



Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach in Aqidah Akhlak Instruction to Develop Critical Thinking

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Abstract

Learning in Aqidah Akhlak requires instructional approaches that foster meaningful understanding, reflective thinking, and active student engagement rather than rote memorization. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak instruction and examine its contribution to developing students' critical thinking skills at MAN 3 Palembang. A qualitative case study design was employed. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that the integration of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning encourages students to actively construct knowledge, reflect on Islamic values, and develop logical reasoning in addressing contextual problems. The implementation of the Deep Learning approach is supported by teacher competence, institutional commitment, and a conducive learning environment, although differences in students' readiness and limited learning resources remain challenges. These findings provide empirical evidence that the Deep Learning approach offers an effective pedagogical framework for strengthening critical thinking while fostering meaningful religious learning in Islamic secondary education.

Keywords: Aqidah Akhlak; Critical Thinking; Deep Learning; Islamic Education; Meaningful Learning.

Abstrak

Pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak memerlukan pendekatan yang mampu mengembangkan pemahaman bermakna, kesadaran belajar, dan keterlibatan aktif peserta didik sehingga tidak hanya berorientasi pada hafalan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis implementasi pendekatan Deep Learning dalam pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak serta kontribusinya terhadap pengembangan keterampilan berpikir kritis peserta didik di MAN 3 Palembang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan. Keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi meaningful learning, mindful learning, dan joyful learning mendorong peserta didik membangun pemahaman secara mendalam, merefleksikan nilai-nilai keislaman, serta mengembangkan kemampuan berpikir kritis dalam menganalisis dan menyelesaikan permasalahan kontekstual. Keberhasilan implementasi didukung oleh kompetensi guru, komitmen madrasah, dan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif, meskipun masih dihadapkan pada perbedaan kesiapan belajar peserta didik dan keterbatasan sumber belajar. Temuan ini memberikan bukti empiris bahwa pendekatan Deep Learning merupakan kerangka pedagogis yang efektif untuk memperkuat keterampilan berpikir kritis sekaligus mewujudkan pembelajaran agama yang lebih bermakna.

Kata kunci: Aqidah Akhlak; Berpikir Kritis; Deep Learning; Pendidikan Islam; Pembelajaran Bermakna

Introduction

The transformation of 21st-century education has shifted the orientation of learning from content mastery toward the development of higher-order thinking competencies as a prerequisite for lifelong learning. Among these competencies, critical thinking is regarded as a fundamental capacity that enables students to evaluate information rationally, construct evidence-based arguments, and make reflective decisions in responding to social complexity and technological advancements (Ennis, 2018; Halpern & Dunn, 2022). Numerous studies have also demonstrated that critical thinking skills are positively correlated with academic achievement, problem-solving, creativity, and adaptive learning abilities, making them one of the primary indicators of the quality of contemporary learning (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Vincent-Lancrin, 2023).

In line with these demands, the Deep Learning approach has emerged as a learning paradigm that emphasizes the construction of meaning through conceptual understanding, reflection, and the active engagement of students in the learning process. This approach integrates the dimensions of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning to foster deep understanding rather than the mere reproduction of information (Alim et al., 2025; Andayanie et al., 2025). Conceptually, this paradigm is rooted in Meaningful Learning theory, which positions the integration of new knowledge with students' existing cognitive structures as the core of the learning process, thereby orienting learning toward the development of reasoning, reflection, and the transfer of knowledge to various life contexts (Bryce & Blown, 2024; Hattie & Donoghue, 2016).

In Islamic Religious Education, particularly in the Aqidah Akhlak subject, the orientation of learning is directed not only toward mastering religious concepts but also toward developing reflective thinking skills in understanding, internalizing, and actualizing Islamic values. However, learning practices are still predominantly characterized by expository approaches that position students as passive recipients of information, thereby limiting opportunities to develop critical thinking skills through dialogue, reflection, and problem-solving. Previous studies have demonstrated that innovative instructional models can improve the quality of Aqidah Akhlak learning. For

instance, Aisyah and Lutfi (2025) found that the implementation of a game-based learning model significantly improved students' learning outcomes by creating more interactive and student-centered learning experiences. Nevertheless, studies examining the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning remain limited. This condition positions the Deep Learning approach as a relevant pedagogical alternative for transforming Aqidah Akhlak learning into a more meaningful, contextualized, and critically oriented learning process.

Although the implementation of the Deep Learning approach has been widely investigated across various educational contexts, empirical evidence indicates that research has been predominantly conducted in science, mathematics, and primary school learning, with a focus on improving learning outcomes and higher-order thinking skills (Chen et al., 2020; Siregar et al., 2025; Taqiyya et al., 2025). In contrast, its implementation in Islamic Religious Education, particularly in Aqidah Akhlak learning, has received relatively limited attention. In fact, the characteristics of this subject require students not only to understand religious concepts but also to develop the ability to reason, reflect, and critically relate Islamic values to various real-life issues.

These research limitations indicate that the discourse on the Deep Learning approach in Islamic Religious Education has not yet shifted from conceptual discussions toward explaining its implementation mechanisms in classroom practice. Most studies have focused on the effectiveness of the approach in improving learning outcomes, whereas studies that explain how the dimensions of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning shape the process of developing critical thinking skills remain scarce. Consequently, the relationship between the characteristics of the Deep Learning approach and the development of critical thinking skills in Aqidah Akhlak learning has not yet been comprehensively explained.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to analyze the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang and to identify its contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills. The novelty of this study lies not only in the madrasa context as the research setting but also in its integrative analysis of how the dimensions of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning are implemented in fostering critical thinking processes within Islamic Religious Education. The findings of this study are expected to broaden the body of knowledge regarding the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Islamic education while providing an empirical foundation for developing learning

practices that are more reflective, contextualized, and oriented toward meaningful learning.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang. A case study design was selected because it enables researchers to comprehensively explore a phenomenon within its real-life context and uncover the processes, interactions, and experiences underlying the implementation of learning (Yin, 2018). The study focused on the implementation of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning dimensions, as well as their contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in Aqidah Akhlak learning, consisting of the madrasa principal, Aqidah Akhlak teachers, and students participating in the learning process.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Deep Learning approach. The use of multiple data collection techniques enabled the researcher to generate rich information while facilitating triangulation across data sources and methods. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analytical process was conducted iteratively from the data collection stage until patterns and themes representing the implementation of the Deep Learning approach were identified. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source and methodological triangulation, member checking with participants, and peer debriefing to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research results.

Results and Discussions

The findings of this study are organized into three major themes that correspond to the research objectives. As summarized in Table 1, the implementation of the Deep Learning approach encompasses its classroom implementation, its contribution to students' critical thinking skills, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing its implementation.

Table 1. Synthesis of Research Findings

Research Focus	Synthesis of Findings
Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach	The Deep Learning approach was implemented through the integration of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning, enabling students to construct knowledge through contextual, reflective, and collaborative learning experiences.
Contribution to Students' Critical Thinking	The implementation encouraged students to ask questions, present arguments, evaluate information, reflect on Islamic values, and solve contextual problems, indicating the development of critical thinking skills.
Supporting Factors	Successful implementation was supported by teacher competence, institutional commitment, and a conducive learning environment that promoted active student participation.
Inhibiting Factors	Differences in students' learning readiness and limited learning resources remained the primary challenges affecting the consistency of implementation.

The synthesis presented in Table 1 provides an overview of the main findings, which are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach in Aqidah Akhlak Learning

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang was carried out through the integration of three dimensions: meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning. These dimensions were not implemented as separate activities but complemented one another in shaping students' learning experiences. Observation results revealed that the entire learning process was designed to guide students toward developing a deep understanding of the learning materials through contextual, reflective, and participatory activities. The meaningful learning dimension was implemented by connecting Aqidah Akhlak concepts with students' real-life experiences. Before introducing the main learning materials, teachers explored students' prior knowledge through guiding questions and discussions related to everyday phenomena. According to the madrasa principal, this strategy enabled students to connect new knowledge with their previous experiences, making the learning process more meaningful and relevant.

The implementation of mindful learning was reflected in students' active engagement throughout the learning process. Teachers provided opportunities for students to ask questions, express opinions, present arguments, and reflect on the concepts being studied, transforming learning from a one-way instructional process into a more interactive experience. Observations indicated that students actively participated in discussions and demonstrated the ability to justify the opinions they expressed. In

addition, the joyful learning dimension was manifested through collaborative activities such as group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and experience sharing, which allowed students to interact more freely with both their peers and teachers. One of the students explained that the integration of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning made Aqidah Akhlak lessons more engaging and enjoyable.

The findings further showed that the implementation of these three dimensions had become an integral part of daily classroom practice. The Aqidah Akhlak teacher explained that each learning session began by connecting the learning materials with students' experiences, continued with discussion and reflection activities, and concluded with collaborative tasks that created positive learning experiences. This pattern was consistently applied to strengthen students' engagement throughout the learning process. The consistency of the Deep Learning approach was also evident in the teaching modules, lesson plans, and assessment instruments, which provided opportunities for students to explore problems, construct arguments, participate in discussions, and formulate conclusions. The alignment among observation, interview, and documentation findings demonstrates that the Deep Learning approach has been systematically integrated into the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang.

Contribution of the Deep Learning Implementation to the Development of Critical Thinking Skills

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach made a significant contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang. Observation results showed that students no longer acted merely as recipients of information but actively participated in identifying problems, presenting reasons, analyzing different perspectives, and drawing conclusions based on the outcomes of discussions. These learning activities reflected a shift from a learning pattern primarily oriented toward content mastery to one emphasizing reflective, analytical, and argumentative thinking processes. The development of critical thinking skills was also evident in students' increasing confidence in expressing their opinions during the learning process. By providing equal opportunities for every student to ask questions, respond to ideas, and defend arguments based on the learning materials, teachers encouraged students to evaluate information more carefully before expressing their views, making classroom discussions more dynamic and reasoning-oriented.

These findings were reinforced by interviews with the Aqidah Akhlak teacher, who explained that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach had brought noticeable changes to students' ways of thinking and participating in classroom activities. According to the teacher, students became more confident in asking questions, more actively engaged in discussions, and more capable of providing logical reasons to support their opinions. Similar experiences were reported by students, who perceived that learning activities based on discussion, reflection, and joyful learning provided greater opportunities to express ideas and exchange opinions with their classmates. Such conditions helped students develop a deeper understanding of the learning materials because concepts were explored collaboratively rather than being obtained solely through the teacher's explanations.

The documentation findings further strengthened these results by showing that learning materials and assessment instruments provided opportunities for students to analyze cases, construct arguments, solve problems, and reflect on their learning outcomes. These forms of assessment demonstrate that the development of critical thinking skills had become an integrated component of the learning process, extending from lesson planning to the evaluation of Aqidah Akhlak learning. Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach not only transformed teachers' instructional strategies but also contributed significantly to students' ability to present arguments, analyze information more deeply, evaluate multiple perspectives, and relate Aqidah Akhlak concepts to the issues they encounter in everyday life. Therefore, the Deep Learning approach represents a learning strategy that supports the development of a more reflective, participatory, and critical thinking-oriented learning process.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach

The successful implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang was influenced by the interaction of various internal and external factors that shaped the learning ecosystem. The findings indicated that the effectiveness of this approach depended not only on teachers' competence in managing the learning process but also on institutional support, the learning environment, and students' readiness to actively participate in every learning activity. Institutional support emerged as the most dominant factor, as the madrasa continuously organized training programs and workshops to strengthen teachers' understanding of the Deep Learning

concept and improve their capacity to implement it in the classroom. In addition, the madrasa developed a conducive learning environment that encouraged active, collaborative, and student-centered learning. Another supporting factor was students' characteristics, as most students demonstrated high enthusiasm, psychological readiness, and confidence in expressing their opinions and participating in classroom discussions. These conditions fostered more dynamic classroom interactions and encouraged the development of critical thinking skills through questioning, dialogue, and argumentation in Aqidah Akhlak learning.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the Deep Learning approach continued to face several challenges. Observations showed that the availability of learning facilities and infrastructure had not fully supported all activities designed within the approach, while variations in students' physical and mental readiness, thinking abilities, and self-confidence resulted in unequal levels of participation during the learning process. Some students still tended to remain passive when asked to express their opinions or raise questions, limiting the effectiveness of classroom interactions. Interviews with the madrasa principal, teachers, and students consistently identified limited facilities and differences in students' readiness as the main obstacles to implementation, while madrasa documentation demonstrated efforts to address these challenges through teacher training, the improvement of learning materials and instructional resources, and the development of a more supportive learning environment. Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach is the result of synergy among institutional support, teacher readiness, the learning environment, and students' characteristics. Strengthening these components will increase the sustainability and effectiveness of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning, while the challenges related to facilities and students' readiness require continuous attention to optimize its implementation over time.

Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach in Aqidah Akhlak Learning

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang reflects a paradigm shift from an orientation toward knowledge transmission to the creation of learning experiences that encourage the active construction of meaning. This shift is evident through the integration of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning at every stage of the learning process, enabling students not only to understand learning materials conceptually but also to connect them with their experiences, values, and real-life contexts. These characteristics

represent the essence of the Deep Learning approach, which views learning as a process of developing thinking capacity, reflection, and the internalization of values through students' intellectual, emotional, and social engagement (Alim et al., 2025; Andayanie et al., 2025; Prihantoro et al., 2025). The integration of new knowledge with students' prior experiences demonstrates that Aqidah Akhlak learning is no longer oriented toward the procedural acquisition of information but toward the development of meaningful understanding. In line with Meaningful Learning theory, knowledge is retained more effectively when it is connected to learners' existing cognitive structures (Bryce & Blown, 2024). Similarly, Hattie and Donoghue (2016) emphasize that learning strategies that link prior experiences with new concepts foster deeper understanding than approaches centered on information reproduction. Consequently, Aqidah Akhlak values are learned not merely as academic content but also as a foundation for understanding and responding to everyday realities, a finding that is consistent with Pakanna et al. (2025).

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach also demonstrated the development of mindful learning, reflected in students' engagement in reflective thinking, argumentation, and the evaluation of information throughout the learning process. These findings indicate that learning extends beyond cognitive achievement and becomes a metacognitive process that encourages students to understand the rationale, meaning, and relevance of the concepts they learn. This perspective supports the view of Andayanie et al. (2025), who argue that mindful learning forms the foundation of deep learning because it promotes students' awareness of their own learning processes, while Taqiyya et al. (2025) identify reflective awareness as a prerequisite for sustainable learning in the twenty-first century. At the same time, the implementation of joyful learning created an open environment in which students felt more confident in expressing opinions, asking questions, and engaging in dialogue without fear of making mistakes. Such psychological comfort strengthened active participation and enhanced the quality of classroom interactions, extending the findings of Siregar et al. (2025) regarding the synergy among meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning, while also confirming the findings of Budhiarti et al. (2025) concerning the transformation of pedagogy toward more collaborative, contextualized, and student-centered learning.

The findings of this study offer a perspective that differs from most previous studies, which have generally implemented the Deep Learning approach in non-religious subjects or primary education settings (Chen et al., 2020; Budhiarti et al., 2025).

In Aqidah Akhlak learning, the Deep Learning approach functions not only as a pedagogical strategy to improve learning quality but also as a means of internalizing religious values through reflection, dialogue, and the connection of concepts with students' lived experiences. As a result, religious learning is transformed from the transmission of doctrine into a process of developing religious awareness through meaningful learning experiences. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of this approach demonstrates that Deep Learning is not synonymous with learning without teacher guidance. Effective implementation still requires systematic instructional design, gradual instructional support, and learning management that balances learner autonomy with teacher guidance. This argument is consistent with Sweller et al. (2007), who contend that minimally guided instruction may increase students' cognitive load, particularly when dealing with complex learning materials. Therefore, the effectiveness of the Deep Learning approach in this study was determined not only by students' active participation but also by teachers' capacity to design learning experiences that enable students to construct understanding in a gradual, reflective, and meaningful manner.

Contribution of the Deep Learning Approach to the Development of Critical Thinking Skills

The Deep Learning approach positions thinking processes as the core of learning, enabling students not only to understand Aqidah Akhlak concepts but also to develop the ability to reason, evaluate, and reflect on various issues they encounter. These characteristics are reflected in students' ability to present more logical arguments, provide reasons for every opinion they express, and relate Islamic values to the realities of everyday life. These changes indicate that learning has progressed beyond the achievement of cognitive outcomes toward the development of higher-order thinking skills. This perspective is consistent with Ennis (2018), who conceptualizes critical thinking as a decision-making process grounded in rational reasoning, while reinforcing the views of Hitchcock (2017) and Halpern and Dunn (2022), who argue that critical thinking is a fundamental goal of education because it enables students to evaluate information objectively before forming beliefs or making decisions. The strengthening of critical thinking skills does not emerge spontaneously but develops through learning experiences that provide opportunities for students to engage in dialogue, question concepts, and examine the validity of various viewpoints. Such conditions cultivate habits of reflective thinking because every idea expressed must be supported by justifiable reasons and evidence. In this framework, critical thinking is understood as an

integrated process involving analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and reflection, as described by Heard et al. (2020) and Vincent-Lancrin (2023). Furthermore, Liu et al. (2014) emphasize that these skills develop more effectively when students are confronted with authentic problems that require the application of knowledge in real-life contexts rather than merely recalling previously learned information.

The development of critical thinking skills is further strengthened through collaborative learning interactions, where group discussions and the exchange of ideas enable students to examine their arguments from multiple perspectives and promote deeper thinking processes. In this context, teachers act as facilitators who provide scaffolding according to students' needs until they are able to construct their reasoning independently. This mechanism supports the Social Interdependence theory proposed by Johnson and Johnson (2009), which argues that collaborative learning produces higher-quality reasoning than individual learning. This perspective is also consistent with the studies of Wass et al. (2011) and Gunawardena and Wilson (2021), which emphasize scaffolding as an effective strategy for gradually developing critical thinking skills. Moreover, the findings of Wartono et al. (2019) and Chotimah et al. (2025) strengthen the argument that learning designed based on the Deep Learning approach and Higher-Order Thinking Skills effectively enhances students' analytical abilities while deepening their conceptual understanding. In the context of Aqidah Akhlak learning, the development of critical thinking skills carries a broader meaning than merely improving academic achievement, as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on religious issues fosters wiser ways of understanding Islamic teachings and applying them to various life situations. Therefore, the implementation of the Deep Learning approach not only creates more active learning but also develops students' intellectual capacity to make rational decisions while remaining grounded in Islamic values. These findings demonstrate that integrating the Deep Learning approach into Aqidah Akhlak learning contributes to strengthening twenty-first-century competencies while expanding the role of Islamic Religious Education as a means of fostering reflective, analytical, and responsible thinking skills.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach in Aqidah Akhlak Learning

The successful implementation of the Deep Learning approach is determined not only by instructional design but also by the interaction among various elements that shape the learning ecosystem. The findings reveal that teacher readiness, institutional

support, students' characteristics, and a conducive learning environment are complementary factors in creating meaningful learning experiences. This indicates that the implementation of Deep Learning is a systemic process requiring synergy among teachers' competencies, institutional policies, and a supportive learning culture. This perspective is consistent with Alim et al. (2025), who argue that Deep Learning is not merely the application of instructional strategies but a comprehensive transformation of educational practices. Similarly, Prihantoro et al. (2025) emphasize that the successful implementation of Deep Learning policies largely depends on the readiness of human resources and institutional support.

Among these factors, the role of teachers emerged as the most influential because teachers function not only as providers of learning materials but also as designers of learning experiences capable of integrating meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning. Teachers' abilities to select appropriate instructional strategies, facilitate discussions, provide feedback, and establish positive interactions constitute the foundation of deep learning experiences. This finding supports Andayanie et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of teachers' competencies in implementing the three dimensions of Deep Learning in an integrated manner. Likewise, Meliyawati and Dinata (2025) found that the successful integration of the Deep Learning approach is strongly influenced by teachers' capacity to adapt instructional strategies to students' characteristics and the school context. Nevertheless, the study also identified several challenges, including variations in students' learning readiness, limited supporting facilities, and learning habits that remain oriented toward passive information reception. From the perspective of educational psychology, these conditions reflect individual differences that influence students' motivation, attention, and readiness to learn (Bentham, 2002), while established thinking patterns and learning behaviors often shape students' responses to new instructional approaches, requiring continuous adaptation toward more active learning (Bargh, 2013).

Despite these challenges, they do not constitute major obstacles when accompanied by adaptive instructional strategies and a collaborative learning environment. Effective classroom management, opportunities for active participation, and the development of a supportive learning culture can minimize the barriers encountered during the learning process. These findings reinforce the synthesis of Hattie and Donoghue (2016), which argues that learning outcomes are determined more by the effectiveness of instructional strategies than by students' initial conditions. Furthermore,

the Social Interdependence theory proposed by Johnson and Johnson (2009) explains that positive interactions within the learning environment enhance students' motivation, engagement, and the overall quality of learning. Therefore, the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning requires strengthening teachers' competencies, institutional support, and a collaborative learning culture to ensure that the principles of meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning can be implemented sustainably.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MAN 3 Palembang has proven to promote learning oriented toward the development of conceptual understanding, learning awareness, and students' active engagement through the integration of meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning. This approach not only contributes to enhancing students' critical thinking skills in analyzing, evaluating, and reflecting on Islamic values but also demonstrates that its successful implementation is influenced by the synergy among teachers' competencies, institutional support, and a conducive learning environment. These findings provide a novel contribution by strengthening the empirical evidence that the Deep Learning approach is relevant for implementation in Aqidah Akhlak learning as an instructional approach that not only improves the quality of learning but also supports the development of reflective thinking skills and the internalization of Islamic values. This study was limited to a single madrasa and employed a qualitative approach; therefore, its findings cannot yet be generalized broadly. Accordingly, future research is recommended to involve more diverse school contexts and employ mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to examine the effectiveness of the Deep Learning approach in developing various dimensions of students' competencies.

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