

The Transformation of PAI Learning Based on Deep Learning in Shaping Students' Religious and Critical Character: A Case Study at SMAN 2 Blora

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on a deep learning approach in shaping students' religious and critical character at SMAN 2 Blora. Deep learning in this context refers to a student-centered learning approach that emphasizes meaningful understanding, reflective thinking, contextual engagement, and the internalization of values rather than mere memorization. This research employed a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how deep learning principles are implemented in PAI classrooms and how they contribute to character formation. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers and students, and documentation analysis. The data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the transformation of PAI learning through deep learning strategies such as problem-based learning, reflective discussions, contextual case analysis, and collaborative activities—encourages students to critically examine religious texts and relate them to contemporary social issues. This approach fosters not only a stronger religious commitment, reflected in attitudes of responsibility, honesty, and spiritual awareness, but also enhances students' critical thinking skills in analyzing moral and societal challenges. Furthermore, the teacher's role shifts from knowledge transmitter to facilitator and mentor, creating a more dialogical and participatory learning environment. The study concludes that deep learning based PAI instruction significantly contributes to the holistic development of students' religious and critical character in the secondary school context.*

Keywords: *Deep Learning Approach, Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Religious Character, Critical Thinking*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) plays a central role in shaping students' moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility within Indonesian secondary schools. In the national education system, PAI is not merely positioned as a subject for transmitting doctrinal knowledge, but as a strategic instrument for cultivating character and nurturing holistic human development [1]. The urgency of strengthening character education has become increasingly evident in the context of rapid social change,

digital transformation, and the growing complexity of moral challenges faced by adolescents [2], [3], [4]. Senior high schools, including SMAN 2 Blora, are required to respond to these dynamics by transforming learning practices so that they remain relevant, meaningful, and capable of shaping students' religious and critical character simultaneously.

In practice, however, PAI learning often remains dominated by teacher-centered approaches, emphasizing memorization of concepts, textual understanding, and normative explanations [5], [6], [7]. While such approaches may contribute to cognitive acquisition [8], they frequently fail to encourage deeper reflection, contextual interpretation, and the internalization of values in students' daily lives [9]. As a result, a gap sometimes emerges between students' religious knowledge and their actual attitudes and behaviors [10]. This phenomenon highlights the need for an innovative pedagogical transformation that not only strengthens religious understanding but also fosters critical thinking, moral reasoning, and active engagement with contemporary issues [11], [12].

One promising pedagogical paradigm in this regard is the deep learning approach. In the educational context [13], [14], deep learning does not merely refer to advanced computational models or artificial intelligence systems; rather [15], [16], it denotes a learning orientation that emphasizes meaningful understanding, conceptual connections, reflective inquiry, and the integration of knowledge with real-life situations. Deep learning encourages students to explore underlying principles, question assumptions [17][18], analyze problems from multiple perspectives, and construct their own understanding through active participation [19]. Compared to surface learning, which focuses on rote memorization and short-term performance, deep learning promotes long-term retention, conceptual mastery, and value internalization [4],[7],[15].

The relevance of deep learning in PAI classrooms lies in its potential to transform religious instruction from a purely transmissive process into a transformative one [21], [22]. Islamic teachings inherently contain ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions that require interpretation, contextualization, and reflection. When students are guided to examine Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence through inquiry-based dialogue, case analysis, and problem-solving activities [23], they are more likely to develop a comprehensive and internalized understanding of religious values [24]. Such an approach can cultivate a religious character that is not only ritualistic but also reflective, responsible, and socially aware [25].

At the same time, contemporary education increasingly emphasizes the importance of critical thinking skills. The rapid flow of information in the digital era exposes students to diverse perspectives, ideologies, and interpretations of religious teachings [8]. Without adequate critical competence, students may become vulnerable to misinformation, simplistic reasoning, or even radical narratives [13]. Therefore, integrating critical thinking within PAI learning is not contradictory to religious education; rather [21], it is essential for enabling students to engage constructively with religious texts and societal realities. Deep learning provides a conceptual and methodological foundation for fostering such critical engagement [23].

The integration of religious character and critical thinking within PAI requires a balanced pedagogical design [26]. Religious character involves

dimensions such as faith commitment, sincerity, honesty, responsibility, discipline in worship, tolerance, and empathy. Meanwhile, critical character encompasses analytical skills, openness to dialogue, reflective judgment, and the ability to evaluate arguments logically and ethically [27]. Through deep learning strategies such as problem-based learning, collaborative discussion, reflective journaling, and contextual case studies students can explore moral dilemmas, analyze social phenomena, and relate Islamic values to contemporary challenges. In this way, PAI learning becomes a dynamic arena for character formation rather than a static transmission of information [28].

The transformation of PAI learning is also closely linked to the evolving role of teachers. In traditional settings, teachers are often positioned as the primary source of knowledge and authority. However, deep learning requires teachers to act as facilitators, mentors, and dialogical partners who guide students' exploration and reflection [29]. This shift demands pedagogical competence, openness to innovation, and the ability to design learning experiences that stimulate inquiry and critical engagement. Teachers must be capable of creating a supportive classroom climate where students feel safe to express opinions, ask questions, and respectfully challenge ideas. Such an environment is essential for nurturing both religious devotion and intellectual maturity [30].

Within the Indonesian educational landscape, character education has been widely promoted as a national priority. Policies and curricular reforms emphasize the integration of moral values across subjects, including PAI. Nevertheless, the practical implementation of character-based education often encounters challenges, such as limited time allocation, assessment constraints, and entrenched habits of conventional teaching [28]. Consequently, examining concrete examples of pedagogical transformation at the school level becomes crucial for understanding how theoretical ideals can be realized in practice. A case study at SMAN 2 Blora offers an opportunity to explore how deep learning principles are interpreted, implemented, and experienced within a real educational setting [30].

As a public senior high school located in Blora Regency, SMAN 2 Blora represents a typical Indonesian secondary school context where students come from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds [31]. The diversity of students' experiences and perspectives provides fertile ground for implementing dialogical and inquiry-based learning in PAI. By examining how deep learning is integrated into lesson planning, classroom interaction, and assessment practices, this study seeks to uncover the processes through which religious and critical character are cultivated [32]. Understanding these processes is important not only for local improvement but also for contributing to broader discussions on innovative PAI pedagogy.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and prior experiences. Constructivism aligns closely with deep learning principles, as both emphasize meaning-making, reflection, and contextualization. In the context of Islamic education, constructivist perspectives support the idea that understanding religious teachings requires engagement, interpretation, and personal reflection rather than passive reception [23]. When students are encouraged to connect scriptural messages with contemporary realities such as environmental issues, social justice, digital ethics

[23], and pluralism they develop a more integrated and applicable understanding of Islam.

Furthermore, the concept of character formation in Islamic education is intrinsically linked to the notion of akhlaq (moral conduct). Akhlaq is not solely concerned with outward behavior but with the internalization of values that shape attitudes and intentions. Deep learning facilitates this internalization by providing opportunities for students to reflect on the moral implications of their actions, evaluate real-life cases, and practice ethical decision-making. Through continuous reflection and guided discussion, students gradually develop consistency between knowledge, belief, and action. This coherence is a key indicator of authentic religious character.

Despite its theoretical promise, the implementation of deep learning in PAI classrooms is not without challenges. Teachers may face constraints related to time management, curriculum coverage, assessment standards, and varying student readiness. Students accustomed to passive learning may initially struggle with open-ended questions and analytical tasks. Therefore, investigating how teachers navigate these challenges and how students respond to the new approach is essential for understanding the feasibility and impact of deep learning-based transformation. A qualitative case study enables the researcher to capture nuanced experiences, perceptions, and interactions that cannot be fully represented through quantitative measures alone.

This study is motivated by the assumption that transforming PAI learning through deep learning strategies can contribute significantly to shaping students' religious and critical character. However, empirical evidence is needed to substantiate this assumption within specific contexts. By focusing on a particular school setting, this research aims to provide a rich and contextualized account of pedagogical transformation. The findings are expected to illuminate how lesson design, classroom discourse, teacher-student interaction, and reflective activities collectively influence character development.

In addition, this study seeks to address a broader academic gap concerning the integration of deep learning and Islamic education [24]. While numerous studies have examined character education and critical thinking separately, fewer have explored how deep learning can serve as a unifying framework that bridges religious values and critical competence [21]. By situating the analysis within a real secondary school context, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on innovative and transformative approaches in PAI.

Ultimately, the transformation of PAI learning is not solely about adopting new methods but about reorienting educational goals toward holistic human development. Education in Islam aspires to produce individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, ethical, and socially responsible. In the contemporary era, these qualities must be accompanied by the ability to think critically, engage in dialogue, and respond wisely to complex challenges. Through the lens of deep learning, PAI can evolve into a transformative space where students do not merely learn about religion but learn to live religious values thoughtfully and critically. Therefore, this study examines how deep learning based PAI instruction at SMAN 2 Blora contributes to shaping students' religious and critical character, offering insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers committed to advancing Islamic education in the twenty-first century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Deep Learning in Educational Context

The concept of deep learning in education originates from the distinction between *deep learning* and *surface learning* approaches. Deep learning refers to a meaningful learning orientation in which students actively seek to understand ideas, relate concepts to prior knowledge [9], critically examine arguments, and apply insights to real-life contexts. In contrast, surface learning emphasizes memorization, reproduction of information, and minimal engagement with meaning. Within contemporary pedagogy, deep learning is closely associated with constructivist theory, inquiry-based learning, reflective practice, and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) [19].

Deep learning emphasizes conceptual understanding, metacognitive awareness, and student centered engagement. It requires instructional strategies that promote dialogue, questioning, problem-solving, and collaborative exploration [1]. Research in secondary education contexts suggests that deep learning environments enhance long-term retention, analytical reasoning, and intrinsic motivation [23]. When students are invited to interpret, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge, they move beyond procedural mastery toward transformative understanding.

In religious education settings, deep learning is particularly relevant because religious knowledge involves interpretative, ethical, and contextual dimensions. Teaching that merely transmits doctrinal content without encouraging reflection may result in fragmented understanding. Therefore, applying deep learning principles in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) offers opportunities for students to internalize values, develop moral reasoning, and connect scriptural teachings to contemporary realities.

2. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Formation

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesian schools aims to cultivate faith (*iman*), piety (*taqwa*), and noble character (*akhlak al-karimah*). PAI is expected not only to develop cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings but also to shape students' attitudes and behaviors in personal and social life[5]. Character education within PAI encompasses honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, empathy, and social awareness.

Theoretical discussions on Islamic education emphasize that character formation requires integration between knowledge (*ilm*), faith (*iman*), and action (*amal*). The process of internalization involves habituation, modeling, reflection, and moral dialogue. Scholars argue that effective character education must create learning experiences that allow students to examine ethical dilemmas, evaluate consequences, and make informed decisions based on Islamic principles.

However, empirical findings indicate that PAI classrooms often remain teacher-centered and textbook-oriented. Assessment practices tend to prioritize cognitive achievement rather than attitudinal transformation. This condition may limit the effectiveness of PAI in cultivating authentic religious character. Consequently, pedagogical innovation such as adopting deep learning strategies—becomes essential to bridge the gap between knowledge acquisition and value internalization.

3. Critical Thinking and Religious Education

Critical thinking is widely recognized as a core competency in twenty-first-century education. It includes skills such as analysis, evaluation, interpretation, inference, and reflective judgment. In the context of religious education, critical thinking does not imply skepticism toward faith; rather, it supports deeper engagement with religious texts, contextual interpretation, and resistance to simplistic or extreme narratives [9].

Several studies highlight the importance of integrating critical pedagogy into religious instruction to prevent dogmatism and promote intellectual maturity. When students are encouraged to question, analyze arguments, and consider diverse perspectives, they develop a more resilient and reflective religious identity [25]. In multicultural societies, critical competence also fosters tolerance and constructive dialogue.

Deep learning provides methodological tools for nurturing critical thinking in PAI. Strategies such as problem-based learning, case analysis, Socratic dialogue, and collaborative inquiry enable students to examine social issues such as environmental ethics, digital behavior, and interfaith relations through Islamic frameworks [20]. Through these processes, students learn to connect normative teachings with empirical realities and ethical reasoning.

4. Deep Learning and Character Integration

The integration of deep learning and character education is grounded in constructivist and humanistic learning theories. Constructivism posits that knowledge is constructed through interaction and reflection, while humanistic theory emphasizes personal growth and self-actualization. Together, these perspectives support an educational approach that attends to cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions simultaneously.

Research demonstrates that deep learning environments contribute to character formation by promoting reflection, responsibility, collaboration, and empathy. For instance, group discussions require students to listen respectfully, articulate arguments logically, and appreciate different viewpoints. Reflective journaling fosters self-awareness and moral introspection. Problem-solving tasks develop perseverance and ethical reasoning [13].

Within Islamic education, the synergy between deep learning and character formation aligns with the holistic vision of education as *tarbiyaha* process of nurturing intellectual, spiritual, and moral capacities. By encouraging students to interpret religious texts contextually and apply values in daily life, deep learning supports the internalization of *akhlaq* in a meaningful way [33].

5. Qualitative Case Studies in Educational Research

Qualitative case study methodology is frequently used to explore pedagogical innovation in specific school contexts. It enables in-depth examination of processes, experiences, and meanings from participants' perspectives. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, researchers can capture how educational transformation unfolds in practice.

In studies of character education and deep learning, qualitative approaches provide insights into classroom interaction, teacher roles, student engagement, and institutional culture. Rather than measuring outcomes solely through numerical indicators, qualitative research reveals how values are negotiated, interpreted, and embodied within learning communities.

A case study conducted at SMAN 2 Blora offers contextualized understanding of how deep learning principles are implemented in PAI classrooms and how they influence students' religious and critical character. By situating analysis within a real educational environment, the research contributes to practical and theoretical discussions on transformative Islamic education.

6. Research Gap

Although previous studies have examined character education in PAI and the application of student-centered learning models, limited research specifically analyzes the integration of deep learning principles with religious and critical character formation in Indonesian secondary schools. Moreover, few qualitative case studies provide detailed accounts of how such integration occurs at the classroom level.

Therefore, this study addresses a significant gap by investigating the transformation of PAI learning based on deep learning in shaping students' religious and critical character within a specific institutional context. The literature suggests strong theoretical alignment between deep learning and Islamic character education, yet empirical exploration remains necessary to understand practical implementation and challenges.

Tabel 1. Literature Review

No	Author(s) & Year	Focus of Study	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
1	Marton & Säljö (1976)	Deep vs. surface learning	Experimental study	Identified differences between meaningful understanding and rote memorization	Provides conceptual foundation for deep learning approach
2	Biggs (1999)	Constructive alignment & deep learning	Theoretical	Emphasized alignment between objectives, activities, and assessment	Supports instructional design in PAI transformation
3	Lickona (1991)	Character education theory	Conceptual	Character involves moral knowing, feeling, and action	Framework for religious character formation
4	Halstead (2007)	Islamic values in education	Qualitative review	Islamic education integrates moral and spiritual development	Theoretical basis for PAI character goals
5	Facione (2011)	Critical thinking framework	Analytical study	Defined core critical thinking skills	Supports integration of critical character
6	Hidayat (2018)	PAI and character education in Indonesia	Qualitative	PAI contributes to moral development but faces pedagogical challenges	Identifies need for innovative approaches
7	Fullan (2013)	Deep learning & 21st century skills	Policy research	Deep learning enhances collaboration and critical skills	Reinforces contemporary relevance
8	Yin (2014)	Case study research design	Methodological	Case study suitable for contextual exploration	Justifies qualitative case study approach

9	Zubaedi (2015)	Character education implementation	Field research	Effective character education requires modeling and reflection	Aligns with reflective deep learning practices
10	Recent Indonesian Journal Studies (2020–2023)	Student-centered PAI models	Mixed methods	Inquiry-based learning improves engagement and values internalization	Indicates research gap on deep learning integration

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative case study design to explore how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on deep learning strategies contributes to shaping students' religious and critical character. The research was conducted at SMAN 2 Blora, chosen purposively for its active implementation of student-centered and reflective PAI learning.

The participants included one PAI teacher, selected students from a single class, and the vice principal, selected using purposive sampling to provide relevant insights. Data were collected through classroom observations to examine teaching and learning activities, in-depth interviews with teachers and students to understand perceptions and experiences, and document analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials to support the findings.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of qualitative research, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, enabling the identification of themes and patterns related to the implementation of deep learning and its impact on character formation. To ensure credibility and reliability, triangulation was applied by comparing data from multiple sources [34].

This methodology allowed the researchers to capture in-depth, contextualized understanding of the processes and experiences involved in transforming PAI learning, highlighting both pedagogical strategies and their effects on developing students' religious values and critical thinking skills.

Table 2. Qualitative Research Methods

Component	Description	Purpose in This Study	Instruments/Tools	Expected Output
Research Design	Qualitative Case Study	To explore in depth the transformation of PAI learning based on deep learning in shaping students' religious and critical character	Research protocol, case study framework	Contextualized and holistic understanding of the phenomenon
Research Site	SMAN 2 Blora	To investigate implementation in a real secondary school setting	Institutional permission letter	Authentic field-based data
Participants	PAI teacher, selected students,	To gather multiple perspectives on	Purposive sampling criteria	Rich, relevant, and diverse data

	vice principal	instructional transformation and character formation		
Data Collection Method 1	Classroom Observation	To examine deep learning implementation and student engagement	Observation sheet, field notes	Descriptive data on classroom interaction and character indicators
Data Collection Method 2	In-depth Interviews	To understand perceptions, experiences, and challenges	Semi-structured interview guide, audio recorder	Verbatim transcripts reflecting participants' viewpoints
Data Collection Method 3	Document Analysis	To analyze lesson plans, teaching modules, and reflective journals	Document checklist	Supporting evidence of pedagogical design and character integration
Data Analysis Technique	Interactive Model (Data Reduction, Data Display, Conclusion Drawing)	To identify themes and patterns related to deep learning and character development	Coding sheets, thematic matrix	Thematic findings and analytical interpretations
Trustworthiness Strategy	Triangulation, Member Checking, Audit Trail	To ensure credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability	Cross-source comparison, validation notes	Valid and reliable qualitative findings
Ethical Considerations	Informed Consent, Confidentiality, Anonymity	To protect participants' rights and maintain research integrity	Consent forms, pseudonyms	Ethical compliance and responsible research conduct
Research Focus	Deep learning implementation & character formation	To analyze how instructional transformation shapes religious and critical character	Indicator matrix	Clear alignment between data and research objectives

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The implementation of deep learning in PAI (Islamic Religious Education) at SMAN 2 Blora showed a significant transformation in teaching and learning processes. The results are presented in two main themes: deep learning strategies in PAI and development of students' religious and critical character. Data were derived from classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the teacher and students, and document analysis.

1. Deep Learning Strategies in PAI

a. Student Centered Learning

Classroom observations revealed that the teacher consistently applied student centered learning techniques. Instead of delivering content through traditional lecture methods, the teacher encouraged students to actively explore Islamic teachings through discussion, problem-solving, and reflective tasks.

One student stated: *"I feel more involved when we discuss Qur'anic verses and try to relate them to daily life. I think about how to apply them, not just memorize."* [9]

Document analysis of lesson plans showed that activities were designed to stimulate inquiry, such as case studies on ethical dilemmas, reflective journaling on religious practices, and group debates on moral issues.

b. Reflective and Contextual Activities

The teacher integrated reflective questions and real-life contexts to deepen understanding. For example, students were asked to reflect on honesty, responsibility, and social interactions in school and community life, linking these values to Qur'anic teachings and Hadith [24].

Classroom observations noted that students could articulate their reasoning and demonstrate awareness of the relevance of religious teachings in contemporary life [19]. This approach aligns with deep learning principles, emphasizing conceptual understanding and value internalization.

c. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative tasks, such as group discussions and peer teaching, were frequently implemented. These activities fostered dialogue, encouraged mutual respect, and allowed students to critically examine different perspectives while connecting them to Islamic principles.

The teacher noted [25]: *"By working in groups, students not only learn content but also practice patience, listening, and critical reasoning. This develops both religious and social character."*

2. Development of Religious Character

The study found that deep learning strategies positively influenced students' religious character. Key aspects observed included: Spiritual awareness: Students demonstrated greater attention to daily worship, prayer, and ethical behaviour, Moral responsibility: Students reflected on their decisions and actions, showing honesty and accountability in group activities and personal tasks, Ethical reasoning: Through reflective discussions, students were able to connect Islamic teachings to everyday ethical dilemmas.

For instance, a student reflected: *"I realized that being honest in school assignments is not just about rules but about pleasing Allah and being responsible to others"* [5]. These outcomes suggest that deep learning does not only transfer knowledge but also nurtures internalized moral and religious values.

3. Development of Critical Character

In addition to religious character, students' critical thinking and reasoning skills improved through deep learning-based PAI learning: Analytical skills: Students analyzed social and moral cases from multiple perspectives, Reflective judgment: They evaluated the implications of their actions in both religious and social contexts, Problem-solving ability: By examining real-life dilemmas, students proposed solutions guided by Islamic ethical principles [23].

Observations indicated that students could critically question and discuss issues such as fairness, social justice, and personal responsibility, showing a balance between religious understanding and rational thinking.

4. Teacher's Role Transformation

The deep learning approach changed the teacher's role from knowledge transmitter to facilitator and mentor. The teacher guided discussions, provided feedback, and encouraged self-reflection rather than delivering direct answers. The teacher stated [20]: *"My role now is to guide students to explore meanings and apply Islamic values themselves, instead of just telling them what is right or wrong."*

This transformation was key to creating a dialogical and participatory learning environment, which allowed students to actively construct knowledge while internalizing ethical and religious values.

5. Integration of Religious and Critical Character

The combination of reflective activities, collaborative discussions, and problem-based learning contributed to the simultaneous development of religious and critical character. Students were able to: Internalize moral and spiritual values, Analyze social and ethical issues critically, Apply religious teachings in contemporary contexts [13].

This finding confirms that deep learning provides a holistic framework for character formation, addressing both the affective and cognitive dimensions of PAI learning.

6. Challenges and Limitations

Despite positive outcomes, some challenges were observed: Students initially struggled with self-directed learning and critical discussion, Time constraints limited the depth of reflection for some topics, Teachers required additional training to design deep learning activities effectively [8].

These challenges indicate that successful implementation requires continuous teacher development, curriculum flexibility, and supportive classroom culture.

DISCUSSION

The findings align with previous studies highlighting the effectiveness of student-centered, reflective, and collaborative learning in character education. Deep learning enables students to connect knowledge with values, facilitating authentic internalization of religious principles while simultaneously fostering critical thinking skills [17]. In the context of Indonesian secondary schools, particularly at SMAN 2 Blora, this study demonstrates that integrating deep learning in PAI:

- a. Moves education beyond rote memorization toward meaningful learning.
- b. Fosters a balanced character that is both religiously devout and critically reflective.
- c. Encourages teachers to adopt a facilitative, mentorship-oriented role, which is essential for character-based pedagogy.

The results suggest that deep learning strategies are effective in transforming PAI into a dynamic and holistic educational experience, preparing

students not only to understand Islam intellectually but also to live its values ethically and reflectively in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) learning based on deep learning principles at SMAN 2 Blora demonstrates a significant shift from conventional, teacher-centered instruction toward a more reflective, student-centered, and meaningful learning process. By integrating deep learning approaches, PAI instruction no longer focuses solely on the transfer of religious knowledge, but emphasizes understanding, critical thinking, contextual application, and internalization of Islamic values in daily life. This transformation contributes positively to shaping students' religious character by fostering stronger spiritual awareness, moral responsibility, and consistent religious practice. At the same time, it nurtures critical character development, enabling students to think analytically, evaluate information wisely, and respond thoughtfully to contemporary social and religious issues. The case study findings indicate that deep learning based PAI creates a balanced educational environment where faith (iman), knowledge ('ilm), and critical reasoning develop simultaneously. Therefore, the transformation of PAI learning through deep learning is not only relevant to current educational demands but also essential in preparing students to become religiously grounded, intellectually critical, and socially responsible individuals in the modern era.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Siti Nur'aini: The author was solely responsible for the conception and design of the study entitled "*The Transformation of PAI Learning Based on Deep*

Learning in Shaping Students' Religious and Critical Character: A Case Study at SMAN 2 Blora.” The author conducted the literature review, developed the research instruments, collected and analyzed the data at SMAN 2 Blora, and interpreted the findings. The author also prepared, drafted, and revised the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. All aspects of the research, including ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the work, were carried out independently by the author.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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