

Madrasah Head's Strategy on Independent Implementation of Changing the Independent Curriculum

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Abstract

This study explores the strategies employed by madrasah heads in implementing the Independent Curriculum Change at MAN 1 Soppeng, an area previously unexplored in research on religious schools. Using a qualitative approach, the study identifies three key strategies: (1) conducting regular webinars via the Ministry of Religion's Smart Platform, (2) fostering learning communities through MGMP (Subject Teacher Deliberation) and FGD (Focus Group Discussion) activities, and (3) organizing Independent Curriculum Implementation (IKM) workshops. To facilitate the Independent Curriculum Change, the madrasah head established a Madrasah SOP Preparation Team (Standard Operating Procedures). Additionally, a Curriculum Development Team was formed to support the Pancasila and Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5RA). This team designed activities based on established guidelines, tailored to students' abilities, and collaborated with various stakeholders to ensure success. The study also highlights both supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation process. Therefore, the madrasah head must adopt effective strategies to successfully manage the transition to the Independent Curriculum.

Keywords: Strategy, Head of Madrasah, Independent Change, Independent Curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the important pillars in making a nation progress, education has a central role in shaping a young generation that is qualified, intelligent, and highly competitive (Nurfatimah et al., 2022). The education system is very decisive for success in achieving these

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goals. Therefore, there needs to be continuous efforts in monitoring and improving the quality of education on a sustainable basis (Suti et al., 2020). The curriculum has an important role in the world of Education, to face global challenges. The education system in Indonesia has experienced development from year to year. starting in 1947 until the Independent curriculum was learned and changed to the Independent Curriculum. Although it changes, the curriculum has the same goal of improving the previous curriculum.

The Independent Curriculum is a curriculum officially launched by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim. The definition of independent learning is an approach taken for students and students so that they can choose the subjects they are interested in (Sari et al., 2022). The purpose of the independent curriculum is to effectively catch up with learning lag during the pandemic. For now, the 2013 curriculum can still be used because it is still waiting for the readiness of existing schools to implement the independent curriculum. The implementation of the independent curriculum in educational units can be carried out in stages based on the readiness of each school (Sari et al., 2022).

The implementation of the independent curriculum cannot be separated from the important role of school principals to determine the policies that will be implemented in their schools (Siregar & Marjo, 2022). The principal's strategy is an important policy to achieve the goal of improving and developing the quality of schools (Noor, 2019). The right strategy will have an impact on the success of the school in obtaining information that supports the achievement of goals for the development and progress of the school, especially in improving the quality of superior human resources. The head of the madrasah is responsible for improving the success of students and every program carried out in the school, therefore as the head of the madrasah is able to take a role in accordance with his duties, authority and responsibilities. Schools are able to implement the concept of an independent curriculum well in accordance with government policies, so the right one is needed (Khoirurrijal & Fardiati, 2022).

The Independent Curriculum has several stages of implementation, one of which is the Independent Change stage. At this stage, educational units are given the freedom to develop the curriculum according to their needs and abilities. Man 1 Soppeng is one of the schools that has implemented an independent curriculum at the independent stage since the 2022/2023 school year. This is in line with the policy of the Ministry of Religion which provides guidelines for madrasahs to implement the Independent Curriculum in accordance with the readiness of each school (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).



Previous research has identified various strategies employed by madrasah heads in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Siti Istiana (2023) highlighted the effectiveness of training through the Merdeka Learning platform, webinars, and learning communities. Similarly, Walidaini et al. (2024) stressed the significance of forming curriculum formulation teams and fostering collaboration among educators. Studies by Muntatsiroh (2023) and Eny et al. (2023) emphasized the critical role of leadership and academic supervision in supporting curriculum implementation. While these studies have explored strategies for implementing the Independent Curriculum, they often lack focus on specific contexts, particularly in upper secondary madrasas overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This gap is evident at MAN 1 Soppeng, a highly regarded religious secondary school in the Soppeng community with notable national and regional achievements. However, MAN 1 Soppeng faces challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum, revealing a disconnect between policy and practice. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure and limited technological proficiency among teachers, which require targeted strategic solutions. This study aims to examine the strategies employed by madrasah heads at MAN 1 Soppeng during the Independent Change phase of curriculum implementation. By addressing these challenges, the research seeks to contribute to the field of education, particularly in understanding leadership strategies in madrasas. The findings will serve as a reference for policymakers and future researchers, offering insights to improve curriculum implementation in similar educational contexts.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Madrasah Head's Strategy

Strategy is one of the keys to the success of an agency in achieving its goals. Strategy is the first step that a leader must have in achieving goals. Strategy is a comprehensive and integrated organizational or agency plan that is needed to achieve organizational goals (Ety et al., 2010). The leadership strategy formulated by Wilson (2000) in (Sulastri et al., 2022), namely (a) Talk the talk, school principals must talk a lot, exchange ideas and discuss to improve the sustainable profession of teachers. (b) Walk the walk, the principal at any time to visit or survey the learning process in the classroom. (c) Be the caddy, the principal must be able to serve teachers and students in using learning facilities and infrastructure.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (Paudpedia, 2022) outlines six strategies, which are: (a) The independent learning platform, an educational tool designed to support teachers in



fostering Pancasila students and enhancing their teaching, learning, and working practices. (b) Introduction to the webinar series, an online learning initiative organized by the Ministry to offer a deeper understanding of the Independent Curriculum's implementation. These webinars aim to educate teachers, school leaders, and educators on various innovations, strategies, and best practices in education. (c) Learning communities, comprise three types: in-school, inter-school, and online groups. These communities create a platform for educators to share experiences, ideas, and effective teaching methods while building a collaborative network that supports the implementation of the Independent Curriculum across various regions. (d) Resource persons sharing best practices, involve experts who share their successful experiences in implementing the Independent Curriculum. They offer practical examples of effective teaching methods and school management strategies that other institutions can adopt. (e) The Helpdesk, is a service provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture to deliver technical support and information related to the Independent Curriculum. It is designed to assist schools and teachers by addressing queries and resolving challenges during the curriculum's implementation. (f) Collaboration with development partners, sees the Ministry working with domestic and international organizations to enhance the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This partnership focuses on teacher training, curriculum development, and providing necessary educational resources.

Leadership Concept

In contemporary educational institutions, leaders play a crucial role in determining the quality and effectiveness of the educational process. Figures like principals or deans serve not only as administrators but also as agents of change and sources of inspiration in shaping the institution's vision and mission (Suharti et al., 2024). Mulyasa highlights that school principals must fulfill various roles, including those of educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator—collectively remembered as EMASLIM. Specifically, principals function as educators, managers, and administrators (Mulyasa, 2013). Similarly, the role of a madrasah head is vital in ensuring the school's smooth operation and growth. As an educational leader, administrative manager, decision-maker, communicator, and cultivator of school culture, they create a positive and supportive learning environment while driving the institution toward achieving its vision and mission.



Concept of Independent Curriculum

The concept of Curriculum develops along with the advancement of theory and practice in the field of education, also varies according to the school or theory of education adhered to. Hamalik (2007:5) in Triwiyanti states that there are objectives of the view regarding the curriculum, namely i) Curriculum as a planned activity program, ii) Curriculum as expected learning outcomes, iii) Curriculum as cultural reproduction, iv) Curriculum as a collection of tasks and discrete, v) Curriculum as a social reconstruction agenda, vi) Curriculum as curere, and vii) Different viewpoints between the old curriculum and the new curriculum (Triwijayanti, 2015).

There are several principles in the management of the independent curriculum that need to be considered in the implementation of the independent curriculum (1) Productivity, The outcomes of curriculum activities must be prioritized to ensure the curriculum's effective implementation. (2) Demonstration and implementation of the curriculum must be based on democratic principles that place managers, implementers, and students in the right position in carrying out their duties with the responsibility to achieve curriculum goals. (3) Cooperative, Achieving the desired outcomes in curriculum management requires positive collaboration among all stakeholders. (4) Effective and efficient, Curriculum management activities should focus on achieving goals in a manner that is both effective and efficient, delivering meaningful results with minimal time, effort, and cost. (5) The curriculum management process must be clearly aligned with and directed by the institution's vision, mission, and objectives as outlined in the curriculum framework (Ishak Abdulkhak, 2014).

The Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the concept of independent learning, which focuses on two key aspects: independent learning and empowering teachers. Independent learning emphasizes granting teachers and students the freedom to innovate and learn independently and creatively (Desrinari & Yuliana, 2022). The Independent Curriculum was developed as a response to address the learning crisis, particularly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Its goal is to foster independence in both teachers and students, encouraging innovative teaching methods. These innovations enable teachers to deliver material in ways that are easier for students to understand, enhancing the overall learning experience.

In 2024, the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2024 will be updated, which is an improvement of the independent curriculum with more emphasis on essential competencies, character development through the Pancasila student profile, and the integrity of the use of technology in learning. The



main characteristics of the independent curriculum that support the recovery of learning according to (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024) are 1) Utilizing the initial assessment, process, and end of learning to understand the learning needs and development that have been achieved by students. 2) using an understanding of the needs and positions of students to adjust, 3) prioritizing the learning progress of students more than the scope and completeness of the curriculum material provided, 4) based on reflection on the learning progress of students carried out collaboratively with other educators.

Independent Implementation Changes the Independent Curriculum

For educational units that choose to implement the independent curriculum, there are 3 categories of application options, namely (1) independent learning, The institution utilizes the 2023 curriculum structure to develop its own curriculum, incorporating several principles of the Independent Curriculum in teaching and assessment. (2) Independent change, The institution adopts the Independent Curriculum structure to design its curriculum and applies its principles comprehensively in teaching and assessment. (3) Independent sharing The institution employs the Independent Curriculum structure to develop its curriculum while implementing its principles in teaching and assessment, with a commitment to sharing best practices with other educational institutions (Circular Letter, 2023).

The Operational Curriculum of Educational Units (KOSP) is an independent curriculum at the level of educational units that includes all learning process plans organized by educational units, as guidelines for all learning activities (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). KOSP is developed in accordance with the context and needs of the students and the educational unit itself. The operational curriculum becomes a document that is constantly updated, used as reference material, reflected and further developed with a deeper understanding. There are four main components of KOSP Education, namely: characteristics of the educational unit, vision, mission, and goals, learning organization, and learning planning. The independent curriculum under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion has guidelines to implement it based on the Decree of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Number 450 of 2024. The Rahmatan lil Alaminn Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5RA) is a project directed in the framework of strengthening moderation (PMB) at the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. PMB has been a priority program of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs since 2020-2024. The student profile of Pancasila and rahmatan lil Alamin (P5RA) refers to lifelong Indonesian students



who are competent, have character, and behave in accordance with Pancasila values and are moderate in religion.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Qualitative research focuses on descriptive data, including both written and oral information from observed individuals and participants (Fitrah & Luthfiah, 2017). The research was conducted at MAN 1 Soppeng and followed three main stages in qualitative research: description, reduction, and selection. Data collection methods included interviews with four informants: the head of the madrasah, the deputy curriculum officer, and two subject teachers. Additionally, non-participant observation and document analysis related to the research topic were utilized. To ensure data validity, the study employed data triangulation techniques, incorporating both source triangulation and methodological triangulation to cross-check information from various sources. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, involving data collection, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

Madrasah Head's Strategy in the Independent Implementation of Changing the Independent Curriculum

The strategy of madrasah heads in the independent implementation of independent curriculum changes includes three strategies. First, the implementation of the webinar series through the Ministry of Religion's smart platform which is held twice a month. The head of the madrasah encourages the active participation of teachers and group work to deepen the understanding of the Independent Curriculum. Teachers are given motivation and direction to actively participate in the webinar. The webinar material has been prepared by the Ministry of Religion's Education and Technical Center in the form of learning videos. Teachers have the freedom to choose topics according to their interests and needs, especially those related to the Independent curriculum. To evaluate teachers' understanding after participating in the webinar, a post-test was carried out as a tool to measure the understanding of the material studied. Teachers who achieve a standardized score will receive a certificate as recognition. However, the implementation of this webinar faces several obstacles, such as limited ability to use technology,



limited waku, and difficulties in applying the material obtained from the webinar into learning practices.

The second strategy is a learning community. At MAN 1 Soppeng, the existing learning community is in the form of MGMP (Subject Teacher Conference), which is the main forum for teachers to discuss learning strategies and challenges faced in the learning process. This learning community is designed as a forum for collaboration involving various parties, and the head of the madrasah acts as a director to create a conducive and sustainable learning environment. The goal is to improve the competence and professionalism of teachers. MGMP is held regularly once a year. To evaluate teachers' abilities, supervision is carried out every semester. The supervision team consists of the head of the madrasah, the deputy head of the madrasah for curriculum, student affairs and dormitory, public relations and entrepreneurship, as well as facilities and infrastructure. This team is in charge of supervising each subject teacher. However, the implementation of the learning community through MGMP faces a number of obstacles, such as budget limitations, non-routine implementation, and time constraints. As a solution, teachers are still encouraged to continue to work through online platforms, independent learning, and discussions with peers within the scope of linear subjects.

The third strategy is the use of resource persons of various good practices. The head of madrasah at MAN 1 Soppeng implements this strategy through the organization of an annual workshop, which presents competent and expert resource persons in the implementation of the Independent curriculum. The selection of resource persons is carried out through a meeting of the curriculum development team to determine the topic of material to be represented, followed by looking for qualified resource persons as needed. This process also involves consultation with the Education Office to ensure the selection of resource persons who are experts in fields related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum Change. After participating in the workshop, teachers are directed to apply the material that has been learned in the learning process in class. This step is in line with the preparation of the RPP (Learning Implementation Plan) and SKP (Employee Performance Targets) as a form of learning implementation plan in the classroom. However, the implementation of the workshop faced several obstacles, such as limited time for in-depth delivery of the material, lack of participation and motivation of teachers in following the material, and the level of understanding of teachers in understanding different materials. As a solution, the head of the madrasah encourages group discussions between subject teachers to strengthen the understanding and application of the material that has been discussed.



Independent Implementation Changes the Independent Curriculum

The head of the madrasah has an important role in the formulation of the madrasah Educational Operating Standards (SOP) by forming a special team for the preparation of SOPs. This team conducted an in-depth assessment by collecting data as material in the preparation of SOPs. In determining the school's vision and mission, the madrasah principal and the development team consider special characteristics including the conditions and potentials of the madrasah. In-depth study to ensure that the vision and mission set are in accordance with the needs of the school. The delivery of vision and mission can be done through meetings and discussions to gain understanding and support from all parties involved. In addition, the head of the madrasah groups teachers based on their expertise, such as educational background, teaching experience, and special skills they have. Students are also grouped based on talents, interests, and abilities, which are obtained from the results of psychological tests. This strategy aims to maximize the learning process to suit the potential and needs of individual educators and students. In managing the learning load on the curriculum structure, the head of the madrasah held a meeting with teachers to discuss the allocation of time and the number of subjects. Adjustments are made to intracurricular learning programs, P5RA projects and extracurricular activities.

The strategy for designing and developing P5RA activities in madrasahs emphasizes collaboration and a thorough understanding of the program. This is achieved through workshops and regular meetings aimed at evaluating and enhancing the P5RA project. The head of the madrasah established a dedicated curriculum development team responsible for designing P5RA activities tailored to students' abilities. Collaboration involves engaging all stakeholders to ensure the project's successful implementation.

Supporting and inhibiting factors for independent implementation of changing the independent curriculum

The implementation of Independent Curriculum Change at MAN 1 Soppeng is supported by several factors. First, teachers and educators who have participated in training and workshops have a sufficient understanding of the Merdeka curriculum, so that they are able to apply the knowledge gained in the learning process. Second, the leadership of madrasah heads who are active in providing direction and conducting monthly evaluations is the key in monitoring and directing the implementation of the independent curriculum. In addition, teachers' enthusiasm to continue learning and their ability to utilize technology also contribute positively to the



implementation of the curriculum. The support from various parties makes it possible for the implementation of the independent curriculum at MAN 1 Soppeng to run well.

However, this implementation also faces a number of obstacles. Factors inhibiting the implementation include limited facilities and adequate infrastructure, which has an impact on optimizing the learning process. In addition, educators under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially at MAN 1 Soppeng, have not been able to access the independent learning platform provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The implementation of learning communities through MGMP has not been carried out optimally due to budget and time limitations, so it has not been able to provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of independent curriculum-based learning.

DISCUSSION

There are 6 strategies for school principals in the independent implementation of changing the Independent curriculum. However, the strategy implemented at MAN 1 Soppeng has three strategies, namely: (1) The implementation of the webinar series, which is a form of activity that is used as a means of conveying information and discussion, including various good practices, is a webinar (Rohimat et al., 2021). Webinars are activities that gather at a certain time to observe, listen, and participate in the presentation of a topic online (S.Izza et al., 2019). For the implementation of the webinar at MAN 1 Soppeng, the Ministry of Religion uses a smart web of the Ministry of Religion that provides various learning materials for teachers. (2) learning community, the community formed in MAN 1 Soppeng, namely the Subject Teacher Conference (MGMP). Activities that support teacher professionalism and improve the quality of learning that can be carried out by teachers through the MGMP forum, such as equalizing perceptions and increasing understanding of the curriculum, developing syllabi and assessment systems, developing and designing teaching materials, developing effective learning models, developing and implementing the analysis of appropriate learning facilities to support the achievement of learning objectives, the development of learning media based on technology. MGMP has a central role in the implementation of the curriculum. (Maure et al., 2023). With MGMP, it is a medium to produce professional teachers by holding several activities such as training and training to increase teachers' creativity in the learning process (Arba, 2018). (3) resource persons for various good practices. The Independent Curriculum is a program with diverse learning content, the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen skills



(Anggraini & Devana, 2022). The Resource Person for Various Good Practices (NSBPB) is part of the implementation strategy of the Independent Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology. NSBPB is one of the forms of support from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology for education units in implementing the Independent curriculum. Education units and learning communities as well as other parties who want to learn the Independent curriculum can invite NSBPB as needed (Nunuk, 2022).

The independent implementation of changing the independent curriculum through the Operational Curriculum of Education Units (KOSP) covers all learning process plans used in educational units and serves as a guideline for all learning implementation. The operational curriculum of the educational unit is an effort to improve the curriculum to be more familiar with students and teaching staff. In order for the national education system to remain relevant and competitive, continuous improvement of the curriculum is needed. This is in accordance with Articles 35 and 36 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that KOSP must be periodically improved as a curriculum reference to achieve national education goals (Silva, 2024). The principles of preparing KOSP include 1) student-centered, learning must be able to facilitate the diversity of student characteristics. 2) Contextual KOSP shows the peculiarities of the characteristics of the educational unit based on the social, cultural, and environmental context. 3) Essential, containing all important elements according to the needs of the school. 4) Accountable, can be held accountable because KOSP is present based on actual facts. 5) Involving all stakeholders (stakeholders), the KOSP is prepared jointly by school residents and stakeholders, these stakeholders include students, parents, organizations, and various related centers (Anggraeni et al., 2021).

The independent implementation of changing the independent curriculum through the Pancasila and Rahmatan lil Alamin Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5RA). P5RA includes a variety of competencies that are formulated into six main dimensions. Namely: 1) Faith, by worshipping God Almighty, and having noble character. 2) global diversity, 3) mutual cooperation, 4) independence, 5) logical thinking, and 6) creativity. The Pancasila student profile reflects the character and competencies that are internalized in the daily life of each student. This is realized through culture in the education unit, intracurricular learning, co-curricular activities in the form of P5RA strengthening projects, and extracurricular activities such as scouting. The scouting activity module can be adapted and used as part of the P5RA strengthening project activities (Satria et al., 2024). The implementation of Independent Curriculum Changes faces various



supporting factors and obstacles that need to be overcome by each school so that its implementation runs optimally.

CONCLUSION

The head of the madrasah at MAN 1 Soppeng applies three strategies to the independent development of changing the Independent curriculum. First, the implementation of Webinars through the Ministry of Religion's Smart Platform, which is carried out twice per month as a means to deepen material related to the independent curriculum. Second, the formation of a learning community through MGMP (Subject Teacher Conference) which is held once a year, and FGD (Focus Group Discussion) which is a forum for teachers to increase their understanding of the curriculum, learning strategies, and how to design learning in the classroom creatively and innovatively in accordance with the Independent curriculum. And third, the implementation of the IKM Workshop which presents expert speakers in their fields, is held once a year. This workshop aims to deepen educators' understanding of the concept of Independent Change Curriculum, provide material on the use of learning media in the classroom, and provide motivation to educators to implement new learning models.

In the Independent Implementation of Changing the Independent Curriculum at MAN 1 Soppeng, the head of the madrasah has an important role in compiling the Educational Operational Standards (SOP) which includes academic aspects, school management, facility management, student discipline, and other supporting activities. The head of the madrasah also adjusts the school's vision and mission to be in accordance with the Independent Curriculum. To support the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5RA), the head of the madrasah formed a curriculum development team that designed and evaluated the activity. In addition, an annual workshop is held to review the rules and guidelines for the implementation of the curriculum, ensuring targeted and sustainable implementation. Supporting factors in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MAN 1 Soppeng include the availability of teachers who have participated in training, active leadership from the head of the madrasah, and teachers' enthusiasm in adapting technology. However, there are several obstacles, such as the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure to support the learning process, as well as limited access for educators under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially in MAN 1 Soppeng, to the Independent Learning Platform provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition, the implementation of the learning community through



MGMP is also not optimal due to various limitations, which results in a lack of deep understanding of the implementation of independent curriculum-based learning.

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