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## Active Citizenship by Active Learning

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**Abstract:** Active citizenship is a way of development greater young citizen responsibility. It is a combination of obligations and responsibilities through involvement in civic issues. Be an active citizen need new ways of educating students which are different from traditional learning methods. Active learning method derived from learned-centred approaches stress more on students as intelligent entities rather than just receivers. Employing methods of active learning in citizenship education has some obstacles but the advantages are greater than passive ways of learning.

**Key words:** Active learning, citizenship education, active citizenship, participation, responsibility

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### INTRODUCTION

If we want to translate participation in the sense of civic studies, the best meaning will be the development but its function is not clear (Clarke and Missingham, 2009). The idea of participation of young citizens indicates that the mission of the state in a democracy is to achieve as the process whereby they can perform in the common good (White, 2004). Modern developed civilizations have confronted rapid developments. Thus, sociologists have named this stage of post-traditional societies as postmodernity, risk society (Beck, 2000), or late-modernity (Giddens, 2007). Giddens (2007) said that persons are continually forced to question themselves existential question: "What to do?" (p. 70) Because this late-modernity world makes people dependent on political organizations, people share a deep feeling that something vital is threatened and perceived to be at risk (Tsuchiya, 2005). As all societies become gradually more diverse, encouraging young people for participate in collective actions is becoming tougher (Zuniga *et al.*, 2005). In these days more than half of young citizens do not like to involve in collective activities in many countries (Kennedy, 2007). The idea of citizenship itself has low existing in educational environment even it is the leading theme of teaching and learning (Davies and Evans, 2002). However, little is known about how active citizenship works and whether there are shared strategies which lead to effective practices (GHK, 2007). Citizenship in an active way means a transformation of personal behaviour to more

involvement (Hoskins and Mascherini, 2009). It means participating in civil society willingly to make more common sense (Anheier, 2004; Howell and Pearce, 2002). A difficulty with this idea is that while rights are frequently written down as part of law, responsibilities are not as well described and there may be disagreements among the citizens as to what the responsibilities are.

### ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Active citizenship associates with an active citizenry having the authority to engage in flexible decision making as characterized from influential citizen participation which contains activities like voting, joining public hearings, being part of citizen boards and participating in public opinion analyses (Weeks, 2000). The concept of active citizenship is different in every context and society, but generally they have similar meanings, for instance, in European sense it means have required capacity to face with new issues in a modern era plus an awareness of common norms and identity towards social and cultural interplanetary (European Commission-Education and Training, 2010). Several characters of active citizenry regularly reappear through the literature on civic culture such as being knowledgeable, independent, courteous and aware of the common good, loyal to democratic principles, to provide input and be informed of the possible effects of the several decisions made on their behalf (White, 2004). Citizenship study has in the past concentrated more on the responsibilities and rights of the person in association with the state. Citizenship in its

active realm is a combination of participation, right-based development, good governments and supporting role of government in helping citizens (Clarke and Missingham, 2009). The two main aspects are:

- Participatory development wants to respond to the critiques over its meaning as oppression (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). It accepts the problems of civil society in the community-based associations which have a very restrictive gate for citizens and the limited role of non-governmental organizations and local developmental attempts (Clarke and Missingham, 2009). In this sense the main focus of active citizenship of youth involvement is more towards decision-making and deliberate democracy (Barber, 2003; Hoskins and Mascherini, 2009; Mutz, 2006)
- Rights-based development says that ‘citizenship’ clearly raises the issue that people are in the position of rights in relation with the state which highlights the idea of good governance as a main core for development. It emphasized on the significance of civil, political and social rights which is connect a person to its state (Westholm *et al.*, 2007)

**Youth as active citizens:** Youth are the core of the development process of each nation with holding the key of changing or continuing policies but their contributions will not achieve full impact unless they are engaged in their nation as a whole (Varshavsky, 2009). The issue of engaging them in current social activities is discussed by many scholars (Youniss *et al.*, 2002) and for instance try to correlate this to their attitude (Bekkers, 2005; Fahmy, 2006; Kennedy, 2007; Keulder and Spilker, 2001; Menezes, 2003; Saha *et al.*, 2005). We must add that, democracy does not only give certain rights to people, but that it also suggest the “obligation” to appreciate the opinions of others. This was seen to be especially vital for youth, to teach them that they had to take account of the interests of others (GHK, 2007). Young people can be engaged to civic issues if allow them to do so (Flanagan and Christens, 2011).

**Approaches to active citizenship:** There are two approaches about citizenship which can explain active citizenship:

- Psychological theories often focus on personal development in contrast with sociologists’ focus on social and structural forces and environment in the course of socialization

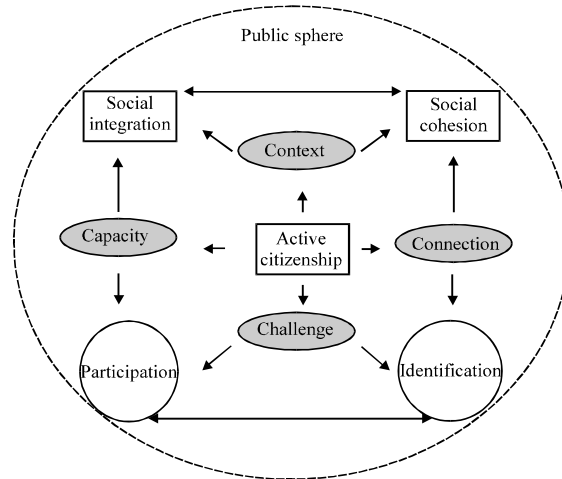


Fig. 1: Dimension of active citizenship (Jansen *et al.*, 2006)

- Sociological theories focus more on teaching individual at each life stage to socialize them for new roles riley (Steckenrider and Cutler, 1989). Based on this approach, socialization has two seemingly contradictory functions, one of which is “fitting people into social roles” and the other of which is freeing them from it by the way of “individuation” (Tsuchiya, 2005)

**Dimension of active citizenship:** Active citizenship has four dimensions related to citizenship practices which summarizing sociological conditions represent as the capacity (how people can act based on their rights), connection (relationship with others), challenge (desire of self in practices during involvement) and context (how people aware of diverse options during social practices) (Clarke and Missingham, 2009). Each of above indicates a shape of contribution towards citizenship by a person (Jansen *et al.*, 2006). As shown in Fig. 1, the dotted surface circle signifies the variation of the public sphere, representing various social places or public sphere for different practices of active involvement. This figure shows the importance of participation for social integration, while identification exaggerates cohesion in the society with double headed arrows of their relations in making citizens active in a society.

**HOW BECOME ACTIVE CITIZENS?**

Many citizenship studies emphasizes more on competent as the main path to become active citizens which included an awareness educating component, often

in mixture of an element of initiating the participants, such as “learning by doing”, “discussions”, or “acquiring new skills” (GHK, 2007). Learning civic competency can improve active citizenship by allowing to some repetitions and exchange experience through interaction by each side of involving persons. These participation through involvement enhance learning in the context (Lavelle and O’Ryan, 2001). The willing to participate is fixed to the context. As a result all educational programs designed for practice based on the context can bring more people to participate in civil activities (Wenger, 2011). As a result, education can contribute to these participatory competencies by:

- Situating learning facilitates access to citizenship practices
- Developing of participatory competencies empowers coordinated action with the promotion of communicative strategies
- Spread these competencies to other places (Jansen *et al.*, 2006)

#### **RELATIONS BETWEEN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND EDUCATION**

The importance of active citizenship is being progressively accepted in education (GHK, 2007). Active citizenship term has different meaning in the field of education (Holford and van der Veen, 2003) and education for job (Preston and Green, 2003), shows the connection between education and active citizenship. Studies related to active citizenship reveals its connection to social results of education (Hoskins and Mascherini, 2009; Preston and Green, 2003). Learning as a form of active citizenship involves the education of young citizens, resulting in improved decision making regarding community-wide issues. Another component of active citizenship refers to issues relating to learn about the interaction, ties and connections to the community of citizens (Stivers, 1990). These components will be used to further explore local and community involvement of young citizens in the devolution era (White, 2004).

**The needs of youth to learn active citizenship:** Young people are expected to be equipped with appropriate civic skills for be active part in their community. This needs lifelong education (Delanty, 2003; Schuguransky and Myers, 2003) through formal, non-formal and informal education. The tendency to happen this is that young people need to consider them as citizens who are actively participating (Crick, 2005). They need to do their best in learning forms of involvement (Branson, 2004). This leads

to the ways of developing active citizens recognized by most democratic societies (Branson, 2004; Crick, 2005). Be an active citizen needs to learn competencies for participation. These competencies are crucial for living in a modern society for all people specially youth (Hoskins and Crick, 2010). The significance of active citizenship as part of life-long learning is extensively recognized and attention in education for active citizenship has been rising (GHK, 2007).

**Active learning and citizenship education:** Effective combination of civic learning into the curriculum in the case of “pedagogies of engagement” needs that students be intellectually engaged in their learning (Colby *et al.*, 2003; Nobbe, 2012). Developing related competencies needs mental awareness of learners about the environment for employing them in analyzing current issues (Lathrop, 2005). Also, Revans (1982) suggested that active learning involves giving students greater responsibility for their own learning to have the complete opportunity for involving actively and ‘share ideas’ (Killeavy and Clarke, 2002). Holden and Clough (1998) believed that this process needs educational instructors’ balancing role between providing security and offering challenge. According to Fogarty and McTighue (1993) there are three steps for expanding civic competency which are gaining skills (Marzano and Hutchins, 1985), critical thinking for problem solving (De Bono, 1985) and other thoughtful application (Brown and Palincsar, 1982). This last one is the important particle in citizenship education which called by Fogarty (2009) as thoughtful classroom for developing civic competencies. According to Chickering and Gamson (1999), youth develop their higher order thinking skills in such learning processes. Active learning is the best for being an active citizenship (Middleton, 2013) and has been linked to social integration (Braxton *et al.*, 2000) which enable “students to express themselves by taking courses and through their content and related activities to apply them” (Meyers and Jones, 1993). Dewing (2010) mentioned about the goals of active learning:

- Embedding thinking critically and life-long learning
- Supporting sharing these learned abilities with others

Mitchell (1999) tried to describe active learning explicitly based on the community to employ and engage in lifelong learning (Annette, 2000). Astin (1985) described active learning as students ‘taking more responsibility’ for their learning. It is interpreted in two ways:

- Denoting learning activities which gives considerable attention towards learning behaviours
- Denoting higher order thinking to the activities for intellectual involvement (Kyriacou and Marshall, 1989) which guide to purposeful concept (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1989) and meaningful cognition (Anthony, 1996)

The active citizens informally and even incidentally learn from their activities with members as well as from their daily experiences outside of their study (Tsuchiya, 2005). Active learning uses multiple techniques to bring students into participation by instructors (Gleason *et al.*, 2011).

**Background of active learning:** Based on constructivism theory (Ernest, 1995) learning actively is a learned-centred approach which the students themselves are the main players in the whole process (Von Glasersfeld, 2001). Even though it concentrates on cognition, there is gap about its definition (Bonwell and Eison, 1991; Bonwell and Sutherland, 1996; Ebert-May *et al.*, 1997; Meyers and Jones, 1993). With active learning students become closely involve in participation activities because the thinking of them follows their actions and not reverse (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004). It believes that learning is inactive process (Fox, 2001), thus an 'active' view of learning is often compared with behaviourist stimulus-response accounts in which organisms learn by being 'stimulated' and by 'responding' (Fox, 2001). Using following techniques are vital because of their influential effect upon youth learning (Bonwell and Eison, 1991):

- Assuming science as learning process
- Cultivating self-efficacy about their abilities
- Bring responsibility to students
- Placing experience in the learning process (Allen *et al.*, 1996; Bonwell and Sutherland, 1996; Svinicki, 1998)

**Function of active learning:** It was anticipated that youth in active learning environments demonstrate increased engagement in contrast to passive learning environments (Kuh *et al.*, 2005; Lundberg *et al.*, 2007; Popkess, 2010) which consist of telling, or instructing and learners as 'empty vessels' filled with information. Active learning researchers believe that either listening or reading can be passive because all of cognition is active in the sense of involving activity in youth mental life (Fox, 2001). Active learning can act as below:

- Encouraging involvement at the same time with learning activities
- Teach learners processing competencies
- Make courses with its higher order thinking aspects
- Let students to engage with their activities
- Allow them to explore their ideals about learning (Wilke, 2003)

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACTIVE LEARNING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

Active learning helps students to engage in learning activities by gaining more experience from learning process. It moves from the control of the teacher to student ability to interact with environment and others (Gleason *et al.*, 2011; Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2004). According to Bonwell and Eison (1991), learning actively prevents students from retention and also it enhance thinking abilities of them. This student-centered approach increases youth involving time with the subject from their colleagues (Barr and Tagg, 1995) and this can change formal and informal context of learning (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009).

## **STRATEGIES OF ACTIVE LEARNING**

The main question in here is that how educational systems can use this kind of cognitive learning in educational environment? These ways comprise growing student time on task, involving them in real situations (Casem, 2006; Michael, 2007). These strategies can be peer tutoring, taking note, putting students in the role of decision makers and two side discussions (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). Using these strategies has demonstrated a positive influence on civic engagement (Kelly *et al.*, 2005; Kuh *et al.*, 1997; Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005). Between above strategies, discussion between students and instructors is the most important vessel for encouraging active learning. If the aim of the teaching is motivating information gaining, then this method is preferable (McKeachie, 1986), however, other methods of active learning must be designed based on the educational goals (Hyman, 1980) and help students to have challenge with each of above methods (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). In addition, there are various strategies for learning actively can affect students' outcome like visual-based teaching and etc. These active learning methods relied on learned-centred theories can be incorporated to student learning process (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999). Active learning strategies combine students' cognitive knowledge construction with

real life. This can be happened both by participation in activities and experience with such activities which enables them to connect concept and training (Charman and Fullerton, 1995). Gibbs (1988) suggested that it is not enough to design active learning strategies alone and getting experience from them must connect responsibility with assessment. A basic model of active learning comprises five steps:

- Be familiar to it
- Understand it
- Experience it
- Knows about others feedback
- Modify it (Toohey, 1999)

### OUTCOMES OF ACTIVE LEARNING

The component of this kind of learning includes talking, listening, reading, writing and reflecting (McKinney, 2009). According to Khan (2011), the proven effects on student learning are:

- Engage students beyond listening and reading
- Promote learning, not just acquisition of facts
- Encourage interaction between students
- Develop high-order thinking skills
- Persuade accountability with learning process
- Develop competencies
- Allow students to monitor their own learning and lastly
- Endorse deep learning

### APPROACHES TO ACTIVE LEARNING TOWARDS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

In a teacher-focused approach, educator ask students to recall information he or she gave to learners to classify it by low thinking skills (Houghton, 2003). In this approach students must reproduce knowledge but in a learner-centred approach students find meaning from knowledge and interpret it (Scheyvens *et al.*, 2008). The recommendation of this literature is that the development of civic skills in college students can be assisted through active, experiential learning that promotes outcomes such as critical thinking, moral reasoning, social responsibility, civic mindedness, exposure to diversity and leadership (Colby *et al.*, 2003; Ehrlich, 2000; Kezar and Rhoads, 2001; Mentkowski, 2000; O'Grady, 2000; Sax, 2004; Thomas, 2000). There are summarized approaches of active learning in Table 1.

Table 1: Approaches of active learning adopted and adapted from Nobbe (2012)

Kinds of learning	Description
Experiential learning	Based on learning as a cycle that starts with experience, lasts with reflection and leads to action. It is also based on philosophy that one learns best by doing (Colby <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Ehrlich, 2000; Kezar and Rhoads, 2001; O'Grady, 2000; Sax, 2004; Thomas, 2000)
Service learning	A shared method for integrating civic learning into the curriculum which aims to help students see that they are not only autonomous individuals but also are accountable to others (Colby <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Kezar and Rhoads, 2001; O'Grady, 2000)
Problem-based learning	Students are presented with critical thinking or real-life problems, shifting the focus of the course to the problems, rather than the text or assignments (Bean, 2011; Hogan and Lundquist, 2006; Neill, 2008; Romero <i>et al.</i> , 2004, 2010; Whelan <i>et al.</i> , 2007)
Collaborative learning	Opportunities for students to learn how to reach consensus through inquiry, analysis and argument (Bean, 2011)
Team-Based learning	Involves the development of several groups within a class and use of course concepts to resolve problems (Beatty <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Conway <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Letassy <i>et al.</i> , 2008)
Case-Based learning	Cases often are preceded by an assigned reading and/or a mini-lecture, whereas classroom time is predominantly focused on cases that involve application of content and subsequent class (large-group) discussions (Gleason <i>et al.</i> , 2011)

### OVERCOMING ACTIVE LEARNING BARRIERS

In contrast to advantages of active learning, college science education depend more on traditional didactic ways of education (Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, 1998). There are some identified active learning obstacles:

- Endurance to use new thing (Modell, 1996; Orzechowski, 1995)
- Misconceptions by their role (Huang and Carroll, 1997; Modell and Michael, 1993)
- Lack of time to cover many content by faculties (Bonwell and Eison, 1991)
- Lack of student interest (Gleason *et al.*, 2011)

Using active learning strategies are not always affluent (Bonwell and Eison, 1991) and may involve overcoming numerous barriers:

- Sacrifice of course content coverage and add content to web site like pre-class mini lectures and so on
- Design a session carefully with details and aims
- Think with its higher-order aspect
- Seek ways to motivate student participation (Gleason *et al.*, 2011)

### ACTIVE LEARNING MYTHS

Employing active learning approach in education process is not easy and always confronted with some myths:

- Just do it: Active learning is made of many activities but it is not happen because students just engage in these activities (Biggs, 2003)
- Active learning happens just in attending classes: Newcomers to this process need more guidance from instructors who are well aware of teaching it and therefore using active learning method can be less useful for beginners (Elliott, 2005; Hanson and Moser, 2003)
- There is no place for lecturing within this kind of learning: Lectures are maybe teach in an old fashion way but even this kind of instruction can deliver information about the context and subject (Bligh, 2000)
- Active learning requires too much work: According to Hanson and Moser (2003), active learning need too much attention from both sides but too much preparation is not very necessary
- There are significant institutional restrictions to promoting it: All things are needed for active learning is the readiness and willingness to use it (Scheyvens *et al.*, 2008)
- It can reduce from the transmission of knowledge in a certificated program: It can be very time consuming (Elliott, 2005) but knowledge is transmitted in a way that leads to deep learning and not just short-term memory (Scheyvens *et al.*, 2008)

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study suggests some ideas and strategies for applying in citizenship education and showed the importance of using these methods for cultivation citizenship among youth. The literature on the development of active citizenship suggests that there is no single way in the development of youth active citizenship. Rather, the appreciation of citizenship is located in everyday life experience by interaction in and outside of educational environment. Education is a key for implanting civic value and knowledge among new generation. By enhancing active learning methods which can reflect society's complexities, youth can be aware of their rights and responsibilities towards others despite learning differences among countries, employing an active way of learning methods rather than passive ways has great differences among youth civic outcomes.

There are many implications of active learning:

- Active learning should be used into course objectives for civic outcomes
- Active learning must be considered as the best way for educating good citizens
- Active learning and active citizenship should be like twisted thing in every educational programs and courses
- Appropriate assessment activities are critical to promoting active learning

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