

IN-DEPTH LEARNING EVALUATION IN PREPARING THE GOLDEN GENERATION OF 2045 THROUGH CHARACTER EDUCATION

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-01-2026

Revised : 07-02-2026

Accepted : 25-05-2026

KEYWORDS

in-depth learning;
character education;
golden generation;

ABSTRACT

Deep learning as an important framework for cultivating a resilient and character-driven golden generation. This study aims to evaluate the role of deep learning pedagogy in preparing the Golden Generation of 2045 through character education. The method used was a qualitative case study at Sekaran Public Elementary School with seven class teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire on teachers' perceptions of seven character values and participatory observation during learning. The questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively quantitatively using percentage techniques, while observation data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The results showed that all character values reached a percentage above 80%, with details of democracy 88%, discipline 86%, honesty 85%, creativity 83%, tolerance 82%, and responsibility 81%. The synergistic application of the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning can internalize character while strengthening students' social-emotional development. These findings confirm that deep learning pedagogy is an effective and prospective pedagogical strategy in shaping a resilient, character-driven, and globally competitive generation towards Golden Indonesia 2045.

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INTRODUCTION

The vision of Golden Indonesia 2045 calls for the birth of a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also resilient, with strong character, and globally competitive. However, this ideal still clashes with the reality of Indonesia's lagging digital education readiness, creating a significant gap between the demands of 21st-century competencies and conditions on the ground. To bridge this gap, the presence of pedagogical innovation is crucial, one of which is through the concept of deep learning pedagogy.

Indonesia has a grand vision to realize the Golden Generation of 2045, a generation that is resilient, has strong character, and is globally competitive, coinciding with the centenary of Indonesian independence. This goal can be achieved through character building, mental readiness, and the development of children as the nation's future leaders (Pohan & Zainun, 2025).

Indonesia's digital readiness index still lags behind other ASEAN countries (Setyawan & Citrawati, 2023),

According to a report, only 34% of elementary schools in Indonesia have adequate access to digital devices, and 68% of teachers have not been trained in technology integration for learning (Ardiansyah, 2023). This situation has created a significant gap between the demands of 21st-century competencies and the reality on the ground. The importance of education in shaping a quality generation and enhancing the nation's intelligence cannot be ignored.

Education plays a role in developing individuals as a whole by taking into account their interests, talents, and needs, so they can grow into compassionate individuals with strong character (Wasliman, 2023). Education is not just about providing information, but also about self-development, positive attitudes, and constructive behavior (Fitriani & Amalia, 2023). Similarly, Maisaroh & Untari (2024), expressed that education also shapes individual character, fostering a strong work ethic.

Education is directed at creating a dynamic learning process and environment, with a focus on developing students' personal potential so that they possess spirituality, morality, intelligence, personality, and skills relevant to individuals, society, the nation, and the state. Therefore, character education is crucial and must be instilled from an early age through both formal and non-formal educational institutions (Fattah et al., 2025). Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a very strategic role in producing a generation that possesses not only intellectual intelligence but also emotional and social intelligence (Drigas et al., 2023).

Schools, as centers of transformation, have a broader role than simply imparting scientific knowledge to students. Schools should be places where students not only acquire knowledge but also develop the character and skills needed to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world (Damaševičius & Sidekerskienė, 2024). The educational process students undergo in schools will shape them into individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess a sense of social responsibility, leadership, and the ability to collaborate in various situations (Mustakim et al., 2024).

The formation of a golden generation is crucial, especially for Indonesia, which boasts significant potential in its productive-age population (Rahmawati, 2025). A quality generation will be the key to national progress, bringing positive change across various sectors of life. The golden generation refers to a group of individuals expected to become future leaders of the nation and state. This concept aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's view of education as a process of shaping children's character and intelligence. Character education is a crucial component in enhancing national competitiveness, and with a strong golden generation, it is hoped that the nation and state can achieve greater progress (Meilia Rosani et al., 2025).

The Golden Indonesia 2045 vision sets the direction for higher education development to support sustainable economic growth and innovation in Indonesia (Erita et al., 2025). Schools are expected to function not only as institutions for acquiring theoretical knowledge but also as learning centers capable of producing graduates who are ready to face contemporary challenges (Mahardhani et al., 2023). Therefore, schools must play an active role in shaping students' character to become superior, creative, and innovative individuals (Siregar et al., 2025). This requires strengthening in-depth learning to adapt to rapid technological changes and global dynamics (Zou et al., 2025).

The new paradigm promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendiknas, 2010) is based on three main principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. Deep learning pedagogy is a holistic approach that encourages students to think critically and understand the material in depth, rather than simply memorizing. Research shows that the simultaneous integration of these three pillars can improve academic performance while developing students' character, such as improving self-regulation and social competence (Tri Miftakhul Jannah et al., 2026).

The principle of enjoyment emphasizes the importance of creating a pleasant learning environment (Arbabi et al., 2025). When students feel happy and engaged in the learning process, they are more likely to be motivated to actively participate. Research (Maceiras et al., 2025) suggests that enjoyable learning experiences can improve information retention and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the principle of meaningfulness emphasizes the importance of connecting learning material to life experiences and contexts (Bastiaansen & Duerden, 2025). Meaningful learning helps students understand the relevance of the material.

The principle of mindfulness focuses on awareness and reflection (Chems-Maarif et al., 2025). Mindfulness in

education can improve focus, concentration, and stress management. Teachers need to build intensive interactions and positive relationships with students, provide full respect, and recognize individual differences in thinking and learning styles (Zulkarnain, 2021). The implementation of immersive learning encourages the acquisition of 21st-century learning skills (Lu, 2025), while simultaneously fostering the character and mental resilience of a generation expected to be globally competitive (Kucuksuleymanoglu, 2024).

These three conceptual pillars are highly relevant to realizing the aspiration of producing a golden generation. Through mindful learning, the younger generation is shaped into individuals who are self-aware, respect diversity, and able to collaborate effectively (Musa & Enggarsyah, 2025). Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of character education in shaping a morally grounded and competitive generation, but most still focus on conventional, religious, or cultural approaches (Al-Nahdi & Li, 2025). According to Huang et al., (2025) highlighting that the synergy between the three pillars in in-depth learning forms the basis for developing adaptive, character-strong, and globally competitive human resources. Similarly, (Hernawati et al., 2025) show that character education plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses integrity, responsibility, and empathy. Other studies, such as those conducted by (Darwati et al., 2025) show that integrating character education into learning forms the Golden Generation of Indonesia 2045 in improving social and emotional skills and supporting balanced development across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

However, studies specifically analyzing the synergy between deep learning pedagogy and character education within the framework of the Golden Generation 2045 are still very limited. Most existing studies tend to focus on conventional, religious, or culturally specific approaches to character formation, such as the integration of Sundanese values into deep learning models (Sutisna et al., 2025). Meanwhile, other research on educational trends only indicates a shift toward humanistic pedagogy, without examining the validity of this model on a broader scale and contextualized to national needs (Rohmah et al., 2026).

Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the role of deep learning pedagogy in preparing the Golden Generation 2045 by strengthening character education. By addressing this gap, the research is expected to provide new insights for the formulation of educational policies and practices that are more responsive to future challenges.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative case study approach to in-depth evaluate the role of deep learning pedagogy in preparing the Golden Generation of 2045 through character education. The qualitative case study approach was chosen because it allows for a natural exploration of contemporary phenomena in a real educational context, as recommended by Kandau et al., (2024) in their study on improving teacher quality in Indonesia. The study was conducted at Sekaran Public Elementary School with seven classroom teachers selected through a purposive sampling technique. The selection criteria were teachers who have implemented the principles of deep learning pedagogy (mindful, meaningful, joyful) in their teaching practice. The use of purposive sampling in qualitative research allows researchers to select participants who are rich in information and relevant to the study's focus, as explained by (Goodwin et al., 2024) who adopted a similar technique to select respondents in their qualitative study.

Data were collected through two complementary primary instruments. First, a closed-ended questionnaire was developed to measure teachers' perceptions of the internalization of seven character values (honesty, discipline, politeness, responsibility, cooperation, self-confidence, and creativity) in the context of deep learning pedagogy. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items with a Likert scale of 1–5. The instrument's content validity was achieved through validation by two character education experts, referring to the procedures for developing expert-validated character education-based self-assessment instruments, as conducted by Sultoni et al., (2019) in her study, which used the Miles and Huberman model and expert validity testing. The use of Likert scales in the context of elementary education has been proven valid and reliable, as reviewed by Mellor and Moore (2014) who examined elementary school children's abilities using various Likert response formats. Second, participant observation was conducted to directly observe the implementation of deep learning pedagogy and the emergence of students' natural character behaviors in the classroom. Participatory observation has been widely used in character education research in Indonesian elementary

schools, such as that conducted by Astuti & Thohir (2024), in their study integrating traditional games to strengthen character education in elementary schools, as well as by Ardiansyah (2023), in a study of the implementation of Pancasila Student character education in elementary schools that combined participatory observation with in-depth interviews and document analysis.

Data analysis was conducted in an integrated manner according to the type of data obtained. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively quantitatively using percentage techniques to map the achievement of each character value based on teacher perceptions. Meanwhile, data from participant observations were analyzed qualitatively following the interactive model of Miles et al., (2014), which includes three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This interactive analysis model has been widely applied in character education research in Indonesia, including by Pratama et al., (2024) in a study of independent character education at Gunungsaren Public Elementary School, and by (Azhura & Saleh, 2025) in a study of character education practices in English teaching, which also used the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) with stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The integration of these two types of analysis is intended to obtain a comprehensive picture of the extent to which deep learning pedagogy plays a role in strengthening character education in elementary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RESULTS

The implementation of deep learning pedagogy at Sekaran Public Elementary School is carried out through three principles of in-depth learning: meaningful learning, joyful learning, and mindful learning, which simultaneously serve as a vehicle for internalizing seven character values. Based on questionnaire data and participant observation, an overview of the achievement of each character is obtained, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of Implementation of Character Values in In-depth Learning

In-depth Learning	Components	Indicators	Percentage Characte
Mengaplikasikan	Honesty	Educating children to not lie, to be trustworthy, and not to betray.	85%
	Discipline	Directing a habit/characteristic that always calls for the truth, telling the actual facts Implementing the habit of not being lazy in studying to students Modeling pleasant behavior Order to complete tasks on time	86%
	Tolerance	Model good behavior and language Applying respect and obedience Implementing civilized attitudes and understanding customs	82%
	Responsibility	Instilling values of trust in students Instill the ability to make rational and moral decisions	81%
	Democracy	Giving advice and understanding that he does not live alone, but needs other people Implementing mutual assistance between students Implementing mutual cooperation	88%
	Creativity	Encourage students to have original thinking Emphasizes students to have new ideas	83%

Guiding in producing innovative, creative and useful
work

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

DISCUSSIONS

There are two approaches to character education: the essential approach and the practical method. The practical method focuses on teaching desired behaviors to students, while the essential approach aims to build a strong personality. Character education encompasses eighteen characteristics, including religiousness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love of the homeland, appreciation of achievement, friendliness or communication, love of peace, love of reading, environmental awareness, social awareness, and responsibility (Simamora, 2025). Educators can use these characteristics as a guide in building student character (Baginda, 2022). However, this study focused on seven characters: honesty, discipline, responsibility, creativity, tolerance, and democracy. The following table shows the percentage of character values applied in in-depth learning. The data shows that the seven character values reached a percentage above 80%, indicating that the deep learning pedagogy implemented by teachers consistently had a positive impact on the formation of students' character. To build on these descriptive findings, the following discussion examines the underlying synergies that make deep learning pedagogy effective, first by analyzing how the three pillars collectively foster character development, then by exploring the specific role of mindful learning in internalizing tolerance and responsibility, and finally by considering the broader implications for preparing the Golden Generation of 2045.

Synergy of Deep Learning Pedagogy and Character Education

Deep learning pedagogy not only encourages cognitive engagement but also catalyzes students' social-emotional development. This is evident in the highest democratic character achievement (88%), where, through the principle of joyful learning, students experience enjoyable collaborative interactions, while meaningful learning emphasizes the relevance of cooperation as a real necessity in life. Teachers consistently advise students that they live in mutual need, embracing mutual assistance and reciprocal cooperation. This strategy reinforces previous findings that deep learning that integrates local character values encourages reflective and applicable character internalization, so that character education is not separated from academic learning.

The second component, related to discipline, achieved a percentage of 86%. This is demonstrated by teachers

starting to encourage students to not be lazy in studying, modeling pleasant behavior, and instructing them to complete assignments on time. Teachers strive to encourage students to complete assignments on time so they become responsible and active citizens (Kyza & Georgiou, 2025). The implementation of clear and consistent rules is also part of efforts to improve discipline in order to prepare the golden generation of 2045. When students know that there are clear consequences for every violation, they will be more careful in their actions, which will support the formation of discipline (Rahmat et al., 2025).

Discipline (86%) and honesty (85%) indicate that mindful learning principles play a significant role in shaping students' self-awareness. Through mindfulness, students are trained to complete assignments on time and to be honest. This finding is consistent with research showing that a mindful, meaningful, and joyful deep learning approach effectively forms positive habits such as healthy living and good social behavior. The implementation of clear and consistent classroom rules also strengthens discipline; when students understand the consequences of violations, they are more cautious in their actions.

Creativity (83%) indicates that joyful and meaningful learning create space for students to explore and produce original work. Teachers actively encourage students to think critically through problem-solving, questioning, and discussion. This confirms that creativity is the result of deep, reflective, and collaborative thinking, not simply spontaneous talent.

The Role of Mindful Learning in Internalizing the Characters of Tolerance and Responsibility

Tolerance (82%) and responsibility (81%) demonstrate a close relationship with the principles of mindful

learning. Through mindfulness exercises, students are encouraged to reflect on their actions toward others. Teachers model polite language and respect, and guide students to respect differences of opinion. These findings support studies that suggest that integrating local wisdom values into a deep learning framework can increase social sensitivity and tolerance in elementary schools.

The 81% level of responsibility indicates that deep learning pedagogy is capable of fostering students' moral independence. However, observations revealed that some students were still not optimal in carrying out their responsibilities, such as chatting while the teacher was explaining. This suggests that internalizing the character of responsibility requires a continuous process and consistent reinforcement. Recent studies confirm that developing deep learning-based teaching materials integrated with character values can improve cognitive mastery and holistic character formation, while also providing an alternative to traditional teaching that separates academic and moral aspects.

Implications for the Golden Generation of 2045

The results of this study confirm that deep learning pedagogy is a promising approach to preparing the Golden Generation of 2045. The synergy of the three principles—mindful, meaningful, and joyful—creates a learning ecosystem that not only hones critical thinking skills but also fosters adaptive, collaborative, and high-integrity character.

The results of the six character components in in-depth learning synergize to form the foundation for developing human resources with strong character. Character education plays a crucial role in supporting students' socio-emotional development, as its goal is to cultivate individuals who are moral, intelligent, rational, innovative, hardworking, optimistic, self-confident, and patriotic (Jayuni et al., 2022). The task of educators at all levels of education is not limited to knowledge alone, but is a comprehensive task in which socio-emotional development is one of the points that must be considered in preparing the golden generation of 2045.

Research by (Hamdani et al., 2022; Simanjuntak, 2019; Yulianti, 2021) emphasizes that character education is a key factor in building Indonesia's golden generation in 2045. (Dewi et al., 2025) highlights the importance of utilizing online multimedia to cultivate humanistic and character-based educators, but this is still limited to the use of digital technology. Based on the results of research (Zainuddin et al., 2025) it was found that character education is very necessary to form the next generation of the nation with superior quality by fostering a responsible attitude in facing the era of globalization. According to Hasbi & Ine Indiyani (2025), it is hoped that instilling character education values can improve the quality of education and form a generation that has a strong personal character and loves the nation.

Collaboration between teachers, schools, and the community remains a key factor in the successful implementation of deep learning pedagogy. Schools need to ensure that character-building programs are not implemented in isolation but are integrated into every learning process. Thus, deep learning pedagogy not only meets the demands of 21st-century competencies but also provides a solid foundation for the emergence of a resilient, character-driven, and globally competitive generation by 2045.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the application of deep learning pedagogy through the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning simultaneously plays a significant role in internalizing seven main character values in Sekaran Public Elementary School students. The percentage achievement of all characters above 80% indicates that this approach creates a learning ecosystem that not only encourages cognitive engagement but also strengthens students' social-emotional development. The democratic character achieved the highest achievement (88%) because it is supported by fun and contextual collaborative interactions, while the responsibility character (81%) still requires further strengthening considering that some students have not fully demonstrated consistent behavior. Overall, the integration of deep learning pedagogy and character education has proven relevant as a promising pedagogical strategy in preparing the Golden Generation of 2045 with strong, adaptive, and globally competitive characters.

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