

## Evaluating the Effectiveness and Challenges of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Curriculum in Indonesia: Insights and Recommendations

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### Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and challenges of curriculum implementation in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Indonesia, as well as provide strategic recommendations for improvement. A qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design is used to identify factors that affect the success of curriculum implementation. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with madrasah heads and teachers, participatory observations, and analysis of documents such as syllabus and evaluation reports. The results show that limited teacher training, lack of learning facilities, and dominance of traditional approaches are the main obstacles in achieving curriculum goals. These findings highlight the importance of applying project-based learning methods (PBL) and character education to improve 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. However, the implementation of this method still faces technical and pedagogical obstacles. Strengthening teacher competence through continuous training and the provision of technology-based educational resources is a priority. In conclusion, the synergy between education policies, teacher training, and infrastructure support is urgently needed to improve the quality of curriculum implementation in MI. This research makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. The study also opens up further research opportunities to explore the effectiveness of other innovative methods, such as adaptive technology-based learning, in supporting curricula that are responsive to global change.

**Keywords:** madrasah ibtidaiyah, curriculum, effectiveness and challenges

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### Introduction

Primary education plays a crucial role in shaping the foundation of students' character and skills (Purwaningsih, 2024; Sukarno & Riyadini, 2024). Character education is the foundation for fostering positive personality traits in students (Begum et al., 2022). Effective learning strategies are identified as an essential element for internalizing character values (Junaidi & Rohmani, 2024). Teachers have a central role in the implementation of character education, both as guides and as role models for students (Fitriana, 2024; Tuhuteru et al., 2023). This approach makes a significant contribution to the formation of students' morality from an early age.

In addition to character education, primary education also serves to develop students' cognitive abilities, social skills, and moral understanding, which is an essential basis for future learning and personal development (Alfiyanto et al., 2023; Putri, 2024). The school environment and the teaching methods used significantly affect the effectiveness of this skill development process. Therefore, supportive educational practices are needed to ensure optimal results (Putri, 2024).

The success of character education and skill development cannot be separated from collaboration between schools, families, and the community. This synergy creates an environment conducive to student growth (Fitriana, 2024). Positive interactions between students, peers, and educators also play an essential role in improving social skills and character

development (Sipayung et al., 2024). However, some argue that external factors, such as socioeconomic status and family background, can affect educational outcomes, thus overshadowing the role of schools in shaping students' character.

In Indonesia, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), one of the Islamic educational institutions at the primary level, has a strategic role in integrating religious and general education. The curriculum at MI is designed to build students' academic, spiritual, and social competencies in line with national education goals (Moslimany et al., 2024; Syafi'i, 2019). However, the dynamics of the times, such as changes in education policies and the influence of globalization, pose significant challenges to the effectiveness of the implementation of the MI curriculum (Mahmudin, 2023).

In the last decade, a lot of research on the curriculum in MI has been conducted. For example, the study by Zidan & Qamariah (2023) and Yafie et al. (2024) compared the effectiveness of the 2013 Curriculum with the Independent Curriculum, showing that curriculum changes significantly affect the teaching-learning process. Other research, such as those conducted by Fikrotussholihah (2024) and Parwati & Suastra (2024), highlights how the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can strengthen students' character by maintaining the profile of Pancasila Students. However, most of these studies tend to focus on specific aspects of the curriculum, such as teaching methods or technical implementations, without comprehensively evaluating their effectiveness at the MI institutional level.

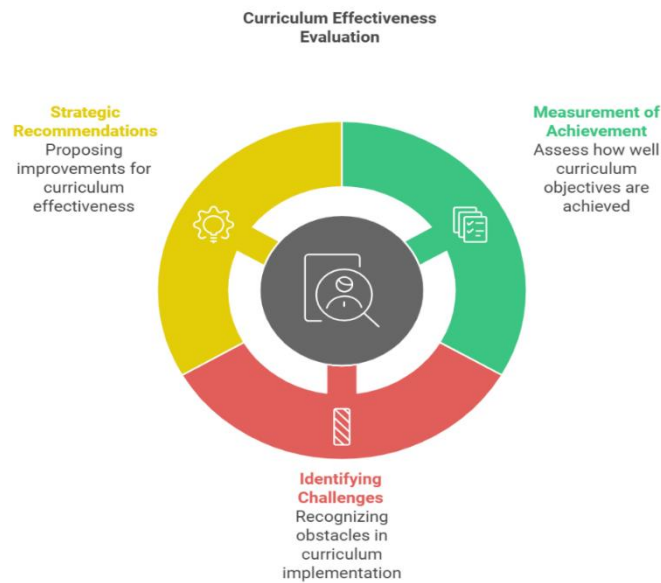
The gap in this study shows that there is still a lack of holistic studies that comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness and challenges of curriculum implementation in MI, including its impact on the achievement of overall educational goals. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by examining the effectiveness of the curriculum in MI, identifying the challenges faced, and providing recommendations for future improvement.

This research is necessary because the results can be the basis for more effective policy-making in improving the quality of education in MI. By integrating empirical data and critical analysis, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. Research Objectives This research aims to 1) Evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation in MI, 2) Identify the main challenges faced by MI in the implementation of the curriculum, and 3) Provide strategic recommendations to improve the quality of MI curriculum implementation.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design to evaluate the effectiveness and challenges of curriculum implementation in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with madrasah heads and teachers, participatory observation in learning activities, and analysis of curriculum-related documents such as syllabi and evaluation reports. Triangulation of methods and sources is used to ensure the validity of the data, while thematic analysis is applied to identify patterns and relationships from the data obtained. The analysis process includes coding, interpreting, and drafting a narrative of the findings.

This study aims to measure the achievement of curriculum goals in MI, identify the main obstacles in its implementation, and provide recommendations for strategic improvement. With a systematic approach, this research is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of the curriculum in MI as well as practical solutions for stakeholders. This is important to support the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in facing the challenges of the era of globalization and changes in education policies.

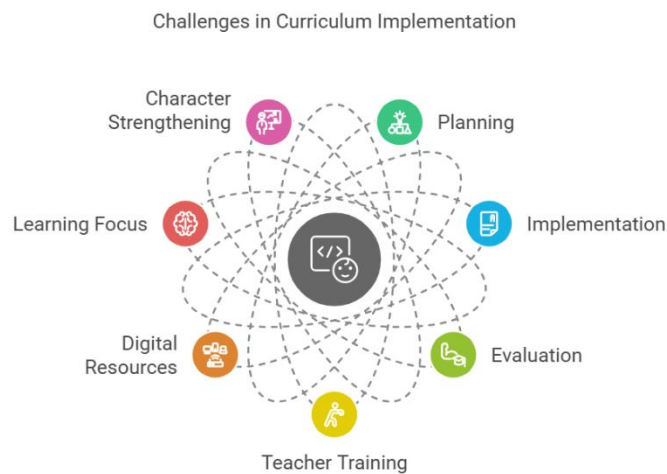


**Figure 1.** Curriculum Effectiveness Evaluation Process

### Results and Discussion

Based on interviews with madrasah heads and teachers in several Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), it was found that curriculum implementation faces significant challenges in terms of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Teachers reported that adaptation to curriculum changes, such as the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum, took a considerable amount of time due to a lack of adequate training. In addition, supporting facilities such as digital teaching materials and technology devices are still limited in most MIs, especially in remote areas.

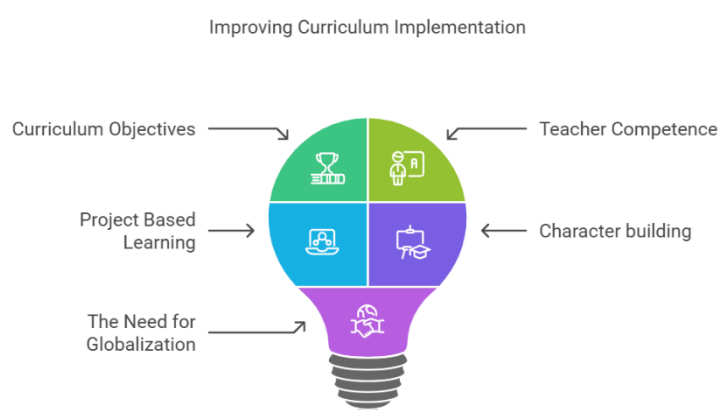
Direct observation shows that the learning process in the classroom tends to focus on the cognitive aspect, with the memorization approach still dominant. Meanwhile, strengthening students' character and skills, which is one of the main goals of the curriculum, has not been implemented optimally. In terms of documentation, the analysis of the syllabus and lesson plans shows that most teachers have not taken advantage of the innovative learning methods suggested in the latest curriculum.



**Figure 2.** Challenges in Curriculum Implementation

The results of this study reveal the gap between curriculum goals and actual implementation in the field. These findings are consistent with previous studies, such as the research of Yafie et al. (2024), which show that the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum requires better preparation in terms of teacher training and facility procurement. In addition, the results of this study also emphasize the importance of strengthening teacher competence in adopting project-based learning methods and characters that are relevant to the needs of the globalization era (Jaedun et al., 2024).

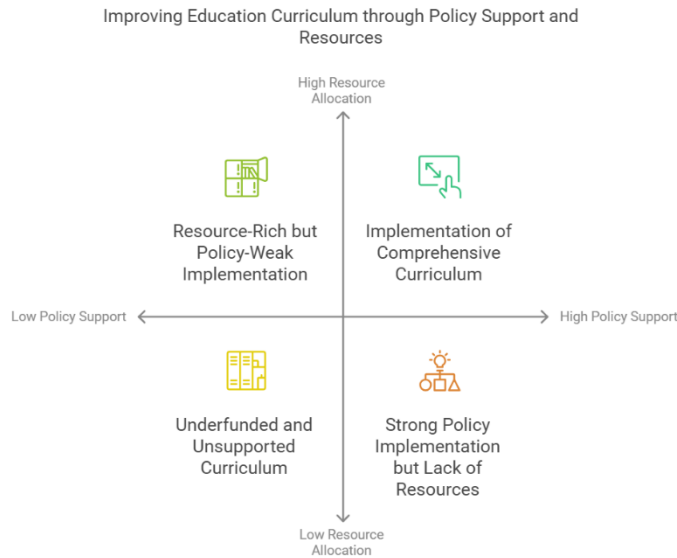
Improving teacher competence includes the development of pedagogical, social, and professional aspects that support the implementation of holistic learning. For example, project-based learning (PBL) integrates practical approaches to improve students' skills, such as communication and problem-solving. This is supported by research that shows the effectiveness of PBL in building critical thinking skills and character values (Putri, 2023). In addition, long-term competency-based character education assists students in understanding complex value systems, such as morality and social responsibility (Ilaltdinova et al., 2022).



**Figure 3.** Strategies to Improve Curriculum Implementation

PBL not only facilitates academic learning but also instills entrepreneurial values, such as creativity and risk-taking, from an early age (Rina et al., 2018). This combination of character-based education and entrepreneurship provides students with the ability to respond effectively to global changes. However, it is also important to consider education system reform and resource allocation as support for the overall success of this program (Kusnandi, 2024). This reinforcement strategy requires collaboration between teachers, educational institutions, and policymakers to create an adaptive and future-oriented learning environment. This approach ensures that students are not only prepared to face global challenges but are also able to contribute actively to society.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the concept that curriculum effectiveness depends on the synergy between policy, training, and resource support at the institutional level. This study fills the literature gap by providing a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the curriculum in MI, which has not been widely discussed in previous studies. The resulting recommendations not only target improving teacher competence but also emphasize the importance of more robust policy support for the provision of technology-based learning facilities.



**Figure 4.** Strategies to Improve the Educational Curriculum through Policy Support and Resources

This research makes a significant contribution to offering practical solutions for policymakers and education actors to improve the quality of curriculum implementation at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. These findings emphasize the need for collaboration between the government, madrasas, and the community to create a learning environment that is in line with the vision of the national curriculum.

**Conclusion**

This study reveals that the implementation of the curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Indonesia faces various challenges, particularly in teacher training, the availability of supporting facilities, and the application of project-based learning (PBL) methods and character education. Observations and data analysis indicate that while the curriculum is designed to foster students' 21st-century skills and character values, its practical application in the field does not fully align with these goals. This gap is primarily attributed to limited resources and insufficient training for educators.

The findings underscore the necessity of a comprehensive strategy to support curriculum implementation. Strengthening teacher competence through intensive training programs and providing adequate learning facilities are crucial for achieving curriculum goals. Moreover, collaboration among government bodies, madrasas, and communities is essential to establish a conducive educational environment. These efforts are pivotal in making MI education more adaptive to globalization challenges and relevant to the digital era's demands.

However, this study has certain limitations. It primarily focuses on qualitative analysis and data gathered from specific regions, which may not fully capture the diversity of challenges across all MI in Indonesia. Additionally, the study does not delve into the long-term impacts of curriculum adjustments on student outcomes. Future research is recommended to explore quantitative measures of curriculum effectiveness, broader regional comparisons, and the integration of emerging technologies in supporting curriculum implementation.

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