

Change Framework Of The Independent Curriculum: An Analytical Study On Learning Transformation In Madrasah Aliyah

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Abstract. Adaptation efforts become a concern when viewing the independent curriculum from the perspective of adapting it to the change framework, ensuring it remains relevant when implemented. The purpose of this study is to collect information and analyze the change framework of the independent curriculum in the transformation of learning in Madrasah Aliyah. This paper uses a qualitative research method with a literature study approach. Data sources for the analysis include Michael Fullan's theoretical book on the Characteristics of Change, scientific articles related to the independent curriculum. The results of this study describe and analyze four aspects: 1) The need to see the importance of making curriculum changes; 2) Clarity by clarifying the concept standards and curriculum implementation; 3) Complexity in the form of internal and external indicators of Madrasah Aliyah that influence learning transformation; and 4) Quality/Practicality that makes the independent curriculum still exist today. The conclusion shows that the principle of change has a positive and significant influence on the development of quality learning in Madrasah Aliyah.

Keywords: Independent Curriculum, Madrasah Aliyah, Characteristics, Change, Transformation

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum changes play a significant role in the transformation of education, which continues to adapt to modern developments (Amrullah et al., 2024). Adjustments to the curriculum framework can be an effort to align with student needs and meet increasingly complex global requirements. Madrasah Aliyah, as an educational institution grounded in religious teachings, has a fundamental obligation to ensure that its adopted curriculum integrates Islamic principles with relevant capabilities in this digital era. Therefore, curriculum reform is seen as a critical priority that cannot be postponed.

Within the framework of Indonesia's national education policy, the Independent Curriculum is proposed as a new paradigm that offers educational institutions the flexibility to design learning processes tailored to the unique profiles of students and the context of their learning environments (Manullang & Marpaung, 2024). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the Madrasah Aliyah level is not limited to updating curriculum content and pedagogical strategies alone, but also encompasses adjustments to deeply rooted cultural norms of learning. This requires a comprehensive transformation of the education system, encompassing both managerial and operational aspects in the classroom.

The persistent gap between curriculum design and its implementation in practice highlights the need for a comprehensive review of the principles and frameworks for curriculum reform. Madrasah Aliyah face various challenges, including limited resource allocation, varying levels of understanding among educators, and resistance to reforms in learning methods. This situation highlights that curriculum transformation is not a purely linear process, but rather is influenced by various internal and external factors of the madrasah institution (Weiss et al., 2021).

The Independent Curriculum adopted at Madrasah Aliyah essentially represents a development of the previous curriculum, while maintaining the authenticity of Islamic values and character. This curricular nature facilitates the proportional improvement of student capabilities in both academic and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, it is essential to confirm that the philosophical foundation of the changes effectively improves educational quality, going beyond mere procedural modifications.

Michael Fullan emphasizes that implementing change initiatives requires a focus on several crucial attributes that determine the success of educational restructuring. Michael Fullan is an educational figure who has extensively discussed the management and dynamics of educational change. In his analysis, Fullan identifies factors such as need, clarity, complexity, and quality/practicality of application as vital parameters in managing curriculum reform (Fullan, 2007). Thus, these principles are important to examine in order to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which the learning paradigm shift in Madrasah Aliyah aligns with the established goals.

Given the observed phenomena, this research question is formulated as follows: (1) To what extent do the needs criteria influence the relevance of the Independent Curriculum changes in Madrasah Aliyah? (2) How clear is the concept and implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Madrasah Aliyah environment? (3) What are the complex challenges arising from the Independent Curriculum transformation? and (4) How do the quality and functional aspects of the Independent Curriculum contribute to the sustainability of its implementation in Madrasah Aliyah?

This research aims to outline and examine the conceptual framework underlying the Independent Curriculum changes in transforming the learning process in Madrasah Aliyah. This study focuses on four essential dimensions of Fullan's theory of change: urgency of need, clarity of purpose, complexity of challenges, and quality and practical aspects of implementation. It is hoped that this study will enrich the intellectual treasury regarding efforts to improve the quality of implementing the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah.

Several previous studies have extensively examined the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, with a primary focus on educator readiness, utilization of learning resources, and project-based pedagogy (Subhan Widiyansyah et al., 2024). However, the majority of these studies have not deeply explored the underlying framework underlying curriculum change within the educational transformation landscape at Madrasah Aliyah. Furthermore, the research methods employed tend to prioritize the assessment of program execution over analyzing the framework for change as the fundamental basis for implementation.

Based on the literature review, research on curriculum change in Madrasah Aliyah continues to focus on developing religious capabilities and integrating Islamic values (Ahmadi et al., 2021). This current study proposes an innovative perspective: that curriculum evolution is not solely dependent on Islamic content but is also influenced by structured change management (Atmojo et al., 2022). Therefore, this study emphasizes the need for an analysis of the Independent Curriculum using a multidimensional approach, one that is not limited to content alone.

Given this research gap, this paper aims to fill it through a literature review that integrates Fullan's theory with the practical implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah. It also demonstrates that the principle of change plays a significant role in ensuring the relevance, sustainability, and quality of learning that aligns with national education goals and Islamic values. The research findings are expected to serve as a foundation for developing better educational policies and practices in the future.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method that analyzes meaning and understanding, as opposed to quantitative research, which relies on statistics and numerical data (Lim, 2025). The focus of this study is to discover the deeper meaning of the phenomenon being studied. Based on the problems encountered in the changes to the independent curriculum, this study employs a qualitative research method with a literature review approach to provide a realistic and complex analysis (Annasthasya et al., 2025).

The research approach employed in this study is a literature review, utilizing reference materials from books, journals, and scientific papers (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). These references are used to connect the topic of curriculum change in Madrasah Aliyah. This library study approach examines

references from various literature sources to emerge new patterns and understandings of learning transformation in Madrasah Aliyah (Hanelt et al., 2021). Information gathering was conducted by analyzing the concept of curriculum-learning transformation from Michael Fullan's book on the characteristics of change. Based on this, this study aims to connect the analysis of the independent curriculum context in Madrasah Aliyah with Michael Fullan's concept.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The independent curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah represents an effort to reform the educational landscape, tailored to meet the needs of students (Muslimin et al., 2023). This change did not emerge suddenly; instead, it resulted from the increasingly rapid and complex demands of the times. Madrasah aliyah, which previously focused on mastering religious knowledge, now faces the challenge of adapting to various social and technological dynamics. Curriculum transformation requires teachers to be innovative in developing materials and learning models. Learning based on the classic lecture method needs to be balanced with a habituation to a participatory and contextual approach. This certainly requires a change in mindset and the readiness of all madrasah components. Therefore, implementing the independent policy is one strategic step in increasing the relevance of education in today's madrasah aliyah.

The implementation of the independent curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah emphasizes a broader foundation and greater freedom for learning. Each student is given space to develop their potential according to their interests and talents. The learning process is no longer teacher-centered, but shifts to students as the primary subjects in the process of knowledge formation (Dziubaniuk et al., 2023). This encourages a more lively, creative, and collaborative classroom atmosphere among students. However, this change also presents various new challenges, such as limited facilities, uneven teacher understanding, and a significant administrative burden. Therefore, ongoing mentoring and training are crucial for educators to implement the principles of the independent curriculum effectively.

This transformation in learning is a crucial foundation for ensuring that the curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah can adapt to current developments without losing its identity. The Islamic values that characterize madrasahs must not be abandoned despite ongoing innovation. Therefore, these values serve as moral and spiritual strength in facing ongoing social change. The independent curriculum should integrate general knowledge and religious values in a balanced and contextual manner. Thus, madrasah aliyah graduates will be intellectually intelligent and mature in personality and morals. Wise curriculum adjustments will create a resilient and adaptive generation that remains grounded in Islamic values, a blessing for the world.

Based on the conditions and needs of students, the transformation in learning can be seen from the four aspects of change outlined in Michael Fullan's theory.

First, the Need Aspect is the primary reason why curriculum changes are necessary in Islamic high schools. This need often arises from rapid developments and demands adjustments. Policymakers can no longer remain idly with the old system. This is because students' needs are constantly evolving. If the curriculum remains unchanged, learning will lag significantly behind. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the actual needs of those involved in education (Erin Aprillia et al., 2022). From this perspective, the Need aspect becomes the first step in curriculum change.

In the context of Madrasah Aliyah, the needs of madrasah leaders also require in-depth analysis. Leaders must ensure that the direction of learning aligns with the institution's goals. However, leaders often focus solely on administration and neglect the academic needs of students. This becomes an obstacle if not addressed promptly and effectively. Madrasah leaders must maintain an open perspective on the development of the independent curriculum. Otherwise, change efforts will remain on paper. The role of madrasah leaders is a key factor in the success of curriculum transformation.

Teachers also have important needs in the context of curriculum change. They often struggle to develop new learning models without guidance. When curriculum demands are high but teachers'

skills are not yet ready, gaps arise. Teachers require training, support, and time to adapt, making this a pressing need that must be addressed. Without these resources, teachers will feel stressed in the learning process. Therefore, teachers' needs must be a primary consideration in developing curriculum policies.

On the other hand, students also have significant needs that must be taken seriously. They require not only theoretical knowledge but also 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. If learning prioritizes memorization only, students will struggle to face real-world situations. Students now live in a fast-paced digital environment. They need learning that aligns with the realities of life (Rohm et al., 2021). Without meeting these needs, education loses its primary purpose. Therefore, students' needs are a strong reason for curriculum change.

This aspect also concerns the learning environment, which is often far from ideal. Limited facilities are a significant obstacle to maximizing the implementation of the independent curriculum. The need for interactive classrooms and modern learning media must be championed. Many madrasahs still survive with modest facilities, and this is not their fault. However, these must be improved if they are to compete with other schools. Therefore, efforts to provide infrastructure are also part of the needs aspect. Without adequate facilities, implementing new curriculum concepts is challenging.

When all these needs are analyzed, the importance of the needs aspect in any curriculum planning becomes clear. Changes cannot be made haphazardly without precise data on needs. This identification process also requires dialogue between all parties involved. If only one party is satisfied, inequalities will resurface. Therefore, the needs aspect is the initial foundation for curriculum change in madrasah aliyah. By understanding needs, policies will be more targeted and beneficial. Ultimately, curriculum transformation can align with national and religious education goals.

Second, clarity is a crucial foundation for curriculum change in Madrasah Aliyah. Without clarity, the direction of learning will be confusing for all parties involved. Clarity is necessary for curriculum concepts to be implemented effectively (Marzuqi & Ahid, 2023). Many schools and madrasahs often find themselves trapped in complex but difficult-to-understand documents. Therefore, simplifying curriculum information is crucial. All regulations must be written in clear and easily implemented language. Otherwise, curriculum implementation will be chaotic and far from the learning objectives.

Clarity also relates to the values and principles that must be maintained in Islamic high schools. Despite innovations, the Islamic character must not be obscured or lost. These religious principles distinguish madrasahs from regular schools. If these values are not clarified in the curriculum, the madrasah's identity could slowly fade. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the core of Islamic character development, which remains a priority. These values must be evident in the objectives, materials, and learning processes. Without them, curriculum transformation will lose its spiritual direction.

Furthermore, conceptual clarity facilitates teachers' ability to implement learning in the classroom. Teachers often complain that curriculum instructions are sometimes too general and non-specific. Teachers need clear technical guidance to develop appropriate teaching materials. Without clarity, teachers will interpret them according to their own understanding. This leads to uneven learning quality between classes or between madrasahs. Therefore, the development of measurable teaching modules and implementation guides is crucial for effective teaching and learning. This will enable teachers to implement the transformation more optimally.

Students also greatly need clarity in their learning. They are often confused when learning objectives are not explained from the outset. Students need to know what they are expected to achieve and why the material is being studied. Lacking clarity can drastically reduce motivation to learn. Clarity also helps students focus on the skills they want to develop. This will make the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable. Therefore, clarity must be present in every learning activity.

Clarity is also closely related to the assessment of learning outcomes. An unclear assessment system will create confusion and unfairness for students (Agustian et al., 2022). Assessment rubrics must

be created in a transparent and understandable manner for all. Teachers must clearly explain the assessment indicators to students before they begin working on assignments or projects. Otherwise, students may feel they are being assessed unfairly or objectively. Therefore, clarity in assessment is a core part of implementing the independent curriculum. A straightforward evaluation process will support improved learning quality.

Clarity in curriculum changes also requires good communication between leaders, teachers, and all other parties at the madrasah. Without systematic communication, information will be lost. Curriculum socialization must be carried out repeatedly, not just in a single meeting. This is crucial so that everyone understands what is changing and how it will be implemented. Clarity of information will make everyone feel confident and ready for transformation. Thus, clarity is a key factor in the success of the curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah. Ultimately, clarity will lead to more focused and high-quality learning in madrasahs.

Third, the complexity aspect demonstrates that curriculum change in Madrasah Aliyah is not as simple as flipping a switch. Numerous interconnected factors influence learning. Complexity arises because madrasahs have unique characteristics that differ from public schools. Strong religious identities require careful curriculum adaptation. If these factors are not taken into account, policies can conflict in practice. Therefore, mapping the level of complexity must be conducted before implementing policies. This is crucial for a smooth learning transformation (Lembong et al., 2023).

Internal complexity encompasses organizational structure, human resource capacity, and learning culture in Madrasah Aliyah. Each madrasah has its own unique dynamics, making it difficult to generalize. Sometimes, leadership structures are inefficient enough to support rapid change. On the other hand, uneven teacher competency also adds to the difficulty. Ingrained work cultures can be challenging to change, even after a new curriculum has been implemented. All of this creates multiple challenges in implementing the independent curriculum. Internal complexity is a primary concern in transformation planning.

Complexity also comes from external sources, such as frequently changing government policies. Societal environmental factors, technology, and the needs of the workplace also influence the learning system (Gkrimpizi et al., 2023). Madrasahs must adapt to these various demands to stay ahead of the curve. However, these adjustments must not undermine long-standing traditions. External pressures can sometimes overwhelm madrasahs in determining priorities. Therefore, the ability to read the external situation is crucial. This way, madrasahs can compete and maintain their identity.

Limited facilities and infrastructure also contribute to the complexity. Not all madrasahs have access to modern technology that supports 21st-century learning. When curriculum demands are high but facilities are minimal, results will be suboptimal. Teachers and students struggle to implement innovative learning. This situation further clarifies the gap between madrasahs. Therefore, the government and madrasah leaders must seriously address the provision of facilities. Without this, learning transformation will remain merely a concept on paper.

Another complexity arises from the mindset of some teachers, who continue to struggle with adapting to change. Some have long been comfortable with old methods of lectures and memorization. When new concepts emerge, resistance naturally arises. This cannot be forced, as each individual has their own rhythm of adaptation. A persuasive approach and ongoing training are needed to mitigate this obstacle. If left unchecked, resistance can hinder innovation in classroom learning. Therefore, changes must take into account the psychological aspects of educators.

Given these various factors, it is clear that the complexity of learning transformation in madrasah aliyah is very high. However, this level of complexity is not an obstacle to progress. Instead, it represents a challenge that must be faced together with a well-thought-out strategy. In-depth analysis is necessary to identify all aspects of the problem accurately. A systematic approach will help reduce the risk of failure in implementation. Therefore, complexity is a crucial indicator in the curriculum reform process. Learning transformation will be successful if all complexities can be managed effectively.

Fourth, the quality/practicality aspect is the primary factor ensuring the continued existence of the independent curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah. Learning quality is not solely assessed by the appearance of a curriculum document. It must be evident in actual, daily learning practices. If the curriculum is merely beautiful on paper, there will be no improvement in student quality. Madrasahs must be able to uphold religious values while still providing the competencies needed for the times (Muh. Aril Widi Saputra et al., 2025). This provides a strong foundation for maintaining the independent curriculum. Learning quality is the measure of the success of curriculum transformation.

Practicality is key to ensuring the curriculum can be implemented by teachers and easily understood by students. Many policies fail because they are too ambitious and challenging to implement in practice. The curriculum must be flexible yet maintain a clear direction. Teachers must be provided with practical and uncomplicated teaching aids. If procedures are too lengthy, they will lose focus on the actual learning process. Therefore, technical simplification is crucial for the successful implementation of the independent curriculum. Practicality means ease of implementation, but still high quality.

Quality in Madrasah Aliyah is also measured by the ability to maintain Islamic values in every lesson. Religious identity must not fade despite numerous innovations. Islamic values must be integrated into general material naturally, not forced. This will produce a generation that is not only intelligent but also possesses strong morals. Moral quality is a key characteristic of madrasah graduates. Without it, madrasahs will lose their identity as Islamic educational institutions. Therefore, spiritual quality is a crucial part of curriculum policy.

The quality aspect also encompasses excellent academic achievement among students. The curriculum must provide students with opportunities to excel and compete at a higher level. Excellence is not limited to the sciences and social sciences, but also encompasses mastery of the Quran and religious knowledge. Students need to be equipped with skills relevant to the needs of the workplace. Otherwise, madrasahs will only produce graduates who are not adaptable to the modern world. Therefore, academic quality and 21st century skills must be balanced. This is the true manifestation of quality.

Practicality also relates to the madrasa's ability to manage time and resources efficiently (Polishchuk & Horbatiuk, 2023). Learning schedules should be structured to strike a balance between religious and general subjects. Students should not be overburdened, as this could reduce their learning effectiveness. A practical curriculum will enable everyone to work at their full capacity. Therefore, ongoing evaluation is necessary to correct any deficiencies. This way, quality can be maintained. Practicality does not mean reducing content; instead, it means maximizing its delivery.

If quality and practicality are well managed, the learning transformation will be effective. All processes become more measurable and align with the set objectives. Students can experience the direct benefits of their learning, and teachers will feel more confident implementing the new curriculum. This demonstrates that quality is not merely a concept but must be demonstrated in action. Therefore, quality and practicality are crucial factors in determining the sustainability of the independent curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah. A balance of quality and practicality will lead madrasahs to advanced and highly competitive education.

CONCLUSION

Transforming learning in Madrasah Aliyah is an unavoidable necessity. This change is crucial to meet the growing diversity of student needs. Each student has a unique personality, and therefore, madrasahs must be able to adapt the challenges of a fast-paced era force madrasa educators to be more creative. Many new things must be embraced to ensure students remain competitive. Teachers can no longer teach using outdated, less relevant methods. The transformations that are occurring also require innovation in learning habits. The involvement of technology is a decisive factor driving change. All of this proves that learning transformation is essential for the development of madrasah aliyah.

Madrasah aliyah must not disregard the inevitable flow of change. If they are reluctant to adapt, the learning process will come to a halt. Students may miss out on opportunities to develop in line with global demands. Learning that fails to adapt will produce graduates who are ill-prepared for the future. Therefore, every madrasah must maintain the quality and integrity of its learning. Quality is measured not only by academic results but also by the character and morals of students. The distinctive values of the madrasah must be maintained despite numerous innovations. Collaboration between teachers, madrasah leaders, and external parties will strengthen this process. Ultimately, the effort to maintain the existence and quality of madrasah aliyah in the modern era is an endeavor to transform it.

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