

# CIVIC EDUCATION LEARNING BASED ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO STRENGTHEN CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY OF PGSD STUDENTS

## *Abstract*

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*The purpose of this study is to review and synthesize existing literature on the application of environmentally-based Civic Education learning to enhance the civic responsibility of Elementary School Teacher Education students. As future educators, Elementary School Teacher Education students play a crucial role in developing the ideals of civic responsibility and environmental sustainability. This study uses a literature review technique, examining various important scientific sources on the integration of Civic Education, Environmental Education, and the idea of Ecological Citizenship. The research findings indicate that contextualizing Civic Education with environmental issues can enhance students' civic knowledge, abilities, and dispositions by increasing ecological awareness, critical attitudes towards environmental challenges, and active involvement in sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, it is revealed that the integration of environmental issues into Civic Education has not been regularly implemented at the tertiary level, particularly in Elementary School Teacher Education study programs. This study provides a conceptual model of civic learning that focuses on environmental concerns, emphasizing the development of ecological civic responsibility obligations.*  
**Keywords:** Civic Education, Environmental Issues, Civic Responsibility

## **Abstrak**

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk meninjau dan mensintesis literatur yang ada tentang penerapan pembelajaran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan berbasis lingkungan untuk



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meningkatkan tanggung jawab kewarganegaraan mahasiswa Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar. Sebagai calon pendidik, mahasiswa Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar memainkan peran penting dalam membangun cita-cita tanggung jawab kewarganegaraan dan keberlanjutan lingkungan. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik tinjauan literatur, dengan meneliti berbagai sumber ilmiah penting tentang integrasi Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan, Pendidikan Lingkungan, dan gagasan Kewarganegaraan Ekologis. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mengkontekstualisasikan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan dengan isu lingkungan dapat meningkatkan pengetahuan, kemampuan, dan disposisi kewarganegaraan mahasiswa dengan meningkatkan kesadaran ekologis, sikap kritis terhadap tantangan lingkungan, dan keterlibatan aktif dalam inisiatif keberlanjutan. Lebih lanjut, terungkap bahwa pengintegrasian isu lingkungan ke dalam Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan belum diterapkan secara teratur di tingkat perguruan tinggi, khususnya dalam program studi Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar. Penelitian ini menyediakan model konseptual pembelajaran kewarganegaraan yang berfokus pada kepedulian lingkungan, menekankan pengembangan kewajiban ecological civic responsibility.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan, Isu Lingkungan, *Civic Responsibility*

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## Introduction

Higher education plays a crucial role in educating a generation that is not only academically proficient but also able to critically and responsibly address various contemporary challenges in an era of globalization and rapid social change. Civics Education, as part of the higher education curriculum, contributes to students' civic competence by developing civic knowledge, talents, and attitudes, all essential components of civic education. Research on the use of Civics Education in higher education shows that civics learning enhances students' character development and social awareness, but is limited in their ability to respond to environmental challenges as part of a complex social life (Basariah, Dahlan & Ismail, 2024).

Civic Education is crucial in educating individuals who understand their rights and responsibilities and can actively participate in community life. Civics education learning in

higher education, particularly in Elementary School Teacher Education Study Programs, has the potential not only to develop civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions but also to enhance students' critical awareness of civic responsibilities, such as environmental issues (Sitompul et al., 2024). Civics education not only helps citizens learn their rights and obligations but also instills the ideals of social responsibility in community life.

Climate change, ecological damage, and environmental degradation are global issues that require attention at all levels of society. Integrating environmental issues into Civics Education helps increase ecological knowledge and motivates students to become environmentally responsible citizens. Recent studies have shown that incorporating environmental education into the Civics curriculum can expand the role of Civics Education in creating pro-environmental knowledge and behaviors through the use of contextual and participatory pedagogy (Nasoha et al., 2025).

In line with this phenomenon, the concept of ecological citizenship emphasizes citizens' obligations to understand and protect the environment as part of their social obligations. This concept is important because modern environmental challenges, such as ecosystem degradation and climate change, have reached a critical stage, requiring the active involvement of all segments of society, including universities. Reflective studies on ecological citizenship indicate that, although efforts have been made to promote ecological awareness in certain settings, active public engagement and an understanding of ecological responsibility must be continuously developed through education (Halimah & Nurul, 2020). Integrating environmental principles into Civic Education enhances commitment to sustainability, as evidenced by its use in many formal educational settings. In Indonesia, current research indicates a trend toward investigating ecological civic education as a sustainable development initiative, but most focus on elementary and secondary school education rather than university education (Santoso et al., 2024).

However, although the benefits of this integration have been examined in a number of studies, empirical and conceptual literature linking environmentally-based civic learning to increased civic responsibility in elementary school teacher education students remains limited. Most current civics education research focuses on broad character development or

normative features of citizenship, rather than addressing environmental factors relevant to contemporary global challenges (Nasoha et al., 2025). Furthermore, while civics studies have explored general environmental education in primary and secondary schools, they have not received much attention in higher education or in the preparation of prospective primary school teachers. For example, incorporating environmental ethics pedagogy into civics education has resulted in increased environmental knowledge and ethical behavior among secondary school students. However, the use of this concept in higher education remains limited, particularly in literature reviews that comprehensively examine and synthesize research findings (Thoa, 2024).

Therefore, this study uses a literature review approach to gather the latest scientific research on environmentally-based citizenship learning and its potential to enhance civic responsibility among elementary school teacher education (PGSD) students. This strategy aims to provide a conceptual framework that can serve as a theoretical foundation and recommendation for a contextual, integrative, and responsive citizenship curriculum that addresses contemporary environmental issues at the tertiary level. In addition, it contributes theoretically to the development of citizenship education that not only instills general civic values but also helps in the formation of environmentally conscious and ecologically responsible citizens as an essential component of civic responsibility in the current era of global environmental challenges.

## **Methodology**

This research uses a qualitative research methodology, specifically a literature review. The purpose of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the ideas, models, and findings of previous research on the topic of environmental education in the context of civic responsibility among Elementary School Teacher Education students. The data sources in this study are journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and research reports published between 2020 and 2025. The search keywords selected to reflect the research concept include: Civics Education, Citizenship Education, Environmental Education, Citizenship Education for Elementary School Teacher Education students,

education for Sustainable Development, environmental issues, and citizens' responsibility toward the environment. Using these keywords, 38 scientific articles were identified as meeting the basic requirements based on their titles and abstracts. Subsequently, inclusion criteria were used to assess the relevance of the subject and material to citizenship education and environmental issues. The selection process yielded 18 articles, which were then thoroughly researched and evaluated to serve as the basis for data findings, idea development, and the identification of research needs. Literature searches were conducted thru several international and national academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and Portal Garuda.

## **Results**

A Civic Education curriculum that incorporates environmental issues has significant potential to enhance students' civic responsibility, particularly through increased ecological knowledge and pro-environmental behavior. Findings from Gallay et al. (2025) indicate that when environmental education is closely linked to socio-environmental issues, it not only enhances ecological knowledge but also fosters civic engagement and sustainable behavior among students. The addition of environmental education to the curriculum enhances scientific literacy and civic participation. According to Ballard, Lindell, & Jadallah (2024), responsible environmental education must be complemented by educators who emphasize contextual, interactive, and reflective learning to successfully address social and behavioral change beyond the classroom. This is crucial because Ecological Citizenship Education requires direct exposure to and reflection on real-world issues affecting the broader population.

According to research by Velepini (2025), environmental education practices help students gain a comprehensive understanding of the SDGs, which encompass education for sustainable development and the dimensions of civic responsibility in addressing global social and environmental issues. These findings suggest that addressing environmental issues in civics education is not only essential for civics education, but also promotes cross-

cutting educational goals that promote ecological awareness and social responsibility as components of sustainable citizenship.

Other literature explains that higher education highlights the need for community engagement in education as a way to enhance students' civic responsibility. Student involvement in community projects focused on sustainability can enhance academic and civic skills while encouraging students to take concrete action on environmental issues outside the classroom (Mittal, P., & Bansal, R. (2024). This strategy is particularly beneficial in the context of environment-based Citizenship Education for Elementary School Teacher Education students because it encourages active engagement in socio-ecological experiences that enhance civic understanding and action. According to Prasetyo, Winarno, and Gunawati (2024), Citizenship Education educates and provides instruction related to civic responsibility.

## **Discussions**

Data findings suggest that higher education plays a crucial role in instilling civic responsibility in students, particularly when civic education is combined with environmental challenges. Global findings on civic studies worldwide highlight the need for active engagement, including social and environmental action, into students' higher education curricula. The combination of various tactics, such as intercultural competence, global community identification, and social engagement, provides a strategic framework for developing students' civic responsibility (Gaitán et al., 2024).

Other research indicates that incorporating ecology into Civic Education can enhance students' ecological knowledge and social responsibility, particularly when combined with teaching methods that emphasize environmental conservation and civic principles. Civic Education that incorporates environmental conservation issues has the potential to increase ecological awareness and environmental responsibility in local contexts, such as forest conservation as an expression of active civic participation (Paulina et al., 2025). This study suggests that the concept of ecological citizenship can act as a conceptual bridge between

Civic Education and Environmental Education, enhancing the civic responsibility of elementary school teacher education students.

Furthermore, research in sustainability education shows that incorporating sustainability and social responsibility issues into higher education curricula can help students understand the relationship between civic identity and contributions to sustainable development. This finding is crucial for efforts to promote civic responsibility in environmentally-based citizenship education, as it ensures that students not only understand the theory but also commit to demonstrating socio-ecological responsibility in their daily lives (Abo, 2024).

According to global literature, the concept of environmental citizenship offers a solid foundation for fostering environmentally conscious citizen behavior. A quantitative study of university students in Lebanon, for example, found that environmental citizenship can be assessed and linked to pro-environmental behaviors such as community participation and daily sustainability practices. These findings suggest that civic education addressing environmental issues can enhance students' understanding and behavior as ecological citizens (Hajj et al., 2024). These findings align with previous research that has highlighted the importance of education in fostering civic engagement in various socio-ecological issues, including real-world problem-based learning and community action. These studies demonstrate that active participation in sustainability initiatives adds a substantial participatory component to civic responsibility (Kudryavtsev, Zamora, & Nordgrén, 2025). Environmental sustainability is a responsibility shared by citizens worldwide (Prasetiyo, Winarno & Gunawati, 2023).

Incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into higher education curricula not only provides information but also encourages environmentally responsible attitudes and actions among students and the public. This integration fosters the interconnectedness of critical thinking, problem-solving, and moral principles within complex socio-environmental systems. This context is crucial for fostering environmentally-based citizenship learning and instilling civic responsibility in Elementary School Teacher Education students (Uggla & Soneryd, 2023). Contemporary pedagogical strategies such as



service-based learning, contextualized project-based learning, and experiential learning help students develop civic responsibility toward environmental challenges. These strategies place students in real-world environments where they must use civic knowledge to address environmental challenges and issues, enhancing their participation and sense of environmental responsibility (Arbues, Celaya, & Naval, 2025).

Environmental and civic education studies have found that well-designed environmental education can enhance civic knowledge, skills, and values. This refers to students' ability to think critically about environmental issues, interact effectively, and make socially and ecologically responsible decisions. Integrating pedagogies such as problem-based learning and community service can help students develop a stronger commitment to pro-social and environmental issues (Gaitán, Hofhuis, & Jansz, 2024). Service-based learning is an effective strategy for developing students' civic responsibility and action skills in the context of environmental challenges. This approach encourages real-world, experiential learning by combining social action, academic reflection, and community participation, thereby increasing students' environmental awareness and civic engagement (Felismonte, Donn & Ruiz, 2024). From the context of elementary teacher education, combining service-based learning and environmental-based civic education can help students develop skills in designing specific activities that have a social and ecological impact on their communities.

The concept of ecological citizenship is increasingly prevalent in education as an obligation to the global environment and sustainable development goals. Ecological education considers not only the social and political aspects of the environment but also the relationship between responsibility, action, and effort in achieving ecosystem sustainability. Research findings indicate that this strategy is crucial for developing students' awareness of human-environmental interactions and guiding them toward a more comprehensive and timely understanding of the environment (Santoso et al., 2024). Institutional policies that encourage the integration of sustainability curricula provide a comprehensive education that is responsive to global issues. These regulations encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, teaching support, and appropriate resource allocation for sustainability education, while simultaneously enhancing students' civic responsibility (Barnett et al.,



2025). Therefore, a contribution that can be made after reviewing various findings or data is to consider support and planning for higher education policies that can systematically encourage environmental-based citizenship learning, especially for Elementary School Teacher Education students.

## **Conclusions**

This study shows that environmental-based Civic Education (Civic Education) learning can strengthen students' civic responsibility, especially for prospective elementary school teachers. Integrating environmental issues into Civic Education helps students understand the relationship between humans and the environment as part of sustainable citizenship responsibilities. Students engaged in this learning demonstrated better ecological knowledge and active participation in socio-environmental activities. The study also emphasizes the importance of transforming higher education curricula to be more responsive to environmental challenges. The new pedagogical model positions students as agents of socio-ecological change. Thus, Civic Education that incorporates environmental aspects helps shape teachers who care about socio-environmental sustainability and requires policy support for better curriculum development.

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