

The Role of Leading Teachers in Supporting the Acceleration of the Independent Curriculum Adaptation in Senior High School Education Units in LUWU Regency

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ABSTRACT:

This research is motivated by the importance of the role of the Leading Teacher in supporting the acceleration of the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in senior secondary education units. Although the Leading Teacher program has been implemented nationally, its implementation still faces various challenges that affect the effectiveness of learning transformation. This study aims to analyze the role construction, implementation mechanisms, and dynamics of the Leading Teacher role in supporting the acceleration of the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in Luwu Regency. The research employed a qualitative approach with an interpretive case study design within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm. The study was conducted at seven senior high schools in Luwu Regency. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, limited participant observation, and document analysis. Data were then analyzed using thematic analysis through data condensation, coding, theme development, data presentation, and verification of findings. The research results show that the role of the Leading Teacher is constructed through the integration of instructional leadership, teacher mentoring, training facilitation, professional collaboration, and learning innovation. The implementation mechanism proceeds cyclically through the interconnected stages of identification, reflection, planning, and implementation within an adaptive praxis system. The dynamics of implementation are influenced by resource limitations, resistance to change, structural constraints, competency gaps, and stakeholder support. The study concludes that the Leading Teacher acts as an agent of educational transformation, not only performing administrative functions but also fostering collaboration, collective reflection, and learning innovation, accelerating the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum. These findings provide a conceptual contribution to the development of Leading Teacher studies and provide practical recommendations for strengthening policies for implementing

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the Independent Curriculum in educational contexts with similar characteristics.

Keywords: Leading Teacher, Independent Curriculum, curriculum adaptation, educational transformation, case study

Introduction.

Changes in education policy in Indonesia through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum are part of an effort to transform the education system, orienting it toward more flexible, student-centered, and contextual learning. This curriculum provides teachers with the freedom to develop learning strategies tailored to student characteristics and educational unit conditions. However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum depends not only on regulatory changes but also on the readiness of human resources, school culture, and the ability of all stakeholders to adapt to ongoing changes.

In this transformation process, the Leading Teacher holds a strategic position as an agent of change, tasked with motivating learning communities, building collaboration among teachers, facilitating professional development, and encouraging learning innovation within the school environment. This role is no longer understood as merely implementing policies, but as a learning leader capable of fostering a reflective and collaborative culture to support the accelerated adaptation of the Independent Curriculum.

However, the implementation of the Leading Teacher role in the field still faces various challenges. Limited resources, resistance to change, structural constraints, competency gaps, and varying levels of support from stakeholders are factors that influence the effectiveness of this role. These conditions demonstrate that accelerating the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum is a complex process influenced by interactions between individuals, school organizations, and the broader educational environment.

Luwu Regency is one of the regions with diverse characteristics in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, both in terms of school

readiness, resource conditions, and the level of policy adoption. The active presence of Teacher Leaders in several senior secondary education units provides a relevant empirical context for examining how this role is constructed, implemented, and developed to support the accelerated adaptation of the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, research in this context is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of educational transformation practices at the school level.

Based on the above description, this study aims to analyze the role construction, implementation mechanisms, and dynamics of the Leading Teacher role in supporting the accelerated adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in senior high school education units in Luwu Regency. The research results are expected to contribute to the development of educational studies, particularly regarding the role of Leading Teachers as agents of transformation, as well as serve as recommendations for the formulation of more effective and sustainable policies and strategies for implementing the Independent Curriculum.

Theoretical Study

Independent Curriculum as a Paradigm for Educational Transformation

The Independent Curriculum is an education policy designed in response to the demands of social change, scientific developments, technological advancements, and the need to improve the quality of human resources in the global era. The introduction of this curriculum marks a shift in the national education paradigm, shifting from a content-focused approach to student-centered learning. This shift provides teachers with greater freedom to develop instruction tailored to student characteristics, school conditions, and environmental needs. Therefore, the Independent Curriculum is understood not only

as a change in curriculum structure but also as a transformation of the educational paradigm that places students as the primary subjects in the learning process.

Philosophically, the Independent Curriculum is rooted in the thinking of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, who views education as a process of liberating humans through the development of their full potential. This concept positions teachers as facilitators who guide students to develop according to the dictates of nature and the times. In its implementation, the principle of learning freedom is realized through flexible teaching materials, differentiated learning, diagnostic assessments, and character strengthening through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). This orientation demonstrates that learning success is no longer measured solely by mastery of material, but also by students' abilities to think critically, creatively, collaboratively, and communicate effectively, as well as by developing character that aligns with Pancasila values.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum brings about fundamental changes to teaching practices in schools. Teachers are required to have the ability to identify student learning needs, develop adaptive learning strategies, utilize digital technology, and conduct evaluations oriented towards student competency development. These changes require improvements in teachers' professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies to optimally fulfill their roles. In other words, the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum is largely determined by the readiness of teachers as the primary implementers of the learning process at the educational unit level.

From a constructivist perspective, learning is viewed as an active process of constructing knowledge through meaningful learning experiences. This view aligns with John Dewey's thinking, which emphasizes the importance of experience as the basis for knowledge formation, and Lev Vygotsky's theory, which explains that learning development occurs through social interaction and collaboration. Therefore, the

Independent Curriculum encourages teachers to create a learning environment that allows students to construct their own knowledge through discussion, exploration, problem-solving, and reflection. This approach makes the learning process more contextual, relevant, and capable of sustainably developing 21st-century competencies.

Despite its progressive orientation, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces various challenges. Various studies have shown that differences in teacher competency, limited facilities and infrastructure, resistance to change, a low collaborative culture, and unequal access to training are factors that influence the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Furthermore, the diverse characteristics of schools cause the adaptation process to proceed with varying degrees of success. These conditions indicate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a complex process of organizational change that requires educational leadership capable of mobilizing the entire school community to adapt to the new learning paradigm.

Based on this description, the Independent Curriculum can be understood as a paradigm for educational transformation that emphasizes flexibility, innovation, collaboration, and student-centered learning. The success of its implementation depends not only on government regulations but also on the school's ability to build an adaptive and collaborative learning culture. In the context of this research, the existence of the Leading Teacher is a strategic element because it plays a role as a learning leader capable of accelerating the process of adapting the Independent Curriculum by strengthening teacher competencies, developing learning communities, and creating a reflective culture within the school environment. Therefore, understanding the Independent Curriculum as a paradigm for educational transformation serves as an important theoretical foundation for explaining how the Leading Teacher carries out its role in supporting the acceleration of curriculum adaptation in senior high school units in Luwu Regency.

B. Leading Teachers as Agents of Educational Transformation

The Leading Teacher Program is a strategic policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to support the transformation of national education by strengthening the capacity of teachers as learning leaders. This program is designed to produce teachers who not only possess strong pedagogical competencies but also are capable of acting as agents of change in the school environment. Through various stages of education and mentoring, Leading Teachers are prepared to build an innovative, collaborative learning culture, oriented towards improving the quality of learning. Therefore, Leading Teachers are seen not only as implementers of education policy but also as strategic actors driving change towards the sustainable implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

The concept of the Leading Teacher is based on the instructional leadership paradigm, which positions teachers as leaders in the process of improving educational quality. This leadership is manifested through the ability to manage learning, guide students, facilitate teacher professional development, and build collaboration among fellow educators. From this perspective, leadership is not solely related to structural positions, but rather emphasizes the ability to exert positive influence through competence, exemplary behavior, and professional practice. Thus, the Leading Teacher exercises participatory leadership and is oriented toward developing the capacity of the entire school community.

Theoretically, the role of the Leading Teacher can be explained through the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio. This theory explains that a leader is able to create change through the ability to inspire, motivate, provide intellectual stimulation, and pay attention to the needs of individuals within the organization. In the educational context, the Leading Teacher not only directs other teachers to implement curriculum policies but also builds collective awareness of the importance of

student-centered learning changes. This approach makes the Leading Teacher a driver of transformation capable of creating a school culture that is adaptive to various changes in educational policy.

In addition to carrying out leadership functions, the Leading Teacher also acts as a facilitator of professional learning through the development of teacher learning communities. Learning communities provide a forum for teachers to discuss, share good practices, reflect, and collaboratively resolve various learning issues. These activities contribute to improving teachers' professional competence because learning is not only acquired through formal training but also through collective experiences within the community of practice. Thus, the Leading Teacher acts as a liaison, strengthening collaboration between educators, thereby creating a culture of sustainable learning within the school environment.

In implementing the Independent Curriculum, the Leading Teacher performs various strategic functions, including serving as a mentor, coach, motivator, innovator, and companion to other teachers. This role is realized through assistance in the development of teaching materials, the implementation of differentiated learning, the use of technology in learning, the implementation of learning reflections, and the strengthening of assessments oriented towards the development of student competencies. The Leading Teacher also plays a role in building effective communication between the principal, teachers, and various stakeholders so that the curriculum implementation process can proceed in a more focused and collaborative manner. Therefore, the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum implementation is greatly influenced by the Leading Teacher's ability to integrate leadership functions, professional mentoring, and the development of a learning culture in the school.

Based on this description, the Leading Teacher can be understood as an agent of educational transformation with a multidimensional role in supporting changes in the learning system. Their role is not limited to carrying out teaching duties

in the classroom, but also encompasses pedagogical leadership, teacher professional development, strengthening learning communities, and facilitating learning innovation at the educational unit level. In this study, the Leading Teacher is positioned as the main actor driving the acceleration of the Independent Curriculum adaptation through collaborative, reflective, and contextual pedagogical leadership. This perspective serves as a theoretical foundation for analyzing how the Leading Teacher constructs its role, implements various change strategies, and navigates the dynamics that arise in the Independent Curriculum adaptation process at senior high school levels in Luwu Regency.

C. Dynamics of Independent Curriculum Adaptation in Educational Units

Adapting the Independent Curriculum is a process of change that involves adjusting various aspects of education, from mindsets and organizational culture to learning strategies and evaluation systems implemented in schools. This adaptation process does not occur instantly, but rather through stages influenced by the internal and external conditions of the educational unit. From the perspective of organizational change theory, every educational innovation requires an adjustment process that allows individuals and organizations to understand, accept, and implement the changes gradually. Therefore, the success of adapting the Independent Curriculum is determined not only by the quality of the policies designed by the government, but also by the school's ability to manage the changes that occur.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires a paradigm shift in learning from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one. This change requires teachers to develop learning strategies that are more flexible, contextual, and responsive to student needs. In practice, this process often faces various challenges because some teachers are still accustomed to conventional learning patterns that place the teacher as the primary source of knowledge. Consequently, the transition to a

more participatory learning approach requires time, mentoring, and ongoing professional capacity building.

The successful adaptation of the Independent Curriculum is influenced by various supporting factors originating from the school environment and educational policies. These factors include the principal's commitment, teacher competence, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, access to training, and support from the educational community. The principal plays a crucial role in creating an organizational climate conducive to change through policies that encourage innovation and collaboration. Meanwhile, teachers serve as the primary implementers, determining the extent to which the principles of the Independent Curriculum can be effectively implemented in the learning process. The synergy between these various elements is a crucial foundation for creating sustainable curriculum adaptation.

On the other hand, various obstacles also contribute to the dynamics of the Independent Curriculum implementation. Several studies have shown that limited resources, resistance to change, low digital literacy, and teacher administrative burdens remain challenges faced by many schools. Furthermore, differences in geographic, social, and economic characteristics contribute to varying levels of school readiness to implement the Independent Curriculum. This situation demonstrates that curriculum adaptation is a complex process involving various interconnected factors. Therefore, strategies are needed to bridge the gap between policy demands and the reality of implementation on the ground.

In facing these challenges, collaboration and learning communities are crucial tools for accelerating the curriculum adaptation process. Learning communities enable teachers to share experiences, discuss learning challenges, and collectively develop solutions. Through this collaborative process, teachers not only gain new knowledge but also build confidence in implementing various learning innovations. This perspective aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through

interaction and the exchange of experiences among community members. Therefore, strengthening learning communities is an effective strategy for supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in various educational institutions.

Based on this description, the dynamics of the Independent Curriculum adaptation can be understood as a process of change influenced by the interaction between individual, organizational, and educational environmental factors. Curriculum adaptation is not only related to the implementation of new learning tools, but also includes the transformation of learning culture, leadership patterns, and professional relationships between teachers within the school environment. In the context of this research, the dynamics of the Independent Curriculum adaptation serve as a foundation for understanding how the Leading Teacher carries out his or her role as an agent of change in facing various challenges and opportunities that arise during the curriculum implementation process. Thus, the study of the dynamics of curriculum adaptation provides an important theoretical framework for analyzing the role construction, implementation mechanisms, and development of the Leading Teacher's role in supporting the acceleration of the Independent Curriculum adaptation in senior high school units in Luwu Regency.

Methods

This research employed a qualitative approach with an interpretive case study design within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the role of the Leading Teacher in supporting the accelerated adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in senior secondary education units in Luwu Regency. The case study design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the relationships between educational actors, policies, and practices in a real-life context.

The research was conducted at seven senior high schools in Luwu Regency, purposively selected based on their Education Report Card achievements, specifically the Minimum

Competency Assessment (AKM) indicators, Character Survey, and Learning Environment Survey. The selection of these locations was based on the consideration that these schools represent the dynamics of Independent Curriculum implementation, with varying levels of readiness and challenges.

Data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from Leading Teachers, principals, teachers, students, and education personnel selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Secondary data were obtained from policy documents, Education Report Cards, school documents, and various scientific literature relevant to the research focus.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, limited participant observation, and documentation studies. These three techniques were used in an integrated manner to obtain rich data while also enabling triangulation, thus gaining a comprehensive understanding of the role construction, implementation mechanisms, and dynamics of Leading Teachers in supporting the accelerated adaptation of the Independent Curriculum.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The data was then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify themes, patterns of relationships, and meanings emerging from interviews, observations, and documentation. The analysis process was repeated until data saturation was reached, resulting in in-depth interpretations aligned with the research focus.

Data validity was ensured through the application of trustworthiness criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Testing was conducted using source triangulation, technical triangulation, member checking, observational diligence, and an audit trail to ensure that research findings have a level of credibility, consistency, and objectivity that can be scientifically justified.

Results

The Role of Leading Teachers in Supporting the Acceleration of Independent Curriculum Adaptation

The research results show that Leading Teachers play a strategic role in accelerating the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in senior high schools in Luwu Regency. This role is realized through instructional leadership, professional mentoring, and facilitating teachers in understanding and implementing the Independent Curriculum. Leading Teachers actively conduct discussions, conduct internal training, share good practices, and form learning communities as a forum for collaboration among teachers. These efforts not only improve teacher understanding and competence but also build confidence in implementing differentiated learning, diagnostic assessment, and student-centered learning.

Research findings also indicate that Leading Teachers play a crucial role in building a collaborative culture within the school environment through collaborative lesson planning, reflection on learning outcomes, peer observation, and the exchange of professional experiences. This collaborative culture fosters continuous professional learning, enabling teachers to develop learning innovations tailored to student characteristics. These changes demonstrate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum not only impacts administrative aspects but also produces tangible transformations in classroom learning practices, making them more adaptive, participatory, and oriented toward improving the quality of learning.

The results of this study align with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of leaders in inspiring, motivating, and developing the capacity of organizational members to navigate change. In the context of this study, the Teacher Leader carries out pedagogical leadership functions through mentoring, collaboration, and learning innovations that accelerate the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum. Thus, the Teacher Leader acts not only as an educator but also as an

agent of educational transformation capable of building teacher readiness and a school culture that supports the effective and sustainable implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

B. Strategies of Leading Teachers in Accelerating Adaptation of the Independent Curriculum

The research results show that the Leading Teachers implemented various strategies to accelerate the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in senior high schools in Luwu Regency through a participatory, collaborative, and sustainable approach. These strategies focused not only on improving teacher competency but also on fostering a reflective and innovative learning culture. The Leading Teachers involved principals, teachers, and education staff at every stage of the Independent Curriculum implementation, fostering a shared commitment to supporting change. One of the main strategies implemented was strengthening learning communities through discussion forums, internal workshops, lesson study, and sharing of good practices, which encouraged the improvement of teachers' professional competency and strengthened collaboration within the school environment.

In addition to building learning communities, the Leading Teachers also implement ongoing mentoring and coaching strategies in developing teaching modules, planning lessons, conducting assessments, and reflecting on learning outcomes. Mentoring is provided formally and informally, as needed, to help teachers identify problems and find solutions tailored to their students' characteristics. Furthermore, the use of digital technology is a crucial strategy to support communication, sharing teaching materials, conducting training, and disseminating learning innovations, ensuring a more effective and sustainable adaptation of the Independent Curriculum.

The findings of this study align with the concept of professional learning communities and transformational leadership theory, which emphasize the importance of collaboration, reflection, and continuous capacity development

in driving organizational change. Through strengthening learning communities, professional mentoring, coaching, and the use of digital technology, Teacher Leaders are able to create a school environment that is adaptive to change and supports teacher competency improvement. Thus, the strategies implemented are oriented not only toward the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum but also toward building a collaborative, innovative, and sustainable school culture.

C. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of the Role of Leading Teachers in Adapting the Independent Curriculum

The research results show that the effectiveness of the Leading Teacher's role in accelerating the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum is influenced by interrelated supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors include the principal's commitment, a collaborative culture, teacher motivation to continue learning, and the use of information technology to support learning and professional development. This support provides space for Leading Teachers to provide mentoring, develop learning communities, and strengthen collaboration between teachers, thus creating a school environment conducive to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

On the other hand, the research also identified various obstacles affecting the adaptation process of the Independent Curriculum, including differences in teacher competency, resistance to change, administrative burdens, time constraints, and unequal understanding of the substance of the Independent Curriculum. Furthermore, limited facilities and infrastructure, particularly access to technology and learning resources, also hampered optimal curriculum implementation. These conditions resulted in the adaptation process experiencing varying levels of success in each educational unit, depending on the characteristics and readiness of each school.

The findings of this study align with change management theory, which explains that the success of educational innovation is influenced by individual readiness, organizational culture,

leadership, and resource availability. In the context of this research, the Leading Teacher acts as an agent of change capable of minimizing various obstacles through a collaborative approach, professional mentoring, and effective communication. Therefore, optimizing the Leading Teacher's role requires ongoing support from principals, teachers, the government, and all stakeholders to ensure effective, adaptive, and sustainable implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

5. Conclusion

This research demonstrates that Leading Teachers play a strategic role in accelerating the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in senior high schools in Luwu Regency. This role is realized through instructional leadership, professional mentoring, facilitation of learning communities, and strengthening a collaborative culture that encourages teachers to implement student-centered learning. The presence of Leading Teachers not only enhances teachers' understanding of the Independent Curriculum concept but also accelerates changes in learning practices that are more innovative, reflective, and tailored to student needs.

The strategies implemented by the Leading Teachers to accelerate the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum include developing learning communities, implementing coaching and mentoring, sharing best practices, utilizing digital technology, and strengthening collaboration between principals, teachers, and other stakeholders. These strategies have been proven to improve teachers' professional competence, strengthen a culture of collaborative learning, and create a school environment that is more adaptive to changes in education policy.

The successful implementation of the Leading Teacher role is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors. Principal support, a collaborative culture, teacher motivation, and the use of technology are factors that accelerate the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Conversely, differences in teacher competency, resistance to change, limited infrastructure, and administrative burdens remain challenges that

require attention. Therefore, optimizing the Leading Teacher role requires ongoing synergy between the government, principals, teachers,

and all stakeholders to ensure effective, sustainable implementation of the Independent Curriculum and improve the quality of education.

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