

Teachers' Perceptions of Deep Learning in History Education

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the tendency for history instruction in schools to be dominated by conventional, rote-memorization-based methods, which can limit students' active engagement, motivation, and critical thinking skills. The study aims to describe teachers' perceptions of the deep learning approach in history instruction and to identify the obstacles they face in implementing this approach at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed. The research informants consisted of three history teachers. Data were collected through checklist-based observation, interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed through the stages of data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that teachers hold a highly positive perception of deep learning as a student-centered approach that emphasizes in-depth conceptual understanding, specifically learning that is mindful, meaningful, and joyful. This approach has proven effective in enhancing students' active engagement, motivation, and critical thinking skills by connecting past historical events with real-life contexts. However, implementation in the field faces several obstacles, including: (1) the need for students to adapt, as they are accustomed to passive learning methods; (2) the diversity of students' socioeconomic backgrounds and family geographical locations; (3) limited technological facilities, such as an insufficient number of projectors; and (4) limited internet access and students' ability to afford data packages. In conclusion, the deep learning approach has proven capable of increasing students' active engagement in learning; however, optimizing its implementation requires improvements in school facilities and infrastructure, stronger parental support, and the ongoing development of teacher creativity.

Keywords: Teacher Perception, Deep Learning, History Education

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INTRODUCTION

History is a compulsory subject at the Senior High School (SMA) level and forms an inseparable part of history education as a whole (Sinunukan et al., 2021). Learning history is an important part of education because it not only provides knowledge about past events but also helps students develop historical awareness, critical thinking skills, and an understanding of changes in social life. The learning process involves several stages, including the reception, processing, and comprehension of information, as well as its subsequent application (Abdurahman et al., 2024). However, in practice, history learning is still frequently associated with rote memorization of facts, dates, and names. This tendency reflects what Marton & Säljö (1976) originally described as a surface approach to learning, in which students focus on reproducing information rather than constructing meaning from it; such a condition can cause students to become passive and their understanding of historical material to remain superficial. Therefore, the deep learning approach emphasizes a deeper and more applicable understanding of the material being studied, rather than merely memorizing or recalling



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information ([Bahtiar & Putra, 2025](#)).

Deep learning is a learning approach that focuses on comprehensive conceptual understanding, in-depth information processing, and the application of knowledge in new situations ([Khasanah et al., 2025](#)). This orientation is consistent with [Biggs' \(1999\)](#) classic distinction between surface and deep approaches to learning, in which a deep approach is characterized by an intention to understand, to relate new ideas to previous knowledge, and to use evidence critically, rather than simply reproducing content for assessment purposes. In the Indonesian context, deep learning emphasizes student engagement through three main principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. Mindful learning emphasizes awareness in the learning process, exploration, and intellectual engagement; meaningful learning emphasizes project-based learning that is relevant to students' lives; while joyful learning creates a learning atmosphere that is enjoyable, humane, and non-pressuring ([Nurjanah, 2025](#)). [Nafi'ah & Faruq \(2025\)](#) further conceptualize these three principles as an integrated framework in which mindfulness, meaningfulness, and joy reinforce one another to produce learning experiences that are simultaneously reflective, relevant, and emotionally engaging, rather than functioning as three separate or optional components.

This approach is in line with constructivist theory, which views students as active participants in constructing knowledge while teachers act as facilitators. Constructivism emphasizes the importance of students constructing knowledge based on their previous learning experiences ([Siska & Sulkaisi, 2024](#)), a process that [Vygotsky \(1978\)](#) situates within social interaction, arguing that higher-order thinking develops first through guided collaboration with more knowledgeable others before being internalized independently by the learner. Within this framework, the teacher's role as facilitator becomes central, since it is the teacher who scaffolds students toward increasingly independent historical reasoning. Teachers' perceptions are therefore important because teachers are the main implementers who translate a learning approach into classroom activities. According to Walgito, perception can be viewed through three indicators: stimulus absorption, understanding or comprehension, and assessment or evaluation ([Malaka, 2024](#)). These three indicators were used in this study to examine how teachers receive, understand, and evaluate the implementation of deep learning in history education. Learning activities require active learning, participation, and interactive communication between teachers and students in order to achieve success in the learning process ([Meldawati, 2023](#)).

The implementation of the deep learning approach is inseparable from various challenges. Teachers, as the main implementers of learning, play an important role in determining the success of the deep learning approach. Teachers' perceptions of the concept of deep learning, their understanding of its implementation strategies, and their readiness to transform learning practices are factors that greatly determine the course of the learning process. In addition, there are various obstacles faced, such as limited time, lack of training, limited learning resources, and pressure from a dense curriculum. [Baharuddin & Burhan \(2025\)](#) similarly note that curriculum reform in Indonesia tends to place heavy demands on teachers to adapt their pedagogical practices quickly, often without commensurate support in the form of training, facilities, or time, a gap that is generally more pronounced in schools located outside major urban centers.

Previous studies have shown that teachers hold positive perceptions of the deep

learning approach in history education and recognize its potential to improve students' conceptual understanding and critical thinking skills ([Bahtiar & Putra, 2025](#)). Research on teacher readiness also indicates that the deep learning approach can be implemented through discussions, case studies, and reflective activities. However, much of this existing research has been conducted in urban or well-resourced school settings, leaving the perceptions and challenges of teachers in more remote, geographically dispersed regions comparatively underexplored. This study addresses that gap by specifically describing teachers' perceptions and the obstacles to implementing deep learning in history education at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora, a school located in the Mentawai Islands Regency.

Based on this background, the objectives of this study are : (1) describe teachers' perceptions of deep learning in history education at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora; and (2) identify the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing deep learning in history education.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting, with the researcher acting as the primary instrument. Specifically, this descriptive qualitative study aims to (1) describe teachers' perceptions regarding deep learning in history instruction at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora; and (2) identify the obstacles teachers face in implementing deep learning in history lessons. The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora, located at Jalan Raya Tuapeijat KM 7, North Sipora District, Mentawai Islands Regency. The research took place during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year.

The research informants were individuals who provided information regarding the situation and conditions of the research site; specifically, history teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora served as sources of relevant information and data concerning the issues under study. Data collection techniques included checklist-based observation, interviews, and documentation. Checklist-based observations were conducted directly during the learning process to ensure consistency in observing various aspects, such as teacher activities related to deep learning in history instruction. Interviews were conducted with three history teachers to gather information on their perceptions and the challenges they faced regarding deep learning in history lessons. Documentation, in the form of photographs and videos, was used as supporting data.

Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, comprising data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing ([Huberman, 2024](#)). Data collection was conducted continuously in a natural setting throughout the study. The collected data were then reduced by selecting information relevant to the research focus and subsequently presented in a narrative format, thereby facilitating the identification of patterns and relationships among various data points. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on this analysis, supported by findings from the various data sources obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that history teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora hold highly positive perceptions of deep learning. This is evident from interviews with the history teachers; for instance, Ms. BM noted that deep learning is a learner-centered approach capable

of creating learning experiences that are meaningful, mindful, and joyful. Furthermore, Ms. P stated that deep learning makes history lessons more meaningful, relevant, and contextual, as students are not merely required to memorize information but are also encouraged to understand, apply, and connect the material to real-life situations. Teachers support the implementation of this approach because they consider it capable of making students more active, helping them understand material more deeply, think critically, and connect historical material with everyday life.

Teachers' Perceptions of Deep Learning in History Education

Stimulus Absorption

Stimulus absorption is the initial process through which an individual receives stimuli through the senses, such as seeing, hearing, or observing an object or event (Malaka, 2024). In the classroom, this stage showed that teachers provided a variety of stimuli through apperception, guiding questions, explanations of the material, PowerPoint media, images, discussions, and interactive activities. Teachers consistently connected previously studied material with the material to be learned, a practice that closely resembles what Ausubel (1968) termed an advance organizer: an introductory framework presented before new material that bridges what students already know with what they are about to learn, so that new historical information can be anchored to an existing cognitive structure rather than absorbed as isolated facts. By doing so, students became more prepared, more focused, and better able to situate new historical content within a coherent frame of reference before deeper processing took place.

At the stimulus absorption stage, the implementation of mindful learning was reflected in activities that focused and sustained students' attention, such as trigger questions and recall of previous lessons. Meaningful learning was reflected through the explicit connection drawn between new learning materials and material students had previously mastered, while joyful learning was reflected through the use of varied media, songs, ice-breaking activities, and interactive question-and-answer sessions that kept students engaged from the outset of the lesson.

Understanding and Comprehension

Understanding or comprehension is the process through which an individual processes and interprets the stimuli received in order to construct meaning from an object or event (Malaka, 2024). At this stage, teachers facilitated comprehension through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, student presentations, and problem-solving activities that required students to actively process historical information rather than passively receive it. This pattern is consistent with Ausubel's (1968) theory of meaningful learning, which holds that understanding occurs when new information is deliberately related to and subsumed within a learner's existing cognitive structure, rather than memorized as an arbitrary, disconnected string of facts. It also reflects what Biggs (1999) characterizes as a deep approach to learning, in which learners actively seek relationships between ideas, evidence, and conclusions instead of merely reproducing content.

Students did not merely receive the material passively; they were also encouraged to explain concepts in their own words, analyze historical events, and connect those events with real-life situations. Interview results showed that teachers considered deep learning helpful in

enabling students to understand history more meaningfully and to think more critically, although some students, particularly those who were still adjusting from more passive learning habits, required additional individualized guidance.

Assessment or Evaluation

Assessment, or evaluation, is formed after understanding or comprehension has developed, as individuals evaluate newly acquired knowledge based on their own subjective standards or norms; even when the object being evaluated is the same, individual assessments may differ, resulting in perceptions that are inherently individual in nature (Malaka, 2024). In the classroom, evaluation was carried out continuously through question-and-answer activities, discussions, presentations, drawing conclusions, reinforcing the material, and providing appreciation for student contributions. This pattern of ongoing, in-process evaluation is consistent with the concept of formative assessment described by Black & Wiliam (1998), who argue that assessment functions most powerfully for learning when it is embedded within everyday classroom activity and used to adjust teaching and learning in real time, rather than reserved solely for end-of-unit testing. Students were able to restate the material concerning World War II and the Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia in their own words, connecting causes and consequences rather than reciting isolated facts. This indicates that evaluation in this context did not merely measure memorization but also captured students' understanding and their ability to process and reconstruct historical information.

Based on these findings, teachers' perceptions of the implementation of deep learning at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora can be categorized as positive across all three stages of perception: stimulus absorption, comprehension, and evaluation. The three principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning have been implemented in history education, a pattern that mirrors the integrated framework proposed by Nafi'ah & Faruq (2025), in which the three principles function together rather than in isolation. This approach has made learning more student-centered, increased student participation and understanding, and helped students connect historical material with their everyday lives, consistent with the broader literature describing deep approaches to learning as more durable and transferable than surface, memorization-based approaches (Biggs, 1999; Marton & Säljö, 1976). However, the aspect of joyful learning still needs to be improved, as some students have not yet participated optimally, indicating that the transition toward a fully deep-learning classroom culture remains a work in progress.

Table 1 Implementation of Deep Learning

Principle	Forms of Activities	Observable Results
Mindful Learning	Trigger questions, communicating learning objectives, recalling previous material, and summarizing the lesson.	Students become more focused, aware of the learning process, and able to reflect on the material.
Meaningful Learning	Discussions, cause-and-effect analysis, connecting historical material with real life, and conceptual understanding.	Students understand the material more relevantly and do not merely memorize facts.
Joyful Learning	Group discussions, ice-breaking activities, the use of PowerPoint/images, appreciation, and active interaction.	Learning becomes more interesting, and students become more enthusiastic and active.

Based on the table above, the three principles of deep learning were present in the

learning process, although their implementation varied across classes. In Class X E5, question-and-answer activities and group discussions demonstrated mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. In Class XI F8, the mindful and meaningful aspects were more evident through activities recalling World War I and connecting it with World War II, as well as analyzing the causes of the defeat of Germany and Japan. Meanwhile, in Class X E1, group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, summarizing activities, and the provision of appreciation demonstrated the three principles of deep learning more clearly.

Obstacles Faced by Teachers in Implementing Deep Learning in History Education at Sma Negeri 2 Sipora

Students' Passive Learning Habits

Students were still accustomed to passive learning and teacher-centered instruction, in which information flows primarily from teacher to student with limited opportunity for independent inquiry. Consequently, they required time to adapt to a learning approach that demands active participation, independence, and critical thinking skills. This finding is consistent with [Baharuddin & Burhan \(2025\)](#), who observe that curriculum reforms in Indonesia often encounter a period of adjustment in which students accustomed to conventional, teacher-centered habits need sustained scaffolding, in the [Vygotskian \(1978\)](#) sense of graduated support that is gradually withdrawn as learners become more capable, before they can participate confidently in a more student-centered classroom.

Students' Socioeconomic and Geographical Conditions

Some students came from different family and environmental backgrounds, which could influence their readiness, energy levels, and concentration during learning. Several students, for example, had to help with family work or lived far from school, conditions that left them fatigued by the time history lessons took place. Communication difficulties between the school and parents also became a concern, limiting the extent to which parental support could reinforce classroom learning at home. These patterns echo [Baharuddin & Burhan's \(2025\)](#) finding that schools outside major urban centers in Indonesia frequently contend with wider socioeconomic disparities among students, which in turn shape how consistently a student-centered pedagogical reform such as deep learning can be implemented across different classrooms.

Limited Facilities and Infrastructure

The availability of facilities and infrastructure, particularly the limited number of projectors, became a recurring obstacle to implementing technology-supported deep learning activities. Media such as PowerPoint, Quizizz, and YouTube can help make history lessons more interesting and interactive, but their effective use depends on the availability of adequate hardware. This finding aligns with the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework proposed by [Mishra & Koehler \(2006\)](#), which holds that meaningful technology integration in teaching requires the alignment of pedagogical intent, content knowledge, and technological access; when the technological component is constrained, as it was here, even well-designed pedagogical strategies cannot be fully realized in practice. [Rasimin et al. \(2024\)](#), in a systematic review of information technology-based learning in Indonesian social science education, similarly report that limited hardware and infrastructure remain among the most

frequently cited barriers to technology-supported instruction, particularly outside major urban areas.

Internet Access and Limited Data Packages

Not all students had the same ability to afford internet data packages needed to participate in learning activities that relied on digital resources, and network coverage in the Mentawai Islands Regency was itself inconsistent. This constraint disproportionately affected students from lower-income households, effectively narrowing the range of digital learning media that teachers could reliably use across all classes. [Rasimin et al. \(2024\)](#) similarly identify unequal access to internet connectivity as a structural barrier that continues to shape the extent to which technology-based learning innovations can be equitably implemented in Indonesian schools.

Therefore, the successful implementation of deep learning does not depend solely on teachers' understanding but also on support from school facilities, parents, and students' conditions.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of deep learning is consistent with constructivist theory, in both its cognitive and social dimensions. Teachers act as facilitators who create learning situations that enable students to think critically, experiment, and discover historical concepts independently ([Nurjamilah et al., 2025](#)), while also providing the scaffolded guidance that [Vygotsky \(1978\)](#) identifies as necessary for learners to progress from what they can do with assistance toward independent historical reasoning. This is highly relevant to history education because understanding history cannot be achieved merely through memorization; it requires the ability to understand chronology, cause-and-effect relationships, the significance of events, and their connection to social life, precisely the kind of second-order historical thinking concepts described by [Seixas & Morton \(2013\)](#) in their widely used framework for historical reasoning. Seen in this light, the mindful, meaningful, and joyful principles observed in this study are not merely generic pedagogical techniques but a concrete pathway for cultivating the disciplinary thinking that history as a subject specifically demands.

History teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora view deep learning as an approach that can improve students' participation, motivation, and conceptual understanding. History learning, which was previously often considered monotonous, has become more interactive and relevant to everyday life. However, although teachers hold positive perceptions, the implementation of deep learning still faces several obstacles in the field. One of them is the adaptation process of students who are still accustomed to conventional learning and tend to passively receive information from teachers. Deep learning requires students to be more active, think critically, and become involved in the learning process; therefore, time is needed for students to adapt to this approach, a transition that [Biggs \(1999\)](#) notes rarely occurs immediately, since students who have long been rewarded for surface-level reproduction of content need repeated experience and explicit encouragement before they adopt a deep approach on their own initiative. In addition to the adaptation process, differences in students' socioeconomic backgrounds and geographical conditions also became obstacles. Several teachers explained that some students live far from their parents, while others have to work after school. These conditions can cause fatigue and affect students' concentration when participating in learning. Communication between the school and parents regarding students'

conditions can also sometimes be difficult.

Another obstacle is the limited availability of technological facilities and infrastructure. Media such as PowerPoint, Quizizz, and YouTube can increase students' enthusiasm, but their use is sometimes hindered by the limited number of projectors available at the school. In addition, suboptimal internet networks and the limited financial ability of some students to purchase data packages also create obstacles to the use of internet-based digital learning media. This confirms, at the classroom level, the structural pattern identified by [Mishra & Koehler \(2006\)](#) and by [Rasimin et al. \(2024\)](#): that technology-supported pedagogy in Indonesian schools is frequently constrained less by teachers' willingness to innovate than by the availability of the underlying infrastructure. The results of this study are also consistent with previous research showing that the implementation of deep learning still faces challenges such as limited technical understanding, a lack of training, and suboptimal utilization of technology and character building ([Bahtiar & Putra, 2025](#)). However, this study reveals more specific conditions at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora, particularly regarding students' learning habits, socioeconomic and geographical conditions, limited facilities, and internet access, conditions that reflect the broader urban-rural disparities in Indonesian education reform documented by [Baharuddin & Burhan \(2025\)](#).

Thus, the implementation of deep learning in history education at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora has received positive perceptions from teachers and provides opportunities to create learning that is more meaningful, active, contextual, and student-centered. However, its implementation still requires adjustments and support from various parties, since, as [Baharuddin & Burhan \(2025\)](#) argue, the success of pedagogical reform in geographically diverse settings such as Indonesia ultimately depends not only on teachers' pedagogical commitment but also on coordinated policy support for infrastructure and resource distribution beyond urban centers. Efforts to overcome these obstacles can be made by improving students' readiness, developing teachers' creativity in managing learning, increasing parental attention and support, and improving facilities, infrastructure, and technological access provided by the school and relevant education authorities.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that teachers' perceptions of deep learning in history education at SMA Negeri 2 Sipora are highly positive, and teachers fully support the deep learning approach. The teachers stated that learning should be student-centered in order to create a learning atmosphere that is meaningful, mindful, and joyful. Teachers believe that this approach has successfully changed students' previous habits of passively listening and memorizing texts. Students have become more confident in thinking critically and are now able to connect the values of historical events from the past with the situations they encounter in their everyday lives.

However, despite the teachers' highly positive perceptions, the implementation of deep learning in the field is still hindered by several complex problems or obstacles. These obstacles originate from students themselves, who still need time to move away from a passive learning culture, as well as limited family support due to economic and geographical factors. Many students have to work after school, which results in physical fatigue and decreased concentration during classroom learning. In addition, limited school facilities, such as the

insufficient number of projectors and difficulties in accessing the internet, prevent teachers and students from accessing learning materials optimally. Addressing these obstacles will therefore require continued collaboration among teachers, school management, parents, and local education authorities to strengthen facilities, digital access, and family support, so that the positive perceptions teachers hold toward deep learning can be more fully translated into everyday classroom practice.

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