

Curriculum Management Implementation Strategies in Improving the Quality of Madrasah Education

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Abstract:

Curriculum management plays a central role in shaping the quality and character of Islamic education in madrasah institutions. This study aims to analyze the implementation of curriculum management and its effectiveness in improving educational quality through the integration of religious and national academic standards. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with school leaders, teachers, and staff, direct classroom observation, and document analysis. The results indicate that curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation are conducted collaboratively using the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Products) model, emphasizing harmony between cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains. Regular evaluation cycles enhance the adaptability and relevance of learning materials to students' needs. The study contributes a contextualized model of value-based curriculum management that strengthens the alignment between institutional vision and classroom practices. The findings highlight the importance of systematic, reflective, and integrative curriculum evaluation for sustainable educational quality improvement.

Key Words: Curriculum Management, Education Quality, CIPP Model

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INTRODUCTION

Education quality remains one of the fundamental indicators of a nation's progress. In Indonesia, improving education quality has become a national priority as outlined in the Merdeka Belajar policy framework, emphasizing autonomy, relevance, and innovation in learning (UNESCO, 2023). However, beyond general schools, madrasahs play a vital role in shaping both intellectual and moral character aligned with Islamic values (Chang, 2024; Yoshany, 2025; Y. Zhang, 2024). The integration of these two missions religious and academic makes madrasahs an essential pillar in nurturing holistic human resources. The

urgency of this research lies in the fact that the success of national education reform depends on how effectively curriculum management can align spiritual formation with competitive academic quality (Idrus, 2025; Tang, 2024). Therefore, examining curriculum management implementation strategies is not only relevant to educational institutions but also crucial for social transformation toward an intelligent and ethical generation.

Despite government efforts to reform education through curriculum renewal, madrasahs continue to face structural and managerial challenges. The dual objectives of combining Islamic teachings and national curriculum standards often result in overlapping priorities, limited resources, and inconsistent implementation (Sankaran, 2022; J. Zhang, 2020). In many cases, the curriculum fails to meet students' real-life needs, particularly in integrating religious knowledge with practical skills for modern society. This imbalance can weaken the learning process and hinder the quality outcomes expected from madrasah graduates. Furthermore, a lack of systematic evaluation mechanisms causes difficulties in assessing whether curriculum management truly enhances learning effectiveness (Samsonov et al., 2022; Syifa et al., 2024). Consequently, there is a pressing need for studies that critically analyze curriculum management implementation strategies as a pathway to improve education quality in madrasahs.

Empirical observations reveal that some madrasahs successfully balance religious and academic dimensions, while others struggle to maintain consistent quality. MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren serves as an interesting example. Located within a traditional pesantren environment, it has achieved significant progress in accreditation rising from grade B to A and increasing student enrollment and university admissions. Yet, the madrasah still faces challenges in maintaining equilibrium between Islamic character formation and mastery of 21st-century competencies (OECD, 2023). Teachers often find it difficult to adapt to changing curriculum demands, while evaluation systems remain fragmented. This phenomenon highlights the need to explore curriculum management not only from administrative efficiency but also from its effectiveness in integrating religious identity with academic excellence. Hence, MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren provides a relevant context for in-depth study.

Several scholars have examined curriculum management in the context of Islamic education. Li et al. (2021), Reyhan (2023), and Montesinos (2022) emphasized the importance of collaborative planning between teachers and administrators to ensure curriculum alignment at MTs Al Azhary. Katmon et al. (2020) and Kholid et al. (2020) explored how local cultural and religious values influence pesantren-based curriculum integration. Alwehebi (2023), Fachrizal et al. (2023), and Rohaeni et al. (2021) investigated work-skill-oriented curriculum at MA Sunan Kalijaga, demonstrating the relevance of vocational aspects in religious education. In addition, Wijaya et al. (2021) and Mustofa (2020) analyzed the challenges of curriculum evaluation in madrasahs under the Ministry of

Religious Affairs. While these studies provide important insights, most of them focus on specific components such as design or content but lack comprehensive evaluation frameworks that assess curriculum management as an integrated system. Therefore, a holistic approach remains necessary.

Previous research has not sufficiently applied evaluative models such as the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) framework developed by Stufflebeam, which provides a systematic lens for assessing the effectiveness of curriculum management. Although several studies have mentioned planning or implementation, few have explicitly linked these dimensions to measurable educational outcomes within madrasah settings. This creates a research gap: the absence of an integrative evaluation-based study of curriculum management in pesantren-based madrasahs. Addressing this gap is vital because the sustainability of educational reform in Islamic schools depends on evidence-based management strategies. Thus, this study aims to fill that gap by employing the CIPP model as an analytical tool to understand curriculum management practices comprehensively.

The novelty of this research lies in applying the CIPP evaluative model to analyze curriculum management in a pesantren-based madrasah environment, a context rarely discussed in international education management literature. Unlike previous studies that focus merely on design or outcomes, this research examines the full process planning, implementation, and evaluation while considering the unique integration of Islamic values and modern educational principles. Furthermore, this study introduces a contextualized model that bridges global quality assurance concepts with local religious education practices. Such an approach contributes to developing sustainable curriculum management strategies that can be adapted by other Islamic educational institutions facing similar challenges.

Based on these gaps, this research is guided by a central question: How is curriculum management implemented at MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren including planning, implementation, and evaluation and to what extent does it contribute to improving educational quality? This inquiry is grounded in the belief that effective curriculum management is not merely administrative but strategic, requiring leadership, teacher collaboration, and systematic evaluation. Through the lens of the CIPP model, this study argues that successful curriculum implementation must reflect contextual adaptation, efficient resource utilization, and measurable impact on learning outcomes (Mahmud et al., 2022; Sumanti et al., 2024). Thus, this research proposes that madrasah quality improvement begins with data-informed and value-oriented curriculum management.

Theoretically, this research expands the discourse on curriculum management by integrating Islamic educational values with modern evaluation models. Practically, it provides a framework for madrasah leaders, teachers, and policymakers to design, implement, and evaluate curricula more effectively. The results are expected to support continuous quality improvement through

reflective and evidence-based decision-making. Ultimately, this study contributes to building a sustainable model of curriculum management for madrasahs that aligns spiritual development with academic excellence. Hence, this research not only addresses academic inquiries but also offers practical strategies to strengthen the quality and competitiveness of Islamic education in Indonesia's dynamic educational landscape.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design, chosen to provide a deep and contextualized understanding of curriculum management implementation in a real-life educational setting. According to Finn (2022), a case study enables researchers to explore complex social phenomena within their natural context, which aligns with this research's objective to analyze curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation as interrelated processes. The qualitative approach is further justified by Kusumaputri et al. (2023), who emphasizes its suitability for exploring meaning and experiences as perceived by participants, allowing the researcher to capture the dynamics and depth of educational practices that cannot be quantified.

The research was conducted at MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren, a madrasah located within a traditional pesantren environment in Cirebon, West Java. This location was purposefully selected because it represents a unique blend of Islamic boarding school traditions and formal education systems, and it has shown significant improvement in educational quality, as evidenced by its recent accreditation upgrade from grade B to A. Such characteristics make the institution an ideal case for investigating how curriculum management strategies contribute to maintaining both spiritual and academic excellence in a pesantren-based madrasah context.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The main informants consisted of the madrasah head, deputy head of curriculum, core subject teachers, and academic administrative staff, all selected purposively based on their direct involvement in curriculum management. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to explore informants' experiences and perceptions, while observations focused on classroom practices and curriculum coordination meetings. Document analysis included reviewing lesson plans, syllabus documents, meeting minutes, and evaluation reports to triangulate findings from other data sources, as recommended by White & Cooper (2022).

The process of data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Mulyani (2021), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation was performed by selecting and organizing relevant information from interviews, field notes, and documents. The reduced data were then presented in narrative and tabular forms to highlight emerging patterns and

relationships. The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, involved interpreting the data thematically to construct an understanding of how curriculum management is implemented and how it impacts educational quality. This iterative process allowed ongoing reflection between data collection and analysis to maintain analytical rigor and depth.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study applied multiple triangulation techniques, including source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and time triangulation. Cross-verification among interviews, observations, and documents was conducted to confirm the consistency and credibility of findings. In addition, prolonged engagement in the field and member checking were carried out to enhance the trustworthiness of the data interpretation. The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by interview guides, observation sheets, and document analysis templates, ensuring sensitivity to context and reflexivity during the research process. Through this rigorous methodological framework, the study aims to generate credible, contextual, and comprehensive insights into the curriculum management implementation strategies that contribute to improving the quality of education in pesantren-based madrasahs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study present a comprehensive overview of curriculum management practices at MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren, focusing on their strategic design, implementation dynamics, and relevance to educational quality improvement. These findings illustrate how the madrasah integrates institutional vision, pedagogical practices, and Islamic values into a coherent system that supports sustainable educational excellence within the unique cultural and spiritual context of a pesantren-based madrasah.

Strategic Design of Curriculum Management in Pesantren-Based Madrasah

Strategic design of curriculum management in the context of MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren is understood as a systematic process of designing the direction, structure, and implementation steps of the curriculum tailored to the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This design includes planning learning objectives, developing teaching materials, selecting methods and media, and establishing an evaluation system that reflects a balance between Islamic values and academic achievement. The primary objective is to ensure that the curriculum is not merely an administrative document but also a concrete guideline for shaping the character of students who are knowledgeable, faithful, and have noble morals. In practice, this strategic design is formulated through a coordination meeting before the new academic year, involving all elements of the madrasah so that decisions are made collectively and contextually to the needs of the students.

The madrasah principal explained that the curriculum planning process is carried out in a structured manner through annual coordination meetings attended by the vice principal for curriculum, teachers, and the school committee. During these meetings, the madrasah's vision and mission serve as the basis for formulating learning objectives and determining the direction of curriculum development. The madrasah principal emphasized that each teacher is given the freedom to adapt their teaching strategies to the characteristics of the students in their respective classes, as long as they adhere to graduate competency standards. From this statement, researchers interpret that planning at the madrasah is participatory and adaptive, emphasizing a balance between institutional policies and teacher creativity. This demonstrates institutional awareness that curriculum design must be rooted in madrasah values while remaining flexible to the dynamics of learning.

The deputy head of curriculum added that each new academic year, learning materials such as syllabi, lesson plans, annual programs, and semester programs are developed, tailored to the students' abilities. Because students are not permitted to bring electronic devices, learning media focus on textbooks and Student Worksheets (LKS) to ensure effective learning. Furthermore, assessments are designed authentically, encompassing aspects of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. From this explanation, researchers interpret that the madrasah has a comprehensive planning system, encompassing all curriculum components, from input to evaluation. This approach demonstrates alignment between pesantren regulations and the demands of the national curriculum, where planning is not solely academically oriented but also considers the moral values and discipline unique to the pesantren environment.

Based on the researcher's observations in the field, curriculum planning activities at MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren proceeded in an orderly and collaborative manner. Each teacher was seen actively expressing their views in meetings to develop teaching materials, while the principal acted as a guide to ensure that decisions remained aligned with the institution's vision. Planning documents such as syllabi, annual programs, and authentic assessments were neatly organized in the madrasah archives and used as references for learning implementation. From these overall findings, it can be concluded that curriculum planning at the madrasah demonstrates a collaborative, adaptive, and values-based pattern. Collaborative because it involves many parties, adaptive because it adapts to the conditions of the students and the pesantren environment, and values-based because it maintains Islamic spirituality as the primary foundation in every aspect of curriculum planning.

Curriculum Implementation Dynamics

The implementation of the curriculum operates at two interconnected levels institutional and classroom which together shape the learning ecosystem at the madrasah. At the institutional level, curriculum management involves the

principal and curriculum vice, who function as key coordinators in administrative planning and pedagogical supervision. Their role extends to mapping students' abilities through entrance assessments, including Qur'an literacy, to ensure learning differentiation. Before the formal teaching begins, students undergo a ta'aruf orientation period that introduces them to the school environment, norms, and educators, serving as a foundation for cultural and academic adaptation.

Through direct observation, it was found that the institutional framework emphasizes systematic guidance to teachers, particularly in aligning lesson plans with curricular objectives and administrative compliance. Meetings and coordination between the headmaster and teachers occur periodically, ensuring uniform understanding of pedagogical direction. The orientation activities reflect a preparatory phase where academic and religious integration begins, bridging administrative readiness with students' learning engagement. This alignment between structure and practice demonstrates the school's effort to contextualize curriculum implementation according to the characteristics of its learners.



Figure 1. Curriculum Implementation Dynamics

From the researcher's interpretation, the curriculum implementation pattern shows a coherent connection between institutional policies and classroom practices. The administrative and preparatory activities at the institutional level create a foundation for teachers to execute classroom learning effectively. At the classroom level, teachers are observed applying varied instructional approaches lectures, discussions, and simulations tailored to students' learning styles and emotional engagement. Literacy culture, such as reading before lessons and note-taking, reinforces comprehension and discipline, while motivational closure at the end of lessons nurtures learning enthusiasm.

The data pattern indicates that curriculum implementation at the madrasah follows an integrative and cyclical model. The institutional structure provides a systematic framework, while classroom practices operationalize it through adaptive pedagogy. The school's extracurricular programs ranging from scouts to marawis function as an extension of the formal curriculum, supporting character building and multidimensional student development. This demonstrates that the curriculum is not only administratively designed but

dynamically enacted across institutional and classroom levels, creating a balanced environment for cognitive, affective, and psychomotor growth.

At the classroom level, teachers apply lecture methods, discussions, simulations and learning strategies that are tailored to students' characters. A culture of literacy is instilled through reading before lessons and taking notes on the material. Teachers also motivate students at the end of the lesson to increase their enthusiasm for learning. In addition to classroom learning, the madrasah organizes various extracurricular activities such as scouts, PMR, marching band, martial arts and marawis, which aim to broaden students' horizons and skills.

Relevance of Curriculum Management Implementation to Education Quality Improvement

The operational definition of this sub-finding refers to the alignment between curriculum management practices and measurable improvements in educational quality at the madrasah. Curriculum management in this context encompasses planning, implementation, and evaluation processes that are coherently linked to institutional goals. At MTs NU Putra 1, curriculum development is based on the national framework but adapted to the local context and religious environment of the pesantren. This adaptation ensures that educational outcomes are not only academically strong but also spiritually grounded, creating graduates who are competitive in academics and morally upright in character.

Table 1. Observation of Curriculum Management Relevance to Education Quality Improvement

| Observation Aspect | Indicator | Observation Percentage |
|--|---|------------------------|
| Curriculum planning aligns with quality objectives | Lesson plans, syllabus, and programs are designed to meet quality standards | 90% |
| Implementation integrates Islamic and general education values | Integration observed in teaching and dormitory activities | 85% |
| Evaluation supports continuous improvement | Authentic and periodic assessments applied to monitor outcomes | 80% |
| Student achievement reflects curriculum effectiveness | Increase in academic and non-academic competition results | 75% |
| Teacher professionalism supports curriculum execution | Teachers actively join IHT and peer sharing sessions | 70% |

The observation results in the table indicate that curriculum management at MTs NU Putra 1 strongly supports the improvement of educational quality. The highest indicator (90%) lies in curriculum planning that clearly links learning objectives with quality standards, showing institutional commitment to excellence. Integration of Islamic values in the teaching process (85%) ensures

holistic education that builds both intellect and character. The implementation of authentic evaluations (80%) demonstrates a data-driven effort to sustain quality, while student achievements (75%) and teacher professionalism (70%) provide tangible evidence of positive educational impact.

From the researcher's interpretation, the data suggest that the curriculum management system functions as an interconnected cycle planning sets the direction, implementation operationalizes it through integrated learning, and evaluation ensures sustainability. The high alignment between planning and quality goals reflects institutional readiness and teacher capacity to translate curriculum policy into classroom reality. The continuous professional development programs (IHT) and inter-school experience sharing also strengthen teacher competence, which in turn enhances the quality of instruction and learning outcomes.

The pattern emerging from these findings indicates that curriculum management in the madrasah follows an adaptive-integrative model, where national standards are localized through pesantren values. This dynamic creates a curriculum that is both responsive and sustainable. The interaction between structural planning, pedagogical practice, and value integration produces a coherent system that maintains educational quality and relevance. Thus, curriculum management is not merely administrative compliance, but a strategic mechanism driving continuous quality improvement across all dimensions of madrasah education.

Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that curriculum management at MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren adopts a strategic, adaptive, and value-oriented design that aligns institutional goals with the national education framework. This supports the theoretical model of curriculum management proposed by Huang (2025) and Khumsikiew (2023), which emphasizes that curriculum design must integrate philosophical, sociological, and psychological foundations to ensure relevance and effectiveness. The planning process in this madrasah reflects such multidimensional integration, where the curriculum is not merely administrative but functional and contextualized within the pesantren environment (Aziz, 2025; Munawwaroh, 2024). The emphasis on participatory decision-making among the principal, teachers, and committees demonstrates the application of distributed leadership theory, showing that effective curriculum planning is strengthened by collective input rather than top-down directives.

The implementation findings at the institutional and classroom levels align with the concept of curriculum as praxis, as described by Poth (2020) and Sankaran (2022), which suggests that the curriculum becomes meaningful only when theory and practice are interconnected. At MTs NU Putra 1, this is evident in the synchronization between administrative frameworks and classroom practices. Teachers act as agents of implementation who translate policy into

learning experiences that reflect students' character and learning styles. The literacy culture, orientation activities, and extracurricular integration further indicate that the curriculum extends beyond the classroom, fostering both intellectual and moral development (Fawaid et al., 2025; Nawaah, 2024; Zamroni et al., 2025). Compared to previous studies in similar pesantren contexts, this research confirms that curriculum implementation that blends academic rigor and religious values can produce holistic learners with both cognitive and affective competence.

The results on curriculum relevance to educational quality highlight that MTs NU Putra 1 applies a continuous improvement model, where planning, implementation, and evaluation form an iterative cycle. This supports Deming's concept of the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle in educational quality management (Herlina, 2024; Zahro, 2024). The alignment between curriculum goals and quality outcomes evidenced by improved student achievements, teacher professionalism, and accreditation results reflects the effectiveness of this approach. However, unlike conventional schools, the madrasah integrates Islamic ethics and discipline as intrinsic components of quality, which sets it apart as a hybrid model combining spiritual and academic excellence (Abdullah, 2024; Nisa' & R, 2024). This hybridization demonstrates that educational quality in a pesantren-based system is not only measured by academic achievement but also by the moral integrity of its graduates.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the notion that curriculum management is an adaptive system that responds to institutional context and learner characteristics. The adaptability shown in the use of non-digital media and the contextualization of content according to students' abilities demonstrates how curriculum design in resource-limited but value-rich environments can still achieve high standards. Practically, this has implications for policymakers and educators: curriculum management should not be standardized rigidly across schools, but rather, contextualized according to institutional culture and students' needs. The MTs NU Putra 1 experience suggests that giving teachers autonomy while maintaining strong institutional supervision produces a more dynamic and effective learning environment.

In conclusion, the research underscores that pesantren-based curriculum management embodies a model of sustainable educational quality, rooted in collaboration, adaptability, and value integration. The combination of structural discipline and pedagogical flexibility ensures that the curriculum functions as both a strategic document and a living practice. This model contributes theoretically by expanding the understanding of curriculum management within Islamic educational institutions, showing that spirituality and modern educational management can coexist harmoniously. Practically, it implies that other madrasahs and pesantren can emulate this approach to build systems that are both compliant with national standards and responsive to local wisdom, thus enhancing the long-term sustainability of educational quality.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that curriculum management at MTs NU Putra 1 Buntet Pesantren operates through a structured and adaptive system integrating planning, implementation, and evaluation aligned with the institution's Islamic identity and academic goals. The curriculum design is participatory and values-based, while its implementation harmonizes institutional structure with classroom practice through adaptive pedagogy and extracurricular enrichment. The coherence between curriculum management and educational quality improvement demonstrates that the madrasah successfully localizes national standards within the pesantren context, producing graduates who are intellectually competent and spiritually grounded.

Scientifically, this study contributes to strengthening the theoretical application of curriculum management in pesantren-based education, illustrating how an adaptive-integrative model enhances educational quality. Practically, it offers a contextual framework for Islamic schools seeking to balance academic and moral education. However, this study remains limited to a single institution and a qualitative scope, thus future research should explore comparative and mixed-method approaches to provide broader generalization and measurable outcomes.

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