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Teacher Creativity in Enhancing Civic Literacy at State Junior High School 3 of Manipa Islands

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Abstract
Cultivating civic literacy in remote archipelagic schools remains challenging due to severe textbook shortages (35 books for 215 students) and conventional lecturing methods that still dominate approximately 70% of instruction. Addressing the demands of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, this study aims to analyze the creativity of Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) teachers in enhancing students' civic literacy at SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through non-participant classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the PPKn teacher, principal, and students, and lesson plan analysis, then evaluated via Miles and Huberman's interactive model. Findings reveal that the teacher fosters civic comprehension and character by contextualizing lessons with local gotong royong traditions, deploying varied participatory methods (mock elections, debates, role-plays), utilizing adaptive digital and print media despite connectivity constraints, and implementing project-based assessments. Unlike prior studies emphasizing high-end digital infrastructure or single-method interventions, this research contributes a replicable, three-dimensional framework demonstrating that pedagogical adaptability outweighs technological sophistication. Practically, these findings offer an actionable instructional model for educators in resource-constrained island regions while reinforcing social constructivist theory in civic education.

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Introduction

Creativity is a cognitive process undertaken by individuals to generate novel ideas, products, or modes of communication that ultimately become integrated into their personal identity (Waritsman, 2020). It reflects an individual's capacity to act uniquely, produce capabilities that diverge from conventional norms, and demonstrate fluency, originality, and flexibility in generating distinct concepts. Fostering creativity from an early age is crucial, as it positively influences various developmental domains, including linguistic, cognitive, psychomotor, moral, spiritual, social, emotional, and artistic competencies (Fatmawati, 2020). Within the classroom, student comprehension and teacher creativity are intricately linked; students tend to grasp subject matter more effectively when it is delivered creatively. Consequently, encouraging creative engagement in an enjoyable learning environment yields motivated, active learners who sustain efficient learning trajectories, thereby optimizing educational outcomes. Teachers possess specialized pedagogical attributes and bear the substantial responsibility of guiding students toward intellectual and personal maturity (Waritsman, 2020). Beyond merely transmitting knowledge, teachers must act as holistic educators (Burhan & Saugad, 2021). Enhancing students' civic literacy requires educators to adopt innovative instructional approaches. Civic literacy. It defined as the capacity to understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship constitutes a foundational competency required of every citizen in the contemporary era. A core facet of a teacher's pedagogical competence is the ability to teach creatively, utilizing instructional strategies that render the classroom engaging and dynamic while enabling students to analyze problems and synthesize ideas from diverse knowledge sources.

In educational contexts, creativity refers to the ability to cultivate potential beyond conventional intelligence and generate fresh, efficient solutions to pedagogical challenges (Suhardi, 2018). A creative teacher is adept at articulating original concepts and transforming existing instructional elements into meaningful learning experiences. To stimulate student interest, teachers must deploy engaging and innovative strategies (Minsih, 2018). Teacher professionalism and creativity are mutually reinforcing; professional educators are better equipped to develop tailored instructional resources and scaffold complex material so that it is accessible to all learners, enabling students to reach their full potential. Because teaching is a complex endeavor intersecting with multiple educational dimensions, educators must remain prepared to integrate contemporary learning models, techniques, and media into their lesson plans (Minsih, 2018; Gultom, 2025).

According to Yuliah (2025), civic literacy encompasses students' ability to comprehend, rationalize, and apply the fundamental principles of national and state life in their daily routines. This includes democratic participation, respect for diversity, awareness of social and national issues, and knowledge of civic rights and obligations. Formally, the Pancasila and Civic Education (*Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* or PPKn) curriculum serves as the primary vehicle for instilling civic literacy to shape informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. In practice, however, civic literacy has not been fully integrated into school-based learning processes (Yuliah, 2025). Many students rely on rote memorization of civic concepts but struggle to operationalize them in real-world contexts. At this juncture, teacher creativity becomes

indispensable in translating theoretical jargon into contextual, participatory, and meaningful learning experiences.

Challenges in cultivating civic awareness are further compounded by globalization and rapid advancements in digital technology. Contemporary students navigate an unprecedented, uncurated influx of information (Natsir, 2025), exposing many to misinformation, radicalism, and intolerance that run counter to national ideals. Under these conditions, civic literacy is vital for equipping youth with critical thinking skills, analytical discernment, civilized civic conduct, and a resilient moral compass. Despite the inclusion of civic literacy within the PPKn curriculum, students' practical grasp of civic principles remains deficient, largely because they struggle to connect classroom material to their lived experiences (Karima, 2024). Instruction that remains overly theoretical and teacher-centered inhibits the optimal development of civic literacy, resulting in student attitudes and behaviors that insufficiently reflect tolerance, cooperation, and social concern.

Furthermore, a persistent disconnect exists between classroom instruction and students' civic behavior within their communities. Students often exhibit low active participation in initiatives fostering social awareness and democratic engagement. Yet, civic literacy extends beyond cognitive knowledge; it encompasses the dispositions and skills requisite for constructive social interaction in both school and society. Bridging this gap necessitates a contextual, active, and applied pedagogical approach. At SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa and similar remote or archipelagic schools, these challenges are magnified. Homogeneous social environments, restricted access to information, and inadequate learning facilities can constrain students' civic awareness and knowledge, demanding localized strategies for developing civic literacy. Schools serve as critical institutions for systematically and sustainably nurturing national values through life-relevant civic instruction.

Beyond formal classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, such as group discussions, community-based initiatives, student organizations, and social projects, offer valuable avenues for practicing active citizenship. In archipelagic institutions like SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa, local cultural capital, including community values, traditional deliberations, and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), can be leveraged as contextual pedagogical tools. Given the distinct sociocultural backgrounds, geographical isolation, and limited informational access of its students, SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa faces unique hurdles in advancing civic literacy, requiring teachers to exercise high adaptability and creativity in their instructional methods, media, and techniques.

Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa identified two primary barriers impeding the enhancement of students' civic literacy. First, access to comprehensive and contextual PPKn learning resources is severely restricted; school library records indicate that only 35 civic education textbooks are available for a student body of 215, limiting students' reference materials and exposure to contemporary civic issues. Second, instructional delivery remains predominantly conventional. Interviews with the school principal revealed that approximately 70% of classroom instruction still relies on traditional lecturing and basic assignments, with minimal effort directed toward cultivating critical, analytical, and participatory thinking. Conversely, genuine civic literacy requires students to engage in

reflective thinking, comprehend their constitutional rights and duties, and participate actively in societal and national life.

Addressing these challenges is particularly urgent amid the phased nationwide implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Emancipated Curriculum) at the junior high school level. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* mandates student-centered, contextual, and differentiated instruction tailored to learners' needs, interests, and potential. It also prioritizes strengthening the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile), prominently featuring "Global Diversity" (*Berkebinekaan Global*) and "Critical Reasoning" (*Bernalar Kritis*), two core competencies of civic literacy. Within PPKn instruction, this curriculum requires teachers to adopt creative and innovative strategies to foster active student engagement, relevant national insight, and reflective reasoning on social and civic issues. Accordingly, teacher creativity in designing PPKn instruction is both vital and strategic. This study therefore aims to examine the extent to which teachers implement creative, contextual, and participatory instructional approaches aligned with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and to evaluate their impact on students' civic comprehension and awareness at SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of teacher creativity in enhancing students' civic literacy. This approach was selected to capture the phenomenon naturally within its authentic field context. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa, West Seram Regency (Kabupaten Seram Bagian Barat), Maluku, Indonesia. The primary research subjects were PPKn teachers directly involved in teaching civic literacy. Data were collected using three primary techniques: (1) non-participant observation during classroom instruction, (2) semi-structured interviews with PPKn teachers, the school principal, and students, and (3) document analysis of instructional planning materials (lesson plans). Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, comprising three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure data trustworthiness and validity, methodological and source triangulation were conducted by cross-checking findings across observations, interviews, and instructional documents.

Results and Discussion

Results

Based on classroom observations conducted on Monday, November 16, 2025, lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran* [RPP]) for Grades VII through IX were structured around three core components: learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment. In an interview, Ms. Irny Abdul Rahman, S.Pd., a Grade VII Pancasila and Civic Education teacher, explained her instructional design approach:

> I design lessons using a contextual approach. Rather than focusing solely on theory, I look for tangible examples from everyday life that align with the topic. For instance, when discussing tolerance or citizens' rights and obligations, I connect the material to local occurrences, such as village gotong royong activities

> or news reports about differences of opinion resolved peacefully. (I. A. Rahman, personal communication, 2025)

This account was corroborated by Mr. Boneventura Mungga, the school principal, who expressed his appreciation for the teacher's instructional creativity:

> I deeply appreciate the creativity of our PPKn teacher, particularly Ms. Irny Abdul Rahman, S.Pd. She does not merely deliver content from textbooks; she genuinely designs instruction that resonates with students' daily lives. Students are actively engaged in discussions, classroom projects, and reflections on social issues, which significantly helps cultivate national character and awareness from an early age. (B. Mungga, personal communication, 2025)

Students also reported positive learning experiences resulting from these creative instructional strategies. Rina Syarif, a Grade VII student, described her learning experience as follows:

> In my opinion, the way our teacher teaches is different from other subjects. We frequently hold discussions, and sometimes we create videos or presentations. As a result, we learn about our nation and state not only from books, but also from real-life events. (R. Syarif, personal communication, 2025)

Similarly, Rara Sasya Tomia, a Grade VIII student, highlighted the relevance of contextual learning activities:

> Yes, because we occasionally discuss news or events happening in our village. Our teacher asks for our opinions and then explains how they relate to the lesson material. This makes me feel that the subject is important and useful. (R. S. Tomia, personal communication, 2025)

At the beginning of formal secondary education, developing students' civic character is particularly important, especially through Pancasila and Civic Education. During this developmental stage, teachers play a strategic role as mentors and role models who guide students in internalizing national values. Given the dynamic nature of character development among seventh-grade students, innovative and engaging pedagogical strategies are essential. Regarding this, Ms. Irny Abdul Rahman, S.Pd., explained:

I consistently link subject matter to daily events within the students' environment. For example, when teaching Pancasila values, I invite students to carry out small collaborative projects, such as gotong royong to clean the classroom or designing posters promoting tolerance. (I. A. Rahman, personal communication, 2025)

Principal Boneventura Mungga further emphasized the importance of these practical initiatives in shaping students' civic character:

PPKn teachers bear a major responsibility in character formation. At our school, the PPKn teacher is highly proactive and creative in delivering lessons. She does not focus exclusively on theoretical knowledge, but assigns tasks and activities involving direct practical application in students' everyday lives. (B. Mungga, personal communication, 2025)

Discussion

Effective PPKn instruction demands a holistic approach integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The findings demonstrate that the PPKn teacher exhibits high creativity in designing meaningful learning experiences tailored to students' lived realities, incorporating group discussions, role-playing, debates, and mock elections. This aligns with Munandar (2009), who posits that teacher creativity is characterized by the capacity to generate novel methods and adapt instruction to meet learners' needs. Rather than relying on conventional lecturing, the teacher embeds social realities directly into the curriculum. Specifically, instructional methods are differentiated according to topic characteristics: mock elections are utilized to teach democratic principles; social conflict role-plays foster tolerance; group discussions and presentations facilitate the analysis of citizens' rights and duties; and classroom debates sharpen argumentation skills and empathy toward dissenting viewpoints (Gultom, 2025). These interactive methods make PPKn dynamic, enabling students to construct critical and applied understanding. This practice substantiates Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist learning theory, wherein learners construct knowledge through experiential engagement and social interaction.

Student interviews confirm that these strategies yield tangible cognitive and behavioral gains. Students reported a clearer grasp of democracy, tolerance, and civic responsibilities because concepts were anchored in authentic situations. Furthermore, classroom dynamics became participatory, reducing student disengagement and fostering positive behavioral shifts, including increased self-confidence, willingness to articulate opinions, active listening, and environmental stewardship. These outcomes indicate that instruction successfully transcends knowledge transmission to actively forge national character. This aligns with Djabidi (as cited in Sari, 2019), who emphasizes that effective classroom management entails creating and sustaining optimal learning conditions, as well as Darmadi (as cited in Yogica et al., 2020, p. 48), who notes that varied instructional methods are essential for achieving learning objectives efficiently.

A second dimension of teacher creativity lies in the adaptive use of instructional media. Moving beyond traditional chalkboards and scarce textbooks, the teacher leverages visual and digital resources, including educational videos, infographics, online news articles, PowerPoint, YouTube, and interactive platforms such as Wordwall and Canva. Crucially, when confronted with intermittent internet connectivity in an island setting, the teacher demonstrated resourcefulness by printing news articles and visual materials for group discussions. This illustrates that pedagogical creativity is driven less by infrastructural abundance than by educator initiative and adaptability.

Consistent with Munandar (2009), these media serve not merely as passive visual aids, but as catalysts for dialogue, reflection, and value internalization. For example, viewing videos on Indonesian cultural diversity transitions into student-led poster campaigns advocating social harmony, while news reports on social conflicts prompt collaborative problem-solving discussions. Similarly, the teacher's assessment strategies reflect creative innovation. As Suparno (2007) asserts, creative evaluation provides a more comprehensive portrait of student achievement, capturing social skills, empathy, and civic responsibility. Students responded enthusiastically to performance-based assessments, such as producing videos on local *gotong*

royong or presenting group analyses of community disputes, over traditional written tests. Consequently, assessment functions not merely as a measurement tool, but as a mechanism for character reinforcement and contextual learning. Overall, teacher creativity serves as a primary determinant in cultivating civic literacy, defined by Yuliah (2025) as the foundational capacity to comprehend and exercise one's rights and duties as a citizen.

Cultivating Civic Character and Theoretical Implications. A primary mandate of PPKn is civic character formation. The teacher's integration of digital quizzes, Pancasila value infographics, and guided educational media aligns with Heinich et al. (2005), who emphasize that appropriate instructional media enhance motivation, clarify abstract concepts, and bridge theory and practice. When guided ethically, media becomes a potent instrument for moral and civic socialization. These findings corroborate Wardani and Kristin (2021) regarding the efficacy of contextual learning in PPKn, while extending the literature by demonstrating that contextualization simultaneously builds cognitive comprehension and national character through experiential learning. Unlike Sari and Purnama (2021), who examined single-method efficacy, this study highlights that a multi-method repertoire is superior for fostering holistic civic understanding. Furthermore, while Lestari and Handayani (2022) underscored the importance of teacher creativity, the present study identifies three replicable dimensions of creativity: contextual lesson design, adaptive media utilization, and performance-based assessment. In contrast to Wijaya et al. (2021), who focused heavily on advanced digital technology integration, our findings reveal that in resource-constrained archipelagic environments, pedagogical adaptability and methodological innovation outweigh technological sophistication. Ultimately, this provides empirical support for Yuliah's (2022) assertion that civic literacy is effectively nurtured through creative, contextually grounded pedagogy.

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged proportionally. First, the investigation was confined to a single junior high school in an archipelagic region with distinct geographical and sociocultural characteristics; thus, generalizing these findings to dissimilar contexts requires caution and further comparative inquiry. Second, reliance on qualitative interview data carries inherent risks of respondent subjectivity and researcher interpretation bias, despite triangulation efforts. Third, due to its cross-sectional timeframe, this study did not measure the longitudinal impact of teacher creativity on students' civic character retention after graduating from junior high school.

Conclusion

This study analyzed teacher creativity in enhancing students' civic literacy at SMP Negeri 3 Kepulauan Manipa. The primary findings indicate that PPKn teachers employ contextual and innovative instructional strategies—including collaborative discussions, simulations, adaptive digital and print media, and project-based assessments—that effectively elevate students' civic comprehension, classroom participation, and character development. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the application of social constructivism within PPKn pedagogy. Practically, the study offers a replicable pedagogical model for educators in remote or resource-limited archipelagic regions to overcome textbook and infrastructural deficits. Institutional support from school leadership and participatory classroom approaches prove essential for ensuring that national and civic values are deeply internalized by students.

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Authors' Note

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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