DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Civic Education and Community Development: A Participatory Approach in FATA's Educational Institutions

Alamzeb Aamir
Principle Investigator – HEC NRPU
Assistant Professor – Department of Management Sciences FATA University
Email: alamzeb.aamir@fu.edu.pk

Sharif Ullah Jan
Co-Principal Investigator - HEC NRPU
Lecturer – Department of Management Sciences FATA University
Email: sharifullah.jan@fu.edu.pk

Moudassir Habib
Co-Principal Investigator - HEC NRPU
Lecturer – Department of Management Sciences FATA University
Email: m.habib@fu.edu.pk

Allah Yar
Research Assistant - HEC NRPU
Lecturer- Higher Education Department
Email: aallahyar96@gmail.com

Said Muhammad
Research Associate - HEC NRPU
PhD Scholar Qurtuba University
Email: Smuhammadafridi23@gmail.com

Abstract
This paper discusses how civic education can help improve community development in the educational institutions of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which have now become part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The research adopts a participatory action research (PAR) approach to show the importance of involving local communities, designing inclusive and locally relevant curricula, and encouraging active citizenship. Drawing on existing studies, policy documents, and real-life community projects, the paper identifies both challenges and opportunities for implementing civic education in a region that has long been politically and socially sidelined. The findings suggest that educational strategies aligned with local culture, supported by community participation, can lead to more democratic engagement and sustainable progress.

Keywords: Civic Education, Community Development, Participatory approach, Educational Institutions

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Introduction

The merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through the 25th Amendment back in 2018 was a pretty significant moment for this historically overlooked region. For the first time ever, people living there were finally brought into the constitutional and legal framework of Pakistan. This came with promises of better rights, services, and representation (Shinwari, 2020). Among the many areas needing some serious attention, education especially civic education, has really become key for helping people get used to these new political realities. It is all about understanding their rights and responsibilities and getting involved in public life.

For years, this region was stuck under the old Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), with no proper public education system in place. You can imagine the gaps that created not only in terms of basic literacy but also in civic awareness and participation. According to ASER (2021), the education indicators in the tribal districts are still lagging behind the rest of the country, particularly for girls. And these issues are not just limited to the classroom; they influence how communities relate to the state and each other. Now, when we discuss about civic education, it is not just about hitting the books or passing exams. It is really about equipping people, especially the youth, with the tools they need to be informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. This means understanding democratic values, respecting the rights of others, and having a say in the decisions that impact their communities (UNESCO, 2017). But honestly, just copying what works somewhere else in Pakistan or in other countries probably will not cut it here.

The success of civic education in FATA hinges on how well it fits into the local scenario. One promising way to achieve this is through something called participatory action research (PAR). It brings together community members, whether they are students, teachers, elders, or parents, to collaborate on what civic learning should look like. This kind of approach makes education more relevant and effective, and it is a great way to build trust and a sense of ownership within the community (Rahman, 2020). When you think about it, civic education that is backed by community-driven initiatives could really help tackle issues like extremism and social fragmentation. These are challenges that have plagued the tribal areas for a long time, mainly because of ongoing conflict, outside influences, and neglect from the state. Initiatives like school-based civic clubs, community forums, and youth volunteer programs can really empower people and foster social cohesion (Ali & Jan, 2022). Given the complex socio-political landscape in the region, a participatory model for civic education could act as both a preventive measure and a constructive force, helping communities build trust, get involved in governance, and steer their own development.

In this context, educational institutions in FATA need to step up and evolve beyond just the usual teaching methods. They should become centers for civic engagement, dialogue, and local development. Universities like FATA University, along with primary and secondary schools, have the potential to be real change-makers if they get the right resources and are woven into community development strategies. So, this study takes a closer look at how we can implement civic education in a meaningful way through participatory approaches in the educational institutions of the newly merged districts of FATA. It digs into the existing challenges, suggests some practical strategies, and

showcases successful examples of community-led civic education efforts. The ultimate goal is to promote long-term community development and ensure democratic inclusion in one of Pakistan's most historically marginalized regions.

Literature Review
Civic Education: An Evolving Paradigm
Civic education has typically been seen as just another subject in school. It is all about teaching students how governments work, what their rights are, how to vote, and a bit of national history thrown in. But lately, there has been a shift in how people think about it. Now, many scholars are talking about civic education as something much deeper, like a way to really get people involved and think critically about their roles in society. It is about fostering social responsibility and encouraging active citizenship (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Hoskins, 2021).

Especially in the wake of 9/11 and in places recovering from conflict, civic education is being viewed through the lens of peacebuilding and democratization. Take Pakistan's tribal regions, for instance. Here, it is not just about classroom lessons. It is about connecting traditional values with modern democratic ideals. Civic education is breaking out of the school walls and making its way into community spaces, media, and all kinds of informal learning settings (Bajaj, 2017). It is really evolving into something that is much more integrated into daily life.

The Role of Education in Post-Conflict and Marginalized Regions
When we think about education in places that have gone through conflict, it really has to do more than just fix up the classrooms and get kids back to learning. It is got this bigger role to play helping with reconciliation, nation-building, and bringing people together (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Take FATA, for instance, this area has been under colonial rule for ages and has dealt with a lot of violence. Here, education needs to rebuild trust among citizens and empower people to engage in their political rights (Ahmed, 2021).
Then there is the work by Novelli & Lopes Cardozo (2008), which brought up a pretty important idea: "Education and Fragility." They highlighted that we cannot just slap a one-size-fits-all education system on these conflict-affected places. No, we really need to adapt our education to fit the local political and social situations. Civic education, in particular, should resonate with the culture, be inclusive of everyone, and really encourage participation.

Theoretical Models Underpinning Civic Education and Community Development
Several models and theories provide a robust foundation for understanding the role of civic education in driving community development, particularly in underserved or transitional regions:

Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000)
Putnam emphasizes that **social capital such as networks, norms, and trust, facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit**. Civic education

fosters social capital by teaching civic norms, enhancing interpersonal trust, and encouraging civic engagement. In tribal areas where trust in formal institutions is low, civic education can help rebuild state-society relations.

Freire's Critical Pedagogy (1970)
Freire's theory promotes **education as a dialogical and liberatory process**, challenging learners to question oppression and contribute to societal transformation. In FATA, where historical silencing and power asymmetries have prevailed, critical pedagogy encourages civic consciousness among youth and marginalized groups.

Deliberative Democracy Theory (Habermas, 1984; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004)
This theory supports the idea that **citizenship is strengthened through public reasoning and participation in dialogue**. Civic education, when implemented through classroom debates, community forums, and youth parliaments, empowers learners to become engaged participants in democratic processes.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Model (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993)
Unlike needs-based approaches that highlight deficiencies, ABCD focuses on **local strengths, resources, and leadership**. Applied to civic education, this model encourages communities to recognize their traditional wisdom, local governance systems (like jirgas), and indigenous values (like *Pashtunwali*) as assets for civic learning.

Participatory Approaches to Civic Education
Participatory methods in civic education enhance ownership, relevance, and sustainability. **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**, as outlined earlier, encourages learners and communities to be co-designers of educational content. Studies from other post-conflict settings such as Rwanda and South Africa have shown that participatory civic education fosters reconciliation, empathy, and democratic participation (Freedman et al., 2008; Harley & Parker, 2017).
In Pakistan, small-scale initiatives such as the "**British Council's Active Citizens Programme**" and **"Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi's community" learning centers** have presented that indulging youth in local problem-solving through civic education improves both leadership and trust in institutions (British Council Pakistan, 2020).

Barriers to Civic Education in FATA
The literature reports many limitations to civic education in FATA including lack of standardized civic content in the curriculum (Rehman et al., 2022); s**hortage of trained teachers** to facilitate participatory and critical pedagogy; **cultural resistance** to values perceived as "foreign" or "Western"; g**ender barriers** restricting girls' access to both education and civic spaces; p**olitical instability and security challenges** limiting civil society engagement. Developing curriculum that is sensitive to the context, enhancing educators' abilities, and establishing strategic partnerships with

community stakeholders including local government officials, religious leaders, and tribal elders are all necessary to address these problems.

Global Perspectives on Civic Education and Their Relevance to FATA
To provide students the civic skills they need for the twenty-first century, UNESCO (2021) and the OECD (2018) support Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Despite their value, these universal frameworks need to be localized. For example, relating environmental stewardship to Quranic teachings or discussing political involvement through the Islamic idea of Shura (consultation) might help make civic principles more accessible in the FATA setting (Khan & Afridi, 2023).

Methodology
Research Design
In order to evaluate the contribution of civic education to community development among students from various educational institutions in the recently combined districts of the former FATA, this study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional survey research approach. This approach was chosen because it effectively measures the knowledge, attitudes, and engagement levels of a sizable population over a predetermined period of time. It allows the researcher to use organized statistical methods to find trends across demographic groupings and assess correlations between variables.

Population and Sampling
The target population for this study includes students from:
- **Secondary schools (grades 9–10)**
- **Higher secondary schools and girls' colleges (grades 11–12)**
- **FATA University (undergraduate students)**

To ensure representation, a **stratified random sampling** technique was used. The sample was stratified by **institution type** and **gender**, ensuring inclusion from:
- 5 secondary/higher secondary schools (both male and female)
- 2 girls' degree colleges
- 1 public-sector university (FATA University)

A total of 350 students were selected:
- 150 from secondary schools
- 100 from girls' colleges
- 100 from FATA University

This broader sample ensures comparative analysis across educational levels and gender, enhancing the generalizability of the findings within the context of FATA.

Instrument Design
The research instrument is a structured questionnaire, developed using frameworks adapted from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) and the UNESCO Guidelines for Civic Education. The questionnaire consists of the following sections:
1. Demographic Information: Age, gender, grade level, institution type

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2. Civic Knowledge Scale (20 items): Measures understanding of civic rights, responsibilities, democracy, and governance. Score range: 0–100.
3. Community Participation Index (5 items): Measures involvement in school clubs, community volunteering, and civic activities. Score range: 0–10.
4. Civic Attitudes Scale (5 Likert-scale items): Assesses attitudes toward political participation, tolerance, rule of law, and collective responsibility. Scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A pilot study with 30 students (excluded from final analysis) was conducted to test the instrument's clarity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha for the instrument was 0.82, indicating strong internal consistency.

Theoretical Framework
The study is guided by the following models and theories:
- Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995) – emphasizes resources, motivation, and engagement in civic participation.
- Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) – informs the design of participatory civic education strategies in formal and informal learning environments.
- Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) – supports the role of trust, networks, and civic norms in community development.
- Participatory Action Research (PAR) – although this is a quantitative study, PAR principles inform the community-centered focus and participatory implications of civic education efforts.

Data Collection Procedures
Data collection was carried out in-person and online (via supervised Google Forms) over a one-month period. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional research board. Written consent was secured from institutional heads, and student participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. For students under 18, parental consent was also obtained.

Data Analysis and Findings
Data were entered and analyzed using **SPSS 26.0** and **Microsoft Excel**. The following analytical techniques were applied:

Descriptive Statistics
Means and standard deviations were computed for civic knowledge, community participation, and civic attitudes across gender and institution types.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

INSTITUTION TYPE	GENDER	MEAN CIVIC KNOWLEDGE	MEAN PARTICIPATION	MEAN CIVIC ATTITUDE
SCHOOL	Male	71.2	4.5	2.9
SCHOOL	Female	70.5	4.8	3.1
GIRLS'	Female	75.4	5.6	3.5

COLLEGE UNIVERSITY				
UNIVERSITY	Male	77.2	6.1	3.8
	Female	79.0	6.5	4.0

Inferential Statistics

- **Independent Samples t-test**: Used to compare civic knowledge, participation, and attitudes across gender.
- **One-Way ANOVA**: Tested differences in means across institution types.
- **Two-Way ANOVA**: Analyzed the interaction between gender and institution type.
- **Pearson's Correlation Coefficient**: Measured relationships between civic knowledge, participation, and attitudes.
- **Multiple Regression Analysis**: Assessed how civic knowledge and participation predict civic attitudes.

Table 2: Regression Model Summary

PREDICTOR	B (UNSTANDARDIZED)	BETA	P-VALUE
CIVIC KNOWLEDGE SCORE	0.023	0.31	0.001
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	0.278	0.41	0.000

The model is statistically significant, $F_{(2, 347)} = 79.6$, $p < 0.001$, and explains 39% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.39$). This indicates that 39% of the variance in civic attitudes is explained by knowledge and participation scores.

Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical approval from FATA University's research ethics committee. All respondents gave their informed consent, and participation was voluntary and anonymous. Particularly in colleges for girls, gender-sensitive procedures were rigorously adhered to.

Limitations

Even though the sample is large, it might not accurately reflect informal learners or youth who are not enrolled in school. Social desirability bias may have an impact on self-reported attitudes and involvement. Furthermore, because it is a cross-sectional study, it is unable to monitor changes over time.

Findings and Discussion
Resource Constraints

In many schools in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), the lack of basic infrastructure, teaching materials, and trained personnel is a significant barrier to the effective delivery of civic education. Many schools operate in a resource-poor environment where classrooms are overcrowded, teaching resources are outdated or non-existent, and there is a shortage of qualified teachers who are equipped with the

necessary pedagogical skills. The absence of modern technology and instructional materials further exacerbates the challenge, as it limits the ability to teach complex civic concepts in an engaging manner. For civic education, which necessitates inclusive, participatory, and critical thinking-based teaching strategies, this is particularly difficult. Students may not completely comprehend how democratic ideas relate to their everyday lives, making civic education delivery inefficient and useless without the required resources (Wagner & Knowles, 2022; UNESCO, 2020).

Cultural Sensitivities
Performing civic education functions in FATA is hampered by another challenge which is the cultural environment. Some elements of civic education, particularly with respect to participation of citizens, males and females on equal footing, human rights, and other engagement, might conflict with prevailing customs and traditions which stem from a deeply conservative and tribal society. For example, in a society where women and men have ascribed roles, advocates for gender equality will face resistance. Equally, social bodies that prioritize community or tribal values will resist the advancement of individualistic values that espouse personal rights over collective duties.

Civic education must thus be adapted to uphold regional traditions while simultaneously advancing the fundamental democratic principles that form the basis of contemporary citizenship, including equality before the law, human dignity, and civic engagement. This necessitates the creation of culturally sensitive curriculum that integrate regional customs and beliefs while introducing students to fresh viewpoints that encourage tolerance, diversity, and social engagement (Smith & Patel, 2021; Hira, 2022).

Limited Community Engagement
FATA has traditionally experienced economic and political marginalization, which has resulted in a severe lack of faith in formal institutions, such as the educational system. Reluctance to participate in educational programs, especially those that are thought to be externally imposed or not in line with local needs and beliefs, is frequently a result of the lack of confidence that exists between the local populace and the government.

A FATA example may be where neglected community trust results in a low participation rate. In FATA's case, the lack trust results in neglected participation at the communal level when it comes to planning and implementing educational initiatives. This participation gap is the clearest evidence of the second level of this absence of trust. To overcome the challenge and ensure that educational programs for civics are positively regarded by constituents in FATA, stronger bridges and trust need to be established between educational institutions and the people. Jenkins and Mann (2023) optimal requires diverse groups of society focused on civic education program. In other words, trust erosion directly associates with the degradation of involving communities in decision-making processes regarding planning civic educational activities.

Opportunities through Participatory Approaches
Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)
Implementing Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) helps strive through the

obstacles faced with applying civic education at community grassroots levels. This method puts more focus on discovering and mobilizing local assets and potentials of the specific community for its development. ABCD can greatly enhance civic education integrated into the school curriculum through using indigenous knowledge systems, community relations, and cultural heritage of the people. The adoption of these local resources makes educational programs more relevant and acceptable to the community. For example, local storytelling traditions can help in teaching children democratic values in a context that is relatable to them. Furthermore, including local elders and community leaders in the civic education planning and teaching frameworks may help in overcoming the gap between traditional societal structures and the education system. ABCD encourages looking at community assets for civic education rather than the challenges. This creates more sustainable answers to civic education problems (Khan & Khan, 2021).

Collaborative Curriculum Design

One way to also increase the relevance of civic education is by, working collaboratively in the design of the curriculum. To involve local residents and its community in the development of the civic education curriculum ensures that it is situated contextually and considers the specific needs and challenges faced by the community. One way to also make sure that students appreciate the relevancy of the civic education they receive is do so through this participatory approach and this way bring the curriculum in such a manner that it fits into the local culture, the accepted of cultural and political realities. For instance, the curriculum can include topics that are directly relevant to students' lives, such as local governance or conflict resolution, if these are important community issues.

Capacity Building

The ability to teach civics in FATA makes region-specific capacity-building the most impactful strategy. Enhancing the training of educators and community leaders on participatory methods may foster a better cooperative and engaging learning climate. Trained participatory teachers especially encourage critical thinking, discourse, and participation among students regarding their civic responsibilities and rights. Equally, community leaders trained in civic education are more likely to actively champion the implementation of educational initiatives and exemplify democratic participation. This strategy is not only vital for the functioning of civic education, but also enables local communities through self-empowerment to shape their educational delivery system and future actively. Moreover, provided local teachers are motivated by the limited resources available to them, capacity-building initiatives designed to assist educators in resource-poor environments can mitigate staff shortages in local schools (Patton, 2020; WHO, 2021).

Recommendations
Policy Support

The educational landscape is significantly shaped by government policies, particularly in underserved areas like FATA. A conscious change in policy that prioritizes participatory

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approaches in educational planning and implementation is necessary to successfully integrate civic education into these communities. This entails developing policies that specifically address the distinct requirements of areas such as FATA while taking into account their historical, sociocultural, and economic background. Politicians should endeavor to create an inclusive educational system in which civic education is viewed as a cooperative endeavor involving local communities rather than as a top-down mandate (UNESCO, 2017).

Key Policy Actions
- Policymakers should make sure civic education programs take into account local needs, values, and customs while also being culturally sensitive. To guarantee that the curriculum is relevant, local leaders, educators, and community members must be involved in its design (World Bank, 2019).
- To ensure that community involvement is included in educational decisions and that local input is not only encouraged but required, a legal framework for participation must be created (Patton, 2008).
- Policies should be created to guarantee that all people, especially those in underserved areas, have fair access to high-quality education. Civic education can be elevated in these domains by incorporating participatory teaching approaches into national and regional educational policies (UNESCO, 2017).

Resource Allocation
Proper civic education cannot take place in FATA or elsewhere, without a substantial investment in teaching materials, infrastructure and capacity building. Promoting an environment in which civic education can thrive necessitates managing resources wisely. Governments and international donors should fund the education sector to a greater extent, particularly in regions with historically/less historically low levels of development. This encompasses the provision of physical infrastructure such as technology, libraries, and classrooms. Moreover, to ensure that civic education can be taught in an interesting and meaningful manner, new teaching materials (textbooks, digital resources) have to be bought.

Key Resource Allocation Strategies
- Infrastructure Development: To create secure and comfortable learning environments, school buildings in FATA must be built or renovated. Access to essential amenities like electricity, clean water, and sanitary facilities, all of which are frequently absent from rural schools, should be part of this (World Bank, 2019).
- Teachers Training and Development: Investing in professional development programs for educators, especially those who will be teaching civic education, will guarantee that they possess the abilities needed to effectively engage students and promote critical thinking (Rogers, 2003).
- Technology Integration: In areas where access to textbooks and other physical resources is restricted, the incorporation of digital tools and resources into civic education can help overcome numerous resource constraints. Access to civic

education can be increased through interactive learning environments **(Asian Development Bank, 2021).**

Community Engagement

Community engagement is a cornerstone of successful civic education. In regions like FATA, where historical marginalization has led to a disconnect between formal institutions and the local population, it is essential to establish platforms for community members to participate in educational decision-making. Engaging local communities in the educational process fosters ownership, increases the relevance of the curriculum, and ensures sustainability. It also helps rebuild trust in formal educational systems by giving communities a voice in the development and delivery of programs (Arnstein, 1969).

Key Community Engagement Strategies

- Schools and educational authorities can establish local committees that include parents, community leaders, and students to provide input into the curriculum, school management, and teaching methodologies (Rogers, 2003).
- To increase awareness of the benefits of civic education, public campaigns can be launched that explain the importance of democratic values, rights, and responsibilities (Patton, 2008).

- Organizing workshops and training sessions for community members such as elders, religious leaders, and women's groups can help build their capacity to contribute meaningfully to educational activities and reinforce civic values at the grassroots level (Arnstein, 1969).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems must be put in place for civic education initiatives to be successful and long-lasting. In addition to guaranteeing accountability, these systems offer insightful input for ongoing development. M&E systems ought to be made to evaluate how civic education programs affect students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as well as how the general public participates in democratic processes. Programs can then be improved and modified using this data to satisfy changing needs (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

Key M&E Strategies

- It is important to create quantifiable, clear markers of success, such as heightened civic rights awareness, heightened involvement in local affairs, and shifts in perceptions of democratic principles (Patton, 2008).
- To gauge student learning and community involvement, regular assessments should be carried out, both formative (during the program) and summative (at the conclusion). Feedback loops can guarantee that future programming incorporates the lessons learned (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).
- Academic institutions or outside organizations should carry out independent evaluations to guarantee objectivity. This can assist in offering an objective evaluation of the program's efficacy and impact (Patton, 2008).

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