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Navigating Curriculum Dynamics: Teachers' Strategies for Pedagogical Adaptation in Learning at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki Malang

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Abstract

This study examines teachers' strategies in dealing with curriculum changes through adaptation of learning methods at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki Malang. The change from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum requires teachers to adapt quickly and effectively in the learning process. In the field, approximately 20% of grade 2B students still experience difficulties understanding the material, requiring flexible learning strategies tailored to student needs. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observations, interviews with grade 2 teachers, and documentation of learning activities. Then, they were analyzed descriptively and interpretively to understand teachers' adaptation patterns to curriculum changes. The results showed that teachers implemented three phases of change management: identification, implementation, and stabilization. During the implementation phase, teachers used oral methods, memorization, question and answer sessions, and direct practice with the aid of LCDs, speakers, and learning videos. Teachers also established intensive communication with parents via WhatsApp to assist students experiencing learning difficulties. This study concluded that successful adaptation was influenced by teachers' abilities as change agents, school support, and parental involvement.

Kata Kunci:

Manajemen Perubahan; Adaptasi Kurikulum; Metode Pembelajaran; Strategi Guru;

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi guru dalam menghadapi perubahan kurikulum melalui adaptasi metode pembelajaran di MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki Malang. Perubahan dari Kurikulum 2013 ke Kurikulum Merdeka menuntut guru untuk mampu beradaptasi secara cepat dan efektif dalam proses pembelajaran. Di lapangan, sekitar 20% siswa kelas 2B masih mengalami kesulitan memahami materi sehingga diperlukan strategi pembelajaran yang fleksibel dan sesuai kebutuhan siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain

Keterlibatan Orang Tua.	*studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan guru kelas 2, dan dokumentasi kegiatan pembelajaran, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif-interpretatif untuk memahami pola adaptasi guru terhadap perubahan kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menerapkan tiga fase manajemen perubahan, yaitu identifikasi, implementasi, dan stabilisasi. Pada tahap implementasi, guru menggunakan metode lisan, hafalan, tanya jawab, serta praktik langsung dengan bantuan media LCD, speaker, dan video pembelajaran. Guru juga menjalin komunikasi intensif dengan orang tua melalui WhatsApp untuk membantu siswa yang mengalami kesulitan belajar. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberhasilan adaptasi kurikulum dipengaruhi oleh kemampuan guru sebagai agen perubahan, dukungan sekolah, dan keterlibatan orang tua.*

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum changes in education are an ongoing process that evolves in response to the demands of the times, technological advancements, and students' needs. The shift in education policy in Indonesia from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum requires schools and educators to adapt quickly and effectively to the new learning system. In the context of elementary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyah, these changes impact not only instructional administration but also the approaches teachers take in selecting teaching methods appropriate for the characteristics of young students. According to Michael Fullan (2007), the role of teachers is crucial as agents of change, de This role requires teachers to tailor their teaching approaches to students' needs so that educational goals can be effectively achieved. Termining the success of implementing educational reforms in schools.

Numerous studies on change management in education have been conducted in recent years. Research by Michael Fullan (2007) reveals that the success of educational change is greatly influenced by teachers' ability to create adaptive and flexible learning tailored to students' needs. Furthermore, Kurt Lewin's (1951) theory of change, based on the Unfreeze-Change-Refreeze concept, emphasizes that effective change requires a process of problem detection, implementation, and reinforcement of new learning habits. Another study by Susanti and Nurhayati (2021) also indicates that adapting classroom teaching methods can enhance student participation and understanding of the material, particularly when teachers employ contextual approaches and diverse media.

However, there is a significant gap in the existing literature. First, most previous studies have examined curriculum changes at the macro-policy level and school administrative readiness, without delving deeply into how teachers concretely adapt teaching methods at the classroom level, particularly in lower-grade classes of madrasah ibtidaiyah. Second, existing research tends to be perceptual and large-scale surveys, thus failing to capture the actual dynamics of teachers' adaptation strategies in daily learning interactions. Third, no study has specifically explored the role of parental involvement as an integral part of teachers' adaptation strategies in addressing the transition to the Merdeka Curriculum at the elementary madrasah level. This gap underscores the need for research focused on teachers' adaptation practices directly in the field, considering parental involvement and school support as factors contributing to the success of curriculum change.

This phenomenon is clear at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki, particularly in Class 2B, which is taught by Dina Maghfiroh. Teachers are required to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate students with varying levels of ability. These adjustments are made using various techniques, such as question-and-answer sessions, memorization, hands-on practice, and the use of both digital and conventional learning media. Furthermore, teachers also maintain communication with parents to support the learning process of students who are struggling. This demonstrates that the successful implementation of the curriculum depends not only on government policies but also on teachers' ability to apply contextual and flexible learning strategies directly in the classroom.

Based on this explanation, this study aims to analyze the strategies used by teachers to address curriculum dynamics through the adaptation of teaching methods at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki. This study will examine the process of identifying improvement needs, the implementation of adaptive teaching methods, the challenges faced by teachers, and the assessment of the effectiveness of learning changes. Therefore, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the development of educational change management studies, particularly in teaching practices at elementary madrasah.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design conducted at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki, Malang City, East Java. This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' adaptation strategies in responding to curricular changes in a contextual manner. Research subjects were selected through purposive sampling and included several groups: (1) the 2B class teacher as the primary informant directly involved in curriculum implementation, (2) the school principal as a supporting informant who understands policies and institutional support, and (3) parents as additional informants involved in learning communication. The involvement of these various elements was carried out to fulfill the principle of source triangulation so that the data obtained did not come from just one perspective. In qualitative research, the researcher's presence in the field is crucial as the primary instrument and as an observer who understands the school's social and cultural context (Suhandi & Robi'ah, 2022).

Data was collected using three main techniques: direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly observe the learning process in the classroom, including the use of teaching methods, learning materials, and interactions between teachers and students. In-depth interviews were conducted with the 2B homeroom teacher, the school principal, and parent representatives to gather information regarding adaptation strategies, obstacles encountered, and ways to overcome them. Documentation was collected in the form of photos of learning activities, records of communication between teachers and parents, and lesson plans used by teachers. The use of these three data collection techniques also served as a triangulation of methods, allowing the researcher to obtain a comprehensive and valid picture of the phenomenon under study.

The primary research instrument in this study was the researcher themselves as a human instrument, aided by a semi-structured interview guide and an observation sheet. The data were analyzed descriptively and interpretatively using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which comprises three stages: (1) data reduction, which is the process of selecting and focusing on raw data relevant to the research objectives; (2) data presentation, which involves organizing the data into narrative descriptions and charts to facilitate drawing conclusions; and (3) drawing conclusions, which is the process of interpreting the meaning of the data that has been systematically presented.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied the four criteria of trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely: (1) credibility, which was achieved through source triangulation and methodological triangulation as described above, as well as through member checking with informants to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations; (2) transferability, which is ensured through a detailed description of the research context so that readers can assess its relevance to other contexts; (3) dependability, achieved through an audit trail involving the systematic documentation of the entire data collection and analysis process; and (4) confirmability, achieved through the researcher's reflexivity in documenting every methodological decision throughout the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

A. Identifying the Need for Change

Changes to teaching methods at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki were implemented as an adjustment to changes in the government's curriculum policy. Based on the researcher's interviews with second-grade teachers at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki, these adjustments were made not only to meet curriculum requirements but also to consider the students' circumstances and abilities in the classroom. The teachers stated that students' learning abilities vary and based on the results of interviews with the teachers which were further confirmed by students' learning progress records obtained from documentation approximately 20% of students, or about 6 out of 30 students, still struggle to understand the learning material.

Based on the researcher's observations, teachers adapt their teaching methods flexibly to meet students' needs. The presentation of material, choice of methods, and pace of learning are tailored to the students' circumstances to make the learning process easier to understand. The learning process must be adapted to the students' characteristics and needs so that learning objectives can be effectively achieve (Fawzi et al., 2022).

B. Implemetation of Adaptive Learning Methods

Based on the results of the researcher's interviews with second-grade teachers at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki, the teachers use several teaching methods, such as oral instruction, memorization, question-and-answer sessions, and hands-on practice. The choice of method depends on the type of material and the students' abilities in the classroom. In addition, the teachers also utilize teaching aids such as LCD projectors, speakers, and educational videos, particularly for lessons on Pancasila and Cultural Arts.

Based on the researcher's observations, teachers still use blackboards in mathematics lessons because they believe students find them easier to understand in the classroom. Teachers explained that direct explanations and exercises on the blackboard help students focus better on understanding arithmetic concepts than the use of digital media.

The school also provides support by offering learning resources and teacher training, both online and in-person, through activities organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Teacher Working Group (KKG). The use of digital learning resources can help boost students' motivation and understanding during the learning process (Munawaroh et al., 2023). In addition, the use of digital learning materials can also increase student engagement and participation during learning activities (Rusdi et al., 2025).

Table 1. Variables in Teaching Methods and Media.

No.	Aspect	Implementation	Relationship/Function
1.	Teaching Methods	Oral, memorization, question and answer, hands on practice	Selected based on the type of material and the students' skill level
2.	Education Materials	LCD, speaker, video	Used in subjects that require visual and auditory stimulation
3.	Specific Subjects	Math using a whiteboard	Chosen because it is more effective for understanding mathematical concepts than digital media
4.	School Support	Online and in person teacher trining	Enchancing teacher's capacity to implement adaptive methods

These findings are supported by documentation of learning activities in the field, as shown in the following image.



Picture 1. The Atmosphere of Learning Activities for Second-Grade Students at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki.

C. Challenges and Strategies for Overcoming Them

Based on the results of the researcher's interviews with second-grade teachers at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki, the main obstacle teachers face in implementing changes to their teaching methods is the significant variation in students' abilities. Some students still struggle to understand the material, so teachers need to adjust their teaching methods gradually.

Teachers use a scaffolding approach by adjusting the difficulty level of the lessons to match students' abilities without putting undue pressure on them. In addition, teachers provide individual support to students facing learning difficulties so that they can continue to keep up with the lessons.

Based on the results of the researcher's interviews and observations, teachers also communicate with parents via WhatsApp, particularly regarding students who require special attention in their studies. In some cases, teachers recommend additional study sessions or tutoring outside of school to help students understand the course material. Adapting teaching strategies to students' needs and characteristics can help improve student participation and learning effectiveness (Nuriyah et al., 2024).

Table 2. Challenges and Strategies for Teachers in the Classroom.

No	Obstacle	Strategies for Addresssing	Approach Used
1	Differences in students' abilities	Gradual adjustment of the method	Differentiated instruction
2	Students have difficulty understanding the material	Individual coaching	Scaffolding
3	Specific learning Difficulties	Communication with parents	School-family collaboration
4	Learning Gap	Recommendations for extra tutoring	Out of school learning support

These findings are also supported by documentation of communication between teachers and parents, as shown in the following image.



Figure 2. Parent teacher meeting for 2nd-grade students at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki.

D. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Changes

Based on the researcher's observations and interviews with second-grade teachers at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki, the change in teaching methods has had a positive impact on the students' learning process. Most students approximately 25 to 28 out of 30 were able to follow the lessons well. Only a small number of students still had difficulty adjusting to the learning process in the classroom.

Teachers address this situation by taking a personalized approach and adapting their teaching methods to meet the individual needs of each student. This more flexible approach helps students feel more comfortable and participate more actively in class.

Teachers also noted that the constant changes to the curriculum pose a challenge to the teaching process. Teachers need time to understand the new system and adjust their lesson plans to align with the policies being implemented. These curriculum changes also require teachers to be able to adapt when determining appropriate teaching strategies in elementary schools (Rusmiati et al., 2023).

Discussion

A. A three Phase Synthesis of Change Management Practices Applied by Teachers

This study aims to answer the question of how teachers at MI Sunan Kalijogo Karangbesuki manage recurring curriculum changes. Based on field findings, it can be concluded that teachers navigate curriculum dynamics through three structured phases of change management: the identification phase, the implementation phase, and the stabilization phase. Unlike previous studies, which generally examined only one phase of adaptation in isolation, this study found that these three phases do not proceed linearly but rather occur cyclically and overlap, depending on the complexity of the curriculum changes faced during each academic period. It is this iterative and context-sensitive three-phase framework that constitutes the primary conceptual contribution of this study to the literature on educational change management at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level.

These findings substantially expand and modify existing models of change. While linear models generally position teachers as objects of policy change, this study demonstrates that teachers actively serve as adaptive agents of change. This is evident in the way teachers at MI Sunan Kalijogo do not merely follow curriculum guidelines but also proactively adjust their strategies based on actual classroom conditions. It is this adaptive capacity that distinguishes the findings of this study from previous studies, which tended to be descriptive-normative without deeply analyzing the internal mechanisms of teacher adaptation.

During the identification phase, teachers conducted an in-depth analysis of the new curriculum, attended training sessions organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and collaborated with fellow educators to understand the direction of the policy (Suhandi & Robi'ah, 2022b). This phase is a crucial foundation because misunderstandings at the early stages can potentially lead to misconceptions in the implementation of instruction.

Next, during the implementation phase, teachers translate their conceptual understanding of the curriculum into actual classroom practice. This phase is characterized by adjustments to lesson plans, the selection of methods aligned with the principles of the new curriculum, and modifications to assessment tools. The implementation phase is a critical stage because the success of the curriculum is heavily influenced by teachers' ability to adapt policies into actual learning processes (Sinta et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, the stabilization phase is characterized by the integration of changes into teachers' professional routines, during which adaptive strategies that have proven effective begin to become established pedagogical practices, accompanied by an increase in teachers' confidence in conducting the learning process in accordance with curriculum requirements. Collectively, these three phases reflect the madrasah's institutional capacity to manage curriculum changes in a sustainable manner.

B. Relationship Between the Findings and Change Management Theory

The findings of this study are closely related to the theory of change management proposed by (Kotter, 1996) in the eight-step model of organizational change. Specifically, the identification phase in this study corresponds to Kotter's first through third steps: creating a sense of urgency, building a strong coalition, and developing a vision for change. In the context of MI Sunan Kalijogo, the urgency for change arose due to a national curriculum policy that the school was required to implement immediately. This situation encouraged teachers and madrasah officials to collaborate, participate in training, and understand the objectives of the curriculum change so that the learning process could proceed effectively. Interestingly, these findings indicate that in the context of elementary madrasahs, coalition building occurs not only within the school but also involves parents as strategic partners a dimension not explicitly articulated in Kotter's model, which is oriented toward business organizations.

Furthermore, the theory (Lewin, 1951) The three stages of change unfreezing, moving, and refreezing are also relevant for explaining the adaptation patterns identified in this study. The identification phase aligns with the unfreezing stage, during which teachers begin to question and let go of old practices that are no longer relevant to the demands of the new curriculum. The implementation phase corresponds to the moving stage, when teachers actively experiment with new methods and approaches. The stabilization phase reflects the refreezing stage, when new practices have been internalized and become stable professional norms. However, while Lewin viewed these three stages as a linear and sequential process, the findings of this study indicate that, in the context of recurring curriculum changes, these three phases can occur cyclically. Teachers currently in the stabilization phase may re-enter the identification phase when new curriculum policies are issued. This modification constitutes the conceptual contribution of this study to Lewin's theory within the context of Islamic elementary education in Indonesia.

Within the framework of the theory of professional learning for teachers, these findings are also consistent with the concept of teacher agency proposed by Biesta and Tedder (2007), quoted in (Urbani, 2024), which emphasizes that teachers' ability to act independently in the face of change is influenced by the interaction between individual capabilities and structural conditions within the school. Teachers at MI Sunan Kalijogo demonstrated strong adaptability, as evidenced by the way they adjusted their teaching strategies without neglecting the primary objectives of the established curriculum.

C. Teacher-Parent Collaboration as a Change Management Strategy

The findings of this study underscore the importance of parental involvement as a key stakeholder in the success of changes to the learning system. Parents are no longer viewed merely as recipients of information, but also as active partners in the educational process. Collaboration between teachers and parents is one of the strategies that helps schools navigate changes to the learning system, particularly in adapting to students' increasingly diverse learning needs. This intensive relationship strengthens communication, monitoring of student progress, and coordination in overcoming various learning challenges.

The form of collaboration identified in this study is evident in the use of WhatsApp groups as a communication channel between teachers and parents. The use of this communication technology reflects the adaptation of change management strategies to digital advancements. Through WhatsApp groups, teachers can provide learning information, share updates on student progress, and coordinate regarding assignments or learning challenges students face at home. This practice aligns with the principle of stakeholder engagement in the eight-step model of organizational change, which emphasizes that stakeholder involvement is a critical factor in supporting the success of change (Dovi et al., 2026).

Parental involvement in the educational process is known to enhance the effectiveness of learning, especially for students with diverse learning needs (Adien et al., 2025). In the context of this study, such collaboration serves as a crucial tool for assisting students with learning difficulties, who account for approximately 20% of the total student body. Given a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:30, teachers naturally face limitations in providing individualized support in the classroom. Therefore, parental support at home plays a vital role in helping students achieve more optimal learning outcomes.

D. Policy Implications: Criticism of Curriculum Instability

The findings of this study also highlight a critical aspect of education policy: the negative impact of frequent curriculum changes on the workload of classroom teachers. The criticism voiced by informants regarding the pattern of curriculum changes that follow ministerial transitions is a relevant issue that warrants serious attention from policymakers. This situation creates uncertainty that disrupts the change management process currently underway at the classroom level.

In addition to increasing the workload, overly rapid curriculum changes also impact the effectiveness of implementing changes at the classroom level. Teachers need time to understand, internalize, and implement the curriculum optimally before being faced with the next policy change. In practice, too frequent changes prevent the adaptation process from being fully effective, so that the implementation of learning tends to be administrative rather than substantive. As a result, the goal of curriculum changes to improve the quality of education is often not fully achieved because teachers are still in the adjustment phase when new policies emerge.

This perspective reinforces the arguments of Hargreaves and Fullan (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013) on the need to build sustainable change capacity within the education system. According to them, meaningful change requires consistency, support, and sufficient time to be implemented effectively. Therefore, the informants' recommendations regarding the importance of curriculum stability and the need to incorporate input from classroom teachers are relevant to educational policymaking. As the direct implementers in the classroom, teachers possess practical experience that can serve as a basis for developing policies that are more realistic, sustainable, and aligned with the needs of learning in the field.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of change management at the teacher level within the institutional context of madrasah ibtidaiyah in Indonesia. This study offers a modification to the linear change model by proposing a three-phase framework that is interactive and context-sensitive. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of considering institutional factors, a culture of collaboration, and policy stability as variables that determine the success of curriculum implementation in the field.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that teachers successfully managed the dynamics of curriculum change through three iterative and context-sensitive phases of change management: the identification phase, the implementation phase, and the stabilization phase. These three phases do not proceed in a linear fashion but rather occur cyclically, in accordance with the complexity of the curriculum changes faced. These findings modify Lewin's linear model of change (1951) by demonstrating that, in the context of Islamic elementary education in Indonesia, the curriculum adaptation process is cyclical and never truly complete as long as curriculum policies continue to change.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a change management framework at the teacher level by emphasizing that teachers are not merely the objects of policy change but rather play an active role as adaptive agents of change. These findings reinforce the concept of teacher agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2007 in Urbani, 2024) while also expanding on Kotter's (1996) model by demonstrating that, in the context of elementary madrasahs, parental involvement is an integral component of change management strategies, rather than merely an additional supporting factor. The three-phase iterative framework developed in this study can serve as a conceptual framework for future research on educational change management, particularly in elementary Islamic educational institutions.

In practical terms, this study shows that the success of curriculum adaptation at the classroom level is determined by three interrelated factors: teachers' ability to implement flexible and contextualized instruction, institutional support from schools in the form of facilities and ongoing training, and the active involvement of parents as partners in addressing students' learning difficulties. These findings have practical implications for school principals and educational supervisors in designing teacher professional development programs that are not only oriented toward policy understanding but also toward strengthening teachers' capacity for adaptation at the classroom level.

In terms of policy, this study recommends that education stakeholders consider curriculum stability as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of changes. Too frequent curriculum changes prevent teachers from fully reaching the stabilization phase, resulting in learning implementation that tends to be procedural rather than substantive. Therefore, it is imperative to involve classroom teachers as key stakeholders in the curriculum policy formulation process. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of the study to include more elementary madrasahs and different levels of education, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of curriculum change management patterns in Indonesia.

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