

# Challenges and Innovations of the GTK MA Sub-directorate of the Ministry of Religion in Exploring the Capabilities of Madrasah Teachers in the Independent Curriculum

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**Abstract:** *This research aims to explore the challenges faced by the Subdirectorate of Teachers and Education Personnel (GTK) Madrasah Aliyah (MA) of the Ministry of Religion in exploring the capabilities of madrasa teachers towards the Independent Curriculum, as well as the innovations made in dealing with them. these challenges. Using a qualitative approach, this research analyzes data from interviews with relevant stakeholders at the Ministry of Religion, participatory observation and documentation studies. In the context of education in Indonesia, developing teacher capabilities is crucial in ensuring the implementation of quality learning. Moreover, with the introduction of the Independent Curriculum as an effort to transform national education, the challenges faced by the Subdirectorate of Teachers and Education Personnel (GTK) of Madrasah Aliyah (MA) at the Ministry of Religion are increasingly complex. This article discusses the main challenges faced by the GTK MA Subdirectorate of the Ministry of Religion in exploring the capabilities of madrasa teachers towards the Independent Curriculum, as well as the innovations made to overcome these challenges.*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali tantangan yang dihadapi oleh Subdirektorat Guru dan Tenaga Kependidikan (GTK) Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Kementerian Agama dalam menggali kemampuan guru madrasah menuju Kurikulum Mandiri, serta inovasi yang dilakukan dalam menghadapi Kurikulum Mandiri mereka. tantangan-tantangan ini. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis data hasil wawancara dengan pemangku kepentingan terkait di Kementerian Agama, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Dalam konteks pendidikan di Indonesia, pengembangan kemampuan guru sangatlah penting dalam menjamin terselenggaranya pembelajaran yang berkualitas. Apalagi dengan diperkenalkannya Kurikulum Mandiri sebagai upaya transformasi pendidikan nasional, tantangan yang dihadapi Subdirektorat Guru dan Tenaga Kependidikan (GTK) Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Kementerian Agama semakin kompleks. Artikel ini membahas tentang tantangan utama yang dihadapi Subdirektorat GTK MA Kemenag dalam menggali kemampuan guru madrasah menuju Kurikulum Mandiri, serta inovasi yang dilakukan untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main foundations in the development of a country, and therefore, transformation in the educational paradigm becomes an inevitable necessity to answer the needs of the times (Rusniati, 2015). In Indonesia, the strategic role of Madrasah Aliyah (MA) in forming the younger generation with religious and cultural values is important. (Maghfuri, A., & Rasmuin, 2019) explains that improving the quality of education in the MA environment is the focus of attention, which is manifested in government efforts through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

The curriculum plays an important role in the continuity of the teaching and learning process (Mansur, 2012). Without a structured curriculum, education tends to lose consistency. As an integral part of education, the curriculum is the main pillar in achieving educational goals. This is also the main reference for determining how learning is carried out in madrasahs. The nature and vision of a country can be reflected in the curriculum implemented in that country's educational institutions.

Nursyamsi, (2018) revealed that the Merdeka Curriculum is directed as an educational reform step with the aim of producing graduates who are more independent, creative and able to adapt to global dynamics. As an integral part of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the central role of the Subdirector of Teachers and Education Personnel (GTK) at the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) lies in developing the capabilities of teachers at Madrasah Aliyah. However, this role is not without significant challenges.

The main challenges include the essence of understanding the Independent Curriculum which requires a paradigm shift from conventional learning methods to an approach that is more contextual, inclusive, and focused on developing 21st century skills (Susanti, L., Handriyantini, E., & Hamzah, 2023). Apart from that, teacher involvement in implementation is a second challenge, requiring in-depth understanding, support and active participation from educators.

In the context of the Subdirector of Teachers and Madrasah Education Personnel (GTK MA) at the Ministry of Religion, the main challenge is how to integrate the spirit of the Independent Curriculum with developing the capabilities of teachers in madrasahs (Fauzi, 2023). One of the challenges is to combine the Independent Curriculum approach with the specific needs of madrasahs in exploring teacher potential and abilities. This can be done with several innovations: (1) Continuous Development: Organizing regular training and training programs for madrasah teachers to deepen their understanding of the principles of the Independent Curriculum and apply them effectively in learning. (2) Development of Local Materials: Encouraging teachers to develop learning materials that are relevant to the local environment and culture, in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes the local context. (3) Utilization of Technology: Utilizing technology to support innovative learning processes. In this case, the Ministry of Religion can provide access and training related to the use of technology to madrasah

teachers. (4) Collaboration and Networking: Encouraging collaboration between madrasas in curriculum development that focuses on local needs. This can be done through exchanging experiences, joint workshops, or other collaborative activities. (5) Measurement and Evaluation: Building a measurement system that is capable of measuring the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving teacher abilities and student learning outcomes in madrasas. This can help in continuous adjustments and improvements.

Nurhuda, (2022) in his research revealed that the education process is a complex task in changing individuals to become the best. Of the various challenges that lie ahead, the government must be able to align its goals with parties that are related to educational institutions, such as madrasas. Education has a close relationship with various elements in society, such as parents or guardians of students, educational institutions (madrasas), and social institutions such as industry or business. Stakeholders in the world of education have a very important role in educational progress. Therefore, good cooperation from all parties is very necessary to advance the education system.

By facing these challenges through innovations as mentioned above, the GTK MA Subdirector at the Ministry of Religion can help madrasa teachers to be better prepared to face changes in the Independent Curriculum while still maintaining the quality of education that is relevant to local needs and religious values (Romalina, 2022).

On the other hand, technical aspects such as infrastructure and resource readiness are also obstacles that need to be overcome. In the context of innovation, the Ministry of Religion's GTK MA Subdirector is faced with the task of creating creative solutions to overcome this challenge, ranging from effective development program training to the application of relevant educational technology.

With a deep understanding of this background, it is hoped that the GTK MA Subdirector of the Ministry of Religion can develop innovative strategies to improve the ability of Madrasah teachers to implement the Independent Curriculum. This aims to present inspiring learning and produce graduates who are ready to face various challenges in the future. Romalina, (2022) in the webinar explained that the Indonesian Ministry of Religion has issued a decision regarding the Independent Curriculum, namely guidelines for implementing the Independent Curriculum in Madrasas which are regulated in the official document of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion number 347 of 2022. This journal discusses issues related to Challenges and Innovation of the GTK MA Sub-directorate of the Ministry of Religion in Exploring the Capabilities of Madrasah Teachers in the Independent Curriculum.

## **METHOD**

This research uses descriptive and qualitative methods for systematic analysis and presents a picture based on facts. Qualitative analysis methods are used to examine written documents through document studies, with a focus on content analysis. This approach aims

to carefully describe the challenges and innovations of the GTK MA Sub-directorate of the Ministry of Religion in exploring the capabilities of Madrasah teachers towards the Independent Curriculum. The data collection method applied in this research involves observation, interviews, and documentation to investigate problems related to a comprehensive literature review of the Independent Curriculum, challenges faced by Madrasah teachers, as well as innovations that have been proposed or implemented by the GTK MA Sub-directorate of the Ministry of Religion. Meanwhile, to analyze the data, an interactive analysis method is used which includes stages of data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) has faced various challenges in improving the ability of madrasa teachers to implement the Independent Curriculum. The GTK Sub-directorate (Teachers, Education Personnel) at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) plays an important role in overcoming these challenges with various innovations that can improve the quality of teaching and learning in the madrasa environment.

### Challenges and Innovations of the GTK MA Sub-directorate

The following are some of the challenges faced and the innovations implemented by the GTK MA Sub-directorate of the Ministry of Religion:

**Tabel 1. Challenges and Innovations of the GTK MA Sub-directorate**

No	Challenges Faced	Implemented Innovation
1.	Lack of Availability of Quality Learning Resources	Development of a digital platform for access to interactive learning resources and diversification of teaching materials.
2.	Independent Curriculum Readiness in Madrasas	Mapping madrasah needs and adapting the curriculum locally with tailored guidelines.
3.	Limited Access to Technology	Programs to increase technology accessibility by providing supporting devices or infrastructure.
4.	Teacher Readiness in Implementing the Independent Curriculum	Intensive competency-based training to prepare teachers to implement new approaches.
5.	Responsive and Holistic Evaluation	Development of formative assessment tools that are integrated with the Independent Curriculum approach.
6.	Limited Human Resources	Capacity development program to improve the quality and quantity of human resources in madrasas.
7.	Psychological and Emotional Support for Teachers	Providing mental well-being programs and psychological support for teachers on a regular basis.

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8.	Management of Changes in Curriculum and Teaching Methods	Development of ongoing training modules to support teachers in managing changes in curriculum and teaching methods.
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This table provides an overview of several challenges faced by the GTK MA Subdirector of the Ministry of Religion along with the innovations implemented to overcome these challenges. Each innovation listed may have sub-details or more in-depth specific steps depending on implementation and specific needs in the field.

The innovations carried out by the GTK MA Subdirector of the Ministry of Religion are positive steps in facing the challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum in madrasas. Through training programs, providing a variety of learning resources, collaboration between teachers, and developing a local curriculum based on the Merdeka Curriculum, they strive to improve the quality of learning that is more relevant and adaptive to local conditions, while strengthening the religious aspect of education.

Stronger collaboration between the Ministry of Religion, madrasa teachers, local communities and other stakeholders is the key to success in overcoming these challenges. It is also important to continue to evaluate and adjust the innovations implemented to ensure their effectiveness in improving teacher capabilities and the quality of education in madrasas.

### **Madrasah Teachers' Challenges and Innovations Against the Independent Curriculum**

Challenges faced by madrasa teachers related to the Independent Curriculum can include: (1) Curriculum adaptation, teachers experience difficulties in adapting the Independent Curriculum to the madrasa context. This curriculum may require significant changes in learning approaches, teaching methods, and assessment that may not align with existing practices. (2) Teacher readiness, another challenge is the readiness of teachers to implement new approaches, especially if they are already familiar with the previous curriculum. Training and mentoring may be needed to help teachers understand and implement the Merdeka Curriculum. (3) Infrastructure and resources, related to supporting infrastructure, such as access to technology, relevant learning resources, or open materials that suit the new curriculum, can be a challenge. Limited access or availability of resources may hinder effective implementation. (4) Evaluation and assessment, developing an evaluation and assessment system that is in accordance with the independent curriculum approach is also a challenge. Finding ways to measure student understanding and progress in a way that complies with the principles of the new curriculum can be complex (Annur, S., Oktarina, W., Divy, E. O., Wachyudianta, B., Lestari, C., Khumaidi, I., & Astuti, 2023).

Meanwhile, madrasa teacher innovations in facing the Independent Curriculum include: (1) Development of teaching materials, teachers can develop teaching materials that are more contextual and relevant to the

Independent Curriculum, which places more emphasis on mastering competencies and practical applications in the context of students' daily lives. (2) Use of Technology, utilizing educational technology to increase learning accessibility and interactivity. Teachers can integrate digital platforms or applications that support learning methods that suit the new curriculum. (3) Training and coaching, teachers can take part in intensive training and receive continuous training to understand, adapt and implement the Merdeka Curriculum well. (4) Collaboration and Collaborative Material Development, teachers can collaborate with other teachers or educational institutions to develop more holistic learning materials, supporting the Independent Curriculum approach (Aisyah, S., Arisanti, K., & Yaqin, 2023).

These innovations can help madrasah teachers face the challenges arising from the introduction of the Independent Curriculum, ensuring that learning remains effective, relevant and in line with the needs of students in the madrasah environment.

This framework can be a basis for exploring the challenges and considering the innovations needed in implementing the Independent Curriculum within the GTK MA Subdirectorate. In practice, it is necessary to carry out further research, interviews with stakeholders, and monitoring of the implementation process to initiate and adapt appropriate innovation strategies.

The following is a table that can be used to summarize teachers' needs regarding innovation and challenges in the GTK MA Subdirectorate of the

Ministry of Religion (Didipu, I., Umar, A., & Hidayatullah, 2021):

**Tabel 2. Challenges and Innovations of the GTK MA Subdirectorate of the Ministry of Religion in Exploring the Capabilities of Madrasah Teachers in the Independent Curriculum**

No	Aspect	Teacher needs	The desired innovation	Challenges faced
1.	Professionalism Development	Training that focuses on the latest teaching methods, educational technology, and learning strategies.	Use of technology for professional development	Limited budget for training and development.
2.	Quality Learning Resources	Access to relevant curriculum, interesting teaching materials, and easily accessible teaching materials.	Technology integration in learning resources and curriculum development.	Limited infrastructure to support access to learning resources.
3.	Psychological and Emotional Support	Support for managing work pressure and stress.	Development of mental and emotional well-being programs	Lack of awareness or access to mental well-being support.
4.	Adequate Technology Access	Adequate educational infrastructure to support distance or digital learning.	Procurement of learning supporting technology.	Limited internet access in remote areas.

5.	Technology Based Learning	Increased use of technology for student interaction and understanding.	Integration of mobile applications, e-learning, or online learning tools.	Teacher readiness in adopting technology.
6.	Collaborative Learning Methods	Development of more effective collaborative learning methods.	Project-based approach, group discussions and practical activities in learning.	Challenges in implementing new methods in existing curriculum.
7.	Effective Formative Assessment	More formative assessment of student progress with constructive feedback.	Development of a more formative assessment system.	Challenges in assessing student progress holistically.

adaptations according to the needs of madrasah learning, especially in strengthening Islamic religious education and the Arabic language which is its characteristic. Since 2022, there will be 2,471 madrasah institutions implementing the independent curriculum (Ramah, S., & Rohman, 2023). This number increased to 26,169 madrasah institutions at various levels implementing the independent curriculum this year. This data reflects enthusiasm in implementing the independent curriculum in madrasas and indicates the readiness of madrasas to change.

The Ministry of Religion has prepared guidelines to support the implementation of IKM in madrasas through the Directorate of Madrasah Curriculum, Facilities, Institutions and Student Affairs (KSKK) at the Directorate General of Islamic Education. The Ministry of Religion has also carried out various socialization, training and evaluation activities on a regular basis to ensure that madrasas can implement the Independent Curriculum in accordance with the direction of the Ministry of Religion, which emphasizes the importance of religious values in providing education.

The IKM guidelines issued by the Ministry of Religion provide flexible general guidelines for madrasas so they can create innovations in the curriculum that suit their characteristics and vision and mission (Sholehuddin, 2021). This allows madrasas to make changes without fear of failure, because failure can be a valuable lesson for future improvement. The madrasa curriculum aims to provide students with competencies, attitudes and life skills to be ready to face the challenges of the

The government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology has established the Independent Curriculum as a step to restore learning at various levels of education, from early childhood to secondary education, which will be implemented from 2022. In line with this policy, the Ministry of Religion has issued a Ministerial Decree Religion Number 347 of 2022 which sets guidelines for implementing the Independent Curriculum in Madrasas (Wiguna, I. K. W., & Tristaningrat, 2022).

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) in madrasas fully follows the direction of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry of Religion has made

times, while at the same time passing on noble character and values so that future generations remain connected to cultural, religious and national values. To achieve this, the curriculum must continue to develop according to the demands of the times.

Madrasas are expected to implement curriculum with a focus on the effectiveness of education and learning management to achieve their vision, mission and goals. This requires breakthroughs and innovations in educational management to create an inspiring learning environment for teachers and students. The spirit of the Independent Curriculum gives madrasas the authority to develop operational curricula in accordance with existing potential and resources, as well as providing flexibility in managing learning activities in accordance with current needs and developments. It is hoped that this spirit can encourage innovation and creativity in education management to improve the quality and competitiveness of madrasas.

The madrasa curriculum does not only focus on knowledge, but also on forming students' competencies, attitudes, life skills and ways of thinking to face change. This curriculum also emphasizes the importance of Pancasila values, religious moderation, critical thinking, creativity and innovation through the Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile and the Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile (P5 PPRA). Religious values are also instilled in an integrated manner in all aspects of education in madrasas (Cantika, I., & Supawi, 2023).

Teachers are expected to be the main movers in implementing this curriculum with a focus on assisting

students in learning, character building and developing life skills. They need to continue to increase their capacity and collaborate with the educational community to provide the best service to students. The Independent Curriculum places students as the main focus. Different learning is tailored to accommodate students' talents, interests and potential. The assessment system was developed to reflect various intelligences and talents, making each student achieve according to their individual potential.

The success of the Independent Curriculum in madrasas is measured by a pleasant learning atmosphere, high student enthusiasm, and the realization of a culture of lifelong learning. This change is expected to shape the character of students and improve learning outcomes effectively and efficiently. However, the success of this curriculum does not only depend on changes to the curriculum itself, but also on the role of teachers and other elements in the madrasa education ecosystem. Collaboration from all parties is needed to provide quality, relevant and competitive education.

To monitor the development of the implementation of the independent curriculum in madrasas, the KSKK Madrasah Directorate has conducted a survey involving 2,193 madrasas implementing IKM in 2022. The results show the high enthusiasm of teachers and students in making changes in learning, as well as the madrasah's belief in autonomy and independence in managing education (Hikmah, 2023).



## CONCLUSION

In exploring the capabilities of madrasa teachers towards the Independent Curriculum, the GTK MA Subdirector of the Ministry of Religion faces challenges that require related innovations. The following are the conclusions regarding the challenges and innovations faced by the sub-directorate:

Challenges faced by madrasa teachers related to the Independent Curriculum can include:

1. **Adaptation Curriculum:** Madrasah teachers need to adapt to changes in approaches, teaching methods and assessments used by the Merdeka Curriculum. This adaptation process may require time and intensive learning.
2. **Teacher Readiness:** Teachers' willingness to implement this new curriculum is crucial. Continuous training, coaching and support are needed so that teachers are able to implement the Independent Curriculum effectively.
3. **Infrastructure and Resources:** Limited infrastructure, such as access to adequate technology, relevant learning resources, and appropriate open materials, is a challenge in supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the madrasa environment.
4. **Assessment and Evaluation:** Developing an assessment system that is responsive, formative, and in accordance with the Independent Curriculum approach is also a challenge. Finding the right way to measure student understanding holistically can be complex.

Madrasa teacher innovations in facing the Independent Curriculum include:

1. **Development of Contextual Teaching Materials:** Teachers can develop teaching materials that are more contextual and relevant to the principles of the Independent Curriculum, ensuring that learning is centered on mastering competencies that are appropriate to the daily lives of students in madrasas.
2. **Ongoing Training and Support:** Intensive training programs and ongoing training need to be provided to teachers to understand, adapt and implement the Merdeka Curriculum well.
3. **Use of Technology:** Better use of educational technology can help improve accessibility, interactivity and quality of learning in accordance with the principles of the new curriculum.
4. **Collaboration between teachers and institutions:** Collaboration between teachers and educational institutions can encourage the development of collaborative materials that support the Independent Curriculum approach.

In conclusion, the GTK MA Subdirector of the Ministry of Religion faces important challenges related to adaptation, readiness, infrastructure and evaluation of the Independent Curriculum. Innovations in the form of developing contextual materials, training, use of technology, and collaboration can help mitigate these challenges and increase the effectiveness of implementing the Independent Curriculum in the madrasa environment.

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