

Implementation of a Deep Learning Approach in Akidah Akhlak Instruction to Strengthen Students' Reflective Thinking Skills

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai in order to strengthen students' reflective thinking skills. This effort responds to the limitations of conventional instruction, which has tended to be normative and memorization-oriented, with the expectation that learning can become more meaningful and contextual. The research employed a qualitative method with a case study design. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers, students, the principal, and parents, as well as documentation of instructional materials. Data were analyzed using an interactive model involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the implementation of Deep Learning occurs through contextual lesson planning, dialogic classroom practices, the use of moral cases closely related to students' everyday lives, and assessment practices that emphasize students' ability to reflect on values of faith. The conclusion of this study confirms that the Deep Learning approach is effective in strengthening students' reflective thinking skills, as students are not only able to understand content at a textual level, but also evaluate behavior, consider moral consequences, and develop self-awareness based on Islamic teachings.

Keywords: *Deep Learning, Akidah Akhlak Instruction, Reflective Thinking*

ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi pendekatan *Deep Learning* dalam pembelajaran Akidah Akhlak di MTs Negeri 1 Banggai guna menguatkan kemampuan berpikir reflektif peserta didik. Upaya ini dilakukan untuk mengatasi keterbatasan pembelajaran yang selama ini cenderung normatif dan berorientasi pada hafalan, sehingga diharapkan menjadi lebih bermakna dan kontekstual. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi proses pembelajaran, wawancara mendalam dengan guru, peserta didik, kepala madrasah, serta orang tua, dan dokumentasi perangkat pembelajaran. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif melalui tahap kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi *Deep Learning* berlangsung melalui perencanaan kontekstual, pelaksanaan dialogis, penggunaan kasus moral yang dekat dengan kehidupan sehari-hari, serta evaluasi yang menekankan pada kemampuan peserta didik dalam merefleksikan nilai-nilai keimanan. Simpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pendekatan *Deep Learning* mampu menguatkan kemampuan berpikir reflektif peserta didik, di mana mereka tidak hanya memahami materi secara tekstual, tetapi juga mampu menilai perilaku, mempertimbangkan konsekuensi moral, dan membangun kesadaran diri berdasarkan ajaran Islam.

Kata kunci: *Deep Learning, Pembelajaran Akidah Akhlak, Berpikir Reflektif*



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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary evolution of madrasah education reflects a change from Akidah Akhlak instruction, which was primarily concerned with memorizing, to a method that stresses moral awareness, in-depth comprehension, and students' capacity to consider the principles of faith in practical situations (Nurulhaji dkk., 2025). In addition to teaching faith and ethics in a normative way, 21st-century learning trends demand that educators provide forums for discussion, meaningful learning opportunities, and critical thinking exercises that motivate students to consider the causes, effects, and applicability of particular behaviors in their social context (Mantau & Talango, 2023). The Deep Learning approach is crucial in this case because it gives students the chance to learn more actively, consciously, and reflectively by helping them comprehend, connect, interpret, and assess Akidah Akhlak's values (Wafa dkk., 2025). Students at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai must develop reflective thinking skills in order to not only comprehend the concepts of right and wrong but also be able to weigh decisions, evaluate actions, and develop self-awareness based on Islamic values. This is especially urgent given the abundance of digital information, cultural shifts, and the moral challenges faced by adolescents. In order to meet the educational demands of today's madrasahs, the application of a deep learning strategy in the teaching of Akidah Akhlak could be seen as a pedagogical endeavor to enhance students' reflective thinking skills in a more contextual and relevant way.

According to earlier studies, the application of deep learning in Islamic Religious Education is highly relevant to the educational requirements of madrasahs, which place an emphasis on students' character development, internalization of values, and comprehension of the subject matter in addition to mastery (Dzulfiqar & Miskiyah, 2026). According to a number of studies, comprehensive religious instruction can change students' learning styles from only remembering facts to being able to comprehend Islamic teachings in a contextual, thoughtful, and useful way (Rudini dkk., 2026). This approach is crucial in the context of Akidah Akhlak education because the subject matter of Akidah and Akhlak cannot be understood simply as normative knowledge; rather, it must be connected to life experiences, the moral dilemmas that adolescents face, and students' capacity to assess behavior based on religious values. The literature also demonstrates that methods like problem-solving, religious reflection, analytical tasks, classroom discussion, and connecting the subject matter to social realities can help students develop a more critical and reflective understanding of Islamic ideals.

Nevertheless, prior research has left key topics unexplored, especially with regard to the practical application of deep learning techniques in Akidah Akhlak instruction at the MTs level (Sabila dkk., 2025). The learning process for Akidah Akhlak, which is focused on enhancing students' reflective thinking abilities, has not been particularly studied because some studies continue to concentrate on deep learning within the larger context of Islamic religious education, character education, or religious moderation (Kurnia dkk., 2025). Additionally, there aren't many studies that go into great detail about how teachers in madrasah classrooms create learning activities, encourage reflective dialogue, choose contextual problems, lead students through the process of reflection, and assess improvements in reflective thinking abilities. In order to close this gap, research on the application of a deep learning approach in the teaching of Islamic ethics and beliefs to enhance students' capacity for reflective thought at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai is crucial, especially through a qualitative study that looks at instructional strategies, teacher and student experiences, and the elements that facilitate and obstruct its application.

The purpose of this study is to particularly discuss how MTs Negeri 1 Banggai uses the Deep Learning approach to teach Akidah Akhlak in order to improve students' capacity for

reflective thought. This paper's main goal is to comprehend how teachers plan, carry out, and assess their lessons. It also focuses on how these learning activities help students develop a deeper understanding of faith and ethical values, connect them to their experiences in life, consciously evaluate their attitudes and behaviors, and make moral decisions based on Islamic teachings. Therefore, this study aims to address the problem of Akidah Akhlak instruction, which still tends to be normative and rote, necessitating the adoption of a more relevant, contextual, and reflective approach to student learning.

The central argument of this study is that applying a Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak education has the potential to enhance students' reflective thinking abilities, particularly when teachers design learning processes that go beyond mere content delivery. In such an approach, learning is directed toward helping students interpret the meaning of faith and moral values, relate these concepts to real-life experiences, engage in open discussions on ethical issues, and critically reflect on their own attitudes and behaviors. This enables students not only to understand religious and moral concepts at a conceptual level, but also to assess their actions, evaluate moral implications, and develop self-awareness grounded in Islamic principles. Consequently, the more the learning process is designed to be meaningful and reflective through Deep Learning, the greater the improvement in students' reflective thinking skills in both understanding and practicing Islamic teachings.

Deep learning in the context of education can be defined as a method of instruction that prioritizes deep cognitive engagement, meaningful comprehension, and students' capacity to relate knowledge to their experiences and real-world circumstances (Syafi'i & Darnanengsih, 2025). According to Marton and Säljö, deep learning happens when students make an effort to comprehend the significance of the material they are studying instead of just mechanically memorizing facts (Qoyyim & Salsabil, 2026). Accordingly, Biggs and Tang stress that deep learning helps students comprehend concepts, make connections between ideas, evaluate data, and critically apply knowledge in pertinent circumstances (Fatmawaty, 2024). According to Fullan, Deep Learning is a pedagogical approach that changes the function of the instructor to that of a creator of real-world problem-solving, collaborative learning experiences (M.Pd dkk., 2026). Mystakidis, on the other hand, stressed that deeper meaningful learning entails higher-order cognitive processes including meaning-making, pattern identification, conceptual association, critical thinking, problem-solving, and metacognition (Nadawina dkk., 2025). According to these viewpoints, deep learning can be understood as a method of instruction that places students in the role of active participants who consciously comprehend, interpret, reflect on, and internalize knowledge. This way, learning transcends rote memorization and becomes a process of creating meaning, attitudes, and behaviors.

In education, deep learning can be defined as a method that prioritizes in-depth comprehension, the creation of meaning, introspection, and the application of information in practical settings (Putri dkk., 2026). Deep learning generally takes several forms, such as inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, collaborative learning, reflective learning, and contextual learning (Haq & Prasetyo, 2025). Students' active participation in concept exploration, making connections between new information and past experiences, critically assessing problems, conversing with others, and reflecting on the learning process and its results are all examples of its essential features. In actuality, Deep Learning requires students to do more than just comprehend knowledge; they also need to make decisions, solve problems, interpret meanings, recognize connections between concepts, and absorb the principles they are learning (Syayidah & Sodik, 2025). Thus, deep learning can be defined as a type of learning that progresses from memorization to comprehension, reasoning, assessment, reflection, and deliberate application of knowledge in practical contexts.

It is possible to think of the teaching of Aqidah and Akhlak as an Islamic educational process that deliberately and methodically helps students comprehend, believe in, internalize, and

apply the principles of religion and moral behavior in their day-to-day lives (Damanik & Ningrum, 2025). According to Zakiah Daradjat, Islamic education covers the holistic development of the individual such that religious principles influence students' personalities and behaviors rather than being restricted to the distinct facets of faith, worship, or moral character (Al-Farabi dkk., 2023). According to Muhaimin, Islamic Religious Education is an endeavor to inculcate Islamic principles through practice, instruction, and guidance so that students can comprehend religious teachings and use them as a life guide (Irsad, 2016). According to Abuddin Nata, moral character is associated with the formation of an inner disposition that results in good action that is deliberate, consistent, and consistent with Islamic principles (Daulay, 2025). Abdul Majid, on the other hand, describes learning as an interactive educational process that involves teachers, students, instructional materials, and the learning environment with the goal of changing students' knowledge, attitudes, and abilities (Majid, 2021). According to this viewpoint, the teaching of Akidah Akhlak is a process of internalizing values that links religious understanding with moral awareness, self-reflection, and the practice of Islamic behavior among students, rather than just being a presentation of material on the pillars of faith, the attributes of Allah, praiseworthy moral qualities, and reprehensible moral qualities.

There are two primary components to the Aqidah and Akhlak curricula: Akhlak and Aqidah (Sari & Nazib, 2022). The foundations of students' religion, including faith in Allah, angels, scripture, messengers, the Day of Judgment, and qada and qadar, including the strengthening of Tawhid, faith in Allah's power, and religious awareness, are covered in the course of Aqidah (Irawan, 2023). In the meantime, the study of ethics focuses on the evolution of Islamic beliefs and conduct, including morality toward God, other people, oneself, and the environment (Warasto, 2018). Depending on its format, Akidah Akhlak's content may include moral principles, anecdotes of exemplary people, prohibitions against repugnant behavior, instances of virtuous action, and the development of positive attitudes in day-to-day living. This subject's primary feature is the integration of knowledge, comprehension, and practice, which means that students must not only comprehend Islamic teachings cognitively but also develop inner awareness and put it into practice (Jannah, 2020). As a result, the Akidah Akhlak curriculum includes normative, reflective, practical, and habit-forming content. This is because the curriculum's overall goal is to mold faithful, honorable, responsible people who can use Islamic values as the basis for their attitudes, thoughts, and actions.

Reflective thinking is a profound thinking process that involves analyzing experiences, comprehending issues, weighing arguments, and making deliberate decisions based on certain ideals and logical factors (Utami dkk., 2025). According to Dewey, reflective thinking is an active, continuous, and meticulous analysis of a belief or piece of knowledge, including its implications and the evidence that supports it (Oseven, t.t.). Accordingly, Schön clarifies that reflection happens when people are able to consider both their past and present behaviors, allowing experience to be a source of self-improvement (Taabudilah dkk., 2025). Mezirow highlights that the capacity to critically reassess presumptions, viewpoints, and the significance of experiences is linked to reflective thinking (Thamrin dkk., 2026). In the meanwhile, Moon claimed that reflection is a mental activity that aids people in developing a more mature understanding, connecting new information with existing knowledge, and making more meaningful sense of their experiences (Aminah & Mauliyah, 2025). According to these viewpoints, reflective thinking can be defined as students' capacity to analyze their educational experiences, assess their comprehension, take values and consequences into account, and derive meaning that can direct their attitudes and behaviors in a more responsible and conscious way.

A critical comparison of previous studies indicates that the existing literature has developed along three main lines. First, studies on Deep Learning in Islamic Religious Education generally emphasize meaningful learning, value internalization, and the movement from memorization toward understanding (Dzulfiqar & Miskiyah, 2026; Wafa et al., 2025). Second,

studies on Deep Learning and curriculum development tend to discuss broader pedagogical trends, character formation, and religious moderation, rather than the concrete classroom mechanisms through which reflective thinking develops (Haq & Prasetyo, 2025; Kurnia et al., 2025). Third, studies on Akidah Akhlak learning have shown the importance of moral value formation, but they have not yet explained in detail how teachers transform moral content into reflective dialogue, moral case analysis, self-evaluation, and assessment of students' reflective reasoning (Sabila et al., 2025; Rudini et al., 2026). These studies provide an important foundation, but they still leave an empirical gap concerning how Deep Learning is planned, enacted, and assessed in Akidah Akhlak instruction at the MTs level.

This study responds to that gap by examining the implementation of Deep Learning in a specific madrasah context, namely MTs Negeri 1 Banggai. Rather than treating Deep Learning only as a theoretical concept, this research investigates how the teacher designs contextual learning, facilitates reflective questioning, selects moral problems from students' everyday lives, guides students to evaluate their own attitudes, and assesses reflective thinking within Akidah Akhlak learning. In this way, the study extends existing knowledge by linking three areas that earlier research often discusses separately, namely Deep Learning, Akidah Akhlak instruction, and reflective thinking skills.

Accordingly, this study positions itself as an empirical case study that clarifies the classroom-level implementation of Deep Learning in Akidah Akhlak instruction and its contribution to students' reflective thinking. Its novelty lies in the formulation of an implementation pattern that connects contextual planning, dialogic learning, moral case analysis, reflective writing, and value-based assessment as an integrated process for strengthening reflective thinking in Islamic moral education. In accordance with this focus, the following research questions are formulated: How is the Deep Learning approach planned in Akidah Akhlak instruction at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai?, How is the Deep Learning approach implemented in classroom practices of Akidah Akhlak learning to support students' reflective thinking skills?, How is students' reflective thinking assessed within the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction?, What factors support and hinder the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in strengthening students' reflective thinking skills in Akidah Akhlak learning?.

METHOD

The material object of this study is the Akidah Akhlak learning process implemented at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai, with the unit of analysis focusing on the practical application of the Deep Learning approach in teaching and learning activities aimed at strengthening students' reflective thinking skills. The case under investigation centers on how Akidah Akhlak teachers design, implement, and evaluate learning processes that encourage students to deeply understand theological and moral values, relate them to lived experiences, and reflect on their attitudes and behaviors based on Islamic teachings. The research site was selected because MTs Negeri 1 Banggai represents a relevant madrasah educational setting for observing the dynamics of religious learning amid shifts in student character, technological development, and adolescent moral challenges. The key events examined in this study include teacher–student interactions in Akidah Akhlak classes, the use of reflective questioning, value-based discussions, moral problem-solving activities, contextual assignments, and students' responses in interpreting and applying Islamic values in their daily lives.

This study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach, as its focus was directed toward an in-depth understanding of the implementation process of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction to enhance students' reflective thinking skills at

MTs Negeri 1 Banggai. This design was selected because the study did not aim to test statistical effects, but rather to describe, interpret, and analyze naturally occurring classroom practices. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with Akidah Akhlak teachers, students, and school stakeholders, as well as document analysis of instructional plans, teaching materials, student assignments, and evaluation records. Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, enabling the researcher to identify implementation patterns, forms of reflective activities, student responses, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in the application of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak learning. Through this design, the study is expected to generate a comprehensive understanding of how Akidah Akhlak instruction can be developed in a more meaningful, contextual, and reflective manner.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from participants directly involved in the Akidah Akhlak learning process, namely the Akidah Akhlak teacher as the implementer of instruction, students as the subjects experiencing the learning process, and the principal or vice principal for curriculum affairs as supporting informants who understand educational policies and instructional implementation within the madrasah. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the consideration that they possess relevant knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction. Secondary data were collected from instructional documents, including lesson modules, learning objectives flow (ATP), learning outcomes (CP), teaching materials, student worksheets, assessment instruments, reflective notes, and documentation of learning activities. Through these data sources, the study is able to obtain comprehensive information regarding planning, implementation, evaluation, student responses, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in the application of the Deep Learning approach to strengthen students' reflective thinking skills.

Data collection in this study was conducted in a staged manner through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out by directly examining the Akidah Akhlak learning process in the classroom, with a particular focus on teachers' implementation of the Deep Learning approach, forms of classroom interaction, the use of reflective questioning, value-based discussions, contextual assignments, and students' responses during learning activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with Akidah Akhlak teachers, students, principals, or vice principals for curriculum affairs to obtain detailed information regarding planning, implementation, evaluation, learning experiences, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in the application of the Deep Learning approach. Documentation involved collecting instructional materials such as learning outcomes (CP), learning trajectory plans (ATP), lesson modules, teaching materials, student worksheets, assessment instruments, reflective notes, students' assignments, and photographs of learning activities. All data were systematically collected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Deep Learning approach is implemented in Akidah Akhlak instruction and how this process contributes to strengthening students' reflective thinking skills.

Data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, simplified, grouped, and focused data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation related to the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction. The condensed data were then presented in the form of narrative descriptions, thematic matrices, or categorized findings to make key patterns more visible. These patterns included teachers' strategies in designing deep learning instruction, forms of students' reflective activities, students' responses to the learning process, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn gradually through interpretative processes, including meaning-making, comparison across multiple data

sources, and verification to ensure consistency between field findings and the research focus. Through this analytical process, the study is expected to produce an in-depth understanding of how the Deep Learning approach is implemented in Akidah Akhlak learning and how it contributes to strengthening students' reflective thinking skills.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai occurs through learning processes that emphasize meaning construction, reflective dialogue, and the integration of learning content with students' lived experiences. These findings address a gap in previous studies, which have largely discussed Deep Learning within the broader scope of Islamic Religious Education, but have not provided a detailed examination of its practical application in Akidah Akhlak at the madrasah junior secondary level. In this study, Deep Learning is not only understood as a learning strategy that enables students to achieve deep conceptual understanding, but also as an approach that supports them in evaluating behaviors, considering moral consequences, and reflecting on the relationship between faith-based values and everyday life.

Observation results indicate that the Akidah Akhlak teacher did not begin instruction by directly explaining conceptual material. Instead, the learning process started with guiding questions that were closely related to students' daily lives. In the topic of commendable and blameworthy moral conduct, the teacher introduced examples of behaviors commonly encountered by students, such as speaking truthfully, respecting parents, maintaining proper social etiquette, using social media responsibly, and avoiding mocking peers. This instructional strategy shifted learning away from rote memorization of definitions toward a deeper understanding of values. Students appeared more engaged when the teacher asked them to explain why certain behaviors are considered good or bad, rather than merely identifying textual references or providing examples.

During classroom observation, the implementation of the Deep Learning approach was evident through several key activities, including group discussions, reflective questioning sessions, moral case analysis, and short reflective writing tasks. The teacher provided opportunities for students to connect Akidah Akhlak content with their experiences at home, at school, and within their peer environments. During discussions, students were not only required to respond to the teacher's questions, but also encouraged to explain their reasoning, provide relevant examples, and evaluate the possible consequences of certain actions. These activities indicate a strengthening of reflective thinking processes, as students gradually learned to consider values, personal experiences, and potential outcomes before drawing conclusions.

Interview findings with the Principal of MTs Negeri 1 Banggai, Jamil Hasyim, confirm the institutional relevance of reflective Akidah Akhlak instruction. He stated, "Akidah Akhlak learning should not stop at memorization. Students need to understand religious values and relate them to the problems they face every day, especially in the digital environment." This statement shows that the madrasah views Deep Learning as a practical response to current moral challenges, because students need learning experiences that connect Islamic values with concrete decisions in daily life.

Interview results with the Akidah Akhlak teacher, Abdul Gafur, show that Deep Learning is implemented through lesson planning that links learning outcomes with students' lived experiences. He explained, "When students discuss real cases, they understand why honesty, trustworthiness, and respect matter in life. They do not only memorize the definition, but also think about the consequences of their actions." This explanation indicates that the teacher

deliberately uses contextual cases to move students from textual understanding toward moral reasoning and self-reflection.

In practice, the teacher employs reflective questions such as why a person should uphold trustworthiness, what the consequences of lying are for oneself and others, and how students should respond when witnessing peers engaging in behavior that contradicts Islamic moral principles. Such questions encourage deeper cognitive engagement, as students are required to connect religious knowledge with moral reasoning and personal experience.

Interview findings with one of the students' parents, Erni A Mamak, indicate that reflective Akidah Akhlak instruction also affects students' awareness outside the classroom. She stated, "My child responds better when religious advice is linked to daily behavior, not only memorized." Parents also noticed subtle changes in how the child evaluates behavior, such as becoming more careful in speech, more receptive to advice, and increasingly able to explain why certain actions should be avoided. These findings suggest that reflective thinking begins to appear not only during classroom interaction, but also in students' moral awareness at home.

Interviews with students indicate that Deep Learning makes Akidah Akhlak learning easier to understand because it is closely connected to everyday experience. Salsabila Himran stated, "The case examples made me realize that akhlak is not only a lesson, but something I must practice with friends." Moh Fadil Mardani added, "The teacher's questions made us think about what happens after a bad action." Faiz Badhila explained, "Writing reflection helped me remember my mistakes and think about how to improve." These student voices show that reflective activities strengthen self-awareness, moral reasoning, and the ability to evaluate one's own behavior.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai is carried out through contextual lesson planning, dialogic learning implementation, the use of moral problems closely related to students' lived experiences, and evaluation processes that assess not only conceptual mastery but also students' ability to reflect on values. These findings clarify aspects that have received limited attention in previous studies, particularly how teachers concretely design learning activities, facilitate reflective dialogue, guide processes of contemplation, and observe the development of students' reflective thinking within the madrasah classroom context. Accordingly, the Deep Learning approach can be understood as a pedagogical strategy that is relevant for strengthening Akidah Akhlak instruction to make it more meaningful, applicable, and oriented toward the development of students' moral awareness.

The documentation findings indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai is supported by various instructional documents that reflect teachers' efforts to design contextual, reflective, and value-oriented learning. The documents analyzed include lesson modules, learning trajectory plans (ATP), teaching materials, student worksheets, reflective notes, assessment instruments, and students' assignment outputs. These documents demonstrate that Akidah Akhlak learning is not solely directed toward achieving cognitive outcomes in terms of conceptual understanding of faith and moral principles, but also toward enabling students to connect learning content with their daily experiences, evaluate behaviors based on Islamic values, and reflect on attitudes that require improvement. These documentation findings reinforce the results of observations and interviews, showing that the Deep Learning approach is implemented through learning activities that require students to construct meaning, engage in dialogue, think critically, and reflect on moral behavior in real-life contexts.

Table 1. Documentation of the Implementation of the Deep Learning Approach in Akidah Akhlak Education

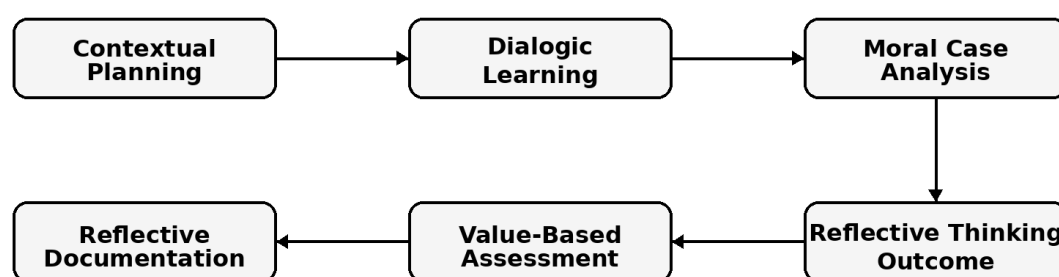
No	Document Type	Concrete Example of Content	Findings Related to Deep Learning	Relationship to Reflective Thinking
1	Akidah Akhlak lesson module	Learning objectives include students' ability to understand commendable and blameworthy behaviors and relate them to daily life.	Teachers design instruction that goes beyond content delivery and guides students toward understanding the meaning of moral values.	Students are directed to consider why certain behaviors are regarded as good or bad.
2	Learning Objective Flow (ATP)	Learning materials are structured from concept introduction, behavioral examples, case discussions, to self-reflection.	The learning sequence demonstrates a progression from basic understanding toward meaning-making and value application.	Students are given space to evaluate personal experiences based on Akidah Akhlak values.
3	Teaching materials	Materials include case examples on honesty, trustworthiness, respect for parents, etiquette in friendship, and social media use.	Content is developed contextually to remain close to students' everyday lives.	Students can connect learning content with moral issues they encounter in real life.
4	Student worksheets (LKPD)	Worksheets contain questions such as "Why is honesty important in social interaction?" and "What are the consequences of breaking trust?"	Questions encourage students to explain reasons, consequences, and underlying values of actions.	Students are trained to think before drawing conclusions and making moral judgments.
5	Student reflective notes	Students write about experiences of dishonesty, feelings of regret, and efforts to improve themselves.	Written reflection indicates a learning process that engages students' self-awareness.	Students begin to evaluate their own behavior and formulate commitments for improvement.
6	Assessment instruments	Assessment includes not only multiple-choice questions but also reflective essays and attitude-based evaluation.	Evaluation covers cognitive understanding, attitudes, and students' ability to relate values to behavior.	Reflective thinking is evident in answers that include reasoning, personal experience, and moral awareness.
7	Classroom activity documentation	Photos show students engaging in group discussions, presenting results, and writing reflections.	Learning takes place actively, dialogically, and involves students in meaning-making processes.	Discussion and presentation activities help students express opinions and consider peers' perspectives.
8	Student assignment outputs	Assignments include simple analyses of immoral behavior in the school environment and ways to avoid it.	Tasks demonstrate that students do not merely memorize concepts but also analyze moral problems in a simple way.	Students learn to identify problems, evaluate their impact, and determine actions aligned with Islamic values.

Based on the table, the research documentation demonstrates that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction is reflected in the alignment between instructional planning, classroom implementation, and assessment practices. The lesson modules, learning trajectory plans (ATP), teaching materials, and student worksheets indicate that teachers have designed learning activities that connect Akidah Akhlak concepts with students' real-life contexts. Reflective notes, assignment outputs, and assessment instruments further show that students are not only guided to acquire subject knowledge, but are also encouraged to understand the meaning of values, evaluate behaviors, and develop awareness of actions that require

improvement. Accordingly, the documentation findings strengthen the main conclusion of the study that the Deep Learning approach serves as a relevant instructional strategy for enhancing students' reflective thinking skills in Akidah Akhlak learning.

Data triangulation was conducted by comparing observations, interviews, and documentation to examine the consistency of evidence regarding the implementation of Deep Learning in Akidah Akhlak instruction. Observation data showed that teachers used guiding questions, moral case discussions, reflective dialogue, and reflective assignments. Interview data from the principal, teacher, parents, and students confirmed that these activities helped students connect Akidah Akhlak values with daily moral situations. Documentary data, including lesson modules, ATP, LKPD, reflective notes, assessment instruments, and student assignments, further showed that reflection was embedded in planning, classroom activities, and evaluation. Analytically, these findings indicate that reflective thinking emerged when learning moved through a connected sequence of contextualization, dialogue, moral reasoning, self-evaluation, and value-based action. The triangulated data therefore demonstrate not only consistency across sources, but also the instructional mechanism through which Deep Learning strengthens reflective thinking.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Deep Learning Implementation in Akidah Akhlak Instruction



Deep Learning Implementation Process in Akidah Akhlak Instruction

The conceptual model shows that Deep Learning in Akidah Akhlak instruction operates as a connected process. Contextual planning prepares students to see moral relevance, dialogic learning trains them to justify ideas, moral case analysis develops consequence evaluation, reflective documentation supports self-evaluation, and value-based assessment makes reflective thinking observable. This model clarifies the study's novelty because it explains the process through which Islamic moral learning develops reflective thinking, rather than merely confirming that Deep Learning is useful.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai takes place through learning processes that emphasize meaningful understanding, reflective dialogue, the integration of learning content with lived experiences, and the habituation of students to evaluate behavior based on Islamic values. Teachers do not merely deliver concepts of creed and morality in a normative manner; instead, they develop learning activities through guiding questions, moral case discussions, contextual tasks, and self-reflection exercises. Students appear more engaged when asked to explain why certain behaviors are considered good or bad, evaluate the consequences of specific actions, and connect learning content with their experiences at home, at school, and within their social environment. These findings demonstrate that Deep Learning in Akidah Akhlak instruction can encourage students to think more reflectively, develop stronger value awareness, and better understand Islamic teachings as a guiding framework for ethical behavior.

The implications of this study suggest that Akidah Akhlak instruction should be developed as a values-based educational process that does not stop at memorizing content, but is directed toward fostering students' moral awareness and reflective thinking skills. For teachers, the findings reinforce the importance of designing learning that is dialogic, contextual, and grounded in students' real-life experiences. For madrasahs, these findings provide a basis for strengthening student character through instructional policies that create space for reflection, value-based discussion, and attitude evaluation. For students, this approach helps them understand that Akidah Akhlak values are not merely learned for test purposes, but are intended to guide behavior, improve conduct, and build self-awareness in everyday life.

The findings emerged because Akidah Akhlak has a strong value-oriented structure that naturally invites moral interpretation, but this potential becomes visible only when the teacher transforms normative content into contextual problems, dialogue, and self-evaluation. The teacher's role was central because reflective thinking did not arise from content exposure alone. It developed when students were asked to explain reasons, examine consequences, compare behavior with Islamic values, and relate moral principles to their own experiences. This explains why students showed stronger engagement in discussions and reflective writing than in conventional explanation. The adolescent context also shaped these findings, because students at the MTs level face peer influence, digital interaction, and identity formation, all of which require opportunities to evaluate behavior consciously.

This study differs from previous research in its empirical focus and analytical depth. Earlier studies generally positioned Deep Learning as a broad pedagogical approach for Islamic Religious Education, character education, curriculum transformation, or religious moderation (Dzulfiqar & Miskiyah, 2026; Kurnia et al., 2025; Wafa et al., 2025). Other studies discussed Akidah Akhlak learning and value formation, but offered limited explanation of the classroom processes through which reflective thinking is cultivated (Rudini et al., 2026; Sabila et al., 2025). By contrast, this study demonstrates the micro-level mechanisms of implementation, namely contextual lesson planning, reflective questioning, moral case discussion, written reflection, and value-based assessment. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies not only in confirming the relevance of Deep Learning, but also in explaining how it works in Akidah Akhlak instruction.

Theoretically, these findings offer two implications for Islamic education and reflective learning. First, Deep Learning in Akidah Akhlak instruction can function as a bridge between value internalization and reflective thinking, because it requires students to interpret Islamic values through concrete moral situations. Second, reflective learning in Islamic education should not be understood only as introspection after learning, but as a continuous process that begins with contextual problem recognition, develops through dialogue and reasoning, and becomes visible through self-evaluation and ethical decision-making. Practically, teachers should strengthen lesson modules, LKPD, reflective journals, moral case materials, and assessment rubrics so that reflective thinking can be planned, observed, and evaluated more systematically. Madrasahs can support this process through teacher training on reflective pedagogy and continuous communication with parents, so that values learned in class are reinforced in family and social environments.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study indicates that the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction at MTs Negeri 1 Banggai is able to strengthen students' reflective thinking skills through learning that is meaningful, contextual, dialogic, and grounded in real-life experiences. Teachers do not merely present Akidah Akhlak content as normative knowledge; instead, they guide students to understand the meaning of values, evaluate behaviors, consider moral consequences, and reflect on their own attitudes in everyday

life. Learning activities such as guiding questions, moral case discussions, written reflections, contextual assignments, and value-based dialogue have proven to play an important role in developing students' awareness of Islamic teachings. Accordingly, Akidah Akhlak instruction can be understood not only as a space for transferring religious knowledge, but also as a setting for cultivating moral consciousness.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in its empirical explanation of the implementation of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction at the madrasah junior secondary level (MTs), particularly in relation to strengthening students' reflective thinking skills. This research extends previous studies that have largely discussed Deep Learning within the broader context of Islamic Religious Education, character education, or religious moderation. The findings provide a more specific account of how teachers design learning activities, select contextual cases, facilitate reflective dialogue, guide processes of contemplation, and assess students' reflective abilities within the madrasah classroom. Conceptually, this study affirms that Deep Learning in Akidah Akhlak instruction can be understood as a pedagogical approach that integrates deep understanding, value internalization, self-awareness, and moral decision-making grounded in Islamic teachings.

The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which is confined to a single madrasah. As a result, the findings cannot be broadly generalized to all MTs, given the variation in student characteristics, teacher practices, and school cultures. This research also employs a qualitative approach; therefore, the findings emphasize in-depth understanding of learning processes, experiences, and meanings rather than statistical measurement of the extent to which students' reflective thinking skills improve. In addition, observations of changes in students' reflective behavior were limited to classroom processes and information obtained from informants. Future research is therefore recommended to involve a longer observation period, more structured reflective instruments, and comparative studies across different madrasahs in order to produce stronger and more comprehensive evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Deep Learning approach in Akidah Akhlak instruction.

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