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# Reimagining 21st-Century Higher Education: A Literature-Based Exploration of Deep Learning for Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Skill Development

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#### **Abstract**

The transformation of higher education in the era of global communication demands a paradigm shift in learning that not only focuses on content mastery but also emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking skills and readiness to face 21st-century challenges. This article aims to comprehensively examine the concept, urgency, and implementation strategies of deep learning in higher education. This study employs a qualitative approach through literature review by analyzing various relevant national scientific sources. The findings indicate that deep learning enhances students' conceptual understanding, cognitive engagement, and the development of social and emotional dimensions in learning. Its implementation strategies include formulating learning objectives based on constructive alignment, utilizing digital technology, applying active learning methods such as Project-Based Learning and flipped classrooms, as well as incorporating authentic assessments. This article recommends the integration of deep learning as a holistic, adaptive, and contextual learning approach to improve the quality of higher education amid global complexities and technological advancements.

**Keywords:** 21st-century skills, cognitive engagement, deep learning strategies, emotional skill development, learning adaptation, learning transformation, project-based learning

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#### 1. Introduction

In the era of global communication characterized by the accelerated development of information and communication technology, higher education institutions are confronted with demands for fundamental and comprehensive transformation. This transformation extends beyond the enhancement of technological capacity, necessitating a paradigm shift and a reevaluation of approaches within the

learning process itself. As strategic institutions responsible for producing qualified human resources, universities must demonstrate the ability to adapt dynamically and respond proactively to the multifaceted dynamics of globalization, which encompass social, economic, and cultural dimensions (Budiningsih et al., 2022).

According to Rarasyanti et al. (2025), the development of graduate competencies

should be oriented not only towards comprehensive mastery of academic content but also towards the enhancement of critical, analytical, and creative thinking abilities. These competencies are essential to effectively respond to the increasingly and evolving complex challenges (Rahmiaty et al., 2025). In this regard, the traditional learning paradigm, which emphasizes static knowledge and rote memorization, is progressively losing its relevance especially given the growing demand for graduates who possess not only advanced competencies but also the agility to adapt to rapid and multifaceted changes (Muis, 2023). Therefore, the deep learning approach to education is increasingly recognized as highly pertinent, as it conceptualizes students as active agents who engage in the learning process with reflective and critical awareness. As articulated by (Hidayah et al., 2021), this approach fosters a deeper cognitive engagement whereby learners encouraged not only to absorb information passively but also to critically analyze, synthesize, and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts.

Such a paradigm shift is essential to cultivate autonomous learners capable of navigating complex problems and adapting to the dynamic demands of contemporary society. This approach transcends mere content mastery by placing greater emphasis on cultivating profound comprehension through the integration of diverse concepts, while simultaneously refining higher-order cognitive skills such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation. Deep learning, articulated by Maelasari & Lusiana (2025), is pivotal in cultivating the cognitive capacities indispensable for the optimal realization of students' intellectual and professional potential.

The critical importance of integrating deep learning within higher education is further substantiated by numerous scholarly investigations, notably by (Winata et al., 2023) who contend that the efficacy of the learning process is intrinsically linked to the extent of students' profound comprehension the subject matter. This understanding not only facilitates comprehensive mastery of concepts but also students with the ability effectively transfer and apply knowledge across a variety of authentic contexts, transcending the limitations of rote memorization of facts and procedural information (Winarti et al., Consistent with this perspective, the OECD (2018) delineates a set of 21st-century competencies as critical imperatives for higher education graduates, encompassing critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. These competencies are unlikely to be effectively cultivated through surface learning methodologies, which predominantly focus on rote memorization and repetitive mechanical practice, thereby limiting deeper cognitive engagement.

In contrast, deep learning is widely regarded as a more effective pedagogical approach, as (Ratnasari et al., 2025), assert that it actively engages both the cognitive and metacognitive faculties of students. This dual activation facilitates the construction of a comprehensive and contextually relevant understanding that extends beyond rote acquisition Moreover, knowledge. deep learning encompasses not only the cognitive domain but also maintains a profound connection with affective and social dimensions of the process, learning thereby promoting emotional engagement and collaborative interactions that are essential for meaningful

and sustained learning outcomes. (Arafah et al., 2023) emphasize that meaningful learning occurs when individuals are able to connect knowledge with real-life experiences and the surrounding social context, resulting in a comprehensive and contextualized understanding. In today's era of global communication, student interactions are no longer confined to physical spaces but have expanded into virtual realms rich with information and cross-cultural social exchanges.

Therefore, the integration of digital technology within deep learning strategies becomes critically important, as (Indri et al., 2024), assert that technology can facilitate interactive, collaborative, and personalized learning environments tailored to students' needs. Within this framework, the urgency of implementing deep learning strategies is increasingly evident, particularly in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Efforts to enhance the quality of national education and bolster global competitiveness necessitate the adoption of holistic and contextually grounded learning approaches. The "Merdeka Belajar -Kampus Merdeka" policy, launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2021), explicitly highlights the imperative of student-centered learning paradigms, the cultivation ofcharacter. and the advancement of essential 21st-century skills. Within this framework, the deep learning approach emerges as particularly pertinent. As emphasized by (Munfiatik, 2023), deep learning aligns closely with the overarching goals of the policy by fostering autonomous learners who exhibit critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and the integrate interdisciplinary to knowledge across varied contexts in a comprehensive manner. This approach not

only equips students with cognitive tools to navigate complex academic challenges but also nurtures the resilience and flexibility necessary to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and interconnected world.

A growing body of empirical research has consistently demonstrated that the implementation of deep learning strategies significantly contributes to enhancing student learning outcomes, increasing academic motivation, and fostering the development of critical thinking skills. (Sodikin, 2024) rgues that students who engage in deep learning approaches do not merely rely on rote memorization of course material; rather, they exhibit deeper conceptual understanding and advanced higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, in their peers who rely comparison to predominantly surface on learning strategies. These findings are further substantiated by (Roy, 2024) who affirms learning deep facilitates development of durable understanding and the effective transfer of knowledge to novel situations an attribute that is particularly crucial in navigating the complex and rapidly evolving demands of both the contemporary workforce and academic research environments.

Furthermore, Abdullah (2025) underscores the importance of curriculum design grounded in the principles of deep learning, students' which enhances intrinsic motivation by actively engaging them in the learning process. Such engagement fosters more meaningful and sustainable learning experiences. This pedagogical approach not only equips students with knowledge but also encourages the development of lifelong learning dispositions, enabling them to adapt to evolving environments and professional demands in the future.

Beyond its theoretical and empirical foundations, the implementation of deep carries significant practical learning implications for higher education particularly within the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0, complexity where and digital transformation are increasingly dominant. The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies presents vast opportunities fostering for collaborative, and personalized learning experiences through digital platforms such as e-learning systems, virtual simulations, augmented reality environments, interdisciplinary project-based learning. The integration of these technologies allows students to learn more flexibly and contextually, in ways that align with their individual learning preferences as (Mujianto & Suryadhianto, 2025), emphasize, such conditions enable the deep learning strategy to be implemented more effectively and at scale.

The strategy of implementing immersive learning in the classroom is a informative-ness approach that moves education toward greater meaning and With a strong theoretical relevance. foundation, teachers can create a learning environment that fosters deeper understanding, higher-order thinking skills, and character development in stu-dents. Immersive learning is not just a trend, but a necessity. It prepares students not only for exams but also for life.

However, the successful realization of deep learning requires coordinated efforts and sustained commitment from all higher education stakeholders. Faculty members must assume the role of facilitators who are capable of designing and guiding learning processes that cultivate critical, reflective, and creative thinking. In parallel, curricula must be holistically and integratively structured to support the development of 21st-century competencies that are aligned with global needs. Equally critical is the provision of robust and sustainable technological infrastructure including reliable internet access, adequate hardware and software resources, and comprehensive training for both educators and students to ensure effective and efficient use of digital tools. In this regard, deep learning should not be regarded merely as a theoretical construct, but as a pedagogical praxis that is systematically implemented to produce graduates who are competent, adaptive, and globally competitive. By examining the adaptation of higher education learning processes through the lens of deep learning in the context of global communication, this article seeks to offer a comprehensive conceptually contribution, both practically, to the ongoing discourse on educational transformation.

This study aims to provide an in-depth exploration of the concept of deep learning, accompanied by practical steps for its implementation, while also identifying effective strategies to optimize learning processes in higher education. The findings of this study are expected not only to serve as a comprehensive academic reference but also to offer practical guidance for higher education institutions in designing and implementing adaptive and responsive learning models that address the evolving challenges demands and contemporary era. In doing so, this article seeks to contribute meaningfully to the enhancement of higher education quality in ways that are aligned with the imperatives globalization the and ongoing technological revolution.

## 2. Approach

The literature-based approach employed in this study constitutes a fundamental step, carried out systematically construct a robust comprehensively to conceptual foundation concerning the implementation of deep learning strategies within the context of higher education in the era of global communication. The literature review involved a critical examination of a range of primary scholarly sources, with particular emphasis on peer-reviewed journal articles recognized for their academic credibility at the national level. These sources were retrieved from indexed databases such as Google Scholar and accredited national journal portals listed in the SINTA system, thereby ensuring the quality, validity, and relevance of the information utilized in this study.

The primary objective of this literaturebased approach extends beyond a mere theoretical understanding of the concepts and principles of deep learning. It also seeks to identify the relevance and pedagogical implications of its implementation within higher education, particularly in relation to the cultivation of 21st-century competencies. Critical, creative, and reflective thinking are among the essential dimensions that, as emphasized by Nurmawanti (2023) must be systematically developed through learning strategies, given their pivotal role in optimizing students' cognitive and metacognitive processes. These capabilities are not only integral to academic success but also constitute foundational prerequisites for university graduates to effectively navigate the complexities and ever-evolving dynamics of the globalized world.

The body of literature related to educational technology is critically examined in this study to reinforce the theoretical foundation of the argument concerning the of information strategic role and communication technology (ICT) articulated by (Aini, 2021), as a key enabler in the implementation of deep learning strategies in higher education. Recent studies have increasingly demonstrated that the integration of digital technologies into the learning process has evolved beyond merely serving as a channel for content delivery or a supplementary instructional tool. Instead, technology has become a central facilitator that fosters dynamic interaction, crossdisciplinary collaboration, and intensive, meaningful personalization of learning experiences.

**Empirical** evidence supports effectiveness of blended learning and flipped classroom approaches in enhancing student engagement by offering flexible and adaptive learning environments. These models allow learners to access instructional materials independently and utilize face-to-face sessions for in-depth discussion and problemactivities. Furthermore, application of e-learning platforms and virtual simulation technologies, as described by et al., (2022), enables development of practical skills and critical thinking through project-based learning and case studies pedagogical strategies that are essential for promoting deep, applied learning outcomes.

Beyond the technological dimension, this literature review also places significant emphasis on the analysis of both national and global higher education policies as normative frameworks that support the relevance and urgency of implementing deep learning strategies. Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, underscores the importance of student-centered learning,

character development, and the enhancement of 21st-century competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). This policy orientation resonates with UNESCO's (2020) advocacy for lifelong learning and adaptive capacity development as essential foundations for preparing future generations to thrive in an era marked by rapid change and increasing uncertainty.

Thus, the integration of technological innovations, educational policy frameworks, and deep learning pedagogical strategies forms a cohesive and responsive framework capable of addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by higher education in the age of global communication.

Through a structured literature-based this formulates approach, study comprehensive and holistic conceptual This framework not only framework. articulates the essence and urgency of deep learning strategies within the context of higher education, but also integratively synthesizes empirical, theoretical, and policyrelated dimensions in a mutually reinforcing manner. Consequently, the present study aspires to yield an analysis that demonstrates both high academic validity and strong practical relevance, serving as a critical reference point for the development of adaptive and innovative learning models. Such an approach opens up valuable space for dialogue academic and practical implementation, ensuring that deep learning is not merely conceptualized as an idealistic but be paradigm, can effectively operationalized in dynamic and multicultural higher education settings. In the face of rapid technological advancement and communication, this research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical constructs and real-world educational practices.

#### 3. Result and Discussion

## a. The Concept of Deep Learning

In the context of higher education, the concept of deep learning emphasizes profound intellectual engagement, wherein students are not merely passive recipients of information but are actively involved in the processes of analysis, synthesis, evaluation of knowledge (Nurgenti & Wahyudi, 2025). As argued by Arif et al., (2025) this approach marks a paradigm shift from a focus on superficial learning outcomes often characterized by rote memorization towards the development of meaningful and enduring conceptual understanding. Deep learning thus serves as a critical foundation for cultivating 21stcentury competencies, fostering learners' capacity to think critically, integrate knowledge, and apply it effectively across diverse and dynamic contexts.

#### 1) Meaningful Understanding

Students engage beyond simple rote memorization, as highlighted by Chasanah et al., (2020), they cultivate profound conceptual understanding that allows them to synthesize diverse ideas and transfer their knowledge adeptly across new and varied contexts.

#### 2) Higher-Order Cognitive Engagement

In the learning process, the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills including critical analysis, synthesis, reflective thinking, and evaluative judgment is of paramount importance. As emphasized by (Selirowangi et al., 2024), students must actively engage in the development of these cognitive capacities, which serve as essential tools for navigating complex problems and generating innovative solutions. Such active involvement not only enhances intellectual rigor but also fosters autonomous learning, empowering students to become critical thinkers capable of

adapting to evolving academic and professional demands.

In the context of deep learning, autonomous learning serves as a crucial foundation for shaping students into critical, creative, and adaptive individuals who can meet both academic and professional demands. Its implementation can be realized through project-based learning, which independence cultivates in managing projects; the flipped classroom, which promotes independent study prior to class discussions; the use of digital platforms and learning management systems for flexible access and self-evaluation; as well as authentic assessments such as portfolios, selfreflections, and case studies that connect knowledge to real-world experiences.

## 3) Knowledge Integration

Students are actively encouraged to establish meaningful connections between newly acquired information and their pre-existing knowledge frameworks. According to Mikhael & Neno (2023), this integrative process plays a critical role in enabling learners to construct increasingly complex and comprehensive cognitive schemas. Such knowledge integration not only deepens understanding but also enhances

the ability to transfer and apply concepts across various contexts, fostering adaptive expertise. By linking diverse pieces of information, students develop a holistic perspective that is essential for solving multifaceted problems and engaging in interdisciplinary thinking, which are crucial competencies in contemporary higher education settings.

## 4) Contextualized Learning

Effective learning transcends mere theoretical comprehension and necessitates a strong connection to authentic experiences contextually relevant situations. and Syamsuridhawati et al., (2025), emphasize that such contextualization is critical to transforming abstract knowledge into practical, applicable skills that resonate with learners' real-life environments. situating learning within meaningful contexts, students are better able to internalize concepts, engage deeply with the material, and transfer their understanding to solve complex, real-world problems. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also cultivates adaptive expertise, preparing learners to navigate the multifaceted challenges encountered in professional and societal domains.

Table 1. Key Dimensions of Deep Learning in Higher Education

| Aspect       | <b>Brief Definition</b>   | <b>Key Activities</b>   | <b>Expected Outcomes</b>                                   | References    |
|--------------|---|---|--|---------------|
| Meaningful   | Goes beyond   | <ul><li>Case-study</li></ul>  | <ul><li>Ability to</li></ul>                               | Chasanah et   |
| Understandin | memorization; builds deep   | discussions   | synthesize ideas   | al. (2020)    |
| g            | conceptual understanding<br>that enables synthesis and<br>transfer of knowledge<br>across new contexts. | <ul><li>Application-based quizzes</li><li>Integrative project assignments</li></ul> | <ul> <li>Transfer solutions<br/>across contexts</li> </ul> |               |
| Higher-Order | Development of higher-  | <ul> <li>Academic debates</li> </ul>  | <ul> <li>Enhanced critical</li> </ul>                      | Selirowangi   |
| Cognitive    | order thinking skills   | <ul><li>Reflective</li></ul>  | reasoning  | et al. (2024) |
| Engagement   | (analysis, synthesis,   | journals • Peer reviews   | • Autonomous   |               |
|              | reflection, evaluation) for<br>solving complex problems<br>independently and<br>innovatively.           | - reci leviews  | learning & creative solutions                              |               |

| Aspect                      | <b>Brief Definition</b>   | <b>Key Activities</b>   | <b>Expected Outcomes</b>   | References                           |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| Knowledge<br>Integration    | Linking new information with existing cognitive frameworks, forming more complex and interdisciplinary understanding.   | <ul><li>Mind mapping</li><li>Cross-disciplinary projects</li><li>Collaborative learning</li></ul>           | <ul><li>Holistic cognitive<br/>schemas</li><li>Adaptive expertise<br/>across domains</li></ul>         | Mikhael &<br>Neno (2023)             |
| Contextualize<br>d Learning | Embedding theory into authentic experiences and contextually relevant situations so that knowledge becomes more applicable and meaningful in real-world settings. | <ul> <li>Real-world simulations</li> <li>Internships/practic als</li> <li>Problem-based learning</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Sharpened applied<br/>skills</li> <li>Ability to solve<br/>real-world<br/>problems</li> </ul> | Syamsuridha<br>wati et al.<br>(2025) |

## b. Theoretical Perspectives on Deep Learning

The theoretical underpinnings of deep learning are articulated through various conceptual frameworks, notably Biggs (2011) Constructive Alignment model. This framework posits that the efficacy of the educational process hinges on the coherent alignment among learning objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. In the realm of deep learning, learning objectives are explicitly crafted to cultivate profound conceptual standing and advanced critical thinking skills. Concurrently, pedagogical approaches are intentionally designed to foster active exploration, reflective inquiry, and meaningful engagement. Assessment mechanisms, in turn, are tailored to capture not only knowledge acquisition but also the application of complex, integrative competencies in authentic contexts. Complementing this, Mezirow (1997) Transformative Learning Theory provides an invaluable lens to further elucidate the essence of deep learning. This theory foregrounds the pivotal role of critical reflection in facilitating transformative shifts in students' cognitive frameworks. passively Rather than assimilating information, learners are encouraged to

rigorously interrogate their foundational assumptions, critically evaluate entrenched perspectives, and thereby construct a more nuanced, integrative, and sophisticated understanding of the subject matter.

# c. The Social and Emotional Dimensions of Deep Learning

Beyond the cognitive aspects, deep learning encompasses significant social and emotional dimensions. As emphasized by (Aura et al., 2024), eep learning involves not only individual cognitive processes but also rich social interactions. Through group discussions, case studies, and collaborative projects, students are encouraged to share diverse perspectives, critically examine arguments, and co-construct collective understanding. This approach aligns closely with Vygotsky (1978) Social Constructivism theory, which posits that learning is fundamentally a social process shaped by interactions with others.

Developing the social and emotional dimensions of learning is a crucial foundation for creating a holistic and informativeness education. By instilling the ability to recognize emotions, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions, students learn not only to succeed academically but also to become

empowered, thoughtful, and caring individuals. Implementing social-emotional strategies in the classroom is not an add-on, but a core component of a quality education. With strong theoretical support and consistent practice, teachers can create emotionally healthy and socially enriching learning environments where every student can grow holistically.

Furthermore, the implementation of deep learning strategies has been shown to exert a positive influence on students' affective domain. Students engaging in this approach, as demonstrated by (Herawati et al., 2025), exhibit higher levels of learning greater perseverance, motivation, stronger emotional involvement throughout the learning process. This can be attributed to learning experiences that are not solely cognitive but also meaningful and relevant to their real-life contexts. Consistent with these findings, deep learning strategies also contribute significantly to the development of essential 21st-century skills. Research by (Dewi et al., 2024) reveals that students who adopt this approach not only achieve a deeper academic understanding but also demonstrate markedly enhanced critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills.

# d. The Relevance of Deep Learning in the Era of Global Communication

In the contemporary era of global communication, the pertinence of deep learning has grown substantially. The accelerated evolution of information and communication technologies has cultivated a learning landscape characterized by heightened dynamism and interactivity. Through digital platforms, students are afforded seamless access to an expansive array of global information resources, opportunities for meaningful engagement

with international experts, and active participation multicultural in and interdisciplinary discourse forums (Susanti et al., 2024). This environment not only broadens their intellectual horizons but also necessitates the development sophisticated cognitive and metacognitive skills essential for navigating complex global challenges. (Rahmiaty et al., 2025) emphasize that deep learning, facilitated by digital technologies, significantly enhances student engagement, enriches the learning experience, and fosters the development of critical and creative thinking skills. Furthermore, the Merdeka Kampus Belajar Merdeka policy (Kemendikbudristek, 2021) explicitly encourages higher education institutions to adopt learner-centered approaches focused on cultivating 21st-century skills. Within this framework, deep learning emerges as a highly relevant pedagogical strategy, given its intrinsic capacity to promote active involvement, critical reflection, and the resolution of complex problems.

# e. Conceptual Application of Deep Learning in Higher Education

In practice, the implementation of deep learning strategies in higher education can be actualized through various innovative teaching methods, such as:

## 1) Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

This instructional approach immerses students in authentic, real-world case studies that challenge them to actively engage in complex problem-solving processes. Through rigorous analysis, synthesis of diverse information, and critical reflection, students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. PBL encourages the cultivation of higher-order cognitive skills, enabling learners to connect theoretical knowledge

with practical applications, thereby fostering their ability to navigate and resolve multifaceted issues in professional contexts.

Many lecturers still face difficulties in providing students with real and relevant cases, which often results in learning that remains theory-centered. In fact, case studies are an effective strategy for developing students' cognitive, social, and emotional skills within the framework of deep learning. Technically, the implementation of case studies begins with the selection of contextual cases that are closely related to students' experiences. Students are then divided into small groups to analyze the case using guiding questions related to the problem, relevant theories, alternative solutions, and the evaluation of proposed options. The lecturer facilitator, ensuring participation, providing direction, and stimulating deeper analysis. The group discussion results are presented in class to broaden dialogue, followed by individual reflections to reinforce both conceptual understanding and the learning experience.

## 2) Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

learner-centered approach, students collaborate in teams to design, execute, and present comprehensive projects that are both complex and contextually relevant. This method promotes interdisciplinary integration of knowledge encourages active problem-solving within authentic scenarios. By engaging in sustained inquiry and cooperative efforts, students not only deepen their conceptual understanding but also develop essential skills such as teamwork, communication, project management, and adaptability. PjBL thus prepares students to confront real-world challenges with creativity and critical insight, aligning with the demands of the 21st-century workforce.

With support from various educational theories and learning psychology, PjBL is the right solution for creating meaningful, contex-tual learning that has a long-term impact on students' lives. More than just completing a project, PjBL shapes students into lifelong learners, capable of critical thinking, creative action, and meaningful contributions to their communities.

In practice, the implementation of deep learning strategies such as project-based learning requires students to develop selfregulation skills, including setting learning objectives, managing study time, selecting appropriate problem-solving strategies, and evaluating both individual and group performance. This cultivates process metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral support autonomous competencies that learning, enabling deep learning to foster not only deeper conceptual understanding but also the capacity of students to become lifelong learners who are prepared to meet the complex demands of the 21st century. This perspective is strongly aligned with the principles of self-regulated learning, defined as the learner's ability to consciously plan, monitor, and reflect on their own learning processes (Wong et al., 2020). Within this framework, students are expected not only to acquire knowledge but also to develop adaptive and sustainable learning strategies, positioning SRL as a fundamental foundation for achieving meaningful and effective learning outcomes.

#### 3) Flipped Classroom

This instructional model redefines traditional learning environments by shifting the initial acquisition of foundational knowledge outside of the classroom, often through digital resources such as video lectures, readings, or interactive modules. Students engage in self-directed study at their

own pace, allowing for greater flexibility and personalized learning.

The Flipped Classroom approach aims to create more active, participatory, and flexible learning. In this model, learning activities typically conducted in class (such as lectures or explanations) are moved home, while activities typically assigned as homework are instead conducted in class through discussions, exercises, or collaborative projects.

Classroom time is then dedicated to deeper engagement through active learning strategies, including discussions. collaborative problem-solving, case analyses, application-based activities. approach fosters higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking, synthesis, and evaluation, as students apply theoretical concepts to practical scenarios under the guidance of the instructor. Furthermore, the flipped classroom enhances student motivation and accountability, as learners assume greater responsibility for their educational progress. This model is in line with technological devel-opments and the demands of the 21st century which emphasize independence, collaboration, and creativity.

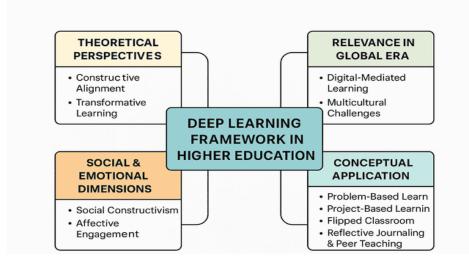
#### 4) Reflective Journaling

Students are encouraged to engage in reflective writing practices that facilitate critical self-examination of their learning experiences. This process enables them to articulate and consolidate their understanding, identify the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills, and recognize areas for further growth. By systematically reflecting on their educational journey, learners deepen their conceptual grasp and enhance their capacity for self-directed learning, which is essential for lifelong academic and professional success.

# 5) Peer Teaching and Collaborative Learning

Students actively engage in knowledge exchange and experiential sharing through collaborative group discussions and structured presentations. This interactive process fosters deeper cognitive engagement, promotes diverse perspectives, and cultivates essential communication and teamwork skills critical for academic and professional development.

Deep learning not only facilitates a more meaningful learning experience but also equips students with critical thinking skills essential for navigating complex challenges. global According (Kamaruddin et al., 2024) students who actively engage with this approach demonstrate higher academic achievement exhibit greater adaptability professional environments.



#### Figure 1. Deep Learning Framework in Higher Education

## f. Implementation Steps of Deep Learning

The implementation of deep learning in education transcends adoption of specific instructional methods; it encompasses a deliberate process meticulous planning, systematic execution, and continuous evaluation oriented towards fostering profound understanding. Biggs (2011), through the Constructive Alignment framework, emphasizes that the success of deep learning implementation critically depends on the coherence among learning objectives, teaching strategies, assessment methods. Within this context, several pivotal steps must be undertaken to effectively operationalize deep learning strategies in higher education.

# 1) Formulating Learning Objectives Oriented Toward Deep Understanding

The first step in implementing deep learning is to formulate clear, measurable learning objectives that emphasize the development of higher-order thinking skills. These objectives should be designed to encourage students to achieve conceptual understanding and to proficiently analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Wilson (2016) revised Bloom's taxonomy highlights higher-order cognitive processes analysis, evaluation, and creation as the core skills that must be prioritized in deep learning.

For instance, in an Educational Theory course, learning objectives might be articulated as follows.

(a) Students are able to critically analyze various educational theories grounded

- in their philosophical and sociological foundations.
- (b) Students are capable of evaluating the strengths and limitations inherent in each educational theory.
- (c) Students are able to design learning strategies grounded in specific educational theories that are pertinent to contemporary contexts.

# 2) Selecting Teaching Strategies that Facilitate Active Engagement

The implementation of deep learning necessitates teaching strategies that actively engage students throughout the learning process. Such strategies encompass a variety of approaches designed to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and reflective practice, including but not limited to:

- (a) Problem-Based Learning (PBL): Students are presented with complex real-world problems and encouraged to seek solutions through thorough analysis, collaborative discussion, and reflective thinking. As articulated by (Annidaul Husna et al., 2025) the Problem-Based Learning approach not only enhances conceptual understanding but also systematically develops critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities.
- (b) Project-Based Learning (PiBL): Students collaborate in groups to complete projects that require the creative, practical, and innovative application of knowledge. approach emphasizes a learning process oriented towards tangible, contextual outcomes, which, according to (Swandi et al., 2021) effectively enhances active student engagement while

- simultaneously strengthening critical thinking and collaborative skills. Furthermore, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) fosters a learning environment that encourages open communication, shared responsibility, and deep reflection on the learning process itself.
- (c) Flipped Classroom: Students engage in self-directed learning by studying instructional videos or digital modules prior to classroom sessions an approach which, according to (Yahya et al., 2020) allows face-to-face time to be used effectively for more in-depth discussions, interactive O&A, and intensive problem-solving. Through this method, students not only gain a deeper conceptual understanding, but are also encouraged to develop critical thinking and collaborative skills during the in-class learning process.
- (d) Reflektive Journaling: Students are required to write reflective journals that capture their thoughts, emotions, and understanding throughout the learning process an approach that, according to (Damayanti et al., 2023) is highly effective in fostering the development of metacognitive and reflective skills. This technique encourages students to consciously evaluate their own learning experiences, thereby deepening their comprehension and continuously enhancing the quality of their academic engagement.

# 3) Utilizing Media and Technology as Learning Facilitators

The global communication era provides a wide array of digital media that can be leveraged to support the implementation of deep learning. Technology functions not merely as a channel for delivering information, but as a vital platform that

enables interdisciplinary collaboration, inexploration, depth conceptual personalized learning tailored to individual student needs. As noted by (Putra et al., 2024) the use of e-learning platforms, digital simulations, and interactive multimedia not only enhances active student engagement but also enriches the learning experience in a more contextual and applicable manner. Consequently, the integration of digital technologies is essential in fostering a dynamic learning environment that is responsive to the evolving challenges of higher education in the era of globalization.

Examples of technology implementation in deep learning include:

- (a) Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle or Google Classroom, which provide students with flexible access to learning materials, enable interactive discussions, and facilitate assignment submissions. These support platforms asynchronous learning and promote student autonomy, making them essential tools in fostering deep learning environments.
- (b) Interactive Learning Videos, which allow students to control the pace of instruction, engage in self-reflection, and assess their understanding through integrated digital quizzes. This form of media promotes active learning by enabling learners to revisit complex concepts, personalize their learning journey, and receive immediate feedback, thereby reinforcing deep comprehension and critical engagement with the material.
- (c) Virtual Reality (VR) used to simulate complex scenarios, such as laboratory experiments or global environment explorations, allowing students to learn through direct, immersive experiences.

# 4) Encouraging Collaboration and Social Interaction

Deep learning does not only occur through individual processes but also through meaningful social interactions. Vygotsky (1978), through his Social Constructivism theory, emphasizes that learning happens optimally when students interact with their peers and instructors. Therefore, teaching should be designed to facilitate collaboration, group discussions, and exchange of ideas.

Examples of collaborative applications in deep learning include:

- (a) Focused Group Discussion (FGD): Students are divided into small groups to discuss a specific topic in depth, guided by a facilitator who leads the discussion and encourages critical reflection.
- (b) Peer Teaching: Students are asked to teach certain concepts to their peers, which not only enhances the understanding of the teaching students but also enriches the learning experience of their classmates.
- (c) Project Collaboration: Students work together on interdisciplinary projects, allowing them to apply knowledge in broader and more diverse contexts.

# 5) Conducting Assessments Oriented Towards Deep Understanding

Assessment in deep learning should be designed to measure conceptual

understanding and higher-order thinking skills, rather than merely testing the ability to recall facts. Biggs (2011) emphasizes the importance of using authentic assessment methods that are relevant to the learning objectives. Some assessment methods that align with deep learning include:

- (a) Authentic Assessment: Students are evaluated based on their ability to complete tasks that reflect real-world situations, such as case studies, projects, or simulations.
- (b) Learning Portfolio: Students compile their work throughout the semester, reflecting the development of their understanding and skills.
- (c) Descriptive Assessment Rubric: Each assessment criterion is clearly detailed with specific indicators, enabling students to understand the evaluation standards and self-assess their progress effectively.
- (d) Reflective Self-Assessment: Students are encouraged to reflect on their understanding and
- (e) learning experiences, as well as set personal development goals.

These steps are designed to ensure that deep learning strategies can be implemented effectively, resulting in a more meaningful and high-quality learning process. Students are not only prepared to master academic content but are also trained to become lifelong learners who are adaptive, critical, and creative.

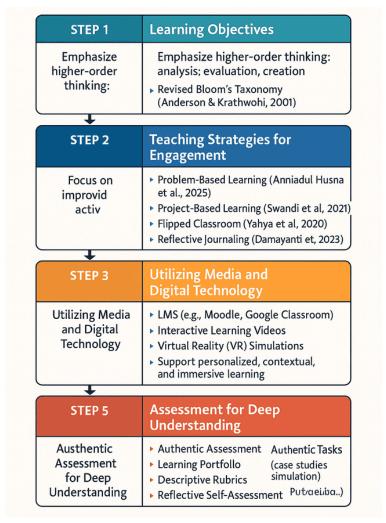


Figure 2. Implementation Steps of Deep Learning in Higher Education

## g. Implementation Strategies for Deep Learning

The implementation of deep learning strategies in higher education requires a holistic and integrated approach, encompassing curriculum design oriented towards deep understanding, the utilization of digital technology, and the strengthening of social interaction and collaboration. Furthermore, institutional policies must support innovation, provide resources for experimentation with emerging technologies, and promote student-centered learning environments that value critical thinking and real-world problem solving. The following strategies can be applied:

# 1) Curriculum Design Based on Deep Understanding through Constructive Alignment

The concept of Constructive Alignment, developed by Biggs (1996), emphasizes the importance of alignment between learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment. Research by Biggs and Tang (2007) demonstrates that this approach encourages students to adopt deeper learning strategies, as opposed to surface learning approaches. By designing a curriculum that is constructively aligned, students are motivated to build better understanding and higher-order critical thinking skills.

# 2) Implementation of the Understanding by Design (UbD) Approach

Understanding by Design (UbD), introduced by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), emphasizes the importance of begins curriculum design that identifying desired learning outcomes, followed by determining appropriate assessments, and finally planning learning activities that support the achievement of those goals. This approach has proven effective in promoting deep understanding and the transfer of knowledge to new contexts.

# 3) Integration of Digital Technology for Personalized and Adaptive Learning

The utilization of digital technologies, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive learning videos, and simulation applications, not only enhances student engagement but also opportunities to create more personalized, adaptive, and flexible learning experiences. Technology enables students to learn at their own pace, access materials anytime, and receive real-time feedback. Furthermore, the implementation of artificial intelligence in education, as explained by (Rifky, 2024) allows learning systems to recognize individual needs, preferences, and weaknesses, enabling materials and teaching strategies to be dynamically tailored. This approach has been proven to

increase intrinsic motivation, strengthen understanding, and promote the achievement of more optimal learning outcomes.

# 4) Strengthening Social and Collaborative Interaction in Learning

Deep learning does not occur solely through individual processes but also through meaningful social interactions. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning is most effective when students interact with their peers and instructors. Strategies such as group discussions, project-based learning, and peer teaching can enhance student engagement and deepen their understanding of the learning material.

# 5) Continuous and Reflective Evaluation to Support Deep Learning

Continuous and reflective evaluation plays a crucial role in supporting deep learning. Through formative assessments, authentic evaluations, and self-reflection, students can more objectively identify their strengths and weaknesses, motivating them to continuously improve their understanding and skills. Well-designed assessments, as explained by (Steven et al., 2024), not only serve as measures of academic success but also function as pedagogical tools that enhance motivation, foster metacognitive awareness, and promote meaningful and sustainable learning processes.

#### **Curriculum Design (Constructive Alignment)**

Align learning objectives, activities, and assessments to encourage deep understanding and critical thinking

- · Clear learning outcomes
- Biggs (19956):
- · Activities matching outcomes (discussions, case studies) re objectives
- Biggs & Tand (2007)

## Understanding by Design (UbD)

Use backward design: identify desired outcomes, determine appropriate assessments, plan supporting activities. Enhances knowledge transfer to new contexts

- "Desired Results
- Wiggins-& Mctighe (2005)
- Evidence (tests, portfolios)
- Putra et al. (2024); Rifky (203)
- · Learning Plan (projects, simulations)

## Integration of Digital Technology

Utilize LMS. Interactice videos, simulations, and Al to create personalized, adaptive, and flexible learning experiences

- Focused Group Discussions
- Vygotsky (1978)
- Peer Teaching Sessions
- Putra et al. (2024); RIK y (204)
- VR/AR simulations

#### Strengthening Social & Collaborative Interaction

Encourage group discussions, peer teaching, and PJBL to enrich learning through meaningful interactions, aligned with Social Constructivism Formative Oulzzes & Feedback

- Focused Group Discus sions
- Peer Teaching Sessions
- · Authentic Tasks (case studies, simulations)
- VRodrive Simulations
- Reflective Journals & Portfolios

Figure 3. Implementation Strategies for Deep Learning

#### 4. Conclusion

The implementation of deep learning strategies in higher education has become an imperative amidst the complexities of globalization and digital transformation. As a learning approach that emphasizes intellectual engagement, critical reflection, and deep conceptual understanding, deep learning significantly contributes to the development of essential 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. This strategy not only enhances students' cognitive learning outcomes but also strengthens affective social dimensions of learning, making the

educational experience more meaningful and contextual.

Optimal implementation of deep learning requires a systematically integrated curriculum design based on constructive alignment and the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework, supported by the utilization of digital technologies as facilitators of adaptive and personalized learning. Moreover, the success of this strategy highly depends on the active role of lecturers as facilitators, as well as the provision of infrastructure that supports collaborative and reflective learning processes. From national policy perspective, deep learning aligns with the spirit of Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar -

Kampus Merdeka initiative, which places students at the center of learning and emphasizes the importance of lifelong education. Thus, deep learning is not merely an alternative teaching strategy but a transformative paradigm capable holistically reshaping the processes, goals, outcomes of higher education. Consistent application of this approach is believed to produce graduates who are not only academically excellent but also adaptive, resilient, and competent in addressing the multifaceted challenges of an ever-evolving global era.

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