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Implementation And Management of A Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah of Palembang

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the management of the Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Palembang City, focusing on planning, implementation, and evaluation, as well as identifying enabling and inhibiting factors. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research involved principals or vice principals for curriculum affairs, teachers, and students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and document analysis, then analyzed with Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that curriculum planning was conducted collaboratively by aligning instructional documents with the official format of the Ministry of Religious Affairs while retaining long-standing positive practices. Implementation emphasized persuasive communication, teachers' exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), and participatory methods such as discussions, storytelling, and role-playing to build empathy and cooperation among students. Evaluation combined cognitive and affective dimensions through continuous observation, attitude records, and non-material reinforcement. Enabling factors included strong synergy between family-based and school-based education and the deeply rooted religious culture of Palembang's community. However, challenges emerged from teachers' heavy administrative workload and unequal training opportunities, which hindered consistent practice. Overall, the Love-Based Curriculum was effectively applied, offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers in developing humanistic, Islamic value-based learning strategies.

1. Introduction

Primary education serves as the fundamental foundation in shaping learners' personalities and character to be individuals of integrity, knowledge, and noble morals. *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI), as one of the formal educational institutions

under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, plays a vital role in instilling Islamic values while equipping students with academic skills (Nasrullah & Amril, 2025). In an era of increasingly complex developments, the challenges of education are no longer limited to improving cognitive abilities but also include the formation of attitudes, behaviors, and character aligned with religious teachings and universal human values (Wisiyanti, 2024). This awareness underlies the necessity for a curriculum approach that is more humanistic, spiritual, and touches the affective dimension of learners, ensuring that the learning process does not merely produce intellectually intelligent generations, but also those who are empathetic, loving, and socially sensitive.

In this context, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has recently and officially launched the *Love-Based Curriculum* as a formal curriculum to be implemented across all levels of *madrasah*, including MI (Panduan Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta, 2025). The launch of this curriculum is a strategic step in addressing educational needs that are not solely oriented toward academic achievement but also emphasize the importance of healthy emotional relationships between teachers and students, interactions grounded in compassion, and learning that humanizes learners. The term “love-based” here is not merely a slogan, but a philosophy of education grounded in the principle that learning becomes more effective and meaningful when built upon a foundation of affection, appreciation for students’ potential, and respect for diversity (Ifendi, 2025).

Although the *Love-Based Curriculum* has only recently been formalized as an official policy of the Ministry, its concepts and values have long been practiced in various MI across Palembang City. Teachers and school administrators in this region have internalized love-centered learning approaches in daily teaching and learning activities long before the issuance of formal regulations. This is evident in the way teachers greet students warmly, use learning methods that involve empathy and active participation, and organize religious and social activities that foster care for others. In other words, MIs in Palembang possess strong social and cultural capital to formally adopt this curriculum, as practices aligned with its principles are already deeply rooted in the school culture.

However, the transition from informally practicing love-based values to implementing them within a formal curriculum framework brings certain consequences and challenges that cannot be overlooked. This shift demands adjustments in various aspects, ranging from lesson planning, development of teaching materials, evaluation strategies, to teacher competence development. Teaching instruments such as syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), and instructional materials must be adapted to meet the standards set by the Ministry without losing the essence of the values long applied. Furthermore, teachers are required to fully understand the philosophy, principles, and objectives of this curriculum so that its implementation is not merely administrative but genuinely reflected in teaching behavior and interaction with students (Auliyah et al., 2024).

The current situation shows that MIs in Palembang occupy a unique position. On one hand, they benefit from a long history of implementing love-infused learning,

thus having a strong foundation for adapting to the new curriculum. On the other hand, they face the need to harmonize existing practices with the demands of a formally structured and standardized curriculum document. This calls for synergy between central policies, school-level implementation strategies, and the active involvement of all stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parents, and the surrounding community. Without such synergy, there is a risk of a gap between the curriculum concept and classroom practice, potentially preventing the optimal achievement of the curriculum's objectives.

Beyond technical aspects, the implementation of the *Love-Based Curriculum* requires a deep understanding of the local socio-cultural context. Palembang City, as one of the centers of Islamic development in South Sumatra, possesses a rich religious tradition that serves as a significant asset in supporting this curriculum. The culture of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), mutual respect, and strong traditions of religious education can be substantial supporting factors. Nonetheless, modern social dynamics, the influence of digital media, and lifestyle changes in urban communities present distinct challenges that necessitate adaptive strategies to ensure that the love-based values promoted by the curriculum remain relevant and capable of shaping students' character amid the rapid currents of globalization (Praekanata et al., 2024).

In the realm of educational research, studies on the management of the *Love-Based Curriculum* at the MI level, particularly in Palembang, remain relatively scarce. Most existing research tends to discuss character education implementation in general or the application of previous Ministry of Religious Affairs curricula without specific focus on this new curriculum. As a curriculum recently formalized yet deeply rooted in existing field practices, the management of the *Love-Based Curriculum* offers a unique perspective on the continuity between policy innovation and local educational wisdom. This gap in scholarship indicates the need for research that comprehensively describes how this curriculum is planned, implemented, and evaluated at the *madrasah* level, as well as the factors influencing its success.

Based on the aforementioned background and current conditions, the author deems it essential to compose this article with two primary objectives. First, to elaborate on how the curriculum is managed in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) in Palembang City covering the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation while taking into account prior experiences and established best practices. Second, to identify the enabling and inhibiting factors in the curriculum's implementation, both from the internal dynamics of the *madrasah* and from external factors involving community support and other relevant stakeholders.

By formulating these objectives, this article is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education policy, particularly in the implementation of the *Love-Based Curriculum* at the elementary level. Furthermore, this study aims to serve as a reference for teachers, school principals, and policymakers in designing learning strategies that are more effective, humanistic, and consistent with Islamic values, while remaining relevant to contemporary needs. The emphasis on love as

the foundation of the curriculum is expected not to remain a mere policy slogan but to truly become the spirit that animates the entire educational process in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, producing a generation that is not only academically competent but also gentle-hearted, committed to truth, and dedicated to the common good.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design (Creswell, 2015). This approach was chosen because the focus of the research is to provide an in-depth description of the management of the Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Palembang City following its official launch by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand educational phenomena holistically, thereby uncovering the interactions, values, and socio-cultural contexts that underpin curriculum practices in a comprehensive manner. The research location was purposively selected from several MI in Palembang City that had implemented the Love-Based Curriculum both before and after the official policy was introduced. The selection of locations considered the diversity in the status of the madrasah, both public and private, as well as the varied social environments in which these institutions operate.

The research subjects were limited to three main groups: school principals or vice principals in charge of curriculum affairs, teachers, and students. School principals or vice principals in charge of curriculum were selected because they hold authority over curriculum planning and management at the institutional level. Teachers were considered key subjects as they are the direct implementers of teaching and learning, integrating the values of love into classroom activities. Meanwhile, students were included to capture the perspectives of the direct beneficiaries, thus revealing how they experience and perceive the integration of love-based values in daily learning. The selection of subjects was conducted using purposive sampling, choosing informants deemed capable of providing relevant and in-depth information about the phenomenon under study.

Data collection was carried out through several techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted with principals or vice principals of curriculum and teachers using a semi-structured format, providing the researcher with guiding questions while allowing flexibility to explore broader responses. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with students to gain insights into their learning experiences, interactions with teachers, and perceptions of the love-based values embedded in instruction. Participant observation was also employed to directly observe classroom environments, teaching methods, and teacher-student interactions, including extracurricular activities related to curriculum implementation. In addition, document analysis was conducted by collecting various school documents such as syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), and curriculum department work programs to verify and complement data obtained from interviews and observations.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, serving as the human instrument responsible for designing, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the

data. The researcher was supported by interview guides, observation checklists, and FGD protocols designed in accordance with the research objectives. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model (Nurfajriani et al., 2024), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by filtering and categorizing relevant data according to the research focus. Data were displayed in descriptive narratives, tables, or diagrams to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn inductively based on empirical data collected in the field.

The validity of the data was maintained through source triangulation (Nurfajriani et al., 2024), comparing information from principals/vice principals, teachers, and students; technique triangulation, comparing findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis; and member checking, which involved confirming preliminary findings with informants to ensure accuracy. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were upheld by seeking informed consent from schools and informants before data collection, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and ensuring that all data were used solely for academic purposes and the advancement of scientific knowledge.

3. Results and Discussion

At the time of the research, the general condition of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Palembang City reflected both opportunities and challenges in implementing educational innovations. Most schools operated in modest but functional buildings, equipped with basic classrooms, prayer rooms, and limited library facilities, while some state-funded institutions had begun to benefit from infrastructure improvements provided by the government. Student populations were relatively large, with an average of 30–35 students per class, representing diverse social and economic backgrounds, yet united by strong religious values inherited from the local community. Teachers were generally committed and familiar with national curriculum standards, although disparities remained between state and private MI in terms of resources, training opportunities, and administrative support. The curriculum in use at the time already combined national guidelines with local religious practices, making the integration of new approaches such as the Love-Based Curriculum more culturally acceptable. Despite constraints such as limited technological facilities and teachers' heavy workload, the school environment remained conducive, characterized by warm teacher–student relationships, daily religious routines, and active parental involvement. These conditions shaped the practical context in which the Love-Based Curriculum was introduced, influencing both its planning and subsequent implementation.

In terms of data collection, this study utilized a variety of sources to ensure triangulation and reliability. Primary data were gathered from in-depth interviews with principals, vice principals for curriculum affairs, teachers, and students, focusing on their experiences and perceptions regarding the Love-Based Curriculum. Complementary data were obtained from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which allowed participants to collectively reflect on challenges and best

practices in implementation. Participant observation was conducted to capture real-time teacher–student interactions, classroom management strategies, and the integration of love-based values into daily routines. In addition, document analysis included lesson plans (RPP), curriculum guidelines, teacher assessment records, and school policy documents to verify consistency between formal planning and actual practices. Together, these data sources provided a holistic understanding of how the Love-Based Curriculum was planned, implemented, and evaluated in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Palembang. To complement these data collection strategies, several guiding questions were developed to structure the interviews and focus group discussions. These questions served to explore participants’ perspectives on curriculum planning, teaching practices, student experiences, parental involvement, and the overall implementation process, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Questions

No	Questions
1	How is the Love-Based Curriculum integrated into school-level planning? What challenges have you faced in aligning MoRA guidelines with school traditions?
2	How do you incorporate love-based values into daily teaching practices? What methods do you find most effective in fostering empathy and cooperation among students?
3	How do you feel about learning activities under this curriculum? Can you share an example of when you felt supported or appreciated by your teacher?
4	What role do you play in supporting the Love-Based Curriculum at home? How do school values align with family practices?
5	What factors support or hinder the effective implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in your school?

Love-Based Curriculum Planning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Palembang City

The planning process for the Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) within Palembang City reflects a strong effort to combine national directives with local cultural practices that have long been part of the school environment. At the beginning of every academic year, curriculum planning is initiated through coordination meetings involving principals, vice principals, teachers, and curriculum staff, all of whom work together to ensure alignment with guidelines from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). These meetings serve not only as technical sessions for preparing work programs but also as spaces for discussing how MoRA’s standards can be adjusted to the daily practices already embedded in the school. One of the principals of a State MI explained that this approach does not remove the identity of the institution but rather affirms existing practices that are considered positive and worth maintaining. In his words, the curriculum strengthens values that have already been deeply ingrained rather than imposing something new.

“We prepare the work program based on MoRA guidelines, without abandoning positive traditions already in place, such as encouraging students to greet and shake hands every morning. This curriculum merely reinforces practices we have long upheld.”

In a Private MI located in Seberang Ulu, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs emphasized that while the Love-Based Curriculum was officially formalized only recently, its essence had long been practiced informally within the institution. According to him, the most significant adjustments were not related to changing the school's values, but rather to making sure that instructional documents and lesson plans were written in accordance with the official MoRA format. He described the planning process as a continuation of what teachers had already been doing, only now with stronger documentation and more explicit affective learning indicators. Before explaining further, he highlighted that the curriculum values had been internalized for years and that the main task was aligning them with administrative requirements.

The planning stage in Palembang therefore demonstrates a form of curriculum contextualization, where national frameworks are carefully adapted to school traditions that have been preserved across generations. This process reflects the argument of Salabi, who notes that educational reforms are more sustainable when they are consistent with institutional practices (Salabi, 2020). Teachers and administrators experienced fewer obstacles during the adoption of the Love-Based Curriculum because the changes were evolutionary, strengthening existing approaches rather than introducing disruptive methods. Furthermore, the planning process was participatory, with teachers actively involved in revising lesson plans, assessments, and instructional strategies. A teacher who was interviewed described how this collective approach built mutual responsibility among staff members and gave them greater confidence to apply the changes in their classrooms.

Furthermore, the active engagement of teachers in revising instructional materials illustrates the principle of shared leadership as emphasized by Leithwood, where participatory decision-making enhances a sense of ownership and fosters commitment to curriculum implementation (Leithwood et al., 2004). In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Palembang, teachers were not positioned merely as implementers of policies designed by higher authorities, but rather as co-creators who contributed ideas, revised documents, and adjusted teaching strategies according to classroom realities. This collaborative approach gave them confidence to integrate affective learning indicators into lesson plans and to design activities that cultivated empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility among students. More importantly, shared leadership also minimized resistance, since teachers felt that the curriculum was a product of their collective work rather than a mandate imposed from above. By being directly involved in shaping the instructional process, teachers internalized love-based values more effectively and developed stronger motivation to bring those values into their classroom practices. This demonstrates that the success of the Love-Based Curriculum was not only a matter of compliance with regulations but also a result of genuine teacher ownership and commitment.

Implementation of Love-Based Learning

The practical application of the Love-Based Curriculum in classrooms prioritizes positive interpersonal dynamics between teachers and students, highlighting the

importance of gentle communication, personal acknowledgment, and student-centered interaction. Teachers in Palembang emphasized that effective learning is achieved not only through structured lesson delivery but also through the creation of a supportive and respectful atmosphere that nurtures students' emotional well-being. For instance, a Grade IV teacher at a Private MI underlined the importance of starting the day with simple gestures that strengthen the bond between teachers and learners, demonstrating how relational practices are inseparable from academic instruction.

“Children respond better when approached with a gentle tone and concrete examples. Before starting lessons, I greet them individually. This makes them feel valued.”

This emphasis on relational pedagogy is also reflected in the classroom management approaches adopted by teachers of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Rather than relying on punishment or harsh reprimands, teachers preferred to use persuasive dialogue as a means of correction, thereby maintaining students' dignity while ensuring discipline. Such practices reveal that the Love-Based Curriculum encourages teachers to serve not merely as enforcers of rules but as guides who foster moral awareness through respectful interaction. An Islamic Religious Education teacher at a State MI elaborated on how persuasion is used as an effective strategy to address student misbehavior in a constructive manner.

“When a student behaves inappropriately, I choose to approach and talk with them persuasively rather than reprimand them in a harsh tone. This way, they realize their mistake without feeling humiliated.”

From the learner's perspective, the Love-Based Curriculum also translates into a more comfortable and engaging classroom environment. Students reported that the non-intimidating atmosphere created by teachers helps them feel secure, motivated, and willing to ask questions when they encounter difficulties. This student-centered approach ensures that learners are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the learning process. A Grade V student shared a personal reflection on how this approach shaped their learning experience and fostered a sense of trust between student and teacher.

“I enjoy learning with my teacher because the atmosphere is not tense. If I don't understand something, she is willing to explain again until I do.”

These findings indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum is operationalized through student-centered and humanistic pedagogies, which align with Rogers' theory that emphasizes mutual respect and emotional connection as foundations of effective learning. Within this framework, teachers function not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as moral exemplars, consistent with the Islamic concept of *uswah hasanah* (Parjuanganī, 2016). This perspective is further supported by Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, where he highlights that the success of moral education depends largely on the consistency of the educator's behavior as a role model. According to Al-Ghazali, students are more likely to internalize noble

values by directly observing the teacher's example rather than by merely listening to verbal instruction (Imron, 2023). To strengthen this process, teachers in Palembang employed experiential methods such as storytelling, group discussions, and role-playing, which engage students' affective and social domains while facilitating the internalization of love-based values (Mahendra et al., 2025). These strategies cultivate empathy, cooperation, and moral reasoning key competencies within values-based education that ensure the holistic formation of learners (Judijanto et al., 2025).

Evaluation and Assessment Practices

Evaluation mechanisms within the Love-Based Curriculum extend beyond the measurement of cognitive learning outcomes and place equal emphasis on the continuous assessment of students' affective development. This approach ensures that behavioral growth, moral values, and interpersonal skills are monitored alongside academic achievement, reflecting the holistic goals of education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. At the institutional level, administrators and teachers collaborate to maintain records of students' attitudes, such as their respect toward teachers, willingness to assist peers, and concern for environmental cleanliness. These records are regularly discussed in teacher meetings, where observations are shared and strategies are refined. In describing this practice, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs at a Private MI in Palembang highlighted the importance of maintaining detailed documentation of students' character formation as part of the assessment process.

“We keep special records of students' attitude development, such as how they respect teachers, help peers, or maintain cleanliness. These notes are discussed with other teachers every month.”

In addition to formal records, classroom teachers also rely on immediate reinforcement strategies that are integrated directly into daily interactions with students. These strategies provide non-material recognition of positive behavior, reinforcing the idea that appreciation does not have to be tied to physical rewards but can be expressed through acknowledgment and encouragement. Such practices emphasize the humanistic character of the Love-Based Curriculum, where the aim is to build intrinsic motivation among students rather than dependence on external incentives. A PAI teacher illustrated this approach by explaining how public recognition was often more effective than material rewards in reinforcing desired behavior.

“When there is a positive change in student behavior, we give immediate appreciation not always in the form of material rewards, but sometimes as public praise in the classroom.”

The integration of cognitive and affective domains in assessment reflects the principles of authentic assessment embedded in Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum (Jauhari et al., 2017). Continuous observation, supported by regular teacher collaboration, enhances assessment reliability by reducing the risk of individual

bias or subjectivity. Furthermore, positive reinforcement strategies, as described in Skinner's behaviorist learning theory, serve to strengthen desirable student behaviors and create a classroom environment that encourages repetition of constructive actions (Widayanthi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, teachers also reported challenges in balancing pedagogical responsibilities with administrative demands, particularly the need for detailed documentation of affective development. Excessive paperwork risks diverting valuable time away from direct student interaction, potentially undermining the relational foundation that is central to the Love-Based Curriculum. Therefore, there is a strong need for streamlined assessment protocols that maintain both academic rigor and practical feasibility, ensuring that the holistic aims of the curriculum are preserved without creating unnecessary burdens for educators (Nurjanah & Adawiyah, 2025).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Family engagement emerged as a critical support mechanism in the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum, as teachers and administrators consistently emphasized the role of parents in reinforcing school-based learning at home. Collaboration between school and family environments was regarded as essential to ensure that love-based values were not only taught in classrooms but also practiced in daily family life. This alignment was expected to create consistency in the child's moral and social development, thereby accelerating the internalization of values. In explaining this collaborative approach, the principal of a State MI in Palembang stressed the importance of parental involvement in sustaining the effectiveness of the curriculum.

“Collaboration with parents is very helpful. We ask them to instill love-based values at home so that they align with learning at school.”

Teachers also confirmed that students who had already been exposed to respectful behavior and love-based interactions at home showed greater readiness to engage positively in the classroom. This indicates that parental reinforcement of school values enhances student receptivity and makes the teaching process more effective. Such consistency between home and school life reduces the burden on teachers to correct behavioral gaps, allowing more focus on deeper moral and academic development. A Grade III teacher at a Private MI highlighted this dynamic, explaining how parental influence facilitated the smooth implementation of the curriculum.

“Students' prior exposure to respectful behavior at home makes it easier for us to implement the love-based curriculum in class.”

Despite these positive supports, several obstacles were also identified in the field. Teachers noted that administrative demands, particularly the complexity of the revised RPP format, limited the time available for creative lesson preparation. At the same time, uneven access to official MoRA training contributed to disparities in teacher readiness between institutions. These challenges highlight the gap between policy design and practical implementation at the school level. As one

Grade III teacher at a State MI explained, paperwork requirements often overshadow opportunities for pedagogical innovation, while the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs observed that professional development opportunities were not equitably distributed.

“The complexity of the revised RPP format, combined with other administrative duties, reduces the time available for creative lesson preparation.”

“Not all teachers have received MoRA training, and this causes uneven readiness across different institutions.”

From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, the alignment between home and school environments accelerates the internalization of values, as students experience reinforcement across multiple contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). In the case of Palembang, the deeply rooted religious culture of the community further strengthens receptivity toward love-based educational principles, as noted by Nuryupa (Nuryupa et al., 2024). However, the presence of administrative complexities and the uneven distribution of training opportunities represent structural barriers that hinder optimal curriculum enactment. These issues point to a classic policy practice gap, where formal mandates are not fully supported by institutional capacity at the ground level. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, such as simplifying administrative protocols, ensuring equitable access to professional development, and providing stronger institutional support for teachers. By doing so, policymakers can safeguard the relational quality of teacher student interactions while sustaining the holistic objectives of the Love-Based Curriculum.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) across Palembang City has proceeded relatively effectively, as the curriculum’s core values have long been internalized within the institutional culture. Planning was conducted through collaboration among school principals, vice principals for curriculum affairs, and teachers, with adjustments made to align with the official format of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, while preserving pre-existing positive practices. The learning process emphasized persuasive interaction, role modeling, and activities designed to foster empathy and cooperation. Evaluation combined cognitive and affective dimensions through continuous observation, supported by positive reinforcement to sustain desired behaviors.

Key enabling factors include the synergy between family-based and school-based education, as well as the deeply rooted religious culture of the community. However, challenges were identified in the complexity of teachers’ administrative workload and the uneven distribution of training, both of which may affect the consistency of implementation.

Accordingly, the research objectives—to describe and analyze the implementation of this curriculum—were achieved, while also highlighting the success of its application despite technical challenges. Future research is recommended to expand the scope to include school supervisors and parents in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding, as well as to examine strategies for mitigating administrative barriers and strengthening teacher capacity to ensure the sustainability of the curriculum.

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