

Promoting Transformative Citizenship in Diverse Society: An Appraisal of Massive Open Online Course as a Teaching Platform

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Abstract: This study discusses a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) as an alternative teaching platform with the purpose to promote topics of transformative citizenship in Indonesian diverse society. Designed by collaborative works of the Dialogue, Empathic Engagement and Peacebuilding (DEEP) Network and eight prominent universities in Indonesia, this course namely the MOOC Citizenship has bridges both educators and learners across the country to broaden their perspective and knowledge on citizenships. Through qualitative analyzes, this study found that the MOOC Citizenship had been particularly successful in enhancing learners' skills in conducting action research project as an actual contribution to the community. Additionally, the participated educators were emphasized both benefits and challenges of having the Citizenship MOOC. This study argued that MOOC is a potential alternative of teaching platform, especially when it involved multidisciplinary perspectives for broader outreach. However, it is necessary to ensure the technological preparedness of the users (both learners and educators) are well established.

Keywords: Transformative citizenship, MOOC, action research project, learners, educators.

1. Introduction

The generation that holds a strong foundation of citizenship is critical to the nation (Broadbent et al, 2017) especially in a diverse society, such as Indonesia. However, the current modern world has challenged the concept and practice of citizenship which merely relies on the membership or registration matter. As a concept, citizenship is defined as a legal status, rights, membership, national identity, and belonging (Klug 2000, Abowitz and Harnish 2006). From this point of view, therefore, the internalization of norms and values of citizenship needs to be readdressed to expand the sense of citizenship into daily life practices. In this sense, it is required a comprehensive approach to teaching generation the concept and implementation of citizenship that meets to the current world challenge. The existing learning activities were mostly conducted in a conventional way (Kamsin, 2005), where lecturer limitedly teach their students from their affiliated university in their classroom-based setting. Thus, students and lecturers were having lack of chances and exposures from other institutions who also studying the similar course. In addition to that, common obstacles faced in teaching citizenship course in diverse society of Indonesia was decreasing trends of students' interest in studying about citizenship. A study argued that this was affected by inefficient teaching method (Sainudin, Jamaludin & Palimbong, 2014).

Furthermore, this study narrowing down the discussion by using a case study of an alternative online teaching platform of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) or namely "the MOOC Citizenship". According to Wulf et al, (2014), MOOC is a "web-based online courses for an unlimited number of participants held by professors or other experts" (p.111). In particular, the needs of developing the citizenship course through MOOC platform relies upon the spirit to connect and collaborate. Consider that studying citizenship courses in Indonesian universities is compulsory since this course is categorized as a foundation knowledge in the Indonesian education context. Therefore, by bridging those divides, this MOOC Citizenship supplementary provides both educators and learners the opportunity to study citizenship courses in a more comprehensive and empathic way.

Developed by focusing on self-centered and experienced-based learning models, the MOOC Citizenship enables learners to deepening their understanding while they implement what they have learned into an actual contribution. According to Collins & O'Brien (2003) self-centered or student-centered learning (SCL) model “places the student (learner) in the center of the learning process. The instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively” (Collins & O'Brien, 2003, p 338). Besides the self-centered model, this MOOC combined with experienced-based learning where learner's knowledge is recognized as “accumulated cultural knowledge, which manifests itself in routines, practices, training upbringing, sayings and narratives” (Saugstad, 2013). By adopting these two learning models, the MOOC Citizenship program emphasis learning activities that are empathic and inclusive for both learners and educators.

In response to the background above, this study attempts to analyze an alternative perspective in teaching citizenship discourse by offering an idea of what so-called ‘transformative citizenship’. This transformative citizenship aims to fill the gap between traditional citizenship and global citizenship perspectives. The Citizenship MOOC was conducted in 2016 as a collaboration between the Dialogue, Empathic Engagement and Peacebuilding (DEEP) Network and Gadjah Mada University as host institutions, together with eight prominent universities in Indonesia as partners. The significance of this course lies in the combinations between foundation enhancements; context variations of citizenship actualization; and learners’ action projects. The program puts its focuses on self-centered (Floyd and Simpson, 2008) and experienced-based (Ip and Naidu, 2001) aspects to encourage learners in gaining practical implementation.

Overall, the course contents that the Citizenship MOOC had developed, have shown tremendous aspects to manage diversity in Indonesian society, particularly among the learners. The course is eager to address critical issues related to how being citizens who respect the values of social, cultural, and political diversities. Since Indonesia is immensely diverse in many aspects, including language, religion, ethnicity, and political views (Schefold, 1998), then it is crucial to develop people's soft skills on how to celebrate diversity by strengthening citizenship values (Banks, 2007). Thus, this study aims to address further queries through an appraisal of how the Citizenship MOOC could complement the existing conventional teaching model? What is the significance of the Citizenship MOOC in transforming theoretical knowledge towards actual and practical aspects to generate inclusive learning activities?

2. The Development of the Citizenship MOOC

2.1 Course Structure

There are fifteen topics offered in the Citizenship MOOC. Structurally, this Citizenship MOOC consists of three main phases. In each phase, learners will have sets of learning materials as well as guidance to conduct their projects at the end of the course. In phase 1, the general theoretical foundation and introduction of the course were delivered. The purpose of phase 1 is to set a common ground understanding towards practices of transformative citizenships in diverse communities. While in phase 2, deep and specific topics are being discussed to broaden learners’ perspectives from a multidisciplinary point of view. This phase 2 considered the longest phase within the whole course, as it is covered ten different topics out of fifteen.

Lastly, phase 3 is where learners are implementing what they have been learning from phase 1 and phase 2 of the Citizenship MOOC, which is meant to encourage learners to conduct an action research project. In this phase, learners are expected to contribute the possible action to the community around them. The theme of learners’ projects is inclusively varying between one to another. They are allowed to come up with various ideas on conducting their project that include the values from the transformative citizenship that they have learned. The details of each topic in the Citizenship MOOC is available in Figure 1 below.

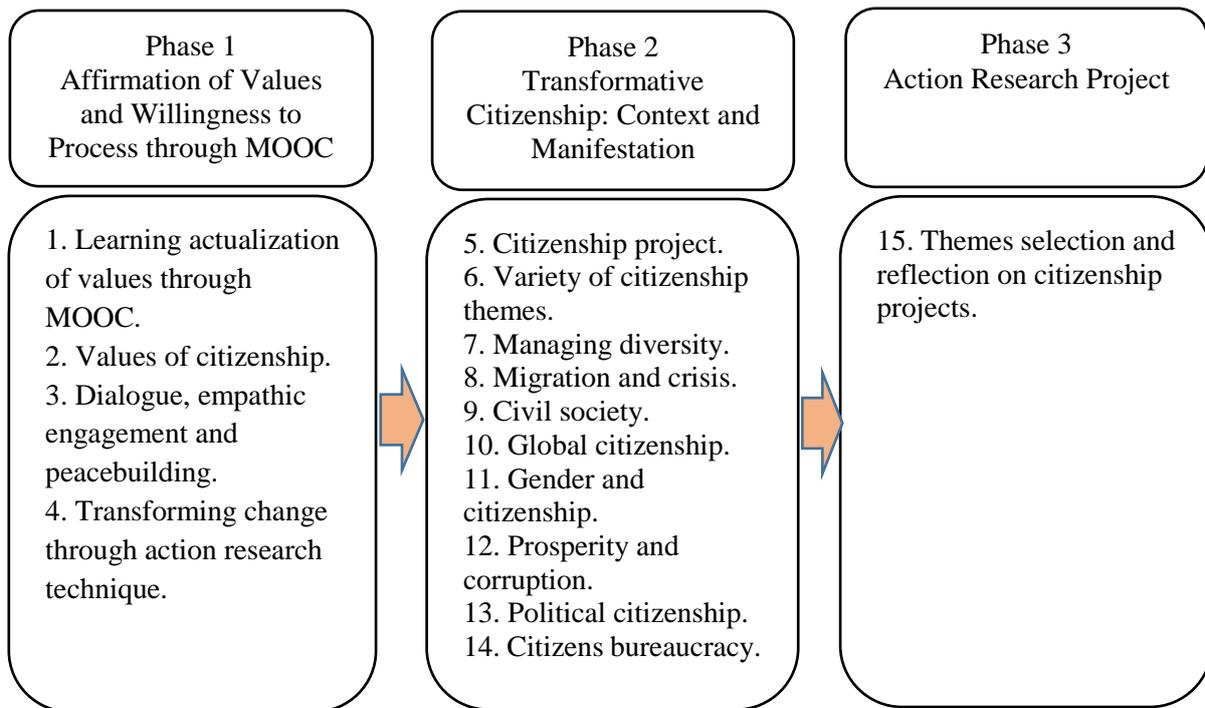


Figure 1. Three Phases Applied in the Citizenship MOOC

2.2 Course Contents

In the stage of implementation, the MOOC provided learners with sets of various topics that cover multiple topics on transformative citizenship (see Figure 1). It had consisted of various lectures from various partner universities according to their expertise. For instance, in topic 4 a session from Gadjah Mada University has delivered a topic on the action research project. Similarly, another platform that had been offered is called the problem-based learning model (De Graaf & Kolmos 2003), focusing on a learning process based on the courage to find an appropriate solution towards an identified problem. In order to design an inclusive and empathic engagement platform in the community it is useful to apply the experienced-based learning model (Saugstad, 2013). This model accommodates citizens to participate and learn about enhancing social values based on the common experience together with people in their groups.

Additionally, in topic 7 learners were studying about managing diversity, which the lectures given by educator from the Islamic University of Indonesia. The educator has highlighted the importance of understanding diversity as well as being able to offer a concrete solution towards diversities challenges. Furthermore, a lecture from the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga presented about civil society on topic 9. The educator emphasized the citizenship aspect through social contexts, given the meaning that each society is shaped and built by its socio-cultural values and norms. While in topic 11, a session from Semarang State University specifically addressed citizenship issues from a gender perspective. In this session, the learner focused on the significance of gender relations in day-to-day life.

In particular, the Citizenship MOOC provided an introduction content video between one phase to another. This video delivered by the purpose of connecting between the previous phase. This content is useful for the learners to ensure their understanding on the topic discussed is following the tracks. Since this is an on-line platform, there is a possibility where learners might miss one or some previous sessions. Thus, an introductory content in each phase is helping them to know the stage of the course. In the Figure 2 below are random examples of how the on-line lectures looks like.



Figure 2. Screenshots of Lectures from Random Topics in the Citizenship MOOC.

3. Method

3.1 Course Participants

The participants who joined in the Citizenship MOOC are mainly learners and educators. Characteristically, the Citizenship MOOC targeted learners inclusively open for anyone who interested to study this theme. While the educators are from eight partner universities who are represented by lecturers who run similar courses respectively. Therefore, the majority of learners were students from those partner universities. Nevertheless, there are numbers of learners who came from public audiences whom they affiliated with various institutions (see Figure 3). In total, the Citizenship MOOC was having a total of 634 learners. The different percentage of numbers of learners is not directly associated with the level of enthusiasm but rather due to the learners in each university are those who enrolled in each course supervised by the participated educators.

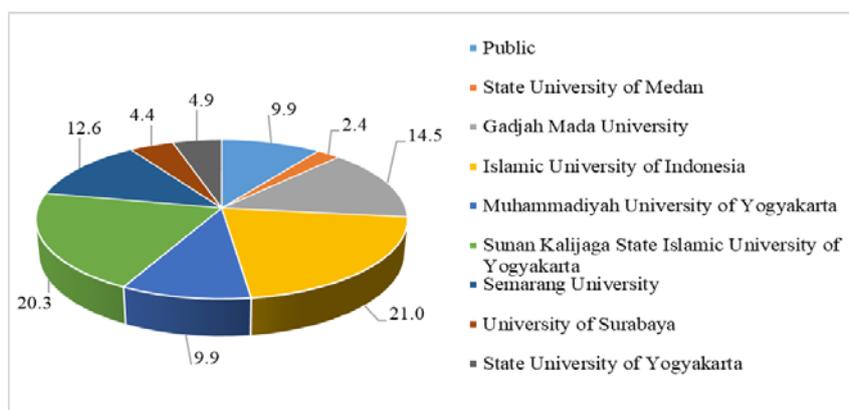


Figure 3. Percentage of Total 634 Learners Participated in the Citizenship MOOC.

3.2 Instrument

The data obtained in this paper was mainly collected from the Moodle system of MOOC. The Moodle system storage database of the implementation stages (see Table 1) of the Citizenship MOOC web activities. This includes database of numbers of learners and their affiliated institutions (see Figure 3). In addition to that, the assessment method of the action research project was employed to assess learners' project implementation. Furthermore, a qualitative interview using open-ended questions was conducted virtually with participated educators which aim to assess their feedback towards the benefits and the challenges of using the Citizenship MOOC as alternative teaching platform.

3.3 Course Development and Learning Activities

As we can see in Table 1 below, the Citizenship MOOC has developed four gradual stages. The preparation and development stages are considered as pre-course. Continuously, the course was taking place in the implementation stage which was then followed by the last stage of closing and evaluation. The duration of the course was conducted in a total of 12 weeks where learners were accessing learning contents in each topic (implementation stage). Besides, the two first stages of the Citizenship MOOC preparation and development took 7 weeks to be done with additional 5 weeks in the last stages of closing and evaluation.

Table 1. *Timeline of developing and learning activities in the Citizenship MOOC*

| Stages | Activities | Duration |
|------------------------|---|----------|
| Preparation | Website development | 3 weeks |
| | Preparing learning materials | |
| | Preparing learning objects | |
| Development | Material production | 4 weeks |
| | Assessments selection | |
| | Coordination with partner universities | |
| | Launching and promotion | |
| Implementation | Learners accessing each topics in Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 | 12 weeks |
| | Monitoring program | |
| | Regular evaluation | |
| Closing and evaluation | Writing final report | 5 weeks |
| | Presenting the final report and evaluation | |
| | Coordination for sustainability program with partner universities | |

4. Results

4.1 Learners' Project Implementation

The main implementation of the Citizenship MOOC is taking place in unit 15. In this unit, the learners were given a specific session on how to conduct a project as an implementation from what they have learned in the course. Learners were allowed to choose any aspect they think relevant and doable for them to conduct around their community. As an example, in Figure 4 below, several groups of learners from the State University of Medan initiated action projects in various topics. From raising awareness of being transformative citizenship by avoiding the use of drugs and the dangers of terrorism as well as about etiquette of using public facilities. The groups project has given learners handing experiences in transforming theory into practice (Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012), including how they applied skills on dealing with diverse group of people as a teamwork (Arasaratnam, 2016).

Therefore, the projects conducted by learners is one of the significant outcomes of the Citizenship MOOC.



Figure 4. Screenshots from Learners' Project Implementation.

4.2 Course Evaluation, Learners' Feedback and Educators' Feedback.

One of the evaluation method that being used in this Citizenship MOOC is a form of self-reflection quiz. For instance, the learners were assigned to respond the questions about the course content in one of the session, according to their own perception. This method aims to evaluate whether the objective of the course has been successfully achieved yet. The type of questions such as: "are the materials, process, and approach that being used in this course, different to other courses generally?", "what make it different?", "what do you find interesting?". The feedbacks received from the learners were generally positive. The learners' statements that were commonly found are: "this course is more effective in helping us to breakdown our critical perspective", "since the course is available on-line, it is helpful to reduce the study load from the conventional classes".

Furthermore, apart from obtaining the result of the Citizenship MOOC by having learners' project implementation, it is necessary to listen to how the participated educators giving their feedbacks towards the Citizenship MOOC. Based on the open-ended questions asked to the total of 10 participated educators, this study found that the common feedbacks were both elaborating the benefits and challenges of having the Citizenship MOOC as a teaching platform. The details of the educator's feedbacks are available in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *Qualitative Feedbacks from Educators towards the Citizenship MOOC.*

| Item | Feedback |
|------------|--|
| Benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The Citizenship MOOC is an alternative platform that applicable to be integrated with actual face-to-face class. <input type="checkbox"/> The Citizenship MOOC delivered the key point of enhancing learners' enthusiasm in contributing their project to the community. <input type="checkbox"/> The applied 3 phases in the Citizenship MOOC is useful to equip learners with skills of critical thinking, empathy, cooperation and networking. |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Since the Citizenship MOOC was characteristically virtual and supplementary, educators face an obstacle towards learners' commitment in fulfilling each of the lecture topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Upon the course implementation in 2016, learners were not generally familiar with e-learning platform. Thus, numerous technical problems occurred. |

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed an alternative online teaching platform by using a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) that the program named the Citizenship MOOC. The course content was developed to addresses critical issues of transformative citizenship practices in the Indonesian diverse social context. This Citizenship MOOC came as a complementary learning platform which was participated by eight prominent Indonesian universities (contributed educators) in collaboration with DEEP Network. Besides being open to the public, the majority of learners in this course were university students. The Citizenship MOOC focuses on enhancing learners' skills to develop an actual action research project as the course implementation as well as a contribution to society. More importantly, this study suggested that MOOC is a prospective for an alternative online teaching platform. Specifically, developing MOOCs that involved multidisciplinary parties could generate a broader perspective for the learners.

From the qualitative data collected from the participated educators' feedbacks, this study found that the Citizenship MOOC was particularly successful in transferring multidisciplinary perspectives related to citizenship discourse to the learners. While at the same time, learners were encouraged in transforming their theoretical knowledge into actual projects, strengthening their skills of critical thinking and empathy. Despite its benefits, there were challenges in the application of the Citizenship MOOC due to a lack of technological awareness by the time this course take place.

Based on the findings discussed above, this study suggested that further work is recommended to address technological preparedness, (especially for the learners) before developing learning activities using the MOOC platform. Having well prepared technological infrastructure will lead to the more effective and efficient application of MOOC. This aspect is necessary, since MOOC is a platform that includes large data both from its numbers of contents as well as big numbers of participants.

Finally, this study admitted its limitations especially covering two main aspects, including: first, the time gap between the implementation of the Citizenship MOOC (in 2006) and writing of this paper (in 2021) is considered too long ago. Thus, this study was having difficulties to contact the participated educators for qualitative data collection purposes. Hence, it is recommended to avoid this such situation in further related study. Secondly, in relation to the first limitation, this study was not able to present quantitative analyzes about the learners' perceptions towards their experience learning through the Citizenship MOOC. Therefore, it would be more comprehensive to have this analyzes in the future works.

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