

The Implementation Of Deep Learning Approach In Phase D Visual Art Education

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Abstract

Visual art education in Phase D of the Merdeka Curriculum demands active student engagement across four core elements: experiencing, creating, reflecting, and impacting. However, instruction is still dominated by rigid, product-oriented surface learning, leading to artistic anxiety and highly imitative artwork. This descriptive-contextual qualitative study analyzes the implementation of the Deep Learning approach—encompassing Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning pillars—in Phase D Visual Art education at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran. Subjects included Grade VIII students and the visual art teacher. Data gathered through classroom observations, portfolio documentation, reflective interviews, and student logs were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. Findings reveal that Mindful Learning enhances focus during ideation. Meaningful Learning connects visual concepts with personal experiences and local wisdom to produce authentic creations. Meanwhile, Joyful Learning establishes a psychologically safe environment, reducing evaluation anxiety and encouraging technical experimentation. Overall, the Deep Learning approach effectively shifts the paradigm toward a holistic, contextual artistic experience while significantly enhancing the quality of students' aesthetic-visual expression.

Keywords: Deep Learning, Visual Art Education, Phase D, Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, Joyful Learning

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INTRODUCTION

Visual art education at the Junior High School (SMP) level, particularly as applied in Phase D within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, plays an exceptionally essential and strategic role in optimizing the development of students' character, critical thinking skills, empathy, and overall visual literacy. In essence, visual art education should no longer be narrowly construed merely as a supplementary subject that focuses solely on the mastery of mechanical technical skills and basic motor coordination (Pratama & Wulandari, 2023). Far beyond that, visual art education serves as a comprehensive and inclusive educational platform for students to explore imagination, process emotional sensitivity, convey abstract ideas, and reflect various life experiences and surrounding social phenomena into dynamic, meaningful, and identity-rich visual works. Within the structure and framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, the visual art learning process in Phase D is designed holistically and integratively through four continuous core elements: Experiencing, Making/Creating, Reflecting, and Impacting. These four elements systematically demand active engagement, exploratory consciousness, and full presence from students throughout their artistic process (Rachman & Wijaya, 2022). The indicator of success in visual art education at this stage is measured not merely by the neatness or physical aesthetic of the final product, but by the extent to which students independently explore tools, materials, and techniques while conveying explicit and implicit messages that are contextual and exert a positive impact on themselves and their surrounding environment (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2019). However, the ideal expectations mandated by the national curriculum guidelines frequently clash with the empirical realities occurring in the field, as observed during preliminary studies at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran (Purnomo & Lestari, 2023).

The implementation of visual art instruction continues to face real challenges, particularly regarding students' deep engagement and intrinsic motivation. Most students tend to view visual art as a routine formality rigidly oriented toward the final product (product-oriented) (Saldana, 2021). This leads to the neglect of the core essence of process-based learning (process-oriented), where understanding meaning, exploring media, and experimenting with ideas should constitute the heart of the learning experience. Consequently, this tendency triggers a highly imitative, partial, and passive learning phenomenon in the classroom. A majority of students feel content simply copying visual examples provided by the teacher or found on social media, merely to fulfill task submission requirements and secure academic grades (Santrock, 2021). This superficial learning pattern stifles students' courage to explore original ideas, causing them to fail to comprehend the fundamental principles of art, visual composition, or the emotional connection

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between their creation and the intended message. Ultimately, the produced artworks tend to be uniform, lacking vitality, and failing to reflect students' authentic personal expression (Setiawan & Rahmawati, 2023). This low level of deep engagement also exerts a domino effect on the decline of a conducive learning atmosphere and the dimming of creative interactions in the classroom. Many students demonstrate hesitancy, a lack of confidence in their artistic capabilities, and even experience anxiety in exploring visual ideas due to the fear of being judged negatively or failing to meet conventional standards. Such situations result in very low active participation, leading students to misperceive visual art as a monotonous, exhausting instructional burden with no direct relevance to their daily lives (Sugiarto, 2021). Traced further, the root cause of this fundamental issue stems from the dominant application of instructional approaches that emphasize shallow mastery of content (surface learning) (Suratno & Handayani, 2022).

These one-way, instruction-centered teaching methods fail to provide adequate reflective space for students to explore freely, engage with their emotions, or connect artistic concepts with real-life experiences. Yet, psychologically, early adolescent learners in Phase D require adaptive educational stimulation that sparks high curiosity while offering a safe and supportive learning environment to express imagination without fear of judgment. To bridge the gap between ideal conditions and field realities, an innovative, holistic educational breakthrough is needed—specifically through the Deep Learning approach (Fullan et al., 2020: 34). Deep Learning offers an educational framework emphasizing foundational concept understanding, active cognitive and emotional engagement, and continuous creative problem-solving. In visual art education, this approach translates into three mutually reinforcing holistic pillars (Suryana & Priatna, 2022): Mindful Learning (building full presence and focus across every stage of the creation process), Meaningful Learning (connecting artwork messages with students' personal experiences and life values), and Joyful Learning (establishing an enjoyable, inclusive exploration atmosphere free from anxiety) (Tishman, 2018).

The demand for educational transformation in the Merdeka Curriculum era signals the need for a paradigm shift from traditional, passive methods toward a model oriented toward depth of meaning and subjective student experiences. In practical Phase D visual art instruction, this transition requires the realization that artistic activity is not merely a space for mechanical form reproduction or technical mastery, but a reflective process involving feeling, intent, and creative power (Trianto, 2021). When students internalize Mindful Learning values, they are trained to cultivate full presence toward every visual element, medium, and creative workflow (Valanides, 2014). This presence serves as a crucial foundation to erode superficial, rushed



learning (surface learning), enabling students to develop precision, focus, and mature aesthetic sensitivity in exploring artistic ideas (Nurseto & Rahmawati, 2023). Furthermore, reinforcing Meaningful Learning acts as a key driver connecting students' inner ideations with their socio-cultural environment and daily emotional experiences. In Jimbaran, a region rich in cultural traditions and social dynamics, visual art education holds a strategic role as a symbolic articulation space for students to voice their personal perspectives (Watanabe & Kusuma, 2021). When artwork creation is infused with authentic narratives, the resulting output ceases to be a cold, imitative aesthetic object; instead, it transforms into a living, characterful visual communication tool strongly tied to its creator (Prahani et al., 2016). This meaningful approach directly encourages students to understand art as a medium for self-reflection and a tool for building contextual visual literacy with a positive impact (Latif, 2018).

Additionally, establishing an inclusive and dynamic classroom environment heavily relies on how Joyful Learning is operationalized during creative activities. The fear of rigid evaluation and artistic anxiety often act as major barriers to early adolescents' creative potential. By fostering a psychologically safe, enjoyable space that celebrates expressive diversity (safe risk-taking environment), students are empowered to take creative risks, experiment with new media and tools, and view technical mistakes as natural components of learning. Learning experiences that trigger a state of Flow—where physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement harmonize—ultimately enhance active participation, boost intrinsic motivation, and lead to sustained improvements in authentic, innovative visual expression at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2019).

Integrating Deep Learning pillars contextually in the visual art classroom urgently addresses the relevance of art education amid digital disruption and hyper-visual reality. Surrounded by rapid information flows and instant visual imagery consumed via social media, students frequently fall into passive, superficial visual consumption devoid of critical filtering or deep interpretation. Without appropriate pedagogical intervention, this instant-mindset carries into classroom artmaking, turning students into automatic copiers of popular visual trends rather than critical, original creators (Koster, 2017). Through the Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning framework, visual art instruction functions as a safe mental laboratory to train visual literacy sensitivity, trigger analytical thinking, and build cognitive resilience. Consequently, students are equipped to filter, process, and synthesize external visual stimuli into original, reasoned artwork rooted in personal awareness (Hetland et al., 2018). Furthermore, implementing this paradigm requires a fundamental shift in the visual art teacher's role within the



Merdeka Curriculum (Wida & Yulia, 2022). Teachers can no longer act as absolute instructional authorities or sole judges enforcing rigid aesthetic standards. Instead, they must transform into empathetic facilitators, scaffolders, and growth providers sensitive to each student's unique potential (Fullan et al., 2020). Applying Deep Learning demands courage from teachers to design flexible learning scenarios, formulate thought-provoking prompts that trigger deep emotional reflection, and foster a dialogic atmosphere prioritizing appreciation over right-or-wrong positioning (Yuliani & Hartono, 2023). A teacher's adaptability in articulating these three pillars becomes a pivotal variable in building deep student engagement (Winner et al., 2019). Ultimately, this facilitative shift transforms the visual art classroom at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran from a place of monotonous task completion into a vibrant, communicative, inclusive, and collaborative learning community (Eisner, 2017).

Driven by the urgency and background of these issues, this descriptive-contextual qualitative study is designed to implement, observe, and analyze the effectiveness of the Deep Learning approach in Phase D visual art education at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran. By integrating Deep Learning pillars into classroom activities, this study aims to formulate the planning and implementation of Deep Learning while analyzing changes in student responses, active participation, and visual expression quality following the intervention (Zimmerman, 2020). Academically, this research enriches theoretical literature on integrating Deep Learning pillars with Merdeka Curriculum elements (Experiencing, Creating, Reflecting, Impacting) to build student engagement and visual literacy (Hidayat & Setyawan, 2020). Practically, it offers concrete guidance for teachers transitioning from product-oriented to process-oriented instruction, empowers students to build confidence and authentic exploratory courage, and serves as a best-practice model for innovative art education in schools (Dewey, 2015).

The empirical implementation of the Deep Learning paradigm at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran successfully reconceptualized Grade VIII students' perceptions toward the subject of Visual Arts. Prior to the intervention, the majority of students viewed painting and drawing as a rigid instructional burden heavily focused on academic grades and physical product perfection (product-oriented) (Tondeur et al., 2017). However, through a series of sessions integrating Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning pillars, a significant cognitive shift occurred, leading students to connect the artistic process with liberating self-expression and emotional communication (Halimah & Sukmayadi, 2019). As highlighted by Setiawan and Rahmawati (2023) in *Jurnal Edukasi dan Seni Visual*, shifting from product-oriented metrics to process-based exploration allows learners to reclaim their creative agency. The long-standing perception that



visual arts belong exclusively to naturally gifted individuals (art talent myth) gradually dissolved, replaced by an understanding that every individual possesses aesthetic potential and unique narratives worthy of visual expression. This mental transformation became the primary key to building a strong sense of ownership over their creations (Darmuki & Hariyadi, 2021).

In connection with Phase D Learning Outcomes set by Kemendikbudristek (2024) in Capaian Pembelajaran Mata Pelajaran Seni Rupa Fase D, the Mindful Learning pillar made the most dominant contribution to strengthening the Experiencing and Creating elements. Stillness and focus exercises prior to drawing helped students refine their visual observation skills regarding object details, light and shadow, and spatial awareness (Wong et al., 2020). During the creation phase (Creating), this full presence encouraged students to execute their work with greater patience and perseverance rather than rushing toward the end product (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). As demonstrated by Pratama and Wulandari (2023) in *Jurnal Pendidikan Seni Rupa Indonesia*, integrating mindfulness into art instruction significantly enhances learners' technical concentration and sensory awareness. Technical qualities such as brushwork, line control, and color gradation showed noticeable improvements in precision compared to artworks produced prior to the implementation of the Deep Learning approach (Damayanti & Nurgiyantoro, 2019). The integration of these three deep learning pillars significantly elevated the quality of student reflections within the Reflecting element. Through daily reflection logs and open appreciation sessions, students were able not only to describe what they created but also to articulate why they chose specific visual elements and how they felt throughout the creative process. As discussed by Darmuki and Hariyadi (2021) in *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif dalam Pendidikan*, structured reflective practices enable students to develop metacognitive awareness and articulate subjective experiences effectively. Students routinely utilized accurate visual art terminology to evaluate their own work and that of their peers in a respectful, constructive manner (Budiarto & Susanti, 2021). This ability to engage in critical dialogue about the artistic process confirms that art education at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran successfully honed students' critical thinking and visual literacy.

The successful implementation of the Deep Learning approach relied heavily on the visual art teacher's shift from an instructional authority to an empathetic facilitator (scaffolder). In this study, the teacher abstained from dictatorial, one-way instructions, opting instead to pose thought-provoking questions that stimulated students' imagination and reflection. As articulated by Suryana and Priatna (2022) in *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan*, effective modern educators act primarily as learning environment designers who provide scaffolding to foster student



independence. Classroom interaction patterns evolved to become more dialogic, inclusive, and collaborative. The teacher provided tailored guidance that accommodated the learning pace and unique expressive style of each student. This shift in communication effectively created a warm learning atmosphere, bridged the psychological distance between teacher and students, and fostered deeper engagement throughout instructional hours. Overall, the findings of this study provide robust theoretical and empirical evidence that the Deep Learning framework offers a highly relevant pedagogical solution for operationalizing the Merdeka Curriculum in secondary education. As synthesized by Trianto (Miles et al., 2020) in *Mendesain Model Pembelajaran Inovatif, Progresif, dan Konsektual*, contemporary instructional models must seamlessly combine cognitive depth with meaningful contextual application to ensure long-term learning engagement (Sugiyono, 2022). The integrated model of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning not only resolved low motivation and imitative tendencies among students at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran, but also established an applicable, process-oriented (process-oriented) framework that can easily be adapted by other visual art educators. Applying this approach effectively restores visual art education to its core purpose: serving as a medium for humanization, character building, and the holistic, sustainable nurturing of student creativity (Astuti & Arifin, 2022).

METHOD STUDY

This study was designed comprehensively using a descriptive-contextual qualitative research design. The qualitative approach was purposefully selected because the fundamental nature of the problem under investigation required a holistic, in-depth, and nuanced understanding of classroom learning phenomena as they naturally occurred (*naturalistic inquiry*). Specifically, this research aimed to record, describe, and analyze the dynamics of the visual art learning process under the intervention of the Deep Learning paradigm—which is specifically grounded in three primary pillars: Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning. Within this qualitative paradigm, the focus was not directed toward testing quantitative hypotheses or mapping statistical figures; rather, it was placed on the qualitative observation of educational interactions, the evolution of students' active participation, and the deepening of visual-aesthetic expression reflected in their generated artworks. The selection of a descriptive-contextual approach enabled the researcher to present a complete and contextual picture of how the Deep Learning intervention structure was implemented by the teacher, how students responded to each learning stage, and how students' affective and cognitive engagement reflected improvements in the quality of their artistic expression within the school environment.

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Research Subjects, Site, and Objects

This study was conducted at SMP Widiatmika, strategically located in the Jimbaran area, South Kuta District, Badung Regency, Bali Province. The selection of this research site was carried out using purposive area sampling based on the school's commitment to Merdeka Curriculum innovation, the rich socio-cultural context of Jimbaran as a thematic foundation for Meaningful Learning, and the readiness of learning facilities and classroom accessibility. The primary target subjects in this qualitative research were Grade VIII students at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran during the ongoing academic year, along with the visual art teacher as the key informant. The selection of Grade VIII students was based on psychological and academic developmental considerations corresponding to Phase D Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran*). Student participants were selected inclusively to cover a diverse range of initial participation levels and varying backgrounds in artistic capability.

The execution procedure of this study was systematically designed through three continuous main stages: the pre-fieldwork stage, the intervention implementation stage, and the post-fieldwork stage. In the pre-fieldwork stage, the researcher designed observation instruments, reflective interview protocols, and a Deep Learning-based lesson module integrating the Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning pillars in collaboration with the visual art teacher. The intervention implementation stage focused on direct observation of classroom learning, recording student engagement dynamics using field notes, collecting reflection logs, and compiling visual documentation of both process and product. Subsequently, during the post-fieldwork stage, all raw data gathered were condensed, substantively analyzed, and systematically presented to formulate objective research findings.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the obtained data, this study employed data trustworthiness testing through dual triangulation: source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was performed by comparing and cross-checking information across multiple stakeholders, specifically comparing the researcher's observations, interview transcripts from the visual art teacher, and students' honest perceptions recorded in their self-reflection logs. Meanwhile, technique triangulation was executed by cross-referencing data obtained from different methods, such as matching student enthusiasm levels on observation checklists with visual evidence of artwork development in student portfolios. This approach ensured that every conclusion drawn rested upon a solid, valid, and empirically tested foundation (Perdani & Andayani, 2021).

The research objects were categorized into two main aspects: material objects (the



implementation process of Grade VIII visual art instruction, teacher-student interactions, and visual artwork portfolios) and formal objects (the dynamics of implementing Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning pillars, alongside the impact on student engagement and visual expression quality).

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

To ensure the acquisition of comprehensive, valid, and context-rich data, collection was conducted through a combination of three primary techniques (data collection technique triangulation):

1. **Structured Observation (Checklist & Field Notes):** Passive participatory direct observation utilizing structured checklists and field notes to capture students' physical and mental indicators during the learning process.
2. **Photographic Archive and Visual Artwork Portfolio Documentation:** Systematically recording the creative process chain (*Process Archive*), learning gestures/behaviors, and final product photography (*Gallery of Student Artworks*) (Sugiarto, 2021: 88).
3. **Reflective Interviews and Student Reflection Logs:** In-depth semi-structured interviews with the teacher and student representatives, combined with student reflection log entries completed at the end of each session.

In this qualitative research, the researcher acted as the primary instrument (*key instrument* or *human instrument*) directly involved in the entire process from data collection to field analysis. The researcher's presence at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran extended beyond that of a passive observer; the researcher served as a co-designer of the Deep Learning instructional strategy alongside the visual art teacher and as a primary data collector who actively observed classroom dynamics, responded to students' emotional reactions, and analyzed the resulting visual works. Positioned as a key instrument, the researcher could interpret meaning with flexibility, sensitivity, and empathetic understanding regarding every behavioral shift, affective expression, and artistic obstacle experienced by students throughout the artistic process. To safeguard the human rights, privacy, and psychological comfort of all participants during research activities, this study strictly adhered to educational research ethics principles. Prior to initiating the intervention, official administrative permission was secured from the school authority, and informed consent forms were distributed to the teacher and parents/guardians of Grade VIII students to ensure voluntary participation without coercion. Furthermore, principles of anonymity and confidentiality were strictly enforced by anonymizing students' real identities in



interview transcripts, reflection logs, and published artwork documentation, ensuring that all data collected were utilized exclusively for academic research development.

Table 1. Operational Matrix for Research Data Collection

No	Focus of Data & Research Indicators	Deep Learning Pillar	Data Collection Technique	Instruments & Tools
1	Focus of attention, calmness during idea observation, and full presence in planning artwork visualization	Mindful Learning	Structured Classroom Observation & Student Self-Reflection	Observation Checklist Form & Student Reflection Log Form
2	Depth of ideas, reliability of narrative/symbolism in artwork, and connection of ideas to local/personal context	Meaningful Learning	Portfolio Documentation & Reflective In-Depth Interview	Visual Content Analysis Guide & Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
3	Learning enthusiasm, active engagement, and courage to explore techniques/media without fear of failure	Joyful Learning	Field Observation & Process Photo/Video Documentation	Field Notes Form & Activity Photo Documentation Form
4	Final visual expression quality (mastery of line, shape, color, composition, and idea originality)	Learning Outcomes (Phase D)	Student Visual Artwork Gallery Documentation	Visual Art Portfolio Evaluation Rubric

The data analysis process in this qualitative study adopted the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2020: 112). Analysis was conducted continuously through the following stages: **Data Condensation**, involving the simplification and abstraction of field notes, interview transcripts, and photographic documentation; **Data Display**, presented as a structured descriptive narrative integrated with thematic matrices and artwork galleries;



Conclusion Drawing and Verification; and Data Trustworthiness Testing utilizing Source Triangulation and Technique Triangulation (Sugiyono, 2022: 240)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Phase D Visual Art education at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran was executed through the integration of three core pillars (*Mindful, Meaningful, Joyful*) into lesson modules based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Field observations indicated a significant shift in student behavior and learning engagement from the pre-intervention to the post-intervention state. The evaluation of student engagement completeness and active participation prior to the intervention (pretest) is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Pretest Learning Outcome Completeness

Category	Range	Pretest Frequency	Percentage (%)
Completed	63 – 100	8	29,6 %
Incomplete	0 – 62	19	70,4 %
Total		27	100%

Initial data in Table 2 demonstrates that prior to applying the Deep Learning approach, only 8 students (29.6%) achieved the criteria for complete engagement and participation, whereas 19 students (70.4%) fell into the incomplete category due to a surface learning pattern that leaned toward passive and imitative behaviors. The pretest data in Table 2 reveals that out of a total of 27 students, only 8 students (29.6%) reached the completed category in terms of active participation and creative engagement. A total of 19 students (70.4%) were categorized as incomplete (Silvester et al., 2024). This was primarily caused by the students' perception of Visual Arts as a mere instructional formality to fulfill basic course requirements (Papakostas, 2025).

The dynamics of student responses and affective shifts during the intervention period showed a marked improvement within the *Mindful Learning* pillar. Before the intervention, students tended to rush through their initial sketches without considering composition and proportion due to an urge to complete the assignment quickly (*product-oriented*). After introducing mindful observation exercises at the beginning of each session, students began

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allocating sufficient time to observe visual details, feel the media's texture, and deliberately plan color-mixing techniques. The psychological calm established through mindfulness proved effective in reducing artistic anxiety (*art anxiety*), enabling students to maintain focus and appreciate every stage of their exploratory creative process.

The development of visual idea uniqueness and originality among students served as strong evidence supporting the efficacy of the *Meaningful Learning* pillar. During artwork creation, students were encouraged to draw upon personal emotional memories and connect them with the socio-cultural landscape of the Jimbaran area. Portfolio analysis revealed a clear transition: students' artworks—which were initially imitative and uniform due to blindly copying visual trends from social media—evolved into creations rich in authentic symbolic narratives. Highlighting local themes combined with personal emotional expression demonstrated that visual art education had shifted from a mechanical technical exercise into a vital, identity-rich visual communication medium (Tzafilkou et al., 2023).

The successful resolution of low classroom participation was also directly driven by the operationalization of the *Joyful Learning* pillar. The researcher and the teacher designed an inclusive, communicative learning environment that offered broad tolerance for technical mistakes during experimentation (*safe risk-taking environment*). Eliminating the intimidation of rigid evaluation standards fostered students' self-confidence and enthusiasm to attempt new media and tool combinations without fear of being judged incorrectly. This enjoyable classroom atmosphere cultivated a state of *Flow*, wherein full engagement, joy, and curiosity harmonized seamlessly, ultimately sustaining improvements in the aesthetic quality of their generated visual works (Al-Gerafi et al., 2024).

The *Mindful Learning* pillar provides a solid psychological foundation for the *Experiencing* element. Full presence while handling media, observing textures, and planning initial brushstrokes helps students release cognitive pressure. This finding reinforces the study by Fullan et al. (2020: 45), which asserts that deep learning requires full conscious engagement to enable learners to process information deeply and continuously. In visual art education, mindfulness proves to be an effective mechanism for breaking imitative learning habits that routinely stifle artwork originality.

Substantively, the *Meaningful Learning* pillar successfully transforms student artworks from mere imitative physical forms into living symbolic communication channels. When students link artistic ideas with personal experiences and the local social context of Jimbaran, an alignment occurs between emotional ideation and technical skills. This aligns with findings by Pratama & Wulandari (2023: 120), who argue that contextual, meaning-based art instruction significantly



enhances emotional engagement and student courage in expressing personal narratives. This connection reinforces both the *Creating* and *Reflecting* elements within Phase D of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Comparatively, the novelty of this research lies in its conceptual modeling, which holistically integrates the three Deep Learning pillars (*Mindful, Meaningful, Joyful*) across the four core learning elements of Phase D Visual Arts in the Merdeka Curriculum. Unlike previous studies that generally examined deep learning or process-based learning in isolation, these findings demonstrate that a harmonious synthesis of full awareness, depth of meaning, and creative joy exerts a tangible, lasting impact (*Impacting*) on character building, self-confidence, and sustained improvements in the aesthetic quality of student artworks.

DISCUSSION

This discussion section provides substantive interpretation of the analytical results and compares them with prior empirical findings grounded in relevant, recent, and primary literature. The successful application of the Deep Learning approach at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran demonstrates that shifting the instructional paradigm from product-oriented to process-oriented effectively alleviates artistic anxiety among early adolescents (Lin & Chang, 2023).

Research findings indicate that applying the *Mindful Learning* pillar during the initial stages of art instruction successfully altered students' mindsets from superficial, instant-oriented learning (*surface learning*) toward complete immersion in the creative process (*process-oriented*). Through simple guided mindfulness sessions and step-by-step object observation prior to artmaking, Grade VIII students at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran exhibited heightened mental presence and composure when exploring lines, forms, and textures. Field observations recorded a sharp drop in the habit of rushing through tasks merely to fulfill minimum course obligations. Conversely, cultivating full awareness fostered precision, cognitive endurance, and aesthetic sensitivity in understanding tool and material characteristics. This proves that *Mindful Learning* conditioning serves as an effective foundation for eroding artistic anxiety (*art anxiety*) and guiding students to consciously enjoy every detail of visual experimentation (Risan, 2022).

In the *Meaningful Learning* dimension, guiding ideation to connect directly with personal stories, emotions, and the socio-cultural environment of Jimbaran successfully transformed students' artworks from uniform, derivative pieces into creations rich in identity and authentic symbolism. Students no longer relied on popular social media imagery for ideas; instead, they boldly drew upon personal memories, social phenomena around the school, and individual



emotional expressions to construct visual compositions. Reflective dialogues during initial sketching sessions and reflection log entries revealed how students could articulate the underlying narratives behind their choices of colors and formal art elements. This confirms that when visual art education functions as a meaningful channel for self-articulation, student artworks evolve into living symbolic communication tools—laden with message depth and marked by strong emotional engagement between the creator and the creation.

The implementation of the *Joyful Learning* pillar served as a primary catalyst in establishing an inclusive, psychologically safe classroom climate (*safe risk-taking environment*) that sparked students' intrinsic motivation. Conditioning a learning environment free from rigid evaluative pressure encouraged students to boldly experiment with diverse media, color-mixing techniques, and non-conventional forms without fear of being judged wrong. Classroom observations recorded the emergence of a *Flow* state—a psychological condition where students experienced peak focus and enjoyment during artmaking, losing track of time and remaining actively involved throughout the period. A communicative and mutually appreciative peer environment effectively dissolved passivity and hesitation. This underscores that joy in art learning is essential for unlocking creative potential, sparking curiosity, and boosting students' artistic self-efficacy.

Holistically, integrating all three Deep Learning pillars (*Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning*) demonstrated a significant positive impact on improving visual expression quality and fulfilling Phase D Visual Art learning outcomes (encompassing *Experiencing, Creating, Reflecting, and Impacting*). Portfolio evaluations showed clear progress in structural composition, marked by more dynamic visual arrangements, courageous color play, and message originality. Beyond physical artwork quality, this intervention fostered critical thinking, independence, and creative character among students. Learners were empowered not only to produce aesthetic creations, but also to reflect critically on their creative journeys and experience a positive personal impact (*Impacting*) through heightened self-confidence and inner satisfaction over the authentic artworks they produced at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran (Hamilton et al., 2021).

These findings align with Csikszentmihalyi's Flow theory and the Deep Learning framework developed by Fullan et al. (Irdalisa et al., 2022) which posit that when learning environments are supportive and relevant to students' lived experiences (*Meaningful*), mental engagement reaches optimal levels. The fundamental difference between these findings and prior research lies in the comprehensive integration of *Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning* pillars directly into the four core learning outcome elements of the Merdeka Curriculum (*Experiencing, Creating, Reflecting, Impacting*). This synthesis not only increases quantitative student engagement metrics,



but also transforms the aesthetic quality of visual artworks to become more authentic, expressive, and vital

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach through the integrated pillars of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning has proven to be highly effective in transforming Phase D visual art education at SMP Widiatmika Jimbaran from a superficial, product-oriented routine into a deeply engaging and process-oriented experience. By cultivating full cognitive presence during the initial ideation stage, grounding creative expression in the authentic socio-cultural context of Jimbaran and personal narratives, and fostering a psychologically safe, risk-tolerant classroom atmosphere, this instructional model successfully alleviates early adolescent artistic anxiety while dismantling imitative surface learning habits. These combined interventions lead to a substantial increase in active student participation, emotional connection, and self-efficacy, which directly translate into enhanced visual expression quality, dynamic compositional mastery, and original aesthetic communication across the Experiencing, Creating, Reflecting, and Impacting elements of the Merdeka Curriculum. Ultimately, this conceptual synthesis provides a valuable, sustainable framework for art educators to nurture independent, critical, and authentic creative character in secondary school students.

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