

Development of civic skills through citizen projects in the citizenship education courses

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Abstract: The study's aim and particular targets are as follows: (1) to describe the implementation of Project Citizen in the Citizenship Education course; and (2) to describe how Project Citizen can be used to enhance civic skills. The methodology employed was descriptive qualitative research. Data were gathered through interviews, observations, documentation, and field notes. Data analysis will use qualitative analysis in the stages of data reduction, data display, verification, and drawing conclusions. According to the study's findings, the implementation of Project Citizen in the Citizenship Education course at the Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Mataram is designed to shape and develop students' civic skills for them to become good and smart citizens capable of dealing with all issues that arise in society, the nation, and the state. The technical implementation of Project Citizen in the PKN course at the PPKn Study Program at Unram is carried out through the following steps: 1. Problem Identification: This process develops empathy, social concern, and a sense of community. 2. Problem Selection: This stage hones and develops critical thinking/critical minds, communication, and collaboration. 3. Information Gathering: This activity deeply hones students' communication skills, attention to detail, honesty, politeness, and mutual respect. 4. Portfolio Development: This emphasizes collaborative skills and creativity. 5. Showcase and Reflection on Learning Experiences: In this stage, students are trained to present their opinions obtained from the field in an organized and clear manner, using proper language, while building mutual trust within their groups and with others.

Keywords: Civic skills, project citizen, citizenship education

1 Introduction

The current globalization is undeniable and has had negative impacts on national and societal life, especially when followed by advancements in technology. These impacts force individuals to adapt and live as a result of these impacts, which makes social interactions unpleasant for those who are not yet prepared to handle the changes. Generally, students and younger generations are typically the most vulnerable groups impacted by globalization since they are still figuring out their identity.

Students are the country's greatest asset and its best chance to preserve and advance its beliefs. On the other hand, students are also part of the agents of change, who will guide the nation's future transfor-

mations. However, many students face disorientation when we examine the reality of society through social media and mass media, which impacts their personalities and makes them lack the qualities or character that conform to social norms and regulations. As a result, a large number of students participate in illegal activities (drug use, fights), have free sex, drink alcohol, and exhibit a lack of social and environmental consciousness. Today's culture has a very low level of moral awareness, which contributes significantly to the frequency of violence and unrest. If this continues unchecked, the country will face more and more concerning problems. Because of these circumstances, social control is vital and should be addressed in several ways, including by teaching the next generation civic skills. A crucial component of initiatives to produce decent citi-

zens is civic competence. From a different angle, civic skills and civic disposition are elements that impact the formation of integrative attitudes and favorably impact nation-building and elite-people integration when viewed through the prism of political integration. A productive national life that aims to achieve the common good, as desired by the nation's goals and objectives, can be fostered by successfully cultivating integrative attitudes among citizens. (Cholisin, 2010).

Based on the explanation above, the development of civic skills is a necessity for all educators, including those in higher education, one of which is through Civic Education (CE). PKn is a compulsory subject in the higher education curriculum, as mandated by the education system law. PKn has a crucial role in developing its dimensions, especially the civic skills dimension, which is closely related to the vision, mission, and objectives of PKn, focusing on the potential of knowledge, skills, and values/dispositions. Wahab and Sapriya (2006) in (Sawaludin & Dahlan, 2023) state that "...citizenship that is developed must contain knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that are ideally possessed by citizens." Similarly, when viewed from an axiological perspective, the existence and urgency of civic education (CE) serve as a vehicle for value education, moral education, and character education, thus becoming a means of transforming character education to foster a sense of nationalism and awareness of the nation and the state (Amin, 2021). This illustrates that PKn has a great responsibility ideologically, politically, socially, morally, and legally to protect the Indonesian people, nation, and state from various threats, obstacles, and challenges that would undermine national resilience to achieve the welfare of the Indonesian people, as stated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

Recognizing the duty, the Pancasila and Citizenship Studies Program at the University of Mataram has used the Project Citizen learning approach to assist in the development of civic skills during the last two years. Project Citizen is a problem-based instructional technique that aims to foster the knowledge, skills, and character of democratic citizenship, allowing and encouraging engagement in government and civil society. This program encourages students to actively engage with government and civil society organizations to solve problems in schools or communities and to sharpen the social and intellectual skills essential for responsible democratic citizenship (Anita & Wartoyo, 2020).

In terms of CE, Project Citizen can help students in-

teract, think critically, creatively, and innovatively, as well as acquire discipline and responsibility while devising projects to solve societal problems and give solutions. Students can also gain civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, as well as the resilience required for autonomous study, which is essential for competing and achieving in the real world. Based on the preceding description, the author proposes to investigate further the beneficial effect of implementing the Project Citizen model on the development of civic skills in the Citizenship Education course.

2 Methods

This study will use a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Qualitative research uses scientific logic to highlight deductive and inductive reasoning, as well as the dynamics of the relationships between observed phenomena (Rodhi, 2022). Meanwhile, descriptive research is a collection of statements that reveal problems, conditions, or events as they are, merely presenting facts (Moleong, 1996).

Data will be collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and field notes. This research data will be qualitatively examined using the methods defined by Miles & Huberman (2014): data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drafting. The data collected in fieldwork will be simplified, which indicates that the raw data will be condensed and presented as rational notions consistent with the facts discovered in the field. After data simplification and presentation, the final step is to conclude relevant to the research topic.

3 Results & Discussion

The implementation of Project Citizen in the Civic Education (CE) course at the Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, is carried out to shape and develop students' civic skills, enabling them to become good and smart citizens in solving problems within society, the nation, and the state. Essentially, Project Citizen is a problem-based instructional treatment designed to develop civic knowledge, civic skills, and democratic civic dispositions, which enable and encourage participation in government and civil society (Budimansyah, 2009). Additionally, Project Citizen can create a joyful and meaningful learning environment, fostering high enthusiasm and interest in learning.

In the learning process, Citizen Project helps and guides students to independently identify issues or cases, directly analyze problems, formulate materials related to the focus of the problem, search the information from various available sources, justify the results of their material collection and analysis in the form of a portfolio, and conduct showcases with each group's creativity. According to Budimansyah (Anita & Wartoyo, 2020), the implementation of Project Citizen can integrate various components, including social problem-solving, social inquiry, social involvement, cooperative learning, simulated hearing, deep dialogue, and critical thinking, value clarification, democratic teaching, empowering learning, meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, activating, and joyful learning. Furthermore, the Center for Indonesian Civic Education (1998) emphasizes that this model involves students throughout the entire process, facilitating them to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills—both theoretical skills such as critical thinking, and practical skills such as research activities and interactive dialogue through portfolio presentations. The skills referred to are those that emerge directly (instructional effects) or accompany (nurturant effects) the learning steps. This process is capable of fostering individual character, attitudes, and skills in students. These skills coherently arise from intellectual development, emotional development, sensory and creativity development, and physical development. Budimansyah (2010:23) explains that intellectual development involves reasoning processes to critically, creatively, and innovatively seek and apply knowledge, which results in an intelligent individual. This intellectual process naturally occurs when students identify problems, gather information, analyze solutions, formulate public policies, and develop work plans based on various information sources used at each stage of the Citizen Project. By using knowledge critically and intelligently to solve various problems under study, attitudes, and beliefs are formed, creating individuals who are honest and have a high sense of social responsibility (emotional development). An honest individual in this context is someone who learns to provide the best solutions sincerely to solve problems without being influenced by the interests of any other party (participation skills).

In terms of sports, each stage of the Project Citizen model teaches kids the virtue of sportsmanship and shapes them into robust individuals. The concept of sportsmanship is displayed when students appreciate their peers' viewpoints and accept responsibility

for their assigned chores. Meanwhile, each student demonstrates resilience by expressing a strong desire to accomplish Project Citizen with excellence. During presentations or showcases, resilience is displayed by the willingness of all Project Citizen participants to analyze, evaluate, and create the project that was developed. As for sensory development, it relates to the willingness reflected in students' concerns. In Project Citizen, this character can be demonstrated as part of civic dispositions and civic skills, such as showing concern for issues happening around them (local, regional, national, or global), having empathy for others affected by these issues, and demonstrating a high level of social responsibility.

Based on the explanation above, the civic skills that can be developed through Project Citizen include intellectual skills and participation skills. This aligns well with what the Center for Civic Education (2010) explains: intellectual skills encompass identifying, describing, explaining, analyzing, evaluating, determining, and defending opinions regarding public issues. Meanwhile, participation skills include interacting, monitoring, and influencing. Furthermore, Winatapura dan Dasim (2007) states that 20 basic competencies of civic skills can be developed, including:

First, intellectual skills include: (a) accurately and precisely expressing thoughts verbally and/or in writing in Indonesian, accompanied by comprehensive reasoning abilities and a sense of social responsibility; (b) critically analyzing social issues using various available sources of information and with genuine goodwill; and (c) making intelligent and responsible individual and/or collective decisions.

Second, participatory skills consist of: (a) organizing or collaborating within their environment with full awareness and personal and social responsibility as individuals and citizens, as well as with a strong sense of family; (b) participating intelligently in school and/or community settings, with a sense of personal and social responsibility and a spirit of kinship; (c) communicating intelligently and ethically with elders/superiors, colleagues, and juniors; (d) influencing public policy using methods that align with current standards and the socio-cultural context of the region; (e) making individual and/or collective decisions responsibly according to context; (f) building cooperation with individuals or other organizations based on acceptance of differences, mutual understanding, and common interests; (g) competing with others to create something better and beneficial for the development of community, national, and state life; (h) actively participat-

ing in various discussions about social/state issues intelligently and responsibly; (i) protesting against various forms of human rights violations in different sectors using socially and culturally acceptable methods; (j) participating in resolving interpersonal/group conflicts constructively in a manner acceptable to all parties; (k) responsibly leading community activities in their area; (l) providing healthy and responsible support to potential leaders in their environment; (m) offering sincere and healthy support to democratically elected leaders, even if they are from different groups; (n) fulfilling various duties as community members and citizens sincerely and selflessly; (o) continuously fostering mutual understanding and respect among tribes, religions, races, and groups to maintain the integrity of Indonesian society, nation, and state with a spirit of kinship; (p) striving to build mutual understanding among nations/countries using available mass media and communication technology networks; (q) working to enhance personal capacity and socio-cultural activities as citizens, realizing that their future contributions to the country must be better than today.

The civic skills that can be developed through Project Citizen align well with the 21st-century learning concepts according to UNESCO (1996) as cited in [Dharma & Siregar \(2014\)](#), which are based on four pillars: 1) Learning to think, which means learning to think critically; 2) Learning to do, which involves learning to take action; 3) Learning to be, which focuses on learning to live a fulfilling life; and 4) Learning to live together, which emphasizes learning to co-exist among nations. Concerning these four pillars of learning, [Budimansyah & Sapriya \(2012\)](#) explains that Learning to Know is a learning process that enables students to master techniques for discovering knowledge rather than simply acquiring it. Learning to do refers to learning to achieve the ability to perform controlling, monitoring, maintaining, designing, and organizing tasks. This form of learning through concrete actions encompasses not only mechanistic skills but also communication skills, collaboration with others, and managing and resolving conflicts. Learning to live together equips individuals with the skills to co-exist with others who are different, fostering tolerance, mutual understanding, and a lack of prejudice. Lastly, Learning represents the success of learning, which requires the support of the achievements from the first, second, and third pillars. Technically, the implementation of the Civics course using the citizen project in the Unram Civics Study Program is carried out in the following phases:

3.1 Phase Learn (Substance recognition)

The first phase is known as the learning phase or the substance recognition phase. During this phase, students acquire the content of the Citizenship Education course, which consists of seven sessions. This stage is essential because it lays the groundwork for students' conceptual understanding, critical awareness, and readiness for later stages of project-based learning. Citizenship Education in this phase is not merely content delivery but also the cultivation of civic values and competencies aligned with both national and global educational goals ([Bosio et al., 2023](#)).

Meetings 1 and 2 are designed as an orientation stage, focusing on the course contract, introductions, and an overview of the project implementation area. At this point, students are not only familiarized with the academic and administrative aspects of the course but also encouraged to build an initial sense of community and responsibility toward the learning process. The orientation also serves to contextualize the broader purpose of Citizenship Education, linking classroom learning to social realities and contemporary civic challenges such as intolerance, bullying, and gender-based violence—issues that are consistently highlighted as urgent within Indonesian education ([Maduwu et al., 2024](#)).

Meeting 3 introduces the substance of materials 1 and 2 through discovery learning and small group discussions. Discovery learning emphasizes active knowledge construction, encouraging students to investigate diverse sources, reflect on multiple perspectives, and articulate their understanding in weekly journals. Recent studies in the Indonesian context confirm that the application of discovery learning significantly improves student activity and academic outcomes in Citizenship Education courses (?). The weekly journal is not only a learning tool but also a formative assessment strategy, enabling students to track their intellectual growth while the lecturer can monitor their progress. Meanwhile, small group discussions cultivate collaboration, enhance argumentation skills, and promote mutual respect among peers in deliberating civic issues—skills essential in a democratic society.

Meeting 4 proceeds with materials 3 and 4, maintaining the same interactive format. By sustaining the pattern of exploration and discussion, students are trained in consistency, intellectual discipline, and comparative analysis across different themes of Citizenship Education. Meetings 5 and 6 further deepen the engagement with materials 5–8. These meetings emphasize cumulative learning, where previously ac-

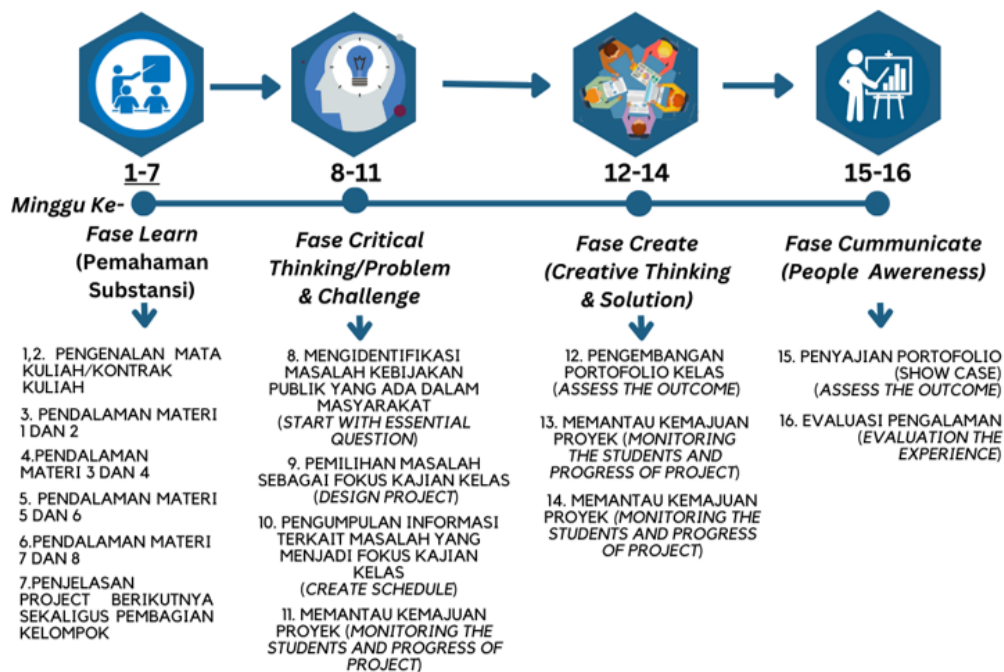


Figure 1. project in the Unram Civics Study Program

quired concepts are connected with new ones to create a more integrated understanding. Through this cumulative approach, students not only memorize content but also practice critical synthesis, linking various aspects of civic knowledge such as democracy, human rights, multiculturalism, and civic virtues—dimensions emphasized in recent comparative studies on global citizenship education (Bosio et al., 2023).

Finally, Meeting 7 functions as a transitional bridge from knowledge acquisition to knowledge application. At this stage, students are introduced to group assignments and the description of project implementation themes. Importantly, the chosen themes are derived from the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the pressing issues known as the “three deadly sins of education”: sexual violence, bullying, and intolerance. Linking the course with SDGs ensures that learning outcomes are not isolated from real-world challenges but directly address global development agendas. Research has shown that embedding SDGs into higher education curricula not only enhances students’ civic awareness but also equips them with competencies to contribute to sustainable societal transformation (Molina et al., 2023); (Saini et al, 2022).

3.2 Phase Critical Thinking/Problem & Challenge

The second phase is known as the Critical Thinking (Problem and Challenge Phase). This phase is central to the learning process because students are trained to sharpen both critical thinking skills and civic participation skills. It consists of four meetings, namely Meetings 8, 9, 10, and 11, with interconnected activities. Meeting 8 focuses on identifying problems within the students’ surrounding environment. Each student is instructed to observe, record, and document public issues relevant to the predetermined theme. The identified problems may come not only from direct observation but also from documentation studies or informal discussions with community members. The results of these observations are then brought to group forums to be presented and debated in the following meeting. This process trains students to be sensitive to their environment, to develop empathy, and to distinguish between general and specific information. Research by Anita & Wartoyo (2020) shows that the problem identification stage in Project Citizen helps develop accuracy, patience, attention to detail, as well as analytical and critical thinking skills. This is in line with Cholisin (2010) view that civic skills encompass both intellectual and participatory skills, with critical thinking as the core of intellectual skills.

Meeting 9 is devoted to selecting the problem to be

studied further. At this stage, each student presents their findings, after which the group deliberates to determine the main issue considered most important and feasible to address. This deliberative process trains students to communicate effectively, respect differing opinions, and make democratic decisions. Thus, besides sharpening critical thinking skills, students also build participation skills such as negotiation, collaboration, and shared responsibility. Anita & Wartoyo (2020) highlight that the problem selection stage fosters honesty, politeness, respect for others' views, and lifelong learning habits.

The next step, in Meeting 10, is gathering information related to the chosen problem. Together with their groups, students design a structured research schedule to collect data from multiple sources. They may conduct interviews with experts, consult references in libraries, explore mass media content, or engage in discussions with government officials, community leaders, and civil society organizations. Through this activity, students not only enrich their knowledge but also learn to assess the credibility of information, compare multiple perspectives, and systematically organize data. Owen (2024) stresses that student involvement in authentic inquiries into public problems deepens analytical thinking, communication skills, and problem-solving orientation.

The final stage in Meeting 11 is monitoring progress. Each group reviews the collected data, evaluates whether their research objectives are being met, and identifies weaknesses or gaps that need to be improved. This activity is not only technical but also reflective. Students are encouraged to be honest in acknowledging shortcomings, diligent in correcting mistakes, and appreciative of their peers' contributions. Dos (2024) emphasizes that structured reflection practices strengthen lifelong learning habits and foster civic dispositions grounded in responsibility and collaboration.

Overall, the Critical Thinking / Problem and Challenge Phase emphasizes the development of diverse civic skills, including critical and analytical thinking skills to identify, explain, analyze, and evaluate public problems; decision-making skills to filter relevant information and determine priority issues; communication and collaboration skills to present ideas, negotiate, and engage in democratic discussion; research and inquiry skills to collect, assess, and synthesize information from credible sources; and reflective and evaluative skills to assess achievements, identify weaknesses, and design improvements. Thus, this phase is not

merely an exercise in critical thinking but a transformative learning experience that prepares students to be more sensitive to social issues, skilled in investigating and communicating findings, and responsible in teamwork. Through this process, students are equipped to become citizens who are analytical, communicative, collaborative, reflective, and solution-oriented in facing the challenges of a democratic society.

3.3 Phase Create (Creative Thinking & Solution)

The third phase is known as the Create Phase (Creative Thinking & Solution) because it emphasizes the development of creativity, innovation, and problem-solving skills among students. Conducted across three sessions (Meetings 12–14), this stage serves as a bridge between conceptual understanding and practical application.

Meeting 12 focuses on the fourth syntax of Project Citizen, namely the creation of a class portfolio. This portfolio is not merely a compilation of written reports but a creative and aesthetic product that synthesizes the students' fieldwork projects, including problem identification, alternative solutions, supporting evidence, and proposed action plans. The portfolios are presented in the form of three-dimensional (3D) exhibition panels or portfolio binders, allowing students to demonstrate both academic rigor and artistic expression. Such an approach cultivates collaboration and creativity, as students must negotiate ideas, assign roles, and integrate their contributions into a coherent product. Empirical evidence supports this practice: a study by Mupidin et al. (2024) showed that modifying the Project Citizen model through creative media such as pop-up books significantly enhanced students' critical and creative thinking in civic education.

Meetings 13 and 14 are devoted to the iterative refinement of the portfolios. This iterative process allows students to revise and improve their work based on peer and instructor feedback, highlighting portfolio development as not a one-time assignment but a reflective cycle of improvement. Recent research at Universitas Negeri Medan (UNIMED) demonstrated that an outcome-based education (OBE) design integrating citizen project practices effectively strengthened students' problem-solving skills in civic education (Simarmata et al., 2024). This reinforces the importance of structured, reflective learning processes in producing meaningful outcomes.

Portfolio-based assessment has also been shown to positively impact civic education learning. For exam-

ple, [Sanjaya et al. \(2022\)](#) found that the combination of a conflict resolution learning model with portfolio assessment significantly improved students' civic education learning outcomes at Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha. This indicates that portfolios serve not only as final products but also as authentic assessment tools that foster critical reflection and meaningful learning.

The culmination of this phase is the portfolio showcase, where students present their work in a public forum. According to the [Center for Civic Education \(2023\)](#), Project Citizen portfolios are often displayed in classroom, school, or community showcases, encouraging students to take ownership of their work and engage with broader audiences. This process develops civic skills such as systematic and creative problem-solving, clear and effective communication, and the ability to connect academic learning with real societal challenges.

In this way, the Create Phase becomes a transformative stage in which knowledge is not simply reproduced but reimaged and applied. Students emerge not only as informed individuals but also as active citizens capable of proposing, designing, and communicating innovative solutions to pressing civic issues.

3.4 Phase Communicate (People Awareness)

The fourth phase is known as Communicate (People Awareness), which represents the culmination of the Project Citizen cycle. In this phase, students not only complete their portfolios but also communicate their findings, solutions, and reflections to a wider audience. This activity emphasizes key civic skills such as public speaking, teamwork in presentation, honesty, and the ability to appreciate the work of others. This phase is divided into two meetings, namely Meetings 15 and 16.

Meeting 15 focuses on the portfolio showcase. In this session, each group is given the opportunity to exhibit and present the portfolio they have collaboratively developed. The presentation is not carried out by a single member, but involves all group members to ensure active participation from every student. This practice is in line with the democratic principle that every voice holds equal value and strengthens the sense of civic responsibility ([Center for Civic Education, 2023](#)).

To create a more relaxed and enjoyable presentation atmosphere, lecturers also encourage groups to incorporate creative elements such as slogans, chants, or icebreakers. Such strategies align with findings from the Project Citizen Research Program, which re-

veal that incorporating creative approaches in showcases enhances students' civic expression skills, self-confidence, and engagement in public discussions ([Owen et al., 2023](#)).

The portfolio showcase also serves as a form of authentic assessment. Instead of relying solely on written exams, students are assessed on their ability to communicate ideas, present data coherently, and interact with the audience. The Project Citizen Research Program Final Report highlights that portfolio- and showcase-based assessment strengthens communication, problem-solving abilities, and students' capacity for civic participation ([Owen, 2024](#)). Thus, the showcase is not merely a display of the final product but a transformative learning experience in which knowledge is tested publicly and validated through audience interaction.

Meeting 16 focuses on reflection and public policy formulation. Reflection is carried out collectively between students and lecturers to evaluate the overall learning process—from planning and implementation to final outcomes. Students are encouraged to analyze what worked well, the challenges they faced, and improvements needed for future projects. [Dos \(2024\)](#) emphasizes that reflective practices of this kind strengthen students' capacity for lifelong learning and deepen civic engagement by connecting personal experiences to broader social issues.

Furthermore, students are tasked with drafting alternative public policy proposals relevant to the issues they have studied. This formulation integrates interdisciplinary perspectives such as education, law, and social sciences, enabling students to produce not only theoretical recommendations but also applicable solutions. Findings from the Project Citizen Research Program demonstrate that when students engage in policy formulation simulations, they develop civic problem-solving skills as well as the ability to design evidence-based policy solutions ([Owen, 2024](#)). Consequently, this phase equips students with essential skills for participating in broader public decision-making processes.

Overall, the Communicate (People Awareness) phase emphasizes the development of key civic skills, namely:

1. Public communication skills → delivering ideas, data, and solutions clearly, coherently, and persuasively.
2. Collaboration and democratic participation skills → involving all group members in presentations, thereby fostering shared responsibility.

3. Reflective and evaluative skills → assessing strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement from the learning experience.
4. Appreciation and empathy skills → valuing the work of other groups and fostering social solidarity.
5. Public policy formulation skills → designing practical policy alternatives based on evidence and multidisciplinary perspectives.

Thus, this phase represents a highly significant conclusion to the Project Citizen cycle. Students not only produce academic work but are also trained to become active citizens who are communicative, collaborative, reflective, appreciative, and solution-oriented in addressing societal issues.

4 Conclusion

Based on the findings and presentations above, it can be concluded that the implementation of Project Citizen in the Citizenship Education course can develop civic skills, which can be identified through several stages. The first step is problem identification, in which students thoroughly study and analyze their surroundings or community before making decisions on which problems to bring to their different groups. Furthermore, this method will create empathy, social awareness, and kinship, allowing students to naturally develop their intellectual and participatory skills. The second step is problem selection, in which students must return to their groups to explain the findings of their investigation and field analysis, and then determine which topics will be investigated and resolved cooperatively within their groups. This stage also helps to polish and improve intellectual skills as well as participation skills in critical thinking, communication, and teamwork. The third step is acquiring information. At this level, students go through a variety of steps to gather information from numerous sources, including conducting interviews with knowledgeable informants. This practice helps students improve their communication skills, attention to detail, honesty, civility, and mutual respect. Fourth, portfolio development focuses on collaboration skills and innovation. Fifth is the exhibition and reflection of the learning experience, where students are instructed to communicate their thoughts gained from the field in an organized and clear manner, using proper and precise language, while creating mutual trust within their group and with others.

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