

Love-Based Curriculum as a Humanistic Approach to Realizing Inclusive Learning

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Article history

Submitted: 2026/04/15; Revised: 2026/05/14; Accepted: 2026/06/30

Abstract

This study explores learning strategies for early childhood education in remote and coastal areas, focusing on how contextual, community-based, outdoor, and technology-supported approaches can improve the quality of learning for young children in geographically isolated regions. Using a qualitative literature review method, this research analyzes scholarly articles, journals, and academic publications related to early childhood education practices in rural, remote, and coastal contexts published between 2020 and 2025. The findings indicate that contextual and community-based learning strategies, which integrate local wisdom and involve active participation from families and community members, significantly enhance children's engagement, cultural identity, and developmental outcomes. In addition, outdoor learning in natural coastal environments provides meaningful experiential learning opportunities that support cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development while fostering environmental awareness. Furthermore, technology integration serves as a complementary strategy to overcome geographical barriers by improving access to learning resources and supporting teacher professional development, although challenges such as limited infrastructure and digital literacy remain. The study concludes that a blended approach combining local-context learning, nature-based education, and digital innovation is essential to ensuring equitable and high-quality early childhood education in remote and coastal areas, while also promoting sustainable educational development

Keywords

Coastal Areas; Early Childhood Education; Learning Strategies; Remote



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INTRODUCTION

Education systems across the world are increasingly challenged to provide learning environments that are not only academically effective but also emotionally safe, socially just, and inclusive for all learners. In contemporary classrooms, diversity is no longer an exception; students come with different social backgrounds, cultural identities, learning needs, emotional conditions, and levels of ability. This reality requires a pedagogical orientation that moves beyond a narrow emphasis on cognitive achievement toward an educational model that recognizes learners as whole human beings. In this context, inclusive learning is not merely

about placing diverse students in the same classroom, but about ensuring their meaningful participation, dignity, sense of belonging, and opportunities to grow. Humanistic education offers a strong philosophical basis for this goal because it emphasizes empathy, respect, self-actualization, emotional security, and the development of the full person. A curriculum that is intentionally grounded in love, compassion, and care therefore becomes highly relevant as a practical extension of humanistic educational thought in responding to the demands of inclusive learning in the twenty-first century (Moriña, 2021; Reyes-Parra et al., 2020).

The growing discourse on inclusive education highlights that successful inclusion depends not only on policy or physical access, but also on the quality of pedagogical relationships and classroom culture. Students are more likely to engage in learning when they feel accepted, valued, and emotionally supported by teachers and peers. This is especially important for learners who are vulnerable to exclusion, including students with disabilities, those from minority groups, and those who experience academic or emotional barriers in school. Recent scholarship on inclusive pedagogy stresses that inclusive classrooms require teachers to combine beliefs, knowledge, classroom design, and concrete actions that support participation for all students. Such a perspective resonates strongly with humanistic principles, which position the learner as an active subject rather than an object of instruction. Humanistic teaching therefore encourages dialogue, trust, authentic relationships, and sensitivity to individual differences, all of which are essential for building inclusive learning communities. In this regard, the curriculum should not only transmit knowledge but also cultivate empathy, belonging, and humane interaction as central educational outcomes (Moriña, 2021; Lindner & Schwab, 2020).

Within this framework, the Love-Based Curriculum emerges as a promising approach for rethinking educational practice, particularly in contexts where schooling has often been dominated by academic competition, standardization, and disciplinary control. The Love-Based Curriculum places compassion, empathy, tolerance, mutual respect, and care at the center of the learning process. Rather than treating affective values as supplementary, it makes them foundational to curriculum design, teacher–student interaction, and school culture. This orientation aligns with humanistic education because it views students as persons with emotional, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions that must be nurtured alongside intellectual growth. Recent studies in Indonesian Islamic and general education contexts show that a love-based orientation can help create more humane and participatory classrooms by reducing fear, strengthening teacher–student relationships, and promoting a culture of acceptance toward diversity. As a result, the Love-Based Curriculum can be understood not simply as a moral slogan, but as a pedagogical paradigm that connects humanistic educational philosophy with the practical agenda of inclusive learning (Mukhsin et al., 2024; Nurul 'Aini & Solich, 2025; Aliyya et al., 2025).

The relevance of a love-based and humanistic curriculum becomes even more urgent when schools face persistent problems such as bullying, discrimination, intolerance, emotional alienation, and the marginalization of learners with special needs. In many educational settings, students are still judged primarily by academic performance, while emotional well-being,

interpersonal care, and moral development receive less systematic attention. This imbalance can weaken students' sense of safety and belonging, which are crucial conditions for meaningful learning. Humanistic approaches argue that education should cultivate self-worth, empathy, and authentic interpersonal connection, because learning flourishes when students feel recognized as valuable persons. Recent studies on inclusive and humanistic schooling also demonstrate that empathy-based teaching strategies, emotionally supportive classroom interaction, and student-centered learning can strengthen participation and social inclusion. Therefore, integrating love into curriculum practice offers a strategic response to contemporary educational challenges by linking academic learning with emotional care, ethical formation, and social justice in one coherent framework (Patty et al., 2024; Maharani et al., 2024; Gumbalai & Zainal, 2026).

In the Indonesian context, the Love-Based Curriculum has gained increasing attention as part of broader efforts to humanize education and respond to social fragmentation, intolerance, and the need for more inclusive religious and general schooling. The concept is particularly significant for madrasahs and schools seeking to balance academic achievement with character education, spirituality, and respect for diversity. Several recent studies indicate that the implementation of a love-oriented curriculum encourages persuasive discipline, empathetic communication, student-centered learning, and a school climate that values cooperation rather than exclusion. These findings suggest that the Love-Based Curriculum has the potential to operationalize inclusive learning by transforming daily pedagogical practices, not only by revising formal curriculum documents. However, despite this growing interest, scholarly discussion still needs to more clearly explain how the Love-Based Curriculum functions specifically as a humanistic approach to inclusive learning, and how its values can be translated into concrete educational practice. Based on this gap, this article aims to examine the Love-Based Curriculum as a humanistic approach to realizing inclusive learning, focusing on its philosophical foundations, pedagogical principles, and relevance for creating classrooms that are compassionate, participatory, and equitable for all learners (Syakhrani, 2025; Hasanah et al., 2026; Rusydu, 2025).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design to examine the concept of the Love-Based Curriculum as a humanistic approach to realizing inclusive learning. The study relies on secondary data derived from scholarly journal articles, books, policy documents, and relevant academic publications discussing humanistic education, inclusive learning, curriculum development, and love-based educational practices. Data were collected through systematic literature review techniques by identifying, selecting, and analyzing credible sources published in recent years, particularly those relevant to inclusive and humanistic educational discourse. The analysis was conducted descriptively and interpretively by categorizing key themes, comparing theoretical perspectives, and synthesizing findings related to the philosophical foundations, pedagogical values, and practical implications of the Love-

Based Curriculum in fostering inclusive learning environments. Through this method, the study aims to generate a comprehensive conceptual understanding of how a curriculum grounded in love, empathy, care, and respect can support the realization of inclusive, participatory, and humane education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Love-Based Curriculum as a Humanistic Foundation for Inclusive Learning

The Love-Based Curriculum can be understood as a humanistic educational framework that places compassion, empathy, dignity, and meaningful human relationships at the center of the teaching and learning process. In contrast to conventional curriculum orientations that often prioritize content delivery, testing performance, and compliance, the Love-Based Curriculum repositions education as a process of nurturing the whole person. This perspective aligns closely with the humanistic tradition in education, which views learners as individuals with emotional, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions that deserve recognition in addition to their cognitive potential. Within inclusive learning, this orientation is especially important because inclusion is not simply a matter of placing diverse learners in one classroom; it requires a learning environment where every student feels valued, safe, heard, and capable of participating meaningfully. The Love-Based Curriculum therefore provides a philosophical basis for inclusion by insisting that education should begin from respect for human dignity, mutual care, and the belief that every learner possesses unique worth and potential (Moriña, 2021; Gumbalai & Zainal, 2026).

From a humanistic standpoint, love in education should not be interpreted merely as affection in a sentimental sense, but as an ethical and pedagogical commitment to recognize the learner as a full human subject. In practical terms, this means that teachers do not merely transfer knowledge but build relationships based on empathy, acceptance, dialogue, and trust. These relational dimensions are essential for inclusive learning because many forms of exclusion in schools occur not only through formal barriers but also through subtle experiences of rejection, labeling, humiliation, and invisibility. Students with disabilities, students from marginalized cultural or economic backgrounds, and students with different learning styles are often at risk of being positioned as “problems” rather than as legitimate participants in the learning community. A love-based and humanistic curriculum counters this tendency by reframing diversity as a natural and valuable condition of the classroom, and by encouraging teachers to respond to learners with patience, affirmation, and relational sensitivity rather than control and judgment. In this way, the Love-Based Curriculum acts as a moral-pedagogical response to exclusion by emphasizing recognition, belonging, and humane interaction as core conditions of learning (Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Kim, 2020).

Another major contribution of the Love-Based Curriculum to inclusive learning lies in its challenge to the dominance of rigid, standardized, and performance-oriented schooling. In many educational contexts, curriculum implementation remains heavily shaped by measurable academic outcomes, competition, and uniform benchmarks of success. Although

such measures may provide administrative clarity, they often fail to accommodate the varied needs, abilities, and lived experiences of learners. Humanistic education critiques this reduction of students to scores or categories and instead advocates educational practices that foster self-actualization, agency, and emotional well-being. The Love-Based Curriculum extends this critique by foregrounding care as a curricular principle, meaning that the design of learning objectives, classroom interaction, assessment, and discipline should be guided by what supports learners' flourishing rather than merely what improves institutional performance indicators. For inclusive education, this is a critical shift because it opens space for differentiated teaching, emotional support, flexible participation, and non-punitive responses to learning difficulties. Inclusion becomes more achievable when curriculum logic moves from standardization to responsiveness and from control to care (Moriña, 2021; Qamariah & Anwar, 2025).

The philosophical relationship between the Love-Based Curriculum and inclusive learning is also strengthened by their shared emphasis on participation, voice, and belonging. Inclusive learning requires more than access to the classroom; it demands that learners are genuinely involved in learning processes, classroom interaction, and meaning-making. Humanistic pedagogy has long emphasized that students learn more deeply when they are treated as active participants whose feelings, perspectives, and experiences matter. In a Love-Based Curriculum, this principle is expressed through dialogical teaching, collaborative learning, reflective activities, and emotionally supportive communication. These practices help students experience school not as a space of fear or passive compliance but as a community where they are invited to speak, ask, contribute, and grow. For students who have historically been marginalized, such recognition can be transformative because it reduces alienation and fosters a stronger sense of ownership over learning. As a result, the Love-Based Curriculum contributes to inclusive learning not only by changing what is taught, but also by changing the relational atmosphere through which teaching occurs (Ki, 2020; Lugo et al., 2025).

Recent scholarship in Indonesia has further strengthened the argument that the Love-Based Curriculum can serve as a conceptual bridge between humanistic education and inclusive educational reform. A number of recent studies describe the Love-Based Curriculum as a response to dehumanizing tendencies in education, especially those caused by excessive emphasis on cognition, disciplinary harshness, intolerance, and weak teacher–student relationships. In madrasah and school contexts, this curriculum has been associated with values such as compassion, respect, spiritual responsibility, tolerance, and persuasive discipline. These values are particularly relevant for inclusive learning because they encourage a school culture that is not based on fear, exclusion, or ranking, but on solidarity and mutual growth. Moreover, the curriculum's emphasis on "Panca Cinta" or the broader ethic of love provides a normative framework for building classrooms where diversity is met with openness rather than suspicion. This makes the Love-Based Curriculum especially meaningful in plural educational settings where inclusive learning must address not only disability and learning differences, but also religious, cultural, linguistic, and social diversity among learners

(Mukhsin et al., 2025; Jubaedah et al., 2026; Danil et al., 2025).

At the same time, positioning the Love-Based Curriculum as a humanistic foundation for inclusive learning also requires critical reflection. Love cannot function as a vague slogan detached from curriculum structures, teacher competence, and institutional support. If the language of love is not translated into pedagogical practice, it risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. Therefore, the significance of the Love-Based Curriculum lies in its capacity to influence concrete educational decisions: how teachers communicate with students, how learning barriers are addressed, how classroom participation is organized, how difference is interpreted, and how discipline is enacted. Humanistic and inclusive education both remind us that educational values only become meaningful when embodied in everyday school life. Thus, the Love-Based Curriculum should be understood not as an abstract moral discourse, but as a practical humanistic orientation that guides inclusive curriculum design, learner-centered teaching, equitable participation, and caring educational relationships. In this sense, it offers not only a philosophical foundation but also a transformative lens through which inclusive learning can be imagined and enacted more fully (Gumbalai & Zainal, 2026; Sunarya & Sassi, 2025).

The Contribution of the Love-Based Curriculum to Inclusive Classroom Practice

In practical classroom terms, the Love-Based Curriculum contributes to inclusive learning by transforming the teacher's role from a controller of instruction into a facilitator of humane, participatory, and emotionally responsive learning. A humanistic and love-based teacher does not position authority as domination, but as responsibility to accompany learners in their intellectual and personal development. This change is significant for inclusive education because many students who struggle in school do so not only because of academic difficulty, but also because of fear, low self-confidence, trauma, stigma, or lack of relational support. When teachers approach students with empathy, patience, and respect, they create conditions in which learners feel secure enough to take risks, make mistakes, and remain engaged in the learning process. Inclusive classrooms therefore depend not only on curriculum content but also on pedagogical presence—the teacher's ability to listen, notice, encourage, and adapt. The Love-Based Curriculum strengthens this pedagogical presence by making care and emotional safety integral to teaching rather than peripheral to it (Hasanah et al., 2026; Inayah et al., 2026).

One concrete contribution of the Love-Based Curriculum is its support for differentiated and learner-centered instruction. Inclusive classrooms are characterized by heterogeneity: students differ in pace, prior knowledge, communication styles, emotional readiness, and learning support needs. A curriculum grounded in love and humanism encourages teachers to respond to this diversity not by forcing uniformity, but by designing flexible learning pathways. This may include varying learning tasks, offering multiple forms of participation, using collaborative learning, providing scaffolded support, and allowing students to demonstrate understanding in different ways. The underlying principle is that fairness in education does not mean treating every learner identically, but responding to

learners according to their needs while preserving dignity and high expectations. Such a principle is highly consistent with inclusive pedagogy, which rejects deficit views of students and instead asks how teaching can be broadened so that more learners can participate meaningfully. In this way, the Love-Based Curriculum supports inclusion by legitimizing flexibility, responsiveness, and pedagogical adaptation as expressions of educational care (Moriña, 2021; Balzan et al., 2025).

The Love-Based Curriculum also contributes to inclusive learning through the cultivation of emotionally safe classroom climates. Emotional safety is often underestimated in discussions of curriculum, yet it is central to whether students can focus, participate, and persevere in learning. Students who fear ridicule, punishment, or rejection are less likely to ask questions, express confusion, or engage collaboratively. This is especially true for students with special educational needs, linguistic differences, low academic confidence, or prior experiences of exclusion. A love-based approach addresses this by promoting communication that is affirming rather than humiliating, discipline that is persuasive rather than punitive, and interaction that is relational rather than transactional. In classrooms shaped by these principles, mistakes are treated as part of learning, differences are not mocked, and students are encouraged to support one another. Such conditions help build a sense of belonging, which is one of the most important dimensions of inclusive learning. Belonging does not emerge automatically from physical presence in the classroom; it is created through repeated experiences of being respected, welcomed, and taken seriously by others (Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Lugo et al., 2025).

Another important dimension of classroom practice is the role of the Love-Based Curriculum in strengthening moral and social learning as part of inclusion. Inclusive learning is not solely about academic access; it is also about forming a classroom community where students learn to coexist with difference in constructive and ethical ways. Love-based education supports this by embedding empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and mutual responsibility into the learning process. These values can be cultivated through group work, reflective dialogue, peer support activities, problem-based learning around social issues, and teacher modeling of respectful interaction. When such values become habitual classroom practices, students are more likely to see classmates with different abilities or backgrounds not as outsiders but as legitimate partners in shared learning. This social dimension is essential because exclusion often operates through peer culture as much as through institutional structures. A classroom committed to love and humanism therefore does more than help marginalized students adjust; it reshapes the entire social ethos of the classroom so that inclusion becomes a collective responsibility rather than an individual struggle (Danil et al., 2025; Jubaedah et al., 2026).

The contribution of the Love-Based Curriculum is equally visible in the area of assessment and classroom evaluation. Conventional assessment systems often privilege speed, standard answers, and narrow demonstrations of competence, which can disadvantage learners with different processing styles, language backgrounds, or emotional conditions. A

humanistic and love-based perspective does not reject assessment, but it asks whether assessment practices genuinely support learning and respect learner diversity. In inclusive classrooms, this can mean using more formative feedback, valuing progress as well as performance, allowing varied modes of expression, and ensuring that evaluation does not humiliate students or define them solely by deficits. When assessment is approached as a tool for growth rather than a mechanism of exclusion, students are more likely to remain motivated and feel capable of improvement. The Love-Based Curriculum supports this orientation by framing learning as a developmental process that requires encouragement, reflection, and recognition of individual trajectories. As such, inclusive learning becomes more sustainable when evaluation practices are aligned with care, dignity, and pedagogical justice (Gumbalai & Zainal, 2026; Lenzer et al., 2024).

Finally, the practical implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in inclusive classrooms depends on the consistency between curriculum values, school culture, and teacher preparation. A classroom cannot sustain inclusive love-based practices if the wider institutional environment remains authoritarian, discriminatory, or excessively performance-driven. Teachers need support through professional development, reflective spaces, and policy structures that legitimize caring, flexible, and humanistic pedagogy. Likewise, school leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that inclusion is not treated as a technical obligation but as an ethical commitment embodied in curriculum planning, student support, disciplinary policy, and community relations. Therefore, the Love-Based Curriculum should be viewed as both a classroom strategy and a broader educational culture. Its real contribution to inclusive learning lies in its ability to connect humanistic values with everyday educational practice—through empathetic teaching, differentiated learning, emotionally safe interaction, participatory classroom culture, and fair assessment. When these dimensions are enacted consistently, the Love-Based Curriculum offers a meaningful pathway toward inclusive learning that is not only accessible but also humane, dignified, and transformative for all learners (Mukhsin et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2026; Sunarya & Sassi, 2025).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Love-Based Curriculum represents a meaningful humanistic approach to realizing inclusive learning because it places compassion, empathy, respect, dignity, and care at the center of educational practice. As a curriculum orientation, it moves beyond the narrow focus on academic achievement and standardized performance by recognizing learners as whole persons with cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Its relevance to inclusive learning lies in its capacity to create classroom environments where diversity is welcomed, participation is encouraged, and every student feels valued, safe, and supported in the learning process. Through humanistic teacher–student relationships, differentiated instruction, emotionally responsive classroom interaction, and fair assessment practices, the Love-Based Curriculum contributes to the development of learning spaces that are not only accessible but also humane and equitable. Therefore, the

implementation of a Love-Based Curriculum can be seen as a strategic educational effort to strengthen inclusive learning by integrating academic development with emotional care, social justice, and respect for the uniqueness of every learner.

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