

Strengthening Legal Literacy and Democratic Citizenship through an Advocacy-Based Approach in Civic Education

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strengthening of synergy between legal literacy and democracy through the integration of legal advocacy and civic education. This study is grounded in the weak legal awareness of citizens, the lack of critical participation in public affairs, and the limited comprehension of constitutional rights and obligations among the younger generation. This research applied a descriptive qualitative approach through literature studies, normative analysis, and case

studies. The data was obtained from literature, interviews, and participatory observations. Thematic analysis was conducted to examine the synergy of legal advocacy and civic education and to explore its effects on legal literacy, civic consciousness, and democratic participation within schools and the wider community. The findings indicated that legal advocacy serves not only as a mechanism for right protection, but also as a pedagogical medium for internalizing the values of democracy, justice, and active citizen participation. The integration of legal advocacy in Civic Education can strengthen *civic knowledge* (legal and civic knowledge), *civic skills* (critical thinking, advocacy, and *problem solving*), and *civic disposition* (democratic attitudes, social responsibility, and concern for justice). In conclusion, legal advocacy-based civic education can foster citizens who, beyond understanding their rights and obligations, also demonstrate the courage and capacity to advance public interests within a democratic framework.

Keywords *legal advocacy, civic education, legal literacy, democracy*

A. Introduction

The integration of legal advocacy and civic education is a strategic need to strengthen legal literacy and the responsibility of citizens in a democracy. The lack of legal literacy often leads society to neglect the understanding and advocacy of its rights and obligations, which in turn weakens democratic participation¹. Civic Education serves to shape citizens' critical knowledge, attitudes, and skills,² while legal advocacy

¹ Lisa Hilbink et al., "Why People Turn to Institutions They Detest: Institutional Mistrust and Justice System Engagement in Uneven Democratic States," *Comparative Political Studies* 55, no. 1 (2022): 3–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140211024299>.

² Pascal Alscher et al., "Civic Education, Teaching Quality and Students' Willingness to Participate in Political and Civic Life: Political Interest and Knowledge as Mediators," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 51, no. 10 (2022): 1886–900, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01639-9>; Frank Reichert et al., "Educational Beliefs Matter for Classroom Instruction: A Comparative Analysis of Teachers' Beliefs about the Aims of Civic Education," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 98 (February 2021): 103248, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103248>.

ensures equal protection and access to justice³. The synergy between civic education and legal advocacy is in line with Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, and Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning National Education System. Through this integration, it is expected that citizens who are legally literate, active, and democratically conscious will emerge.

Citizen participation in a democracy is determined not only by formal political rights, such as the right to vote or be elected, but also by legal understanding and awareness of social responsibility⁴. Political rights without adequate legal literacy tend to be passive and have less impact on the democratic process⁵. Citizens with an understanding of their rights and obligations are able to engage in active and constructive participation, from participating in elections to providing input, criticizing public policies, and participating in responsible decision-making⁶. This understanding includes knowledge of legal regulations, governmental procedures, and social responsibilities. It is inherent to every citizen, ensuring that their participation is not only formal, but also substantive, meaningful, and⁷ ethical.

³ Daryanti Daryanti et al., "Legal and Political Advocacy in Renewable Energy Governance: Strengthening Policy Effectiveness in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Advocacy and Legal Services* 7, no. 1 (2025): 35–70, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijals.v7i1.13039>.

⁴ Zain Rafique et al., "Legal, Political and Administrative Barriers to Citizen Participation in Local Governance: An Inquiry of Local Government Institutions," *International Journal of Public Administration* 46, no. 4 (2023): 256–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2021.1993908>.

⁵ Maartje De Visser, "Promoting Constitutional Literacy: What Role for Courts?," *German Law Journal* 23, no. 8 (2022): 1121–38, <https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2022.73>.

⁶ Hanna Hämäläinen and Janne Salminen, "Inclusive Participation in Law-Making: Good Governance or a Constitutional Obligation?," *The Theory and Practice of Legislation* 13, no. 2 (2025): 213–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20508840.2025.2513176>.

⁷ Claudia Zilla, "Defining Democratic Inclusion from the Perspective of Democracy and Citizenship Theory," *Democratization* 29, no. 8 (2022): 1518–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2090929>.

Legal literacy is the key to the creation of a critical and empowered society⁸. With legal literacy, citizens are able to recognize their rights and limitations, understand legal procedures, and protect themselves from unfair practices. Good legal literacy allows citizens to utilize political rights optimally and act as agents of change in strengthening democracy⁹. In addition, legal literacy encourages a collective awareness of legal compliance, transparency, and accountability¹⁰. With a strong foundation of legal literacy and social responsibility, democratic participation becomes formal, intelligent, critical, and constructive.

A comparison of legal literacy between Indonesia and other countries shows that there remains a considerable gap. The level of legal literacy of the Indonesian people is still relatively low. The Indonesian Legal Needs Survey (ILNS) conducted by the National Legal Development Agency (BPHN) of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in 2019 revealed that only around 38% of the population understood basic legal procedures, while more than 60% of respondents admitted being confused or unaware of how to resolve the legal problems they faced¹¹. Other data from the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) reinforces this finding, showing that most citizens still rely on third parties (such as community leaders or village officials) rather than utilizing formal legal channels¹². This condition has a direct impact on

⁸ Anuradha Joshi, "Legal Empowerment and Social Accountability: Complementary Strategies Toward Rights-Based Development in Health?," *World Development* 99 (November 2017): 160–72, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.07.008>.

⁹ Celestina Ekene Chukwudi et al., "E-Government and Democracy: A Boost to Sustainable Development," *JPPUMA Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan Dan Sosial Politik Universitas Medan Area* 11, no. 2 (2023): 110–18, <https://doi.org/10.31289/jppuma.v11i2.10651>.

¹⁰ Alalddin Al-Tarawneh et al., "Translating Governance and Legal Compliance: Exploring the Role of Translation in Facilitating Corporate Reporting and Policy Implementation," *Corporate Law and Governance Review* 6, no. 3 (2024): 27–36, <https://doi.org/10.22495/clgrv6i3p3>.

¹¹ National, the Legal Development Agency, and the MINISTRY OF LAW AND Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia. "bphn." *Retrieved March 3rd* (2023).

¹² Larashati Putri and Mochammad Najib Imanullah, "Kajian Sosiologi Hukum Tentang Tingkat Kepercayaan Masyarakat Terhadap Aparat Penegak Hukum," *Jurnal Hukum Dan Pembangunan Ekonomi* 11, no. 1 (2023): 162, <https://doi.org/10.20961/hpe.v11i1.68099>.

the prevalence of rights violations, illegal levies, and the vulnerability of marginalized groups to legal injustice. Low legal literacy also affects the younger generation; a¹³ 2020 survey by UNICEF¹⁴ and Bappenas on youth participation found that most high school students did not understand their legal rights as children nor the complaint procedures when experiencing discrimination or violence. Conversely, countries with strong *legal literacy* traditions show different achievements. In Canada, for example, the *Department of Justice* in 2020 reported that more than 70% of its citizens had a basic understanding of personal legal rights and court procedures, largely obtained through civic education in schools and community legal literacy programs¹⁵. Meanwhile, in the UK, the *Public Legal Education (PLE)* program integrated in the curriculum since 2010 has succeeded in improving students' legal skills, where the 2019 *Law for Life* report stated that more than 65% of secondary school students were able to identify basic legal procedures related to contracts, consumer protection, and citizen rights¹⁶.

The comparison of legal literacy between Indonesia, Canada, and the United Kingdom—which are often cited to justify the urgency of reform—actually contain fundamental epistemological flaws that must not be overlooked. The 2019 ILNS-BPHN data, which indicates that only 38% of citizens understand basic legal procedures, cannot be interpreted as a reflection of a single failure of the education system, as the survey was designed within the framework of court-based dispute resolution—a construct that is structurally biased toward urban populations with high levels of formal education—while the majority of respondents actually come from communities that resolve conflicts

¹³ Tomson Sabungan Silalahi, *Pemuda milenial: 60 opini pilihan lomba tingkat nasional* (CV Jejak, 2019).

¹⁴ Ilham Mahmud Farikiansyah et al., “Meningkatkan Partisipasi Pemilu Melalui Literasi Politik Pemuda Milenial Dalam Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan,” *Journal of Education Research* 5, no. 4 (2024): 6512–23, <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i4.793>.

¹⁵ Andrew Pilliar, *Understanding the Market for Personal Legal Services to Improve Access to Civil Justice in Canada*, version 1, University of British Columbia, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0394721>.

¹⁶ Richard H. Grimes, *Public Legal Education: The Role of Law Schools in Building a More Legally Literate Society*, Emerging Legal Education (Routledge, 2021).

through legitimate customary mechanisms not captured by the survey's instruments. Directly comparing these figures with reports from Canada (70%) and the UK (65%) is also a serious comparative fallacy: Canada measures rights awareness within an established common law system with legal aid infrastructure that is incomparable to Indonesia's, while the UK report explicitly limits its sample to students who have completed the Public Legal Education curriculum rather than the general population; thus, this comparison of raw figures reflects differences in research design rather than actual differences in citizens' legal capacity.

The public's reliance on community leaders, as noted by LSI, must also be interpreted with greater nuance: this is not merely an indicator of a literacy deficit, but rather an adaptive rationality toward a formal legal system perceived as inaccessible and untrustworthy; thus, the solution lies not only in pursuing procedural literacy rates, but also in simultaneously rebuilding institutional trust. It is within this framework that the synergy between legal advocacy and civic education finds its strongest justification. Article 12 of Law No. 39 of 1999, interpreted through a progressive constitutional lens, must be understood as the state's positive obligation to ensure citizens' actual capacity to understand and defend their rights, thereby making legal literacy not a discretionary policy but a constitutional duty. Law No. 23 of 2014, Articles 12 and 298, specifically allocate regional authority and budgets for community legal empowerment. Meanwhile, Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 3, will only have substantive meaning if the civic education curriculum integrates practical legal competencies, rather than merely the memorization of norms; thus, these three laws collectively compel the state to treat legal literacy not as a side program, but as a fundamental infrastructure of democracy.

Low legal literacy is a major obstacle to effective citizen participation. Many citizens only understand political rights in general without knowing the legal rules governing their rights and obligations, so participation is limited to formal and less substantive activities¹⁷.

¹⁷ Pamela M. Buchan et al., "Marine Citizenship: The Right to Participate in the Transformation of the Human-Ocean Relationship for Sustainability," *PLOS*

Insufficient knowledge of legal mechanisms, procedures for submitting aspirations, or legally protected rights hinders citizens in navigating the legal system and public policy, resulting in participation that tends to be passive or dependent on others. Moreover, the lack of legal literacy weakens citizens' understanding of basic rights and social obligations, potentially leading to conflicts, abuse of rights, and a decline in the quality of democratic interaction.¹⁸ Finally, ineffective participation results in less responsive public policies, less transparent governance, and inclusive decision-making. Therefore, low legal literacy harms individuals while weakening the democratic system.

Civic education plays a strategic role in shaping law-aware, responsible, and democratic citizens¹⁹. In addition to providing theoretical understanding, this education instills practical awareness of the rights and obligations of citizens in community life. Through this approach, citizens become more active, critical, and able to make ethical decisions in a socio-political context. Civic education equips citizens with an understanding of ethical principles, rights and responsibilities, and familiarity with legal regulations, social norms, and democratic values, thereby ensuring that their actions are consistent with the norms upheld in²⁰²¹ society. Furthermore, this education encourages critical

ONE 18, no. 3 (2023): e0280518,
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0280518>.

- ¹⁸ Hadi Nouri et al., "The Role of Citizen Education and Awareness of Laws, Regulations, and Civil Rights in Observing Civil Rights During the Crime Investigation Process," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics* 3, no. 2 (2024): 140–57, <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.isslp.3.2.17>.
- ¹⁹ Handi Kurniyawan and Sri Wahyuni Tanshzil, "Strategy of Civic Education Teachers in Building Awareness and Legal Compliance for the Younger Generation," *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences* 16, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.20473/ijss.v16i2.55927>.
- ²⁰ Anouk Zuurmond et al., "Learning to Question the Status Quo. Critical Thinking, Citizenship Education and *Bildung* in Vocational Education," *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 76, no. 5 (2024): 1185–204, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2023.2166573>.
- ²¹ Naji Alenezi and Maha Alfaleh, "Enhancing Digital Citizenship Education in Saudi Arabian Elementary Schools: Designing Effective Activities for Curriculum Integration," *Frontiers in Education* 9 (November 2024): 1494487, <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1494487>.

and analytical thinking skills that are essential for evaluating public policy and participating in decision-making.

Civic education provides a normative foundation as well as practice in internalizing democratic values²². Normative foundations include an understanding of human rights, constitutions, and principles of justice. While the practice is realized through active involvement in social activities, community organizations, or participatory forums²³. The combination of the two allows citizens to internalize the value of democracy as a whole. With a holistic approach, civic education equips citizens to exercise rights responsibly, respect the rights of others, and play an active role in strengthening democracy²⁴. Citizens are not only law-abiding, but also critical of unjust policies, and capable of contributing to the creation of a civilized, inclusive, and participatory society²⁵. Overall, civic education is the foundation for the formation of law-aware and ethically democratic citizens. This integration of values, knowledge, and skills serves as the primary foundation for effective, constructive, and sustainable participation within the democratic system.

The integration of legal advocacy with citizenship education allows citizens to gain legal knowledge as well as practical skills in applying

²² Gregory White et al., "The Future of Civic Education: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 705, no. 1 (2023): 249–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162231193538>.

²³ Dian Ekawaty Ismail et al., "The Concept of Revitalizing Traditional Institutions in the Criminal Law System to Realize Restorative Justice," *Jambura Law Review* 5, no. 2 (2023): 220–34, <https://doi.org/10.33756/jlr.v5i2.11682>.

²⁴ Zerihun Takele Ayane and Dawit Mekonnen Mihiretie, "Developing Good Person and Citizen through Civic and Ethical Education in Ethiopia: A Content Analysis of Secondary School Textbooks," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 10 (2024): 100913, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100913>.

²⁵ Andreas Hackl, "Good Immigrants, Permitted Outsiders: Conditional Inclusion and Citizenship in Comparison," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 6 (2022): 989–1010, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.2011938>. See also Yohanes Rumbiak, Paulus Pattipeilohy, and Ester Latuconsina. "Ethnic Minority Education and Access to Public Services in Eastern Indonesia: A Justice Perspective". *Indonesian Minority Justice Review* 2, no. 4 (2025) <https://doi.org/10.65815/43g2z057>.

democratic principles²⁶. The approach underscores not merely a theoretical comprehension of legal rules and procedures, but also the capacity to apply them in daily practice. Thus, citizens' rights and obligations can be exercised effectively and responsibly. Legal advocacy serves as a bridge between theory and practice, guiding citizens to recognize rights, understand legal mechanisms, and overcome obstacles in the legal process²⁷. Meanwhile, civic education instills awareness of values and social responsibility, shaping critical, ethical, and democratic attitudes²⁸. The synergy of these two approaches strengthens the legal culture, encourages constructive participation, and builds an empowered, just, and participatory society.

This integrated approach ensures that citizens are not only objects of law, but also active agents of change in democracy. Adequate legal literacy allows citizens to critically assess public policy, guard law enforcement, and avoid the practice of injustice²⁹. Meanwhile, civic awareness forms social responsibility, respects norms and ethics, and encourages active involvement in community life³⁰. The combination of legal literacy and civic education makes citizen participation meaningful and responsible³¹. The integration of these two approaches becomes the

²⁶ Riya Anjarsari et al., "Implementing The Role of NGOs In Curricular and Societal Civic Education Through Political Literacy," *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 2, no. 2 (2023): 32–44, <https://doi.org/10.31098/jsetp.v2i2.1997>.

²⁷ Ajaz Tanveer and Raj Kumar, "Clinical Legal Education: Bridging Theory and Practice Through Experiential Learning and Client-Centered Skills," preprint, Law, May 14, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.33774/coe-2025-f0rd7>.

²⁸ Muhammad Younas and Muhammad Imran, "Multiple Modalities of Teaching Civic Education Awareness among Students: A Pragmatic Approach-Based Case Study," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2460967, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2460967>.

²⁹ Bart Custers, "The Right to Break the Law? Perfect Enforcement of the Law Using Technology Impedes the Development of Legal Systems," *Ethics and Information Technology* 25, no. 4 (2023): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-023-09737-3>.

³⁰ Syed Ali Raza et al., "Whether Organizational Citizenship Behavior Is Triggered by Employee CSR Perception and Spiritual Values: The Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethics," *Management Research Review* 47, no. 3 (2024): 353–73, <https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-10-2022-0714>.

³¹ Martha Shaw, "Worldview Literacy as Intercultural Citizenship Education: A Framework for Critical, Reflexive Engagement in Plural Democracy," *Education*,

foundation for the creation of a healthy and sustainable democracy, where citizens are able to uphold justice, play an active role in decision making, and maintain the quality of socio-political life. In sum, the application of this integrated approach reinforces individual capacities and elevates the quality of the democratic system, thereby establishing legally conscious and democratically principled citizens as the cornerstone of a just, participatory, and sustainable society.

While legal literacy and civic education have been extensively researched in isolation, the systematic study of their integration as a means to reinforce citizens' participation and responsibility within a democratic context remains limited. Some previous studies³² has largely focused on legal comprehension or civic values in isolation, thereby offering insufficient practical strategies for the comprehensive implementation of democratic principles. Previous studies between *law and citizenship education are law-related education*³³, *legal education orientation that integrates citizen ethics in legal education*³⁴, and the law has a moral instrument of social responsibility³⁵. Moreover, comparative

Citizenship and Social Justice 18, no. 2 (2023): 197–213, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17461979211062125>.

³² Nouri et al., "The Role of Citizen Education and Awareness of Laws, Regulations, and Civil Rights in Observing Civil Rights During the Crime Investigation Process." See also Adis Merdzanovic and Kalypso Nicolaidis, "Advocacy for a Citizen-centric Rule of Law Agenda: How Do We Bring the Rule of Law to Life?," *European Law Journal* 27, nos. 1–3 (2021): 297–305, <https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12385>; Jos C.N. Raadschelders and Miriam M. Chitiga, "Ethics Education in the Study of Public Administration: Anchoring to Civility, Civics, Social Justice, and Understanding Government in Democracy," *Journal of Public Affairs Education* 27, no. 4 (2021): 398–415, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2021.1954468>; Jagad Aditya Dewantara et al., "Anti-Corruption Education as an Effort to Form Students with Character Humanist and Law-Compliant," *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan* 18, no. 1 (2021): 70–81, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jc.v18i1.38432>.

³³ David T. Naylor, "Educating for Citizenship with Law-related Education," *Theory Into Practice* 20, no. 3 (1981): 194–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405848109542952>.

³⁴ Julian Webb, "Ethics for Lawyers or Ethics for Citizens? New Directions for Legal Education," *Journal of Law and Society* 25, no. 1 (1998): 134–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6478.00084>.

³⁵ Plant, Raymond. "TH Green: Citizenship, education and the law." In *The University and Public Education*, pp. 33 Routledge.

perspectives reveal that European legal curricula prepare students to become *global citizens*, whereas in China civic education curricula have shifted to integrate democracy, legal education, and psychological health³⁶.

Global data in the practice of *Clinical Legal Education* (CLE) in the UK, *Law in the Community* module at Northumbria University assigns law students to be directly involved in community legal services through *Citizens Advice*, which is proven to improve students' professional skills while expanding access to public justice³⁷. In India, CLE develops through a real-client *clinic model* and free legal services for the poor, which strengthen interview skills, legal research, and document preparation, despite the constraints of institutional support³⁸. In the United States, the *Community Legal Information Center (CLIC)* at California State University provides legal information services to the public, resulting in a meaningful contextual learning experience³⁹. Meanwhile, in the UK there is also a growing *Street Law* model at King's College London, which places students as legal educators in communities, including prisons and schools, to improve public legal literacy and justice awareness.⁴⁰

³⁶ Minghua Zhong and Wing On Lee, "Citizenship Curriculum in China: A Shifting Discourse towards Chinese Democracy, Law Education and Psychological Health," in *Citizenship Curriculum in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. David L. Grossman et al. (Springer Netherlands, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8745-5_4.

³⁷ Lyndsey Bengtsson et al., "The Law In The Community Module At Northumbria University- Working In Partnership With Citizens Advice As An Effective Teaching Tool," *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education* 28, no. 1 (2021): 111–48, <https://doi.org/10.19164/ijcle.v28i1.1129>.

³⁸ J Kumar and J Jalukdar, "Clinical Legal Education in India. International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation," *International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation* 2, no. 3 (2020): 383-94.

³⁹ Mahalley D. Allen et al., "Civic Engagement in the Community: Undergraduate Clinical Legal Education," *Journal of Political Science Education* 8, no. 1 (2012): 35–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2012.641393>.

⁴⁰ P.R. Smith, "Smith, P. R. (2015). The Legal Education-Legal Practice Relationship: A Critical Evaluation (Doctoral Dissertation, Sheffield Hallam University (United Kingdom).," (Doctoral dissertation, Sheffield Hallam University (United Kingdom)., 2015.

At the regional level, data on *Clinical Legal Education* (CLE) and *civic engagement* initiatives in Southeast Asia indicate that such programs contribute not only to improving students' legal competencies, but also to reinforcing community-based *civic engagement* through access to justice, legal literacy, and citizen participation. Nevertheless, these efforts face persistent challenges, including resource constraints, supervisory demands, and issues of program sustainability. In Thailand, CLE has been introduced for a long time, one of them at Thammasat University since 1949, where law students are directly involved in handling real cases and legal services for the underprivileged.⁴¹ In Singapore, CLE develops through the cooperation of law faculties with legal aid institutions, for example in the *NUS Law @ LAB* program in handling real cases, ranging from drafting legal documents, consultation, to court attendance under the supervision of clinical lecturers and the *Legal Aid Bureau*.⁴² At the same time, Universiti Malaya and USIM in Malaysia have advanced *Street Law* and *community outreach* initiatives, enabling students to engage with communities by delivering basic legal education, enhancing public awareness, and cultivating social responsibility among students.⁴³

The novelty of this study lies not merely in the combination of two approaches, but in the construction of an integrative model that challenges the long-standing dichotomy between legal education as the transfer of normative knowledge and legal advocacy as the litigation practice of the elite. Previous research has generally been trapped at one

⁴¹ Panarairat Srichaiyarat et al., "Clinical Legal Education in Thailand: A Pedagogy Whose Time Has Come," in *Clinical Legal Education in Asia*, ed. Shuvro Prosun Sarker (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137517531_9.

⁴² Rathna N. Koman and Helena Whalen-Bridge, "Clinical Legal Education in Singapore," in *Clinical Legal Education in Asia*, ed. Shuvro Prosun Sarker (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137517531_8; Jaria Maidin, A., "Clinical Legal Education Initiatives In The International Islamic University Malaysia.," *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, 7, no. 13 (2011): 2169-2176.

⁴³ Maidin, A., "Clinical Legal Education Initiatives In The International Islamic University Malaysia." See also Norsuhaida Che Musa and Nor Fadzlina Nawi, "A Review Of Clinical Legal Education's (Cle) Experience In Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 9, no. 1 (2021): 35–46, <https://doi.org/10.33102/mjssl.vol9no1.313>.

extreme: civic education that stops at constitutional knowledge without practical competence, or advocacy that treats citizens as objects of legal aid rather than subjects whose critical capacities are developed,⁴⁴ it is the gap that has not yet been systematically addressed in the Indonesian context. This study addresses it by repositioning legal advocacy as a pedagogical innovation, where fighting for rights, combating injustice, and participating in democracy are not taught as abstract concepts, but are lived as formative experiences that simultaneously build procedural skills, ethical awareness, and a critical civic habitus. Its relevance is further underscored by the fact that low legal literacy is not merely a matter of ignorance, but rather structural powerlessness that cannot be resolved by conventional legal education or declarative curricula; thus, this model offers a fundamental solution: citizens who not only know the law but are able to use it, who are not only aware of their rights but dare to uphold them, and who not only understand democracy but actively live it, so that a culture of law grows from internalized capacity, not mere mobilization.

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, deliberately selected because the phenomenon of integrating legal advocacy and civic education is inherently contextual, relational, and not amenable to reduction into numerical measures. Rather, it requires interpretation through meanings, interaction patterns, and the lived experiences of actors in the field. The central research question guiding this study was: How can an integrative model of legal advocacy and civic education be operationalized effectively to enhance legal literacy, civic awareness, and democratic participation, particularly within urban-peripheral communities in the regions of Magelang, Kebumen, Purworejo, Temanggung, and Wonosobo, Central Java, Indonesia?

The study involved 30 participants consisting of legal practitioners, Civic Education teachers, lecturers, and school community members.

⁴⁴ Allen et al., "Civic Engagement in the Community." See also Alscher et al., "Civic Education, Teaching Quality and Students' Willingness to Participate in Political and Civic Life"; Anil Balan, "Bridging the Gap: Law Students as Agents of Public Legal Education and Community Empowerment," *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education* 32, no. 2 (2025): 53–69, <https://doi.org/10.19164/ijcle.v32i2.1692>; Shaw, "Worldview Literacy as Intercultural Citizenship Education."

Their selection was not based on statistical representativeness, but rather on the principle of purposive sampling oriented toward informational richness. Each participant was chosen because of their strategic role as an actor directly engaged in legal advocacy practices and civic education processes, enabling them to provide layered, complementary, and in-depth data until thematic saturation was achieved. Data were collected through three mutually reinforcing methods. *First*, a literature review was conducted to establish the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. *Second*, in-depth interviews using semi-structured protocols were undertaken to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and practical reflections. *Third*, participatory observation was carried out by directly attending legal outreach activities and Civic Education classroom sessions. During these observations, the researcher systematically documented verbal and nonverbal interactions, instructional strategies, and participant responses and engagement using structured observation sheets and narrative field notes.

Data analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of open-coding interview transcripts and observation notes, grouping codes into analytical categories, and identifying key themes that explain patterns of integration and their impacts—this process was operationalized within a theoretical framework of contemporary democratic education that views citizenship not as a passive status but as an active competency encompassing public deliberation, critical thinking, and tangible engagement in shared issues.⁴⁵ This framework concretely guides data collection by establishing observation indicators for deliberative practices in the classroom and community, and guides interpretation by making critical thinking capacity and active participation—not merely normative knowledge—the benchmark for the success of the integration being studied, so that the resulting strategic model is applicable and methodologically accountable.

⁴⁵ Lorin W. Anderson, "Civic Education, Citizenship, and Democracy," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 31 (September 2023), <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.31.7991>; Mary F. Scudder and Stephen K. White, *The Two Faces of Democracy: Decentering Agonism and Deliberation* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

B. The Role of Legal Advocacy in Improving Community Legal Literacy

Legal advocacy plays a fundamental role in improving the legal literacy of society, particularly in providing understanding of citizens' rights and obligations. The 1945 Constitution Article 28c paragraph (2) guarantees that every individual has the right to advance themselves through the fulfillment of fundamental rights, which includes the right to adequate legal education. Unfortunately, limited access to legal information remains an obstacle, causing many citizens to be unaware of their rights. Through legal advocacy, citizens are equipped with both normative and practical knowledge, enabling them to better recognize and constitutionally defend their rights⁴⁶.

In addition to rights, legal advocacy emphasizes the importance of awareness of citizens' obligations. This is in line with the 1945 Constitution Article 28J paragraph (1) which confirms that everyone is obliged to respect the human rights of others. In the context of democratic life, legal advocacy helps people understand that demanding rights must be balanced with the implementation of obligations⁴⁷. For instance, in the context of elections, legal advocacy not only informs citizens of their obligation to exercise the right to vote but also provides guidance on the legal mechanisms available in cases of electoral violations, consistent with the principle of political participation enshrined in Article 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution.

Legal advocacy is also an important bridge to make it easier for the public to understand complex legal procedures⁴⁸. Law No. 16 of 2011 concerning Legal Aid confirms that everyone has the right to receive free legal aid to ensure equality before the law. The existence of Legal Aid Posts (*Posbakum*) in courts, Legal Aid Institutes (LBH), as well as

⁴⁶ Budi Sastra Panjaitan et al., "Revitalizing Sharia Advocates: Reforming the Law on Advocates in Strengthening the Role of Islamic Law in Indonesia," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (2024): 485–504, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v9i2.10875>.

⁴⁷ Kate Vredenburg, "The Right to Explanation*," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 30, no. 2 (2022): 209–29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12262>.

⁴⁸ Ammar Zafar, "Balancing the Scale: Navigating Ethical and Practical Challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Integration in Legal Practices," *Discover Artificial Intelligence* 4, no. 1 (2024): 27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-024-00121-8>.

advocacy services provided by the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) in monitoring elections, represent a concrete manifestation of this regulatory mandate. Therefore, legal advocacy not only helps resolve legal issues, but also strengthens public trust in the justice system.

Furthermore, legal advocacy is both preventive and curative. Preventively, it raises public awareness to be critical of public policies and enables the early prevention of legal violations⁴⁹. Curatively, advocacy provides assistance when citizens face legal cases, so that their constitutional rights are protected⁵⁰. This corresponds with Article 28D(1) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees the right to recognition, assurance, protection, and fair legal certainty. Therefore, legal advocacy plays a strategic role in building a law-literate, participatory, and responsible society in democratic life.

The discussion regarding the role of legal advocacy in improving public legal literacy has a solid normative foundation; however, this is precisely where its most fundamental weakness lies: the argument relies too heavily on what should happen according to the constitution and laws, without critically examining the gap between the normative mandate and the reality of its implementation. Articles 28C, 28D, 28E, and 28J of the 1945 Constitution, as well as Law No. 16 of 2011 on Legal Aid, do indeed provide a comprehensive framework of rights on paper; however, on-the-ground realities paint a vastly different picture: Legal Aid Offices in many district courts operate with limited capacity and an insufficient number of lawyers. Legal Aid Institutions face extreme disparities in distribution between major cities and remote areas, while the legal aid budget allocated by the state is often not fully utilized due to a verification bureaucracy that makes it difficult for the poor—the group most in need—to access services. This situation reveals that the issue of legal literacy is not merely a matter of citizens' ignorance, but also a structural failure of the state to provide accessible

⁴⁹ Michelle A. Albert et al., "Addressing Structural Racism Through Public Policy Advocacy: A Policy Statement From the American Heart Association," *Circulation* 149, no. 6 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001203>.

⁵⁰ Aceng Asnawi Rohani et al., "The Role of the Indonesian Government in the Legal Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers," *Pena Justisia: Media Komunikasi Dan Kajian Hukum* 23, no. 3 (2024): 2918–33, <https://doi.org/10.31941/pj.v23i3.5058>.

and functional legal aid infrastructure. Therefore, arguments regarding the strategic role of legal advocacy will be far stronger and more intellectually honest if they do not stop at citing legal provisions, but explicitly acknowledge that existing regulations serve only as minimum prerequisites, not an automatic guarantee; thus, the synergy between legal advocacy and civic education becomes an urgent necessity precisely to bridge the gap between rights guaranteed by the constitution and those that citizens can actually enjoy in their daily lives. It is the structural gap that the following integrative model, based on a systems framework, seeks to address operationally.

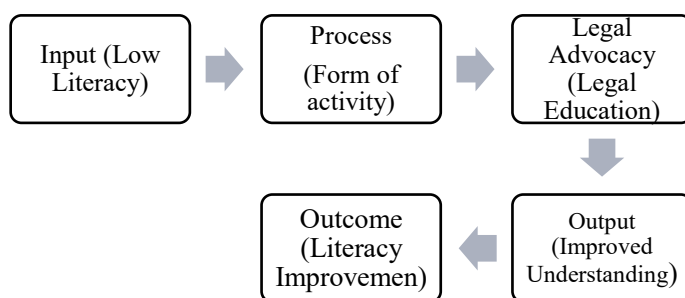


FIGURE 1. Legal Advocacy Process

The conceptual design of this study employs an input-process-output-outcome framework to operationally map the synergy between legal advocacy and civic education. At the input level, the low level of legal literacy and limited access to legal aid—which is guaranteed but not yet substantively fulfilled by the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 16 of 2011—are addressed through available resources such as a Civic Education curriculum focused on democracy and human rights, legal advocacy materials ranging from legal aid to legal awareness, and collaborative networks among teachers, students, legal practitioners, and the community. At the process level, it must be critically emphasized that not all advocacy mechanisms are equally effective or universally applicable: legal education, simulations, public debates, role-playing, and school legal clinics are realistic processes that can be replicated in various contexts, while strategic litigation and policy advocacy require institutional capacity and technical expertise that are not always available. Thus, this model must honestly distinguish

between core processes that are universally applicable and advanced processes that are context-dependent, so as not to be rhetorically ambitious yet operationally fragile. From these realistically designed processes emerge outputs in the form of strengthened civic knowledge, practical advocacy skills, and networks between schools, campuses, and communities; which in turn produce a fundamental outcome: citizens who are not merely normatively literate in the law, but empowered to use it, critical of injustice, and participatory in a sustainable democracy.

The input-process-output-outcome framework employed to map the model for strengthening legal advocacy and Civic Education provides an appropriate conceptual structure; however, its application requires greater consistency and contextual sensitivity to avoid misleading interpretations. At the input level, low legal literacy and limited access to legal assistance are positioned as the initial conditions that generate the need for intervention. It should be emphasized, however, that these conditions are not uniform across all settings. Urban residents, school communities, and vulnerable groups in remote areas experience qualitatively different forms of legal deficits. Consequently, the input dimension must be differentiated according to contextual characteristics rather than treated as a single homogeneous condition. At the process level, the most critical weakness lies in the conflation of legal education, case assistance, policy advocacy, and strategic litigation, as if these four mechanisms were equally available, of equal capacity, and effective in all contexts; yet empirically, strategic litigation and policy advocacy require institutional resources, technical expertise, and legal networks that far exceed the average capacity of a school or local community. Therefore, a clear distinction must be made between processes that are universal and replicable in all contexts—such as legal education and simulations—and those that are context-specific and dependent on the availability of specific legal actors and infrastructure, such as litigation and policy advocacy. This distinction is crucial to ensure that the resulting model does not appear rhetorically ambitious yet operationally fragile; outputs such as increased understanding of rights and trust in legal institutions, as well as outcomes such as the democratic participation of critical and empowered citizens, will only be credible if the processes underpinning them are designed realistically in accordance with the capacity of the implementation context.

The results of the interview indicate that public legal literacy remains low, as evidenced by gaps in the understanding of constitutional rights and legal procedures, thereby necessitating continuous efforts in legal advocacy and education. The following table presents the results of interviews with legal practitioners, lecturers, students and community representatives in Magelang, Kebumen, Purworejo, Temanggung, and Wonosobo, Central Jawa, Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling.

Legal Practitioner (Initial I, Magelang City): *"Many residents who come to us are actually already too late—their cases are already severe, and their rights have been violated repeatedly. They don't know that there are legal mechanisms they could have pursued from the start. Legal education is important, but to be honest, a single session won't change much. Residents need ongoing support, and we don't have enough staff for that."*

Legal Practitioner (Initial Y, Kebumen Regency): *"The hard part isn't teaching the law, but convincing residents that the law is on their side. Many people are apathetic with law because of their bad experiences with law enforcement. Our advocacy efforts often fail not because residents don't want to learn, but because the system they're dealing with is simply unresponsive."*

Lecturer (Initial R, Purworejo Regency): *"In class, students are enthusiastic when we simulate real-life legal cases. But once they leave the classroom, the environment isn't supportive. Their parents still believe that legal matters are expensive and risky—it's better to stay silent than to deal with the courts. So what we build at school often falls apart at home."*

Lecturer (Initial A, Wonosobo Regency): *"The Civic Education curriculum actually already contains many relevant values, but its implementation remains highly normative and focused on memorization. Teachers have difficulty linking the material to real cases because they themselves have not been provided with legal advocacy training. This is a serious gap that has not received much attention."*

Community member/Student (Initial A, Temanggung Regency): *"After participating in the legal awareness program, I*

came to understand that I have the right to report unfair treatment at school. However, I do not feel confident enough to do so because I am afraid that the situation will be turned against me. Knowing one's rights is one thing; having the courage to exercise those rights is another."

Community member/student (Initial K, Magelang Regency):

"The legal awareness session was good, but it was conducted only once and then ended. There was no follow-up. If the intention is truly to help the community, there should be an ongoing program rather than one that comes once and then disappears."

Community member/student (Initial M, Purworejo

Regency): *"I used to think that the law was complicated and only for wealthy people who could afford to hire lawyers. After attending the legal awareness program, I learned that free legal aid is available. Even so, the location is far away, and the procedures are still confusing for those of us who are unfamiliar with the legal system."*

Community member/student (Initial N, Magelang City):

"Our Civic Education teacher teaches us about rights and obligations, but it feels like mere memorization. We have never participated in simulations or discussions about real cases occurring around us. As a result, we know the theory, but we do not know what to do when we actually face a legal problem."

The summary of interview result from different regions is shown in the Table 1.

TABLE 1. Results of Cross-Regional Interviews (Magelang City/Regency, Kebumen, Purworejo, Temanggung, Wonosobo, Central Java, Indonesia)

Respondents	Key Findings	Limitations/ Challanges	Moments of Failure & Acknowledged Resistance	Analytical Implications
Legal Practitioner (I, Y)	The legal literacy of the community is still low; many citizens do not understand	Limited advocacy capacity constrains the provision of sustained	The assistance program was once discontinued because residents withdrew after	Sustained advocacy is meaningful only if it is built on actively rebuilding trust—not merely an administrative extension of a program

Respondents	Key Findings	Limitations/ Challenges	Moments of Failure & Acknowledged Resistance	Analytical Implications
	constitutional rights and legal procedures.	assistance; community members frequently seek support only after their rights have already been violated; and structural apathy persists as a consequence of deep-seated distrust in the legal system.	finding the legal procedures too complicated and exhausting; some policy advocacy cases encountered resistance from uncooperative local officials; and it was difficult to rebuild residents' trust after a procedural failure	
Lecturer (R, A)	Legal understanding needs to be instilled from an early age through civic education and extracurricular activities	The Civic Education curriculum remains predominantly normative and heavily dependent on rote memorization; teachers are not equipped with practical legal advocacy competencies; and the influence of the family environment often undermines the learning outcomes achieved at school.	Curriculum transformation initiatives have, in some cases, been halted due to internal resistance within school bureaucracies and concerns that critical discussions of legal issues might be perceived as "overly political." At the same time, teacher education institutions themselves have not fully moved beyond the transmission-oriented model of knowledge that has long	Institutional transformation requires an honest assessment of resistance—without it, recommendations remain mere normative aspirations that cannot be tested

Respondents	Key Findings	Limitations/ Challenges	Moments of Failure & Acknowledged Resistance	Analytical Implications
Community members/students (A, K, M, N)			been subject to scholarly critique.	
	Legal counseling helps citizens better understand their rights and obligations as well as the mechanisms for dispute resolution.	The gap between knowing one's rights and having the courage to use them; access to legal aid remains limited and bureaucratic; there is no follow-up after legal education sessions	Some participants in the legal awareness programs reported feeling even more powerless after realizing how complex and costly the formal legal system can be. Others chose to remain silent after observing the unsuccessful experiences of individuals who had attempted to assert their rights. In addition, the absence of sustained follow- up created a discontinuous pattern of engagement that weakened the momentum of emerging legal awareness and civic consciousness.	Functional legal literacy is not about acquiring knowledge, but about breaking the cycle of fear rooted in failed collective experiences—and this requires post-education support as a mandatory, not optional,

The three groups of participants consistently confirm that the issue of legal literacy in the field goes far beyond a mere knowledge deficit. Legal practitioners reported that community members often seek assistance only after their rights have been violated and frequently withdraw when legal procedures are perceived as overly complex. Once trust has been

undermined by even a single procedural failure, it is exceedingly difficult to rebuild through subsequent programs alone. The lecturers identified the root of the problem in an educational system that remains dominated by normative and memorization-based approaches. At the same time, efforts to transform this system are frequently stalled by bureaucratic resistance and institutional concerns that critical discussions of legal issues may be regarded as politically sensitive. Community members and students completed this situation by highlighting the most troubling consequence. Some participants in legal awareness programs returned with an even greater sense of powerlessness after realizing how costly and complicated the formal legal system is, while the absence of follow-up after such programs reinforced the perception that the law is ultimately inaccessible to ordinary citizens.

Taken together, these findings reveal a central pattern that cannot be overlooked that is the most significant obstacle lies not in citizens' unwillingness to learn, but in the inability of educational institutions, advocacy organizations, and local authorities to establish trust as a foundational condition of their work rather than as a by-product of program implementation. The persistence of low legal literacy underscores the need for legal advocacy and legal education from an early stage in order to cultivate public awareness, legal compliance, and democratic participation⁵¹. Legal advocacy plays a strategic role in strengthening legal literacy by clarifying citizens' rights and obligations, as well as the legal procedures that govern civic life within a constitutional democracy⁵².

Through advocacy activities, citizens are not only provided with an understanding of their constitutional rights—as stipulated in Article

⁵¹ Dewantara et al., "Anti-Corruption Education as an Effort to Form Students with Character Humanist and Law-Compliant."

⁵² Elizabeth Donger, "Children and Youth in Strategic Climate Litigation: Advancing Rights through Legal Argument and Legal Mobilization," *Transnational Environmental Law* 11, no. 2 (2022): 263–89, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2047102522000218>. See also Bambang Adji Pamungkas, "Feminist Legal Critique of Child Marriage Dispensation Practices in Indonesian Religious Courts". *The Indonesian Journal of Feminist Legal Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 31-60. <https://inleads.id/publications/index.php/IJFLS/article/view/2>.

28C of the 1945 Constitution on the right to develop oneself, Article 28D on the right to recognition, guarantees, protection, and fair legal certainty, and Article 28E on freedom of religion, expression, and association—but are also reminded of their obligation to respect the rights of others in accordance with Article 28J. Further implementation can be seen in Law Number 16 of 2011 concerning Legal Aid which expands public access to legal assistance through the existence of Legal Aid Posts (*Posbakum*), Legal Aid Institutions (LBH), and other state institutions such as the Election Supervisory Agency (*Bawaslu*) which are authorized in the context of resolving election disputes. Therefore, legal advocacy is not only oriented towards solving individual legal cases, but also serves as an instrument of public education that is able to foster critical awareness, increase citizen participation in the democratic process, and shape the character of a more legally and socially responsible society.

C. Citizenship Education as a Foundation for Social and Political Responsibility

Civic Education has a fundamental role in shaping citizens' awareness of their rights and obligations in the life of the nation and state⁵³. Through civic education, students are not only taught aspects of knowledge about political and legal systems, but also instilled moral values, ethics, and social awareness. This positions civic education as a strategic medium for fostering citizens' character that is marked by integrity, critical thinking, and the ability to take an active role in a democratic society⁵⁴.

Civic education emphasizes the importance of social responsibility as part of community life. Each individual is guided to understand that the freedom they possess is always accompanied by the obligation to respect the rights of others. Thus, civic education functions not only to

⁵³ Mas'ud Roziq Afan et al., "The Urgency of Pancasila and Citizenship Education to Strengthen National Character with Global Citizenship Dimensions," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i4.5759>.

⁵⁴ Sukron Mazid et al., "Integrating Civic Spirituality and Civic Disposition to Build Ethical Citizen Character," *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan* 22, no. 1 (2025): 93–100, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jc.v22i1.1286>.

shape formal knowledge, but also to cultivate social sensitivity, concern for others, and the ability to participate in constructive social activities. Concrete examples of its application are social service activities, mutual cooperation, as well as legal and environmental literacy programs that directly involve students in community life.

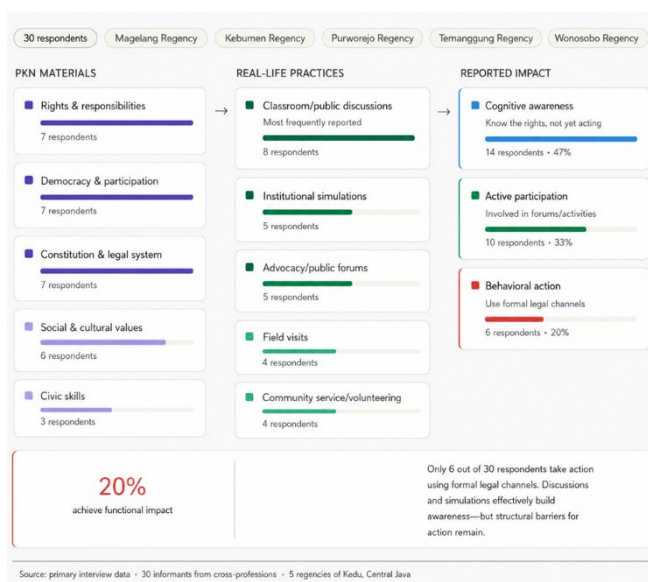
In the context of political responsibility, Civic education provides students with an understanding of the significance of participation in the democratic system. Through materials on the constitution, political rights, and the election process, Civic education equips the young generation to be able to become smart voters as well as candidates for leaders with integrity. This learning practice is often realized in the form of parliamentary session simulations, student council or university student body elections resembling general elections, or public debates on campus, thereby familiarizing students with a healthy democratic culture from an early stage. The following empirical data is based on a simulation of interviews with 30 informants from Magelang City/Regency, Kebumen Regency, Purworejo Regency, Temanggung Regency, and Wonosobo Regency. The informants include college students, high school students, teachers, village officials, and members of the general public who have participated in Civic Education classes or activities as shown on Figure 2.

Empirically, Civic Education serves not only as a theoretical subject but also as a means of shaping citizens who are democratic, critical, responsible, and concerned about social and political life. Through practical learning experiences and community activities, Civic Education strengthens legal awareness, political participation, social solidarity, and civic skills among communities in various regions. Furthermore, Civic Education serves as the foundation for fostering civic responsibility—a concept encompassing social, legal, and political dimensions. Civic responsibility is the duty of citizens to uphold order, justice, and the common good through legal compliance, democratic participation, and public concern⁵⁵. By instilling attitudes of discipline, tolerance, and adherence to rules, Civic Education helps build a

⁵⁵ Dewi Asri Yustia and Firdaus Arifin, “Bureaucratic Reform as an Effort to Prevent Corruption in Indonesia,” *Cogent Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2023): 2166196, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2166196>.

harmonious and orderly society⁵⁶. At the same time, through learning about political participation and democracy, Civic Education prepares citizens who are active, critical, and responsible for the nation's sustainability⁵⁷. For instance, public issue discussion forums, policy advocacy at the campus level, and thematic Community Service activities that engage students in addressing the social and political challenges of society. Thus, Civic Education not only shapes intellectually intelligent individuals but also citizens with a strong sense of social and political awareness.

FIGURE 2.
Civic Education
Learning
Practices
*Source: Interview
Data, organized
by Authors*



At the school level, legal advocacy learning can be implemented through simple moot court simulations at the senior high school level, street law programs conducted by law students in junior and senior high schools, or the integration of child rights advocacy issues into the civic

⁵⁶ Aprillio Poppy Belladonna et al., “Responding to The Challenges of The 2045 Golden Generation: Improving a Legal-Aware Golden Generation with a Cultural and Identity Education Approach,” *Edunesia: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 4, no. 2 (2023): 868–861, <https://doi.org/10.51276/edu.v4i2.412>.

⁵⁷ Asep Rudi Casmana et al., “Global Citizenship: Preparing the Younger Generation to Possess pro-Environment Behavior, Mutual Assistance and Tolerance Awareness through School Engagement,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 21, no. 1 (2023): 15–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2021.2013167>.

education curriculum. Meanwhile, in the community, advocacy practices can be carried out through legal clinic-based service activities that involve students to provide legal counseling in the village, advocacy for environmental issues, and anti-bullying campaigns on social media. Moreover, collaborative practices may be fostered through the synergy of civic education teachers, law students, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in local advocacy initiatives, for instance, community outreach on preventing child marriage in rural areas. By enriching this kind of praxis-oriented analysis, the integration of legal advocacy and civic education appears not only theoretically important but also practically relevant in educational and societal life.

Citizenship competence consists of three main components that complement each other, i.e. civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition^{58, 59}. Civic knowledge relates to the content or what citizens should know, including an understanding of laws, constitutions, and democratic principles as a cognitive foundation. This knowledge is the basis for civic skills, namely the intellectual and participatory skills of citizens to think critically, argue, and solve public problems rationally and constructively. These two aspects would be meaningless without civic disposition, which is the character of citizenship reflected in democratic attitudes, social responsibility, and concern for justice that are essential for the maintenance and development of constitutional democracy. Hence, the integration of these three components forms comprehensive civic competence, enabling citizens not only to know and to be capable, but also to be willing to take an active role in societal and national life in a democratic manner. The following is a picture of the three core components proposed by Branson (1998)⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Apeles L. Lonto, "Students' Civic Disposition through Learning Civics and Pedagogical Competences of High School Teachers," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 7, no. 12A (2019): 35–41, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2019.071905>.

⁵⁹ Dwi Riyanti, "An Analysis of the Suitability of Students' Civic Knowledge and Disposition in the Topic of Citizen's Rights and Obligations," *REID (Research and Evaluation in Education)* 6, no. 1 (2020): 78–86, <https://doi.org/10.21831/reid.v6i1.31621>.

⁶⁰ Margaret Stimman Branson, *The Rule of Civic Education* (Center for Civic Education, 1998).

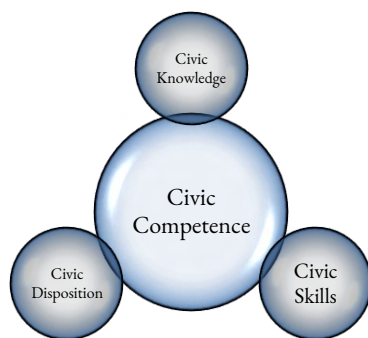


FIGURE 3. Three Citizenship Competencies

Civic competence is formed through the integration of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition, where knowledge of law, constitution, and democracy becomes the basis of critical thinking skills and public participation, which are further reinforced by democratic attitudes, social responsibility, and concern for justice⁶¹. This integration aligns with the role of Civic Education as the foundation for fostering social and political responsibility in Indonesia through the strengthening of Pancasila-based democracy, legal awareness, and community participation. Through legal advocacy, public policy discussions, and community support, citizens not only understand their rights and obligations but are also able to apply them in real life. Therefore, Civic Education has evolved from theoretical learning into a means of empowering citizens to be critical, participatory, and responsible in democratic life. This education not only emphasizes cognitive aspects—such as knowledge of the constitution, law, and democracy—but also addresses the affective and psychomotor domains through the instillation of moral values, social concern, and political responsibility manifested in concrete actions. Through experience-based learning, critical discussions, and simulations of democratic life,

⁶¹ Chanda Chansa Thelma, "Civic Education and National Development: A Comprehensive Analysis of Zambia," *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 50, no. 6 (2024): 170–90, <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2024/v50i61404>. See also Narendra Maheswara, Putri Kania Tisnawati, Mohd Rayyan Fattah Abd Malik, and Omar Fawzi, "Educating Diversity: Policy Design, Cultural Recognition, and Educational Justice in Plural Societies", *Indonesian Education Policy and Justice Review* 2, no. 4 (2025): 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.65815/xgh4dz77>.

students are encouraged to think reflectively while acting proactively in resolving shared challenges. This makes Civic Education a vital foundation for building a just democratic culture, strengthening social solidarity, and ensuring the sustainable harmony of communal, national, and state life.

D. Strengthening Synergy between Legal Advocacy and Civic Education for Sustainable Democracy

The synergy between legal advocacy and civic education is key in building a sustainable democracy. It is clearly reflected in the social practices of communities in the former Kedu region (Magelang, Kebumen, Purworejo, Temanggung, and Wonosobo). Interviews with 30 informants from various professions indicate that legal literacy increases through discussions, simulations, and legal awareness program, however its impact became genuinely meaningful only when these educational efforts were accompanied by direct assistance from legal advocates or local community organizations. In Magelang and Purworejo, community members who had previously understood constitutional rights only in theoretical terms began to participate more confidently in village mediation forums, pursue administrative disputes, and consult legal aid institutions after receiving sustained support. Civic education builds awareness of civil rights and responsibilities,⁶² while legal advocacy provides practical pathways for that awareness to translate into concrete action; the two complement each other, not merely coexist.⁶³

However, this synergy has not yet been fully effective. Data shows that 47% of respondents are still at the cognitive awareness stage, 33% are actively participating, and only 20% dare to pursue formal legal channels. This gap exists because both approaches remain incomplete: civic education stops at the transfer of knowledge, while advocacy has not yet been able to sustainably build citizens' courage. The interviewees confirmed this—legal practitioners in Kebumen and Wonosobo noted

⁶² Younas and Imran, "Multiple Modalities of Teaching Civic Education Awareness among Students." *See also* Anderson, "Civic Education, Citizenship, and Democracy."

⁶³ Zafar, "Balancing the Scale." *See also* Balan, "Bridging the Gap."

that residents remain reluctant to pursue legal proceedings due to complex bureaucracy and high costs; a lecturer in Temanggung assessed that education remains too theoretical; and a community in Magelang acknowledged that the courage to act only emerges when there is direct support from trusted local organizations. The greatest obstacle, therefore, is not that citizens are uninterested, but rather that institutions have not yet been able to build social trust as the foundation for their work.

It is at this point that the true convergence becomes evident. When Civic Education is integrated with community-based legal advocacy, citizens move beyond merely normative understanding and begin to develop civic agency—the capacity to act effectively in response to real-world challenges, ranging from village mediation and land disputes to securing access to public services. The concept underlying this transformation is civic empowerment. Civic Education equips individuals with the knowledge, values, and democratic dispositions necessary for responsible citizenship, while legal advocacy strengthens their practical ability to assert rights, fulfill obligations, and navigate institutional processes. Together, these two dimensions create a mutually reinforcing framework for democratic participation.⁶⁴ This integration transforms citizens from passive subjects who simply comply with the law into active participants capable of critically and constructively shaping democratic processes. When individuals experience the law as something accessible, understandable, and usable to protect their interests, trust in democratic institutions is significantly strengthened. In this sense, the combination of Civic Education and legal advocacy not only enhances legal literacy but also cultivates

⁶⁴ Dicky Eko Prasetyo et al., “Post-Election Reconciliation in 2024 as a Constitutional Convention in Indonesia: A Progressive Legal Culture Perspective,” *Jambura Law Review* 7, no. 1 (2025): 176–96, <https://doi.org/10.33756/jlr.v7i1.26999>; Emmanuel Tamaramiebi Timidi and Goddey Okuro, “Power of education in shaping democratic citizenship and good governance,” *Studies in Humanities and Education* 5, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.48185/she.v5i2.1295>; Daicy Diaz-Granados, “Standing in the Gap with Students: Amplifying Multicultural Education with Culturally Sustaining Civics (CSC),” *Journal for Multicultural Education*, ahead of print, August 12, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-12-2024-0171>.

empowered citizens who are better prepared to safeguard justice, accountability, and democratic governance.

Empirical evidence supports this argument. Of the 15 students and community members who participated in village deliberation simulations and public administration mentoring in Magelang and Purworejo, 11 participants reported a better understanding of public complaint procedures and dispute resolution mechanisms, 9 participants felt more confident expressing their opinions in community forums, and 6 participants began to engage directly in RT/village deliberations and administrative consultations regarding public services. These findings demonstrate that experiential learning not only enhances conceptual understanding of citizens' rights and obligations but also builds courage, a sense of ownership, and participatory capacity in addressing real-world socio-political issues—democratic theory does not end with the rote memorization of norms but is tested and practiced directly within community life.⁶⁵ The following is a diagram of the integration process, concepts, models, and recommendations for legal advocacy and civic education.

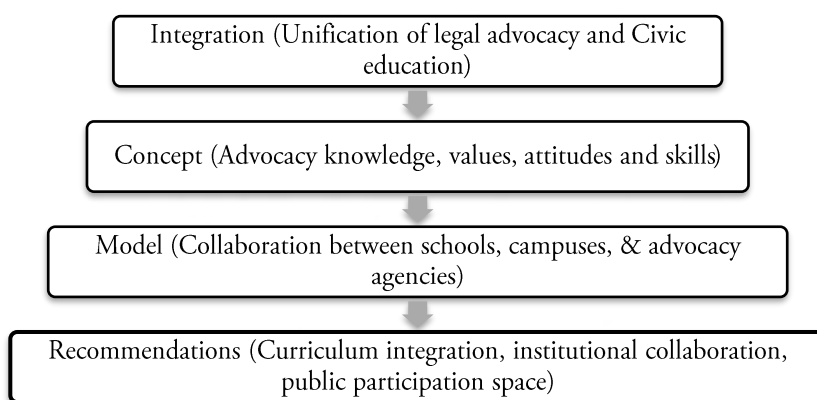


FIGURE 4. Integration Flow, Concepts, Models, and Recommendations

⁶⁵ Elizabeth C. Matto, “Teaching Democratic Citizenship in Moments of Conflict: Putting Civic Engagement Theory Into Practice When Teaching About the War in Ukraine,” *Journal of Political Science Education* 20, no. 3 (2024): 374–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2024.2319839>.

As a visual and conceptual framework, Figure 4 illustrates the integration between legal advocacy and civic education in fostering civic empowerment. This model positions civic education as the foundation for shaping democratic values and participatory attitudes among citizens, while legal advocacy serves as a practical support mechanism to enable citizens to effectively access and utilize legal mechanisms.⁶⁶ Collaboration between schools, universities, advocacy organizations, and community groups serves as a bridge between citizenship theory and the daily practice of democracy—with key strategies including the integration of real-world case-based curricula, inter-institutional collaboration, the use of digital media, and the provision of inclusive public participation spaces at the local level.⁶⁷

To implement this model, a context-specific strategy is needed that aligns with the socio-political realities of the former Kedu community, through four main steps. First, integrating legal advocacy materials into civic education curricula in schools, Islamic boarding schools, and universities through local case studies. Second, strengthening collaboration between local governments, educational institutions, legal aid organizations, and civil society organizations. Third, developing participatory learning materials such as village mediation simulations and public service case analyses. Fourth, providing inclusive spaces for public participation so that residents can directly practice democratic

⁶⁶ Zayd Waghid, “Cultivating Critical Thinking, Social Justice Awareness and Empathy Among Pre-Service Teachers Through Online Discussions on Global Citizenship Education,” *Journal of Creative Communications* 19, no. 1 (2024): 74–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09732586231194438>. See also Anjarsari et al., “Implementing The Role of NGOs In Curricular and Societal Civic Education Through Political Literacy.”

⁶⁷ Zafar, “Balancing the Scale.” See Ravita Mega Saputri and Marzuki Marzuki, “The Role of Parents and Society in Value Education and Civic Education,” *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan* 18, no. 2 (2021): 268–75, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jc.v18i2.38871>; Nouri et al., “The Role of Citizen Education and Awareness of Laws, Regulations, and Civil Rights in Observing Civil Rights During the Crime Investigation Process.” See also Ardhitama Sucahyanto, “Digital Society and the Transformation of Community-Based Dispute Resolution in Indonesia. *The Indonesian Journal of Sociolegal Development* 1, no. 1 (2026): 31–60. <https://inleads.id/publications/index.php/IJSLD/article/view/14>.

values. These strategies, however, must take into account a number of practical constraints, including curricula that remain overly theoretical, limited teacher capacity, inadequate collaborative funding, low levels of trust in local institutions, and deeply entrenched hierarchical cultures in village decision-making. Some educators also remain reluctant to incorporate advocacy-related issues into classroom instruction because they fear such content may be perceived as politically sensitive. This tension reflects a broader challenge between the critical orientation of advocacy-based pedagogy and the longstanding emphasis on social harmony that has traditionally characterized Civic Education in Indonesian schools. From a juridical perspective, this synergy demonstrates that education can function as a preventive instrument for cultivating legal consciousness and protecting citizens' constitutional rights. Accordingly, the model should not be understood as a fully idealized solution, but rather as a collaborative and adaptive process that requires continuous negotiation among democratic values, local cultural norms, institutional capacities, and regional political dynamics. Sustainable democracy can emerge only when legal knowledge, participatory experience, and social trust are developed simultaneously—not through a single intervention, but through an interconnected ecosystem of empowerment in which citizens not only understand their rights, but also possess the confidence and capacity to defend them.

E. Conclusion

The synergy between legal advocacy and civic education in the former Kedu region has proven to play a tangible role in strengthening legal literacy and civic participation among the community. Civic education is effective in building normative awareness, but it has not yet been sufficient to drive concrete action—as reflected in the fact that 47% of respondents remain at the cognitive awareness stage and only 20% dare to utilize formal legal channels. This gap has only narrowed significantly when civic education is integrated with community-based legal assistance and experiential learning such as village mediation simulations, public service case discussions, and administrative support. However, its implementation remains hindered by a normative

curriculum, limited educator capacity, minimal collaboration between schools and legal aid institutions, low public trust in local legal institutions, and tensions between a critical advocacy approach and the Civic Education tradition that emphasizes harmony and compliance. This study confirms that strengthening local democracy requires systematic integration between civic education, accessible legal assistance, and tangible spaces for public participation—not merely an increase in legal knowledge alone. Future research should expand the geographical scope and develop quantitative approaches to measure the long-term impact of this integration on legal literacy and democratic participation among the Indonesian public.

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