Leadership Characteristics of Driving School Principals in Implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan

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Keywords	Abstract
	This research aims to examine the leadership characteristics of Driving School Principals in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan. The main focus of this research is adaptive, visionary and collaborative leadership in managing educational change. The method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach, through interviews, observation and document analysis. The results of the research show that the Mover principal has adaptive leadership which is reflected in his ability to adapt the Merdeka Curriculum policy to the school's needs. Driving school principals can face implementation challenges with flexibility, look for innovative solutions, and support teaching staff in adapting to a competency-based learning system. Visionary leadership can be seen in the school principal's efforts to establish a clear vision and direct school development in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum. Motivating school principals not only provide structured strategies, but also inspire and motivate all elements of the school in improving the quality of learning. Collaborative leadership is demonstrated through effective communication and collaboration with various parties, including teachers, students, parents and the community. This collaboration strengthens the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and creates a more inclusive and innovative learning environment at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of society which is in line with the development of the world of education requires various educational advances and innovations that are in line with society's needs and current developments. In the era of leadership of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbudristek, 2022), Nadiem Anwar Makarim, has launched the newest curriculum called the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum is a refinement of the previous curriculum through Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 56 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the Context of Restoring Independent Curriculum Learning.

The Independent Curriculum focuses on essential material and a flexible structure, making it easier for teachers to carry out differentiated learning, hone talents and interests, and develop students' overall character. The Merdeka Curriculum accommodates the individual needs and potential of students, as well as providing space for creativity and participation in the learning process (Tuerah, 2023: 982). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology is carried out in stages and integratedly through the implementation of five interventions that are interrelated and cannot be separated. This intervention plays a role in accelerating schools to be able to move one to two steps forward which includes: (1) Consultative and asymmetric mentoring activities, (2) Providing strengthening of school human resources, (3) Learning activities through new paradigms, (4) Data-based planning, and (5) School digitalization. The Merdeka Curriculum contains understanding that is in line with educational ideas and principles based on the thoughts of Ki Hajar Dewantara as a National Education Figure. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, independence is not only being independent from orders, but also being capable and strong in governing oneself. Ki Hajar Dewantara explained that the purpose of education is to guide all the natures that exist in children, so that they can achieve the highest safety and happiness both as humans and members of society (Ndoa, 2023: 55).

Strong, goal-oriented leadership characteristics can improve academic achievement, motivate staff, and create an inclusive learning environment. Leadership characteristics not only present a theoretical view of effective school principals, but also provide a framework that school leaders can use to address the concrete challenges they face in managing educational institutions. Some of the popular leadership characteristics of school principals are visionary, transactional, transformational, servant leadership, distributive, dynamic, adaptive, authentic, collaborative and spiritual. Each leadership characteristic has a different approach and offers a unique strategy to achThe leadership of a good school principal is a leader who can fulfill the characteristics of competency standards that support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, namely having adaptive abilities in facing change, including understanding the essence of the Independent Curriculum which is centered on developing students' potential. In addition, school principals must be visionary, able to formulate strategies to create a learning environment that is flexible, innovative and relevant to the needs of the times. Collaborative character is also important, because school principals need to build synergy with teachers, parents and the community to support effective curriculum implementation (Elmanisar, 2024: 2240).

Driving school principals as leaders in schools play an important role in improving governance, developing the learning environment, and improving the quality of education in a relevant and enjoyable way through system reform (Patilima, 2021: 231). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), adaptive leadership is able to realize five Independent Curriculum interventions: (1) Consultative and asymmetric mentoring activities, (2) Providing strengthening of school human resources, (3) Learning activities through a new paradigm, (4) Data-based planning, and (5) School digitalizationieve educational goals (Ningsih, 2024: 349).

Visionary leadership is the leader's ability to create, formulate, communicate, socialize, transform and implement ideal thoughts originating from himself or as a result of social interactions between organizational members and stakeholders which are believed to be the future ideals of the organization which must be achieved or realized through the commitment of all personnel with indicators, (1) Having a vision oriented towards improving the quality of education, (2) Oriented towards student-centred learning, (3) Implementing

the school vision, (4) Motivating all school members (Kurniati, 2023: 92). In collaborative leadership, the principal works together with the teaching team to achieve common goals, encourages active participation, and builds a trusting relationship between the principal and the teaching team. This leadership focuses on empowering teaching team members, joint decision making, and developing collective professionalism, 1) Encouraging collaboration and innovation for school progress, 2) Strengthening learning communities in schools, 3) Empowering students' roles in school activities, 4) Developing collaborative networks (Fitri, 2022: 672).

METHODS

Judging from the type of data, the research approach used in this research is qualitative. What is meant by qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods (Moleong, 2007: 6).

The type of approach to this research is descriptive. Descriptive research is research that attempts to describe solutions to current problems based on data. A type of qualitative research that looks and hears more closely and in detail an individual's explanation and understanding of their experiences. Phenomenological research aims to interpret and explain the experiences a person experiences in life, including experiences when interacting with other people and the surrounding environment. Qualitative research methods have their own characteristics, including, the essence of research is describing existing facts, limited respondents, researchers are predominantly involved in collecting or, and are inductive (Alfatif, 2017: 2).

In the context of qualitative research, the presence of a phenomenon can be interpreted as something that exists and appears in the researcher's consciousness by using certain methods and explanations of how the process of something becomes clear and real. The type of qualitative descriptive research used in this research is intended to examine the leadership characteristics of driving school principals in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research describe the leadership characteristics of the driving school principal in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan. This research uses observation, interviews and documentation methods to obtain in-depth and comprehensive data carried out by researchers. Observations were carried out to directly observe the leadership practices of school principals in managing learning, especially in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Interviews involving school principals, deputy principals for curriculum, teachers, and students to explore their perspectives regarding the leadership of driving school principals in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Meanwhile, documentation is used to analyze various policies and programs implemented with a focus on the leadership characteristics of adaptive, visionary and collaborative school principals.

1. Adaptive Leadership Characteristics of Driving School Principals in Implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan

    Based on the results of research regarding the adaptive leadership characteristics of driving principals in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan, it can be concluded that the leadership characteristics are adaptive in realizing the five main interventions of the Merdeka Curriculum. School principals as learning leaders not only act as policy makers, but also as facilitators who support educational transformation through a flexible and data-based approach. In the aspect of consultative and asymmetric assistance, the Mover school principal plays a role in creating an open space for dialogue with teachers and educational staff. By providing guidance tailored to each individual's needs, the adaptation process to the Independent Curriculum can run more effectively. Apart from that, adaptive leadership is also seen in efforts to strengthen school human resources. Driving school principals ensure that teachers receive relevant training, both through internal and external programs, in

order to increase competence in implementing learning in accordance with the new paradigm. Implementing learning with a new paradigm is one of the challenges faced, but through adaptive leadership, schools are able to develop innovative strategies. Motivating school principals give teachers the freedom to explore learning methods that are more contextual, project-based and (P5) student-centered. This not only increases creativity in teaching, but also encourages students to be more active and independent in their learning process.

Data-based planning is an important aspect in ensuring the effectiveness of implementing the Independent Curriculum. Driving school principals use data from Education Report Cards as a basis for developing school development strategies, including planning learning programs, evaluating teacher performance, as well as more transparent and focused budget management. Thus, every policy taken has a strong foundation, in accordance with the real needs of the school. School digitalization is also a major supporting factor in the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Driving school principals ensure that the use of technology is not only limited to providing devices, but also includes optimizing various digital platforms in learning. Even though it is not yet integrated into one Learning Management System (LMS), the use of various applications such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, and other educational platforms still provides significant benefits in supporting learning flexibility.

Overall, the adaptive leadership of the principal at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan is the main factor in the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. With an approach based on collaboration, innovation and data analysis, school principals are able to create a more dynamic learning environment and empower the entire educational ecosystem in the school. Challenges that arise during the implementation process are overcome through strategies that are solutions and based on real needs, so that each Merdeka Curriculum intervention can run optimally. With leadership that continues to develop and is oriented towards improving the quality of education, SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan is ready to face an educational transformation that is more sustainable and in line with the demands of the times.

2. Visionary Leadership Characteristics of Driving School Principals in Implementing the Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan

Based on the results of research regarding the visionary leadership characteristics of driving school principals in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan, it can be concluded that the principal has demonstrated strong visionary leadership characteristics in implementing the Independent Curriculum. This visionary leadership characteristic is reflected in his ability to formulate a clear and inspiring vision, as well as efforts to realize this vision through school programs and policies that are oriented towards improving the quality of education, especially in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The principal has a clear and strong vision about the direction of school development.This vision is oriented towards improving the overall quality of education, including academic aspects, character development and developing the potential of students. This vision is translated into concrete programs that focus on improving the quality of learning. Encouraging the implementation of student-centered learning, where students are the main subjects in the learning process. Teachers act as facilitators who guide and facilitate students to learn according to their interests, talents and needs. The school principal not only formulates a vision, but also ensures that this vision is implemented in school programs and policies. He actively monitors and evaluates program implementation, and makes adjustments if necessary. The principal encourages teachers and staff to continue learning and developing themselves through various professional development programs.

The principal's visionary leadership characteristics have created a positive and dynamic learning environment at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan. Teachers, staff and students feel motivated and inspired by the school principal's clear vision and real efforts in realizing that vision. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan under the leadership of a visionary principal has had a positive impact on improving the quality of education. Students are more active and enthusiastic in learning, teachers are more creative and innovative in teaching, and the entire school community works together to realize the school's vision. The school principal's visionary leadership is the key to success in implementing the Independent Curriculum and improving the quality of education at SMA

Negeri 1 Pekalongan. By continuing to develop and maintain this leadership style, it is hoped that SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan can continue to develop and become a school of excellence and achievement.

3. Collaborative Leadership Characteristics of Driving School Principals in Implementing the Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan

Based on the results of research regarding the collaborative leadership characteristics of driving principals in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan, it can be concluded that the principal emphasizes the formation of a strong and innovative learning community. The school principal actively encourages collaboration between teachers, students and education staff to create a conducive learning environment. Empowerment of students is carried out through their involvement in the decision-making process and planning learning activities. Apart from that, school principals also build collaborative networks with external parties to broaden horizons and access to useful resources.

First, there is a strong encouragement for collaboration and innovation among all school members to achieve mutual progress. This can be seen from efforts to create a conducive environment for the growth of new ideas and the application of various innovative strategies in learning. Second, learning communities in schools are strengthened through various platforms and activities that facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices between teachers and students. Third, empowering the role of students is realized by providing active opportunities in the learning process, decision making and various other school activities. Fourth, collaborative networks with external parties, such as other schools, educational institutions, the industrial world and local communities, are developed to enrich learning experiences and support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

These characteristics show the commitment of the Mover school principal in realizing an educational vision that is student-centered, innovative, and responsive to current developments.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation regarding "Leadership of Driving School Principals in Implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan" the following conclusions can be drawn:

Adaptive characteristics of the principal's leadership as driving force in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan. Adaptive leadership is able to realize five Independent Curriculum interventions: (1) Consultative and asymmetric mentoring activities, (2) Providing strengthening of school human resources, (3) Learning activities through a new paradigm, (4) Data-based planning, and (5) School digitalization.

Characteristics of the visionary leadership of the school principal. Driving force in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan. The visionary leadership of the driving school principal is one of the keys to success in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan. The principal is not only an administrator, but also a leader who is able to inspire and move the entire school community towards a common goal. Visionary leadership is the ability of the school principal (1) to have a vision that is oriented towards improving the quality of education, (2) oriented towards student-centered learning, (3) implementing the school vision, (4) motivating all school members.

Characteristics of collaborative leadership of school principals Driving the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan. Collaborative leadership is effective leadership whose approach requires collaboration, listening, influencing and adapting. Leadership in schools requires leaders who are able to encourage dialogue for joint development, are able to utilize the knowledge and practical understanding of all members, and have the capacity to fairly provide space and time for collaborative processes, tend to be fair in the distribution of power, and are able to encourage innovative learning conditions, (1) Encourage collaboration and innovation for the progress of the school. (2) Strengthening learning communities in schools. (3) Empowering the role of students in school activities and (4) Developing collaborative networks.

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