

Citizenship Education in Economics: A Phenomenological Study of Civic Consciousness Development Among Junior High School Students

Emelita C. Baylon*

Ph.D. in Education, Major in Social Studies Education Student, Philippines.

Corresponding Author: Emelita C. Baylon, Ph.D. in Education, Major in Social Studies Education Student, Philippines.

Received: 📅 2026 Mar 20

Accepted: 📅 2026 Apr 08

Published: 📅 2026 Apr 20

Abstract

This study investigates how integrating citizenship education into economics instruction shapes students' civic consciousness, moral reasoning, and higher-order thinking skills. Using a transcendental phenomenological design, the research explores the lived experiences of 29 Grade 9 Social Studies students exposed to citizenship-integrated lessons. Phenomenology was employed to capture how learners interpret and assign meaning to their roles as civic and economic actors within authentic classroom contexts. Data were collected through open-ended survey responses and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Moustakas' phenomenological framework, including horizontalization, thematic clustering, and essence synthesis. Findings reveal that citizenship-integrated instruction fosters (1) heightened civic awareness, (2) ethical reasoning grounded in socio-economic realities, and (3) the development of interrelated analytical, creative, and critical thinking skills. Students demonstrated the ability to connect economic concepts with social responsibility, particularly in contexts of global peace, equity, and participatory citizenship. The study contributes to the growing body of literature supporting the integration of civic and economic education and highlights its potential to promote transformative learning. Implications are discussed for curriculum design, teacher training, and the advancement of socially responsive education in the Philippine context.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, Civic Consciousness, Economics Education, Phenomenology, Social Studies

1. Introduction

Developing civic consciousness is central to preparing learners for participation in increasingly complex socio-economic systems. In contemporary education, the integration of citizenship education into disciplinary subjects—particularly economics—has gained importance due to the interconnected nature of civic and economic life. Economics education, traditionally focused on technical and analytical competencies, often neglects the ethical and civic dimensions of decision-making. However, students must not only understand economic systems but also critically evaluate their implications for equity, justice, and social welfare.

This study examines how integrating citizenship education into economics instruction influences students':

- critical thinking
- moral judgment
- understanding of civic responsibilities
- awareness of economic roles

Grounded in phenomenology, the study seeks to uncover how students experience and interpret this integration,

moving beyond outcome-based evaluation toward meaning-making.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

• Citizenship Education and Civic Formation

Citizenship education plays a critical role in fostering democratic participation, social responsibility, and ethical awareness. According to Westheimer and Kahne, effective citizenship education develops not only personally responsible individuals but also participatory and justice-oriented citizens [1]. In the Philippine context, citizenship education is embedded in Social Studies, aligning with constitutional mandates to promote nationalism and civic responsibility.

• Economics Education and Civic Integration

Recent scholarship emphasizes that economics education must extend beyond technical knowledge toward ethical reasoning. Nussbaum argues that education should cultivate the capacity for critical reflection and global citizenship, particularly in addressing inequality and social justice [2]. Similarly, Davies et al highlight that integrating citizenship perspectives into economics enhances students' ability to evaluate real-world issues through moral and civic lenses

[3].

• **Constructivism and Transformative Learning**

This study is anchored in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experience. When students engage with real-world issues, learning becomes meaningful and transformative. Additionally, Mesirow's theory of transformative learning suggests that critical reflection enables individuals to reassess assumptions and develop more inclusive perspectives—an outcome strongly aligned with citizenship education [4].

• **Strengthening Social Studies Education Through Citizenship Education**

Citizenship education has long been recognized as a foundation of Social Studies, aiming to prepare students as active participants in democratic societies. Abulencia highlights that incorporating citizenship education into the curriculum enhances students' national identity and sense of responsibility [5]. This aligns with the K–12 curriculum's objective of producing empowered learners capable of contributing to societal development. Social Studies serves as a vital platform for teaching values, critical decision-making, and participatory governance [6]. Furthermore, it connects historical, cultural, and contemporary contexts, enabling students to relate past and present events to their civic duties. Such efforts focus on nurturing a sense of national identity and collective responsibility, as noted in curriculum reforms emphasizing democratic ideals and social justice [7].

• **Integrating Citizenship Education into Economics Topics**

Integrating civic education with economics fosters critical thinking by encouraging students to analyze socio-economic issues through ethical and civic perspectives. PBEed asserts that teaching economics within a citizenship framework fosters accountability and moral judgment by examining the societal implications of financial decisions [8]. In the Philippines, economic education is intertwined with civic awareness. Dumol and Camposano argue that economics lessons in Social Studies promote the concept of a moral community by highlighting the interplay between civic and economic responsibilities [9]. This integration equips students to navigate their roles as both engaged citizens and economic actors in an interconnected world. Rogayan and Dollete underscore that teaching economics through a civic lens enables learners to explore societal issues like poverty, inequality, and resource management, enhancing their ability to make ethical decisions [10]. Crisolo, Camposano, and Rogayan further emphasize that incorporating economic concepts into a citizenship framework develops students' holistic understanding of their civic and economic roles [6].

• **Critical Thinking and Moral Judgment in Citizenship Education**

Critical thinking is a crucial skill fostered by citizenship education in the K–12 curriculum. The Philippine Department of Education promotes inquiry-based learning to encourage students to challenge, analyze, and evaluate information [11]. Dizon demonstrates that addressing real-world issues such as taxation, labor rights, and sustainable development through a civic consciousness lens enhances students'

problem-solving and critical analytical skills [12]. Similarly, Hicks, S (n.d.) highlights that exposing students to ethical dilemmas in economic contexts, such as environmental sustainability or corporate social responsibility, fosters balanced moral judgment [13]. Citizenship education's focus on empathy, equity, and justice complements economics' technical and analytical aspects, ensuring students consider societal needs in decision-making. This comprehensive approach aligns with DepEd's *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* (ESP) curriculum, which prioritizes moral and ethical growth for responsible citizenship.

• **Enhancing Engagement and Relevance Through Citizenship Education**

Integrating citizenship education with economics enhances the relevance of Social Studies by showing students real-world applications of their learning. Dizon observes that when students understand practical implications, such as taxation policies or labor rights advocacy, their engagement increases [12]. This integration not only strengthens critical thinking and moral judgment but also prepares students for active citizenship in a complex, interconnected world. The inclusion of citizenship education in Social Studies, particularly in economics, is transformative. It equips learners with the skills to address 21st-century challenges by fostering critical thinking, moral judgment, and active civic participation.

A crucial feature of the Philippine K–12 curriculum is citizenship education, especially in social studies, where it transforms students into future-ready individuals. Students get the critical thinking abilities, moral discernment, and civic awareness necessary to tackle today's issues by incorporating citizenship principles into economics and other courses. In addition to making social studies more relevant, the combination of civic education and economics also helps students get ready for their dual roles as responsible citizens and economic actors. Reflecting the main objectives of Philippine education to create a just, equitable, and democratic country, this all-encompassing approach emphasizes the significance of developing knowledgeable, sympathetic, and engaged members of society.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach to investigate how citizenship education can be effectively integrated into economics topics within Social Studies curricula. The purpose of this research is to examine how such integration enhances students' critical thinking, moral judgment, and understanding of their civic and economic responsibilities. The study seeks to provide insights into the lived experiences of students as they engage with citizenship education in an economic context.

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a transcendental phenomenological design to examine the essence of students' lived experiences in engaging with citizenship education within economics instruction. Phenomenology was selected because the study

seeks not merely to describe outcomes, but to understand how learners *perceive, interpret, and assign meaning* to their roles as civic and economic actors. Following the principles of transcendental phenomenology, the researcher engaged in **epoché (bracketing)** to suspend prior assumptions about citizenship education, allowing participants' voices to define the phenomenon. The goal was to distill the invariant structures of experience shared across participants.

2.2. Participants

A total of 29 Grade 9 Social Studies students were selected through purposive sampling based on their exposure to citizenship-integrated economics instruction. This ensured **criterion-based inclusion**, a requirement in phenomenological research where participants must have directly experienced the phenomenon.

From this group, three participants were invited for in-depth interviews to provide textural (what was experienced) **and** structural (how it was experienced) **descriptions.**

2.3. Data Collection

Data collection followed a two-stage phenomenological process:

- **Open-Ended Survey Responses** – to capture initial descriptions of lived experiences
- **Semi-Structured Interviews** – to deepen reflection and uncover meaning structures

Interview questions were designed to elicit:

- Personal interpretations
- Emotional and cognitive responses
- Meaning-making processes

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a **modified Moustakas (1994) phenomenological approach**, involving:

- Horizontalization – **identifying significant statements across all responses**
- Meaning units clustering – **grouping statements into themes**
- Textural description – **describing what participants experienced**
- Structural description – **describing how they experienced it**
- Essence synthesis – **integrating meanings into a unified description of the phenomenon**

Triangulation between survey and interview data ensured credibility, while recurring themes were validated through cross-case comparison. To guarantee rigor and dependability, the analysis procedure was conducted methodically. Initially, the survey responses were examined, and open coding was used to identify the main themes. This was followed by axial coding to group related codes into overarching categories. The interview transcripts were then analyzed using the

same coding framework, allowing for the triangulation of data sources.

Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, thick description, and audit trails. Three participants were selected from the survey respondents to participate in in-depth, semi-structured interviews in the second stage. The rich, qualitative information from these conversations expanded on the survey results. To study the subtleties of participants' involvement with economic citizenship education, and to elicit their reflective perspectives, probing questions were employed. A comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon was guaranteed by the mix of surveys and interviews, which captured the depth and breadth of student experiences.

The analysis process followed a systematic approach to ensure rigor and reliability. First, the survey responses were reviewed, and key themes were identified through open coding. This was followed by axial coding to group related codes into overarching categories. The interview transcripts were then analyzed using the same coding framework, allowing for the triangulation of data sources. A comparative study of the survey and interview data was carried out to guarantee the reliability of the results. Consistencies were brought to light by this comparison, which also gave the emerging themes more support. The main conclusions were on how citizenship education helps students relate academic material to larger societal principles and practical applications while also fostering critical, creative, and analytical thinking abilities. The final themes were distilled to reflect the essence of the students' lived experiences, ensuring that the study provides an authentic and insightful understanding of the research problem.

3. Results

3.1. Discussion

The analysis of students' narratives revealed three major themes that capture the essence of their lived experiences: citizenship education as a lens for understanding social responsibility and the development of moral and ethical awareness. These themes illuminate how students interpret and make meaning of their engagement with citizenship education within economics instruction.

Theme 1: Citizenship Education as a Catalyst for Civic Awareness

Quantitative ratings ($M = 4.38$) indicate strong perceived effectiveness of the lesson. However, beyond satisfaction, qualitative responses reveal that students developed a **heightened sense of civic responsibility**, particularly in relation to global peace and leadership. Students articulated a shift from passive understanding to **active moral positioning**, recognizing their roles in fostering inclusive and peaceful communities.

4. Rate your general experience of the lesson

[More details](#)



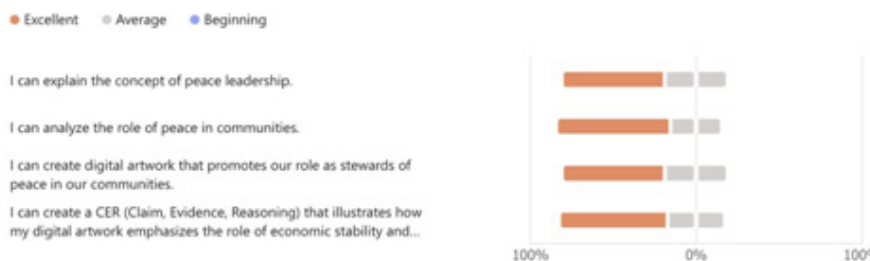
Graph 1: Lesson Rating of the Respondents about the General Experience of the Lesson

Students’ experiences suggest that citizenship education provided a meaningful framework through which economic concepts were understood in relation to real-world social responsibilities. Rather than perceiving lessons as abstract or purely academic, students described how the integration of citizenship themes enabled them to connect economic knowledge with societal impact. As one participant shared, understanding economic issues allowed them to “see how decisions affect people in society,” reflecting an emerging awareness of the broader consequences of economic actions. Participants’ narratives indicate that classroom discussions—particularly those centered on global peace and leadership—served as spaces for reflection and dialogue. Through these engagements, students experienced learning as an opportunity to examine their roles within

society and to consider how individual actions contribute to collective well-being. The integration of citizenship education thus functioned as a lens that helped students interpret economic content not only in terms of systems and structures but also in relation to human values and social responsibility. Moreover, students described these experiences as personally meaningful, emphasizing that learning became more relevant when connected to real-life contexts. The classroom environment, characterized by interactive discussions and reflective activities, enabled students to engage more deeply with the material. In this way, citizenship education was experienced as a bridge between knowledge and lived responsibility, fostering a growing sense of civic awareness and engagement.

3. Competency: Analyze and advocate the concept of Global Peace through Leadership

[More details](#)



Graph 2: Competency: Analyze and Advocate the Concept of Global Peace Through Leadership

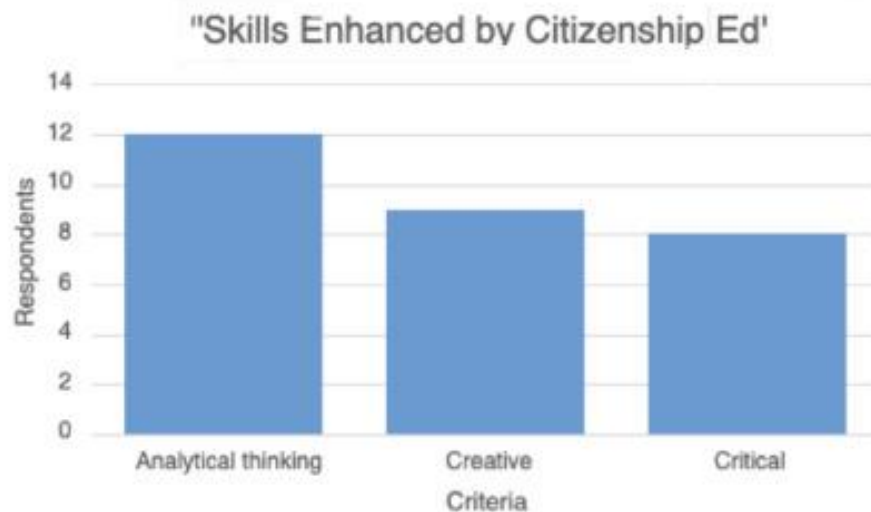
Theme 2: Development of Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Findings show that:

- 41% reported improved analytical thinking
- 31% creative thinking

- 28% critical thinking

Rather than isolated skills, interviews suggest these operate **interdependently**, particularly when students engage with real-world socio-economic dilemmas.



Graph 3: Skill Enhanced by Citizenship Education

Across both themes, students' lived experiences point to a common understanding:

citizenship education within economics is not merely an instructional strategy but a transformative learning experience. It enables students to connect cognitive understanding with ethical reflection, shaping how they perceive their roles in society. Through these experiences, students move beyond passive learning toward active meaning-making, where knowledge is interpreted through the lens of responsibility, justice, and social engagement. These findings align with the essence identified in the study, wherein citizenship education is experienced as a bridge between academic content and lived responsibility. The integration of civic and economic concepts allows students to develop a more holistic understanding of their identities as both learners and members of society, reinforcing the importance of education in fostering reflective, responsible, and engaged citizens.

Theme 3: Moral Reasoning Embedded in Economic Understanding

Participants demonstrated the ability to connect economic concepts with ethical considerations, including:

- fairness
- justice
- social responsibility

This indicates that citizenship education transforms economics from a technical subject into a value-laden discipline, reinforcing findings in existing literature. Another central theme emerging from the data is the development of students' moral and ethical awareness. Students' lived experiences reveal that citizenship education created opportunities for reflection on values such as fairness, justice, respect, and accountability. Through discussions and learning activities, students engaged with ethical dimensions of economic issues, allowing them to consider not only what decisions are made, but why they matter. Interview responses further illustrate how students internalized these values. Participants emphasized the importance of empathy

and inclusivity in promoting global peace, highlighting how reducing discrimination and fostering respect are essential components of a just society. Others reflected on the role of moral judgment in shaping equitable outcomes, recognizing that civic and economic responsibilities are deeply interconnected.

These experiences were shaped by pedagogical approaches that encouraged critical reflection, dialogue, and real-world application. Students described how such approaches supported their ability to think beyond surface-level understanding and engage with complex societal issues. Learning was thus experienced as a process of ethical inquiry, where students examined their beliefs, questioned assumptions, and developed a more nuanced understanding of their roles as members of society. Additionally, students reported that integrating citizenship education made learning more engaging and relatable. By connecting classroom content to real-world issues, students experienced lessons as more meaningful and impactful. This relevance contributed to a deeper level of engagement, reinforcing the idea that education is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about developing a sense of responsibility toward others [14-18].

4. Findings

4.1. Generalization and Conclusions

This study employed a transcendental phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Grade 9 students engaging with citizenship education integrated into economics instruction. Rather than focusing on measured outcomes, the study sought to uncover how students interpret and make meaning of their civic and economic responsibilities within the learning process. From a constructivist perspective, students actively construct meaning by connecting economic concepts with lived experiences. This aligns with Vygotsky's theory that learning is socially mediated and context-dependent. Findings reveal that students experience citizenship education as a meaningful and transformative dimension of learning, where

economic concepts are understood not merely as academic content but as frameworks for engaging with real-world social issues. The development of moral reasoning supports Nussbaum's argument that education should cultivate ethical citizenship capable of addressing global challenges [2]. Through their experiences, students developed a heightened awareness of moral and ethical considerations, particularly in relation to justice, accountability, inclusivity, and global peace. These experiences were not perceived simply as skill acquisition, but as opportunities for reflection, value formation, and social engagement.

The results also reflect Westheimer and Kahne's framework, particularly in developing justice-oriented citizens who critically evaluate societal structures [1]. The integration of citizenship education into economics instruction was experienced as a process that connects knowledge with responsibility. Students described becoming more conscious of their roles as both civic and economic actors, demonstrating an emerging sense of agency in contributing to society. Their narratives highlight how classroom experiences, particularly those emphasizing discussion, reflection, and real-world application, shaped their understanding of civic participation and ethical decision-making. Overall, this study demonstrates that citizenship education, when integrated into economics instruction, enhances students' civic consciousness, moral reasoning, and higher-order thinking skills. It fosters not only cognitive engagement but also a deeper sense of purpose, positioning students as reflective, socially aware, and responsible individuals. These findings underscore the value of integrating citizenship education in Social Studies as a means of cultivating active and engaged citizenship in increasingly complex societal contexts. It transforms economics from a technical discipline into a socially responsive field, enabling students to engage critically with real-world issues.

4.2. Data Limitation

However, the study's scope is limited by its sample size and context. The findings should be interpreted as analytically generalizable, rather than universally applicable. While this study provides meaningful insights into the lived experiences of students engaging with citizenship education in economics instruction, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study involved a relatively small and context-specific sample of 29 Grade 9 students from a single school setting. As a phenomenological inquiry, the goal was not generalizability but depth of understanding; however, the contextual nature of the participants' experiences may limit the transferability of findings to other educational settings or cultural contexts. Second, the study relied on self-reported narratives and interview accounts, which reflect participants' subjective interpretations of their experiences. While these accounts are central to phenomenological research, they may be influenced by social desirability or participants' tendencies to present their experiences in ways they perceive as acceptable or favorable. Additionally, data collection was conducted through online platforms, which may have shaped the depth and richness of participants' responses.

The absence of face-to-face interaction may have limited opportunities for deeper probing, potentially affecting the complexity and nuance of the descriptions gathered. Despite these limitations, the study offers a credible and meaningful account of how students experience and make sense of citizenship education within economics instruction. The findings should therefore be interpreted as context-bound insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon rather than as broadly generalizable claims.

4.3. Recommendation for Future Studies

Building on the insights of this study, future research may further deepen the understanding of how citizenship education is experienced across diverse contexts. Expanding the scope of participants to include learners from varied educational settings, grade levels, and cultural backgrounds may provide richer and more nuanced perspectives on the phenomenon. Such studies can enhance the transferability of findings and reveal how contextual factors shape students' meaning-making processes. Comparative studies across different curricula or international contexts are also recommended to explore how citizenship education is experienced within varying educational frameworks. These investigations may offer broader insights into how civic and economic learning are integrated and interpreted across cultures. Longitudinal research may further illuminate how students' experiences of citizenship education evolve over time, particularly in relation to their ongoing civic engagement, ethical decision-making, and participation in society. Understanding these trajectories can provide valuable insights into the sustained impact of such educational approaches. Future inquiries may also examine the role of digital and technological tools in shaping students' experiences of citizenship education, especially in addressing contemporary global issues such as inequality, climate change, and digital citizenship. Exploring how technology mediates meaning-making can contribute to more responsive and relevant pedagogical practices.

In addition, the following directions are proposed to strengthen both research and practice in this field:

- **Curriculum Development:** Future studies may explore how the integration of citizenship education across various Social Studies domains influences students' lived experiences of civic and economic responsibility.
- **Teacher Preparation:** Investigations into how teachers facilitate and interpret citizenship education can provide deeper insights into the pedagogical conditions that shape students' experiences.
- **Pedagogical Approaches:** Further research may examine how inquiry-based, experiential, and reflective learning strategies influence students' meaning-making processes and engagement with civic and economic issues.

References

1. Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American educational research journal*, 41(2), 237-269.
2. Nussbaum, M. C. (2016). Not for profit: why democracy

- needs the humanities-Updated edition.
3. Davies, I., Evans, M., & Reid, A. (2005). Globalising citizenship education? A critique of 'global education' and 'citizenship education'. *British journal of educational studies*, 53(1), 66-89.
 4. Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1997(74), 5-12.
 5. Abulencia, A. S. (2015). The unraveling of K-12 Program as an education reform in the Philippines. *Sipatahoenan*, 1(2).
 6. Crisolo, O. R., Camposano, S., & Rogayan, D. V. (2021). Relevance of social studies in the 21st century society: Students' perspectives. *International Journal of Didactical Studies*, 2(1), 101457.
 7. Alviar-Martin, T., & Baildon, M. (2016). Context and curriculum in two global cities: A study of discourses of citizenship in Hong Kong and Singapore. Education policy analysis archives.
 8. PBE. (n.d.). *State of Philippine Education Report 2023*. PBE.
 9. Dumol, P., & Camposano, J. (2018). Nationhood and Civic Virtue in Philippine Education.
 10. Rogayan, D., & Eveyen El Elyonna, D. N. (2019). Environmental awareness and practices of science students: Input for ecological management plan. *International Electronic Journal of Environmental Education*, 9(2), 106-119.
 11. Department of Education (DepEd). (2019). 'Policy Guidelines on the K-12 Basic Education Program'
 12. Dizon, A. G. (2022). Citizenship Education in the K to 12 Junior High School Economics Curriculum in the Philippines: A Content Analysis. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 21(2), 136-149.
 13. Hicks, J. (n.d.). (2024) 'Ethics and Economics'.
 14. Camposano, C. C. (2017). Rizal, Civic Virtue, and Active Citizenship. *The Journal of History*, 63(1), 1-1.
 15. T. Center, (n.d.). *1987 Philippine Constitution - The LawPhil Project*.
 16. Marquez, L. P. (2017). Critical Thinking in Philippine Education: What We Have and What We Need. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*, 15(2).
 17. Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives (2019). 10.54096/iene4805
 18. Wui, Ma. G. L., Claudio, J. S. R., Reyes, C. R. R., Reyes-Carbaja, R. T. M., & Rosa-LuxemburgStiftung. (2023). Civic Education in The Philippines (Nonie Florenda, Ill.). In Gegensatz Translation Collective (Ed.), Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.