



Dynamics of Ministerial Change and Curriculum Rotation: Analyzing Indonesian Education Policy through Literature Study

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Abstract

This study analyzes the pattern of the relationship between the change of education minister and changes in the national curriculum in Indonesia over the last 10-15 years. The purpose of this study is to analyze the pattern of the relationship between the change of education minister and changes in the national education curriculum in Indonesia, identify the impact of frequent curriculum changes due to political dynamics, and explore other driving factors of curriculum changes based on literature review. Through a qualitative approach with a literature review method, this research examines the "change of minister change of curriculum" phenomenon that has become a unique characteristic of the Indonesian education system. The results show that the change of education minister is consistently followed by the initiation of curriculum changes, starting from KTSP 2006, Curriculum 2013, to Merdeka Curriculum 2022. The impacts of these frequent curriculum changes include implementation confusion at the school level, the burden of repeated teacher adaptation and the instability of the education system as a whole. Factors influencing curriculum changes include political considerations, the results of international evaluations such as PISA, the demands of the times and the personal vision of the new minister. This study recommends the need for long-term policy consistency and in-depth evaluation before making curriculum changes.

Keywords: Ministerial Changes, Curriculum Changes, Education Policy, Indonesian Education System.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's education system faces a unique challenge that is rarely found in other countries, namely the "change of minister change of curriculum" phenomenon. Since independence, Indonesia has experienced more than 10 curriculum changes, with the intensity of changes increasing in the last two decades (Ratri & Prasetyo, 2024). This phenomenon creates instability in the national education

system and has a direct impact on the implementation of learning at the school level. In a global context, curriculum stability is one of the indicators of the maturity of a country's education system. Countries with well-established education systems generally maintain their curriculum over a relatively long period of time, making gradual evaluations and adjustments without radically changing the fundamentals of the system. In contrast, Indonesia shows a different pattern, making significant curriculum changes almost every time the leadership of the Ministry of Education changes.



The massive and rapid dynamics of curriculum change in Indonesia cannot be separated from the broader political context. Education is often an instrument of political legitimacy for a new regime or minister. Every new leadership in the Ministry of Education (formerly the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology) tends to bring a narrative of "renewal" or "improvement" as part of its political promises. Curriculum changes become a tangible symbol of such efforts, a quick win that can be demonstrated to the public and political bosses. However, the lack of a comprehensive and longitudinal evaluation of the current curriculum before replacing it is a problematic feature. Assessments of the previous curriculum are often subjective, political and focus on shortcomings without looking at achievements or the potential for incremental improvements. As a result, any change tends to be reactive and revolutionary rather than evolutionary, hindering the accumulation of knowledge and good practices within the system.

External factors have also contributed to the acceleration of curriculum change. Global pressure to improve rankings in international assessments such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) is often responded to with drastic curriculum policy changes, for example by emphasizing literacy, numeracy or science more strongly, without considering the readiness of infrastructure and human resources at the grassroots level. Insistence on integrating certain values, such as character education, anti-corruption, entrepreneurship or national defense, is also often incorporated ad hoc into the new curriculum framework, sometimes without adequate synchronization with the existing structure and content. The fast-paced digital technology revolution adds to the complexity of curriculum demands, forcing the system to constantly catch up or adapt, often without a solid pedagogical foundation. Frequent changes of education ministers in Indonesia, especially in different periods of government, are always followed by the emergence of new visions and missions that are realized through curriculum changes. This creates a repetitive cycle: the new minister identifies the weaknesses of the previous curriculum, develops a new curriculum concept and implements it nationwide without allowing enough time for an in-depth evaluation of the previous curriculum.

The impact of this "change of minister change of curriculum" phenomenon is multi-level and highly detrimental. At the teacher level, curriculum instability creates curriculum fatigue and an ongoing burden of adaptation. Teachers are forced to spend significant time and energy understanding new philosophies, structures, learning methods and assessment systems, often through short and less in-depth training. This reduces their time and focus on improving the quality of classroom learning and ongoing professional development. At the student level, too frequent changes lead to fragmentation of learning experiences and unclear competency standards. Students who are in transition between curricula may experience overlapping material or even knowledge gaps. They also become "guinea pigs" for policies that have not been tested for long-term validity and effectiveness. At the school level, the transition costs are a heavy burden. Schools must allocate funds for teacher training, procurement of new textbooks and teaching materials, and adjustments to supporting infrastructure. These social costs are often not properly accounted for in change planning. At the systemic level, this lack of policy continuity inhibits the establishment of a culture of critical and evidence-based evaluation of education. Data and implementation experiences from one curriculum often do not have time to be collected and thoroughly analyzed before it is replaced by a new one, so learning for future policy improvements is limited. In addition, the implementation gap between urban and rural/periphery schools is widening as schools with limited resources find it difficult to keep up with the pace of change required.

This research is important and urgent to unravel the complexities behind the "change of minister change of curriculum" phenomenon that has characterized the Indonesian education system. By critically mapping the pattern of the relationship between political dynamics (especially the change of ministers) and curriculum changes in the last decade and a half, as well as identifying other driving factors beyond political leadership, this research is expected to provide a more holistic and objective picture. This research aims to deeply analyze the pattern of the relationship between the change of education ministers and changes in the national curriculum in Indonesia, especially in the last 10-15



years. Through a literature study approach, this research will examine the impacts and factors that influence curriculum changes beyond the change of ministers.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (literature review). Library research or literature study is a research conducted by collecting data, information and various other data contained in the literature (Hardani MSi et al., 2020). According to Ajat Rukajat, literature studies are used to obtain theoretical data by searching for written and systematic information from several experts who can broaden thinking insights (Rukajat, 2018). This method was chosen because it is in accordance with the characteristics of the research which aims to analyze complex phenomena through a study of various existing literature sources. Literature studies allow researchers to conduct a comprehensive analysis of various perspectives and previous research findings related to the topic under study.

The type of data collection used is a documentary study of various primary and secondary literature sources. Primary sources included government regulations, official policies of the ministry of education, and national curriculum documents. Secondary sources included scientific journals, research articles, policy evaluation reports and credible mass media publications. The inclusion criteria of the literature sources used include: (1) relevance to the topic of ministerial change and curriculum change in Indonesia; (2) publication period in the last 15 years (2010-2024); (3) credibility of the source as evidenced by the reputation of the author or publishing institution; and (4) quality of research methodology for empirical research sources.

The data analysis process was conducted through several stages. First, identification and categorization of literature based on themes and time periods. Second, extraction of key information from each literature source. Third, comparative analysis to identify patterns and trends. Fourth, synthesis of findings to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied. To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, this research applied source triangulation by using different types of literature and different perspectives. In addition, cross-checking of facts and data obtained from various sources was also conducted to ensure the accuracy of the information.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pattern of Relationship between Change of Minister of Education and Curriculum Change (2010-2024)

An analysis of the period 2010-2024 shows a very consistent pattern between the change of education minister and the initiation of curriculum changes in Indonesia. During this period, Indonesia has experienced several changes in education ministers, each of which brought significant changes in national curriculum policy. Mohammad Nuh's period (2009-2014) was marked by the development and implementation of Curriculum 2013. This curriculum was designed as a refinement of the 2006 Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) with an emphasis on the scientific approach and authentic. This change was motivated by an evaluation of the learning outcomes of Indonesian students in various international surveys that showed unsatisfactory results.

The transition of leadership to Anies Baswedan (2014-2016) brought changes in the approach to implementing the 2013 Curriculum. Although he did not fundamentally change the curriculum, Anies conducted a moratorium on the implementation of Curriculum 2013 due to: the absence of publication of the results of studies, data, and other evidence, especially related to the evaluation of the 2006 curriculum, the implementation of the curriculum was considered hasty. This moratorium was done to give time for schools that were not ready. This policy reflects a more pragmatic



approach to education policy implementation. The Muhadjir Effendy period (2016-2019) marked the return to full implementation of Curriculum 2013 with various adjustments and improvements. Effendy focused on strengthening character and literacy as an integral part of the curriculum. This period was also marked by various supporting programs such as the school literacy movement and strengthening character education.

The most significant change occurred during the Nadiem Makarim era (2019-2024) with the introduction of the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" which later developed into the Merdeka Curriculum. Nadiem Makarim, with a background as a technology entrepreneur, brought a new perspective to education with an emphasis on flexibility, creativity, and adaptation to the development of digital technology. The Merdeka Curriculum was officially implemented nationally at the end of March 2024 through Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Regulation Number 12 of 2024 (Permendikbudristek Nomor 12 Tahun 2024, n.d.). This curriculum gives schools the flexibility to develop the curriculum according to student characteristics and needs.

The change of leadership to Abdul Mu'ti in 2024 again brought changes in education policy. Although the Merdeka Curriculum was retained, Mu'ti made some important modifications, including the reinstatement of the majors system in senior high school that had been abolished in the Merdeka Curriculum (Mardianti, 2025). These changes show that the pattern of 'change of minister change of curriculum' still continues, albeit in a more subtle form. A consistent pattern is that each new minister tends to evaluate the policies of his predecessor and then introduce changes as deemed necessary. This creates a continuous cycle of change without allowing sufficient time for an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of the current curriculum.

Systemic Pattern of "Changing Minister Changing Curriculum"

An analysis of the data and literature reviewed shows that the 'change of minister change of curriculum' phenomenon is not a coincidence but a systemic pattern in the Indonesian education system. This pattern has predictable characteristics and deep roots in the political and bureaucratic structures of Indonesian education. First, this pattern reflects a political system that gives the minister great authority to fundamentally change policy. The centralized structure of the ministry allows curriculum change decisions to be made at the top level without having to go through an in-depth consultation process with stakeholders at the implementation level. Second, this pattern also reflects a short-term political orientation that prioritizes visibility and legacy over long-term sustainability and effectiveness. Every minister feels the need to demonstrate contributions and innovations that can be seen and felt by the public, and curriculum changes are the most visible way to do this. Third, the lack of a sustainable evaluation and monitoring system allows curriculum changes to be made without having to wait for the results of a comprehensive evaluation of the previous curriculum. This creates a cycle of change that is not based on evidence-based decision making.

The Impact of Curriculum Changes on Education Implementation at the School Level

Frequent curriculum changes have a multidimensional impact on the implementation of education at the school level. This impact can be categorized based on the perspectives of various education stakeholders.

a. Teacher Perspective

From a teacher's perspective, frequent curriculum changes create a recurring and ongoing burden of adaptation. Each curriculum change requires teachers to relearn new teaching approaches, assessment methods and learning strategies. This adaptation process requires not only time but also significant resources for training and capacity building. Research (Mere, 2024) shows that teachers often experience confusion in implementing the new curriculum due to the lack of



adequate socialization and limited preparation time. Many teachers who are still in the process of adapting to one curriculum already have to prepare to implement a new curriculum again. This condition creates stress and reduces the quality of learning because teachers cannot optimize their mastery of one learning system before switching to another. In addition, in the article (Rahman, 2021), curriculum changes also affect the continuity of teacher professional development. The investment that has been made in training and certification in a particular curriculum is not optimized when the curriculum is changed. This also has an impact on teachers' motivation to develop in-depth expertise due to uncertainty about the sustainability of the system being studied.

b. Student Perspective

From a student perspective, curriculum changes create uncertainty in learning standards and academic expectations. Students who experience a curriculum change midway through their educational journey have to adapt to different assessment systems, learning methods and competency targets. This impact is particularly pronounced for students who are at a transitional level, such as from elementary school to junior high school or from junior high school to high school. The misalignment between the curriculum they received at the previous level and the new curriculum at the next level can create a significant learning gap. In addition, curriculum changes also affect students' preparation for higher education. When the curriculum changes, the selection system and college admission standards also have to be adjusted, which can create uncertainty for students in planning their academic future.

c. Education System Perspective

From the perspective of the education system as a whole, frequent curriculum changes create instability and hamper efforts to continuously improve the quality of education. Each curriculum change requires large investments in terms of developing learning materials, training teachers and adjusting educational infrastructure. According to researchers from the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), frequent curriculum changes do not have a significant impact on improving the quality of Indonesian education. This is reflected in the PISA results, which show no significant improvement despite several curriculum changes (Aranditio, 2024). The researcher emphasized that "the transformation of teachers, learning and assessment, and the competencies to be achieved are far more important than the documents, jargon and political ideas of the curriculum".

System instability also results in the loss of implementation momentum that has been built up. Every curriculum needs sufficient implementation time to be objectively evaluated for effectiveness. A quick turnover does not provide an opportunity to see the real results of a curriculum's implementation. Another significant impact is fragmentation in the national education system. Different schools may be in different stages of curriculum implementation, depending on their readiness and adaptability. This creates a lack of uniformity in national education standards.

Factors Affecting Curriculum Change

An analysis of the literature shows that curriculum change in Indonesia is influenced by a complex range of interrelated factors. These factors can be categorized into several main dimensions.

a. Political and Leadership Factors

Based on the article (Putri & Suhardi, 2023) political factors are one of the main drivers of curriculum change in Indonesia, each change of government or education minister brings a different vision and political agenda in the field of education. This is reflected in the tendency of each new minister to introduce new brands or terminology in their education policies. The personal leadership aspect also plays an important role. Each minister's background, experience and personal vision influence the direction of the education policy developed. For example, Nadiem



Makarim with a background in technology and entrepreneurship brings the perspective of innovation and digitalization in the concept of Merdeka Belajar. Political pressure to demonstrate innovation and reform also drives curriculum change. New ministers often feel the need to show difference and progress compared to their predecessors, which is often realized through curriculum change as the most visible form of legacy.

b. International Evaluation and Benchmarking Factors

According to research (Pratiwi, 2019) shows that the results of international evaluations, especially the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), are important factors that influence curriculum change. Unsatisfactory results in these surveys are often used as justification for making curriculum changes. However, it is contradictory when curriculum changes made based on PISA results do not provide significant improvements in subsequent PISA results. This suggests that curriculum changes alone are not enough to improve the quality of education without improvements in implementation, teacher quality and other support systems. Benchmarking against other countries' education systems also influences the direction of curriculum change. The tendency to adopt best practices from countries with education systems that are considered more advanced is often the basis for new curriculum development, although it does not always consider the specific context and conditions of Indonesia.

c. Technology and the times

The development of digital technology and the changing characteristics of generations of learners are the driving factors for curriculum change. The digital era demands the integration of technology in learning and the development of students' digital competencies. This is reflected in various recent curricula that emphasize digital literacy and the use of technology in learning, such as in the independent curriculum (Dewi & Sunarni, 2024). Changes in the demands of the world of work in the industrial era 4.0 also affect the direction of curriculum development. The new curriculum tends to emphasize the development of soft skills, creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability needed in the modern world of work (Siswati, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has also been a catalyst for changes in learning approaches. Distance learning experiences during the pandemic opened up new perspectives on flexibility in learning and the importance of technological adaptation in education.

d. Social and Cultural Factors

The social and cultural dynamics of Indonesian society also influence the direction of curriculum change. The demand to incorporate values derived from traditions, norms, customs and cultural aspects of society into the curriculum is an important consideration in curriculum development. Curriculum that contains cultural values in Indonesia is crucial to implement, because cultural pluralism is a philosophy that emphasizes tolerance and fair treatment of individuals from various backgrounds (Asrulla et al., 2025). Changes in the social structure of society, such as urbanization, changes in family patterns, and diversification of student backgrounds, require adaptations in learning approaches and curriculum. The curriculum needs to be adjusted to accommodate the diversity of student characteristics and learning contexts. Pressure from various community groups and education stakeholders also influences the direction of curriculum change. Demands from industry, professional organizations and civil society to prepare graduates that meet their needs are inputs in the development of new curricula.

e. Economic and Resource Factors

National economic conditions and resource availability also influence curriculum change. Limited education budgets can affect the ambition and scope of curriculum changes that can be implemented. Investments in human resource development, infrastructure and educational technology become supporting or inhibiting factors for the implementation of the new curriculum. Curriculum changes that are not supported by adequate resource allocation tend to experience



implementation problems. Pressure for efficiency and effectiveness in the management of the education system also drives curriculum change. New curricula are often geared towards achieving better learning outcomes with more optimal use of resources.

Systemic impact on education quality

The impact of frequent curriculum changes is not only limited to operational aspects, but also has systemic implications for the quality of Indonesian education as a whole. This systemic impact can be seen from several perspectives. From a teacher capacity-building perspective, frequent curriculum changes hinder the development of deep expertise. Teachers do not have the opportunity to truly master and optimize the implementation of a curriculum before having to adapt to a new curriculum. This creates a condition where teachers are always in the learning and adaptation stage, not in the optimization and innovation stage. From a student learning continuity perspective, curriculum changes create a disconnect in learning progress. Students who experience a curriculum change midway through their educational journey have to adapt to different standards and expectations, which can disrupt their learning momentum. From the perspective of the national education system, frequent curriculum changes create fragmentation and non-uniformity. Different schools may be in different stages of implementation, depending on their readiness and capabilities. This hampers efforts to create consistent and measurable national education standards.

Comparison with International Education Systems

A comparison with other countries' education systems shows that curriculum stability is a common characteristic of successful education systems. Countries such as Finland, Singapore and Japan maintain their curricula over a relatively long period of time by making gradual and evidence-based adjustments. Based on the article (Haryanto, 2024) Finland, which is often used as a benchmark for the world's best education system, rarely changes its education curriculum, and those responsible for curriculum planning are not the central government but teachers, schools and city governments. Petri Vuorinen, a Finnish education practitioner who also serves as the principal of The English School revealed that the national curriculum that has been established in Finland will be valid for 10 years and does not change even though the government and its policies change (Hutapea & Harususi, 2019). Singapore, with its highly effective education system, has an evolutionary approach to curriculum development. Changes are made gradually and measurably by involving all stakeholders in the development and implementation process. The fundamental difference lies in the approach to change. Countries with stable education systems tend to make changes based on evidence and in-depth evaluation, while Indonesia tends to make changes based on changes in leadership and political agendas.

Recommendations for Education System Stability

Based on the analysis, several recommendations can be formulated to improve the stability of the Indonesian education system and reduce the negative impact of frequent curriculum changes. First, it is necessary to develop institutional mechanisms that provide continuity in education policy beyond leadership changes. This can be done through the establishment of an independent education board or commission that has the authority to maintain long-term policy consistency. Second, a robust and sustainable evaluation and monitoring system needs to be developed for each curriculum implemented. This evaluation must be carried out objectively and evidence-based by involving various stakeholders and using measurable indicators. Third, it is necessary to develop an evolutionary approach to curriculum change, where changes are made in stages (Arifin, 2024). Fourth, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity and autonomy of schools in implementing the curriculum so that changes at the national level do not always have to be followed by radical changes at the implementation level. Fifth, there is a need to develop a culture of evidence-based policy making in education policy decision-making, where any changes must be based on strong evidence of need and expected impact. This article states that the importance of using scientific data and organized research findings to guide good policy decisions (Febriano & Yuadi, 2023).



CONCLUSION

This research confirms that the "change of minister change of curriculum" phenomenon is a systemic pattern that has characterized the Indonesian education system in the last 10-15 years. The pattern of the relationship between the change of education minister and the initiation of curriculum changes shows high consistency, where almost every change of minister is followed by significant changes in curriculum policy. From the period of Mohammad Nuh with the 2013 Curriculum, the transition through Anies Baswedan and Muhadjir Effendy, to the era of Nadiem Makarim with the Merdeka Curriculum, and most recently Abdul Mu'ti with the re-modification of the majoring system, there is a consistent pattern where each minister brings a different vision and approach that is realized through curriculum changes. The impact of this frequent curriculum change is multidimensional and significant. From the teacher's perspective, there is a recurring burden of adaptation that inhibits the development of deep expertise. From the student perspective, there is uncertainty in learning standards and disruption in learning continuity. From the perspective of the education system, there is fragmentation and instability that hampers efforts to improve the quality of education in a sustainable manner.

Factors influencing curriculum change are complex and interrelated, including political and leadership factors, international evaluations, technological developments, socio-cultural dynamics and economic conditions. Political factors and personal leadership are the main drivers, while other factors are often used as justifications for change. The research also reveals the contradiction that although curriculum changes are often justified by unsatisfactory international evaluation results, the curriculum changes that have been made have not shown significant improvements in these evaluation results. This indicates that curriculum changes alone are not enough to improve the quality of education without improvements in implementation, teacher quality and other support systems. To overcome this problem, a more comprehensive and systemic approach is needed. Curriculum stability needs to be maintained through independent institutional mechanisms, robust evaluation systems, evolutionary approaches to change, strengthening school capacity, and developing a culture of evidence-based policy making.

This research makes an important contribution to understanding the dynamics of Indonesian education policy and provides a basis for developing a more stable and effective education system. The resulting recommendations can serve as input for policy makers in developing a more sustainable approach in national education policy. The limitation of this study lies in the focus of the analysis which is limited to literature studies without conducting direct empirical research in the field. Further research using a mixed methods approach involving surveys and in-depth interviews with education stakeholders will be able to provide more comprehensive insight into the impact of curriculum changes at the implementation level. The practical implication of this research is the need to develop a long-term roadmap for Indonesia's education system that can endure beyond changes in political leadership. This requires a commitment from all stakeholders to prioritize the long-term interests of the education system over short-term political interests.

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