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Application of the Design Thinking Model to Improve Students' Understanding of the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia Material in Grade XI

Ninda Bela Karisma [1*], Ludovikus Bomans Wadu [1], Natalia Aristina Dewi [2]
[1] Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang, Indonesia
[2] Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang, Indonesia
* Author Correspondence

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Abstract
This study aims to describe the application of the Design Thinking model and analyze the improvement of students' understanding of the material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in Pancasila Education learning in class XI-7 at SMAN 6 Malang. This study employed a classroom action research method conducted in two cycles. Data were collected through tests, observation, and documentation, then analyzed descriptively quantitatively and qualitatively. The results showed an increase in students' average scores from 68.61 in the pre-cycle to 78.19 in Cycle I and 87.08 in Cycle II. Learning mastery also increased from 50.00% to 77.78% and reached 94.44% in Cycle II. In addition to improved learning outcomes, student activity developed from a tendency toward passive learning to becoming more active in discussing, expressing opinions, collaborating, and formulating solutions to national issues. Contextual problem-based activities also provided opportunities for students to implement Pancasila values, especially mutual cooperation, deliberation, responsibility, and respect for differences in the learning process. This improvement was supported by more directed scaffolding, group role division, clear stage guidelines, and feedback during learning. Practically, this study provides an alternative for Pancasila Education teachers to design contextual and collaborative learning that not only improves conceptual understanding but also encourages active participation and the practice of Pancasila values in daily life.

Contact : Corresponding author e-mail: nindabeela@gmail.com

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Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping students who not only master knowledge but also possess critical thinking, creative, collaborative, and communicative skills to face the challenges of 21st-century life (Birru, 2024). In Pancasila Education learning, students are expected to understand national values and implement them in daily life through attitudes and actions that reflect a commitment to the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Ananta et al., 2026). The Merdeka Curriculum directs learning toward competency achievement, character strengthening, and learning experiences relevant to students' lives. This direction aligns with the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly the dimensions of critical reasoning, creativity, independence, mutual cooperation, and global diversity (Darmayanti et al., 2024). The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile also requires teachers to be able to design differentiated learning according to the needs and characteristics of students in the classroom (Manobi et al., 2024). Therefore, the material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia demands not only conceptual mastery but also students' ability to analyze various national issues and formulate solutions relevant to real conditions in their environment (Putri & Dewi, 2023). This ability is essential for students to act as responsible citizens with a strong national awareness (Reyzaldi et al., 2025).

Theoretically, learning that involves experience and social interaction is grounded in the thoughts of Dewey and Vygotsky. Dewey (1938) emphasized the importance of experience in the educational process, while Vygotsky (1978) explained the role of social interaction and assistance provided to students in the development of thinking abilities. Both perspectives provide a foundation for learning that positions students as active agents in constructing understanding, with teachers acting as facilitators who provide direction according to learning needs. In civic education, Banks (2008) also emphasized the importance of considering the diversity of identities and experiences of students in building civic education relevant to community life. In line with this, the development of social care character and student discipline also needs to be integrated into Pancasila Education learning so that national values are not only understood cognitively but also practiced in daily life (Rafifah et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2025). This foundation indicates that Pancasila Education learning needs to be designed so that students can examine national issues through experience, dialogue, collaboration, and consideration of diverse perspectives. Thus, conceptual mastery can develop into a more meaningful understanding relevant to civic life.

Preliminary observation in class XI-7 at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang showed that students' understanding of the material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia had not reached the expected results. The pre-cycle average score was only 68.61, and 18 out of 36 students, or 50.00%, achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 75. Some students could mention concepts but could not explain their connection to events in the community. Learning activities were also uneven because discussions were dominated by a few students, while others lacked confidence to express opinions. This condition was influenced by teacher-centered learning, limited use of contextual problems, and suboptimal scaffolding for varied learning styles. Low student engagement can also be caused by a lack of social support and achievement motivation in the classroom

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(Nurrahman & Kharunisa, 2024). These initial data indicated the need for corrective action that provides active and structured learning experiences.

The low student learning outcomes were presumably influenced by several factors related to the learning process. Learning still dominated by direct delivery of material caused students to have fewer opportunities to explore problems independently and develop critical thinking skills (De Jong et al., 2023). In addition, student involvement in learning activities was relatively low because they more often acted as recipients of information rather than as active subjects in the learning process (Hettler, 2015). The material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which is actually very close to daily life, had also not been fully linked to real contexts, making it difficult for students to understand the relevance of the material to their environment (Sitepu et al., 2023). The lack of collaborative activities and problem-solving in learning also affected students' ability to construct knowledge more deeply (Vogel et al., 2023).

If these problems are not addressed immediately, they can cause various negative impacts on the learning process and outcomes. In the short term, students will continue to experience difficulties in understanding important concepts related to the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, so learning outcomes will not be optimal. Low student involvement in learning can also reduce learning motivation and hinder the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Siregar et al., 2025). In the long term, this condition has the potential to reduce students' ability to understand and respond to various national issues occurring in society (Sukmayadi et al., 2025). If left unaddressed, Pancasila Education learning risks producing only rote conceptual understanding without the ability to apply national values in real life (Fitriyah et al., 2025).

One alternative solution that can be applied to overcome these problems is the use of the Design Thinking model in learning. Design Thinking is a learning approach oriented toward problem-solving through the stages of empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test, so that students are actively involved in the learning process (Micheli et al., 2018). Through these stages, students are encouraged to understand problems from various perspectives, formulate problems clearly, develop various alternative solutions, and evaluate the effectiveness of the resulting solutions (Mala, 2025). The characteristics of Design Thinking, which emphasize collaboration, creativity, reflection, and contextual problem-solving, are considered suitable for the characteristics of the material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which requires the ability to analyze various social and national phenomena. This approach is also in line with efforts to revitalize Pancasila as a living philosophy that emphasizes dialogue and critical thinking in learning (Gultom, 2025). Therefore, the application of Design Thinking is expected to improve understanding while increasing student engagement in the learning process.

Various previous studies have shown that Design Thinking has the potential to improve the quality of learning and student learning outcomes. Previous research found that the application of Design Thinking can improve critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills because students are actively involved in the process of identifying and solving problems (Patel et al., 2024). Other research showed that Design Thinking can improve creativity, collaboration, and student participation during learning (Von Thienen et al., 2016). In addition, several studies

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reported that the use of Design Thinking in various subjects positively affects student learning outcomes because learning becomes more contextual and meaningful (Kinley et al., 2022). Students' critical thinking skills can also be improved through the application of collaborative learning models and the use of innovative learning media (Indawati et al., 2025; Janah et al., 2024). Nevertheless, research on the application of Design Thinking to the material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in Pancasila Education at the high school level is still relatively limited. Therefore, this study has a novelty in the application of Design Thinking to improve students' understanding of the material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in class XI-7 at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang.

This study aims to describe the application of the Design Thinking model and analyze the improvement of students' understanding of the material on Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in Pancasila Education learning in class XI-7 at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 6 Malang. Theoretically, this study strengthens the study of the relationship between Design Thinking, constructivism, and student-centered civic learning. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a basis for teachers to design contextual and collaborative learning based on national problems. For students, this action is expected to improve understanding, participation, communication, and responsibility in group work. For schools, the results of this study can support the strengthening of the quality of Pancasila Education learning in accordance with the direction of the Merdeka Curriculum. The action hypothesis is that the systematic application of Design Thinking accompanied by scaffolding can improve students' understanding to at least 80% classical mastery.

Method

This study employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method with the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which includes four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, and was conducted in two cycles in Pancasila Education learning on the material of Maintaining the Integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in class XI-7 at SMAN 6 Malang with 36 students as subjects. The study began with observation and a pre-cycle test, which showed a class average score of 68.61 with 50% learning mastery, or 18 students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 75. Each cycle applied five stages of Design Thinking, namely empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test, with an allocation of 2 × 45 minutes of learning per meeting. In Cycle I, students were directed to identify national problems, formulate problems, develop alternative solutions, create simple prototypes, and present results to obtain feedback. The observation and evaluation results in Cycle I were used as the basis for improvement in Cycle II through the provision of scaffolding, clearer group role division, step-by-step work guidelines, time management, and more directed feedback. The research instruments included student understanding tests, student activity observation sheets, learning implementation observation sheets, and documentation. The test blueprint was developed based on indicators of understanding of NKRI integrity material and the cognitive domain of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, namely C1 (remembering), C2 (understanding), C3 (applying), C4 (analyzing), C5 (evaluating), and C6 (creating), with item numbers adjusted based on the instruments used. The content validity of the instruments can be examined through expert

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judgment by Pancasila Education or learning evaluation experts, while reliability can be analyzed through limited trials using techniques appropriate to the item format. Data were collected through tests, observation, and documentation, then analyzed descriptively quantitatively and qualitatively. Triangulation was carried out by comparing test results, observation notes, documentation of student work, and notes from the supervising teacher or collaborator when available to check the consistency of findings and strengthen data interpretation. The researcher acted as the designer and implementer of the learning action, the supervising teacher or collaborator observed student activities and learning implementation, while students were actively involved in all stages of Design Thinking through activities of observing problems, discussing, developing solutions, creating prototypes, and presenting results. Quantitative data were analyzed through average scores and classical mastery percentages using the formula of the number of students obtaining a minimum score of 75 divided by the total number of students multiplied by 100%, while qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and reflective conclusion drawing. The study set a success indicator of at least 80% classical mastery with a minimum score of 75. The results showed that learning mastery increased from 50% in the pre-cycle to 77.78% in Cycle I and 94.44% in Cycle II. The detailed research schedule, item numbers for each indicator, expert validation results, and reliability coefficients need to be included in accordance with the implementation notes and testing evidence that is actually available.

Results and Discussion

Results

Preliminary observation was conducted to map students' understanding and learning activities before the action. Learning was still dominated by lectures, so students tended to receive information without sufficient opportunity to examine national issues. The pre-cycle test results showed an average score of 68.61. A total of 18 students, or 50.00%, achieved the KKM of 75, while the other 18 students had not yet mastered the material. Observation notes also indicated that discussions were not evenly distributed, the courage to express opinions was still low, and some students had difficulty connecting the concept of NKRI integrity with cases in the community. These findings became the basis for applying Design Thinking as a corrective action.

Cycle I applied the five stages of Design Thinking to the discussion of the importance of NKRI integrity and the threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances to the state. In the empathize stage, students observed cases from the surrounding environment and media to recognize their impact on citizens. In the define stage, each group formulated the main problem based on the facts found. In the ideate stage, students compiled several alternative solutions, then selected the most relevant ideas. These ideas were realized in simple prototypes and presented in the test stage to obtain questions and feedback from other groups.

Observation in Cycle I showed changes in the learning process compared to the pre-cycle. More students were involved in discussions, proposing examples, and responding to other groups' solutions. Contextual activities helped students understand that NKRI integrity is related to citizens' actions in daily life. However, participation was not yet evenly distributed because some students still depended on more active group members. Some groups were also

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unable to deepen the reasons supporting their solutions and lacked confidence when presenting their results. The learning outcomes of Cycle I can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Learning Outcomes of Cycle I

Description	Result
Number of Students	36
KKM	75
Average Score	78.19
Number of Mastery	28
Number of Non-Mastery	8
Mastery Percentage	77.78%

The data in Table 1 show that the Cycle I action increased the average score by 9.58 points and classical mastery by 27.78 percentage points compared to the pre-cycle. A total of 28 students had achieved the KKM, indicating that most students were beginning to be able to explain concepts and apply them to the cases discussed. However, the 77.78% mastery was still below the 80% success indicator. The eight students who had not yet mastered the material needed more directed support, especially when formulating problems, developing reasons, and communicating solutions.

Reflection on Cycle I showed that Design Thinking had improved student involvement and understanding, but the implementation was not yet fully effective. The main obstacles were related to the equal distribution of roles within groups, the depth of ideas, time management, and the clarity of guidelines at each stage. Some students were still passive and relied on more active peers. Some groups produced solutions that were still general because they had not used evidence and diverse perspectives. Time in the prototype and test stages was also less controlled, so some groups finished their products in a rush. This condition was related to the eight students who had not achieved the KKM and became the focus of improvement in Cycle II.

The Cycle II improvement was designed directly from the reflection results. The teacher divided group member roles so that each student had responsibility, provided guideline sheets containing step-by-step questions to deepen analysis, set time limits at each stage, and provided examples of simple prototypes. Groups experiencing difficulties received more intensive scaffolding. The teacher also added a brief feedback session before presentation so that students could improve their arguments and increase their confidence. Cycle II applied the improvement plan to the material on the role of citizens in maintaining NKRI integrity, the form of the state, the form of government, and the Indonesian government system. Role division made group work more balanced, while the question guidelines helped students construct relationships between problems, causes, impacts, and solutions. Teacher scaffolding was directed at students who had not yet mastered the material and groups that had difficulty developing arguments. Observation notes showed that students were more active in asking questions, responding to opinions, collaborating, and connecting the material to real situations. Presentations were also more directed because each group had tested and revised its prototype before presenting. The learning outcomes of Cycle II can be seen in Table 2 below.

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Table 2. Learning Outcomes of Cycle II

Description	Result
Number of Students	36
KKM	75
Average Score	87,08
Number of Mastery	34
Number of Non-Mastery	2
Mastery Percentage	94,44%

The results in Table 2 show a further increase after the action improvement. The average score increased by 8.89 points from Cycle I, while classical mastery increased by 16.66 percentage points. Six of the eight students who had previously not mastered the material succeeded in achieving the KKM. The achievement of 94.44% had exceeded the 80% success indicator, so the action was not continued to the next cycle. The two students who had not yet mastered the material still showed progress but needed individual follow-up on their ability to analyze and explain reasons. The comparison of Cycle I and Cycle II results can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Comparison of Results Between Cycles

Stage	Average Score	Number of Mastery	Mastery Percentage
Pre-Cycle	68.61	18	50.00%
Cycle I	78.19	28	77.78%
Cycle II	87.08	34	94.44%

The comparison in Table 3 shows a consistent pattern of improvement from the pre-cycle to Cycle II. The average score increased by a total of 18.47 points, while classical mastery increased by 44.44 percentage points. The change was not only visible in test results. Observation notes indicated a shift from passive learning to more participatory, collaborative, and contextual activities. The relationship between process improvement and the increase in learning outcomes indicates that scaffolding, role division, time management, and feedback in Cycle II helped students use the Design Thinking stages more effectively. This increasing trend is presented in Figure 1.

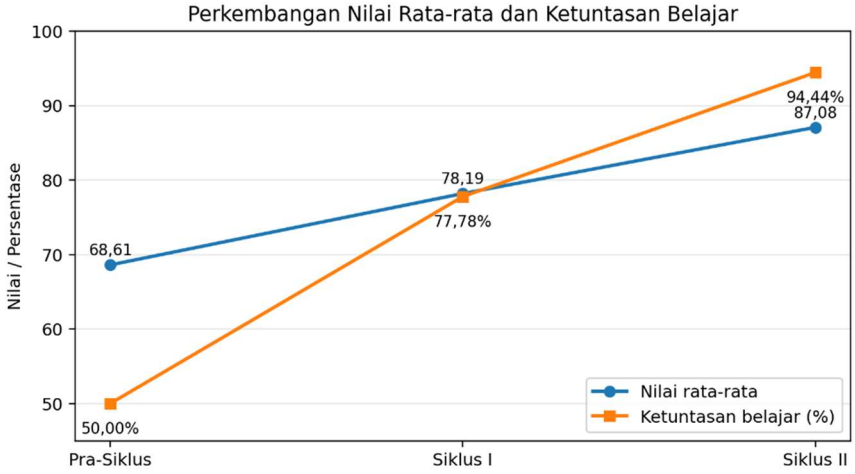


Figure 1. Development of Average Scores and Learning Mastery

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Discussion

The results showed that the application of the Design Thinking model in class XI-7 at SMAN 6 Malang was followed by an increase in students' understanding of the material on the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). The average score increased from 68.61 in the pre-cycle to 78.19 in Cycle I and 87.08 in Cycle II. Learning mastery also increased from 50% to 77.78% and reached 94.44%. This finding indicates that learning through the Design Thinking stages can support students' understanding, especially when the material is linked to civic issues close to their lives. In the constructivist perspective, students construct understanding through experience, discussion, and active involvement in solving problems. Therefore, learning not only positions students as recipients of information but also as parties who process knowledge and develop solutions based on the context being studied.

The ideate, prototype, and test stages strengthen understanding through the development and evaluation of solutions. The ideate stage trains students to generate several possible citizen actions and assess their suitability with Pancasila values. The prototype stage transforms abstract ideas into products that can be seen, discussed, and improved. Meanwhile, the test stage provides opportunities for students to defend their reasons, accept criticism, and revise solutions based on feedback. The cycle of generating, testing, and improving ideas makes the learning process more reflective and helps students recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their thinking. This finding aligns with constructivism, which views learning as an active process of building knowledge through experience and social interaction. In its application, the teacher acts as a facilitator who provides problem contexts, guiding questions, scaffolding, and feedback, while students are directly involved in analysis and solution creation. Guaman-Quintanilla et al. (2023) explained that Design Thinking challenges teacher-centered learning patterns and supports knowledge construction through authentic problems and collaborative work. Tsai et al. (2023) also found that constructivist-based Design Thinking can increase motivation and the ability to face complex problems. In this study, the action improvement in Cycle II showed that active learning still requires adequate activity structure and guidance so that students can participate productively.

The increase in learning outcomes in this study is also in line with previous research. Fanjalu (2023) showed that the application of Design Thinking can increase creativity and activeness in Civic Education. The meta-analysis by Yu et al. (2024) reported a positive effect of Design Thinking on learning outcomes, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration. Guaman-Quintanilla et al. (2023) also demonstrated the development of problem-solving and creativity skills when students work in teams to solve real-world problems. In the context of NKRI material, the findings of this study are in line with Buulolo et al. (2024) and Nurhayati et al. (2024), who emphasized the benefits of problem-based learning. In addition, the development of engaging and relevant learning media has also been proven to improve students' understanding of Pancasila Education material (Janah et al., 2024). Nevertheless, this study has a specific context, namely the application of the empathy flow, problem formulation, idea development, prototype creation, and solution testing to support high school students' understanding of NKRI integrity material. Because this study is a classroom action research without a comparison group, the increase should be understood as a change in learning outcomes after the action was applied, not as proof that a single element of Design Thinking separately was the sole cause of the increase.

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Although learning outcomes increased, mastery in Cycle I only reached 77.78%, so it had not met the research success indicator of 80%. This condition became the basis for improving learning in Cycle II through more structured direction, clearer group role division, time management, and more directed feedback. The results of Cycle II showed that 34 out of 36 students achieved a minimum score of 75. In addition, six of the eight students who had not achieved the KKM in Cycle I succeeded in achieving mastery in Cycle II. This change indicates that adjusting the learning process can help more students understand the material. However, the available data do not allow the researcher to ascertain the contribution of each form of improvement separately. Thus, this finding is more appropriately interpreted as support for the importance of active learning accompanied by guidance and activity structures that suit students' needs.

Two students still had not achieved the KKM at the end of Cycle II. This condition indicates that the application of the same learning model does not always produce equivalent achievements for all students. Based on research notes, these two students still needed scaffolding, especially in analyzing problems and explaining the reasons behind the chosen solutions. Therefore, follow-up needs to be directed at identifying each student's difficulties, not just repeating the entire material. The teacher can provide simple cases related to NKRI integrity, then guide students through step-by-step questions, such as "What is the main problem in this case?", "Who is affected?", and "Why is the solution you chose in accordance with Pancasila values?". Scaffolding can be gradually reduced when students begin to be able to construct reasons independently. Furthermore, their understanding needs to be checked through remedial assessment in accordance with the learning indicators. These steps are follow-up recommendations based on research findings, not interventions that have been tested in the research cycles. The available data also do not include individual scores and detailed answers of the two students, so the specific causes of their difficulties cannot be concluded.

The contribution of this study lies in the application of Design Thinking in Pancasila Education learning by integrating cognitive, social, and reflective aspects. The material on NKRI integrity is not only studied as a collection of definitions but also as a civic issue that needs to be understood from various perspectives and responded to based on Pancasila values. Through group activities, students have the opportunity to express opinions, listen to different perspectives, and consider joint decisions. This process supports the development of critical reasoning, creativity, and mutual cooperation skills as emphasized in the Pancasila Student Profile. This is in line with Wibowo and Martono (2024), who emphasized the importance of learning in supporting student interaction and responsibility. Project-based and collaborative learning can also be a means to foster cultural empathy and mutual respect for differences among students (Gultom, 2025). Thus, the improvement of material understanding can go hand in hand with the strengthening of civic competencies, although the development of social and reflective aspects in this study still needs to be supported by more measurable observation data.

To strengthen the discussion with empirical evidence, authentic quotations from student worksheets or discussion transcripts can be added to the section discussing the process of analysis and solution development. For example, quotations showing students' reasons for choosing certain actions to maintain NKRI integrity can be used to show how students connect concepts with real situations. These quotations must be taken from research documentation that is actually available, accompanied by source information such as group or cycle codes, and

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not made based on researcher estimates. If documentation in the form of original quotations is not yet available, the discussion should remain focused on the score data and observation notes that were actually collected.

Conclusion

This classroom action research demonstrates that the Design Thinking model improved students' understanding of NKRI integrity in Class XI-7 at SMAN 6 Malang, as reflected in the increase in average scores from 68.61 in the pre-cycle to 87.08 in Cycle II and learning mastery from 50% to 94.44%, exceeding the predetermined success indicator of 80%. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the relevance of constructivist learning principles in Pancasila Education, as students actively construct knowledge through problem analysis, discussion, collaboration, solution development, and reflection. The implementation of Design Thinking also has the potential to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly critical reasoning, creativity, and mutual cooperation, although the findings should be interpreted within the specific classroom context because the study did not involve a comparison group. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to integrate contextual civic issues and provide appropriate learning guidance, schools should facilitate collaborative learning and the sharing of best practices, and future researchers should examine the model in different educational contexts using more comprehensive data collection and analysis.

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Authors' Note

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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