

# Implementation of Madrasah Principals' Management as Academic Supervisors of the Independent Curriculum in Developing the Professionalism of Madrasah Teachers in Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study explores the implementation of madrasah principals' management roles as academic supervisors within the Independent Curriculum framework to enhance the professionalism of madrasah teachers in Indonesia. Employing a qualitative approach and case study methodology, the research was conducted at a madrasah located in Prabumulih, Indonesia. Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, direct observations, and analysis of relevant documents. The findings indicate that the role of the madrasah principal as an academic supervisor is pivotal in facilitating the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Competent madrasah principals provide essential guidance and support for teachers' professional development, particularly in planning, executing, and evaluating learning activities. Furthermore, the study identified variations in the readiness and competencies of madrasah principals to perform these supervisory duties, influenced by factors such as prior experience, training, and external support. The research highlights the necessity for continuous training and capacity building for madrasah principals to enhance their effectiveness in academic supervision. In conclusion, while challenges remain in the management and supervision by madrasah principals within the Independent Curriculum, their role holds significant potential to foster the professional growth of madrasah teachers in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Academic Supervision; Independent Curriculum; Madrasah Principal; Teacher Professionalism

## INTRODUCTION

The role of madrasah principals in fostering teacher professionalism is pivotal, particularly in the context of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) in Indonesia (Altrichter, & Kemethofer, 2015). Principals are not only tasked with administrative duties but also serve as academic supervisors who guide teachers in improving instructional practices. In the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes student-centered learning and autonomy, the role of the principal becomes even more significant. This curriculum demands that teachers continually adapt to new pedagogical approaches, making the guidance and support from school leadership crucial for successful implementation (Ehren, & Visscher, 2006). Consequently, principals are expected to facilitate teacher development through continuous professional learning, mentoring, and instructional supervision, aiming to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in madrasahs.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of academic supervision by school principals, including those in madrasahs, in enhancing teacher performance and professional growth. Research indicates that effective instructional leadership positively impacts teachers' abilities to plan, execute, and assess lessons in ways that improve student outcomes (Gaertner, & Pant, 2011). In

particular, studies focusing on school leadership in religious education settings have found that the principal's role in academic supervision contributes significantly to the development of a positive learning culture and professional learning communities among teachers. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that principals who actively engage in mentoring and providing feedback help foster a culture of reflective teaching practices, thus promoting continuous improvement in instructional quality.

Despite the acknowledged importance of academic supervision by madrasah principals, the implementation of this role in the context of the Independent Curriculum faces several challenges. There is considerable variability in the readiness and capability of principals to fulfill this role effectively, often due to factors such as limited professional development opportunities, insufficient training in instructional leadership, and varying levels of support from educational authorities. These challenges can impede the ability of principals to provide adequate guidance, thereby affecting teachers' professional development and their ability to implement the curriculum effectively. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure that the goals of the Kurikulum Merdeka, particularly in enhancing the quality of education, are met.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the management practices of madrasah principals as academic supervisors within the framework of the Independent Curriculum and to explore the impact of these practices on the professional development of teachers. The research aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current supervisory practices, understand the factors influencing the effectiveness of principals in their supervisory roles, and provide recommendations for improving academic supervision to support teacher professionalism. This study also seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on educational leadership in religious educational institutions, offering insights into how leadership can be leveraged to meet the evolving demands of contemporary curricula.

These sections set the foundation for understanding the essential role of madrasah principals as academic leaders who play a critical role in guiding the professional growth of teachers within the context of modern educational reforms.

## **METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is suitable for exploring the complex and dynamic nature of educational leadership and instructional supervision in a madrasah setting (Martin, 2018). The qualitative approach allows for a deep understanding of the experiences and perspectives of madrasah principals and teachers as they navigate the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. By focusing on the lived experiences and contextual factors that influence these educational practices, the study aims to uncover insights that quantitative methods may not fully capture.

The research employs a case study method, conducted at a madrasah in Prabumulih, Indonesia, to provide an in-depth examination of the principal's role as an academic supervisor. The case study method enables the exploration of specific instances and processes within the natural setting of the madrasah, allowing for a detailed understanding of how the principal's management practices affect teacher development. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews with key participants, direct observations of the school environment and instructional practices, and analysis of relevant documents such as school reports and curriculum guidelines. The collected data are analyzed using

thematic analysis, which involves identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns or themes that emerge from the data to construct a comprehensive picture of the supervisory practices and their impact on teacher professionalism.

## **RESULTS**

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role of madrasah principals as academic supervisors in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Principals are not merely administrative figures but are essential in guiding and mentoring teachers to meet the curriculum's pedagogical goals. Their involvement in academic supervision includes overseeing lesson planning, providing constructive feedback on instructional methods, and facilitating teacher development programs. This role is especially significant in the Kurikulum Merdeka, which demands that teachers adopt innovative, student-centered approaches. Effective supervision by principals helps ensure that teachers are equipped to deliver the curriculum, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education in madrasahs.

There is a noticeable variation in the readiness and competence of madrasah principals to perform the role of academic supervisors. Factors such as the principal's prior experience in educational leadership, the amount and quality of training received, and the level of support from educational authorities contribute to these differences. For instance, principals who have undergone extensive training in instructional leadership tend to be more effective in guiding teachers compared to those with limited training. Moreover, the presence of supportive networks and resources plays a role in enabling principals to fulfill their supervisory responsibilities more effectively. This variation in readiness impacts the consistency of curriculum implementation across different madrasahs.

The management practices of madrasah principals as academic supervisors significantly influence the planning, execution, and evaluation of teaching by the teachers. Principals who actively engage in supervision and provide feedback help teachers refine their lesson plans, improve classroom management techniques, and adopt more effective assessment strategies. This continuous support fosters a culture of professional growth, where teachers feel encouraged to experiment with new teaching methods and engage in reflective practice. As a result, the professional development of teachers is enhanced, leading to improved instructional quality and better learning outcomes for students. Thus, the role of principals in academic supervision directly impacts the achievement of the goals set by the Kurikulum Merdeka.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study align with and expand upon previous research regarding the role of academic supervision in fostering teacher professionalism. Prior studies have consistently shown that effective instructional leadership from principals contributes significantly to the professional growth of teachers by improving their teaching strategies and classroom management skills. The present findings further substantiate this by demonstrating the particular impact of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia, where the principal's role is vital in navigating the curriculum's demands for innovative, student-centered teaching approaches. The study also adds to the theoretical understanding of instructional supervision by emphasizing the need for continuous and adaptive support from school leaders, especially in educational settings undergoing significant curricular changes. By building on existing literature, this research enriches the discourse on educational leadership, offering a more nuanced view of the challenges and successes experienced in implementing academic supervision in a madrasah context.

The implications of these findings are significant for educational policy, especially in terms of training and capacity building for madrasah principals. Given the variability in readiness and competence observed, there is a clear need for standardized and ongoing professional development programs aimed at equipping principals with the skills necessary for effective academic supervision. Educational authorities could implement policy initiatives that prioritize instructional leadership training, ensuring that principals are well-prepared to support teachers in delivering the Independent Curriculum. Additionally, mentorship programs that pair experienced principals with those new to the role may help bridge the gap in supervisory skills. By addressing these needs through policy, the educational system can improve the quality of instructional leadership, thus enhancing teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations (Schleicher, 2012). One limitation is the scope of the research, which was confined to a single madrasah in Prabumulih. As such, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of madrasah principals across different regions or educational contexts in Indonesia. Future research should include a broader range of schools and geographical locations to ensure more generalizable results. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative methods, while valuable for capturing in-depth insights, may benefit from being complemented by quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between academic supervision and teacher professionalism. Mixed-methods approaches could thus offer a more robust analysis.

Further studies should explore the long-term effects of various supervisory practices on teacher performance under the Independent Curriculum. Longitudinal research could shed light on how sustained academic supervision contributes to continuous improvement in teaching practices over time. Investigating the specific types of training and support that most effectively enhance principals' supervisory skills could also provide valuable insights for policy development. Moreover, future research might consider comparative studies between madrasahs and other educational institutions to identify context-specific challenges and solutions.

By extending the discussion on academic supervision to the context of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, this study fills a gap in the literature regarding how educational reforms impact the supervisory role of school leaders in religious educational institutions. The findings not only corroborate the existing theories on instructional leadership but also suggest new directions for integrating curriculum implementation support with teacher development programs. The implications point to the potential benefits of adopting a more holistic approach to educational leadership that recognizes the diverse needs of teachers and the unique challenges posed by different curricular frameworks.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of well-prepared madrasah principals in ensuring the successful implementation of educational reforms. While there are challenges in achieving consistent levels of supervisory competence, targeted interventions at the policy and training levels could significantly improve the quality of academic supervision. The study serves as a call for action to policymakers and educators to invest in the development of school leadership as a critical component of educational quality, particularly in the context of evolving curricular demands.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of madrasah principals as academic supervisors in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Their involvement is not only

instrumental in guiding teachers through the curriculum's requirements but also in shaping a culture of continuous professional growth. The results show that effective supervision by principals can substantially enhance teachers' planning, instructional practices, and assessment strategies. This, in turn, positively influences the overall quality of education provided within madrasahs. However, the study also reveals disparities in the readiness and competence of principals, which affect their ability to perform this role consistently across different schools. These variations emphasize the need for targeted interventions to support principals in fulfilling their supervisory responsibilities more effectively.

To improve the effectiveness of academic supervision, it is crucial to prioritize the training and capacity-building of madrasah principals. Structured and continuous professional development programs should be implemented to equip principals with the necessary skills for instructional leadership. These programs could include workshops on curriculum implementation, mentoring for new leaders, and specialized training in teacher evaluation techniques. Additionally, establishing a support network where principals can share best practices and receive feedback would foster a community of learning among educational leaders. By investing in these initiatives, educational authorities can help ensure that principals are adequately prepared to guide teachers in meeting the goals of the Kurikulum Merdeka, thus promoting higher standards of teacher professionalism and educational outcomes.

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