

The Process and Effect of Implementing *We the People...Project Citizen* in Junior High School Social Studies

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Abstract

The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to understand the implementation of *Project Citizen* in Social Studies, to evaluate its effects upon the civic development of junior high school students, and to document the teacher's and students' perceptions of *Project Citizen*. Two classes of 8th graders, one experimental and one comparison, participated in this study. The results showed that students participating in *Project Citizen* significantly outperformed students in the comparison group in civic dispositions and skills. Additionally, qualitative analyses of the interview revealed that the participating teacher and students responded positively toward the *Project Citizen* program. The teacher also expressed interest in implementing the program again in her classes. It also suggested, however, that unequal distribution of responsibility, time constraints, and pressure from the Basic Competence Test for Junior High School Students (BC Test), among other factors, pose significant challenges to implementing/learning *Project Citizen* in the junior high school context.

Keywords: We the People...Project Citizen, Civic Development, Civic Knowledge, Civic Dispositions, Civic Skills



Introduction

Constitutional democracy requires informed, effective, and responsible citizens for its maintenance and improvement. If the polity is to survive and thrive, citizens must possess adequate knowledge of its principles and institutions, and the skills to apply this knowledge to civic life, not to mention dispositions that incline them to protect individual rights and to promote the common good of the society (Chang, Wu, & Liou, 1999; Lee, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2003; NAEP, 1996; Patrick, 1999a, 1999b; Vontz, Metcalf, & Patrick, 2000). Therefore, no one would question that to promote informed and responsible participation in civic life among a citizenry that is committed to the values and principles of constitutional democracy is the over-riding goal of civic education.

Preparation of democratic citizens is the unshirkable responsibility of the public school; the civic mission has long been acknowledged as a priority by the public and the academic community. The Committee of Ten in 1892 and the report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in 1918 affirmed citizenship as one of the cardinal principles of education. Likewise, the Conant report of 1945 asserted that the purpose of schools is to cultivate in the largest number of future citizens an appreciation for both the responsibilities of, and the benefits derived from, liberal democracy. These civic priorities were again reaffirmed more recently in the well-known *A Nation at Risk* report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Brandt (1980) noted that “Preparation for citizenship is unquestionably a principal aim of education” (p.3); the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that comprise these citizens must be cultivated, and the cultivation is the unique assignment of civic education in the public school (Chang & Lee, 2002; Chen, Peng, & Chang, 2004; Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Parker & Jarolimek, 1984; Patrick, 1999; Vontz et al., 2000).

Although the civic mission of education has been accepted for more than a century, there is no consensus as to what characteristics are constitutive of the good citizen or how best to accomplish the civic mission in education (Citizenship Education and Peace Project, 1990; A Generation Adrift, 1990). It is no wonder, then, that educators find it difficult to agree upon the



best instructional strategies for achieving “the elusive goal” (Butler, 1995, p.3). More perplexing, however, is the knowledge that a great deal of research has established guidelines for good practice (e.g., Button, 1972; Ehman, 1980; Guyton, 1982; Remy, 1972), but the typical contemporary classroom uses instructional strategies that are insufficient for developing skills and dispositions beyond those of knowledge acquisition and comprehension (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984).

Taiwan has experienced dramatic political changes in recent years. These political changes indicate that Taiwan is moving toward a more open and democratic society. As Taiwan is in transition from a “hard authoritarianism” to a “soft authoritarianism” (Wincker, 1984, p. 482) and moving toward a constitutional democracy, the efficacy of citizenship education is even more crucial. Civic education in Taiwan, however, faces formidable barriers, most notably a gap between pedagogical theory and classroom practice (Liou, 2004; Liu, 1999), and a conventional instructional emphasis upon the acquisition of factual knowledge concerning the framework of the political system, rather than stressing actual civic participation (Chang, 1993; Liao, Liu, & Doong, 1998; Liu, 1999, National Taiwan Normal University Department of Civic Education, 1991; 1997). These obstacles, among others, impede the civic development of the Taiwanese people and inhibit the flourishing of Taiwan’s newly-emerging constitutional democracy.

Since Taiwan’s civic education continues to face these obstacles, the goal of adequately preparing democratic citizens through education is not being fulfilled. Civic education in Taiwan can and should make a difference. The primary focus should not rely on memorizing facts; instead, it should emphasize genuine civic participation.

Purpose of the Study

We the People...Project Citizen (*Project Citizen*, henceforth) developed by the Center for Civic Education, is an issues-centered curriculum. Its purpose is to promote informed and responsible participation in local government. Based on the rationale, characteristics, and empirical research findings of *Project Citizen* (described later under the heading of *Project Citizen*), it is found that *Project Citizen* covers most content of the Social Studies of the Grade 1-9 Curriculum and seems to have the potentials to remedy some weaknesses of Taiwan’s civic



education and to help Taiwan prepare participatory citizens.¹

The purpose of the study, therefore, was to conduct a quasi-experimental study to test the validity and feasibility of implementing *Project Citizen* in junior high school Social Studies. Specifically, the objectives were:

- to examine the implementation of *Project Citizen* in an 8th grade class,
- to assess the effect of *Project Citizen* on the 8th graders' civic knowledge,
- to assess the effect of *Project Citizen* on the 8th graders' civic dispositions,
- to assess the effect of *Project Citizen* on the 8th graders' civic skills,
- to document the participating teacher's experiences of teaching *Project Citizen*, and
- to document the participating students' experiences of learning *Project Citizen*.

Definition of Terms

Project Citizen is an issues-centered civic education program developed by the Center for Civic Education (CCE). The program is designed to encourage civic development among adolescent students through intensive study of a school or a community issue. In this study, *Project Citizen* was taught to 28 students nested within one class of a junior high school in Taipei City.

Civic Development, according to Patrick (1977, 1999a), and Vontz, Metcalf, and Patrick (2000), is the growth of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable and encourage informed, responsible, and effective participation in political and civic life.

Civic knowledge refers to knowledge of content in three domains: democracy, national identity, and social cohesion and diversity (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). These domains constitute important civic knowledge that all young are expected to know. Civic knowledge is operationally defined as the total score of the 20 multiple-choice items of Test of

¹ Readers interested in the relationship between *Project Citizen* and the goals of social studies education, and the possibility of *Project Citizen* to reaching these goals are directed to "Liou, S. (2003). The Implications of *We the People...Project Citizen* for social studies education. *The Bulletin of Civic and Moral Education*, 14, 55-77."



Civic Knowledge.² Higher scores indicate more civic knowledge.

Civic Dispositions are those traits of public and private character that contribute to both the political efficacy of the individual and the common good of society (Vontz, et al., 2000). Civic dispositions are operationalized by summing the mean scores derived from the following four subscales of Adolescent Student Civic Dispositions Scale (ASCDS): Political Tolerance, Political Interest, Commitment to Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship, and Sense of Political Efficacy. Higher scores imply more positive civic dispositions. Examples of items measuring each dimension of civic dispositions are listed below:

If a person who opposed our government wants to make a speech in our town, he or she should be allowed to speak (political tolerance)

I try to solve problems in my community (political interest).

The freedom to express your political views is important (commitment to rights and responsibilities of citizenship).

People can influence government by attending community meetings to talk with government officials (sense of political efficacy).

Civic Skills are those intellectual and participatory capacities that enable active involvement in civic life (Vontz, et al., 2000). In this study, civic skills refer to students' perceptions of their intellectual and participatory capacities and are operationalized by summing the mean scores of the 11 items of 6-point Likert-type Adolescent Student Civic Skills Scale (ASCSS). Higher scores indicate more civic skills. Following are two examples of the ASCSS.

I am skilled at using facts and reason to analyze other people's positions on problem (intellectual capacities).

I am able to work with others to solve important issues of public policy (participatory capacities).

² Examples of items measuring civic knowledge are available at <http://www.wam.umd.edu/~jtpurta/studentQ.htm>



Review of Related Research

This research review focuses on the understanding of *Project Citizen* along with the empirical findings concerning its impact upon the civic development of adolescents and factors impeding its implementation. The review not only provides further justification for this research but also provides the author with the opportunity to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the research design of each of the studies. Moreover, it provides the research-based context within which the results are presented and interpreted.

Project Citizen

Project Citizen is an issues-centered civic education program developed by the Center for Civic Education (CCE). In this study, *Project Citizen* was taught to students in the experimental class of Democratic Junior High School. In what follows, the goals and anticipated outcomes and the process and content of *Project Citizen* will be discussed.

Goals and anticipated outcomes of Project Citizen. Since the main purpose of this study is to evaluate the effect of *Project Citizen* on the civic development of Taiwanese junior high school students, it is reasonable to ask: What are the civic competencies that *Project Citizen* intends to develop? These questions need to be addressed prior to a formal evaluation of *Project Citizen*.

According to its developers, the goal of *Project Citizen* is to motivate and empower adolescents to exercise their rights and to accept the responsibilities of democratic citizenship through the intensive study of a local community problem. Specifically, *Project Citizen* is designed to help adolescents:

- learn how to monitor and influence public policy in their communities;
- learn the public policy-making process;
- develop concrete skills and the foundation needed to become responsible participating citizens;
- develop effective and creative communication skills;
- develop more positive self-concepts and confidence in exercising the rights and



responsibilities of citizenship (Center for Civic Education, 2000).

Process and content of Project Citizen. *Project Citizen* focuses on the role of state and local governments. The curriculum involves an entire class of students in a series of structured, cooperative learning activities guided by their teachers and/or adult volunteers. Working in cooperative teams, the class learns to interact with their government through a five-step process that includes:

- *Identifying a problem to study.* Students begin by identifying a problem in their community that they think is important and determining which level of government is most directly responsible for dealing with the problem.
- *Gathering information.* Once the class has decided upon the problem they want to study, they will gather and evaluate information about the problem from a variety of sources.
- *Examining solutions.* Students then examine public policies that are currently in effect. They also will examine policies currently suggested by other people.
- *Developing their own public policy.* Students develop a public policy that they think their government should adopt.
- *Developing an action plan.* Students develop a plan of action to show how they might influence the appropriate government or governmental agency to adopt their proposed public policy (Center for Civic Education, 1998).

At the conclusion of the program the class will use the materials they have gathered and written as they accomplished these tasks to develop a class portfolio. In order to develop the best class portfolio, the entire class of students is involved in a series of structured, cooperative learning activities that are guided by their teachers and adult volunteers. With the help of teachers, and community and parent volunteers, students work in cooperative groups to accomplish each of the following tasks (Center for Civic Education, 1998).

- *Group 1: Examine the problem.* The group is responsible for explaining the problem the class has chosen to study. The group should also explain why the problem is important and why that level of government or governmental agency should deal with it.
- *Group 2: Evaluating alternative policies to deal with the problem.* This group is



responsible for explaining present and/or alternative policies designed to solve the problem.

- Group 3: *Developing a public policy the class will support.* This group is responsible for developing and justifying a specific public policy that the majority of the class agrees to support.
- Group 4: *Developing an action plan to get government to accept the class policy.* This group is responsible for developing an action plan showing how citizens can influence their government to adopt the policy the class supports (pp.24-25).

The portfolio is an organized collection of information consisting of the class plan related to the public policy issue they have chosen. According to the student textbook, the portfolio consists of two sections: a display section and a documentation section (Center for Civic Education, 1998).

- *Display section.* For this section the work of each of the four groups should be placed on a separate panel of the four-panel display. The display should be developed so it can be placed on a table, bulletin board, or an easel. Materials to be displayed may include written statements, list of sources, charts, graphs, photographs, original art works, and so forth.³
- *Documentation section.* Each of the four groups should select from the materials gathered those which best document or give evidence of their research. Materials included in the document section should represent samples of the most important and/or significant research they have completed. Not all research should be included (p.24)

Theoretical basis for Project Citizen. The learning pyramid forms the theoretical basis for *Project Citizen* (see Figure 1). According to this Learning Pyramid, retention rates increase with the amount of student involvement (Abrami, Chambers, Poulsen, De Simone, D'Apollonia, & Howden, 1995; Andrini & Kagan, 1990; Learning Pyramid,

³ For a detailed description of the requirements of each group's section of the portfolio, see pages 27-32 in "*We the People...Project Citizen: Student text.*"



2003.). The rates are the highest with teamwork which includes (a) discussion groups: 50%, (b) practice by doing: 75%, and (c) teaching others/immediate use of learning: 90%. As a sharp contrast, the retention rate of the traditional ways of individual and passive learning like lecturing (5%), reading (10%), and demonstration (30%) accounts for no more than 30%. In contrast, the retention rate of the long existing method of lecturing was as low as only five percent.

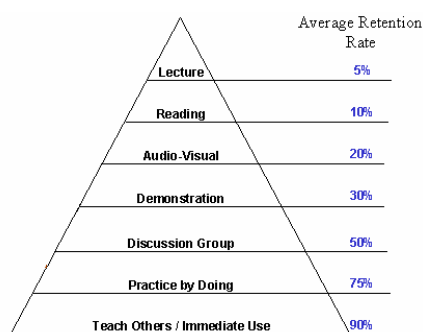


Figure 1 Learning Pyramid

Note: From “Learning Pyramid,” 2003, *Instructor*, 113 (3), p. 9.

These figures cannot be considered absolute, but the retention rates make a point nonetheless. With such a low retention rate of under five percent, the long existing method of lecturing is indeed in need of more effective teaching innovations that involve higher participation like those employed in *Project Citizen*. As a class project, *Project Citizen* encourages students to examine important school or community problems that are relevant to them. The program actively involves an entire class of students in a series of structured, cooperative learning activities guided by their teachers and/or adult volunteers. Throughout the process students are provided with many opportunities to make decisions and to exercise their critical thinking skills, from the identification of the problem to the formation of consensus upon an action plan. They also learn to deal with the problem or issue as it occurs in the genuine context of social life (as opposed to an “artificial” academic exercise). Thus, through the collaborative inquiry process of *Project Citizen*, civic learning becomes more meaningful to the



students.

From the illustration of the learning pyramid, we could see that the implementation of *Project Citizen* is not just an alternative to the teacher-centered lecturing method of Social Studies teaching at junior high school, but a must if Taiwan is aiming at quality civic education in the current wave of education reform. Consequently, this quasi-experimental study was conducted to evaluate the effects of *Project Citizen* on the civic development of junior high school students in Taiwan.

Research on the Effectiveness of Project Citizen

Since its birth, a few studies have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of *Project Citizen*. Tolo's (1998) study provided the first comprehensive look at *Project Citizen* and its implementation throughout the United States. He used surveys to gather information from 381 students in 20 *Project Citizen* classes to investigate students and teachers perceptions of the program. Tolo found that an overwhelming majority of students and teachers believed that *Project Citizen* positively affected students' civic knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. Although Tolo's research provides insights into the perceived effects of *Project Citizen* on students' civic development from the teachers and students who used the program, his study is not comparative. From Tolo's research, we have no idea whether the civic development of students who participated in *Project Citizen* was different from those who did not participate in *Project Citizen*.

Soule (2000) examined the effects of *Project Citizen* on the civic development of students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In May 1999, 1,991 students were surveyed; approximately half had participated in *Project Citizen*, half had not. Using a matching comparison group, Soule found that students participating in *Project Citizen* showed a significant improvement in political skills and knowledge, political attitudes conducive to participatory democracy, and values supportive of democracy. Soule's research showed positive results for participating students across the three dimensions measured: political skills and knowledge, political attitudes, and values supportive of democracy. The conclusions of this study, however, need to be treated with skepticism. The political skills and knowledge, political attitudes, and values of students in



both groups might have been different from each other before the students of the treatment group participated in *Project Citizen*; however, the initial difference between the treatment group and the comparison group was not taken into account.

To avoid the weaknesses of the previous two studies and to improve the credibility of claims regarding the effectiveness of *Project Citizen*, Vontz, Metcalf, and Patrick (2000) used a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design. Their study involved a total of 102 classes (51 treatment and 51 comparison) and 1,412 students (712 treatment and 700 comparison) in three political units: Indiana in the United States, Latvia, and Lithuania. The results of their study revealed that *Project Citizen* positively and significantly affects students' civic development. Specifically, after accounting for pretest differences, students participating in *Project Citizen* showed a statistically significant and positive improvement in civic knowledge and civic skills. In addition, students participating in *Project Citizen* showed statistically significant and positive improvement in propensity to participate in political and civic life. Compared to Tolo's and Soule's research, Vontz, Metcalf and Patrick's study is more sophisticated designed and thoroughly conducted. However, the low reliabilities of some of the subscales of the Civic Development Inventory call the findings of their research into question.⁴

Research by Liou (2002) was the first attempt to employ qualitative approaches to study the effectiveness of *Project Citizen*, to identify conditions influencing its implementation, and to explore the teacher's and students' perceptions of *Project Citizen* in a Midwestern township. One discovery was that the teacher and students had positive perceptions of *Project Citizen*. Another significant finding was that *Project Citizen*, as suggested by previous research (Tolo, 1998; Soule, 2000; Vontz, et al., 2000), has a positive impact on students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions; it also showed a positive impact on some of the psychological traits such as self-efficacy and self-regulation. *Project Citizen* was perceived by the teacher and most students to be a good way to learn civic education; however, several factors such as teachers'

⁴ The Alpha coefficient for the Civic Knowledge subscale, the Commitment to Responsibilities, and the Political Interest subscale are .57, .51, and .51 respectively.



teaching loads, classroom management difficulties and the need for teacher training have impeded its adoption. Although Liou's study suggested the positive impact of *Project Citizen*, it should be noted that her study was solely based on students of one gifted class. The generalizability of her study, therefore, is limited.

Research by Liou (2004) adds support for the positive effect of *Project Citizen*. She evaluated the effects of *Project Citizen* upon the civic skills and dispositions of 952 Taiwanese senior high school students using a non-random, pretest-posttest comparison group, quasi-experimental design. In her study, quantitative methods were supplemented with qualitative data to gain an in-depth understanding of the effects of *Project Citizen*. The quantitative analyses of the pretest and posttest as well as the qualitative analyses of the teacher interview suggest *Project Citizen*'s positive impact upon adolescent civic skills and dispositions. This study, as claimed by Liou, adopted a statistically appropriate analytical model that is well suited to educational research incorporating the hierarchical (nested) design of quasi-experiments. Civic knowledge attainment, one of the most important goals of civic education, however, was not evaluated in Liou's research. Future studies that attend to *Project Citizen*'s effect on civic knowledge are imperative.

Research on Challenges of Implementing/Learning Project Citizen

Though the effects of *Project Citizen* have been documented, as discussed in the previous section, this does not mean that *Project Citizen* can be adopted without any difficulties. There were, like all other instructional innovations, limitations in *Project Citizen*. This section synthesizes the empirical findings concerning the challenges faced by *Project Citizen* users.

In the past, little attention has been paid to challenges faced by *Project Citizen*'s users. One study that addressed this topic was conducted by Tolo (1998) as described previously. The results of the study showed that the biggest two barriers to teaching *Project Citizen* are "time required in class" and "time required outside of class." Among the teachers surveyed, their *Project Citizen* classes spend, on average, 3.9 hours per week for 6.1 weeks working on the program. Other minor challenges included inadequate abilities of students, state and district curricular requirements, and inadequate teacher training.



Liou's (2002) case study identified a couple barriers to the implementation of *Project Citizen* in a gifted class of a middle school in the Midwestern US. Among the barriers, classroom management is the biggest. *Project Citizen* requires students to work in cooperative groups to accomplish their tasks such as discussions. It is possible that students make some noise by talking about irrelevant topics in group time. How to keep the groups on task and reduce noise level needs teachers' concern when teachers intend to incorporate *Project Citizen* into their regular instruction. The classroom management difficulty is followed by heavy teaching loads, inadequate instructional time, and unequal division of responsibility.

Research by Liou (2004) as described earlier was particularly important in identifying difficulties encountered by Taiwanese *Project Citizen*'s teachers. The results suggested that these teachers faced challenges such as time constraints, students' inadequate abilities, pressure from the Joint College Entrance Examination (JCEE), curriculum integration, topic selections, uncertainty of the implementation schedule of *Project Citizen*, lack of sample portfolios, and limited resources available to their students. Some of the challenges such as time constraints, curriculum integration, and students' inadequate abilities were also found in Tolo's (1998) study of *Project Citizen*'s users in the United States. Other obstacles such as topic selections, uncertainty of the implementation schedule of *Project Citizen*, external pressure from the JCEE, lack of sample portfolios, and limited resources available to the students may be unique to the Taiwanese high school context.

This review has implications for the current study. First, although previous research has shown that *Project Citizen* positively impacts the civic development of adolescent students (Liou, 2002; 2004; Soule, 2000; Tolo, 1998; Vontz, et al, 2000), these studies should be interpreted with caution due to flaws in the research design (e.g. Seoul, 2000; Tolo, 1998), poor measurement instruments (e.g. Vontz, et al., 2000), and limited special samples (e.g. Liou, 2002; 2004). To expand the generalizability of *Project Citizen*'s impact, it would be worthwhile to implement the program in junior high school and to measure its effects on a population whose civic development is presumably more malleable than those of their high school counterparts.

Additionally, previous studies have indicated various difficulties encountered by *Project*



Citizen's teachers. However, the findings of these studies were mainly based on teachers' perception and opinions and students' voices were not acknowledged. Based on the awareness that students play critical roles in their own learning, it is essential that their concerns be emphasized. When students' concerns are addressed, they will have greater ownership of the learning process and will be more motivated to work through the inquiry process. It is hoped that, with more empirical evidence yielded in the current study, *Project Citizen* could and would enjoy more popularity and receive more attention in Social Studies teaching in Taiwan.

Methodology

This study employed a non-random, pretest-posttest comparison group, quasi-experimental design. Quantitative and qualitative methods were combined to address the research questions. According to Merriam (1998), whereas the experimental design is more appropriate for a cause-and-effect investigation, “how” and “why” questions are best answered by qualitative inquiry. In this study, quantitative data which consists of the pre- and post-test of junior high students' civic development were used to evaluate the effects of *Project Citizen* upon the civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills of the participating students. Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews constituted the qualitative data and were utilized to understand the teacher's experiences of teaching *Project Citizen* as well as their students' learning experiences, and to explore possible explanations for the quantitative data.

Participants

This research required the researcher to make frequent observations of the experimental class. For budget and transportation consideration, a convenience sampling strategy was used in selecting the participants. The characteristics of the participating school, teacher, and classes and students are described below.



Profiles of the participating school. Democratic Junior High School¹ is conveniently located at the business section of Taipei City.⁵ There were nine classes in each grade, making a total of 27 classes in the school. About 2/3 of the students live close to the school. There are also a few students from neighboring school districts. As indicated by the participating teacher, most students in the school are highly intelligent and the social economic status of most parents is above average. Moreover, a large amount of the parents are very concerned about the education of their children.

Profile of the participating classes and students. Both the experimental and comparison classes were grade eight. *Project Citizen* was taught to the experimental students in addition to the regular Social Studies instruction. There were 28 students in the experimental class and 29 students in the comparison class. In order to choose the participating students, Mrs. Case was asked to select two equivalent classes from among her classes. Then, she designated one class as the experimental group and the other as the comparison group. Although she was instructed to identify two classes composed of students with similar characteristics, there was no assurance that the students in both groups were equivalent across all traits.

Independent sample chi-square tests were performed to examine whether selected categorical background factors of the experimental and comparison groups were different. The results were presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, there were no significances in gender, home literacy resource, mother's education, father's education, extracurricular participation, and mass media exposure between the experimental and comparison groups.

Table 1 χ^2 test of selected characteristics of the participating students

Characteristic	Experimental (n=28)	Comparison (n=29)	χ^2
Gender			
Male	14(45.9)	15(53.5)	
Female	14(54.1)	14(46.5)	.02 NS ^a

⁵ Pseudonyms were used to represent the participating school, teacher and students.



Table 1 χ^2 test of selected characteristics of the participating students (con't)

Literacy resource available at home ^b			
None	1(3.6)	0(0)	
1-10	1(3.6)	1(3.6)	
11-50	8(28.6)	10(35.7)	
51-100	4(14.3)	8(28.6)	
101-200	4(14.3)	4(14.3)	
More than 200	10(35.7)	5(17.9)	4.22 NS ^a
Confidence in attending college ^c			
Weak	4(14.3)	11(39.3)	
Average	13(46.4)	9(32.1)	
Strong	11(39.3)	8(28.6)	4.47 NS ^a
Mother education			
No schooling	0(0)	1(3.4)	
Elementary school	0(0)	2(6.9)	
Junior high school	0(0)	0(0)	
Senior high school	11(40.7)	10(34.5)	
Junior college	4(14.8)	7(24.1)	
College	11(40.7)	9(31.0)	
Graduate school	1(3.7)	0(0)	5.00 NS ^a
Father education			
No schooling	0(0)	1(3.6)	
Elementary school	0(0)	1(3.6)	
Junior high school	0(0)	1(3.6)	
Senior high school	9(33.3)	8(28.6)	
Junior college	2(7.4)	8(28.6)	
College	13(48.1)	8(28.6)	
Graduate school	3(11.1)	1(3.6)	8.34 NS ^a
Mass Media Exposure ^d			
Low	3(10.7)	3(10.7)	
Average	11(39.3)	9(32.1)	
High	14(50)	16(57.1)	.33 NS ^a

Note: percentages are listed in parentheses ^a Not significant at $\alpha = .05$.

^b Literacy resource available at home adopts the IEA's definition (Torney, Oppenheim, & Farnen, 1975; Torney-Purta, et al, 1999). It refers to the number of books available at home, but not counting newspapers, magazines or books for school. ^c Confidence in attending college ranged from 1 to 10. Students scored 3 or below were categorized as "Weak", those scored 8 or above were categorized as "Strong", and the rest were categorized as "Average". ^d Mass Media Exposure ranged from 0 to 7. Students scored 2 or below were categorized as "Low", those scored 5 or above were categorized as "High", and the rest were categorized as "Average"



Furthermore, a series of independent sample t-tests were conducted to test the differences in baseline civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills between the experimental and comparison groups (see Table 2). As indicated in Table 2, no significant differences were found in the students' civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills between the experimental and comparison groups.

Table 2 *t*-test of pretest knowledge, dispositions, and skills (N=57)

Variable	Group	Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>
Civic knowledge	Experiment	14.61 (3.31)	
	Comparison	13.83 (3.32)	.89 NS ^a
Civic dispositions	Experiment	3.74 (.65)	
	Comparison	3.77 (.49)	-.20 NS ^a
Civic skills	Experiment	3.43 (1.13)	
	Comparison	3.78 (.58)	-1.44 NS ^a

^a Not significant at $\alpha = .05$.

Profiles of the participating teacher. Mrs. Case is an experienced teacher. She completed 40 credits of master-level courses after she graduated from the Department of Civic and Moral Education of National Taiwan Normal University. She has 21 years of teaching experience, five years in elementary school and 16 years in junior high school. In elementary school, she taught Music and Language Arts. Currently she teaches Social Studies and Home Economics for the 8th grade.

Research Procedures

The quasi-experimental study combined both quantitative and qualitative data to form an in-depth understanding of the validity and feasibility of *Project Citizen's* implementation in junior high school Social Studies course. The procedures employed are described below.

Selection and training of the participating teacher. In order to select the participating teacher, the author contacted alumni whom she thought might be willing to incorporate new curriculum in their instruction. Among the teachers who agreed to participate, Mrs. Case was invited to take part due to budget and transportation consideration.



Based on the awareness that teachers play critical roles in any education enterprise; the author conducted a one-on-one workshop on *Project Citizen* for the participating teacher. The workshop was intended to provide the participating teacher with the methods and content necessary for implementing *Project Citizen*. Furthermore, to ensure that the teacher understand the program and follow the important guidelines specified in the *Project Citizen* text, a sample *Project Citizen* portfolio was sent to the teacher along with the *Project Citizen* student text and teacher's guide.

Pretest. The pretest of the Adolescent Student Civic Development Inventory (ASCDI) was administered to all students before the experimental class' students engaged in *Project Citizen*; the pretest was administered during regular class time by the participating teacher. On average, the pretest took 25 to 30 minutes to complete.

Intervention Stage. After the students in both the experimental and comparison classes took the pretest, the experimental students began to receive issues-based instruction using *Project Citizen* as an adjunct to traditional instruction of Social Studies. In contrast to the experimental students, the comparison students received traditional, discipline-based instruction of Social Studies based upon the hierarchical model of knowledge acquisition.

To ensure that the participating teacher followed important guidelines and procedures as specified in *Project Citizen* text, direct observations of the class were conducted by two research assistants. Mrs. Case was also asked to record the progress of the class at each stage of the implementation process, in addition to any changes in instruction. To ensure that problems and difficulties were resolved promptly, regular communications with the participating teacher was conducted via various methods such as emails and phone calls.

Information gathered from the emails, phone calls and observations, as well as the interview (which will be described below) were taken as supporting evidence that the participating teacher followed the important guidelines specified in the *Project Citizen* text and the procedures of this study.

Posttest. The posttest (same as pretest) was administered to all students



immediately following the completion of the class portfolio by the experimental class. Again, the test took approximately 25 to 30 minutes for completion and was administered during regular class time by the participating teacher.

Interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participating teacher and six of the participating students between June 22, 2004 and June 24, 2004. The teacher interview lasted for about 45 minutes, whereas each student interview lasted for about 20 to 25 minutes. All of the interviews were audio-taped with the interviewees' permission.

Instrumentation

This study used the following instruments to collect data: (1) pretest and posttest questionnaire, (2) the teacher interview, and (3) the student interview. A brief description of each instrument follows.

Pretest and posttest questionnaire. Based on the work of previous researchers (Angell, 1990; Ehman, 1969; Harwood, 1991; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001; Verba, Schlotzman & Brady, 1995; Vontz et al, 2000), a questionnaire, Adolescent Student Civic Development Inventory (ASCDI),⁶ with a test examining students' civic knowledge and scales measuring students' civic dispositions and skills was constructed and was administered. The questionnaire was assessed for content validity, face validity, and construct validity using data from the pilot-, pre- and post-tests. Reliability tests conducted from the pilot-, pre- and post-tests produced a Cronbach's α of .71 and greater for all scales. Table 3 listed the reliability coefficients for pretest and posttest.

⁶ The questionnaire is available from the author.



Table 3 Reliability coefficients for pretest and posttest

Scale	Alpha	
	Pretest	Posttest
Civic knowledge	.71 (20)	.76 (20)
Civic dispositions	.86 (40)	.79 (40)
Civic skills	.91 (11)	.86 (11)

Note: Item numbers are listed in parentheses

Teacher interview. The teacher interview protocol consisted of four parts. The first part of the interview was designed to provide a general understanding of the school where *Project Citizen* was implemented. The second part was for the purpose of establishing the context of the participating teacher's experience. The third part of the interview focused on understanding the characteristics of the sampled classes and students. The final part of the interview encouraged the participating teacher to reflect on the meaning of her experiences teaching *Project Citizen*.

Student interview. The student interview protocol consisted of two parts. The first part of the interview was for the purpose of understanding their demographic information. The second part of the interview encouraged the participating students to reflect on the meaning of their experiences learning *Project Citizen*.

Data Analysis

The data collected from this study were categorized as quantitative and qualitative and were subjected to different treatments. The quantitative data gathered using the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS® version 12 (SPSS Inc., 2003) in the Windows XP environment. The data from the teacher and student interview were interpreted qualitatively according to the three prescribed themes.

Quantitative data analysis. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to examine *Project Citizen*'s effect on students' civic knowledge, dispositions and skills. Prior to conducting the main quantitative data analysis, various procedures were followed to examine the accuracy of data, missing values, and to test the assumptions



such as normality, equal variance, independence of errors, linearity between/within pretest and posttest, and common slope for all treatment conditions associated with the statistical method of ANCOVA (Kirk, 1995; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). All hypotheses were one-tailed and were tested at an alpha level of .05.

Qualitative Data Analysis. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated, if necessary, into English. The interview transcripts were carefully examined according to three prescribed themes pertaining to the implementation of *Project Citizen*: 1) *Project Citizen*'s advantages to students, 2) teacher's and students' attitudes toward *Project Citizen*, and 3) challenges of implementing/learning *Project Citizen*.

Findings

The following three sections report the findings of this study. The first section, "Student Outcomes," describes the effect of *Project Citizen* on the civic development of students. The second section, "Attitudes toward *Project Citizen*," reports on the teacher's and students' attitudes toward *Project Citizen*. The final section, "Challenges of Implementing/Learning *Project Citizen*," reports on the teacher's challenges of teaching and the students' difficulties of learning *Project Citizen*.

Students Outcomes

Table 4 displays pretest means, standard deviation, and adjusted means for the posttest civic knowledge, dispositions and skills scores of the participating students. After adjustment for the variation of pretest civic development scores, ANCOVA results revealed that students in the experimental group significantly outperformed the comparison group in civic skills, $F(1, 54) = 5.17, p < .05$, and dispositions, $F(1, 54) = 5.49, p < .05$ (see Table 5). However, no significant differences were found in the students' civic knowledge, $F(1, 54) = .22, p > .05$ (see Table 5).



Table 4 Pretest Means, SD, and adjusted means of posttest civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills (N=57)

Variable	Group	Pretest Mean	Pretest SD	Adjusted mean
Civic knowledge	Experiment	14.61	3.31	15.46
	Comparison	13.83	3.32	15.07
Civic dispositions	Experiment	3.74	.65	4.26
	Comparison	3.77	.49	3.96
Civic skills	Experiment	3.43	1.13	4.34
	Comparison	3.78	.58	3.82

The evidence of *Project Citizen*'s effect on students' civic skills has been shown from the quantitative data. The teacher and student interview provided further insight into its effect. Mrs. Case revealed that *Project Citizen* frequently introduces students to specific learning strategies, methods, and experiences for the first time. For example, from conducting telephone interviews with adults and government officials to working cooperatively in teams, *Project Citizen* allows students to gain new skills and understanding. Through participation in *Project Citizen*, she believed that her students develop better research and social skills. She stated, "Because students were not familiar with collecting information for their project, by engaging in *Project Citizen*, they learned [how to use] various resources for collecting information and data. This [training] is especially beneficial in our society". As such, this study confirms Soule's (2000) and Tolo's (1998) survey studies, the recent quasi-experimental study by Vontz et al. (2000), Liou's (2002) case study, and Liou's (2004) mixed study. As mentioned in the literature review, these studies concluded that *Project Citizen* does have a positive effect on the civic skills, both intellectual and participatory, of adolescent students. This study lends support to this claim.



Table 5 ANCOVA summary for civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills

Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Civic Knowledge					
Group	2.09	1	2.09	.22	NS ^a
Error	513.93	54	9.52		
Civic Dispositions					
Group	1.30	1	1.30	5.49	.02*
Error	12.84	54	.24		
Civic skills					
Group	3.62	1	3.62	5.17	.03*
Error	37.87	54	.70		

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed) ^a Not significant at $\alpha = .05$.

In addition to *Project Citizen*'s effect on the civic skills of the participating students, it was also found to have a significant positive effect on the civic dispositions of students. As mentioned previously, the goal of *Project Citizen* is to motivate and empower adolescents to exercise their rights and to accept the responsibilities of democratic citizenship through the intensive study of a local community problem that is relevant and is of concern to them. Therefore, the significant positive effect of *Project Citizen* on the civic dispositions of junior high school students is expected. This instructional expectation, confirmed by the results of this study, therefore, validates the findings of Liou (2002; 2004), Soule (2000) and Tolo (1998).

In contrast to the significant findings of civic dispositions and skills, a significant positive effect of *Project Citizen* was not found in civic knowledge. This result is inconsistent with previous research (Liou, 2002; Tolo, 1998; Vontz et al., 2000) that suggested *Project Citizen* has a positive effect on civic knowledge attainment. Several reasons might account for the insignificant result. It is possible that the Test of Civic Knowledge was not directly tailored to the content addressed in *Project Citizen*. The 20-item multiple-choice Test of Civic Knowledge comprised three domains (i.e. democracy, national identity, and social cohesion and diversity) of important civic knowledge that all young students are expected to know. Even though the test was assessed for content validity, face validity, and construct validity, it still failed to reflect students' attainment in civic knowledge. Another possible explanation of the insignificant result



was that *Project Citizen* had a heavy emphasis on cognitive and participatory processes and a minimal inclusion of substantive content about principles and practices of democracy. Students involved in this evaluation of *Project Citizen* should have made greater gains in civic knowledge. This achievement, however, was a by-product of an instructional program geared primarily to develop civic skills and dispositions. Accordingly, students' gains in civic knowledge were not as substantial as that in civic skills and disposition.

Attitudes toward Project Citizen

Mrs. Case held positive attitudes toward *Project Citizen*. For example, she agreed that *Project Citizen* is a promising Social Studies curriculum with concrete guidelines. The detailed teacher's guide made it possible for her to follow the procedures for teaching *Project Citizen* without much difficulty. In addition, she found that *Project Citizen* increases low achieving students' interest in learning. *Project Citizen* engages students in solving a school or community problem that is of concern and is relevant to them; therefore, students are highly motivated in the learning process. According to Mrs. Case, students are more interested in learning *Project Citizen* than they are in the regular instruction of Social Studies. Moreover, regarding the use of the scientific method to study and solve school or community problems, and the creation of portfolios for competition, the teacher believed that *Project Citizen* has the potential to persuade others that social studies can be as scientific as natural science.

The positive response was not limited to Mrs. Case, her students also showed positive attitudes toward *Project Citizen*. The students found that *Project Citizen* is novel and is different from their regular Social Studies instruction. Another common student response from my interview is that *Project Citizen* enables the students to learn about their community and to improve their community even though they are still school-children. One student indicated "It was a chance to go around the community and learn more about it. It also allows us to hear and understand the problems that are going on in my communities." Some other students also shared similar perspective. For example, a student noted "I have discovered that I can have an impact on my community as a result of *Project Citizen*."



Challenges of Implementing/Learning Project Citizen

Although students might have learned more effectively and retained more of the material as suggested in the Learning Pyramid and the empirical evidence emerged from this study, Mrs. Case and her students faced a number of difficult challenges. The challenges include unequal distribution of responsibility, time constraints, peer pressure, curriculum integration, pressure from the Basic Competence Test for Junior High School Students (BC Test), and uncertainty of the implementation schedule of *Project Citizen*. These challenges were also found in Tolo's (1998) and Liou's studies of *Project Citizen*'s users in the United States, and Liou's (2004) study of *Project Citizen*'s users in Taiwan's senior high schools.

The primary drawback to overcome is unequal allotment of responsibility. *Project Citizen* relies heavily upon cooperative groups. It was evidenced from my interview with the teacher and students that one or two high achievers complete the task and low achievers are often neglected and probably go along for the ride without equal contribution to group tasks. This drawback occurs most likely when a group has only one single task such as hand in a worksheet or a single report. How to divide group tasks fairly according to the individual ability of multilevel group members really troubles the teacher and students.

Mrs. Case also expressed that the pressure of time constitutes a challenge for the students and for her. She stated, "Since Social Studies meets only twice a week, my time is very limited. Because I still have to teach Social Studies, I felt stressed to cover the mandated materials". She believes that this kind of research project is suitable for students. However, the pressure from their course work and the BC Test limited the time that is available to them on the project. The time constraint and BC test pressure were also indicated by the participating students. For example, some student pointed out "We have to go to cram school after the regular school from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. Our time for the project is very limited."

Another limitation of *Project Citizen* lies in the differences of opinion regarding encouraging conflict or achieving consensus among group members. There was an underlying establishment in *Project Citizen* to encourage consensus and thereby arousing unnecessary peer pressure to suppress individual differences and comply with the decisions of the group. Still,



there were students reluctant to talk over personal ideas with their peers for fear that other students might think little of their opinions.

Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of *Project Citizen* upon the civic development of Taiwanese junior high school students. Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of data support previous research that *Project Citizen* has positive impacts upon adolescent civic development. The finding that *Project Citizen* enhanced adolescent civic development suggests the positive implications of the issues-centered curriculum. For those civic educators who accept the assumption that teaching for informed and responsible participation should be the major goal of social studies education, this research offers support for the hope that their goal is attainable. Further, this study suggests directions in which civic education reform might move to promote the citizenship ideal.

Besides, more systematic teaching and learning of civic knowledge in *Project Citizen* is recommended. Findings of this study suggest that *Project Citizen* is an effective instructional product. It appears to enhance the civic development of students with regard to their civic dispositions and skills. However, given that civic knowledge attainment is one of the most important goals of civic education, and that advancing to a good high school and college is the paramount concern of most Taiwanese students, gains in civic knowledge should be enhanced through systematic attention to this dimension of civic development in *Project Citizen*.

Furthermore, to take the full advantages of implementing *Project Citizen*, it is suggested that a carefully structured learning activities that take into account positive interdependence and individual accountability be arranged. As indicated in the literature, *Project Citizen*'s users faced a significant number of challenges. Among these challenges, unequal distribution of responsibility and free-rider effect are considered by the participating teacher and students of the present study to be the most critical. In light of these challenges, this study, therefore, suggests that *Project Citizen* teachers establish rules to ensure that no student dominates group activities and each group member participate in group tasks thoroughly.



Last but not least, to overcome the challenge of time constraint, it is recommended that *Project Citizen* teachers work with other teachers as a cluster to develop an interdisciplinary project that incorporates *Project Citizen*. Because *Project Citizen* offers a wide variety of skill development activities, including research skills, communication skills, and cooperative problem-solving skills, the program can be used in nearly any class. Teachers, therefore, are encouraged to look at curricular requirements broadly and to see the opportunities that *Project Citizen* offers for many classes.

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The Process and Effect of Implementing *We the People...Project Citizen* in Junior High School Social Studies

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「公民養成方案」在國中社會學習領域的 實施與成效

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摘 要

本研究目的在瞭解「公民養成方案」於國中社會學習領域的實施及其對國中生公民發展之影響。為達研究目的，本研究採不等組前後測準實驗設計，選擇台北市某公立國中兩個八年級的班級作為研究對象。並以「國中生公民發展問卷」所得量化資料，輔以半結構訪談與觀察等質性資料，了解「公民養成方案」在個案班級的實施情形及教學成效。根據結果，本研究獲致以下結論：

(一)「公民養成方案」對國中生公民發展的實施成效：

- 1.在公民知識方面，參與「公民養成方案」的學生，並未顯著優於未接受「公民養成方案」的控制組學生。
- 2.在公民性方面，參與「公民養成方案」的學生，顯著優於未接受「公民養成方案」的控制組學生。
- 3.在公民技能方面，參與「公民養成方案」的學生，顯著優於未接受「公民養成方案」的控制組學生。

(二)教師對實施「公民養成方案」教學的評價：

- 1.實驗教師對「公民養成方案」持積極正向的態度。
- 2.實驗教師於教學過程中遭遇如升學考試壓力、教學時間限制、學生能力與合作學習成效不彰的困境。



(三) 學生對實施「公民養成方案」教學的評價

- 1.大部分學生對「公民養成方案」亦持正面態度。
- 2.大部分學生認為所遇到的最大挑戰為組內分工不均、時間壓力、國中基測的升學壓力等。

關鍵字：「公民養成方案」、公民發展、公民知識、公民性、公民技能

