Sindoro

Vol. __ No. __, Tahun __ ***CENDIKIA PENDIDIKAN*** Plagiarism Check No. __

ISSN: 3025-6488

IMPLEMENTATION OF LOVE-BASED CURRICULUM THROUGH DEEP LEARNING STUDY AT *MI KHAIRUL FATIHIN NW KWANG JUKUT*

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Abstrak

Pendidikan dasar di madrasah dituntut tidak hanya menghasilkan capaian akademik, tetapi juga menumbuhkan karakter dan pengalaman belajar yang bermakna, sementara kajian empiris tentang perpaduan Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (KBC) dan pembelajaran mendalam di madrasah ibtidaiyah masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan implementasi KBC, implementasi pembelajaran mendalam, serta faktor pendukung dan penghambatnya di MI Khairul Fatihin NW Kwang Jukut, Lombok Tengah. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus. Subjek dipilih secara purposif dan terdiri atas kepala madrasah, guru, dan peserta didik. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, dianalisis dengan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, serta diuji keabsahannya melalui triangulasi, pengamatan berkelanjutan, pengecekan anggota, dan kecukupan referensi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa KBC diwujudkan melalui sapaan hangat, motivasi, penghargaan atas pendapat peserta didik, pendekatan personal, dan pembiasaan karakter, sedangkan pembelajaran mendalam diwujudkan melalui diskusi kelompok, presentasi, tanya jawab, refleksi, dan pemecahan masalah. Lembar observasi satu sesi pembelajaran menunjukkan skor 30 dari 32 untuk KBC, 28 dari 32 untuk pembelajaran mendalam, dan 8 dari 8 untuk iklim kelas (total 66 dari 72; 91,7%; kategori sangat baik). Faktor pendukung mencakup dukungan kepala madrasah dan komitmen guru; faktor penghambat mencakup keragaman karakter dan kemampuan peserta didik, keterbatasan media dan waktu, serta dukungan orang tua yang belum merata. Temuan bersifat kontekstual dan tidak membuktikan dampak kausal terhadap karakter maupun prestasi belajar.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta; pembelajaran mendalam; implementasi kurikulum; pendidikan karakter; studi kasus kualitatif

Abstract

Primary madrasahs are expected to foster character and meaningful learning alongside academic attainment, yet empirical evidence on how the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta, KBC) and deep-learning pedagogy operate together at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level remains scarce. This qualitative case study described how the KBC was implemented, how deep learning was enacted, and which factors supported or hindered both at MI Khairul Fatihin NW Kwang Jukut in Central Lombok, Indonesia. Participants, selected purposively, comprised the madrasah head, teachers and students. Data were gathered through observation, interviews and document review, analysed with the Miles and Huberman interactive model, and checked through triangulation, persistent observation, member checking and referential adequacy. The

Article History

Received: —

Reviewed: —

Published: —

Plagiarism Checker No. —

Copyright: Authors

Published by: Sindoro

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KBC was enacted through warm greetings, motivation, respect for students' opinions, a personal approach and character habituation, while deep learning was enacted through group discussion, presentations, question-and-answer sessions, reflection and problem-solving. A single-session observation checklist yielded 30 of 32 points for KBC, 28 of 32 for deep learning and 8 of 8 for classroom climate (66 of 72 in total; 91.7%; "excellent" on the instrument's own scale). Supporting factors included the head's backing and teacher commitment; hindering factors included diverse learner characteristics and abilities, limited media and time, and uneven parental support. The findings are context-bound and do not establish causal effects on character or achievement.

Keywords: *Love-Based Curriculum; deep learning; curriculum implementation; character education; qualitative case study*

Introduction

Education is expected to do more than transmit knowledge: Indonesian national law frames it as a conscious and planned effort that develops learners' spiritual strength, intelligence, noble character and skills (Republik Indonesia, 2003). In primary madrasahs, where children's emotional and social development is as prominent as their intellectual growth, this mandate places particular weight on how teachers relate to learners and how lessons are designed. Learning that is organized only around cognitive achievement risks neglecting the affective and practical dimensions of schooling, and scholarship on the science of learning and development argues that cognition, emotion and social experience are intertwined rather than separable (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Immordino-Yang et al., 2019).

Two recent Indonesian policy orientations speak to this concern from different angles. The Ministry of Religious Affairs issued a guide to the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta, KBC) for madrasahs, positioning love, care, empathy, respect and responsibility as values that should inform relationships and learning (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2025). In parallel, national curriculum guidance describes *pembelajaran mendalam* (deep learning) as mindful, meaningful and joyful learning in which students make sense of content, connect it with their lives and learn under supportive conditions (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan [BSKAP], 2025). The first is a value-oriented curricular lens; the second is a pedagogical orientation. They are complementary but not synonymous, and neither should be treated as a single, formally mandated instructional model. In this article, "deep learning" refers strictly to this pedagogical meaning and not to machine learning.

International research offers reasons to expect that the two orientations may reinforce each other, as well as reasons for caution. Meta-analyses associate positive teacher–student relationships with student engagement and achievement, although the associations are neither universal nor automatically causal (Cornelius-White, 2007; Quin, 2017; Roorda et al., 2011). Love-based practice in education, as conceptualized by Uusiautti et al. (2013), likewise treats sincere care, appreciation and respect as the basis of a learning atmosphere in which pupils feel valued. Well-implemented social and emotional learning programmes are linked to positive interpersonal and educational outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017), and transformative approaches stress belonging, agency and equity (Jagers et al., 2019). Self-determination theory adds that relatedness, autonomy and competence underpin self-directed engagement (Niemiec &

Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2020), while empirical work shows that autonomy support is most effective when combined with clear structure (Jang et al., 2010) and that feedback quality shapes what learners gain from instruction (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Together, this literature implies that a caring climate is most useful when it accompanies demanding, well-scaffolded learning tasks.

The pedagogical half of the pairing also requires careful definition. The ICAP framework separates passive, active, constructive and interactive modes of engagement and predicts that deeper modes yield deeper learning (Chi & Wylie, 2014), and Hattie and Donoghue (2016) distinguish surface learning, deep learning and transfer. Engagement itself is multidimensional, comprising behavioural, emotional and cognitive facets (Fredricks et al., 2004). On this view, activities such as group discussion or presentation are opportunities for deeper learning, not proof of it; evidence of explanation, elaboration and application is needed before classroom activity can be called meaningful.

The present study was prompted by conditions at MI Khairul Fatihin NW Kwang Jukut, a private madrasah ibtidaiyah in Pringgarata District, Central Lombok. Preliminary observations indicated that lessons tended to concentrate on cognitive achievement, that affective values and practical skills were not yet developed in balance, and that students' emotional engagement still needed strengthening. At the same time, the madrasah had begun to emphasize caring teacher–student relationships and participatory learning activities. Prior studies have examined teacher–student relationships, engagement, scientific-approach learning and teaching strategies separately, mostly through cognitive or reading outcomes, whereas little is known about how a value-oriented curriculum and a deep-learning pedagogy are enacted together in the ordinary routines of a primary madrasah, and what helps or hinders that enactment. A situated, in-depth account of this kind is needed before any claims about effects can responsibly be tested.

This study therefore aimed to (1) describe how the Love-Based Curriculum was implemented, (2) describe how deep learning was implemented in the learning process, and (3) identify the factors that supported and hindered the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum through deep learning at MI Khairul Fatihin NW Kwang Jukut. Its contribution is an explanatory description of the integration and its pedagogical implications, not a test of causal effects on learning outcomes or character.

Research Method

Research design and setting

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a single-case study design, which is suited to investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context by drawing on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). The case was the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum through deep learning in the learning process at MI Khairul Fatihin NW Kwang Jukut, a private (accreditation B) madrasah ibtidaiyah in Pringgarata District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, which implements the Merdeka Curriculum. Fieldwork took place in the even semester of the 2026 academic year, with classroom observations on 15 and 17 July 2026. The findings are intended to illuminate this particular setting rather than to represent all madrasahs.

Participants and data sources

Participants were selected through purposive sampling according to their relevance to the research questions. They comprised the head of the madrasah and classroom teachers, who

designed and managed learning and could explain how the curriculum values were put into practice, and students, who experienced the lessons directly [jumlah partisipan: lengkapi dari catatan lapangan]. Primary data came from observations and interviews. Secondary data came from documents, namely lesson plans, teaching materials, students' work, photographs of learning activities and school records. Sources were therefore of three kinds: respondents (students), informants (teachers and the head of the madrasah) and documents.

Instruments and trustworthiness

As in most qualitative inquiry, the researcher was the main instrument, supported by an observation sheet, interview guides and a documentation checklist. The observation sheet contained 18 items rated on a four-point scale (4 = highly evident, 3 = evident, 2 = less evident, 1 = not evident), grouped into three components (Table 1). Total scores were converted to percentages and read against four categories: 81–100% excellent, 61–80% good, 41–60% fair and 40% or below poor. Interview guides asked teachers how the curriculum and deep learning were applied, how cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects were integrated and what challenges arose, and asked students about their enjoyment, the help they received, their involvement and their difficulties.

Table 1. Structure of the observation instrument

Component	Indicators (item numbers)	Items	Maximum score
Love-Based Curriculum	Care and affection (1–3); social-emotional relationships (4–5); modelling and empathetic communication (6–7); spiritual and compassionate values (8)	8	32
Deep learning	Mindful (9–10), meaningful (11–12) and joyful learning (13–14); active engagement and critical thinking (15–16)	8	32
Implementation outcomes	Behavioural change and classroom atmosphere (17–18)	2	8
Total		**18**	**72**

Because the data are narrative and interpretive, quantitative validity and reliability tests were not applied; credibility was instead established through the techniques commonly used to establish trustworthiness (Tracy, 2010; Nowell et al., 2017). These were source triangulation (head, teachers and students), method triangulation (observation, interview and documentation) and time triangulation, persistent observation, member checking of interview results with teachers and other informants, and referential adequacy through field notes, photographs and archives (Marlina et al., 2024; Morgan, 2024).

Data analysis

Data were analysed with the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which comprises data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. During reduction, relevant segments of observation notes, transcripts and documents were selected and coded (for example, codes for helping behaviour, critical thinking and practical skills) and grouped by theme. The reduced data were then displayed as narratives, matrices and tables that set observation, teacher

interview and documentation side by side. Tentative conclusions were verified by triangulation, member checks and discussion with supervisors. The observation scores serve only as a descriptive summary of one observed session and were not subjected to inferential testing. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the regional development planning agency (BAPPEDA) and from the madrasah, and participation was voluntary.

Results and Discussion

Results

Implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum. Observation and interview data converge on a relational style of teaching. The head of the madrasah described the curriculum as built on "positive relationships between teachers and students" in which teachers "do not only teach but also act as mentors and friends" (interview, 2026). Observation confirmed that teachers welcomed students with smiles and greetings, offered motivation before lessons and appreciated students' efforts. A teacher explained that when students err, "we do not immediately scold them; instead, we provide guidance and direction using kind and respectful language" (interview, 2026). Five forms of implementation were identified (Table 2).

Table 2. Forms of Love-Based Curriculum implementation

Form of implementation	Description in the field
Greetings and smiles	Offered at the start of every lesson
Providing motivation	Raises students' learning enthusiasm
Respecting students' opinions	Students are given opportunities to express ideas
Personal approach	Teachers attend to individual students' conditions and needs
Character development	Pursued through habituation and exemplary behaviour

Implementation of deep learning.

Teachers designed activities that asked students to question, discuss, solve problems and voice opinions. One teacher reported, "we do not only ask students to memorize the material, but also to understand its meaning and connect it with their daily lives," and a student said that "learning becomes more enjoyable because we often discuss topics and express our opinions in front of the class" (interviews, 2026). Five recurring activities, each with its intended purpose, are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Deep-learning activities and their intended purposes

Activity	Intended purpose
Group discussion	Develop collaboration and critical thinking
Presentation	Improve communication skills and self-confidence
Question-and-answer session	Develop analytical skills
Learning reflection	Deepen understanding

Activity	Intended purpose
Problem-solving activities	Connect material with real-life situations

Observation scores.

The observation checklist, completed during an English lesson in Grade VI on 15 July 2026, gave the scores in Table 4. All three components fell in the instrument's highest band (81–100%). The KBC component scored 30 of 32 (93.8%), the deep-learning component 28 of 32 (87.5%) and the outcomes component 8 of 8 (100%), for a total of 66 of 72 (91.7%).

Table 4. Classroom observation scores (single session)

Component	Items	Score	Maximum	Percentage	Mean per item	Category
Love-Based Curriculum	8	30	32	93.8%	3.75	Excellent
Deep learning	8	28	32	87.5%	3.50	Excellent
Implementation outcomes	2	8	8	100.0%	4.00	Excellent
Total	**18**	**66**	**72**	**91.7%**	**3.67**	**Excellent**

Note. Percentages and per-item means were computed by the authors from the scores recorded on the observation sheet.

The item-level pattern is more informative than the totals. Every indicator describing the teacher's conduct (greeting, patient help, positive reinforcement, modelling, empathetic listening, spiritual integration, linking lessons to daily life) was rated 4. Ratings of 3 were concentrated in indicators that depend on students' own behaviour: peer interaction and tolerance for differences within the KBC component, and sustained learning focus, reflection, explanation of concepts in their own words and voluntary participation within the deep-learning component (Table 5).

Table 5. Observation items by rating

Component	Rated 4 (highly evident)	Rated 3 (evident, not consistent)
Love-Based Curriculum	Greeting; help with difficulties; positive reinforcement; teacher modelling; empathetic communication; spiritual integration	Student interaction; tolerance
Deep learning	Real-life relevance; joyful atmosphere; student enthusiasm; discussion and collaboration	Learning focus; student reflection; conceptual understanding; active participation
Outcomes	Behavioural change; classroom climate	None

Supporting and inhibiting factors.

Five supporting factors emerged: support from the head of the madrasah, teachers' commitment to humanistic learning, a conducive school environment, positive teacher–student relationships and character-building habituation programmes. As the head put it, "all teachers are committed to creating a comfortable and enjoyable learning atmosphere" (interview, 2026). Five inhibiting factors were also reported: differences in students' characteristics, diverse academic abilities, limited learning media and resources, limited instructional time and unequal parental support. A teacher noted that "the biggest challenge is the diverse characteristics of students, which require teachers to use different approaches for different learners." Field notes added that deep-learning activities demanded more time, careful planning and continuous teacher creativity to keep every student engaged.

Discussion

A caring climate as the relational foundation.

The pattern in Tables 2 and 4 is consistent with love-based practice as described by Uusiautti et al. (2013), in which attention, appreciation and respect make pupils feel valued and therefore more willing to take part. The teachers' refusal to answer errors with scolding, in favour of guidance and respectful language, is the practical core of that idea. A plausible explanation for the favourable climate lies in the madrasah's institutional ecology: the head's backing, a school culture that emphasizes religious values and character, and teachers who share a commitment to humanistic teaching mean that caring conduct is expected and reinforced rather than left to individual temperament. The reported link between warm relationships and students' comfort in speaking also echoes meta-analytic evidence that affective teacher–student relationships are associated with engagement and achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Roorda et al., 2011; Quin, 2017). Those reviews, however, describe associations, and the present design cannot show that the teachers' warmth produced the engagement observed.

Why the deep-learning component scored lower than the relational one.

The item-level pattern in Table 5 suggests that what the madrasah enacts most reliably is what teachers control directly: their own greetings, patience, modelling and choice of contextual examples. Indicators that depend on students sustaining attention, reflecting and explaining concepts in their own words were rated one step lower. This is theoretically coherent. In the ICAP framework, constructive and interactive engagement require learners to generate and exchange explanations, which demands more of them, and of lesson design, than receiving a friendly welcome (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Hattie and Donoghue (2016) similarly show that moving from surface to deep learning and then to transfer depends on explicit strategies and well-timed feedback. Group discussion and presentation, the activities most often reported here, create the opportunity for deeper learning, but the 3-rated indicators suggest that the opportunity was not yet consistently converted into sustained reflection and independent explanation. Fredricks et al. (2004) remind us that behavioural participation is only one facet of engagement; observers can readily see hands raised, but cognitive engagement is harder to infer from a single session.

Care and structure together.

Teachers described differentiating their approach for diverse learners, offering extra guidance to some and more challenging tasks to others. Self-determination theory interprets respectful dialogue and the freedom to voice opinions as supports for relatedness and autonomy (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2020), but Jang et al. (2010) found that autonomy support

improves engagement most when paired with structure. Read this way, the inhibiting factors identified in the study are not simply external obstacles; they mark the places where structure is hardest to provide. Limited media and instructional time restrict how much scaffolding, feedback and reflection can be built into a lesson, and uneven parental support limits the continuity of character habituation beyond school. Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest that feedback is most effective when it addresses where learners are going and how to get there, which implies that praise and encouragement, though valued by students, need to be complemented with task-focused feedback if deep learning is to follow. Because the study did not record the intensity or quality of such feedback, this remains a theory-informed interpretation rather than a tested mechanism.

Character claims and the limits of the evidence.

The source study concluded that the implementation had been effective and had contributed to character traits such as respect, responsibility, empathy, discipline and cooperation. The data support a more bounded statement: caring and participatory practices were observable, participants described them favourably and a single observed session received high ratings. Social and emotional learning research indicates that well-designed programmes can be associated with broader developmental benefits (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017), and transformative approaches emphasize agency, belonging and equity (Jagers et al., 2019), yet character is not demonstrated by one teacher modelling respect or by learners cooperating in one lesson. Three features of the design further caution against reading the high scores as evidence of effectiveness. First, the ratings come from one observer in one session, so they cannot reflect consistency over time, and observer presence may itself shape behaviour. Second, the preliminary observations that motivated the study had described an unbalanced, cognitively centred practice, yet no baseline was collected against which the later ratings could be compared. Third, the psychomotor domain, which framed the original inquiry, did not emerge as a distinct theme in the data, so claims about balanced cognitive, affective and psychomotor development are not supported. These points follow the criteria for credible qualitative work, which emphasize transparency, a worthy topic, rich rigour and honest reflexivity over claims of generalizable effect (Tracy, 2010).

Implications for practice and inquiry.

Taken together, the case suggests that a value-oriented curriculum and a participatory pedagogy can be enacted side by side in a primary madrasah, and that the more demanding task is shifting from teacher-visible warmth to student-visible reasoning. Practically, teachers might make reflection routines more explicit, ask students to explain concepts in their own words before and after group work, and pair encouragement with specific feedback. Schools might protect time for such activities, expand simple learning media, and involve parents through regular communication about character habits. For future research, repeated observations over a semester, student work analysed for evidence of explanation and transfer, defined behavioural indicators of the KBC values (for example turn-taking, helping and respectful disagreement) and comparative designs would allow claims about change and effect to be tested rather than inferred (Yin, 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This case study shows that the Love-Based Curriculum was enacted at MI Khairul Fatihin NW Kwang Jukut mainly through teachers' relational conduct: warm greetings, motivation, respect for students' opinions, a personal approach to individual needs and character habituation. Deep learning was enacted through group discussion, presentations, question-and-answer sessions,

reflection and problem-solving that linked lessons to students' daily lives. The two orientations met in lessons where a supportive climate accompanied structured opportunities to discuss and explain ideas. Support from the head of the madrasah, teachers' commitment, a conducive school environment, positive teacher–student relationships and character-building programmes facilitated this integration, whereas diverse learner characteristics and abilities, limited media, limited instructional time and uneven parental support constrained it. The evidence is descriptive and drawn from one madrasah, so it documents implementation and perceptions; it does not prove that the approach improved character or learning outcomes.

For teachers, the findings imply that warm relationships should be matched by explicit learning goals, routines that ask students to reflect and explain in their own words, and specific feedback on tasks. For the madrasah, they imply protecting lesson time for participatory activities, providing simple and varied learning media, sustaining character-building programmes and offering professional development on designing reflective tasks. For parents, regular communication with the madrasah can extend the habits of respect, discipline and responsibility into the home. For future researchers, repeated observations over a longer period, analysis of student work, clearly defined behavioural indicators of the Love-Based Curriculum values, and comparative or longitudinal designs across several schools and levels are recommended so that questions of change and effect can be examined directly.

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