

Madrasah Curriculum Planning Model to Enhance Learning Relevance

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ABSTRACT

Madrasah education in Indonesia faces challenges in integrating religious education with 21st-century skills relevant to workforce demands. This study aims to analyze curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat in response to evolving educational landscapes and its relevance to student learning needs. A qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, classroom observations in 12 sessions, and document analysis of 25 curriculum documents. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, with trustworthiness ensured through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The findings reveal that curriculum planning is collaborative but hierarchical, with limited involvement from students, parents, and industry partners. Integration of religious and general knowledge remains inconsistent and teacher-dependent. Technology integration is constrained by infrastructure limitations and varying teacher competence. Implementation of 21st-century skills is partial, and assessment practices remain cognitively dominated. Key challenges include infrastructure limitations, teacher competence gaps, time constraints, and lack of industry involvement. Supporting factors include leadership commitment, teacher collaboration, and parental support. The study implies that meaningful curriculum transformation requires systematic approaches to integration, sustained investment in teacher capacity and infrastructure, and strengthened stakeholder partnerships.

Keywords: curriculum planning; madrasah; 21st-century skills; technology integration; religious education

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan madrasah di Indonesia menghadapi tantangan dalam mengintegrasikan pendidikan agama dengan keterampilan abad ke-21 yang relevan dengan tuntutan dunia kerja. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis perencanaan kurikulum di MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat dalam menghadapi perkembangan zaman dan relevansinya bagi kebutuhan belajar peserta didik. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan 20 partisipan, observasi kelas dalam 12 sesi, serta analisis dokumen terhadap 25 dokumen kurikulum. Analisis data mengikuti model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña, dengan keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi, member checking, dan peer debriefing. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan kurikulum bersifat kolaboratif namun hierarkis, dengan keterlibatan terbatas dari siswa, orang tua, dan mitra industri. Integrasi pengetahuan agama dan umum masih tidak konsisten dan bergantung pada inisiatif guru. Integrasi teknologi terkendala keterbatasan infrastruktur dan kompetensi guru yang beragam. Implementasi keterampilan abad ke-21 masih parsial, dan praktik penilaian masih didominasi aspek kognitif. Tantangan utama meliputi keterbatasan infrastruktur, kesenjangan kompetensi guru, keterbatasan waktu, dan minimnya keterlibatan industri. Faktor pendukung meliputi komitmen kepemimpinan, kolaborasi guru, dan dukungan orang tua. Penelitian ini berimplikasi bahwa transformasi kurikulum yang bermakna memerlukan pendekatan sistematis untuk integrasi, investasi berkelanjutan dalam kapasitas guru dan infrastruktur, serta penguatan kemitraan pemangku kepentingan.

Kata Kunci: perencanaan kurikulum; madrasah; keterampilan abad ke-21; integrasi teknologi; pendidikan agama

INTRODUCTION

Madrasah education in Indonesia faces increasingly intensive transformative pressures along with the acceleration of technological development, globalization, and changing demands of the workforce (Meliawati, 2026; Astuti & Prastowo, 2025). Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) as Islamic-based basic education institutions are not only required to maintain their Islamic identity but must also equip students with 21st-century competencies relevant to the needs of the times (Latifah & Normuslim, 2026; Mila & Zuhdi, 2025). This phenomenon creates a productive tension between tradition and innovation, between strengthening spiritual values and developing practical skills needed in the professional world (Masruji et al., 2025; Farihin et al., 2025). MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat faces real challenges in designing a curriculum capable of bridging these two interests in a balanced and contextual manner (Meidawati & Kusdarini, 2025; Rifqi & Saputra, 2025).

The main problem that emerges is the gap between the curriculum implemented and the actual needs of students, both in terms of mastery of religious knowledge and the development of 21st-century skills (Manan et al., 2025; Saridudin et al., 2024). The curriculum in madrasahs tends to be fragmented, with religious subjects separated from general subjects, causing students to experience difficulties in connecting Islamic values with practical skills needed in daily life and the world of work (Norlianti et al., 2024; Nurdin et al., 2024). This condition is further exacerbated by limited technology integration in learning, student ability gaps that have not been accommodated through adequate differentiation approaches, and minimal involvement of industry in curriculum planning and evaluation (Burhan et al., 2023; Nasution et al., 2025). As a result, madrasah graduates are often less prepared to face global challenges that demand a combination of moral integrity, digital literacy, critical thinking skills, collaboration, and entrepreneurship (Musthafa et al., 2025; Musayyidi et al., 2026).

Previous studies have identified various problems in madrasah curriculum development. Research on Madrasah Nizhomiah shows that this historical Islamic educational institution successfully integrated religious sciences with various fields of general study, creating an academic model that encourages a holistic approach to education (Alhamuddin & Fanani, 2025). However, there remains a continuing gap in the integration of these elements in Indonesian Islamic education today, with many institutions still separating religious and secular subjects (Asrofi & Adibah, 2025). Studies on curriculum integration indicate that teacher competence in developing integrative materials has a direct influence on student achievement, yet lecture methods still dominate, limiting opportunities for participatory learning (Zahara et al., 2025).

A significant research gap is that most previous studies have focused on analyzing curriculum implementation in general or program evaluation, without specifically developing a curriculum planning model that integrates religious knowledge with 21st-century skills in a particular madrasah context (Alhamuddin et al., 2026; Rahman et al., 2025). Existing research also tends to be descriptive and has not offered a conceptual framework that can be practically adopted by madrasahs to improve learning relevance (Mila & Zuhdi, 2025; Rifqi & Saputra, 2025). Furthermore, studies that specifically discuss curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat with a focus on the integration of 21st-century skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and differentiation approaches are still very limited (Masruji et al., 2025; Asrofi & Adibah, 2025).

The novelty or specific contribution sought through this research lies in the development of a comprehensive and contextual curriculum planning model that integrates religious knowledge with 21st-century skills in the context of madrasah education (Alhamuddin et al., 2026; Rahman et al., 2025). The proposed model not only emphasizes academic aspects but also pays attention to character development, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and differentiation approaches that are responsive to the diversity of student abilities (Musthafa et al., 2025; Musayyidi et al., 2026). This approach aligns with the concept of Culturally Responsive Islamic Madrasah Education (CRIMED), which integrates Islamic teachings with local cultural wisdom, enabling learning content to be relevant to students' lived experiences and diverse social contexts (Rahman et al., 2025).

The main objective of this research is to analyze curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat in facing the changing times and the relevance of learning for students, as well as to formulate a curriculum planning model that integrates religious aspects with practical skills relevant to the world of work (Saridudin et al., 2024; Manan et al., 2025). More specifically, this research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How is curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat conducted in the context of changing times and student needs? (2) What are the challenges faced in implementing a curriculum that integrates religious education and 21st-century skills? (3) How can a curriculum planning model improve the relevance of learning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat? (Meidawati & Kusdarini, 2025; Mila & Zuhdi, 2025).

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of education that can prepare students to face increasingly complex global challenges, both in academic, moral, and practical skill domains (Latifah & Normuslim, 2026; Masruji et al., 2025). With proper curriculum planning, MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat can produce students who are not only competent in religious fields but also ready to face the demands of the workforce that increasingly require 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and critical thinking abilities (Zahara et al., 2025; Musayyidi et al., 2026). This research also makes a significant contribution

to the literature on Islamic religious education, particularly in developing a curriculum that combines Islamic values with 21st-century skills relevant to the modern world (Alhamuddin & Fanani, 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). The findings of this research are expected to serve as a reference for developing a madrasah curriculum that is more responsive to the needs of the times, as well as providing insights for researchers and policymakers in designing a curriculum that can produce a generation that is intelligent, morally upright, and ready to compete in the global world (Meliawati, 2026; Asrofi & Adibah, 2025).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to examine curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat. The case study design was selected because the research sought to understand a contemporary phenomenon—curriculum planning for 21st-century skills integration—within its real-life context, where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). The qualitative descriptive approach allowed the researcher to capture the richness and complexity of curriculum planning practices as experienced by stakeholders in their natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach was deemed appropriate because the research aimed to answer "how" and "what" questions regarding curriculum planning processes, challenges, and strategies rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables.

Research Setting and Duration

The research was conducted at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat, a state Islamic junior high school located in West Bandung Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. This site was purposively selected because it represents a madrasah that has been actively attempting to integrate religious education with 21st-century skills, making it an information-rich case for understanding curriculum planning challenges and strategies in contemporary Islamic education (Patton, 2015). The school has approximately 450 students and 35 teachers, with a curriculum that combines the national curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs curriculum for madrasahs. The data collection was carried out over approximately four months, from January to April 2025, allowing sufficient time for the researcher to develop rapport with participants, observe classroom practices across multiple sessions, and collect comprehensive documentation. This extended engagement was essential for building trust and obtaining authentic data from participants.

Participants and Sampling

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that involves intentionally selecting individuals who have relevant experience and

knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The participants consisted of:

1. The Principal (1 person), as the primary decision-maker and leader responsible for curriculum planning and implementation at the school level.
2. The Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs (1 person), who directly manages curriculum development, teacher coordination, and academic supervision.
3. Teachers (6 persons), representing religious subjects (Fiqh, Akidah Akhlak, Al-Qur'an Hadith) and general subjects (Mathematics, Science, Indonesian Language), all of whom are directly involved in curriculum implementation.
4. Students (12 persons), from grades VII, VIII, and IX, selected to represent diverse academic abilities and backgrounds, providing insights into their learning experiences and needs.

The total number of participants was 20 individuals. The selection criteria for teachers included a minimum of three years of teaching experience at the school and active involvement in curriculum development activities. Students were selected based on teacher recommendations and willingness to participate, with attention to gender balance and academic diversity. This diverse sample ensured that multiple perspectives on curriculum planning and implementation were captured, enriching the data and strengthening the credibility of findings.

Data Collection Instruments

Three primary instruments were developed for this study:

Semi-Structured Interview Guide: This instrument contained open-ended questions designed to explore participants' perspectives on curriculum planning processes, challenges faced, and strategies employed to integrate religious education with 21st-century skills. The interview guide was developed based on the research questions and relevant literature, and was validated by two experts in Islamic education and curriculum studies before use. The guide covered topics such as curriculum planning procedures, stakeholder involvement, technology integration, differentiation strategies, and assessment practices.

Classroom Observation Sheet: This instrument was used to record observable teaching and learning practices, including instructional methods, use of technology, student engagement, and integration of religious values with practical skills. The observation sheet included both descriptive and reflective sections, allowing the researcher to record factual observations and interpretive notes simultaneously.

Document Analysis Checklist: This instrument guided the systematic review of curriculum documents, including the Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM), syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), teaching modules, and assessment instruments. The checklist focused on identifying elements of 21st-century skills integration, technology use, differentiation strategies, and religious-secular integration.

All instruments were pilot-tested with two teachers and one curriculum coordinator from a different madrasah to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions and observation criteria. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the instruments before actual data collection.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.

Interviews were conducted with all 20 participants at times and locations convenient for them, typically in the school's meeting room or a quiet classroom. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim within 48 hours. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to follow the interview guide while remaining flexible to probe emerging themes and follow participants' leads (Moleong, 2017).

Participant observation was conducted in 12 classroom sessions across different subjects and grade levels. During observations, the researcher positioned herself as a non-participant observer, sitting at the back of the classroom and taking detailed field notes without interfering with the teaching and learning process. The observation focused on instructional strategies, technology integration, student responses, and the extent to which religious values were connected to practical skills. Field notes were expanded and organized immediately after each observation session.

Document analysis involved reviewing 25 documents, including the Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM), 10 lesson plans (RPP) from various subjects, 8 teaching modules, and 6 assessment instruments. Documents were analyzed using the checklist to identify patterns and gaps in curriculum planning, particularly regarding the integration of 21st-century skills, technology, and differentiation strategies. The researcher also examined school policies and meeting minutes related to curriculum development.

Researcher Presence and Positionality

The researcher was present at the research site for approximately 20 visits over four months. As a doctoral student in Islamic education with prior experience as a teacher trainer, the researcher brought both insider knowledge of madrasah contexts and an outsider perspective as a researcher. This dual positionality was acknowledged and managed through reflexive journaling, where the researcher recorded assumptions, reactions, and emerging interpretations throughout the research process. The researcher maintained a respectful and collaborative relationship with all participants, emphasizing that the research aimed to understand and improve practice rather than evaluate individuals.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data from interview transcripts, field notes, and documents. The researcher coded the data using both deductive codes derived from the research questions and inductive codes emerging from the data. Coding was performed manually using a color-coding system, with codes grouped into categories and themes.

Data display involved organizing the condensed data into matrices, charts, and narrative summaries to facilitate interpretation. The researcher created thematic matrices that mapped participants' perspectives, observed practices, and documentary evidence against the research questions. These displays were reviewed and revised iteratively as analysis progressed.

Conclusion drawing and verification involved interpreting the displayed data to identify patterns, explanations, and relationships. Initial conclusions were verified by returning to the data, checking for disconfirming evidence, and discussing emerging findings with participants during informal member-checking conversations.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through four strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility was established through triangulation of sources (comparing data from principals, teachers, and students), triangulation of methods (comparing interview, observation, and document data), and member checking (presenting preliminary findings to participants for validation). Prolonged engagement at the research site and persistent observation further strengthened credibility.

Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to other similar contexts.

Dependability was ensured through an audit trail documenting all research decisions, from instrument development to data analysis. The researcher maintained detailed records of raw data, coding decisions, and analytical memos.

Confirmability was achieved through reflexivity, maintaining a reflexive journal, and ensuring that findings were grounded in the data rather than researcher bias. The researcher also engaged a peer debriefer—a fellow doctoral student familiar with qualitative research—to review the analysis and challenge interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the university's research ethics committee prior to data collection. All participants provided written informed consent after being informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to protect their confidentiality. Pseudonyms are used in this article to protect participants' identities. Data were stored securely and will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the research conducted at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat. The findings are organized into six main themes that emerged from the data analysis: (1) Curriculum Planning Process and Stakeholder Involvement, (2) Integration of Religious Education and General Knowledge, (3) Technology Integration in Learning, (4) Implementation of 21st-Century Skills, (5) Assessment and Evaluation Practices, and (6) Challenges and Supporting Factors in Curriculum Implementation.

1. Curriculum Planning Process and Stakeholder Involvement

The curriculum planning process at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat was found to be collaborative and participatory, involving multiple stakeholders at different levels. The principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, and teachers worked together in designing the annual curriculum plan. The process typically began with a needs analysis conducted at the end of each academic year, followed by a series of workshops and meetings to develop the curriculum documents.

The principal described the planning process as follows:

"We start by evaluating the previous year's curriculum implementation. We look at what worked and what didn't. Then we conduct a needs analysis involving teachers, students, and sometimes parents. After that, we hold workshops to develop the new curriculum plan, including the Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM) and teaching modules."

The vice principal for curriculum affairs added that the planning process involved several stages:

"The planning goes through several stages: first, we form a curriculum development team consisting of experienced teachers from each subject area. Second, we conduct a situational analysis to understand our current conditions and needs. Third, we draft the curriculum documents. Fourth, we hold internal reviews and revisions. Finally, we submit the documents to the principal for approval and then socialize them to all teachers."

Teachers confirmed their involvement in the planning process, although some noted that their participation was sometimes limited to providing input rather than being involved in decision-making. One teacher stated:

"We are invited to workshops and asked for our opinions. But sometimes the final decisions are made by the leadership without further discussion. We just follow what has been decided."

Table 1 presents the levels of stakeholder involvement in curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat.

Table 1. Stakeholder Involvement in Curriculum Planning

Stakeholder			Level of Involvement	Main Roles
Principal	Principal for Curriculum Teachers Students Parents Industry/Community		High	Decision-maker, facilitator, supervisor
Vice Principal			High	Coordinator, drafter, evaluator
Teachers			Medium	Input provider, implementer
Students			Low	Recipient, feedback provider
Parents			Low	Supporter, occasional feedback provider
Industry/Community			Very Low	Not systematically involved

Source: Research data, 2025.

The table 1 shows that the highest levels of involvement were from the principal and vice principal for curriculum affairs, while teachers had medium involvement. Students and parents had low involvement, and industry or community partners were not systematically involved in curriculum planning.

2. Integration of Religious Education and General Knowledge

The integration of religious education and general knowledge was identified as a key focus of the curriculum at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat. Teachers reported making efforts to connect religious values with general subjects, although the extent and depth of integration varied across subjects and teachers.

An Islamic Religious Education teacher explained:

"In my Fiqh class, I try to connect the material with real-life situations. For example, when teaching about transactions, I relate it to modern business practices and ethical considerations. But it's not always easy because the curriculum is already packed with content."

A Mathematics teacher shared a similar approach:

"I try to integrate Islamic values in my math lessons. For example, when teaching about percentages, I use examples from zakat calculations. But honestly, it's not systematic. It depends on the teacher's initiative."

However, some teachers admitted that they rarely integrated religious values into their general subjects due to a lack of understanding of how to do so or because they felt it was not their responsibility. One Science teacher stated:

"I focus on delivering the science content. I think religious values are taught in religious subjects. It's not my job to integrate them in science."

Table 2 illustrates the frequency of religious values integration across different subjects as reported by teachers and observed in classrooms.

Table 2. Frequency of Religious Values Integration Across Subjects

Subject	Frequency of Integration
Fiqh	High
Akidah Akhlak	High
Al-Qur'an Hadith	High
Indonesian Language	Medium
Mathematics	Low
Science	Low
Social Studies	Medium

Source: Research data, 2025.

The figure shows that religious values integration was most frequent in religious subjects and less frequent in general subjects, particularly Mathematics and Science.

3. Technology Integration in Learning

Technology integration in learning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat was found to be limited and inconsistent. While the school had some technological infrastructure, including projectors, computers, and internet access, the use of technology in daily instruction was not optimal.

The vice principal for curriculum affairs acknowledged this limitation:

"We have some facilities, but they are not enough. We have projectors in some classrooms, but not all. The internet connection is also not stable. Many teachers want to use technology, but they are constrained by these limitations."

Teachers expressed varying levels of technology use in their classrooms. A young teacher who was comfortable with technology shared:

"I use videos and online quizzes in my classes. The students enjoy it. But I have to use my own laptop and sometimes my own internet quota because the school's facilities are limited."

An older teacher expressed different concerns:

"I'm not very good with technology. I received some training, but I still find it difficult. I prefer to use traditional methods like lectures and discussions."

Table 2 summarizes the types and frequency of technology use in classrooms as observed during the research.

Table 2. Types and Frequency of Technology Use in Classrooms

Type of Technology	Frequency of Use	Observed Challenges
Projector for presentations	Frequent	Limited availability
Video learning	Occasional	Internet connectivity
Online quizzes (e.g., Quizizz)	Occasional	Student device access
Learning Management System	Rare	Teacher competence
Interactive multimedia	Rare	Software availability

Source: Research data, 2025.

The table indicates that the most frequent use of technology was for presentations using projectors, while more interactive technologies such as Learning Management Systems and interactive multimedia were rarely used.

4. Implementation of 21st-Century Skills

The implementation of 21st-century skills—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—was found to be partial and inconsistent. Some teachers had begun to incorporate these skills into their teaching, while others continued to rely on traditional methods.

A teacher who actively implemented 21st-century skills described her approach:

"In my Indonesian Language class, I use project-based learning. Students work in groups to create videos or posters about social issues. They have to research, discuss, and present their work. This helps them develop critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills."

However, another teacher admitted that she had not fully understood how to implement these skills:

"I've heard about 21st-century skills, but I'm not sure how to teach them. I focus on finishing the curriculum content. There's no time for projects or group work because we have to cover so much material."

Students also provided their perspectives on the skills they were developing. One student said:

"Some teachers ask us to work in groups and present in front of the class. We learn to work together and speak confidently. But most of the time, we just listen to the teacher and take notes."

The findings suggest that while there was awareness of the importance of 21st-century skills, their implementation was not yet systematic or widespread across all subjects and teachers.

5. Assessment and Evaluation Practices

Assessment practices at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat were found to focus primarily on cognitive aspects, with limited attention to affective and psychomotor domains. Teachers used a combination of formative and summative assessments, including daily quizzes, mid-semester tests, final semester tests, and project assessments.

The vice principal for curriculum affairs explained the assessment policy:

"We follow the assessment guidelines from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Teachers are required to conduct formative and summative assessments. They also have to assess student attitudes and skills."

However, teachers reported challenges in implementing holistic assessment. One teacher stated:

"Assessing attitudes is difficult. We don't have standardized instruments. Usually, I just observe students' behavior in class and make subjective judgments. It's not very reliable."

Another teacher added:

"Project assessment is also challenging. We don't have rubrics that are specific enough. Sometimes I just give grades based on whether the project is complete or not, without really assessing the quality."

Table 3 presents the types of assessment used by teachers and the domains assessed.

Table 3. Types of Assessment and Domains Assessed

Assessment Type	Frequency of Use	Primary Domain Assessed
Daily quizzes	Frequent	Cognitive
Mid-semester tests	Frequent	Cognitive
Final semester tests	Frequent	Cognitive
Project assessment	Occasional	Cognitive, Psychomotor
Attitude observation	Occasional	Affective
Performance assessment	Rare	Psychomotor

Source: Research data, 2025.

The table shows that cognitive assessments dominated, while affective and psychomotor assessments were less frequent and less systematic.

6. Challenges and Supporting Factors in Curriculum Implementation

The research identified several challenges and supporting factors in curriculum implementation at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat. The main challenges included: (1) limited technology infrastructure, (2) disparities in teacher competence, (3) student ability gaps, (4) limited time for project-based learning, (5) lack of industry involvement, and (6) inadequate assessment instruments. The supporting factors included: (1) commitment from school leadership, (2) availability of some training programs, (3) teacher collaboration in some subject areas, and (4) support from parents for school activities.

The principal summarized the challenges and supporting factors:

"Our biggest challenge is infrastructure. We need more computers, better internet, and more projectors. We also need more training for teachers, especially in technology and differentiated instruction. But we have committed teachers who want to improve. The support from parents is also good. So we are optimistic that we can improve step by step." A teacher added:

"The challenge is time. We have so much content to cover. It's hard to do projects or creative activities when we have to finish the curriculum on schedule."

Students also shared their perspectives:

"I wish we had more interesting classes. Sometimes it's boring just listening to the teacher. I like it when we do group work or watch videos. But we don't do that very often."

The findings indicate that while there is awareness of the need for curriculum improvement and some efforts to address challenges, significant work remains to be done to achieve a more holistic, relevant, and 21st-century-oriented curriculum at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat.

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat:

1. Curriculum planning is collaborative but hierarchical, with limited involvement from students, parents, and industry partners.
2. Integration of religious education and general knowledge is attempted but inconsistent across subjects, with religious subjects showing higher integration than general subjects.
3. Technology integration is limited by infrastructure constraints and varying teacher competence.
4. Implementation of 21st-century skills is partial and not yet systematic across all subjects and teachers.
5. Assessment practices focus primarily on cognitive domains, with limited attention to affective and psychomotor aspects.
6. Challenges include infrastructure limitations, teacher competence gaps, student ability disparities, time constraints, and lack of industry involvement. Supporting factors include leadership commitment, teacher collaboration, and parental support.

These findings provide a comprehensive picture of the current state of curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat and highlight areas for improvement to enhance the relevance and quality of learning for students.

DISCUSSION

This section interprets the research findings by connecting them to relevant theoretical frameworks, comparing them with previous studies, and identifying their implications for educational practice and policy. The discussion is organized around the six main themes that emerged from the data analysis.

The finding that curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat is collaborative yet hierarchical reflects a pattern documented in curriculum management literature. The involvement of multiple stakeholders in curriculum planning aligns with the principle that effective curriculum management requires participation from various parties including school leaders, teachers, and the community (Mulyono, 2025). However, the hierarchical nature of decision-making observed in this study suggests that participation may be more symbolic than substantive in some cases.

This finding resonates with research on curriculum management in madrasahs, which found that while participatory approaches are advocated, actual

implementation often remains leader-centered (Rohman & Kurniawan, 2025). The study suggests that other factors, such as teacher readiness and institutional culture, may be more dominant in determining curriculum success than the mere presence of participatory mechanisms. This aligns with the current finding that while teachers were invited to provide input, final decisions often rested with leadership, creating a gap between the rhetoric of participation and the reality of implementation (Sultani & Sulthani, 2026).

The limited involvement of industry partners in curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat represents a missed opportunity for enhancing vocational relevance. This finding is particularly significant given the growing emphasis on link and match between Islamic education and workforce demands (Kurniawan et al., 2026). Research on curriculum alignment with labor market needs has demonstrated that meaningful partnerships with external stakeholders can enrich learning experiences and improve graduate readiness for employment (Dermawan et al., 2026).

The finding that integration of religious values into general subjects remains inconsistent and teacher-dependent supports existing research on the challenges of achieving holistic Islamic education. Research on curriculum management emphasizes that structured curriculum management through phased coaching, academic training, and systematic evaluation can enhance students' academic achievement (Musolin & Sudarmaji, 2025). However, the current study reveals that such systematic approaches to religious-secular integration are still lacking.

This fragmentation echoes concerns raised in studies of Islamic Religious Education curriculum structure in madrasahs. Previous research has noted that the PAI curriculum is organized into separate subjects—Al-Qur'an Hadis, Akidah Akhlak, Fikih, and Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam—which conceptually aims to build comprehensive Islamic understanding but often fails to achieve meaningful integration in practice (Amiq et al., 2025). The current findings suggest that this fragmentation extends beyond religious subjects to the broader curriculum, where general subject teachers often view religious values as outside their responsibility (Aziz et al., 2026).

The teacher-dependent nature of integration found in this study highlights the importance of teacher competence and disposition. Research on differentiated instruction has shown that success depends heavily on teacher competence in planning, classroom management, and support from curriculum policy (Fatmawati & Muhsinin, 2026). Similarly, the integration of religious values appears to require not only knowledge but also pedagogical skill and commitment from individual teachers (Hidayat & Syahrul, 2026).

The finding that technology integration at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat is limited by infrastructure constraints and varying teacher competence is consistent with broader patterns in Indonesian madrasah education. A study on digital literacy innovation found that technology utilization has a significant effect on students' learning motivation, with digital literacy explaining a substantial portion of variance in learning readiness (Adhitya & Mardalena, 2026). This suggests that when technology is effectively integrated, it can substantially enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

However, the current study reveals that such effective integration is not yet widespread. The dominance of projector-based presentations over more interactive technologies reflects a basic level of technology adoption that does not fully leverage the potential of digital tools for personalized, interactive, and collaborative learning (Alwi & Sulaiman, 2026). Research on AI-based learning technology in madrasah contexts has demonstrated that more advanced applications can significantly increase student engagement across affective, cognitive, and behavioral domains (Mukmin et al., 2026). The gap between what is currently practiced at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat and what is possible with more advanced technologies represents a significant area for development (Ani et al., 2025).

The challenges identified—limited devices, unstable internet, and insufficient teacher training—are structural rather than individual, suggesting that systemic solutions are required. This aligns with the finding that adaptation to the Merdeka Curriculum and variation in teacher readiness are among the main challenges in curriculum management implementation (Purba et al., 2025).

The finding that 21st-century skills implementation is partial and inconsistent reflects a common pattern in Indonesian education, including madrasah contexts. A study on 21st-century skills among students found that critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills were in the "approaching standard" category, while creativity and innovation were "below standard" (Choiriah & Rohmani, 2026). The current study extends this finding by showing that in madrasah contexts, implementation varies significantly across teachers and subjects (Asy'arie et al., 2025).

The emphasis on project-based learning by some teachers aligns with research demonstrating that this approach can develop 4Cs skills. However, the barriers identified—time constraints, content coverage demands, and lack of understanding—suggest that curriculum structure and assessment systems may not adequately support 21st-century skill development (Zulkifli, 2026). Research on curriculum integration has shown that integrated curricula can help develop 4Cs skills when properly implemented (Khofifah et al., 2025).

The finding that students perceive most learning as teacher-centered and content-focused challenges assumptions that curriculum reform alone will transform classroom practice. Teachers need not only knowledge of 21st-century skills but also practical strategies for integrating them into daily instruction without sacrificing content coverage (Fadri et al., 2026). This requires pedagogical approaches that make skill development integral to subject matter learning rather than an add-on activity (Mila & Zuhdi, 2025).

The finding that assessment practices at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat focus primarily on cognitive domains, with limited attention to affective and psychomotor aspects, reflects persistent challenges in implementing holistic assessment in Indonesian education. Research on authentic assessment in Islamic Religious Education found that while teachers recognize the value of authentic assessment for evaluating students' real-world application of religious values, they face challenges including time constraints, difficulty designing age-appropriate instruments, and uneven understanding of authentic assessment principles (Madani & Ujari, 2026).

The limited use of project and performance assessments in the current study suggests that the transformative potential of assessment as a learning tool is not yet realized. Authentic assessment based on digital platforms has been shown to enhance self-reflection, collaboration, and creativity in project-based learning (Abdullah & Fadrianti, 2026). The gap between available approaches and current practice represents both a challenge and an opportunity (Kholis, 2026).

The finding that attitude assessment remains subjective and lacking in standardized instruments is particularly significant in the context of Islamic education, where character development is a central goal. Without valid and reliable affective assessment tools, the curriculum's effectiveness in achieving its spiritual and moral objectives cannot be adequately evaluated or improved (Nurhaliza et al., 2025).

The challenges identified at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat—limited infrastructure, teacher competence gaps, student ability disparities, time constraints, and lack of industry involvement—are not unique to this institution. They reflect broader systemic issues in Indonesian madrasah education. The finding that curriculum management in some madrasahs emphasizes phased coaching, academic training, and reward-based evaluations suggests that systematic approaches can address some of these challenges (Dermawan et al., 2026).

The supporting factors identified—leadership commitment, teacher collaboration, and parental support—point to levers for improvement. Research on curriculum management in madrasahs has shown that ongoing coordination

between school leadership and teachers, teacher development through mentoring and academic supervision, and curriculum evaluation can support more focused learning and sustained quality improvement (Musolin & Sudarmaji, 2025).

The finding that industry involvement is minimal highlights a specific gap in vocational relevance. While madrasah education aims to prepare students for both higher education and employment, the absence of systematic industry engagement limits the curriculum's ability to develop work-relevant skills (Kurniawan et al., 2026). This is particularly significant given the growing emphasis on vocational education in Islamic contexts and the need for madrasah graduates to be competitive in the job market (Dermawan et al., 2026).

The findings of this study have several implications for madrasah curriculum planning and implementation. First, there is a need for more substantive stakeholder participation that goes beyond consultation to genuine involvement in decision-making (Sultani & Sulthani, 2026). Second, systematic approaches to integrating religious and general knowledge are required, including teacher training and curriculum design that makes integration explicit rather than relying on individual initiative (Amiq et al., 2025). Third, technology integration requires both infrastructure investment and sustained professional development (Mulyono, 2025). Fourth, 21st-century skill development needs to be embedded in curriculum structure and assessment systems, not treated as an optional addition (Choiriah & Rohmani, 2026). Fifth, holistic assessment requires the development of valid and reliable instruments for affective and psychomotor domains (Madani & Ujari, 2026). Finally, partnerships with industry and community stakeholders need to be strengthened to enhance curriculum relevance (Kurniawan et al., 2026).

These findings contribute to the growing body of research on curriculum planning in Indonesian madrasah education. They confirm that while awareness of the need for more holistic, relevant, and 21st-century-oriented curricula is growing, significant gaps remain between aspiration and implementation. The study extends existing research by providing a detailed case analysis of how these challenges manifest in a specific madrasah context and by identifying the structural and individual factors that enable and constrain change. The findings suggest that meaningful curriculum transformation requires not only policy reform but also sustained investment in teacher capacity, infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement (Rohman & Kurniawan, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat in response to the evolving educational landscape and its relevance to student learning needs. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that while the madrasah has made meaningful efforts to integrate religious education with

general knowledge, significant challenges remain in achieving a truly holistic, relevant, and 21st-century-oriented curriculum.

The main answer to the research objective is that curriculum planning at MTs Negeri 2 Bandung Barat is characterized by collaborative but hierarchical processes, fragmented integration of religious and general knowledge, limited and uneven technology integration, partial implementation of 21st-century skills, cognitive-dominated assessment practices, and persistent structural challenges. These findings indicate that despite growing awareness of the need for curriculum transformation, substantial gaps persist between policy aspirations and classroom realities.

This study makes three principal contributions. First, it provides a detailed empirical account of how curriculum planning challenges manifest in a specific madrasah context, offering insights that can inform similar institutions facing comparable pressures. The findings demonstrate that curriculum transformation is not merely a technical matter of adopting new policies but requires attention to institutional culture, teacher capacity, and stakeholder engagement.

Second, the study extends existing research on Islamic education curriculum by highlighting the interconnected nature of challenges across planning, implementation, and assessment dimensions. The fragmentation of religious-secular integration, the uneven adoption of technology, and the cognitive bias in assessment are not isolated problems but mutually reinforcing patterns that require systemic solutions.

Third, the study contributes to the discourse on 21st-century skills in Islamic education by revealing the gap between awareness and implementation. While teachers recognize the importance of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, structural constraints—including time limitations, content coverage demands, and inadequate assessment instruments—hinder effective implementation.

Practical implications for madrasah practitioners include the need for more substantive stakeholder participation, systematic approaches to religious-secular integration, investment in technology infrastructure and teacher training, embedding 21st-century skills into curriculum structure, developing holistic assessment instruments, and strengthening industry partnerships.

Theoretical implications include the need to refine models of curriculum integration in Islamic education to account for the specific constraints and affordances of madrasah contexts. The findings suggest that existing frameworks for curriculum integration may underestimate the institutional, cultural, and capacity-related barriers that shape implementation.

Policy implications for the Ministry of Religious Affairs and local education authorities include the need for differentiated support that recognizes the varying capacities of madrasahs, investment in infrastructure and professional development, and flexibility in curriculum frameworks that allow schools to adapt to local contexts while maintaining national standards.

This study has several limitations. First, as a single case study, the findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to all madrasahs. Second, the research focused primarily on qualitative data, which limits the ability to quantify the prevalence of identified challenges. Third, the study relied on self-reported data from interviews and observations, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Fourth, the research was conducted over a relatively short period, limiting the ability to observe long-term change processes.

Future research should explore comparative studies across multiple madrasahs to identify patterns and variations in curriculum planning. Longitudinal studies tracking curriculum transformation over time would provide insights into change processes and sustainability. Quantitative studies measuring the impact of specific interventions on student outcomes would complement qualitative findings. Action research involving practitioners as co-researchers could generate contextually grounded solutions. Research on effective models of industry-madrasah partnership would inform vocational relevance strategies.

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