



## The Role of Civic Education in Forming Character-Based Individuals in Elementary School Children

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### Abstract

This paper aims to find out and explain the role of civic education to form a person of character in elementary school children. The research method uses a qualitative study approach or a descriptive approach where the basis of the discussion is obtained from the results of literature studies on book sources, relevant journals that have existed before, and scientific articles. This study explains the role of Civics subjects in elementary schools in character building efforts. The results of this study indicate that Citizenship Education has an important role in shaping the character of students for the nation and the State to become better individuals. Citizenship Education in its teaching has a great impact on the character development of elementary school students. In Citizenship Education, students can learn to become human beings with good character and are responsible as citizens. This Citizenship Education must exist to create and grow young generations with character in the life of the nation and state for the betterment of the nation and the next generation.

**Keywords:** *Character, Citizenship Education, Elementary School.*

### PRELIMINARY

Education is a conscious and planned effort as a learning process to ensure that every human being becomes a person with good character, knowledge, noble morals, logical thinking, creativity, and responsibility. Education can also be said to be one of the paths taken by some people in determining the future (Suwahyu, 2019). Through education, the nation's children can determine the direction of their lives going forward. Life will continue without regard to time, children will grow and begin to experience development, and become adults who can one day become great and dignified successors in accordance with the education they received during their school years.

In education, character education can be said to be quite important because it is one of the things related to personality and morals that must be instilled from childhood, so that children can grow and develop with good character. Education is a form of effort carried out so that someone is able to mature and humanize fellow humans or even to every other living creature, character education also plays an important role for humans, because character can help the growth of children, especially at the elementary school level, so that they have a caring nature for others, have principles, and are also able to take responsibility.

Character is essentially something that can be seen as a collection of habits that can be felt, because character is not only behavior and understanding but also something that has become a habit in a person, and is certainly applied in everyday life (Sari, 2017). Civics education is one of the subjects that has a fairly important role in the world of education, especially in elementary schools, in learning civics

education there are several values of character that can shape the character and personality of elementary school students. The character and morals of students can be formed better in civics education lessons. Because in civics education it is learned about how students apply character, knowledge about the homeland, love and defend the homeland, foster a sense of responsibility, unity, mutual love and respect, obedience to God as is clearly in the foundation of the Indonesian state, namely Pancasila, and in civics education students can also learn about how to respect others, also respect fellow friends despite differences in religion, race, class, and language.

Character itself is the value of human behavior based on religion, norms, culture, law, customs, and aesthetics in social life which are generally studied in Civic Education subjects. This character education includes a system of instilling student behavioral values in the form of knowledge, awareness to do good things towards God, fellow friends, fellow humans, the environment, to oneself so that they become humans with good character and are also useful for their lives and the lives of others and their environment. Therefore, character education is very important, in Civics learning in elementary school, character education must be instilled as much as possible for the sake of a golden generation with good character in the future. In civic education, students are taught to be good individuals, able to socialize well in social life, become critical citizens, and good citizens.

The statement above provides a brief overview of character education and the importance of civics education in shaping the character of elementary school students. The focus of this issue is on the role of civics education in shaping the nation's future generations, especially in elementary schools. We often see that many still lack an understanding of character education, resulting in students or the next generation of the nation often having poor character. This is due to the lack of character education instruction since elementary school, in several subjects, including civics, both at school and in their personal lives.

Theoretically, this research aims to develop and determine the role of Civics in shaping character in elementary school children. Furthermore, it also aims to provide information to the public, especially elementary school teachers, so that they understand the importance and influence of Civics in shaping students' character.

In various previous studies, namely in the research conducted by (Kamza et al., 2021), strategies for building student character in elementary schools have been discussed by prioritizing how the right learning strategies to shape character, and how the role of Civics Education teachers in shaping student character has been discussed by (Bego et al., 2016) with Civics teachers as the focus for shaping student character. Meanwhile, in the research conducted by (Akbal, 2016) on Civics Education in National Character Building, discussing in general about civics education as an educational program to build good citizens.

Several previous studies on Civics Education for character building have shown some similarities. However, this study, with its different and more developed perspectives, focuses on examining the role of Civics Education in shaping character in elementary school students. This study will further explore Civics Education and its role in shaping elementary school students' character.

This research is expected to provide several benefits, namely, (1) With this research, it is hoped that it can be used as a basis for educators to further develop character education through Civics lessons in Elementary Schools. (2) It is hoped that this research can provide information to teachers and parents regarding how important civic education is for the formation of children's personalities to have more character, especially in efforts to produce the character of the next generation of the nation and state to be better. (3) Can provide knowledge about Civic Education as part of character formation that can be emulated and applied in everyday life.

## METHOD

Researchers use qualitative research methods or a descriptive approach, which is research with data in the form of descriptions of the problem being discussed, providing several descriptions of what occurs in everyday life (Miranti et al., 2021). Research utilizing qualitative methods is a research method that involves conducting exploration, enabling authors to understand and practice exploring what is read and then writing it down in a scientific paper. Qualitative research, according to the qualitative method, is

a concept for the problem to be addressed. Research activities are carried out so that researchers can produce and also obtain theories for analysis (Assingkily, 2021).

This research was conducted with the aim of obtaining valid information and data by focusing on literature review, to obtain data, sources, and also supporting evidence related to the problems discussed. The technique used is a literature study Based on data obtained from the results of previous research from various research journals or referred to as secondary data, then used as supporting material to be studied and analyzed. Researchers obtained references from relevant and reputable scientific journals and related to the problems discussed, namely Civic Education, Character, and Elementary Schools. After the data was obtained and from these relevant reference sources, then the conclusion was then concluded as an answer to the problems that have been discussed in the research.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

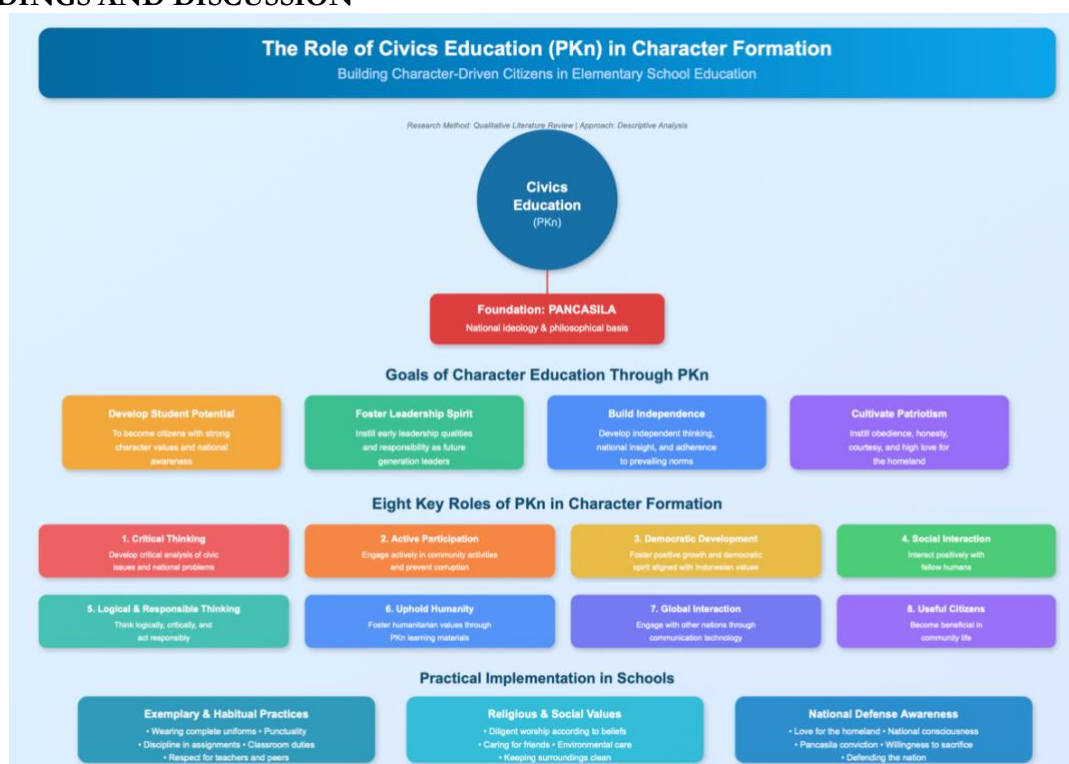


Figure 1. The Role of Civics Education in Character Formation

Character education is an educational process that teaches how to think, behave, help others, and cooperate, whether within the family, community, or nation. With continuous implementation of character education, students will develop emotional intelligence (Setiawan, 2015). Character education for students from elementary school is crucial because it is a system that teaches children habits of thinking and behaving.

Character education itself has several objectives, namely: (1) Developing the potential of students to become citizens with character values. 2. Developing good and commendable behavior and habits in students in accordance with the culture of the nation and state. (2) Instilling the soul of a leader from childhood & training students to become individuals who are always responsible as the next generation of the nation. (3) Developing students' abilities to become more independent individuals, have national insight, and obey applicable norms. (4) Instilling a character that is obedient, polite, honest, and has a high sense of love for the homeland.

There are several functions of character education, namely: (1) As a place to develop students' potential to have good behavior. (2) As a place to improve education to produce a generation with character and responsibility. (3) As a place to develop one's own culture in accordance with character values.

Character education significantly supports students' social, moral, emotional, and ethical development. Character education is a guide for students, especially those in elementary schools, to become individuals with character in their hearts, minds, emotions, and bodies (Nanda & Maulina, 2021). Character reflects everyone's personality, including attitudes, mentality, and cultural and contextual traits. Character education implemented in schools is defined as a learning process to strengthen students' behavioral development. Civics education focuses on developing individuals with competent, moral character, a strong sense of nationalism and humanity, and courage in life, as well as doing what is right and good even when faced with difficult challenges (Hartati, 2018).

Character education through Civic Education is found in the National Education Regulation No. 22 of 2006, namely civic education is one of the subjects that focuses on efforts to shape the character of citizens so that they can be able to carry out their rights and obligations to become good, intelligent, creative, responsible, trustworthy citizens (Indrawati, 2015) and have characters in accordance with the foundations of the State, namely Pancasila and the preamble to the 1945 Constitution (Kurniawan, 2013). Civic education has a role to provide provisions for students with noble character and basic skills regarding national life as well as preliminary education to become citizens and individuals with good character and have tolerance among others (Assingkily, 2021). Because in its teachings, civic education teaches tolerance towards others, in this case students will learn how important tolerant characters are such as respecting friends of different religions.

Thus, it is concluded that there are several roles of Civic Education in efforts to form a character-based personality in elementary school children. As stated in the contents of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which has regulated Civic Education as a formal education starting from Elementary School, namely (Kasminah, 2019): (1) Civic education easily forms the character of students to think critically in responding to civic issues. (2) Can actively participate & act decisively and intelligently in community activities and avoid acts of corruption in the future. (3) Can develop positively in the surrounding environment and foster a democratic spirit to make oneself in accordance with the character of Indonesian society itself. (4) Can interact well with other humans. (5) Able to think logically, critically, and responsibly. (6) Cultivate character and uphold humanity in accordance with Civic Education learning materials. (7) Able to interact well with other nations by utilizing communication technology, becoming smart citizens, and always prioritizing honesty. 8. Becoming a useful human being in community life.

These are some of the roles of Civics Education in developing character, which can be fostered in elementary school children. Why is civics education so crucial in shaping elementary school students' character? This is because, if taught and accustomed to it, students will become accustomed to developing their character. Through civics education, individuals with character can be formed.

Civics education is closely related to Pancasila because Pancasila is a vehicle for uniting the Indonesian nation, serving as the foundation of the state and as the nation's outlook on life. Pancasila contains fundamental concepts of the ideals of the Indonesian nation. As a way of life, Pancasila has very positive values in every point (Assingkily, et.al., 2023). Pancasila and the values contained within it are highly respected by the Indonesian people themselves, this is because the outlook on life in Pancasila is based on what characterizes the culture and outlook of the people of Indonesia (Safitri et al., 2021).

Pancasila is one of the values of character education that must be instilled and developed in elementary school children. Indonesia adheres to the Pancasila state ideology, and its values govern Indonesian society (Nurgiansah, 2021). Character education aims to prepare students to become good citizens by practicing the values embodied in each of the Pancasila principles, becoming good, democratic citizens, and applying Pancasila in their daily lives.

Civics education is like democracy education in that it aims to shape and prepare citizens to think critically and democratically (Suhardiyansyah et al., 2016). Instilling this character in elementary school students is essential, as future awareness of democracy is a form of social life and guarantees the rights of citizens. If students are accustomed to civics education, fostering critical and democratic attitudes, they will develop individuals with critical and democratic character in their lives. Character is formed within individuals through habitual practice.

Thought and behavior are unique characteristics of everyone, but they can change based on several factors, such as the school and family environment. If students are given a critical education, their

character will be shaped accordingly. Therefore, instilling character values in civics education is essential for elementary school students to build a strong Indonesian character based on the philosophy of the nation and state.

The implementation of civics education is always evident in the learning process from the beginning to the end (Didik & Ujung, n.d.). Based on this statement, it can be said that civics education has a significant and deliberate role and influence in helping us understand each person's character and care about ethical/moral values. In learning, we are taught to think about each person's character by observing whether students deeply care about their surroundings or become apathetic. In civics learning, it is said to be successful if students can complete all assignments and all assessments from the teacher. This is a result of the good character successfully developed by the teacher (Ibrohim et al., 2020).

In its implementation, Civic Education also has a role in efforts to form good character individuals, in elementary school students that teachers can apply in the school environment, namely in exemplary and habituation activities in the school environment such as (Dewi et al., 2021): (1) Students are accustomed to wearing complete uniforms, neat, and guarding their speech, as well as obeying teachers. (2) Students are accustomed to discipline by arriving at the right time, completing, and submitting assignments on time, not cheating during exams, carrying out duties according to the schedule, and being responsible for what has been done. (3) Students are also always taught to be diligent in worship according to their beliefs, caring for each other, loving the surrounding environment such as not littering.

In addition, in its learning, civic education has the essence of an effort to develop a character-based personality, which is a conscious effort to develop self-identity in students' obligations in efforts to defend the country because in its learning, civic education educates students to: (1) Have a love for the homeland, (2) Have awareness of being a nation and state, (3) Have a firm belief in Pancasila as the basis of the state, (4) Have the ability to defend the country, and (5) Be a good student and have a character that is willing to sacrifice.

Based on the explanation of the results of the researcher's analysis above, with civic education taught in civic education learning Based on proper education, and habits implemented daily, it will produce students with good character, therefore character education in elementary schools must be instilled through civic education lessons, because it has a very large role for human life with good character.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Civics Education plays a crucial role in shaping character in elementary school children. In its teaching, Civics Education teaches elementary school children to develop good character, be respectful, responsible, disciplined, independent, creative, polite, democratic, and possess a strong sense of nationalism.

The role of Civics Education is crucial at every level of school, but it is particularly influential if instilled from elementary school age. To develop good character, it must be instilled from an early age, so that when children grow up, the character has already been formed. This aligns with what is taught in Civics Education, which teaches moral values in social life that will encourage elementary school students in the form of behavior, in accordance with the surrounding environmental factors. Therefore, a person of character is very important because it is needed in the future as capital to build the nation and state towards a better direction.

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