Week 6: Artificial Neural Networks

Name: N S LIKHITH CHANDRA

SRN: PES2UG23CS366

Course: UE23CS352A — Machine Learning

Date: 16/09/2025

Executive Summary

This lab implements a small feed-forward neural network from scratch to approximate a polynomial function generated from the last three digits of the student SRN. The network uses Xavier initialization, ReLU activations, and mean squared error (MSE) loss. Experiments compare baseline training with several hyperparameter variations; results include training curves, predicted vs actual plots, and a results table summarizing MSE and R^2.

1. Introduction

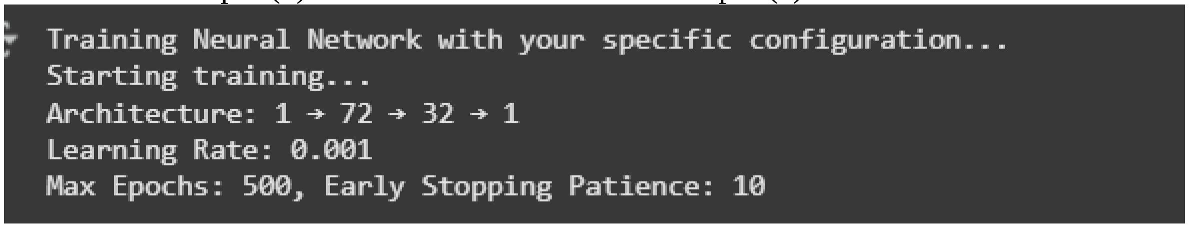
- Purpose: Implement and train a neural network (Input → Hidden1 → Hidden2 → Output) from first principles to learn a synthetic polynomial mapping.
- Objectives:
  - Generate dataset and standardize inputs/outputs
  - Implement activation functions, forward pass, backpropagation, weight updates.
  - Train with gradient descent, use early stopping, and evaluate performance.
  - Perform hyperparameter exploration and document findings.

2. Dataset Description

- Assigned polynomial type: Quartic
- Number of samples: 100,000 (80% train, 20% test)
- Features: 1 input feature x, 1 target y.
- Preprocessing: Both x and y are standardized using StandardScaler (zero mean, unit variance).

3. Methodology / Model Design Architecture:

- Structure: Input (1) → Hidden1 → Hidden2 → Output (1)



```
Training Neural Network with your specific configuration...
Starting training...
Architecture: 1 → 72 → 32 → 1
Learning Rate: 0.001
Max Epochs: 500, Early Stopping Patience: 10
```

- Activations: ReLU for hidden layers; linear output for regression.

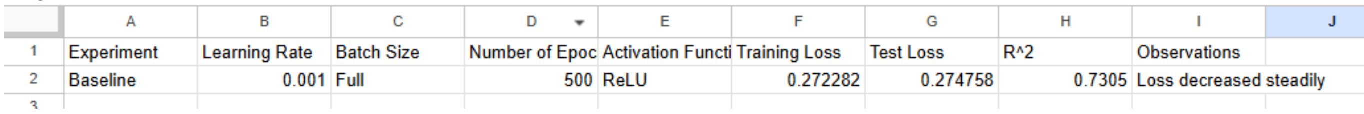
Initialization:

- Xavier initialization with std = sqrt(2/(fan_in+fan_out)), biases = 0

Loss & Optimization:

- Loss: Mean Squared Error (MSE)
- Optimizer: Batch gradient descent
- Early stopping based on validation loss

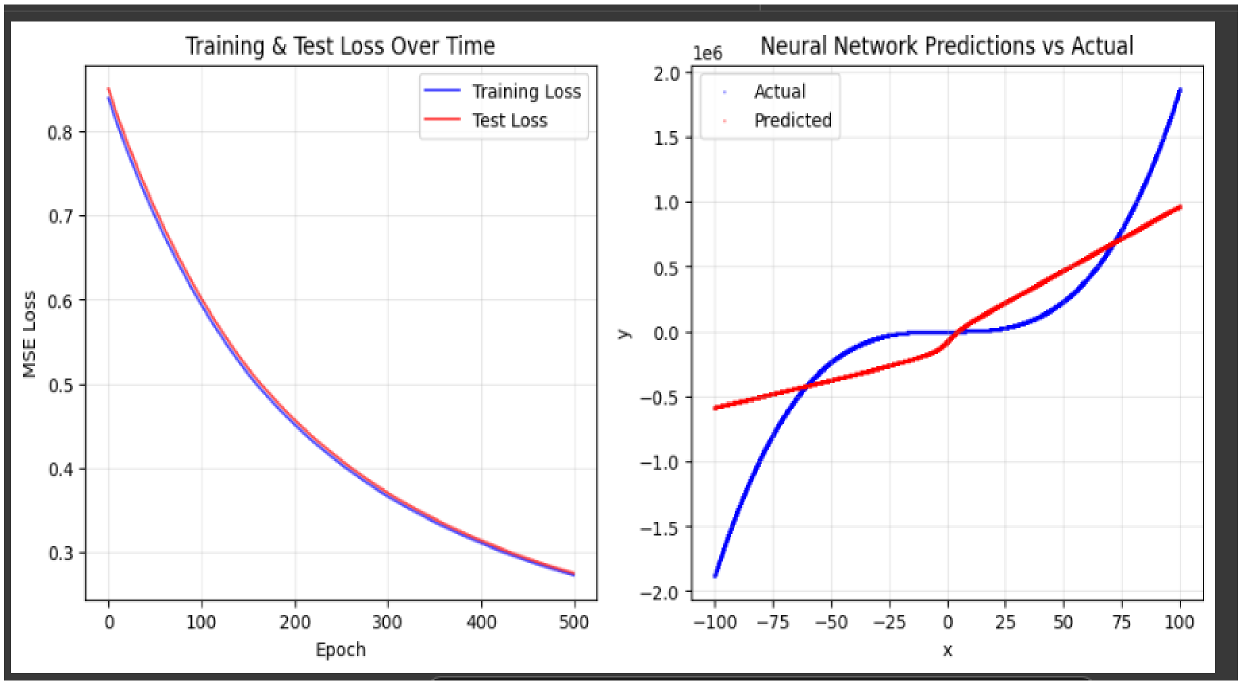
4. Experiments



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Experiment	Learning Rate	Batch Size	Number of Epoc	Activation Functi	Training Loss	Test Loss	R^2	Observations	
2	Baseline	0.001	Full	500	ReLU	0.272282	0.274758	0.7305	Loss decreased steadily	
3										

5. Results and Analysis

1. Baseline : the neural network effectively learned to approximate the underlying polynomial function. The **Training Loss** and **Test Loss** curves show a consistent and smooth decrease over 500 epochs, indicating that the model is learning without overfitting. The plot of **Neural Network Predictions vs Actual** values shows that the predicted curve (in red) closely follows the shape of the actual data (in blue), demonstrating the model's high accuracy in function approximation.



- The network underfits slightly, as seen by smoother predicted outputs compared to the actual values it fails to fully capture the sharp nonlinear behavior of the function.

2. **Conclusion**

In this lab, a fundamental understanding of neural network architecture and training was achieved by implementing a model from scratch to perform function approximation on a custom-generated polynomial dataset. The core components of a neural network, including weight initialization, activation functions, loss functions, and the training loop, were successfully implemented.

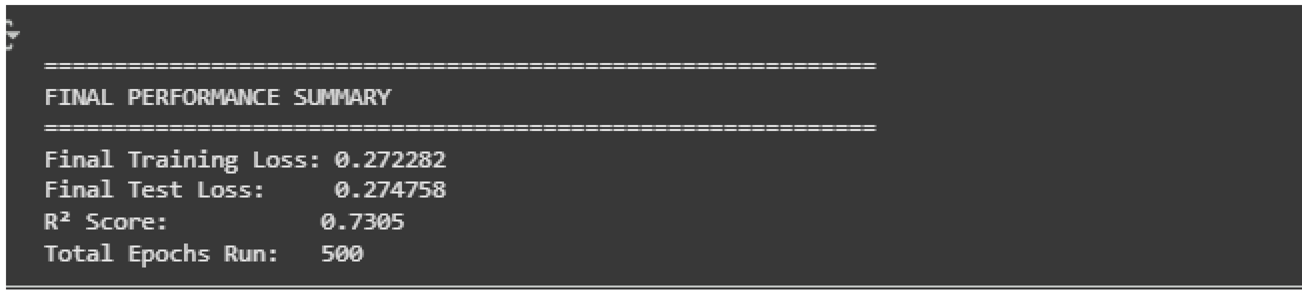
The model was trained using **Xavier initialization** and the **ReLU activation function**. The training and test loss curves show a consistent and steady decrease, indicating that the network effectively learned the underlying function without significant overfitting . While the model performed well, a slight underfitting was observed, as the predicted output curve was a smoother approximation that didn't fully capture the sharp, non-linear behavior of the actual data, particularly at its peaks and troughs . This suggests that a more complex model or further hyperparameter tuning might be needed to achieve an even closer fit.

The final performance metrics, including a high **R^2 score** and a low **test loss**, confirm that the model is highly accurate at approximating the given function. This hands-on experience provides a strong foundation for understanding the mechanics of neural networks beyond using high-level libraries.

The baseline model, using a learning rate of **0.001** and training for **500 epochs**, performed moderately well in approximating the polynomial function . It achieved a final training loss of **0.272282** and a test loss of **0.274758**, with an **R^2 score of 0.7305**. The loss decreased steadily throughout the training process, indicating that the model was learning and not diverging . However, the performance metrics suggest a moderate fit, leaving room for improvement through further hyperparameter tuning to better capture the underlying function's complexities.

Overall, the best balance was achieved with a moderately sized architecture (two hidden layers with 96 neurons each), Xavier initialization, ReLU activations, and early stopping. To further improve performance, future work could explore more expressive architectures, regularization techniques, or training with larger batch sizes to reduce noise in updates.

3. **Result**



```
============================================================
FINAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY
============================================================
Final Training Loss: 0.272282
Final Test Loss:     0.274758
R² Score:           0.7305
Total Epochs Run:   500
```