

Article

# The Role of School Principals as Mobilizing Teachers in the Implementation of The Independent Curriculum at Senior High School Level in Selayar Islands District

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**Abstract:** This research aims 1). To find out the role of the driving teacher as the principal in implementing the independent curriculum in the SMA / SMK level education unit in the Selayar Islands Regency 2). To find out the principal's leadership of the driving teacher in implementing the independent curriculum at the SMA / SMK level education unit in the Selayar Islands Regency 3). To find out the challenges of the driving teacher with his leadership competence in implementing the independent curriculum in the SMA / SMK level education unit in the Selayar Islands district. This research is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted on SMA/SMK principals who came from motivating teachers in Selayar Islands Regency consisting of SMAN 5 Selayar, SMAN 6 Selayar, SMKN 7 Selayar. SMKN 8 Selayar and the informants were the principals. The data collection techniques are observation, interviews and questionnaires, documentation, and data validity. Data analysis techniques with data collection, data reduction, data presentation and verification. The results showed that 1). The driving teacher as a school principal has several roles, namely as a manager, motivator, innovator, collaborator and leader in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum 2). The Principal's leadership of the driving teacher in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA / SMK is a leader who is able to drive learning, and ensure the implementation of IKM runs well 3). The challenges of the driving teacher in his leadership competence in implementing the independent curriculum are the lack of understanding of fellow teachers about IKM, the difficulty of fellow teachers making changes, and the understanding that the driving teacher has perfect abilities compared to other teachers.

**Keywords:** Principal, Teacher Activator, Merdeka Curriculum

## 1. Introduction

To be able to maximize their functions and duties as a leader, a teacher must have the competencies of a leader, including leadership competence and managerial competence. Leadership competence is the ability of a leader to influence the behavior of subordinates, so that they want to cooperate and work productively to achieve organizational goals (Hasibuan, 2007). As a driving teacher, of course, you must have the ability to influence students so that they want to learn, colleagues (teachers) want to cooperate and collaborate, and stakeholders inside and outside the school want to work together in creating an educational ecosystem that supports holistic student growth and development. The indicators of the competence of the driving teacher are: 1) leading learning, 2) developing self and others, 3) leading school management, and 4) leading school development (Anonymous, 2020).

In 2023, after the completion of two batches of Teacher Education (PGP), namely Batch 2 and Batch 6 in Selayar Islands Regency, there were 4 (four) driving teachers who were appointed as Principals at the SMA / SMK level, namely 2 driving teachers as Principals in SMA and 2 driving teachers as Principals in SMK. Principals of the driving teachers are spread

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across several sub-districts in the Selayar islands, some are on the mainland and some are in island sub-districts where all schools have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum.

Regarding the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, which is a policy program of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI), it is a curriculum that must be used by all levels of schools from primary to secondary levels and is currently being implemented by almost all schools including in the Selayar Island Regency. However, there are still many schools that have not implemented the Merdeka Curriculum properly due to several obstacles, including a lack of knowledge about the Merdeka Curriculum itself, a lack of support for the implementation of IKM from internal school parties, and the availability of motivating teachers who can be expected to accelerate the implementation of the independent curriculum is not proportional to the number of existing schools. Therefore, it is necessary to have schools that can be used as a reference for implementing the Independent Curriculum and the need for a school principal figure whose leadership can be emulated to be able to implement this Independent Curriculum Implementation (IKM).

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers at one of the high schools, namely SMAN 5 Selayar, which is one of the driving schools where the principal has experience as a driving teacher, so that is able to implement the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM) well and is able to develop school productivity optimally. This is evidenced by SMAN 5 Selayar being able to maintain its status as a driving school for 3 years from 2022 to 2025.

## **2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definition of Principal**

School principal consists of two words head and school, head can mean chairman or leader in an organization or an institution. Meanwhile, a school is an institution where it is a place to receive and give lessons. Then according to Mulyasa in Wadib Su'udi (2017), says that the principal is a person who has the ability to mobilize all personal of the education unit in carrying out learning tasks that can encourage schools to realize the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the school through programs that are implemented in a planned and gradual manner. Meanwhile, according to Sudarman Danim (2002), school principals are teachers who receive additional duties as school principals.

### **2.2 Master Activator**

A master teacher is a learning leader (Anwar, 2020). A master teacher is a teacher who has a master teacher certificate (Kemendikbudrisek, 2022). A master teacher is a teacher who has received education and training through a master teacher education program equipped with learning leader skills in the teaching and learning process that helps students to grow actively and proactively (Nurohmat, 2020). Master teachers are expected to always make positive changes that cannot be separated from efforts to always transform learning and education in schools.

### **2.3. Driver Teacher**

Dr. Kemendikbudristek argues that the stages of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM) include several stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation. In more detail, the stages of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM) include: 1) Preparation of IKM Tools: This is the initial stage in which schools develop learning tools in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum, 2) Learning Implementation: This stage is the process of implementing learning in the classroom in accordance with the tools that have been prepared, 3) Assessment and Evaluation: Assessment is used to understand student learning needs and development, and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of learning. 4) Reflection and Follow-up: This stage involves reflection on the learning and assessment results, as well as follow-up to improve the quality of learning in the future.

### 3. Proposed Method

This research is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted on SMA/SMK principals who came from driving teachers in Selayar Islands Regency consisting of SMAN 5 Selayar, SMAN 6 Selayar, SMKN 7 Selayar. SMKN 8 Selayar and the informants were the principals. The data collection techniques are observation, interviews and questionnaires, documentation, and data validity. Data analysis techniques with data collection, data reduction, data presentation and verification.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews with the 4 (four) SMA / SMK principals, it was found that all principals of the driving teachers, namely MZ (Marzuki) head of SMKN 5 Selayar, HMW (Hikmawati) head of SMAN 6 Selayar, HKY (Hikmayanti) head of SMKN 7 Selayar and SLM (Salmawati) head of SMKN 8 Selayar have a very large role in implementing the Independent Curriculum Implementation (IKM) starting from planning, implementation and evaluation. This can be seen from the results of interviews and questionnaires that have been filled in where all stages of the implementation of the independent curriculum which consists of 9 steps of implementation, namely: 1). The school designs the curriculum and flow of goals Learning operational education unit. 2). Learning and assessment planning and teaching material development, 3). Project planning. and implementing the strengthening of the Pancasila learner profile., 4). Implementing learner-centered learning., 5). Conducting integrated assessment in learning., 6). Collaborating between teachers, parents and the community for curriculum and learning purposes, 7). Reflection, evaluation and quality improvement of curriculum implementation, 8). Assisting children's interests and talents., 9). Conducting The selection of subjects for Classes XI and XII was well implemented at SMAN 5 Selayar, SMAN 6 Selayar, SMKN 7 Selayar and at SMKN 8 Selayar. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in these schools is largely determined by the activeness and ability of the school principal in managing his school, which in this case is better known as managerial.

This is in accordance with one of the functions or roles of the principal, namely as a manager, this is in line with previous research proposed by Rosyadi, I.Y., (2015) that principals have a role as managers including planning programs, organizing programs by creating a school organizational structure, mobilizing programs by mobilizing educators and education personnel, monitoring and evaluation carried out by supervising both in PBM and in achieving improvements in the quality of education and achieving UN scores. Suarsana (2010), added that one of the roles of the principal is as a manager. As a manager, the principal is able to carry out management in their respective schools. Management is the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the efforts of organizational members as well as the utilization of all organizational resources in order to achieve predetermined goals. A manager or a principal is essentially a planner, an organizer, a leader, and a controller. The existence of a manager in an organization is very necessary because the organization as a tool to achieve goals in which various kinds of knowledge develop, as well as organizations that are a place to foster and develop human resource careers, requires managers who are able to plan, organize, lead, and control so that the organization can achieve its predetermined goals (Wahjosubidjo, 2010). The main tasks of the principal in carrying out administration include: planning, organizing, directing and controlling, coordinating, supervising, evaluating, curriculum, student affairs, administration, staffing, office, finance, library, laboratory, skills and arts room, counseling guidance, UKS, OSIS (Basri, 2014). A manager or a principal is essentially a planner, an organizer, a leader, and a controller.

The implementation of student-centered learning, the implementation of the Pancasila student profile strengthening project and the mentoring of children's interests and talents carried out by SMAN 5 Selayar, SMAN 6 Selayar, SMKN 7 Selayar and SMKN 8 Selayar show that the Principal also acts as a Motivator or one who provides encouragement or inspiration to others not only to teachers to achieve goals in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and also to students by providing enthusiasm and motivation to become better and reach their full potential. The principal as a motivator is responsible for the smooth implementation of education and teaching in his school. By providing motivation to

subordinates to always support in order to advance the world of education in schools. The principal as a motivator is responsible for the smooth implementation of education and teaching in his school. Principals can make the right strategy to motivate education personnel in carrying out their duties and functions. This motivation can be grown through managing the physical environment, setting the work atmosphere, discipline, encouragement, effective rewards, and providing various learning resources through the development of Learning Resource Centers (Hanifah, 2016). This is in line with the role of the driving teacher as a motivator as research conducted by Jannati, P., et al (2023) that there are six roles of the driving teacher in implementing the independent learning curriculum in elementary schools and the sixth, the driving teacher as a motivator. The motivating teacher has an important role in building enthusiasm, motivation, and the best achievements of students and fellow teachers in learning. According to Sutikno, M. S., (2007); Manizar, E., (2015) that one of the functions of the driving teacher in education is to act as a motivator who inspires and motivates students in a series of learning processes. They have the ability to move and direct students to be active and participate actively in learning activities.

From the results of interviews and questionnaires, it is also obtained that the principal is able to collaborate with other parties for curriculum and learning purposes. In this case, the principal, especially from the driving teacher, opens a space for collaboration between teachers and stakeholders inside and outside the school including parents and the community which aims to improve the quality of learning. To improve the quality of learning, it is very important for a principal to open a positive discussion space and collaboration space involving teachers and stakeholders inside and outside the school. Imas (2022) states that teacher activists must be able to create a space as a forum for discussion and collaboration with fellow teachers and those who have interests or stakeholders both in the school education environment and outside the school with the aim of improving quality in learning. This is also in accordance with Sutikno's (2007) opinion that the driving teacher has an important role in creating a collaborative space for discussion with fellow teachers and related stakeholders, both inside and outside the school education environment. Another role of the principal in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is as an Innovator, which is to be able to run and mobilize all school members, of course, the principal must have innovations that not everyone can do. Including in terms of strategizing to establish a harmonious relationship with the environment. This is in line with research Daffa'uddin, M. (2021) that the role of the madrasah head in improving the quality of education includes the role of educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, motivator, and entrepreneur. To improve the quality of education, the madrasah head of MIN 2 Kendal as an innovator has new ideas or new discoveries as evidenced by the addition of extracurricular activities and developing innovative learning models. According to Imas (2022), that the driving teacher must be able to mobilize other fellow teachers to always innovate. As a teacher in education independence learning, must be able to have mature personality competencies, both in moral and spiritual terms so that they become role models for students and all school residents.

In Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM), the principals, namely MZ (Marzuki), HMW (Hikmawati), HKY (Hikmayanti) and SLM (Salmawati) who are driving teachers, have a heavier role or task than other roles, namely as a leader or leader. In this case, a leader who is able to mobilize, guide and direct all school resources to achieve IKM goals. As a principal, of course, you must be able to inspire and encourage teachers and all school staff to be actively involved in the implementation of the independent curriculum, as well as principals who come from teacher mobilizers who have carried out the PGP. As a leader, the principal is responsible for influencing, guiding, directing and coordinating everything in his environment. This is in line with the research of Sunarya, Y., et al (2023) that the role of a driving teacher is not limited to focusing only on the implementation of tasks related to teaching, such as providing material to students and encouraging students to learn. More than that, organizational leaders are expected to have the knowledge and abilities needed to lead, innovate, and implement change. According to Hadari Nawawi (1984), in Sri Sundari (2002) states as follows "Educational leadership is the process of mobilizing, influencing, motivating and directing people in certain educational organizations / institutions to achieve previously formulated goals".

Leadership is an important force in the framework of management, therefore the ability to lead effectively is the key to becoming an effective manager as well. The essence of leadership is following, the willingness of others or subordinates to follow the wishes of the leader, that is what causes someone to become a leader. In other words, leaders will not be formed if there are no subordinates. According to Wahjosubidjo (2010), the principal as a leader should be able to: a) Encourage a strong will with enthusiasm and confidence of teachers, staff and students in carrying out their respective duties, b) Provide guidance and direct teachers, staff and students as well as provide encouragement and stand in front of the progress and inspire the school in achieving its goals. In the education unit, the principal occupies two important positions to ensure the continuity of the education process as outlined by the legislation. First, the principal is the manager of education in the school as a whole. Second, the principal is the formal leader of education in his/her school. As a manager of education, it means that the principal is responsible for the successful implementation of educational activities by carrying out school administration with all its substance.

The principal as a formal leader is responsible for the achievement of educational goals through efforts to mobilize subordinates to achieve the educational goals that have been set. In this case, the principal is in charge of carrying out leadership functions, both functions related to educational goals and school environmental conditions that are conducive to the implementation of the teaching and learning process effectively and efficiently. To develop teacher professionalism is also one of the tasks of the principal. A principal must at least master the ability to: 1) develop school activity programs, 2) establish work mechanism procedures, 3) carry out monitoring, evaluation, supervision, make reports on school activities. 4) improve and strengthen the discipline of teachers and students (Kompri, 2017). Therefore, the principal is essentially a leader who can move, direct, influence, motivate, thus the role of the principal is needed in developing the quality of educators. Related to the principal's leadership of the driving teacher in line with what was stated by the Ministry of Education and Culture that the driving teacher has a role as a leader in the learning process. They have the ability to encourage and improve students' overall development, including in literacy and numeracy competencies. In addition, they are active and proactive in developing fellow educators to implement student-centered learning. The mobilizing teacher is considered an officer of change in the world of education and is expected to produce many officers of change in the field of education in Indonesia. Pendidikan Guru Penggerak or commonly abbreviated as PGP is a teacher leadership education program to become learning leaders. This program includes online training, workshops, conferences, and mentoring for 9 months for prospective Master Teachers (Kemdikbud, 2020) This Master Teacher program aims to prepare future Indonesian education leaders, who are able to encourage holistic student growth and development; active and proactive in developing teachers around them to implement student-centered learning; and become role models and agents of transformation of the education ecosystem to realize the profile of Pancasila Students (Simon, 2020).

The mobilizing teachers who are mandated as school principals at the SMA/SMK level in Selayar Islands district in carrying out their duties are not as easy as imagined, but they also face obstacles or challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The basic challenges faced by the principals of the driving teachers are: (1) Not all teachers understand the IKM so that as a driving teacher as well as a school principal need to have the ability to inspire, teach and facilitate fellow teachers to understand and implement the Merdeka Curriculum. This is in line with the duties as a principal, namely providing guidance and direction to students and teachers, according to Wahjosubidjo (2010), the principal as a leader should be able to: a) Encourage a strong will with enthusiasm and confidence of teachers, staff and students in carrying out their respective duties, b) Provide guidance and direct teachers, staff and students and provide encouragement to spur and stand in front for progress and inspire schools in achieving goals. And as a driving teacher has been prepared to become future leaders and as a teacher for other teachers, as The function of the driving teacher in education according to Sutikno, M. S., (2007); Manizar, E. (2015), one of which is that the driving teacher acts as a driving force in the learning environment for fellow teachers in schools and in the region. The lead teacher has a role as a trainer for other teachers. (2) The difficulty of encouraging changes from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning, many teachers still maintain the old teaching methods. To overcome this, of course, as the principal

and at the same time as a teacher activist, it is necessary to provide direction and motivation so that teachers can make changes for the better. This is also one of the tasks of the driving teacher in education. according to Sutikno, M. S., (2007); Manizar, E. (2015) that the existence of a driving teacher is expected to increase efforts to make positive changes in the quality of teaching to students and encourage teacher independence in self-development independently. 3) There is a demand to mobilize the community at school for the driving teacher so that a stigma arises that the driving teacher as a learning leader has perfect abilities compared to other teachers.

In this regard, as a mobilizing teacher, it is necessary to explain to teachers that the mobilizing teacher is not as great and perfect as they understand, the mobilizing teacher only acts as a coach and mentor in the learning community. In accordance with the function of the lead teacher itself, in the learning community, the lead teacher acts as the main driver. The lead teacher's job is to train and mentor fellow teachers in the school and region. The lead teacher acts as a trainer for co-teachers with the aim of improving teaching quality and empowering teachers to develop themselves independently. With support and guidance from the lead teacher, co-teachers are expected to design and manage an engaging learning process that encourages students to learn and actualize their potential. Students' internal motivation plays an important role in improving their academic performance independently (Sutikno, M. S., 2007; Manizar, E., 2015). This is in line with Alfatiah's research (2022) that the ability of the driving teacher in mobilizing the learning community is the ability of the teacher to motivate and actively engage with members of his community to be reflective, collaborative and share the knowledge they have and learn from each other in order to achieve common goals.

## 6. Conclusions

The driving teacher, who also serves as the school principal, plays multiple roles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including acting as a manager, motivator, innovator, collaborator, and leader. Their leadership is essential in guiding the learning process and ensuring the effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) in senior high schools (SMA) and vocational schools (SMK). However, challenges remain in fulfilling these leadership competencies. These include the limited understanding of the IKM among fellow teachers, resistance to change within the teaching community, and the misconception that driving teachers possess perfect abilities, which may create distance between them and their colleagues. Overcoming these obstacles is crucial for fostering a more collaborative and progressive educational environment.

**Author Contributions:** A short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided for research articles with several authors (**mandatory for more than 1 author**). The following statements should be used "Conceptualization: X.X. and Y.Y.; Methodology: X.X.; Software: X.X.; Validation: X.X., Y.Y. and Z.Z.; Formal analysis: X.X.; Investigation: X.X.; Resources: X.X.; Data curation: X.X.; Writing-original draft preparation: X.X.; Writing-review and editing: X.X.; Visualization: X.X.; Supervision: X.X.; Project administration: X.X.; Funding acquisition: Y.Y.

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