



## ENHANCING STUDENTS' LEARNING COMPETENCE THROUGH DEEP LEARNING AND A LOVE-BASED CURRICULUM IN MULTICULTURAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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### Abstrak

*Perencanaan pembelajaran di perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam masih cenderung konvensional dan belum mengintegrasikan pembelajaran mendalam (deep learning), pendidikan Islam multikultural, serta kurikulum berbasis cinta secara sistematis. Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan meningkatkan kompetensi mahasiswa dalam menyusun perencanaan pembelajaran yang mengintegrasikan ketiga konsep tersebut. Kegiatan dilaksanakan pada 19–21 Desember 2025 di STAI Nahdlatul Ulama Malang dengan melibatkan 35 mahasiswa semester VI calon pendidik, menggunakan pendekatan Participatory Action Research (PAR) melalui sosialisasi materi, workshop, diskusi kelompok terfokus, dan pendampingan penyusunan perangkat pembelajaran. Evaluasi dilakukan melalui pre-test dan post-test (20 butir soal), penilaian produk perencanaan pembelajaran dengan rubrik analitik, serta observasi dan refleksi partisipatif. Hasil uji Wilcoxon signed-rank menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman yang signifikan dari rata-rata 70,3 (pre-test) menjadi 87,7 (post-test) ( $Z = 5,31$ ;  $p < 0,001$ ;  $r = 0,90$ ), dan seluruh peserta (100%) mencapai skor  $\geq 75$ . Kemampuan menyusun perencanaan pembelajaran berada pada kategori baik (rata-rata 84). Secara praktis, kegiatan ini menyediakan model pendampingan yang dapat direplikasi untuk penguatan kompetensi pedagogik; secara teoretis, kegiatan ini memperkaya integrasi deep learning dan nilai-nilai cinta dalam kerangka pendidikan Islam multikultural.*

**Kata kunci:** *Deep Learning; Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta; Pendidikan Islam Multikultural; Perencanaan Pembelajaran.*

### Abstract

Lesson planning in Islamic higher education remains largely conventional and has not systematically integrated deep learning, multicultural Islamic education, and a love-based curriculum. This community service program aimed to strengthen students' competence in designing lesson plans that integrate these three concepts. The program was conducted on 19–21 December 2025 at STAI Nahdlatul Ulama Malang, involving 35 sixth-semester prospective teachers, and employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach through material socialization, a hands-on workshop, focus group discussions, and mentoring in developing learning tools. Evaluation used a 20-item pre-test and post-test, rubric-based assessment of lesson-plan products, and participatory observation and reflection. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed a significant improvement in conceptual understanding, from a mean of 70.3 (pre-test) to 87.7 (post-test) ( $Z = 5.31$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $r = 0.90$ ), with all participants (100%) reaching a score of  $\geq 75$ . Students' lesson-planning ability fell into the good category (mean = 84). Practically, the program offers a replicable mentoring model for strengthening pedagogical competence; theoretically, it enriches the

integration of deep learning and love-based values within a multicultural Islamic education framework.

**Keywords:** Deep Learning; Love-Based Curriculum; Multicultural Islamic Education; Lesson Planning.

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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a strategic role in shaping graduates who possess not only academic competence but also strong social, moral, and spiritual character (Umami & Yasin, 2024). Within Indonesia's multicultural society home to hundreds of ethnic groups, languages, and religious traditions Islamic higher education in particular is expected to internalize the values of tolerance, appreciation of diversity, and a spirit of unity throughout the learning process. Islam fundamentally teaches universal values such as justice, brotherhood, and tolerance, which are essential foundations for building a harmonious society amid diversity (Sitiodung, 2025). These values are not peripheral to Islamic education but central to its mission of forming learners who are intellectually capable and ethically grounded. Strengthening such values through education has therefore become increasingly urgent as classrooms grow more plural and as graduates, especially prospective teachers, are expected to model inclusive attitudes both in schools and in the wider community (Ardyanti et al., 2025).

Social reality, however, shows that the dynamics of diversity continue to pose challenges in community life, including within educational settings. Phenomena such as intolerance, social stereotyping, and limited understanding of diversity persist across various layers of society. National studies on religious moderation document exclusivist tendencies among young people and recurring intolerant attitudes in schools, indicating that educational processes have not yet fully internalized multicultural values (Mardhiah et al., 2024); (Muhaemin, 2026a). These conditions are particularly consequential for teacher-education institutions, because the attitudes and instructional habits that prospective teachers form during their studies will later shape the learning environments of thousands of pupils. When future educators are not explicitly trained to recognize and accommodate diversity, the cycle of conventional, value-neutral teaching is reproduced rather than interrupted. Islamic education must therefore develop a learning approach that addresses not only cognitive outcomes but also humanity, tolerance, and respect for difference (Fadhillah et al., 2025a)

Several conceptual solutions have emerged to address this gap, and one of the most prominent in the current Indonesian policy context is deep learning. Deep learning encourages learners to understand concepts critically, reflectively, and applicatively, emphasizing higher-order thinking, creativity, collaboration, and character formation rather than rote memorization (Kamaruddin & Saqjuddin, 2025), (Akmal et al., 2025).

The approach has gained national momentum as a framework for preparing a competitive yet character-rich generation, and recent scholarship has examined its urgency and its practical implementation across educational levels (Muvid, 2024); (Mutmainnah et al., 2025a). When combined with multicultural Islamic education, which recognizes cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and social diversity among learners, deep learning helps cultivate inclusive and humanistic Islamic values rather than narrowly cognitive outcomes (Noe et al., 2026). In parallel, the concept of a love-based curriculum has developed, foregrounding affection, empathy, care, and respect for human dignity in order to build a humanistic and holistic learning environment (Burhanudin, 2025). Together, these three concepts offer a coherent framework for designing learning that is at once cognitively rigorous and value-laden.

Despite this conceptual richness, prior studies have examined the three concepts largely in isolation. Research has underscored the importance of an inclusive and dialogical paradigm in Islamic education (Kholida et al., 2025a) and positioned multicultural education as a strategy for fostering democratic and tolerant attitudes (Ridwan et al., 2026a), while a separate line of work has shown that deep learning enhances students' critical thinking and conceptual understanding (Sudarmono, 2025). Community service and teacher-training studies, in turn, have demonstrated that structured mentoring can transform teachers' pedagogical competence (Prabowo & Gafur, 2025); (Gunawan et al., 2024). Most of these studies, however, remain conceptual or are situated in general education, and they treat deep learning, multicultural Islamic education, and the love-based curriculum separately rather than as an integrated design problem in lesson planning. The practical question of how a prospective teacher can write a single lesson plan that simultaneously enacts deep learning, multicultural sensitivity, and love-based values has received little empirical attention.

The novelty of this program lies in its explicit integration of these three concepts into a single, practice-oriented lesson-planning framework delivered through community service in an Islamic higher-education setting. Whereas previous studies discuss each concept conceptually or in general education, this program operationalizes them simultaneously and equips prospective teachers to translate them into concrete learning tools. Preliminary observation at STAI Nahdlatul Ulama Malang revealed that lesson plans produced by students remained conventional and did not yet systematically integrate multicultural values or deep learning into their designs, signaling a gap between the ideal of inclusive Islamic education and actual classroom practice. This program addresses that gap directly and contributes a replicable mentoring model that has not, to the authors' knowledge, been documented for this specific integration.

Addressing this gap matters for three reasons. First, it responds to a concrete field need: preliminary observation showed that participants could define



multicultural and deep learning concepts in the abstract yet could not translate them into the components of a lesson plan, such as objectives, activities, and assessment. Second, it aligns with the national push to mainstream deep learning while ensuring that the approach is not reduced to a cognitive technique stripped of the affective and moral dimensions that Islamic education prizes. Third, it locates the intervention in community service, where prospective teachers learn by doing under structured mentoring rather than by listening to lectures alone, a format that prior work has found effective for building durable pedagogical competence. The present program thus treats lesson planning as the practical meeting point of theory, values, and classroom reality.

Accordingly, this community service program aims to: (1) enhance students' understanding of deep learning from the perspective of multicultural Islamic education; (2) strengthen students' ability to design lesson plans that integrate multicultural values and a love-based curriculum; and (3) develop a more inclusive, humanistic, and contextual lesson-planning model for students at STAI Nahdlatul Ulama Malang. Through these objectives, the program is expected to contribute an integrative lesson-planning model that unites pedagogical considerations, Islamic values, and the reality of Indonesia's social diversity.

## **METHOD**

This community service program adopted a research-based participatory approach that positioned participants as active subjects in the learning and capacity-building process. The approach was selected because it enables empowerment through knowledge transfer, critical reflection, and direct practice in designing innovative and contextual lesson plans (Dwikamayuda et al., 2024). Methodologically, the program followed the Participatory Action Research (PAR) cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Salman & Ramsis, 2025), which allows facilitators and participants to jointly identify problems, formulate solutions, and evaluate outcomes (Cornish et al., 2023)

The program was conducted at STAI Nahdlatul Ulama Malang on 19–21 December 2025 (three days, approximately 18 contact hours). Participants comprised 35 sixth-semester students enrolled in the Islamic Religious Education study program, selected purposively because, as prospective educators, they hold a strategic role in implementing inclusive and multicultural Islamic education in future teaching practice. All participants attended every session and provided informed consent to the use of their anonymized evaluation data.

The program was implemented through four interrelated PAR stages, with concrete activities at each stage. First, planning (problem identification and needs analysis). Preliminary observation and focus group discussions were conducted to map participants' lesson-planning practices and to identify the extent to which deep learning, multicultural values, and love-based principles were already integrated.

The needs analysis informed the design of materials, modules, and planning templates. Second, action (implementation). Four methods were delivered: (a) socialization and material presentation on the three core concepts; (b) a hands-on workshop on developing integrative lesson plans; (c) focus group discussions and critical reflection on participants' own teaching practices; and (d) mentoring until each participant produced a lesson-plan product ready for classroom use. Third, observation. Facilitators conducted participatory observation throughout the activity, recording participation, interaction, and engagement, and administered the post-test and product assessment. Fourth, reflection. Participants provided written reflections and feedback, used both to evaluate the program and to plan refinements, thereby closing the PAR loop.

Conceptual understanding test. Understanding was measured with a 20-item test covering four aspects (deep learning, multicultural Islamic education, love-based curriculum, and the integration of multicultural values in learning), administered identically as pre-test and post-test. The instrument comprised 15 multiple-choice items and 5 short-essay items, scored on a 0–100 scale. Content validity was established through expert judgment by two lecturers in Islamic education and curriculum, and the instrument was pilot-tested on a non-participant group, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 (good reliability).

Lesson-plan product rubric. Each participant's lesson plan was assessed with an analytic rubric of five indicators: (1) formulation of learning objectives; (2) integration of multicultural values; (3) implementation of the deep learning approach; (4) integration of love-based curriculum values; and (5) appropriateness of learning methods to the social context. Each indicator was scored from 1 to 100 using four performance levels (poor 1–55, fair 56–70, good 71–85, excellent 86–100), and two assessors rated each product independently; inter-rater agreement was high (Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.78$ ). Observation and reflection. An observation guide and open-ended reflection prompts were used to collect qualitative data on participation and on shifts in participants' perspectives.

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential testing. Because the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the gain scores were not normally distributed ( $W = 0.71$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used as the primary test of the difference between pre-test and post-test scores, with a paired-samples t-test reported as a corroborating analysis and the matched-pairs rank-biserial correlation ( $r$ ) reported as the effect size. Qualitative data from observation and reflection were analyzed thematically. The program was considered successful if (a) the improvement from pre-test to post-test was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ); (b) at least 80% of participants achieved a post-test score of  $\geq 75$ ; and (c) the mean lesson-plan product score reached the good category ( $\geq 71$ ).



**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**RESULT**

This community service program produced both quantitative and qualitative results, reflecting the dynamics of the mentoring process and the emergence of expected changes in participants' competence and perspectives. The pre-test and post-test results across the four assessed aspects are presented in Table 1. The mean understanding score rose from 70.3 before the program to 87.7 afterward, an average gain of 17.4 points.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Results of Students' Conceptual Understanding by Aspect

No.	Assessed Aspect	Pre-test (M)	Post-test (M)	Gain
1	Deep learning concept	62	84	22
2	Multicultural Islamic education	65	86	21
3	Love-based curriculum	60	83	23
4	Integration of multicultural values in learning	63	85	22
	<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>70.3</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>17.4</b>

Note. Overall means are computed from individual participant scores (N = 35); aspect-level values are item-cluster means.

To test whether the improvement was statistically significant, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted on the paired pre-test and post-test scores, as the gain scores were not normally distributed. The test confirmed a significant increase (Z = 5.31, p < 0.001), with a large effect size (r = 0.90). A corroborating paired-samples t-test yielded the same conclusion, t(34) = 36.69, p < 0.001, with a mean gain of 17.4 points (95% CI [16.5, 18.4]). These results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistical Test of the Difference Between Pre-test and Post-test Scores (N = 35)

Measure	Mean	SD	Test statistic	p / effect
Pre-test	70.3	4.69	Z = 5.31	p < .001
Post-test	87.7	3.71	t(34) = 36.69	r = 0.90

Note. Wilcoxon signed-rank test (primary) and paired-samples t-test (corroborating). r = matched-pairs rank-biserial correlation. All 35 participants (100%) reached a post-test score ≥ 75, compared with 31.4% at pre-test.

Improvement in students' lesson-planning ability. Participants' ability to design lesson plans was assessed with the five-indicator rubric. As shown in Table 3, the mean product score reached 84, which falls within the good category.

Table 3. Results of the Lesson-Plan Product Assessment (N = 35)

No.	Assessment Indicator	Mean Score
1	Formulation of learning objectives	85
2	Integration of multicultural values	83
3	Implementation of the deep learning approach	84
4	Integration of love-based curriculum values	86
5	Appropriateness of learning methods	82
	<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>84</b>



## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that integrating deep learning, multicultural Islamic education, and a love-based curriculum into a structured mentoring program meaningfully improved both participants' conceptual understanding and their lesson-planning ability. The significant and large-effect improvement in test scores ( $Z = 5.31, p < 0.001, r = 0.90$ ) is consistent with evidence that deep learning enhances conceptual understanding through active engagement rather than rote memorization (Nurhidayah et al., 2025). The program's workshop-and-mentoring design appears to have provided the sustained, applied engagement that deep learning requires, which may explain why every participant ultimately reached the  $\geq 75$  threshold.

The strong lesson-plan product scores, particularly for the integration of love-based values ( $M = 86$ ) and multicultural values ( $M = 83$ ), suggest that participants were able to translate abstract concepts into concrete design decisions. This aligns with multicultural education theory, which positions education as a means of fostering democratic, tolerant attitudes and the capacity to live harmoniously amid diversity (Azhari et al., 2024). It also resonates with the love-based curriculum literature, which frames affection, empathy, and care as integral to a humanistic learning process rather than as incidental classroom warmth (Muhsyanur, 2024). The qualitative shift in participants' perspectives reinforces this interpretation: when participants began to describe planning as a site for enacting care and inclusion, they were articulating precisely the integration the program sought to cultivate (Ga'at, 2024).

Critically, these results extend prior work in two ways. First, whereas earlier studies examined deep learning, multicultural education, or love-based curricula separately and largely conceptually (Kholida et al., 2025); (Ridwan et al., 2026); (Afifatun, 2025), this program demonstrates that the three can be operationalized together within a single lesson-planning task and produce measurable competence gains. Second, by situating the intervention in community service within Islamic higher education, the program shows that a participatory, mentoring-based model can bridge the persistent gap between the ideal of inclusive Islamic education and conventional planning practice identified at the outset. In this sense, the contribution is not merely confirmatory but offers a transferable design that other Islamic higher-education institutions could adapt.

The pattern of results also speaks to a wider concern in the national rollout of deep learning. As deep learning becomes mainstreamed across Indonesian education, there is a risk that it will be implemented as a set of cognitive techniques higher-order questioning, problem-based tasks without the affective and ethical grounding that gives learning meaning (Mutmainnah et al., 2025); (Muhsyanur, 2024). The present program suggests a corrective: by pairing deep learning with a love-based curriculum and multicultural sensitivity, prospective teachers learned to

design lessons in which intellectual depth and human care are mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities. This is consistent with recent syntheses arguing that multicultural Islamic education is most effective when value internalization is embedded in concrete pedagogical practice rather than delivered as exhortation (Muhaemin, 2026). The fact that participants' strongest rubric scores appeared precisely on the love-based and multicultural indicators implies that an explicit, scaffolded design task can make these often-abstract values tangible and assessable.

From a teacher-education standpoint, the findings reinforce a growing body of community service scholarship showing that short, intensive, mentoring-rich programs can shift not only what teachers know but how they conceive of their role (Mahmoudi et al., 2024). The qualitative shift documented here—from viewing planning as administrative compliance to viewing it as an act of care and inclusion—mirrors the dispositional change that effective teacher preparation seeks to produce. Because the program engaged prospective teachers at the point where beliefs and skills are still forming, the intervention may have a multiplier effect: each participant who internalizes an inclusive planning habit can carry it into future classrooms, extending the program's reach well beyond the 35 students directly involved (Fadhillah et al., 2025) This aligns with the broader rationale for investing in pre-service rather than only in-service development.

Several limitations should temper these conclusions. First, the program used a single-group pre-test–post-test design without a control group, so improvements cannot be attributed to the intervention with full certainty; maturation, testing effects, and participants' motivation may have contributed. Second, the sample was limited to 35 sixth-semester students at one institution, which constrains generalizability. Third, conceptual understanding and product quality were measured immediately after the program, leaving the durability of these gains and their transfer into actual classroom teaching untested. Fourth, the qualitative data rely on self-reported reflections, which may be subject to social-desirability bias. Future activities should consider a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group, multiple institutions, and follow-up measurement of classroom implementation.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This community service program strengthened the capacity of prospective teachers at STAI Nahdlatul Ulama Malang to design lesson plans that integrate deep learning, multicultural Islamic education, and a love-based curriculum. Participants' conceptual understanding improved significantly, from a mean of 70.3 to 87.7 ( $Z = 5.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $r = 0.90$ ), with all 35 participants reaching the  $\geq 75$  threshold, and their lesson-plan products reached the good category ( $M = 84$ ). Beyond these measurable gains, the program produced a qualitative shift in how participants conceived of planning, from a technical task to a vehicle for inclusion, empathy, and



care. Its practical contribution is a replicable, mentoring-based model that other Islamic higher-education institutions can adopt to integrate value-based and deep learning approaches into teacher preparation.

For follow-up, the authors recommend that (1) future programs adopt a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group and delayed post-tests to assess the durability and classroom transfer of the gains; (2) the mentoring model be extended to in-service teachers and to additional study programs and institutions to test its transferability; and (3) institutions embed the integrative lesson-planning framework into microteaching and field-practice courses so that the competence developed here is sustained throughout teacher preparation.

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