

Academic Advisor Support and Student Learning Experiences as Predictors of Deep Learning Pillars in Indonesian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Social support from academic advisors plays a crucial role in enhancing students' learning experiences, particularly within a deep learning framework that emphasizes understanding, application, and reflection. This study aims to examine the relationship between academic advisor support and student learning experience in higher education. A quantitative correlational design was employed involving 386 students from 12 faculties at Universitas Syiah Kuala. The research instrument underwent expert judgment and item validity testing prior to data collection. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation to examine relationships between variables and Chi-square tests to assess associations between meeting frequency and learning experience. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between academic advisor support and student learning experience ($r = 0.732$, $p < 0.01$). All three dimensions of deep learning—understanding, applying, and reflecting—demonstrated strong and significant correlations. Additionally, the Chi-square analysis indicated that higher frequency and intensity of meetings with academic advisors were significantly associated with improved learning experiences ($p = 0.015$). These results underscore the importance of academic advisors' roles beyond administrative functions, highlighting their contribution to students' academic engagement as well as cognitive and affective development. Effective advisor support fosters meaningful learning experiences aligned with deep learning principles. Future research should explore additional contextual factors influencing advisor-student interactions and extend the analysis across diverse institutional settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Deep learning is a learning model that has recently been continuously narrated by the government as an effort to optimize learning at various levels, from primary to higher education, to support innovation and progress in education (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Republik Indonesia, 2025*).

In-depth learning as initiated by the Ministry of Education is learning that prioritizes students' experience and active participation (not passively as in previous learning) and is not merely an object of learning. Deep learning approach is expected to be able to change the learning paradigm, which was originally mechanistic, to be more mindful, meaningful, and joyful to support optimization of students' potential. Deep learning approach in the context of higher education emphasizes the development of students' critical, reflective, and analytical thinking through the integration of deep conceptual understanding. In its practice, deep learning requires active involvement between students and learning materials, as well as meaningful interaction with lecturers or educators (Suwandi et al., 2024). Therefore, students are not only required to memorize information but also directed to understand, connect, and internalize the knowledge gained and apply it in real life.

However, empirically, studies on deep learning concepts in Indonesia are still limited, considering that this idea is relatively new and was just introduced systematically in higher education in 2024 by a national educational figure, Abdul Muti (Rizkasari, 2025). Technically, deep learning is an approach that allows individuals to understand the concept thoroughly, correlate it with cross-disciplinary knowledge, and apply it in context relevant to life experiences (Randall, 2025). Therefore, this approach is considered important in efforts to optimize the development of students' potential, both academically and non-academically. Previous research has examined in-depth learning, but this has been limited to studies within the school setting, limited to describing student engagement in specific subjects. However, this research further explores the involvement and active role of advisor support in supporting in-depth learning, as advocated by the government.

As is commonly known, in the current practice of higher education in Indonesia, it is still found that the relationship between students and academic advisors is solely formal and administrative. The role of an academic advisor is often limited to approving the Course Registration Form, giving a signature, or providing technical information related to academics. In fact, students face more complex learning challenges, including difficulty in understanding abstract course materials, limitations in correlating theory and practice, and low learning motivation due to academic and emotional pressure, as well as the phenomenon of academic procrastination. These challenges require assistance that is more than administrative matters.

This condition increases demands to create mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning experiences so that the role of an academic advisor as a learning mentor is actually an urgent and very necessary need. Unfortunately, not all higher education institutions have a system that encourages academic advisors to carry out this function optimally. As a result, many students have difficulty establishing a personal and academic relationship with their academic advisors. Moreover, many students lose a companion who can assist them in designing a learning process that is deep and relevant to their life goals. The role of an academic advisor as a supporting figure in students' learning process also becomes an important aspect in the successful implementation of deep learning. An academic advisor not only becomes an administrative connector between students and the institution but also has a role as a mentor who assists students in designing more meaningful learning experiences. Social (Widiantoro et al., 2019; Pananto & Paryonti, 2023), emotional, academic, and motivational support provided by an academic advisor can strengthen students' reflection and self-development process as part of the deep learning process (Yamin, 2022; Kuswandono, 2023).

Social, emotional, academic, and motivational support provided by an academic advisor can strengthen students' reflection and self-development process, as well as help them complete their studies (Widiantoro et al., 2019; Pananto & Paryonti, 2023). For example, through open dialogue about learning difficulties, career planning, or search for personal meaning in the studies they undertake, an academic advisor can encourage students to think more critically and contextually. This function makes an academic advisor a co-designer in students' intellectual and emotional journey, not merely a formal supervisor. Along with the changing paradigm of higher education, which increasingly emphasizes student-centered learning, the existence of an academic advisor as an active companion must be formalized, recognized, and developed through training and a supporting assessment system (Kiwari,

2024). Novelty aspect in this study is the combination of focus on deep learning as a learning innovation and the involvement of an academic advisor in supporting students' learning experiences. This kind of study is still limitedly conducted, especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Therefore, this study attempts to describe the phenomenon of the deep learning approach in the campus environment and to explore how academic advisor support influences students' learning experiences thoroughly.

This study is expected to be the starting point to answer the current phenomenon. This study is important to conduct to provide a clearer description of how deep learning can be implemented in the context of higher education and how it impacts the development of students' competencies, both academically and non-academically. Considering the limited studies about this topic in Indonesia, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for further studies that will discuss the topic of innovative learning models.

This approach is in line with the new direction of modern higher education, which not only emphasizes academic achievement but also meaningful learning experiences for each student. In this context, the role of an academic advisor is crucial because they should not only be seen as an academic administrative manager but also as an advisor partner who is able to assist students in the learning process. Moreover, they have great potential as a companion and facilitator that is able to guide students towards reflective, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences. The aim of this study is to examine the level of students' learning experience in the form of understanding, applying, and reflecting, which reflects deep learning pillars, such as mindful, meaningful, and joyful. Moreover, this study is also to analyze the correlation between academic advisor support and the formation of student learning experiences as an effort to establish a deep learning foundation or pillars in the context of higher education.

2. METHODS

This study used a cross-sectional correlational survey method with a quantitative approach conducted on Universitas Syiah Kuala students, involving students from classes 2021 to 2025. The major focus of this study was to explore in-depth the students' perception of the role of an academic advisor as associated with supporting the deep learning process and identifying various dynamics of learning experiences perceived by students so far. The population was 32,148 students spread across 12 faculties. This data was accessed on May 11, 2025, at 15.00 WIB from the official website <https://data.usk.ac.id>, which is directly managed by Universitas Syiah Kuala. To determine the number of samples with Krejcie and Morgan samples, 380 research samples were used. Based on the data collected, 390 respondents were willing to fill in, but only 386 could be included in this research, because 2 respondents did not complete the online form provided previously, so the response rate was 98%. We used several data matching methods, including student ID number, date of birth, and email address to ensure there were no duplicate data submitted by respondents.

The initial research procedure included preparing the instrument used. An instrument for advisor support variable was compiled based on a theoretical approach by Sarafino & Smith (2011), which is social support. Learning experience variable was compiled based on a deep learning theory approach proposed by Abdul Muti, including understanding, applying, and reflecting, which was adapted from an academic manuscript published by the Ministry. The instrument used was first validated with the following brief flow: preparing a blueprint according to the theory used, an expert judgement process by 2 experts according to their fields, an instrument trial/tryout, final validation, and the instrument was ready to use. After the trial procedure, the advisor supported the instrument with the initial items of 40 to be 32 items, and the learning experience instrument with the initial items of 24 to be 18 items.

Data analysis was conducted with the assistance of data analysis software. The approach used in this study was a quantitative approach with a survey design to examine the correlation between the independent variable, which is advisor support, and the dependent variable, which is learning experience perceived by students.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

3.1.1 Respondent Demographics

Table 1. Data of Respondent Demographics

Respondent Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	288	75
Male	98	25
Age (years)		
17	12	3
18	69	18
19	95	25
20	66	17
21	109	28
22	35	9
Residence Status		
Boarding House/Rent	264	68
With Parents	122	32
Semester		
1st	75	19
3rd	112	29
5th	29	8
7th	142	37
9th	28	7
Faculty		
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education	160	41.5
Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	39	10.1
Faculty of Marine and Fisheries	41	10.6
Faculty of Medicine	35	9.1
Faculty of Engineering	32	8.3
Faculty of Economics and Business	23	6.0
Faculty of Nursing	20	5.2
Faculty of Dentistry	17	4.4
Faculty of Agriculture	9	2.3
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	5	1.3
Faculty of Law	3	0.78
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine	2	0.5
Interaction with Academic Advisor		
1-3 times/semester	244	63
4-6 times/semester	77	20
>6 times/semester	65	17

The researcher used a form through an instrument prepared by the researcher and obtained a sample size of 390 respondents, with a 95% confidence level. However, in the final trial, only 386 respondents were used because 4 respondents stated that they were not willing to be in the sample and

did not completely fill out the form provided by the researcher. Based on Table 1, respondents are dominated by females, with 288 respondents (75%), while male respondents were only 98 (25%). In the age range, most students were 21 years old, with 109 respondents (28%), while the fewest students were 17 years old, with 12 respondents (3%). Respondents who live alone at a boarding house/rent were dominant, with 264 respondents (68%), while respondents who still live with their parents were 122 (32%). Based on the semester, the largest number of respondents were in the 7th semester of 142 students (37%), the smallest number of respondents were in the 5th semester of 29 students (8%).

Respondents in this study were from various faculties in Universitas Syiah Kuala, with a total of 386 students. The distribution of respondents showed that the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education was the largest contributor with 160 respondents (41.5%), followed by the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences with 39 respondents (10.1%), the Faculty of Marine and Fisheries with 41 respondents (10.65%), and the Faculty of Medicine with 35 respondents (9.1%). Participation was also observed from other faculties, such as the Faculty of Engineering with 32 respondents (8.3%), the Faculty of Economics and Business with 23 respondents (6%), the Faculty of Nursing with 20 respondents (5.2%), and the Faculty of Dentistry with 17 respondents (4.4%). Meanwhile, participation from the Faculty of Agriculture was 9 respondents (2.3%), the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences with 5 respondents (1.3%), the Faculty of Law with 3 respondents (0.78%), and the fewest respondents were from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine with 2 respondents (0.5%).

If reviewed from the frequency of interaction between students and academic advisor, which means how often students meet academic advisor within a semester, most students (244 respondents (63%)) reported that they interact with their academic advisor 1-3 times per semester; 77 students (20%) interact with academic advisor 4-6 times per semester; and only 65 students (17%) interact for more than 6 times per semester.

3.1.2 Assumption and Hypothesis Testing

Table 2. Normality Test

No	Data	Skewness	Kurtosis	Description
1	Social Support	-0.658	1.005	Normal
2	Learning Experience	-0.265	0.076	Normal
3	Understanding	-0.356	0.755	Normal
4	Applying	-0.432	0.029	Normal
5	Reflecting	-0.096	-0.174	Normal

Based on Table 2, an assumption test in the form of a normality test was carried out to fulfill one of the basic assumptions in parametric statistical analysis. Based on the results of skewness and kurtosis values, all variables had different values in the range -1.96 to +1.96, which became the criteria for normally distributed data for a large sample size (≥ 200 respondents). This study used 386 respondents, which was more than the sample size required in this assumption test. All values were within the required range, so it can be concluded that all data in this study were normally distributed.

Table 3. Linearity Test

No	Correlation	Linearity	Deviation From Linearity	Description
1	Advisor support with Learning Experience	456.872 ($p < 0.01$)	1.175 ($p = 0.179$; $p > 0.05$)	Linear
2	Advisor support with Learning Experience of Understanding	302.284 ($p < 0.01$)	1.288 ($p = 0.077$; $p > 0.05$)	Linear
3	Advisor support with Learning Experience of Applying	324.124 ($p < 0.01$)	1.087 ($p = 0.312$; $p > 0.05$)	Linear
4	Advisor support with Learning Experience of Reflecting	295.892 ($p < 0.01$)	1.133 ($p = 0.238$; $p > 0.05$)	Linear

Table 3 contains data regarding the linearity test to find out whether there is a linear relationship between the advisor support variable and variables related to student learning experiences. Based on the results in Table 3, overall, the results of the test showed that the relationship between the lecturer and the components of student learning experiences (understanding, applying, and reflecting) met the linearity assumption. Thus, further analysis, such as Pearson correlation or linear regression, can be performed appropriately to examine the strength of the relationship between variables.

Table 4. The Results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Test

Variable	Person Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Advisor support with Student Learning Experience	0.732	0.000 ($p < 0.01$)	There is a Significant Positive Relationship
Advisor support with Learning Experience (Understanding)	0.654	0.000 ($p < 0.01$)	There is a Significant Positive Relationship
Advisor support with Learning Experience (Applying)	0.674	0.000 ($p < 0.01$)	There is a Significant Positive Relationship
Advisor support with Learning Experience (Reflecting)	0.655	0.000 ($p < 0.01$)	There is a Significant Positive Relationship

Based on Table 4, the results of the correlation test using the Pearson approach obtained a coefficient value between advisor support and student learning experience, a correlation of $r = 0.732$ with a significance value of $p < 0.01$. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between social support and learning experience. The correlation coefficient value of these two variables was included in the strong category. Moreover, between advisor support and student learning experience (understanding), the correlation was $r = 0.654$ with a significance value of $p < 0.01$. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between social support and learning experience (understanding). The correlation coefficient value of these two variables was included in the strong category. Between advisor support and student learning experience (applying), the correlation coefficient value was $r = 0.674$ with a significance value of $p < 0.01$. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between social support and learning experience (applying). The correlation coefficient value of these two variables was included in the strong category. Moreover, between advisor support and student learning experience (reflecting), the correlation coefficient value was $r = 0.655$ with a significance value of $p < 0.01$. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between social support and learning experience (reflecting). The correlation coefficient value of these two variables was included in the strong category.

Table 5. Categorization of Overall Results

Category		Low	Moderate	High
Advisor support	n	3	99	284
	%	0.8	25.6	73.6
Student Learning Experience	n	2	96	288
	%	0.5	24.9	74.6
Student Learning Experience (Understanding)	n	5	96	285
	%	1.3	24.9	73.8
Student Learning Experience (Applying)	n	2	72	312
	%	0.5	18.7	80.8

Student Learning Experience (Reflecting)				
	n	1	110	275
	%	0.3	28.5	71.2
Student Learning Experience Based on the Frequency of Meeting the Academic Advisor				
1-3 times/semester	n	0	66	178
	%	0	27	73
4-6 times/semester	n	0	19	58
	%	0	24.7	75.3
> 6 times/semester	n	2	11	52
	%	3.1	16.9	80

Based on the results of the analysis in Table 5, the data showed that most students assessed advisor support in the high category, with 284 students (73.6%). Meanwhile, 99 students (25.6%) assessed the advisor support in the moderate category, and only 3 students (0.8%) assessed the advisor support in the low category. This finding indicates that most students perceived the presence of an active lecturer to provide academic, emotional, and motivational support during the learning process. This also reflects that the role of a lecturer is not only administrative matters but also contributes to creating a conducive and meaningful learning atmosphere.

In the aspect of learning experience, generally, based on Table 5, 288 students (74.6%) are included in the high category, 96 students (24.9%) are included in the moderate category, and only 2 students (0.5%) are included in the low category. This result indicates that most students have experienced a deep learning process, including understanding, applying, and reflecting.

In the understanding dimension, the majority of students also showed a high category with 285 students (73.8%) and followed by 96 students (24.9%) in the moderate category, and 5 students (1.3%) in the low category. Moreover, in applying dimension, the result showed stronger domination in the high category with 312 students (80.8%), followed by 72 students (18.7%) in the moderate category, and 2 students (0.5%) in the low category. Meanwhile, in the reflecting dimension, 275 students (71.2%) were included in the high category, 110 students (28.5%) were included in the moderate category, and only 1 student (0.3%) was included in the low category.

Table 5 shows the distribution of the level of student learning experience based on how often they interact or meet with an academic advisor within one semester. Data indicated a fairly clear pattern, where the more frequently the students interact with an academic advisor, and the higher level of perceived learning experience. Most students were in the high learning experience category, for example, the student group that met the academic advisor 1-3 times/semester, with 178 students (73%), while 66 students (27%) were included in the moderate category, and no student was included in the low category. In a student group that met the academic advisor 4-6 times/semester, 58 students (75.3%) were included to have a high learning experience, while 19 students (24.75%) were included in the moderate category. There was no student included in the low category. These results indicate an increase in the proportion of high learning experience compared to the previous group. More frequent meeting seems to provide a space for students to obtain more intensive academic guidance and personal support from an academic advisor, thus helping to deepen their learning process. Moreover, the student group that meets the academic advisor > 6 times/semester showed the most optimal result. 52 students (80%) were included in the high category, 11 students (16.9%) were included in the moderate category, and 2 students (3.1%) were included in the low category. This finding strengthens the assumption that more frequent interaction between student and academic advisor positively contributes to the improvement of learning experiences. Regular meeting allows a reflection process, academic guidance, and continuous feedback, which enrich the quality of students' learning.

Table 6. Frequency of meetings between the academic advisor and students

Variable	Value	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)	Description
Meeting of the Academic Advisor and the Level of Overall Learning Experiences	12.343	0.015	There is a Positive Relationship between the Frequency of Meeting the Academic Advisor and Learning Experiences

Based on the results in Table 6, the results of Chi Square correlation analysis showed that there is a positive relationship between the frequency of meeting academic advisor and level of learning experiences in students, with a Chi Square value of $r = 12.343$ ($p = 0.015$; $p < 0.05$). This result indicates a positive and significant relationship between the frequency of meetings between the student and academic advisor and the level of overall student learning experiences. Therefore, it can be concluded that the more frequently the students meet with an academic advisor, the higher the level of perceived learning experiences.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the results of data analysis in this study, social support from an academic advisor has a positive and significant relationship with student learning experiences. The results of the correlation test show a significantly positive relationship between advisor support and learning experiences, which is included in the strong category. Moreover, three learning experience dimensions, including understanding, applying, and reflecting, also show similar results, all of which show a significantly positive correlation. These results are strengthened by the Chi-Square test, which shows that the more frequently the students meet with an academic advisor, the higher the level of their learning experiences. Therefore, empirical data support the main hypothesis of the study that social support from an academic lecturer has a positive influence on student learning experience, which reflects the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. The provisions for academic guidance by the advisor support at Syiah Kuala University are officially and structured and are clearly regulated and listed in the academic guidebook, namely in the academic guidance section. In detail, several things are regulated: Assisting students in preparing study plans, providing considerations to students in determining the number of credits and types of courses to be taken each semester; Monitoring and assisting the academic development of their student advisors; Helping solve academic and non-academic problems faced by their advisor support; Reporting to the head of the study program/dean.

The descriptive finding also demonstrates that most students assess advisor support in a high category (73.6%), while student learning experience is also generally high (74.6%). These results indicate that academic advisors in Universitas Syiah Kuala not only play an administrative role but also begin to carry out an academic mentoring function, which enriches the learning process that will encourage students to optimize themselves. This is in line with other research, including assisting in study planning and encouraging student study completion (Juwita et al., 2020), reducing negative impact in the form of reduced learning activities in students (Rozi & Nuria, 2023), giving advice, and monitoring learning activities (Susilowati, 2008).

The context of these results is relevant to the characteristics of current higher education, where students are faced with the complexity of academic and the need for reflective guidance. The results of the study show that meeting frequency of 1-3 times per semester results in a high learning experience (73%), while students who meet more than 6 times per semester show a high learning experience of up to 80%. This pattern indicates that the quality and continuity of interaction between an academic advisor and students play an important role in establishing a deep learning experience. Intensity or social interaction established between students and academic advisor has a positive effect and supports learning experiences for students, where the more frequent the intensity of the lecturer's meetings

between students and lecturer, the better the students' grade (Musabbihin et al., 2021), for learning motivation, and for academic achievement (Lestari, 2022). Meanwhile, for students with low intensity with an academic advisor, who have only around 1-2 meetings per semester, they only focus on the academic aspect rather than the non-academic aspect, so it is considered not optimal (Abdillah, 2016). A method that can be carried out to increase intensity with an academic advisor is by strengthening capacity with specific training and technology-based guidance (Ariyanto, 2025). Through higher meeting frequency or meeting intensity between an academic advisor and students, students obtain more space for discussion, reflect on academic experiences, obtain feedback, and develop more effective learning strategies.

Thus, in the framework of a deep learning approach, this indicates that academic advisor support not only improves cognitive aspects, including understanding and applying, but also strengthens affective and reflective aspects of students, including the ability to reflect on what has been learned on the campus. Regular meetings with an academic advisor become an academic reflection space, career guidance, and emotional support, which strengthen students' sense of engagement with the learning process. This finding is consistent with Widiyanto et al. (2019) and Pananto & Paryonti (2023), who show that lecturers' social support can improve students' learning motivation, self-confidence, and study completion (Widiyanto et al., 2019; Pananto & Paryonti, 2023). Other studies are also in line with this study, where the interpersonal relationship between the lecturer and the student plays an important role in encouraging reflective engagement and self-awareness in learning (Yamin, 2022; Kuswandono, 2023). Other studies show that social support provides an important contribution to academic engagement (Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021; Zhang & Qian, 2024). BMC Public Health also found similar findings, where social support predicts students' academic engagement, where groups who perceive higher social support show a higher level of academic engagement. For example, on campus, social relationship is linearly correlated with students' academic engagement, although there are other effects that also contribute, such as academic motivation and life satisfaction experienced by students, which contribute to academic engagement (Chen et al., 2023).

This finding is supported by Archer-Kuhn et al (2020), who highlight how a collaborative learning program based on inquiry-based learning facilitates deep learning carried out through interaction, reflection, and critical discussion. These are components that are really dependent on social support between students and the lecturer or facilitator. Therefore, by positioning the variable of academic advisor support as an official source from the campus institution, this study strengthens the argument that a supportive environment in the internal campus can be the main associated with facilitating students' engagement in the context of reflection on deep learning. A study by Huang et al. (2024) found that social support helps maintain cognitive engagement, although there is learning pressure or fatigue.

Finding that academic advisor support strengthens the reflection aspect of students to improve important insights into deep learning literature. A study by Benlahcene et al. (2024) shows that interpersonal relationships with parents, peers, and teachers can influence students' self-confidence and academic engagement, including cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects. This supports that social support not only establishes students' attention but also assists them in believing in their abilities (self-efficacy), which then strengthens reflection and cognitive engagement. Although the study by Benlahcene et al (2024) was not conducted on college students, but on senior high school students, this study provides a little overview regarding how the context of social support can have a positive effect on students. Students' satisfaction and their desire to persist, especially in first-year students, are really required, and professional development of an academic advisor who can provide personalized academic support in encouraging their academic engagement and success is also required (Pickett, 2025). This means that quality and frequency of guidance are predictive in this context.

4. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes that social support from an academic advisor has a positive and significant influence on student learning experiences, which reflects deep learning principles, including aspects of

understanding, applying, and reflecting, which are learning experiences. A strong relationship between two variables indicates that the role of academic advisor has shifted from an administrative function toward a mentoring function that is oriented toward the development of students' reflective and emotional. The higher the meeting intensity and interaction quality between advisor support and students, the greater the level of students' cognitive and affective engagement in the learning process. An academic advisor should be able to optimize their roles as lecturers who can provide social support to students so that students' potential can be optimized.

Further research is suggested to use other research approaches, such as a longitudinal study. Moreover, the development of an academic advisor training program and strengthening the digital academic guidance system are required so that the mentoring function can occur continuously without being limited by time. Thus, the results of this study not only provide empirical contributions to the development of deep learning theory in higher education in Indonesia but also provide the direction of policy for universities in optimizing the role of an academic advisor as an associate for meaningful and reflective learning.

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