

## SMART AND GOOD CITIZENS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF UDIN S. WINATAPUTRA'S CIVIC EDUCATION PARADIGM

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### ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received** : 27-10-2025

**Revised** : 15-11-2025

**Accepted** : 20-12-2025

### KEYWORDS

Civic Education;  
Smart and Good  
Citizenship;  
Udin S. Winataputra;  
Philosophical Analysis;  
Digital Citizenshi

### ABSTRACT

The rapid development of technology and the growing complexity of citizenship challenges in the digital era highlight the need to revitalise Civic Education based on a strong philosophical foundation. This study analyses Udin S. Winataputra's philosophical framework on the concept of smart and good citizenship and examines its relevance for strengthening Civic Education in Indonesia. Using a qualitative library research method, this study draws primarily from Winataputra's 2001 dissertation and supplements it with contemporary scholarly works on citizenship, digital literacy, and civic virtue. The findings show that Winataputra's concept integrates cognitive competencies (smart) with moral-character dispositions (good), forming a holistic paradigm for civic development. This dual framework aligns with global discussions on transformative citizenship, digital ethics, and democratic education. The study concludes that Winataputra's philosophical contributions provide a significant foundation for redesigning Civic Education to cultivate responsible, critical, and ethically aware citizens in the digital age. Implications for curriculum development and digital citizenship education are also discussed.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the current contemporary era, Indonesia is at a very crucial crossroads. Technological advancements have accelerated significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic (Dass & Kumar Mpm, 2024). Advances in technology and

information can provide opportunities for broader public participation and unlimited access to knowledge, and have great potential to create intellectually intelligent citizens. However, on the other hand, the vast digital space can also be fertile ground for the spread of fake news (hoaxes), political polarisation, hate speech, and the erosion of the values of Pancasila as the noble values of the Indonesian nation, which can undermine the status of being a good citizen.

The fundamental paradox that currently exists is that the public sphere, once envisioned as a forum for rational deliberation, has increasingly become a site of disinformation and ideological polarisation. The challenges posed by the rapid development of the digital era are experienced by society, especially the younger generation (Ruyadi et al., 2023). Civic engagement is currently shifting to the digital space, and society is involved in it (Mulyono et al., 2022). The concept of civic skills can be expanded to include critical digital literacy because it is important to develop critical thinking skills in the virtual world (Flores et al., 2025). Civic education must demonstrate the importance of digital skills while maintaining strong ethics (Almufarreh & Arshad, 2023). Good ethics can prevent digital crime (Aguilar, 2025).

The current situation is further complicated by findings that indicate symptoms of political apathy among the younger generation and a shift in values towards pragmatism and individualism (Dalton, 2021). Currently, many citizens are increasingly apathetic towards politics, leading to a decline in voter turnout and involvement in various political activities (Putnam, 2000). Schools, which should be the main institutions in shaping citizens, are instead trapped in a Civic Education (PKn) approach that is more rote and procedural but lacks the affective and psychomotor dimensions that are essential for character building (Banks, 2017).

Amidst the unrest in society, the ideas of Udin S. Winataputra are relevant to be explored more deeply. However, it turns out that his profound philosophical ideas are often only quoted partially and have never been explored deeply and systematically as a complete conceptual framework to answer the challenges of the times. Udin S. Winataputra's fundamental idea regarding Civic Education (PKn) aims to nurture and develop intelligent and good Indonesian citizens (Winataputra, 2001). The novelty of this study lies in its systematic reconstruction of Winataputra's philosophy and its alignment with contemporary citizenship challenges. The concept of intelligent and good citizens can be one of the foundations for overcoming various national issues that occur today. The urgency lies in the pressing need to rediscover the philosophical basis of Civic Education (PKn) that is authentic and rooted in local wisdom but remains responsive to global challenges. Philosophically, the issues to be addressed centre on the dialectic between idealism and reality.

The idealism proposed by Udin S. Winataputra is the realisation of citizens who have a balance between intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence. Intelligence here does not only mean being well-informed but also being able to think critically, solve problems, and participate constructively (Winataputra, 2001). Meanwhile, being good here does not only mean obeying the law but also having noble character based on the values of Pancasila. This is in line with the vision of a complete citizen who is capable of becoming an agent of positive change for society in accordance with the concept of transformative citizenship as initiated by contemporary thinkers (Biesta, 2011).

However, the reality we face today often presents a different picture because today's digital citizens often spread false information due to a lack of moral ethics. Political participation, which should be a manifestation of civic intelligence, is often trapped in group sentiment and destructive identity politics (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Based on this discrepancy between idealism and reality, this study aims to analyse Udin S. Winataputra's philosophical thoughts on Civic Education (PKn) in a thorough and systematic manner.

## METHOD

This study utilises a qualitative approach with a literature review method (*library research*) of several publications related to the topic. Library research is an effort to collect data and sources on the research topic. Library research involves systematically identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing scholarly sources through thematic categorisation and critical interpretation (Wardah, 2023). There are several procedures used in the library research

method, namely selecting a research topic, determining the focus of the research, collecting literature reviews, presenting data, and compiling reports.

The data corpus consists of primary philosophical texts and secondary peer-reviewed literature. The primary source used is the dissertation by Udin S. Winataputra (2001), which is the main focus of the study. The philosophical thoughts of Udin S. Winataputra in his dissertation are the main subject of the study, which focuses more on comparing the core ideas of Udin S. Winataputra with contemporary theories of citizenship, as well as criticising the relevance of his thoughts in responding to the challenges of the current digital era. The secondary sources of the study are reputable international articles and books relevant to the topic of discussion, which are used as comparative material.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Smart Citizen Dimension

Intelligent citizens, in the perspective of Udin S. Winataputra, are not limited to merely mastering cognitive knowledge. Intelligence is defined as the mastery of a set of civic competencies that enable individuals to participate actively but also ethically ((Fabiano, 2024). Winataputra breaks down this dimension into several basic elements, such as:

#### a. Civic Knowledge

Civic knowledge is the ability to understand rights and obligations, the system of government, the political system, the constitution, and democratic values, which form an intellectual foundation for making appropriate and accountable decisions.

#### b. Civic Skills

Civic Skills encompass intellectual skills such as critical thinking and participatory skills such as communicating, cooperating, problem solving, and expressing aspirations effectively.

#### c. Civic Confidence

Civic Confidence is a sense of confidence that grows from knowledge and skills so that individuals will feel capable of playing an active and participatory role in social, national and state life.

### Good Citizen Dimension

The concept of a good citizen according to the philosophical thinking of Udin S. Winataputra is a moral foundation and character that inspires intellectual competence. Udin S. Winataputra emphasises that without good character, intelligence can be misused. Winataputra outlines this dimension into several basic elements such as:

#### a. Civic Dispositions

Civic Dispositions refer to the internalisation of attitudes and commitment to the fundamental values of democracy and Indonesian nationality, and include a commitment to upholding the rule of law, respecting differences, and placing the public interest above personal or group interests (Winataputra, 2001).

#### b. Civic Commitment

Civic Commitment is an inner drive that is strong, conscious, and voluntary to devote oneself to the common good. This is a manifestation of functional patriotism and nationalism. Commitment to basic civic values will shape responsible individuals (Buchanan & Husain, 2022).

#### c. Civic Responsibility

Civic Responsibility is the moral awareness to fulfil obligations and also accept the consequences of every action as an individual and also as part of a community.

The conceptual mapping between the smart citizen and good citizen dimensions is outlined in the table below  
Table 1. Mapping of Smart Citizen and Good Citizen Dimensions

| Aspect            | Smart Citizen Dimension  | Good Citizen Dimension   |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Main Focus        | Mastery of competencies and capacity for active participation.   | Moral foundation and character that animate the competencies.  |
| Element 1         | Civic Knowledge: Intellectual understanding of rights, obligations, political systems, and the constitution.   | Civic Dispositions: Internalization of democratic values, rule of law, and tolerance.                |
| Element 2         | Civic Skills: Intellectual skills (critical thinking) and participatory skills (communication, collaboration). | Civic Commitment: Voluntary drive to dedicate oneself to the common good.                            |
| Element 3         | Civic Confidence: Sense of confidence ( <i>self-efficacy</i> ) to play an active role in the nation.           | Civic Responsibility: Moral awareness to fulfill obligations and accept the consequences of actions. |
| Digital Relevance | Digital literacy, data verification, and critical reasoning.   | Digital ethics, empathy, and social responsibility in the digital realm.                             |

### Dialectic of Idealism and Digital Reality

A review of secondary literature shows that the dichotomy of intelligent and good proposed by Udin S. Winataputra is highly relevant to the global debate. Udin S. Winataputra's holistic vision, which implicitly integrates knowledge, skills, and character, summarises three types of citizens: *the personally responsible citizen* (good character), *the participatory citizen* (intelligent participation), and *the justice-oriented citizen* (critical reasoning). Challenges in the current digital era further emphasise the urgency of these two dimensions.

Digitally competent citizens without ethical grounding pose significant risks to democratic discourse and social cohesion. The development of digital literacy should not only focus on technical skills but also on character development (Bacalja et al., 2022). They may be proficient in accessing information but are also prone to spreading hoaxes due to a lack of critical reasoning and digital ethics (Bowyer & Kahne, 2020). Conversely, citizens who are only good in the sense of being obedient without critical thinking are at risk of becoming passive subjects who are easily manipulated (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Digital participation (*smart*) is also not automatically of high quality if it is not based on ethical awareness (*good*).

Current digital platforms have accelerated the spread of both accurate and misleading information through ease of publication, wide reach, and virality mechanisms (Humagain, 2025). In this case, civic responsibility is an important part of freedom of expression, where each individual is expected to act with awareness of the rights of others in relation to hate speech or the dissemination of false information (Mitchelstein et al., 2020). If freedom of expression does not take into account the social impact caused by freedom that is sometimes unlimited, it can trigger disinformation and polarization (Burgh & Thornton, 2019). Disinformation will develop through the production and circulation of misleading content (hoaxes) and by exploiting emotions, recommendation algorithms, and attention architecture. The impact on democracy is real, for example, a crisis of trust in institutions, the delegitimation of elections, and the escalation of hate speech that erodes social cohesion (Wu et al., 2025).

As part of the national curriculum, civic education needs to instil a deep understanding of the rights and obligations of citizens in the digital space. Education must be able to create awareness of the importance of responsible freedom of expression, as well as the importance of protecting the social values that form the foundation of the state so that people understand and carry out their civic duties in the virtual world more wisely (Song, 2025). The focus of



Citizenship Education should extend beyond merely training citizens as consumers of information; it must encompass digital literacy and critical thinking skills to enable the effective evaluation of information. Consequently, Citizenship Education is expected to cultivate citizens who are not only critical but also possess civic virtue within the digital sphere (Mitchelstein et al., 2020).

### Relevance to Digital Citizenship

Findings from literature analysis can open up a deeper understanding of the relevance and contribution of Udin S. Winataputra's philosophical thinking to contemporary civic education. Udin S. Winataputra's ideas offer a powerful synthesis to overcome the paradox of modern citizenship, where increased access to information correlates with increased polarisation. Winataputra seems to have anticipated this by stating that the goal of civic education is to 'develop the whole Indonesian person,' a phrase that describes a balance between intellectual and moral potential. Winataputra explicitly places character as the foundation and competence as the instrument. Civic intelligence devoid of ethical character becomes vulnerable to manipulation, whereas moral virtue without critical competence limits meaningful participation.

In the context of the current digital era, this can be interpreted to mean that digital literacy (*smart*) must always be framed within digital ethics (*good*) in order to create a safe space in the digital world (Awashreh, 2025). The ability to verify data must be based on honest character, and the ability to debate must also be balanced with a civic character that respects differences of opinion. This is in line with the idea of transformative citizenship, whereby the goal of education is not only to produce successful citizens but also wise ones (Biesta, 2011).

The philosophical thinking of Udin S. Winataputra offers at least three fundamental contributions to the revitalisation of Civic Education (PKn) in Indonesia, namely:

1. As a philosophical compass, where there is a pragmatic interest in the idea of intelligent and good citizens, it functions as a philosophical compass that can restore Civic Education (PKn) to its essence so that we can understand that the ultimate goal of Civic Education (PKn) is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but a systemic vehicle for democratic education (Winataputra, 2001).
2. As a holistic curriculum framework, this concept provides a strong conceptual framework for designing a more integrated curriculum. Civic Education (PKn) is not only seen as an isolated subject, but as an educational programme that is coherent with other subjects and the overall school culture. This can encourage a problem-based learning approach.
3. As the foundation of digital Civic Education (PKn), Udin S. Winataputra's idea, although born before the era of social media, prophetically provides a solid foundation for digital Civic Education (PKn). The concept of civic skills can be expanded to include critical digital literacy, as it is important to develop critical thinking skills in the virtual world (Flores et al., 2025). Meanwhile, civic dispositions can be contextualised into digital ethics, digital empathy, and responsibility for creating a safe digital space. Thus, Udin S. Winataputra's thinking is not outdated but highly adaptive and relevant to equip the younger generation. Civic education must demonstrate the importance of digital skills while maintaining strong ethics (Almufarreh & Arshad, 2023). Good ethics can prevent digital crime (Aguilar, 2025).

Digital literacy must be used as a reference for policy and education curricula to ensure that citizens have basic to advanced digital skills (Vuorikari, et al., 2022). Appropriate and strategic steps are needed to integrate digital literacy into the framework of digital citizenship, given that it is still developing and requires stronger intervention (Tadlaoui-Brahmi et al., 2022). Teachers and policymakers can integrate digital literacy responsibly (García-López & Trujillo-Liñán, 2025).

Civic Education (PKn) must transform from a focus on teaching digital rights to instilling public reasoning ethics. Students must be guided to become responsible producers of information and understand that every post and comment uploaded must contribute to public reasoning. Civic Education (PKn) learning must shift from the arena of horse-drawn carriage debates (Dworkin) to deliberative dialogue (Rawls) where students will learn to build arguments

based on facts and respect for justice, not just to win debates. The development of teacher professionalism is key because teachers must be equipped with a deep understanding of how digital technology works and its ethical challenges in order to be able to facilitate critical dialogue in the classroom (Özüdogru, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Udin S. Winataputra's framework of smart and good citizenship constitutes a comprehensive philosophical paradigm that remains relevant for revitalizing Civic Education in the digital era. By integrating civic knowledge, skills, and moral dispositions, Winataputra's thought provides a holistic basis for developing responsible, critical, and participatory citizens. The contemporary relevance of this paradigm is evident in its applicability to digital citizenship education, particularly in addressing issues such as disinformation, polarisation, and declining civic virtue. Future research should empirically examine the implementation of this framework in schools, develop instructional models, and compare Winataputra's philosophy with global theories of citizenship.

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