



POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA TO ENCOURAGE FIRST-TIME VOTER PARTICIPATION

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Abstract

Political education is crucial in shaping a politically aware and active society. In today's digital era, where information and communication technology are central to daily life, political education faces new challenges and opportunities. This article discusses how political education in the digital age can enhance the participation of first-time voters by focusing on its definitions, challenges, the role of technology, and implementation strategies. Political education encompasses understanding government structures and electoral processes and developing critical thinking skills, media literacy, and political knowledge. In the digital era, broad access to information can be beneficial and problematic, such as the spread of invalid information and the digital divide. Although technology presents challenges, it offers significant opportunities to improve political education through access to information, interactive educational platforms, and digital campaigns. Effective strategies include intensive digital literacy training, innovative curricula, partnerships with tech companies, and social media campaigns. By wisely leveraging technology, digital-era political education can enhance first-time voter engagement and prepare them to participate in democracy actively. Research is conducted using qualitative methods. Political education in the digital era is critical to increasing first-time voter involvement in the democratic process. By leveraging technology wisely, we can address challenges like misinformation and the digital divide while taking advantage of opportunities to develop critical skills and media literacy among younger generations. Thus, digital-era political education aims to prepare first-time voters for elections and enable them to actively contribute to shaping their country's political future.

Keywords: *Political Education, Digital Era, First-time Voters*

INTRODUCTION

Political education is crucial in shaping a politically aware and active society. As a foundation in the democratic process, political education aims to enhance the public's understanding of government structure, electoral processes, and political decision-making mechanisms. First-time voters tend to use social media as their primary source of political information and as a place to interact with political views that align with their beliefs (Maghrifa Razaqa, 2022). In today's digital age, where information and communication technology is rapidly evolving and transforming how we interact, access information, and participate in various aspects of life, political education faces new challenges and significant opportunities.

The rapid technological changes provide more significant and faster access to political information but also introduce challenges such

as the spread of inaccurate information, hoaxes, and disinformation. This directly impacts voters, particularly new voters who may not yet fully grasp the media and critical literacy skills required to navigate the online information available. Additionally, the digital divide between individuals with access to technology and those without can widen the gap in balanced and comprehensive political education.

In this context, it is essential to understand how political education can be adapted and enhanced in the digital age to engage new voters. Technology can be a highly effective tool in disseminating political knowledge, providing interactive educational platforms, and increasing young voter engagement. However, to maximize this potential, a strategic approach is needed to address existing challenges and leverage the opportunities offered by technological advancements.

This article will discuss how political education in the digital era can play a vital role in increasing new voter participation. The main focus will include defining political education, the challenges faced in the digital age, the role of technology in political education, and practical strategies that can be implemented to ensure that new voters not only understand the political process but also actively participate in their country's political life.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach to examine how political education delivered through digital platforms impacts new voter participation. The focus is on capturing the perspectives of individuals and groups by collecting non-numerical data. Methods such as interviews, observations, and content analysis are employed to understand better these perspectives and the dynamics involved in the digital political education process.

The research design integrates case studies and thematic analysis. Case studies are utilized to investigate various digital platforms that provide political education, emphasizing the strategies they implement. Thematic analysis is employed to uncover recurring themes and patterns within the data collected from interviews and observations, providing insight into the experiences and perspectives of participants. Data from various locations, including universities and digital platforms like websites, apps, and social media, focuses on new voter education.

A combination of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and content analysis is utilized to collect data. Detailed interviews with platform managers, political education instructors, experts, and new voters provide valuable insights, while participatory observation involves monitoring political education sessions and interactions on digital platforms. Content analysis assesses the quality and relevance of educational materials on these platforms, ensuring the research captures a comprehensive view of how political education materials impact new voters. Data analysis uses thematic analysis and data triangulation to ensure the validity of findings and reduce bias, offering a thorough understanding of the challenges and opportunities in digital political education for new voters.

This qualitative research method is designed to provide in-depth insights into how political education in the digital age can affect new voter participation, as well as understanding the challenges and opportunities in this process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Understanding Political Education

Political education is a learning process that develops individuals' understanding and skills related to political systems, government structures, and democratic processes. Beyond merely studying the formal mechanisms of government and elections, political education encompasses several profound and significant aspects.

In general, political education has several main components:

1. **Knowledge about Political Systems:** Political education involves a deep understanding of how political systems function, including government structures, the roles of state institutions, and political decision-making mechanisms. This includes knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities, legislative processes, and electoral systems.
2. **Critical and Analytical Skills:** Political education aims to develop critical skills that enable individuals to objectively analyze and evaluate political policies and decisions. This includes understanding political arguments, assessing the implications of specific policies, and recognizing biases or interests that may influence political information.
3. **Media Literacy:** In the fast-paced information era, media literacy has become crucial to political education. This involves sifting through and assessing information sources, distinguishing between valid and invalid news, and understanding how media can influence public opinion and political decisions. According to Sri Astuti (2024), the advent of digital technology, which is now transitioning to the 5th generation or more commonly referred to as 5.0, continues to push for the mediation of Gen-Z's interests in appreciating political democracy, becoming increasingly vigorous. From conventional communication behavior patterns, moving

towards the 4.0 acceleration and now shifting to the 5.0 function using artificial intelligence (AI), the communication and information warfare in social media spaces is becoming more refined

4. **Participation Skills:** Political education is about understanding theory and developing practical skills for participating in the political process. This includes ways to engage in political activities such as voting, campaigning, and advocacy and understanding the active roles that can be played in society.
5. **Social Awareness and Responsibility:** Political education also instills a sense of social awareness and responsibility, including understanding how political decisions impact society and the importance of active participation to advance common interests.

According to Nuraida (2024) in her journal, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can also help enhance transparency and trust in the election process, thereby increasing public confidence in election results.

Thus, political education empowers individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be active, informed, and responsible citizens. It is crucial to ensure that society can effectively participate in the democratic process and contribute to fair and transparent decision-making.

B. Challenges in Political Education in the Digital Era

Political education in the digital era faces various new challenges that were not encountered in previous times. Here are some main challenges in the context of political education in the digital age:

1. **Spread of Invalid Information:** One of the biggest challenges in the digital era is the spread of invalid information, including hoaxes and disinformation. Incorrect or misleading information spreads quickly through social media and online news platforms, confusing voters, especially those less experienced. This requires voters to have strong media literacy skills to distinguish between valid and invalid information.
2. **Skepticism towards Media and Information:** With the increasing amount of information available online, often accompanied by false

or biased news, the public may become skeptical of all sources of information. This can reduce the effectiveness of political education to provide accurate and helpful information. Voters may struggle to trust the information presented, impacting their engagement in the political process.

3. **Digital Divide:** The digital divide is a significant issue affecting access to political education in the digital era. Not everyone has equal access to technology and the internet, which can exacerbate inequalities in opportunities to obtain adequate political information. This divide often occurs between younger and older groups or urban and rural areas.
4. **Dependence on Digital Platforms:** Political education in the digital era often relies on digital platforms to disseminate information and interact with audiences. However, this dependence can lead to issues such as algorithms restricting information reach, data theft, or other privacy concerns. It can also cause information fragmentation, where individuals are only exposed to viewpoints that align with their preferences, reducing the diversity of information they receive.
5. **Varied Digital Literacy Levels:** Varying levels of digital literacy among individuals also pose a challenge. Not everyone has the same skill level in using technology or assessing the quality of online information. This can affect the effectiveness of political education, as individuals with lower digital literacy may not be able to utilize available resources effectively.
6. **Influence of Manipulation and Propaganda:** In the digital era, political propaganda and information manipulation are often done through social media campaigns and digital ads. Using big data to target audiences with tailored political messages can increase political polarization and influence how individuals view political issues. Political education must address these challenges by helping individuals recognize and understand these manipulation techniques. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach to political education, including the development of media and digital literacy skills, providing reliable information sources, and efforts to bridge

the digital divide. With the right strategies, political education in the digital era can more effectively empower individuals to actively and informatively participate in the democratic process.

C. The Role of Technology in Political Education

Despite the challenges, technology also offers significant opportunities to enhance political education. With further advancements in digital technology, the use of AI and deepfake technology has opened a new chapter in political communication. These technologies offer new possibilities in political campaigns, allowing candidates to deliver messages more effectively and innovatively. (Arfan Santiko, Bahri 2024)

Here are some roles of technology in supporting political education in the digital era:

1. **Access to Information:** The internet provides easy and quick access to various sources of political information, including social media platforms, online news sites, and online discussion forums. New voters can access diverse perspectives and opinions to understand political issues better.
2. **Interactive Educational Platforms:** Digital applications and platforms can provide interactive and engaging political education, such as election simulations, educational games, and online courses. This helps young people learn practically about the political process and the consequences of political decisions they make.
3. **Digital Political Campaigns:** Political campaigns can leverage social media and digital technology to reach young voters effectively. Campaign videos, political podcasts, and live discussions with candidates can help spark interest and engagement among new voters.
4. **Media and Critical Literacy:** Technology can be used to develop media and critical literacy skills. Political education programs can teach young people how to recognize invalid information, identify news biases, and objectively evaluate political claims.

D. Effective Strategies in Political Education in the Digital Era

To effectively engage new voters, here are some strategies that can be implemented in political education in the digital era:

1. **Digital Literacy Training:** Political education programs should include intensive digital and media literacy training. This includes teaching how to access, evaluate, and use political information found online.
2. **Innovative Curriculum:** Developing political education curricula that integrate technology and provide meaningful learning experiences, such as interactive discussions, online case studies, and collaborative projects.
3. **Partnerships with Technology Industry:** Collaborating with technology companies to develop innovative political education apps and accessible educational platforms for young people.
4. **Social Campaigns and Advocacy:** Using social media to campaign for the importance of active political participation among youth, including organizing events, hosting public debates, or spreading information about the electoral process.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Conclusion

Political education in the digital era plays a crucial role in increasing new voter participation and strengthening the democratic process. Amidst rapid information and communication technology advancements, political education faces unique challenges and opportunities. Significant challenges include the spread of invalid information, the digital divide, reliance on digital platforms, and variability in digital literacy skills. However, technology also offers various opportunities, such as quick access to information, interactive educational platforms, and enhanced media literacy skills.

To leverage these opportunities and address existing challenges, digital-era political education strategies should be carefully designed. This includes incorporating intensive digital literacy training, developing innovative curricula integrating technology, partnering with technology companies to create inclusive educational platforms, and using social media campaigns to promote active political participation.

Effective political education in the digital era aims to prepare new voters for elections and empower them to contribute actively to their country's political life. With the right approach, political education in the digital era can help individuals become informed and engaged voters, contributing to the strengthening of democracy and the creation of a more inclusive and transparent political future.

II. Recommendations:

A. Integration of Technology in the Curriculum: Political education should be integrated into school curricula using digital technology. Utilizing online platforms, educational apps, and social media can make learning more interactive and engaging for new voters.

B. Partnerships with Digital Platforms: Governments and educational institutions must partner with digital platforms and social media to disseminate quality and accurate political information. Such collaborations can help reach a broader audience and facilitate access to relevant information.

C. Digital Literacy Training: New voters need training on digital literacy, including evaluating the credibility of information sources and avoiding fake news. These skills will help them make better-informed political decisions.

D. Active Participation in Political Discussions: Encourage new voters to engage in online political discussions constructively and critically. This can help them develop a more diverse understanding of political issues.

E. Enhanced Accessibility: Ensure that educational materials and election information are easily accessible to all, including those with limited access to technology.

By following these recommendations, it is hoped that new voter participation in the political process will increase, and they will be better prepared to engage in democracy actively.

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