explicitly include legal reasoning competencies; civics teachers are encouraged to change their teaching practices from lectures to case-based learning and analytical tasks; education policymakers and school administrators are expected to provide ongoing training and adequate learning resources to support the implementation of legal logic-based learning; while researchers need to empirically test the effectiveness of this model and develop comparative studies across countries and current issues such as digital citizenship and human rights in the digital space.

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