

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstract

Curriculum changes require time for adjustment and strong support from madrasa management and require assistance from related parties so that teachers are able to pass through the transition period successfully. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) will begin to be implemented in its entirety in grades I and IV for the 2023/2024 academic year. This is in accordance with the Minister of Education and Culture's decision number 1443 of 2023 concerning Madrasas Implementing the Independent Curriculum for the 2023/2024 Academic Year. A new era has begun, and teachers are not ready to face curriculum changes for several reasons, including the absence of special training regarding the independent curriculum, technical guidance for the online independent curriculum which is followed independently by teachers is ineffective, as well as constraints on teacher resources in terms of information technology. Some of these things make teachers not ready in mindset to face curriculum changes. Even this change in the curriculum has created feelings of uncertainty and anxiety for teachers. To overcome this, the efforts made by the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Teacher Working Group (KKG) include holding Technical Guidance (BIMTEK) activities for the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) for teachers by bringing in communicative and professional resource persons. The aim of this research is to analyze the readiness of teachers' mindsets after the implementation of technical guidance on the implementation of the independent curriculum which was carried out for two days at the Ibtidaiyah madrasah. The efforts made by the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Teacher Working Group (KKG) include holding Technical Guidance (BIMTEK) activities for the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) for teachers by bringing in communicative and professional resource persons. The aim of this research is to analyze the readiness of teachers' mindsets after the implementation of technical guidance on the implementation of the independent curriculum which was carried out for two days at the Ibtidaiyah madrasah. The efforts made by the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Teacher Working Group (KKG)

include holding Technical Guidance (BIMTEK) activities for the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) for teachers by bringing in communicative and professional resource persons. The aim of this research is to analyze the readiness of teachers' mindsets after the implementation of technical guidance on the implementation of the independent curriculum which was carried out for two days at the Ibtidaiyah madrasah. The research methods used in this research were a questionnaire of 27 teachers and interviews with the head of the madrasah ibtidaiyah teacher working group. This research on the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah will provide a valuable contribution to the development of education at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level.

1. Introduction

The independent curriculum was officially introduced in 2020 in an effort to provide schools and teachers with more flexibility in adapting the national curriculum [1]. Through the independent curriculum, it is hoped that education in Indonesia will become more relevant, responsive and in line with students' needs and local conditions. Starting from the 2023/2024 academic year, the curriculum will be implemented nationally based on the decision of the Minister of Education and Culture number 1443 of 2023 concerning Madrasahs Implementing the Independent Curriculum for the 2023/2024 academic year.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is collaborating with various parties, such as education experts, teachers and practitioners in the education sector, to develop concepts and guidelines for implementing the independent curriculum. In its development process, the independent curriculum involves various educational stakeholders, such as teachers, school principals, parents and local communities, so that it can accommodate the needs and aspirations of the educational community.[2].

The implementation of an independent curriculum at madrasah ibtidaiyah in Indonesia was carried out as part of a broader educational reform effort, although there are several adjustments that need to be made to accommodate the characteristics and context of Islamic education in madrasah ibtidaiyah[3]. It is hoped that the implementation of the independent curriculum at madrasah ibtidaiyah can provide a learning experience that is more meaningful, relevant and in line with students' needs and aspirations. It is also hoped that this can strengthen character development, understanding of religion, and students' readiness to face future challenges.

Adapting to the new curriculum requires time and effort. Adapting to change requires persistence, collaboration, and a passion for continuous learning[4]. Likewise, for teachers at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level, this curriculum change is not immediately accepted by teachers. Several reasons include: First, the absence of specific independent curriculum training activities makes teachers unprepared to face curriculum changes. Teachers need training to understand and implement the independent curriculum well[5].

The independent curriculum is one of the Indonesian government's initiatives to improve the quality of education. However, without adequate training, teachers may have difficulty understanding these changes and implementing them effectively[6]. The training will help teachers understand in depth the objectives, structure and approach of the Merdeka Curriculum. This will help them recognize significant changes in education and how to integrate new elements into their learning.

Training can also provide psychosocial support to teachers in dealing with curriculum changes. They can share their experiences and thoughts about how to face challenges that may arise during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, the government and educational institutions must provide adequate training to teachers in order to face curriculum changes[7]. Good training will make teachers more prepared and confident in implementing the Independent Curriculum, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the quality of education in Indonesia.

Second, Technical guidance for the online independent curriculum which is followed independently by the teacher is not effective. Self-paced online training tends to have little or no direct interaction between the teacher and the instructor or other participants. This can reduce teachers' opportunities to ask questions, discuss, and collaborate with fellow teachers, which can hinder in-depth understanding of curriculum material. The Merdeka Curriculum material is very complex, and teachers will have difficulty understanding it without direct assistance from an instructor who can explain concepts and provide relevant examples.

Third, Not all teachers have enough technological skills to follow self-paced online training smoothly. Poor or limited technology skills for some teachers can be a serious obstacle to engaging in independent online training. This is very relevant considering that Merdeka Curriculum training and various other educational initiatives increasingly rely on technology as the main means of delivering training material[8].

The absence of special training regarding the Independent Curriculum, technical guidance that is carried out independently, and constraints on teacher resources in terms of information technology can have an impact on

teachers' mindsets towards changes in education. Teachers who feel unprepared or lack the skills to face technological changes or new curricula will feel less confident in implementing them. This can result in a negative mindset regarding change[9].

This research was conducted to analyze the mindset readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers after technical guidance for the implementation of the independent curriculum. This is important to ensure that teachers are ready in mindset and are able to implement the independent curriculum effectively. This mindset readiness has a direct impact on readiness in teaching and has a positive impact on a more effective student learning experience.

2. Materials and Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach in the form of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire method is effective for collecting data in research on teacher mindset readiness in implementing the independent curriculum. The use of qualitative questionnaires in research on teacher mindset readiness in implementing the independent curriculum can provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' views and experiences.

The designed questionnaire included open-ended questions that allowed teachers to provide their responses narratively[10]. The questions asked relate to teachers' understanding of the independent curriculum, independent teaching, teacher readiness in adopting and implementing the independent curriculum.

Questionnaires were distributed to 27 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers as research samples. After the data was collected, qualitative data analysis was then carried out on the responses given by the teacher. The results of the data analysis will be interpreted based on the findings that emerge from the teacher's responses. These findings can provide in-depth insight into teachers' perceptions, attitudes and readiness in facing the implementation of the independent curriculum.

Meanwhile, interview This is the most common format of data collection in qualitative research. According to Oakley, qualitative interview is a type of framework in which the practices and standards be not only recorded, but also achieved, challenged and as well as reinforced.[11] As no research interview lacks structure[9] most of the qualitative research interviews are either semi-structured, lightly structured or in-depth.[9] Unstructured interviews are generally suggested in conducting long-term field work and allow respondents to let them express in their own ways and pace, with minimal hold on respondents' responses.[10] The interview method was carried out with the head of the madrasah ibtidaiyah teacher working group. This interview technique was carried out to strengthen the findings from the questionnaire and also to complete the data obtained[11]. The data obtained from these interviews can provide a deeper perspective and richer context regarding the readiness of teachers' mindsets in implementing the independent curriculum.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum is a curriculum approach introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia [12]. The main aim of the Merdeka Curriculum is to increase the flexibility and relevance of the curriculum by accommodating the local needs and characteristics of each school [13]. The Merdeka Curriculum allows schools to develop a curriculum that is more suited to the needs, culture and potential of students in their area. It aims to improve the quality of education and increase student engagement [14].

This initiative emphasizes the importance of literacy (the ability to read and write) and numeracy (mathematics ability) as basic competencies that must be mastered by every student. The Merdeka Curriculum also seeks to increase student access to various types of learning opportunities, including additional subjects, skill enhancement, and exploration of student interests.

The independent curriculum encourages a more holistic approach to education, which involves developing students' social, emotional and character aspects in addition to academic knowledge[15]. Teachers are expected to become more active learning facilitators, helping students identify their interests and talents, and supporting them in reaching their full potential.

As such, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to allow schools to be more flexible in designing their education, while still ensuring that national education standards remain met. It is hoped that this will help improve the quality of education in Indonesia and enable students to be more active in their learning process.

3.1.2 Teacher Mindset

Mindset is the way a person views and interprets the world, life, themselves, and their potential [16]. This includes the beliefs, attitudes, and thought patterns that shape the way we think, respond, and act in various situations. A person with a fixed mindset tends to believe that their qualities and abilities are permanently determined. They think that their abilities are limited and cannot grow. People with *mindset* still tend to avoid challenges, feel threatened by failure, and receive less constructive feedback. In contrast, someone with a growth mindset believes that abilities and qualities can grow through effort, learning, and perseverance [17]. People with a growth mindset will see challenges as opportunities to learn and grow, are not afraid to fail, and are ready to accept feedback as a means of improvement.

Mindset is not static and can change over time [18]. It is important to be aware of the type of mindset you have and work towards its *mindset* growth that allows us to overcome challenges, thrive, and reach our full potential. A strong and positive mindset can influence a person's success, productivity and well-being. A person with a growth mindset is more likely to take risks, see failure as a learning opportunity, and is highly motivated to achieve their goals.

Mindset teachers in the context of the curriculum can engage in understanding and attitudes that support student-centered learning approaches, creativity, collaboration, and the development of 21st century skills [19]. Teacher with *mindset* Strong ones will accept changes in the curriculum and be ready to adapt their teaching methods according to student needs and the demands of the new curriculum. Teachers will collaborate to develop and implement an effective curriculum, adopt a student-centred approach, develop creative strategies and approaches, undertake self-development and become lifelong learners [20]. Readiness *mindset* Teachers are needed for several reasons, including:

First, the independent curriculum demands a change in the teaching paradigm from a more traditional model (the teacher acts as the main source of knowledge) to the teacher becoming a model (the teacher acts as a facilitator and companion) for student learning. Teachers need to have an open mindset and be ready to let go of the dominant role in the classroom and provide greater space for students to take an active role in learning [21].

Second, in an independent curriculum, students are considered as active learning subjects and have their own interests, abilities and uniqueness. Teachers need to have a mindset that understands and appreciates the central role of students in the learning process. They must be prepared to listen to students, understand their needs and interests, and accommodate different learning styles [22].

Third, the independent curriculum emphasizes inclusion, which means providing equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs or diverse backgrounds. Teachers need to have an inclusive mindset, be ready to provide a learning environment that supports diversity and adopt learning differentiation strategies to accommodate the needs of all students [23].

Fourth, the independent curriculum encourages students to think critically, creatively and independently in solving problems. Teachers need to have a mindset that supports creativity, be ready to present challenges, provide space for exploration and experimentation, and encourage students to develop innovative and solution thinking.

Fifth, independent curricula tend to adopt a more holistic and diverse approach to assessment, involving formative, portfolio, and project-based assessments. Teachers need to have a mindset that is open to different assessment approaches and ready to involve students in a more comprehensive assessment process, including providing constructive feedback [24].

Teachers who are ready in mindset can provide greater support and motivation to students in facing the independent curriculum [25]. Teachers are more open to students' differences in learning styles, understand individual needs, and apply appropriate learning strategies. Teachers who have a good mindset tend to be more creative in teaching. They will look for innovative ways to deliver material, develop engaging lessons, and increase student participation.

Madrasah ibtidaiyah has a focus on Islamic religious education. Readiness *mindset* good teachers in facing curriculum changes will be better able to integrate religious values into the independent curriculum well and relevantly in the learning process. The impact is that students can understand how religious teachings are relevant to their daily lives.

Readiness *mindset* teachers can also help in creating a madrasa culture that is positive towards change [26]. Teachers who are proactive and open to change will influence their colleagues to be better prepared to face it. Teachers with a good mindset will improve the quality of learning in the classroom. They focus more on students' learning processes and look for ways to improve their understanding and academic achievement. The positive impact of teacher mindset readiness is on students' learning experiences. Students will feel the difference when they have teachers who are enthusiastic, innovative, and open to new ideas in learning.

3.1.3 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

Madrasah ibtidaiyah is a formal Islamic education institution at the basic level which is equivalent to the elementary school (SD) level in the general education system. Madrasah ibtidaiyah provides basic education for children aged between 6 and 12 years. Madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers have the main responsibility for imparting knowledge and skills in academic subjects[27]. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is often shortened to MI.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah provides basic education that includes subjects such as Mathematics, Indonesian, Arabic, Islamic Religion, Science, etc., with special emphasis on teaching the Islamic religion. Students who attend Madrasah Ibtidaiyah also learn about Islamic teachings, ethics, and Islamic moral values. The Madrasah Ibtidaiyah education system is managed by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenag) and by Islamic educational foundations or institutions. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is an important part of the Islamic education system in Indonesia which provides basic education with the basics of the Islamic religion.

3.2 Discussions

Curriculum changes have brought major changes to the readiness of madrasah ibtidaiyah in adopting the new curriculum. Teachers' mindset readiness in facing curriculum changes must be fought for. The madrasah ibtidaiyah teacher working group must take quick steps to address this, one of which is by holding technical guidance activities on the implementation of the independent curriculum for class I and IV teachers.

This technical guidance activity aims to prepare the teacher's mindset so that they are ready and able to face curriculum changes towards an independent curriculum well. Based on the results of interviews with the head of the madrasah ibtidaiyah teacher working group, it is hoped that through these technical guidance activities, class I and IV teachers will obtain the knowledge and skills needed to successfully implement the independent curriculum. According to him, teachers will be ready and have a positive mindset in facing change, so that the learning experience of class I and IV students will be effective, innovative and meaningful.

Independent curriculum technical guidance activities were carried out for two days. The first day of technical guidance begins on Saturday, July 10 2023. The activity begins with a session on understanding the concepts and philosophy behind the independent curriculum. Class I and IV teachers need to understand the objectives and basic principles of the independent curriculum and identify what changes will occur in their teaching.

Teachers are introduced to the content and structure of the independent curriculum which applies to grades I and IV. They need to know the competencies, learning materials, and other important aspects that will be taught to students. This activity provides provision regarding learning methods that are in accordance with the independent curriculum, especially those suitable for grades I and IV. Teachers are given information about active learning approaches, role playing methods, interactive stories, and the use of educational technology.



Figure 1: Day 1 Technical Guidance Activities

The second day of activities on Monday, July 11 2023, teachers were invited to create innovative and interesting learning plans for students in grades I and IV. This technical guidance also focuses on strengthening the readiness of teachers' mindsets. Teachers are invited to identify and overcome challenges that may arise during the process of implementing the independent curriculum and change their attitudes and views to be more open and ready to face change. This technical guidance activity provides an opportunity for teachers to collaborate and discuss with colleagues. Teachers are given time to prepare learning plans that are in accordance with the independent curriculum, including teaching strategies, use of resources, and evaluation of learning.



Figure 2: Technical Guidance Day 2

These technical guidance activities have a significant role in preparing teachers' mindsets to face curriculum changes or new learning approaches. Through technical guidance, teachers can gain the knowledge, skills, support and confidence needed to adopt these changes with a positive and responsive attitude.

The following is a summary of the results of a questionnaire regarding the readiness of teachers' mindsets after the technical guidance activities for implementing the independent curriculum which were carried out for two days for madrasah ibtdaiyah teachers.



Figure 3: Teacher Mindset Diagram

The percentage of teachers with a growth mindset was 88.9%, while teachers with a fixed mindset was 11.1%. This shows that the majority of madrasah ibtdaiyah teachers in Pekuncen sub-district have a growth mindset and are ready to implement the independent curriculum. The technical guidance activities that have been carried out by teachers as an effort to face the independent curriculum can be seen in the following summary:



Figure 4: Diagram of Teacher Technical Guidance Activities

As many as 48.1% of teachers have participated in technical guidance activities more than once, and 44.4% of teachers have participated in technical guidance activities once, and 7.4% have never participated in technical guidance activities for implementing the independent curriculum. The large number of teachers who have taken part in these technical guidance activities shows that madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers in Pekuncen sub-district are ready to implement the independent curriculum which will be implemented in the 2023/2024 school year.

4. Conclusion

IKM Technical Guidance can provide teachers with a better understanding of the concepts, objectives and methodology of the independent curriculum. This can help them feel better prepared to implement the independent curriculum. IKM technical guidance can also influence teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the independent curriculum. By providing an in-depth understanding of its values and benefits, Bimtek can help change teachers' attitudes to be more positive towards curriculum change. The readiness of the teacher's mindset plays a crucial role in the success of effective teaching and learning. The research results show that teachers are ready in mindset to face the independent curriculum. This readiness will have a positive impact on students' learning experiences and improve the quality of learning at madrasah ibtidaiyah.

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