

The Role of Moving Teachers in Improving the Quality of Education through the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the role of teacher leaders in improving the quality of education through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. The Merdeka Curriculum offers flexibility to teachers and schools to create a contextual and relevant learning process to students' needs, with a focus on character building and strengthening non-academic skills. The study used a literature study method to examine relevant theories and previous findings. The results of the study indicate that teacher leaders act as agents of change who are able to facilitate educational innovation, improve the quality of learning, and strengthen collaboration between stakeholders. The main challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include limited infrastructure, teacher readiness in using technology, and students' socio-economic factors. However, with policy support and collaboration between schools, parents, and communities, teacher leaders can play a crucial role in ensuring that educational transformation is effective. This study provides recommendations for stakeholders to strengthen the Teacher Leader program and increase the success of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Leading Teacher, Learning Innovation, Merdeka Curriculum, Quality of Education

A. Introduction

Quality education is one of the main pillars in the development of a nation, because good education will produce superior and competitive human resources at the global level (Imron et al., 2020). Education also plays a role in shaping the character and skills of the community that are ready to face various challenges of the times (Taufik, 2020). In Indonesia, efforts to improve the quality of education continue to be carried out by the government as part of the national development strategy, especially amidst the complexity of the era of globalization and digitalization. One of the main focuses of improving the quality of education emerged in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which showed the weak readiness of the education system in facing sudden changes. This situation forced the government to

find concrete solutions to overcome learning loss and restore the quality of learning, one of which is through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum was introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as a strategic step to create education that is more relevant, contextual, and in accordance with the needs of students (Fauzan et al., 2023). This curriculum provides flexibility to schools and teachers in designing the learning process according to the characteristics of students and local school conditions. The goal is to form students who are Merdeka, creative, innovative, and able to think critically to face future challenges (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Giving greater autonomy to teachers and schools is a characteristic of the Merdeka Curriculum, so that educational practices do not only focus on academic achievement but also on strengthening non-academic skills and character building.

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum provides teachers with the widest possible opportunity to freely choose curriculum components to suit their students' needs. The Teacher Leader program is the next step taken by the government to help optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. Teacher leaders are teachers who prioritize students and continue to innovate to teach according to their abilities. It is hoped that this article will provide information about the role of teacher leaders in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Indonesia. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture team, teacher leaders have a very important role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum because they are the people responsible for implementing it (Andriani et al., 2022).

One of the key elements in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is the teacher leader, who acts as an agent of change in the school and community environment. Teacher leaders not only act as teachers, but also as learning leaders who facilitate educational innovation and play a role in creating an inclusive learning culture (Kulophas & Hallinger, 2024). The role of teacher leaders is very important to ensure the success of educational transformation at various levels (Datnow, 2020), because they are equipped with leadership and pedagogical skills that encourage active and collaborative learning. The presence of the leading teacher also helps schools and other teachers understand the philosophy and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, so that its implementation can run effectively in the field. Leading teachers are learning leaders who encourage the growth of students as a whole, are active, and proactive in developing other educators to implement student-centered learning. They are also able to become agents of change for their surroundings, especially in terms of strengthening the profile of Pancasila Students among students (Kusumah & Alawiyah, 2021).

This study aims to explore more deeply the role of the leading teacher in improving the quality of education through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The focus is on understanding how the leading teacher is able to overcome the

challenges that arise in the learning process and its impact on improving the quality of education in schools (Zakso, 2023). Several previous studies have shown that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has had a positive impact, although it is still faced with implementation challenges, such as limited infrastructure, teacher readiness, and support from stakeholders (Sumarsih et al., 2022). Specifically, leading teachers are expected to be able to develop new innovations in learning and build collaboration with the education community around them. This is in line with the government's vision to create an inclusive and sustainable education ecosystem, where every student has the opportunity to develop optimally. Thus, the role of the leading teacher is crucial in creating changes that have a significant impact on the quality of national education. Through this study, it is hoped that an in-depth understanding can be obtained regarding the best practices carried out by leading teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, this research is also expected to provide recommendations for stakeholders to support the sustainability of the Teacher Mover program and strengthen the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in various regions in Indonesia.

B. Methods

This study uses a literature study method as the main approach to collect and analyze data (Rozak, 2023). This method involves reviewing various academic sources, such as journals, books, research reports, and policy documents that are relevant to the role of the leading teacher and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Literature studies were chosen because they allow researchers to gain comprehensive insights into theories, concepts, and previous findings related to the research topic. By utilizing various references from trusted sources, this study can identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the contribution of leading teachers to improving the quality of education. Through this method, researchers can also synthesize information to find research gaps and provide new perspectives based on existing studies. In addition, literature studies help in compiling a conceptual framework that underlies the analysis in this study. This literature study includes various recent studies and policy documents published by the government and educational institutions so that it can provide an up-to-date picture of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the practices of Leading Teachers in the field. Thus, the results of this literature study are expected to provide a strong theoretical basis for compiling recommendations for educational policies and strategies in the future.

C. Results and Discussion

The Role of the Leading Teacher

Teachers-in-Charge have a great responsibility in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. They not only function as teachers but also as leaders who inspire fellow teachers and students to adapt to curriculum changes. In a study at SDN Pasar Lama 1, it was found that training and guidance support from the government greatly helped teachers in understanding and implementing this new curriculum (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Teachers-in-Charge must be able to create an inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and encouraged to actively participate.

This teacher-in-charge program, which lasts for nine months online, focuses on the formation of Pancasila students. The concept of Merdeka learning, which is currently the curriculum in the era of Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim, is in line with the teacher-in-charge program. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 20 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan for Education and Culture stipulates that teachers must create a Pancasila student profile when viewed from a legal perspective (Faiz & Faridah, 2022). There is no significant difference between the roles of a driving teacher and a regular teacher; both are responsible for creating an interesting and enjoyable learning environment that encourages students to achieve their potential (Damayanti & Asbari, 2024)..

Teacher Movers are expected to improve the quality of learning through a more interactive and project-based approach. Research shows that student-centered learning methods can increase their engagement and motivation to learn (Amanulloh, 2024). By using information and communication technology, teachers can create more engaging and relevant learning experiences for students (Sibagariang et al., 2021). However, challenges remain, including teachers' lack of experience in using technology effectively (Nadhifah et al., 2024).

The role of the leading teacher also includes fostering professionalism among fellow teachers. Through collaboration and sharing best practices, they can help other teachers better understand and implement the Merdeka Curriculum. Research at SDN Guruminda shows that the principal and teachers must be committed to making changes so that the curriculum can be successfully implemented (Sumarsih et al., 2022). This includes ongoing training and support from the education community. Professional teachers must have several skills needed to work as professional teachers. Competency is the completeness of mastery of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are displayed through performance and are expected to be achieved by someone after completing an education program. There are many definitions of competence. According to the Decree of the Minister of National

Education No. 045 / U / 2002, competence is defined as a set of intelligent and responsible actions that a person has as a requirement to be considered capable of carrying out tasks related to certain jobs by the community (Husaini, 2018). Professional teachers can improve the quality of education in schools; coaching professional teachers needs to be done to support the quality of education. In addition to having pedagogical, personality, social, and academic competencies, professional teachers in the Islamic perspective must also have a vision and mission regarding Islamic teachings. A teacher must always improve their abilities because professional work requires many abilities and expertise. As educators, managers, and leaders, principals should help foster teacher professionalism (Kaslin & Rumisa, 2021).

Teachers also play an important role in building collaboration between schools, parents, and communities. By involving all stakeholders, they can create an educational ecosystem that supports students' holistic development. Research shows that support from parents and the community is essential for the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Zakso, 2023). Teachers must actively communicate and collaborate with various parties to achieve common educational goals (Amanulloh, 2024). As part of the national education system, teacher leaders are responsible for implementing education policies at the school level. They must understand the latest policies and apply them in daily classroom practice. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers need to make adjustments to teaching and assessment methods to comply with the principles of the curriculum. One part of the policy-making process is policy implementation. The policy-making process consists of a series of interdependent stages called the policy-making process. The policy-making process consists of political activities called the policy-making process. These stages include agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, implications, and adjustments. The purpose of policy implementation is to set a direction so that policy objectives can be realized (Solichin, 2015).

Despite the Leading Teacher's importance in improving education through the Merdeka Curriculum, its implementation is difficult. One of the main challenges is the limited facilities and infrastructure. Many schools, especially in remote areas, still lack infrastructure and facilities that support technology-based learning. Limited access to electronic devices, internet networks, and adequate classrooms are serious obstacles in supporting interactive and innovative learning processes as mandated in the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, this challenge widens the educational gap between schools in urban and rural areas, so that the implementation of the curriculum is not evenly distributed throughout the region. In addition to infrastructure factors, challenges also arise from the aspect of human resource development, especially teacher skills in using information and communication technology. Although the leading teacher has received special training, many of them still need to adapt to digital learning methods and online platforms. This slows

down the process of educational transformation, especially in schools that are not yet familiar with technology.

On the other hand, the difficulty in conducting learning evaluations is also an obstacle, because the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes formative assessments that measure the process and development of students, not just the final results. Many teachers find it difficult to adapt to new evaluation methods that require creativity and an individual approach to students. Other challenges are related to student conditions and the environment. Students' socio-economic factors, such as limited learning devices and internet access at home, also affect the effectiveness of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In some areas, students cannot fully participate in learning activities because they have to help their parents work or have difficulty accessing learning materials. In addition, less conducive school conditions can also hinder the efforts of the leading teachers in creating an active and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Thus, the success of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is highly dependent on the synergy between various parties, including the government, schools, and local communities, to overcome these challenges and ensure inclusive and quality education for all students.

D. Conclusions

The role of the leading teacher is vital in efforts to improve the quality of education through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. By becoming agents of change, improving the quality of learning, fostering the professionalism of fellow teachers, building collaboration with stakeholders, and implementing education policies effectively, the leading teacher can bring about significant positive changes in the world of education. Although challenges remain, commitment and support from all parties will greatly determine the success of the implementation of this curriculum in the future. Through this joint effort, it is hoped that education in Indonesia can continue to develop and produce superior future generations who are ready to face global challenges.

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