



**FORMATION OF GLOBAL COMPETENCE AND CHARACTER
THROUGH INTERNATIONAL FIELD STUDIES BASED
ON ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL VALUES**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of a field study to Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), to analyze its contribution to enhancing students' competencies and international outlooks, and to reflect on the internalization of *tarbiyah Islamiyah* values in the learning process. The method employed is a descriptive qualitative approach through field observations, activity documentation, and students' academic reflections during the field study. The findings indicate that the field study activities provided contextual learning experiences that enriched students' understanding of international higher education systems, academic culture, and university governance. Students experienced improvements in academic competence, communication skills, teamwork, adaptive attitudes, and global mindset. In addition, the internalization of Islamic values such as discipline, responsibility, academic etiquette, and openness to cultural differences was fostered throughout the activities. This study's contribution emphasizes international field studies grounded in Islamic educational values are effective as a means of strengthening competencies and shaping students' global character.

Keyword: *International Field Study, Islamic Education, Global Competence and Character*

A. Introduction

Globalization has brought significant changes to the higher education system, particularly in the demands placed on graduates who are expected not only to excel academically but also to possess soft skills, character, and international perspectives (Pramesti et al., 2024). Higher education institutions are therefore required to develop learning models that equip students with adaptability, cross-cultural communication skills, and a global mindset in order to enable them to compete and contribute in an increasingly integrated world (Seputar et al., 2025).

This study focuses on examining how the internalization of Islamic educational values through an international field study program at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) contributes to strengthening students' academic and non-academic competencies as well as their international perspectives. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a field study method. Data were collected through direct observation, activity documentation, and students' reflections during the implementation of the program, which consisted of preparatory, implementation, and evaluation stages. The data were then analyzed descriptively to explore how experiential learning integrated with the values of *tarbiyah Islamiyah* fosters students' competencies, soft skills, and global mindset in the context of higher education.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the development of such competencies is in line with the objectives of *tarbiyah Islamiyah*, which emphasize the formation of *insan kamil*—individuals who develop in a balanced manner across intellectual, spiritual, social, and moral dimensions (Suryani et al., 2024). Education is not merely oriented toward the transmission of knowledge, but also toward the internalization of Islamic values such as discipline, responsibility, academic etiquette, cooperation, and openness to differences (Nursikin & Nugroho, 2021). Therefore, learning models that integrate authentic experiences with Islamic values are highly relevant in the context of contemporary higher education.

Previous studies have shown that experiential learning and value-based education significantly contribute to the development of students' competencies and global perspectives. Wijaya, van den Heuvel-Panhuizen, and Doorman (2022) found that interactive learning environments enhance students' conceptual understanding and engagement. Nusantara, Herman, and Suhendra (2021) reported that the use of dynamic learning media improves students' reasoning and problem-solving abilities. In the context of Islamic education, Suryani et al. (2024) emphasized that the internalization of Islamic values supports the holistic development of students' character and competencies. Furthermore, Madzkuri et al. (2025) demonstrated that field study activities provide authentic learning experiences that strengthen students' academic and social skills. Similarly, Crogman et al. (2025) highlighted that experiential learning fosters adaptability, cross-

cultural communication, and global awareness. These findings indicate that integrating experiential learning with Islamic educational values is effective in enhancing students' competencies and international perspectives.

One form of contextual learning that is considered effective is field study. Field study enables students to learn directly through observation, interaction, and reflection on real-world practices in the field (Madzkuri et al., 2025). This experiential learning approach provides opportunities for students to connect theory with reality, thereby making the learning process more meaningful and applicable (Crogman et al., 2025).

B. Overview of the Implementation of the International Field Study

The international field study to Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) constitutes an implementation of experiential learning designed to broaden students' international perspectives and to enhance both academic and non-academic competencies. Based on field observations and activity documentation, the field study was conducted in a systematic and structured manner, beginning with a preparatory stage, followed by the core implementation phase, and concluding with post-activity reflection.

During the preparatory stage, students received briefings on the objectives of the program, the ethics of academic visits, and the aspects to be observed throughout the activities. This orientation was not merely technical in nature but also embedded with the values of tarbiyah Islamiyah, such as the cultivation of discipline, responsibility, and proper academic etiquette in interacting with members of the partner university. These elements served as a crucial foundation to ensure that students participated in the program with full awareness of its academic and spiritual significance.

The implementation at UUM commenced with a welcoming session and campus introduction conducted by representatives of the host university. Students were introduced to the profile of UUM, its historical background, vision and mission, and directions for academic development. This session provided an initial overview of the characteristics of the Malaysian higher education system, particularly with regard to university governance, internationalization orientation, and the integration of teaching, research, and community engagement.

The activities continued with presentations on the higher education system at UUM, including curriculum structure, instructional methods, and academic evaluation systems. Students obtained information on outcome-based education, internal quality assurance mechanisms, and the use of information technology in supporting the learning process. This information served as reflective material for students to compare higher education practices in Malaysia with those implemented in Indonesia.

The subsequent stage involved field observations of various academic and learning-support facilities at UUM, such as lecture halls, libraries, student activity centers, and the overall campus environment. These observations provided students with empirical experiences of how the physical campus environment is designed to support effective and conducive teaching and learning processes.

The field study concluded with a discussion and question-and-answer session between students and representatives of UUM. During this session, students actively raised questions concerning academic systems, campus culture, international collaboration opportunities, and student learning experiences at UUM. This interaction not only enriched students' insights but also fostered cross-cultural communication skills and the confidence to express ideas in an international forum.

C. Enhancing Students' Understanding of the International Higher Education System.

Fiqh studies the outward laws of Islamic sharia, focusing on purifying the heart and seeking inner truth. Meanwhile, Sufism gives meaning and spirit to the practice of fiqh. Fiqh and Sufism form the basis of daily practice, with forms such as dhikr, khataman, and manaqiban as their applications (Jamaludin & Rahayu, S. S., 2023). The relationship between Sufism and fiqh are two aspects of Islam that have their own entities but still interact, and can make people aware of the importance of balance between the physical and spiritual aspects of religious life (Muhammad, R., dkk., 2021).

One of the principal outcomes of the international field study was the enhancement of students' understanding of the higher education system in Malaysia, particularly at Universiti Utara Malaysia (Smith et al., 2025). Students gained a more concrete picture of how a public university abroad manages academic activities, ranging from curriculum planning and instructional implementation to evaluation systems and quality assurance mechanisms.

Based on students' observations and reflections, it was found that UUM adopts a learning approach that emphasizes the holistic attainment of student competencies. The instructional methods employed do not focus solely on one-way knowledge transmission, but also involve discussions, group work, presentations, and project-based assignments that require students to think critically and creatively. This is consistent with the paradigm of modern higher education, which positions students as active agents in the learning process.

Students also observed that the academic evaluation system at UUM is designed to assess not only content mastery but also applicative abilities, communication skills, and teamwork. Assessment is conducted continuously through various instruments, such as individual assignments, group tasks, presentations, and final examinations. This system illustrates that higher education is no longer oriented merely toward

final grades, but toward the learning process and the comprehensive achievement of learning outcomes.

From the perspective of Islamic education, this approach is in line with the principles of *tarbiyah*, which emphasize holistic human development (Mutalib, 2025). Students are not only equipped with knowledge but are also trained to develop attitudes, skills, and character (Rafsanjani et al., 2025). Therefore, international field studies serve as a means of actualizing Islamic educational values within the context of global higher education (Asykur et al., 2025).

D. Strengthening Students' Academic Competencies, Non-Academic Competencies, and Soft Skills

The findings of the field study indicate that this activity made a significant contribution to strengthening students' academic competencies. Through direct observation and interaction with the academic environment at UUM, students gained a deeper understanding of effective learning practices, university governance, and an academic culture that supports the development of knowledge.

Students reported that observing learning facilities, academic information systems, and integrated campus management at UUM firsthand provided inspiration and motivation to improve the quality of their learning at their home institutions. They became aware of the importance of optimizing the use of academic facilities and of students' active roles in creating a productive learning atmosphere.

In addition, students learned about the importance of systematic and measurable learning planning. The curriculum system implemented at UUM demonstrates a clear alignment among learning objectives, course content, instructional methods, and evaluation systems. This insight encouraged students to recognize that academic success is determined not only by lecturers but also by students' own preparedness and commitment.

The strengthening of academic competencies was reflected not only in increased conceptual understanding but also in students' ability to engage in critical reflection on the education system they observed. Students were able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Malaysian higher education system and compare them with practices in Indonesia. This reflective process constitutes an essential component of experiential learning that fosters critical awareness and evaluative attitudes.

In addition to academic competencies, the international field study also played a crucial role in developing students' non-academic competencies, particularly soft skills (Haliza et al., 2025). Based on observations, discussions, and students' reflections, it was found that this activity had a positive impact on communication skills, teamwork, discipline, responsibility, and adaptive attitudes toward new environments.

Interaction with the academic community of UUM and fellow field study participants trained students to communicate effectively in Indonesian, English, and Malay. Students were required to pose questions, engage in discussions, and express their opinions in international academic forums. This experience enhanced their self-confidence and fostered the courage to interact in cross-cultural contexts.

Teamwork also emerged as one of the competencies developed throughout the field study. Students were required to work in groups, support one another, and share roles in carrying out various activities, ranging from preparation and implementation to report writing. This process cultivated mutual respect, tolerance, and the ability to work within heterogeneous teams.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the development of these soft skills is consistent with the values of *tarbiyah*, such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), and *adab* (proper conduct) (Mirza et al., 2025). Students learned to maintain ethical behavior in interactions, respect cultural differences, and demonstrate courteous and professional attitudes throughout the activities (Wiraman et al., 2025).

E. Formation of International Perspectives and a Global Mindset

One of the significant findings of the international field study was the formation of students' international perspectives and global mindset (Wijayanti et al., 2025). Through learning experiences in an overseas academic environment, students gained broader insights into the dynamics of global higher education, the challenges of globalization, and the importance of international collaboration. (Aziz & Basuki, n.d.).

Students realized that higher education systems cannot be separated from an increasingly integrated global context. They understood that competition in both the labor market and the academic world is no longer local but international in scope. This awareness encouraged students to enhance their personal quality in terms of knowledge mastery, foreign language skills, and professional attitudes.

The international outlook developed through the field study also encompassed an understanding of cultural differences, social systems, and prevailing values in other countries (Shrestha et al., 2025). Students learned to be open-minded, to respect diversity, and to adapt to new environments. These competencies constitute essential capital in shaping students' adaptive character and global competitiveness (Alfizi & Jaya, 2025).

1. Internalization of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* Values in the Field Study

Although the field study was conducted abroad, the internalization of *tarbiyah Islamiyah* values remained an integral part of the learning process. Values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, academic etiquette, as well as attitudes of

tawadhu' (humility) and openness to diversity were reflected in various activities throughout the program.

Students demonstrated discipline in adhering to the activity schedule, maintained ethical conduct in their interactions with the partner university, and showed responsibility in carrying out assigned tasks. These attitudes indicate the successful internalization of Islamic educational values within the context of modern and international learning.

In addition, students were encouraged to engage in spiritual reflection on the experiences they gained. They realized that the pursuit of knowledge constitutes a form of worship and an effort to develop their potential as insan kamil. This reflection strengthened the spiritual dimension of the field study and transformed it into a holistic learning process.

2. Critical Analysis of the Strengths and Limitations of the Program

Although the international field study provided numerous benefits, the analysis also reveals several limitations that require attention. One of the main constraints was the limited duration of the visit, which prevented students from conducting more in-depth observations and interactions. The relatively short timeframe meant that certain aspects of the education system at UUM could only be observed in a general manner.

In addition, not all students had equal opportunities to interact directly with representatives of the partner university, resulting in uneven learning experiences. Some students were more active in discussions, while others tended to be passive due to time constraints or a lack of self-confidence.

These limitations indicate the need for more careful planning in future field study programs, including more flexible scheduling, the addition of discussion sessions, and the provision of more structured observation tasks to ensure that all students can participate optimally.

3. Implications for the Development of Learning in Higher Education

The results of the international field study have important implications for the development of learning models in higher education. Experiential learning integrated with the values of Islamic education has proven effective in enhancing competencies and shaping students' character.

Higher education institutions should consider integrating international field study activities into the curriculum rather than treating them merely as supplementary programs. This integration can be achieved through the design of project-based courses, the establishment of international collaborations, and the development of learning modules that connect theory with field practice.

Furthermore, post-activity follow-up in the form of reflective discussions, seminars, or scholarly publications is necessary so that field study experiences can be transformed into systematic and sustainable knowledge. In this way, the impact

of the program does not end as a momentary experience but contributes to the continuous improvement of the quality of learning in higher education.

F. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the international field study to Universiti Utara Malaysia serves as an effective experiential learning strategy in enhancing students' competencies and international perspectives. The program provided students with direct empirical understanding of the Malaysian higher education system, including university governance, instructional methods, academic culture, curriculum structures, evaluation systems, and outcome-based learning approaches. These experiences contributed to the improvement of students' academic competencies as well as non-academic skills such as cross-cultural communication, teamwork, adaptability, discipline, and academic responsibility. Furthermore, from the perspective of Islamic education, the field study facilitated the internalization of tarbiyah Islamiyah values, including academic etiquette, ethical interaction, openness to diversity, and spiritual awareness in seeking knowledge, thereby supporting the holistic development of students as insan kamil.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept that experiential learning integrated with Islamic educational values can serve as a strategic model for developing holistic student competencies in the context of globalization. However, this research is limited by the relatively short duration of the program and the unequal level of student participation, which may affect the depth of learning experiences. Therefore, future studies are recommended to explore longer and more intensive international programs and to employ more varied research methods for deeper analysis. Practically, higher education institutions are encouraged to integrate international field studies into the curriculum, strengthen reflective and evaluative sessions, and design sustainable academic follow-up activities to maximize the long-term impact of such programs.

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