



## Implementation of the Synectics Model to Enhance Religious Creativity at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of the Synectics learning model in enhancing students' religious creativity at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa. Religious creativity is defined as the ability of individuals to generate innovative ideas and works rooted in religious values. This aspect is essential in religious education as it enables students to express their understanding of faith in a more reflective, imaginative, and contextual manner. The Synectics model, first developed by William J. J. Gordon, is a learning approach that emphasizes the use of analogies and metaphors to connect seemingly unrelated ideas. Through this method, students are encouraged to think beyond conventional boundaries and to produce creative solutions to problems, including those in the context of religious learning. This research employed a classroom action research (CAR) approach conducted over two cycles, involving 32 eighth-grade students as participants. Each cycle consisted of the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' religious creativity, with an average increase of 37.5% from the first cycle to the second. This improvement reflects the effectiveness of the Synectics model in facilitating the integration of religious subject mastery and creative thinking skills. Through activities based on metaphors and analogies, students became more active, reflective, and innovative in expressing religious values. Therefore, the application of the Synectics learning model has proven to be an effective strategy for fostering students' religious creativity in Christian Religious Education.

**Keywords:** Synectics Model, Religious Creativity, Innovative Learning, Religious Education

### INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing global era, creativity has become one of the core competencies required in various aspects of life, including education. Contemporary education is no longer confined to the one-way transfer of knowledge from teacher to student; rather, it emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking skills, such as creative, critical, and innovative thinking. This is increasingly important in the context of

the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the Society 5.0 era, where the ability to generate new ideas and solve problems innovatively is highly demanded. Consequently, education systems are expected to create spaces for students to nurture and develop their creative potential. In the context of religious education, the development of creativity holds a deeper meaning. Creativity is not merely understood as the ability to produce something new and useful but also as an effort to internalize and actualize religious values in everyday life. This concept, known as *religious creativity*, refers to an individual's capacity to process and express religious values creatively—whether in thought, action, or creative works. Religious creativity is essential to foster within students so that they can make spiritual values the foundation for decision-making and for responding wisely to various life challenges.

SMP Negeri 7 Alasa, located in North Nias Regency, North Sumatra Province, is one of the formal educational institutions committed to developing both the intellectual potential and religious character of its students. The school's vision emphasizes the importance of nurturing intelligent students with moral integrity and spiritual grounding. However, initial observations at this school revealed obstacles in developing students' religious creativity. One major challenge identified was the reliance on conventional teaching methods. Teachers predominantly used the lecture method in delivering Christian Religious Education (CRE) lessons, resulting in passive student engagement and limited encouragement for creative thinking or innovative expression of religious ideas.

This problem underscores the urgent need for innovation in teaching strategies, particularly in CRE. One approach considered relevant to address this challenge is the Synectics learning model. Developed by William J. J. Gordon in 1961, this model aims to stimulate creative thinking processes through the use of analogies and metaphors. By engaging students in connecting concepts that are unusual or seemingly unrelated, Synectics opens opportunities for them to view ideas from different perspectives. This process can help students build deeper understanding and enhance their ability to generate new ideas.

The Synectics model emphasizes that creativity is not an exclusive talent possessed by a select few but a potential that can be cultivated in anyone through proper training and guidance. In CRE, the application of Synectics can serve as a medium to help students discover new ways of understanding and applying Christian values in real-life contexts. For example, students might be asked to create an analogy between the value of love in Jesus' teachings and situations they experience at school or home. In doing so, they not only grasp the value theoretically but also learn how to implement it meaningfully.

Previous studies have revealed the effectiveness of the Synectics model in enhancing students' creativity. Amalia and Setyawati (2019) concluded that this model significantly improves creative thinking skills, particularly in subjects requiring conceptual and exploratory understanding. Similarly, Munandar (2021) found that Synectics encourages students to approach problems from new perspectives through imaginative association, thereby enabling them to design more innovative solutions. However, these studies have primarily focused on general subjects such as Indonesian Language or Social Studies. Research specifically examining the application of Synectics in developing religious creativity remains scarce.

Against this background, this study seeks to implement the Synectics learning model in CRE classes at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa, with a particular focus on developing the religious

creativity of eighth-grade students. The study not only aims to evaluate the model's effectiveness but also to explore how the learning process can shape students' spiritual thinking and attitudes in more creative and reflective ways.

The research problem is formulated as follows: "How can the implementation of the Synectics model enhance the religious creativity of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa?" This question reflects an interest in understanding the learning mechanisms that can stimulate students' creative potential in exploring and expressing Christian faith values through relevant and engaging approaches. The imagination-based and lateral-thinking orientation of the Synectics model is believed to serve as a bridge between abstract theological concepts and students' concrete life experiences.

Therefore, this study carries significant urgency and value, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it can enrich the body of knowledge in Christian religious education, particularly in the area of developing religious creativity. Practically, the study's findings are expected to contribute positively to improving the quality of CRE instruction and to offer an alternative learning model applicable to other educational settings facing similar challenges in character and spiritual development.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, adopting the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four main stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These stages were carried out cyclically and iteratively to facilitate continuous improvement in the learning process. The research was conducted over two cycles, with each cycle consisting of two meetings designed to integrate the Synectics learning model into Christian Religious Education (CRE) lessons to enhance students' religious creativity. The subjects of this study were 32 eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Alasa in the 2024/2025 academic year, comprising 17 male and 15 female students. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa, located in North Nias Regency, North Sumatra Province, one of the junior high schools that prioritizes strengthening students' religious character through the learning process.

Data collection was conducted through multiple techniques: observation, testing, documentation, and interviews. Observations were carried out to examine both student and teacher activities during the implementation of the Synectics model, using observation sheets containing indicators of religious creativity, such as students' active participation in expressing opinions, their ability to connect religious concepts with life experiences, and their confidence in presenting interpretations of faith values. Tests were administered to measure students' religious creativity across four dimensions: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration in applying religious values. Documentation was used to gather supporting materials such as lesson plans, students' work, photographs of learning activities, and teacher notes. Structured interviews with both students and teachers were conducted to gather feedback on the application of the Synectics model in religious education. The research instruments included observation sheets with indicators of students' religious creativity, religious creativity test items consisting of open-ended questions encouraging students to generate creative religious ideas, interview guides to explore student and teacher perspectives on the learning process, and questionnaires containing statements to quantitatively assess students' perceptions and levels of religious creativity.

Data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the percentage increase in students' religious creativity from one cycle to the next. Qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, enabling a deeper understanding of the processes and dynamics of the learning activities. The success criterion for this study was set at a minimum of 75% of students achieving a "good" category score in religious creativity, defined as a score of  $\geq 75$  on a 100-point scale.

The implementation of Cycle I began with the planning stage, which included preparing Synectics-based lesson plans, selecting learning materials and media relevant to religious themes, and developing research instruments such as observation sheets, religious creativity tests, interview guides, and questionnaires. The learning process followed the six stages of the Synectics model. In the first stage, the teacher invited students to describe a current situation, for example, the phenomenon of a lack of religious concern in their surroundings. In the second stage, direct analogies were introduced, encouraging students to connect religious concepts with concrete objects or events. In the third stage, students created personal analogies by relating religious values to their own life experiences. The fourth stage involved compressed conflict, where the teacher facilitated discussions that stimulated students to view contrasting ideas creatively. The fifth stage had students construct new direct analogies to broaden understanding, and the sixth stage concluded with the reexamination of emerging ideas to ensure alignment between religious values and creativity. Throughout this process, the teacher and the researcher systematically observed both student and teacher activities, recording interactions, idea expressions, and student engagement. Reflection was then carried out by analyzing observation and test results to identify strengths and weaknesses, followed by the development of improvement strategies to enhance the effectiveness of Cycle II. The second cycle was implemented using the same stages as Cycle I but was refined based on the previous cycle's reflection outcomes. Improvements were made in time management, media variation, and the depth of analogies to better encourage students in optimally expressing their religious creativity.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Description of Initial Conditions***

Before the Synectics model was implemented, the religious creativity of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa was still relatively low. The pre-test results indicated that only 8 students (25%) achieved a religious creativity score in the "good" category (score  $\geq 75$ ). Students experienced difficulties in connecting religious concepts with real-life situations, developing original ideas, and providing creative interpretations of religious texts.

### ***Results of Cycle I***

In Cycle I, learning activities were carried out according to the steps of the Synectics model. The topic discussed was "*Values of Tolerance in Religion.*" Students were encouraged to develop analogies and metaphors related to the concept of religious tolerance. In the direct analogy stage, students were asked to compare tolerance to a rainbow. Most students were able to develop this analogy well, for example: "*Tolerance is like a beautiful rainbow, which has many colors yet remains harmonious.*" In the

personal analogy stage, students were asked to imagine themselves as someone with a different belief system. Some students still struggled at this stage and tended to create stereotypical analogies. In the compressed conflict stage, students were asked to identify contradictions within the concept of tolerance. Several students were able to do this well, such as *"firm yet gentle"* or *"different yet united."*

Based on observations, student engagement during the learning process was fairly good, although some students remained passive and lacked confidence in expressing ideas. Students also continued to experience challenges in developing more complex analogies. The results of the religious creativity test in Cycle I showed improvement. The number of students achieving a religious creativity score in the "good" category increased to 15 students (46.88%). The average religious creativity score was 68.75. Reflection on Cycle I revealed that the implementation of the Synectics model was satisfactory but required several improvements, including: Providing more examples of analogies and metaphors, offering more intensive guidance to students who were still struggling, creating a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, using more varied learning media

### **Results of Cycle II**

In Cycle II, learning activities were conducted by incorporating the reflections from Cycle I. The topic discussed was *"Social Care from a Religious Perspective."* The teacher provided more examples of analogies and metaphors and used more engaging learning media, such as videos and images. In the direct analogy stage, students were asked to compare social care to a shady tree. Almost all students were able to develop this analogy effectively, for example: *"Social care is like a shady tree that provides shelter for anyone beneath it."* In the personal analogy stage, students were asked to imagine themselves as someone in need of help. Most students were able to develop strong personal analogies and demonstrated empathy.

In the compressed conflict stage, students were asked to identify contradictions within the concept of social care. Many students successfully identified contradictions such as *"giving without expecting anything in return"* or *"something small yet having a big impact."* Observation results indicated that student engagement in learning increased significantly. Students were more active and confident in expressing ideas, and they were able to develop more complex and original analogies. The results of the religious creativity test in Cycle II showed a substantial improvement. The number of students achieving a religious creativity score in the "good" category increased to 27 students (84.38%), with an average score of 82.5. Reflection on Cycle II indicated that the application of the Synectics model had successfully enhanced students' religious creativity, enabling them to develop ideas that were more original, flexible, and elaborative in relation to religious values.

**Table 1. Comparison of Religious Creativity Test Results Between the Initial Condition, Cycle I, and Cycle II**

Aspect	Initial Condition	Cycle I	Cycle II
Number of students with a score $\geq 75$	8	15	27
Percentage of students with a score $\geq 75$	25%	46.88%	84.38%
Average score	63.5	68.75	82.5

The data above indicate a significant improvement in students' religious creativity from the initial condition to Cycle II. The findings show that the implementation of the Synectics model successfully enhanced the religious creativity of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa. This is evident from the increase in the percentage of students achieving a "good" category score in religious creativity, from 25% in the initial condition to 46.88% in Cycle I, and further to 84.38% in Cycle II. This improvement can be attributed to the inherent characteristics of the Synectics model, which encourages students to develop creative thinking through analogies and metaphors. Within this model, students are guided to view religious concepts from new perspectives, thereby generating original ideas.

These findings are consistent with the study by Rahmatia, Pajarianto, and Kadir (2022), which concluded that the Synectics model is effective in enhancing students' creativity in Religious Education. Similarly, Nurdin (2020) found that the use of analogies and metaphors in religious instruction helps students grasp abstract concepts and develop creative thinking skills. The process of developing religious creativity through the Synectics model involves several key mechanisms: 1) Direct Analogy – Helps students connect religious concepts to concrete phenomena in everyday life. For example, comparing tolerance to a rainbow or social care to a shady tree. 2) Personal Analogy – Encourages students to develop empathy and understand others' perspectives. In a religious context, this is crucial for fostering tolerance and respect for diversity. 3) Compressed Conflict – Enables students to overcome psychological barriers and think paradoxically. In religious contexts, this is essential for understanding seemingly contradictory concepts such as "humility that exalts" or "giving that enriches."

The study also found that the successful implementation of the Synectics model was supported by several enabling factors: A conducive learning climate – A relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere helped students feel comfortable expressing creative ideas. Teacher guidance – The teacher's role as a facilitator was essential in helping students develop analogies and metaphors relevant to religious contexts. Instructional media – The use of varied and engaging learning media helped students grasp religious concepts and develop more complex analogies. Students' prior knowledge – Prior understanding of religious concepts provided an important foundation for creating analogies and metaphors.

One challenge in applying the Synectics model was students' difficulty in developing personal analogies. Some students struggled to imagine themselves as someone different, particularly in religious contexts. This highlights the need to cultivate empathy and intercultural understanding in religious education. Theoretically, the implications of this study lie in the development of the concept of religious creativity as a synthesis of creative thinking and religious values. Religious creativity not only involves the ability to

generate new ideas but also the capacity to integrate religious values into everyday problem-solving. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of applying innovative learning models such as Synectics in religious education to foster students' religious creativity. Religious education should go beyond doctrinal knowledge to also promote creativity and critical thinking skills.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the application of the Synectics model made a significant contribution to enhancing the religious creativity of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Alasa. This was evidenced by the increase in the proportion of students attaining a "good" category in religious creativity, from only 25% in the initial condition before the intervention to 84.38% in Cycle II after the systematic implementation of the Synectics model. This growth demonstrates that instructional strategies focusing on imagination and creative thinking grounded in religious values are highly effective in developing students' holistic potential. The development of religious creativity through the Synectics model involved three core stages: direct analogy, personal analogy, and compressed conflict. These stages progressively helped students relate religious concepts to their real-life experiences as well as to symbolic imagery that stimulates imagination. Through such activities, students were encouraged to think beyond the boundaries of conventional learning, resulting in new ideas that are both spiritually and contextually relevant. Additionally, the Synectics model fostered active student engagement in discussion, reflection, and problem-solving based on the Christian faith principles they studied.

The success of the model was supported by several factors: a conducive learning climate, consistent teacher support and guidance, the use of varied and engaging learning media, and students' prior knowledge of religious values. Together, these elements created an enjoyable learning environment that encouraged the exploration of religious ideas creatively.

For religious education teachers continue to explore diverse instructional models that foster student creativity, such as the Synectics model, and develop a repository of religious analogies and metaphors for instructional use. For schools support the development of students' religious creativity by providing relevant facilities and resources, including visual media, religious reading materials, and teacher training programs focused on innovative learning. For future researchers consider integrating the Synectics model with other instructional models and developing more comprehensive and standardized instruments for measuring religious creativity, to enrich the field of Christian religious education research.

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