

Navigating the Deep Approach to Learning in Islamic Education: A Study of Its Implementation at State Senior High School

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Abstract: This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning in Islamic Education at State Senior High School 1 Palangka Raya under the Merdeka Curriculum. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving Islamic Education teachers, the principal, the Vice Principal of Academic Affairs, and Grade 10 students. The findings reveal that the Deep Approach to Learning was implemented through three stages: planning, instructional implementation, and evaluation, which emphasize meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning principles. This study contributes novel insights by demonstrating that the Deep Approach to Learning not only enhances students' conceptual understanding but also strengthens the internalization of religious values through reflective activities, socially contextualized projects, and spiritual integration in classroom practices. Furthermore, the study identifies institutional support and teacher readiness as critical success factors, while uneven student participation and limited conceptual understanding among teachers remain key challenges. These findings extend existing literature by highlighting the pedagogical, spiritual, and character dimensions of the Deep Approach to Learning in Islamic Education.

Keywords: Deep Approach to Learning, Islamic Education, Students

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis implementasi Pendekatan Pembelajaran Mendalam (Deep Approach to Learning) dalam Pendidikan Islam di SMA Negeri 1 Palangka Raya dalam kerangka Kurikulum Merdeka. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan guru Pendidikan Islam, kepala sekolah, Wakil Kepala Sekolah Bidang Akademik, serta siswa kelas X. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pendekatan Pembelajaran Mendalam diimplementasikan melalui tiga tahap, yaitu perencanaan, pelaksanaan pembelajaran, dan evaluasi, yang menekankan prinsip pembelajaran bermakna (meaningful learning), pembelajaran sadar (mindful learning), dan pembelajaran menyenangkan (joyful learning). Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi kebaruan dengan menunjukkan bahwa Pendekatan Pembelajaran Mendalam tidak hanya meningkatkan pemahaman konseptual siswa, tetapi juga memperkuat internalisasi

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nilai-nilai religius melalui aktivitas reflektif, proyek berbasis konteks sosial, dan integrasi pengalaman spiritual dalam praktik pembelajaran di kelas.

Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dukungan institusional dan kesiapan guru sebagai faktor kunci keberhasilan, sementara partisipasi siswa yang tidak merata dan keterbatasan pemahaman konseptual guru masih menjadi tantangan utama. Temuan ini memperluas literatur yang ada dengan menyoroti dimensi pedagogis, spiritual, dan pembentukan karakter dalam Pendekatan Pembelajaran Mendalam pada Pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Pendekatan pembelajaran mendalam, Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), Siswa

Introduction

The implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Indonesia aligns with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes freedom of learning and project-based learning. According to Mu'ti in Tempo (2024), the Deep Approach to Learning is a crucial component of the national education system, supported by ministerial regulations and comprehensive teacher training programs. This approach is based on three main principles: Meaningful Learning, Mindful Learning, and Joyful Learning (Wijaya et al., 2025).

Conceptually, the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) is a learning method designed to strengthen students' understanding through in-depth learning processes. This approach emphasizes critical thinking skills, connecting new information with prior knowledge, and applying knowledge in broader contexts. The primary goal is to create reflective, meaningful, and enjoyable learning experiences (Khotimah & Abdan, 2025). The Deep Approach to Learning focuses on comprehensive conceptual understanding and critical application of knowledge by creating a learning environment that supports awareness, meaning, and enjoyable experiences for students (Mutmainnah et al., 2025).

The application of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in education offers a more meaningful, engaging, and enjoyable learning solution, encouraging students to comprehensively understand concepts and apply them in real-life situations. However, its implementation faces challenges, such as limited technological infrastructure, teachers' lack of understanding and skills in utilizing technology, and the need for quality data to effectively support learning models (Sari & Arta, 2025).

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, under the leadership of Minister Prof. Dr. Abdul Mu'ti, M.Ed., has issued a policy on the Deep Approach to

Learning (DAL). This approach emphasizes the creation of a conscious, meaningful, and enjoyable learning environment and involves a comprehensive process of mind, heart, feelings, and body (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Drafting Team, 2025). In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) is positioned as a learning paradigm that emphasizes not only mastery of information but also the internalization of values through reflection, critical dialogue, and the connection of learning experiences to everyday life (Wafa et al., 2025).

The application of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education instruction at the secondary school level presents an innovative solution to increase the effectiveness and relevance of learning. This method encourages students to think critically, reflect, and apply Islamic principles in everyday life while emphasizing deeper mastery of the material. This approach also allows the integration of digital technologies such as visual media, online learning platforms, and interactive applications (Zulfah et al., 2025).

According to the official website of the Ministry of Education and Culture, one of the learning recovery efforts is through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Teachers are given the freedom to design learning modules tailored to students' needs, ensuring effective learning under this new paradigm. These learning modules include learning objectives, media, activity stages, and assessment formats structured according to learning outcomes (Mahmudah et al., 2023). The Independent Curriculum provides opportunities for more engaging material exploration and emphasizes topics critical to student character development (Rosiyati et al., 2025).

A pre-research interview with an Islamic Religious Education teacher, Mr. AM, revealed that the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) emphasizes conscious, meaningful, and enjoyable learning. Teachers are required to provide learning experiences that enable students to understand learning objectives, perceive the meaning of the material, and engage in the learning process with enjoyment. This makes Islamic Religious Education learning not merely routine but also positively influences students' attitudes and understanding.

These findings are supported by previous research, which shows that the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) with the principles of meaningful learning, joyful learning, and mindful learning helps build deeper learning experiences. By connecting new

knowledge to previous experiences, providing a supportive learning environment, and fostering self-awareness, students achieve better academic performance and develop into critical, creative, and adaptive individuals (Nugraha & Melinda, 2025).

However, the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education still faces challenges. Currently, there is no specific training provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs or the Department of Education for Islamic Religious Education teachers. Existing training is limited to general school initiatives, so teachers' understanding of this approach remains limited and requires further development. In practice, the implementation is not entirely different from previous approaches, but the main emphasis is on making learning conscious, meaningful, and enjoyable. This requires changes in teaching tools, particularly learning modules, to facilitate implementation and student engagement.

Since the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) has been introduced and implemented this semester. Although still in its early stages, this approach has shown positive results, with students becoming more active, more aware of the learning process, and better able to understand the material. Thus, this approach is expected to make Islamic Religious Education learning more engaging and meaningful for students.

Although various studies have addressed the concept of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in general education, empirical studies on its implementation in Islamic Religious Education at the secondary school level remain limited. Most previous research has focused on science and mathematics instruction and has not explored in depth how this approach influences students' internalization of religious values, spiritual attitudes, and character.

Furthermore, previous research has focused more on pedagogical aspects, while the affective and spiritual dimensions characteristic of Islamic Religious Education have not been extensively explored empirically. Therefore, this study is crucial to address this gap by analyzing the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education and its impact on students' conceptual understanding and religious character development.

Based on the description above, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education at the senior high school level. It also aims to identify learning strategies used by teachers to create meaningful and reflective learning experiences and examine the impact of this approach on students' conceptual understanding, religious attitudes, and critical thinking skills. It is hoped that this research can be the basis for curriculum development and implementation of more effective learning models in the future, as well as contribute to improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning.

Research method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. According to Sugiyono (2018), qualitative research is an approach based on a particular philosophy and is used to investigate phenomena in natural settings. This approach emphasizes meaning and understanding through the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya, located at Jalan AIS Nasution No. 02, Langkai Village, Pahandut District, Palangka Raya City, Central Kalimantan. The research subjects were Islamic Religious Education teachers, while informants included the principal, vice principal for curriculum, and class X-2 students. The primary informants of this study were Islamic Religious Education teachers who had implemented the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) for at least one semester. Supporting informants included the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, and grade X-2 students involved in project-based learning. The study was conducted for two months (odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year). Data collection techniques used in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner by following the classroom learning process, monitoring group discussions, project assignment implementation, and student reflection activities. Researchers also observed the use of digital learning media and teacher-student interactions during the learning process. To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation and triangulation techniques, so that the validity and reliability of information could be calculated. Data analysis was carried out through four main stages. The first stage was data collection, the second stage was data reduction, the third stage was data presentation, and the final stage was drawing conclusions. The purpose of this

study was to describe the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya, including the learning strategies used by teachers to create meaningful learning experiences for students.

Result and Discussion

Transformation of Deep Approach to Learning-Based Learning Planning at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya

Learning planning is an activity designed by teachers to enable students to learn optimally and achieve targeted competencies. This planning includes organizing learning activity plans, objectives, materials, teaching materials, media, approaches, strategies, and evaluation forms to be used during the learning process (Widyanto & Wahyuni, 2020).

Based on the results of the interview with the Islamic Religious Education teacher, Mr. AM, he stated, "Learning now is not only memorization, but students are encouraged to realize why studying religion is important and how to apply it in everyday life" (Islamic Religious Education Teacher, AM). The results of student responses indicated that "I prefer learning discussions because I can exchange ideas with friends, so I understand better."

The Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya has been implemented since the odd semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. All Islamic Religious Education materials are directed so that students do not only memorize, but also understand, realize, and feel the meaning of each lesson. The main goal is to create a learning experience that is attentive, meaningful, and enjoyable. Islamic Religious Education materials consist of five main aspects, namely the Qur'an, Hadith, Tawhid, Morals, Fiqh, and Islamic Cultural History (SKI), all of which can be integrated with the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL).

The Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) emphasizes the importance of engaging, meaningful, and enjoyable learning experiences. This approach helps students not just memorize but truly understand and absorb information thoroughly, while encouraging them to explore, analyze, and integrate the knowledge they acquire. Within this framework, learning strategies need to be designed to create a learning environment that encourages exploration and collaboration among students (Arif et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, the Independent Curriculum divides Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material into five main chapters aligned with strengthening student competencies and character. The Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) is applied comprehensively at every stage of learning, from initial activities and core activities to closing activities. In the initial activities, teachers conduct an initial assessment in the form of opening questions aimed at exploring students' prior knowledge and fostering awareness of the importance of the material to be learned. Conscious, meaningful, and motivating values are also continuously presented in core and closing activities so that learning focuses not only on outcomes but also on the process of deeper understanding. In lesson planning, the application of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) is reflected in lesson plans and teaching modules.

Teachers first analyze student needs so that the learning strategies used are truly suited to their conditions and potential. To strengthen teachers' ability to implement this approach, the school also holds periodic In-School Training (IHT). The first IHT was attended by teachers who had received previous training, along with school supervisors and counselors. At the end of September 2025, the school will hold another training activity with speakers from the Central Kalimantan Provincial Education Quality Assurance Center (BPMP). This activity will last for four lesson hours on Friday, October 3, 2025. This training program is a school initiative funded by the Performance Assistance Program (BOS Kinerja), as a form of commitment to improving the quality of learning. By implementing the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL), teachers are expected to be able to provide a learning process that makes students aware of what they are learning, understand its meaning, and feel happy in undergoing the process. Through this step, Islamic Religious Education learning is not only a means to increase religious knowledge, but also a learning experience that fosters deep spiritual, moral, and emotional awareness in students.

Meaningful, Mindful, and Joyful Learning Practices in Islamic Education Classes at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya

Learning is a process that occurs through the delivery of information from teachers to students. According to Law Number 20 of 2003, learning occurs through interactions between educators and students, utilizing various learning resources in the learning environment as part of the teaching process. The teaching and learning process is a form of interaction that has specific normative values and goals, so teachers must follow the

rules and guidelines applicable in the school when implementing learning (Syafrin et al., 2023).

The Deep Approach to Learning (DAL), which combines the concepts of mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning, presents a new educational paradigm that is more humanistic and contextual. These three concepts focus not only on cognitive abilities but also address students' affective and social aspects, enabling them to build deeper, more relevant, and more enjoyable learning experiences.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education learning, the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) can be applied by building an adaptive learning system that is able to adjust learning materials to the level of student understanding directly (in real time) (Octavian, 2024).

In practice, the application of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) begins with the development of a teaching module incorporating this approach. Learning tools are prepared in advance to ensure smooth implementation in the classroom. Before beginning learning activities, teachers conduct a perception assessment and convey the desired learning objectives. At this stage, teachers also emphasize the importance of the material to be studied so that students understand its benefits and relevance to everyday life. During the learning process, teachers can use various active learning models, such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning (PJBL), and others.

Learning using the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) requires teachers not only to understand the material but also to be able to design deeper and more meaningful learning experiences for students. Therefore, teacher training and competency development are crucial to support the successful implementation of this approach (Atmojo et al., 2025).

The learning methods used are also diverse, such as lectures, discussions, and Q&A sessions, which can then be developed with other methods to make learning activities more interesting and enjoyable. In the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL), the teacher acts as a facilitator, while students are at the center of learning. Students are encouraged to identify and find their own problems and solutions, so they truly understand and explore the material. Learning activities often involve group discussions, presentations, and reflections to assess students' understanding and critical thinking skills. In the Independent Curriculum, students are required to think

more critically and connect knowledge with moral and ethical values so that all Islamic Religious Education materials strengthen students' character, attitudes, and skills in everyday life.

This statement is supported by previous research on the application of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which is integrated through strategies that emphasize deeper understanding of the material. Islamic Religious Education teachers serve not only as conveyors of information but also as facilitators, encouraging students to think critically, discuss topics, and connect subject matter to everyday life contexts (Hasanuddin et al., 2025).

This program has only just begun implementation this semester, so adjustments are still needed. Teachers are encouraged to continue learning through In-School Training (IHT) activities, workshops, and by reading various references on the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL). School supervisors also play an active role in providing regular coaching and evaluations every month.

An interview with the principal (A) stated that “the school has conducted various workshops and guidance sessions to prepare teachers for the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL).” Teachers are encouraged to implement this approach to ensure a more effective learning process.

An interview with the head of curriculum (I) revealed that the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) has become an essential part of the curriculum, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Although the implementation of DAL has only recently been launched, improvements are ongoing, and teachers are expected to continue improving their instructional practices.

Student interviews also indicated that DAL helped students understand the material more easily, encouraged active participation, and facilitated discussion-based learning. Students reported that discussions, projects, and reflections made learning more enjoyable and meaningful.

Evaluation of Student Learning and Spiritual Reflection at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya

Learning evaluation is a planned process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting various information to assess students' level of achievement of established learning

objectives. Evaluation goes hand in hand with the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL). This approach focuses not only on superficial mastery of the material but also on assessing higher-order thinking skills, such as conceptual understanding, reflection, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge to real-world situations (Mones, 2025).

Based on the author's findings, teachers conducted initial, process, and final assessments. Initial assessment explored students' prior knowledge, process assessment evaluated participation and attitudes, and final assessment measured students' understanding and reflection. Teachers also emphasized three main aspects: knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Although the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) is still in its early stages, teachers continue to develop evaluation strategies to optimize learning outcomes. Reflection activities were conducted to evaluate awareness, meaning, and motivation. Teachers also provided feedback and reinforcement for students who had not yet mastered the material. Spiritually, teachers reminded students to pray and guided them in moral behavior. Evaluation results served as feedback for improving teaching practices. In the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL), students are active participants, while teachers act as facilitators and mentors. Thus, the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya has been implemented by PAI teachers.

Conclusion

The Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya has been implemented. In learning planning at the beginning of the activities, teachers conduct an initial assessment by asking trigger questions aimed at exploring students' prior knowledge and raising awareness of the importance of the material to be studied. This is followed by the implementation of learning activities. Furthermore, the implementation stage of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) begins with the development of learning modules that incorporate this approach. Learning tools are prepared in advance to ensure smooth implementation in the classroom. Before starting learning activities, teachers conduct perception activities and convey the learning objectives to be achieved. During the

learning process, teachers can use various active learning models, such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning (PJBL), and others.

Next, the evaluation stage begins with an initial assessment using trigger questions to explore students' basic knowledge. The process assessment evaluates students' activeness in discussions, presentations, and attitudes during the learning process. The final (summative) assessment is conducted through question-and-answer activities, individual reflection, or problem-solving tasks related to the material that has been taught. Overall, this approach has been implemented well, although it is still in its early stages, and it is expected that teachers will continue to improve their competency in implementing the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL). Schools need to support the use of interactive learning media, and learning evaluations must be conducted more comprehensively so that students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education material becomes deeper.

The implications of this study indicate that the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) can be an effective strategy in Islamic Religious Education learning to improve conceptual understanding and internalization of students' religious values. Therefore, schools and educational policymakers need to provide special training for Islamic Religious Education teachers related to reflective learning design and contextual projects. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs are also advised to integrate the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) paradigm into national Islamic Religious Education learning guidelines.

The limitations of this study lie in the scope of the location, which only covers one school, and the descriptive qualitative approach, so the generalizability of the research results is still limited. Future research is recommended to use a mixed methods approach and involve more schools to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Deep Approach to Learning (DAL) in Islamic Religious Education.

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