

Implementation of In-Depth Learning Methods in Christian Religious Education Learning for Grade XII

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of educational paradigms in the digital era requires teachers to implement innovative instructional approaches that promote meaningful and student-centered learning. This study aims to explore the implementation of the Deep Learning method in Christian Religious Education (CRE) learning for Grade XII students at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya and examine its impact on students' critical thinking, spiritual growth, and learning engagement. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving Christian Religious Education teachers and Grade XII students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that the Deep Learning method successfully transformed conventional teacher-centered instruction into meaningful learning experiences characterized by inquiry, collaboration, reflection, contextual problem-solving, and authentic assessment. The implementation of this method significantly enhanced students' critical thinking abilities, communication skills, collaborative competence, spiritual awareness, and active participation in classroom activities. Students demonstrated greater ability to relate biblical teachings to contemporary social issues and personal experiences. Despite challenges such as differences in students' readiness and limited instructional time, continuous teacher facilitation effectively supported successful implementation. Therefore, the Deep Learning method represents an effective pedagogical approach for improving the quality of Christian Religious Education and supporting the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian secondary education.

Keywords

Christian Religious, Education Learning, Implementation



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology and the emergence of artificial intelligence have fundamentally transformed educational paradigms, shifting learning from teacher-centered instruction toward student-centered, competency-oriented, and meaningful learning

experiences. These transformations require teachers to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches that not only facilitate knowledge acquisition but also develop higher-order thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, communication, and lifelong learning competencies. One instructional approach that has gained increasing attention is the Deep Learning method, which emphasizes meaningful understanding, critical reflection, authentic problem-solving, and the integration of knowledge with real-life contexts. In Indonesia, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum further reinforces the importance of deep learning by encouraging students to actively construct knowledge, develop character, and become independent learners. Consequently, teachers of Christian Religious Education (CRE) are challenged to move beyond conventional teaching methods and create learning environments that encourage spiritual growth alongside cognitive development (Fullan et al., 2020; Hattie, 2023).

Christian Religious Education occupies a strategic position within the Indonesian education system because it aims not only to transmit biblical knowledge but also to cultivate students' faith, Christian character, ethical reasoning, and responsible citizenship. In senior high schools, particularly for Grade XII students who are preparing for higher education and future careers, Christian Religious Education plays an essential role in helping learners interpret Christian values in response to contemporary social, technological, and moral challenges. However, classroom practices often remain dominated by lectures, memorization, and teacher-centered instruction, resulting in passive student participation and limited opportunities for critical reflection. Such instructional patterns are inconsistent with the goals of twenty-first-century education, which require students to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge in authentic situations. Therefore, implementing the Deep Learning method in Christian Religious Education represents an important pedagogical innovation capable of improving both academic achievement and students' spiritual maturity (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The Deep Learning method emphasizes conceptual understanding rather than superficial memorization by engaging students in inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and authentic assessment. Students are encouraged to connect biblical teachings with personal experiences, social realities, and ethical decision-making processes. This learning model enables learners to develop metacognitive awareness, problem-solving abilities, empathy, and responsible behavior while strengthening their Christian worldview. Research indicates that deep learning environments positively influence students' motivation, learning engagement, conceptual understanding, and critical thinking because learners become active participants in constructing knowledge rather than passive recipients of information. Furthermore, learning activities that encourage discussion, reflection, project-based learning, and contextual problem solving have proven effective in promoting meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes across various educational settings (Imms et al., 2021; OECD, 2021).

Within the context of Indonesian secondary education, the Ministry of Education has introduced educational reforms emphasizing competency development, character education, digital literacy, and differentiated instruction through the Merdeka Curriculum. One important initiative supporting these reforms is the implementation of Deep Learning principles, which

integrate mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning to ensure that students actively engage in understanding concepts while developing positive learning experiences. Christian Religious Education teachers are therefore expected to facilitate interactive learning that integrates biblical values with students' everyday experiences, encouraging them to analyze ethical dilemmas, reflect on personal faith, and apply Christian principles in diverse social contexts. Such learning experiences are expected to strengthen students' moral reasoning, communication skills, collaboration, and personal responsibility while fostering stronger spiritual identities (Kemendikbudristek, 2024; OECD, 2021).

SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya, as one of the leading public senior high schools in Central Kalimantan, has continuously sought to improve instructional quality by implementing innovative teaching strategies aligned with national educational policies. The diversity of students' academic backgrounds, learning styles, and social experiences requires teachers to employ instructional methods that actively engage learners and accommodate individual differences. For Grade XII Christian Religious Education classes, the implementation of the Deep Learning method offers opportunities to create interactive, reflective, and student-centered learning experiences that encourage biblical literacy alongside critical and contextual thinking. Through collaborative discussions, case analyses, project-based activities, and reflective learning, students are expected to develop comprehensive understanding of Christian teachings while simultaneously strengthening character formation and spiritual commitment. Such instructional practices align with the educational objective of producing graduates who possess both intellectual competence and moral integrity (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Fullan et al., 2020).

Despite the increasing emphasis on Deep Learning in educational policy and pedagogical discourse, empirical studies examining its implementation in Christian Religious Education remain relatively limited, particularly within Indonesian public senior high schools. Most previous studies have focused on mathematics, science, language learning, or general classroom instruction, while research exploring Deep Learning within faith-based subjects has received comparatively less attention. Moreover, little evidence exists regarding how Grade XII students experience Deep Learning activities in Christian Religious Education classrooms, how teachers facilitate meaningful spiritual learning, and what challenges arise during implementation. These research gaps highlight the necessity of conducting a comprehensive investigation into the implementation of the Deep Learning method in Christian Religious Education learning at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of innovative religious education pedagogy and practically to improving instructional quality, student engagement, and Christian character formation in Indonesian secondary education (Hattie, 2023; Imms et al., 2021).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation of the Deep Learning method in Christian Religious Education learning for Grade XII students at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya. The research was conducted in the natural school setting to obtain an in-depth understanding of teaching practices, student learning experiences, and the challenges encountered during the implementation process. The primary participants consisted of the Christian Religious Education teacher and Grade XII students selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the learning activities. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of lesson plans, teaching materials, student assignments, and school records. To ensure the credibility of the findings, source triangulation and technique triangulation were employed by comparing information obtained from different participants and data collection methods. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This analytical process enabled the researcher to identify themes related to the implementation of the Deep Learning method, student engagement, learning effectiveness, and the integration of Christian values into meaningful learning experiences, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the instructional practices implemented in the research setting (Miles et al., 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Deep Learning Method in Christian Religious Education Learning for Grade XII Students at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Deep Learning method in Christian Religious Education (CRE) learning for Grade XII students at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya has shifted classroom practices from conventional teacher-centered instruction to meaningful student-centered learning. Based on classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students, the learning process was designed to encourage students to actively construct knowledge through biblical inquiry, collaborative discussion, contextual problem-solving, reflective activities, and authentic assessment. Rather than merely memorizing Bible verses or theological concepts, students were guided to understand the relevance of Christian teachings in responding to contemporary moral, social, and technological challenges encountered in their daily lives. Learning activities began with contextual issues that reflected students' real experiences, followed by guided exploration of biblical principles, group discussions, presentations, reflection sessions, and practical applications of Christian values. This instructional sequence enabled students to connect cognitive understanding with spiritual growth while encouraging them to become active participants throughout the learning process. Such findings indicate that the Deep Learning method effectively transforms Christian Religious Education into an interactive learning experience emphasizing conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization. These findings are consistent with the principles of deep learning, which emphasize meaningful

understanding, active engagement, and authentic knowledge construction through learner participation (Fullan et al., 2020; Hattie, 2023).

The teacher played a central role as a facilitator who designed meaningful learning experiences rather than functioning solely as a transmitter of knowledge. During classroom implementation, the teacher initiated learning by presenting authentic cases concerning ethical dilemmas, digital citizenship, environmental stewardship, interpersonal relationships, and social responsibility from a Christian perspective. Students were encouraged to analyze these situations using biblical principles before discussing possible solutions collaboratively within small groups. Throughout the learning process, the teacher continuously facilitated questioning, encouraged reflection, provided constructive feedback, and guided students toward independent learning. This instructional approach created opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills by analyzing biblical texts, evaluating different perspectives, and proposing practical solutions rooted in Christian values. Instead of emphasizing the memorization of doctrinal concepts, classroom discussions promoted interpretation, critical reasoning, and contextual application of Scripture. Such practices reflect the essence of deep learning, where knowledge acquisition becomes meaningful because students actively construct understanding through inquiry and reflection. Consequently, students became more confident in expressing opinions, asking questions, and defending their arguments using biblical evidence and logical reasoning, indicating a significant improvement in learning engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; OECD, 2021).

Another significant finding concerns the integration of reflective learning into Christian Religious Education. Reflection was consistently implemented at the end of each lesson to encourage students to internalize biblical teachings and evaluate their personal attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Students were invited to write reflective journals describing what they had learned, how biblical values related to their personal experiences, and what commitments they intended to make after completing each lesson. Reflection sessions also included classroom discussions where students voluntarily shared experiences regarding forgiveness, honesty, responsibility, compassion, and respect for diversity. These reflective activities promoted metacognitive awareness by enabling learners to evaluate their own thinking processes and spiritual development. Rather than considering religious education solely as academic knowledge, students gradually perceived Christian teachings as practical guidance influencing everyday decision-making. Reflection therefore became an essential component of the Deep Learning process because meaningful learning occurs when students consciously connect newly acquired knowledge with their existing beliefs and life experiences. This finding supports previous studies indicating that reflective pedagogy enhances conceptual understanding, character development, and lifelong learning dispositions among secondary school students (Imms et al., 2021; Hattie, 2023).

Collaborative learning also emerged as a dominant characteristic of the Deep Learning implementation. Students worked in heterogeneous groups to discuss biblical narratives, analyze contemporary ethical issues, prepare presentations, and develop collaborative projects addressing social concerns within their communities. These collaborative activities encouraged students to communicate respectfully, appreciate different viewpoints, negotiate

solutions, and jointly construct knowledge. During classroom observations, students demonstrated increasing confidence in expressing ideas while simultaneously learning to listen carefully to peers' opinions. The teacher intentionally organized learning groups consisting of students with varying academic abilities to promote peer learning and mutual support. Through collaboration, students developed social competence alongside academic understanding because learning occurred through interaction rather than individual memorization. Such collaborative environments also strengthened interpersonal relationships and fostered mutual respect among students with diverse personalities and learning styles. The implementation of collaborative learning therefore reflects the core principle of Deep Learning, which views knowledge construction as a social process facilitated through communication, cooperation, and collective reflection. These findings align with educational research demonstrating that collaborative inquiry significantly enhances conceptual understanding, engagement, and critical thinking in secondary education (OECD, 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The implementation of authentic assessment further strengthened the effectiveness of the Deep Learning approach. Instead of relying exclusively on written examinations, teachers employed multiple forms of assessment, including project presentations, reflective journals, classroom participation, group discussions, case analyses, and portfolio evaluations. These assessment methods enabled teachers to evaluate not only students' cognitive achievement but also their communication skills, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and spiritual development. Students perceived these assessments as fair because they reflected actual learning processes rather than measuring memorization alone. Authentic assessment also motivated students to take greater responsibility for their own learning because evaluation focused on demonstrating understanding through meaningful performance. Furthermore, feedback provided by the teacher emphasized continuous improvement rather than simply assigning numerical scores, thereby encouraging students to reflect on their strengths and areas requiring further development. This assessment strategy is consistent with contemporary educational reforms advocating competency-based evaluation aligned with twenty-first-century learning objectives and the Merdeka Curriculum (Fullan et al., 2020; OECD, 2021).

Despite the successful implementation of the Deep Learning method, several challenges were identified during the research. One major challenge involved the varying levels of students' readiness to participate actively in inquiry-based learning. Some students initially experienced difficulty expressing opinions, analyzing biblical texts independently, or engaging in critical discussions because they were accustomed to teacher-centered instructional approaches. Additionally, limited instructional time sometimes constrained opportunities for in-depth discussions and comprehensive reflection activities. Teachers also reported the necessity of extensive lesson preparation because designing meaningful learning experiences, authentic assessments, and contextual learning materials required considerable professional competence and creativity. Furthermore, differences in students' academic backgrounds and learning motivation occasionally influenced the pace of classroom discussions. Nevertheless, these challenges gradually diminished as students became

increasingly familiar with collaborative learning routines and inquiry-based activities. Continuous teacher guidance, supportive classroom interactions, and carefully structured learning activities contributed significantly to overcoming these obstacles, demonstrating that successful implementation of Deep Learning depends not only on instructional strategies but also on teacher commitment and classroom culture.

Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning method in Christian Religious Education learning at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya has successfully created a more meaningful, reflective, collaborative, and student-centered learning environment. The instructional process enabled students to integrate biblical knowledge with critical thinking, moral reasoning, and everyday life experiences while simultaneously strengthening their spiritual maturity and Christian character. Teachers functioned as facilitators who guided inquiry, encouraged reflection, and created authentic learning experiences rather than merely transmitting religious knowledge. Consequently, learning became an active process in which students developed conceptual understanding, communication skills, collaborative competence, and personal responsibility through meaningful engagement with Christian teachings. These findings confirm that the Deep Learning method represents an effective pedagogical approach for improving the quality of Christian Religious Education within Indonesian senior high schools, particularly in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and preparing students to become intellectually competent, morally responsible, and spiritually mature citizens (Hattie, 2023; Fullan et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The Impact of the Deep Learning Method on Students' Critical Thinking, Spiritual Growth, and Learning Engagement in Christian Religious Education

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the Deep Learning method has generated significant positive impacts on students' critical thinking skills, spiritual development, and overall learning engagement in Christian Religious Education (CRE) for Grade XII students at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya. Classroom observations and interviews indicate that students became increasingly active in analyzing biblical passages, questioning moral issues, evaluating various perspectives, and formulating arguments grounded in Christian teachings. Unlike conventional learning approaches that emphasize memorization of biblical facts, the Deep Learning method challenged students to investigate authentic social issues, relate them to scriptural principles, and formulate contextual solutions based on Christian values. Students demonstrated improved confidence in expressing opinions during discussions and became more willing to engage in intellectual dialogue with their peers. Such learning experiences encouraged higher-order thinking because students were required to interpret, synthesize, evaluate, and apply knowledge rather than simply recalling information. These findings support educational theories asserting that meaningful learning occurs when students actively construct knowledge through inquiry, reflection, and authentic problem-solving, thereby strengthening conceptual understanding and long-term knowledge retention (Hattie, 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

One of the most prominent impacts observed in this study concerns the development of students' critical thinking abilities. During classroom discussions, students were consistently encouraged to analyze biblical narratives from multiple perspectives, compare scriptural principles with contemporary social realities, and justify their viewpoints using logical reasoning supported by biblical evidence. Rather than accepting information passively, students learned to ask meaningful questions regarding ethical dilemmas such as social justice, environmental responsibility, honesty, digital citizenship, and interpersonal relationships. This inquiry-oriented learning environment cultivated analytical reasoning and independent thinking because students were required to evaluate the consequences of various actions before proposing solutions based on Christian ethics. Teachers intentionally designed learning scenarios that challenged students to connect biblical teachings with real-life situations, allowing them to appreciate the practical relevance of Christian values in modern society. Consequently, students developed greater intellectual independence and demonstrated improved confidence when solving complex moral problems through reflective reasoning. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that Deep Learning significantly enhances higher-order cognitive skills by promoting inquiry-based learning and authentic knowledge construction (OECD, 2021; Fullan et al., 2020).

Beyond cognitive development, the implementation of the Deep Learning method also contributed substantially to students' spiritual growth. Christian Religious Education aims not only to transmit theological knowledge but also to cultivate faith, Christian character, and moral integrity. The research findings indicate that students experienced deeper spiritual reflection because classroom activities consistently encouraged them to examine the relationship between biblical teachings and their personal lives. Reflective journals, group prayer, biblical meditation, classroom testimonies, and guided self-evaluation enabled students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses while developing commitments to improve their attitudes and behaviors according to Christian principles. Many students reported becoming more aware of the importance of forgiveness, humility, responsibility, compassion, honesty, and servant leadership after participating in reflective learning sessions. Rather than viewing religious education as merely another academic subject, students gradually understood Christianity as a practical guide for everyday living. This transformation illustrates that Deep Learning facilitates not only intellectual understanding but also spiritual internalization by encouraging learners to integrate knowledge, faith, and personal experience into a unified worldview. Such findings reinforce the argument that meaningful religious education requires reflection and authentic life application rather than doctrinal memorization alone (Imms et al., 2021; Hattie, 2023).

Student learning engagement also increased considerably throughout the implementation of the Deep Learning method. Classroom observations showed that students participated more actively in discussions, collaborative projects, presentations, classroom debates, and reflective conversations compared with previous teacher-centered learning experiences. The interactive nature of Deep Learning encouraged students to become responsible for their own learning because they were actively involved in identifying problems, gathering information, discussing solutions, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Students expressed greater enthusiasm because classroom activities related directly to situations they encountered in everyday life, making learning more meaningful and relevant. Furthermore, collaborative learning strengthened peer interaction and encouraged students to appreciate different opinions while developing communication and teamwork skills. Increased engagement was also reflected in students' willingness to complete reflective assignments, participate voluntarily during discussions, and seek additional biblical references independently. These findings suggest that meaningful learning experiences significantly improve students' intrinsic motivation because learners perceive educational activities as personally valuable and intellectually stimulating rather than merely fulfilling academic requirements (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; OECD, 2021).

Another important finding concerns the development of students' communication and collaborative competencies as essential components of twenty-first-century learning. Throughout the implementation process, students frequently worked in small groups to analyze biblical cases, prepare presentations, conduct classroom discussions, and design practical projects addressing community issues from Christian perspectives. These collaborative activities required students to communicate ideas clearly, negotiate differing viewpoints, provide constructive feedback, and collectively formulate solutions based on biblical values. Initially, several students demonstrated hesitation when expressing opinions or presenting arguments before classmates. However, continuous participation in collaborative inquiry gradually increased their confidence and communication abilities. Students became more respectful toward differing opinions while learning to support their arguments with scriptural evidence and logical analysis. The teacher's role as facilitator proved essential in creating a supportive classroom climate where every student felt encouraged to participate actively. Consequently, collaboration became not only a learning strategy but also a means of developing interpersonal competence, empathy, mutual respect, and shared responsibility within the classroom community. These outcomes correspond with current educational frameworks emphasizing collaboration and communication as fundamental competencies for lifelong learning (Fullan et al., 2020; OECD, 2021).

The implementation of authentic assessment further reinforced the positive impacts of the Deep Learning method on students' overall learning outcomes. Teachers evaluated students through reflective journals, project presentations, classroom participation, case analyses, collaborative assignments, and portfolios instead of relying solely on written examinations. Such assessment methods enabled students to demonstrate their understanding through authentic performance while encouraging continuous reflection and self-improvement. Feedback provided by teachers emphasized learning progress rather than merely assigning grades, motivating students to identify personal strengths and areas requiring further development. Students reported that authentic assessment reduced anxiety because evaluation reflected their actual learning experiences instead of measuring memorization alone. This assessment approach also encouraged students to become independent learners capable of monitoring their own academic and spiritual development. As a result, learning became a continuous process of growth characterized by reflection, improvement, and practical application rather than short-term examination preparation.

These findings support competency-based educational models advocating authentic assessment as an effective strategy for evaluating higher-order thinking, character formation, and meaningful learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Hattie, 2023).

Overall, this study concludes that the implementation of the Deep Learning method has significantly enhanced students' critical thinking skills, spiritual maturity, learning motivation, collaboration, communication abilities, and active classroom participation in Christian Religious Education learning at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya. The instructional process successfully transformed religious education into a meaningful learning experience where biblical knowledge was integrated with critical inquiry, reflective practice, authentic problem-solving, and real-life application. Students no longer perceived Christian Religious Education as a subject limited to doctrinal understanding but as a transformative process that shaped their intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual development simultaneously. These findings affirm that the Deep Learning method effectively supports the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum by promoting student-centered learning, higher-order thinking, character education, and lifelong learning competencies. Therefore, the implementation of Deep Learning represents an innovative pedagogical approach capable of improving both the quality of Christian Religious Education and the holistic development of students in Indonesian secondary schools (Fullan et al., 2020; Hattie, 2023; OECD, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning method in Christian Religious Education learning for Grade XII students at SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya has been successfully carried out through student-centered instructional practices that emphasize inquiry, collaboration, reflection, contextual problem-solving, and authentic assessment. The learning process enabled students to actively construct biblical understanding, relate Christian values to real-life situations, and develop meaningful learning experiences beyond memorization. The implementation of this method positively influenced students' critical thinking skills, learning engagement, communication, collaboration, spiritual growth, and character formation, as evidenced by their increased participation in discussions, reflective activities, and ethical decision-making based on biblical principles. Furthermore, the teacher's role as a facilitator proved essential in creating an interactive and supportive learning environment that encouraged students to become independent, reflective, and responsible learners. Although challenges such as varying student readiness and limited instructional time were encountered, these obstacles were gradually overcome through appropriate instructional strategies and continuous guidance. Therefore, the Deep Learning method can be concluded to be an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing the quality of Christian Religious Education while supporting the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum in developing students who are intellectually competent, spiritually mature, morally responsible, and prepared to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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