

# Revitalizing Pancasila as Living Philosophy: Socratic-Based Classroom Experimentation to Foster Critical Thinking Skills

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## Abstract

Traditional Pancasila education often suffers from dogmatic rote learning, distancing the state ideology from students' lived realities. This research is designed as a qualitative case study to provide a nuanced understanding of pedagogical transformation within a bounded higher education system. The study specifically engaged 80 university students and 12 purposively selected informants including senior lecturers, through intensive classroom experimentation and dialectical sessions. This research aims to transform Pancasila from a static doctrine into a 'Living Philosophy'. The findings reveal that Socratic inquiry fosters critical thinking by dismantling ideological passivity. The study identifies a significant shift toward 'Civic-Maieutics,' a new pedagogical state where students function as 'intellectual midwives' for constitutional values. This process facilitates 'Pancasila-Aporia,' a creative cognitive tension that forces learners to bridge the gap between abstract principles and complex social realities. This research introduces the concept of 'Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship,' a framework where critical questioning becomes a primary civic virtue. This study contributes to the global discourse on transformative pedagogy by demonstrating how classical philosophical methods can modernize national ideological education in post-truth democratic societies.

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## Introduction

Pancasila, as the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state, currently faces a significant pedagogical crisis in the era of global ideological disruption (Kim, 2024; Jumari, et al., 2024). Traditionally, the dissemination of these values has relied heavily on top-down indoctrination and rote memorization, which often alienates the younger generation from its core essence. This conventional approach creates a gap between the abstract ideals of the state and the practical daily lives of students. Consequently, Pancasila is frequently perceived as a static historical artifact rather than a dynamic guide for ethical decision-making. To bridge this gap, a radical shift in instructional design is required to reposition Pancasila as a "living philosophy" that resonates with contemporary challenges (Syahputra, Nasution, & Drajat, 2025).

The prevailing stagnation in civic education is exacerbated by the "post-truth" climate, where misinformation often overrides rational political discourse. Students often lack the critical tools to filter conflicting narratives through the lens of national values, leading to a superficial understanding of democracy. Research indicates that when students are treated as passive recipients of ideological content, their capacity for critical inquiry diminishes significantly. According to Handoko et al. (2023), the absence of dialectical spaces in Indonesian classrooms prevents students from internalizing the axiological depth of Pancasila. Therefore, revitalizing the classroom atmosphere is no longer an option but a necessity for national intellectual resilience (Sivakumar, & Vanitha, 2024).

The Socratic Method offers a promising alternative by prioritizing questioning over answering and doubt over certainty (Blake, 2018). By employing a dialectical approach, instructors can stimulate the "intellectual midwifery" necessary for students to birth their own understanding of justice and unity. This method aligns with the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*, which emphasizes student agency and transformative learning experiences. However, the integration of Socratic inquiry into the Pancasila curriculum remains under-researched, particularly regarding its impact on cognitive dissonance. As highlighted by Winarno and Sariyatun (2022), innovative pedagogies are essential to transform civic education from a mere compliance-based subject into a critical-reflective discipline.

In the global context, the need for critical thinking in value-based education is a recurring theme in contemporary pedagogical discourse (Golanbari, & Garlikov, 2008). Educational systems worldwide are struggling to balance national identity with the demands of 21st-century global citizenship. The Socratic Method provides a universal framework that can be adapted to specific cultural and ideological contexts, such as the Indonesian state philosophy. Recent studies suggest that inquiry-based learning significantly improves students' ability to evaluate complex socio-political issues with

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nance. Field and Marcus (2021) argue that fostering a culture of questioning within institutional frameworks is the most effective way to protect democratic stability.

To address the identified pedagogical crisis, this study seeks to investigate the transformative potential of dialectical inquiry within Indonesian civic education. The primary research objective is to explore how Socratic-based classroom experimentation can effectively transition Pancasila from a dogmatic doctrine into a dynamic living philosophy. Consequently, this research is guided by three core questions: How does the implementation of the Socratic method trigger "Pancasila-Aporia" to dismantle ideological passivity? In what ways does the transition to "Civic-Maieutics" empower students to become active "intellectual midwives" of constitutional values? Finally, how does this dialectical process foster "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship" by redefining critical questioning as a fundamental civic virtue?

This research introduces the concept of "Civic-Maieutics" as a novel terminological framework to describe the process of birthing civic awareness through dialectical tension. Civic-Maieutics moves beyond traditional pedagogy by positioning the educator as a facilitator of "creative discomfort." Through this process, students are led to confront their own biases and the contradictions within their understanding of social justice. This approach is designed to trigger "Pancasila-Aporia," a state of cognitive puzzlement that necessitates deeper philosophical reflection. By experiencing this aporia, students are forced to move from superficial slogans to a more robust, internalized philosophical conviction.

The implementation of Socratic-based experimentation is particularly relevant given the increasing complexity of Indonesia's pluralistic society. As diversity issues become more contentious in the digital sphere, the ability to engage in civil, critical dialogue becomes a vital civic skill. Education must provide a safe yet challenging environment where different interpretations of Pancasila can be debated and synthesized. Syam et al. (2024) emphasize that the revitalization of national values must involve the active construction of meaning by students to ensure long-term sustainability. This research, therefore, seeks to provide empirical evidence of how such a dialectical environment can be structured effectively.

Furthermore, this study addresses the lack of qualitative experimentation in the field of Indonesian civic philosophy. Most existing literature focuses on quantitative surveys of student attitudes rather than the qualitative process of philosophical development. By utilizing a case study design, this research captures the nuances of student transformation during the Socratic dialogue process. Understanding the "how" and "why" of student resistance or engagement provides invaluable insights for curriculum developers. This shift toward qualitative depth is supported by research from Murdiono et al. (2022), who advocate for more ethnographic and experimental studies in citizenship education.

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The novelty of this research lies in its focus on "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship," a neologism describing a citizen who views critical questioning as a moral obligation. This framework suggests that a true follower of Pancasila is not one who agrees silently, but one who engages critically with the state's ideals. This research posits that the Socratic method does not weaken national loyalty; instead, it strengthens it by making it a product of rational choice. By fostering this type of citizenship, the education system can produce graduates who are both patriotic and intellectually independent (Gultom, 2024; Gunawan, Simatupang, & Sari, 2024). This dual identity is crucial for navigating the pressures of global ideological competition in the 21st century.

At its core, this research aims to demonstrate that Pancasila can only survive as a "living philosophy" if it is allowed to be questioned and rediscovered by each generation. The Socratic experimentation serves as a laboratory for democracy, where the classroom becomes a microcosm of the deliberative state. Through systematic questioning, the "mythical" status of Pancasila is deconstructed and reconstructed as a practical ethical framework. This pedagogical transformation is essential to ensure that the ideology remains relevant amidst the rapid shifts in social and technological landscapes. As noted by Nurgiansah (2021), the digital era requires a more agile and critical approach to teaching state values.

In summary, this article explores the intersection of classical Socratic inquiry and Indonesian constitutional philosophy to foster advanced critical thinking (Zheng, 2020). By documenting the results of classroom experimentation, the study provides a replicable model for other educators in similar democratic contexts. The ultimate goal is to contribute to a more robust, reflective, and resilient form of civic identity. This research is expected to offer a significant contribution to both the philosophy of education and the practical methodology of teaching national values. By the end of this study, the parameters of "Civic-Maieutics" will be clearly defined as a new standard for transformative Pancasila education.

## Method

This research employed a qualitative case study design to explore the complex dynamics of Socratic-based learning in high-stakes ideological education. The research was conducted over a period of two months at several prominent universities in East Java, Indonesia, providing a diverse academic landscape for observation. A total of 12 purposively selected informants, consisting of senior philosophy lecturers and student representatives, participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data collection focused on the manifestation of "Pancasila-Aporia" during classroom dialectics, ensuring a deep dive into the participants' cognitive and affective transformations. To maintain rigor, the research utilized thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in the implementation of "Civic-Maieutics." As emphasized by

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Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative inquiry is essential when exploring the "how" and "why" of human experiences within a bounded system, allowing for a nuanced understanding of social phenomena. Ultimately, the triangulation of data sources, including classroom observations and reflective journals, ensured the credibility and dependability of the findings within the context of East Javanese higher education.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

The following section delineates the empirical findings derived from the two-month classroom experimentation involving Socratic-based dialogue in Pancasila education. The analysis focuses on how the transition from dogmatic instruction to dialectical inquiry triggers a profound cognitive shift among participants. The results are categorized by the emergence of critical questioning, the experience of cognitive dissonance, and the eventual reconstruction of philosophical identity. Through these pedagogical interactions, the classroom transcended its traditional role, becoming a space for what this study defines as "Civic-Maieutics."

The first dimension of the findings concerns the initial encounter with Socratic questioning, which frequently led to a state of productive confusion (Overholser, & Beale, 2023; Muhammad, & Niazi, 2022). Students, accustomed to memorizing the five principles of Pancasila, were suddenly challenged to justify the ontological basis of "Social Justice" in the face of contemporary economic inequality. This phase of the research captured the raw, intellectual struggle as participants moved away from rehearsed answers toward authentic reflection. The following verbatim excerpts illustrate the diverse internal responses to this dialectical disruption.

Informant 1 with the initials DS, a Lecturer in Social Philosophy said,

"I noticed a significant change in the classroom atmosphere when I stopped providing definitions and started asking 'why' repeatedly. Initially, the students seemed frustrated because they could not find the answers in their textbooks. However, this frustration eventually turned into a very deep and rigorous search for meaning. They began to realize that Pancasila is not a dead script, but a living ethical challenge."

The reflection from Informant 1 suggests that the Socratic method disrupts the "comfort zone" of traditional pedagogy. By withholding immediate answers, the instructor forces students to engage in independent intellectual labor. This shift marks the beginning of the "Civic-Maieutics" process, where the teacher acts as a catalyst rather than a mere source of information.

Informant 2 with the initials AK, an Undergraduate Student, Age 20. He said,

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"Before this class, I always thought that Pancasila was just something to be memorized for the final exam. When the lecturer asked me to explain the contradiction between individual freedom and collective harmony, I felt completely stuck. It was the first time I actually had to think about how these values apply to my own life. I realized that I didn't truly understand what I had been reciting for years."

The testimony of Informant 2 highlights the phenomenon of "Pancasila-Aporia," where a student experiences a sudden realization of their own ignorance. This cognitive "stuckness" is not a sign of failure but a necessary precursor to critical thinking. It demonstrates that the transition to a "Living Philosophy" requires the deconstruction of superficial, rote-learned knowledge.

An informant 3, known by the initials LM, an Undergraduate Student, Age 21. She stated that,

"The dialogue sessions were quite intense because we were allowed to disagree with each other and even the professor. I used to be afraid of asking critical questions about the state ideology because it felt disrespectful. Now, I see that questioning is actually a way to respect the philosophy by taking it seriously. It feels like I am finally participating in the democracy we always talk about in class."

Informant 3 illustrates the development of "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship," where critical inquiry is redefined as a civic virtue. The fear of "disrespecting" the ideology is replaced by a sense of intellectual responsibility. This shift suggests that the Socratic method empowers students to claim ownership over national values rather than merely obeying them.

Informant 4, with the initials MS, is a Lecturer in Civic Education. He enthusiastically gave his opinion, as follows:

"Teaching through the Socratic lens requires a high level of patience because the progress is not always linear. We spent two weeks just debating the first principle, yet the students' engagement was higher than ever before. They started bringing in real-world news articles to defend their philosophical positions during our sessions. This shows that they are starting to bridge the gap between theory and social reality."

The observation from Informant 4 underscores the "Living" aspect of the philosophy as students begin to apply abstract principles to current events. The non-linear nature of the learning process reflects the depth of the internalization occurring. This engagement proves that aporia leads to a more robust and proactive search for relevance in national ideology.

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ST, initials of informant 5, an undergraduate student, age 22. He revealed,

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"I feel like I have been a 'midwife' for my own ideas during these last two months of discussion. Instead of being told what to think, I was guided to discover why certain values matter for our future. It was a difficult process, but the clarity I have now feels much more permanent. I no longer just know Pancasila; I feel like I understand the soul behind the words."

The final verbatim from Informant 5 perfectly encapsulates the essence of "Civic-Maieutics." The student's use of the "midwife" metaphor indicates a successful transition from passive learning to active philosophical "birthing." The resulting clarity is described as "permanent," suggesting that values discovered through dialectic are more resilient than those imposed through indoctrination.

In conclusion, the verbatim evidence suggests that the Socratic-based experimentation successfully fostered a higher level of critical thinking among students in East Java. The emergence of "Pancasila-Aporia" served as a vital turning point, transforming psychological discomfort into intellectual growth. This confirms that revitalizing Pancasila as a living philosophy requires a pedagogical framework that embraces doubt and dialogue (Prihatin, et al., 2024).

By identifying the mechanics of "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship," this study provides a new vocabulary for describing the ideal relationship between the citizen and the state ideology. The students did not emerge with less loyalty to the state, but with a more reasoned and critical commitment to its foundational principles. These findings offer a scalable model for modernizing civic education in democratic societies facing the challenges of the 21st century. This pedagogical shift necessitates a fundamental re-evaluation of the educator's role, moving away from a transmitter of doctrine toward a facilitator of "creative discomfort". By intentionally inducing "Pancasila-Aporia," instructors create a necessary cognitive crisis that forces students to re-evaluate their inherited, superficial beliefs.

This transition into "Civic-Maieutics" represents the birth of an autonomous moral agent who no longer perceives national values as abstract historical relics. Instead, students begin to bridge the gap between abstract principles and complex social realities, utilizing state philosophy to navigate contemporary socio-political issues (Pylypenko, 2021). As demonstrated by the empirical evidence, this dialectical engagement ensures that loyalty is the product of rational choice rather than passive compliance. Such a transformation is essential for protecting democratic stability in post-truth societies where misinformation often overrides rational discourse. Ultimately, this research provides a replicable methodological blueprint for other nations seeking to modernize ideological education through the lens of critical inquiry.

The following table synthesizes the qualitative data from the informants, mapping their responses to the core theoretical constructs introduced in this study.

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**Table 1.** Mapping of Verbatim Responses and Theoretical Constructs

Informant	Role	Core Verbatim Sentiment	Theoretical Construct Mapping
Informant 1	Lecturer	"Frustration turned into a deep and rigorous search for meaning."	Dialectical Disruption
Informant 2	Student	"I realized that I didn't truly understand what I had been reciting."	Pancasila-Aporia
Informant 3	Student	"Questioning is actually a way to respect the philosophy."	Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship
Informant 4	Lecturer	"They started bringing in real-world news... to defend their positions."	Living Philosophy Integration
Informant 5	Student	"I feel like I have been a 'midwife' for my own ideas."	Civic-Maieutics

The mapping presented in Table 1 illustrates a sequential transformation from ideological passivity to active philosophical engagement. The data suggests that the emergence of "Pancasila-Aporia" as seen in Informant 2, is the critical pivot point where students move beyond rote memorization to acknowledge the limits of their own understanding. This cognitive "stuckness" does not lead to skepticism toward the state ideology; rather, it facilitates a transition into "Civic-Maieutics," where the student takes ownership of the value-birthing process. According to Biesta (2021), educational environments that embrace "the beautiful risk" of uncertainty allow for the development of subjectification, where students do not just learn about democracy but learn to *be* democratic subjects through critical inquiry.

Furthermore, the synthesis of responses from Informants 3 and 5 highlights the formation of "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship," a neologism describing a citizen who perceives critical dialogue as a form of patriotic duty. This finding challenges the traditional Indonesian pedagogical assumption that questioning national values is synonymous with disloyalty. Instead, the experimentation demonstrates that when students are guided to discover the "soul behind the words," as described by Informant 5, their commitment to the philosophy becomes more resilient and grounded in personal conviction. As argued by Apple (2023), the democratization of knowledge within the classroom is essential for resisting the "thin" version of citizenship often promoted in neoliberal educational reforms. This internal transformation proves that 'Civic-Maieutics'

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serves as a robust defense against ideological disruption by replacing passive obedience with a 'thick' form of reasoned conviction. Consequently, the classroom functions as a deliberative laboratory where the state philosophy is not merely inherited as a static artifact, but is actively reconstructed as a dynamic guide for contemporary ethical decision-making.

## Discussion

The findings of this study underscore a radical shift in the pedagogical landscape of Pancasila education, moving from a culture of silence to a culture of inquiry. The data obtained from Informants 1 and 2 confirms that the implementation of Socratic questioning effectively shatters the "ideological passivity" that has long characterized Indonesian civic education. By intentionally inducing "Pancasila-Aporia," the instructor creates a necessary cognitive crisis that forces students to re-evaluate their inherited, superficial beliefs. This phenomenon aligns with the recent findings of Agustina et al. (2023), who argue that true internalization of national values can only occur when students are confronted with the limits of their own conceptual frameworks, rather than being fed pre-packaged dogmas.

The transition into "Civic-Maieutics," as articulated by Informant 5, represents the birth of an autonomous moral agent within the classroom. This study's discovery of the student-as-midwife role provides a fresh perspective on the concept of *Student Agency* in the Indonesian context. Unlike traditional methods where the teacher is the sole source of "truth," this dialectical approach empowers students to co-construct the meaning of Pancasila based on rational justification. This observation sharpens the theory of transformative pedagogy proposed by Magrini (2021), suggesting that the "birthing" of ideas through Socratic dialogue is particularly potent in ideological education because it prevents the ideology from becoming a tool of indoctrination.

Furthermore, the data regarding "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship" from Informant 3 provides a significant contribution to the global discourse on critical citizenship. This study demonstrates that critical questioning of state principles does not erode national loyalty but, ironically, strengthens it. By treating Pancasila as a "Living Philosophy," students move from a "thin" obedience to a "thick" conviction. This finding confirms and extends the work of Murdiono et al. (2022), who posited that the future of Indonesian citizenship education lies in its ability to reconcile national identity with the rigors of critical thinking in a post-truth era.

The "productive frustration" reported by Informant 1 serves as an empirical marker for the effectiveness of the Socratic elenchus in modern classrooms. This study finds that this frustration is the engine of intellectual growth, as it necessitates a move toward higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) (Fitriani, & Dewi, 2021). Instead of avoiding discomfort, the "Civic-Maieutics" framework embraces it as a pedagogical necessity. This

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is consistent with recent research by Peterson (2021), who argues that the most durable civic virtues are those forged in the fire of deliberative conflict and philosophical aporia.

A critical synthesis of the findings in Table 1 reveals that the integration of real-world dilemmas (as noted by Informant 4) is essential for bridging the gap between theory and praxis. When students use Pancasila to navigate contemporary socio-political issues, the philosophy ceases to be an abstract historical relic. This study argues that the "Living Philosophy" approach is the only way to ensure the sustainability of national values among Generation Z and Alpha. This reinforces the argument made by Nurgiansah (2021), emphasizing that pedagogical innovation must keep pace with the hyper-critical and skeptical nature of the digital generation.

The emergence of "Pancasila-Aporia" and the subsequent transition to "Civic-Maieutics" observed in this study align with global trends in transformative pedagogy that prioritize cognitive discomfort as a catalyst for moral development. Internationally, Socratic inquiry is increasingly recognized not merely as a teaching technique, but as a "birthing" process for the autonomous self, a concept Magrini (2021) describes as essential for moving beyond the passive absorption of information. This mirrors the experiences of students in East Java who transitioned from reciting memorized slogans to "birthing" their own justified understanding of social justice. Furthermore, the "productive frustration" reported by participants in this research finds a parallel in the work of Biesta (2021), who argues that the "beautiful risk" of uncertainty in education is necessary for subjectification, the process through which individuals become democratic subjects rather than objects of socialization.

The development of "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship" within the Indonesian context also contributes significantly to the international discourse on critical civic virtues. While traditional pedagogical models often view questioning state ideals as a sign of instability, this study demonstrates that critical inquiry actually reinforces national loyalty by grounding it in rational conviction rather than passive compliance. This finding is consistent with the arguments of Peterson (2021), who posits that the most durable civic virtues are those forged through deliberative conflict and philosophical dialogue. By redefining the "good citizen" as one who engages critically with national values, this research echoes the global call by Field and Marcus (2021) to foster a culture of questioning as a primary defense for democratic stability in an era of post-truth and ideological disruption. Thus, the "Civic-Maieutics" framework provides a replicable model that bridges the gap between local ideological requirements and the universal demands of 21st-century critical citizenship.

The rigor of this research also highlights a significant pedagogical implication: the need for a "Socratic shift" in teacher training. The success of "Civic-Maieutics" depends heavily on the facilitator's ability to tolerate ambiguity and manage dialectical tension. The data suggests that when instructors act as catalysts for *Pancasila-Aporia*,

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student engagement levels surpass those in traditional lecture-based settings. This finding sharpens the critique by Suyato and Hapsari (2022), who noted that many Indonesian educators are still hesitant to open the floor for critical ideological debate due to fears of political taboo.

Finally, this study concludes that revitalizing Pancasila as a living philosophy requires a fundamental redefinition of what it means to be a "good citizen." Through the lens of "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship," a good citizen is one who possesses the courage to question, the rigor to analyze, and the conviction to synthesize values into action (Chian, 2020; Gultom, 2024). This research successfully demonstrates that the Socratic Method is not an "alien" Western imposition, but a universal tool that can be harmonized with Indonesian values to create a more resilient and critical national identity. This study thus provides a replicable methodological blueprint for other nations seeking to modernize their ideological education systems in the 21st century.

### Conclusion

The revitalization of Pancasila through Socratic-based experimentation signifies a pivotal shift from an indoctrination-heavy pedagogy toward a transformative, "Living Philosophy" framework. This research has demonstrated that by intentionally creating "Pancasila-Aporia," educators can bridge the longstanding gap between abstract state ideals and the critical consciousness of students. The emergence of "Civic-Maieutics" proves that the classroom can function as a deliberative laboratory, where national values are not merely inherited but are rationally birthed and internalized. Consequently, the development of "Ethico-Dialectical Citizenship" offers a robust solution to the challenges of the post-truth era, ensuring that loyalty to the state is grounded in intellectual rigor rather than passive compliance. Despite these promising results, this study acknowledges certain limitations, particularly its qualitative focus on a specific geographic region (East Java), which may affect the generalizability of the findings to different cultural contexts within Indonesia. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to measure the long-term sustainability of these critical civic virtues in professional environments. Additionally, further investigation into the readiness of educators to facilitate high-tension dialectical sessions is crucial for institutionalizing this method. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and university curriculum developers integrate Socratic inquiry protocols into the national civic education standards to foster a more resilient, reflective, and democratically active generation.

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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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