



THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN REALIZING INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

Washifah Jannaty¹, Saiful Islam²

^{1, 2}Universitas Nurul jadid

Email : ibushifa24@gmail.com¹, saifulislam23@gmail.com²

Abstract:

Significant changes in the world of Indonesian education occurred with the introduction of the concept of Independent Learning as part of educational reform. This concept emphasizes student independence, increased creativity, and active participation in the learning process. The principal's leadership is key in managing and realizing the concept of Independent Learning at the secondary school level. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Wringin with the aim of in-depth and analyzing the leadership role of the school principal in realizing the concept of Independent Learning. The research method used is qualitative, with a focus on exploring the dynamics of the principal's leadership, the challenges faced, and the strategies implemented in responding to the concept of Independent Learning in the school. The research results show that the leadership of the school principal has a strategic role in forming a school culture that supports Freedom of Learning. The role of the school principal is not only limited to administrative aspects, but also has a strategic impact in facing technological developments and globalization to prepare students to become independent and creative individuals. This research is expected to contribute to the educational leadership literature, while the results can become a practical guide for school principals, teaching staff, and other stakeholders in achieving the goal of Independent Learning in the school environment.

Keywords: *Principal Leadership, Freedom to Learn*

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia is experiencing significant changes, especially with the introduction of the concept of Independent Learning as an integral part of education reform. Merdeka Belajar brings a new paradigm that emphasizes student independence in the learning process, inspires creativity, and increases active participation in learning activities. In this research, the leadership of the school principal is an important factor in managing and realizing the concept of Independent Learning at the secondary school level. Education is a conscious effort to create an ideal study and learning environment so that students can actively develop spiritual strength, self-discipline, character, intelligence and noble moral potential, which is a planned effort carried out. Other abilities needed by himself, society, state and nation (Al Faruq & Supriyanto, 2020).

Freedom to Learn is giving teachers the freedom to develop the learning process according to needs. The essence of Independent Learning should start from increasing the competence of school principals who can understand the characteristics and abilities of their teachers. (Mustaghfiroh, 2020) from the quote above the school principal has an important role in realizing Freedom of Learning in schools. As a leader in the field of education, the principal has a crucial role in establishing a solid

educational foundation to manage and develop the potential of human resources in his institution. Therefore, madrasa heads need to equip themselves with a leadership spirit, innovative abilities, competence, skills and a high level of creativity so that their institutions can grow and develop quickly (Baharun, 2017). SMP Negeri 1 Wringin, as a secondary education institution, also faces challenges in implementing Merdeka Belajar in accordance with the characteristics and context of the school. Therefore, this research aims to deepen and analyze the leadership role of the school principal in realizing the concept of Independent Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Wringin. The principal's leadership does not only cover administrative aspects, but also has a strategic role in shaping a school culture that supports Independent Learning. In facing the era of technological development and globalization, Merdeka Belajar is the basis for preparing students to become independent, creative individuals and ready to face change.

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore the dynamics of school principal leadership, the challenges faced, and the strategies implemented in responding to the concept of Independent Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Wringin. It is hoped that the research results can contribute to educational leadership literature and provide practical guidance for school principals, teaching staff and other stakeholders in achieving the goal of Independent Learning in the school environment.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods to explore the leadership role of school principals in creating a learning environment that provides freedom to students, with the aim of producing graduates who meet the demands of today's needs.

This research was carried out at SMP Negeri 1 Wringin with the reason that school selection was based on considerations of suitability, attractiveness and uniqueness related to the problem that was the focus of the research. The main research participants involved the Principal of SMP Negeri 1 Wringin, the Deputy Principal for curriculum, and teachers. Determination of research participants was carried out through interview, observation and documentation instruments.

The selection of key informants begins with determining the participants which is then continued with determining the next informant from the key informants. The research instruments used include interviews, observation and documentation. The data analysis stage was carried out qualitatively, especially in describing the leadership role of the school principal in creating an independent learning environment at school. The analysis process involves data reduction to produce a clearer picture from research participant observations and interviews. The reduced data is then presented in the form of a descriptive pattern that is relevant to the research objectives, followed by conclusions drawn as findings related to the leadership role of the school principal in creating independent learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principal Leadership

Leadership is the quality possessed by a person to motivate other people so that they can work towards the goals and targets that have been set. This leadership pattern has a significant and even critical impact on the development of a school. Therefore, in modern education, serious attention is paid to the leadership role of the principal. Leadership is defined as an effort to influence individuals or groups so that they can achieve a goal under certain conditions (Said, 2018).

The school principal has a very strategic role as the main driver and determiner of the direction of policies implemented in the school. His task is not only limited to directing, but also involves a real process in realizing the policy. Therefore, appropriate and sustainable innovation is needed, which can continue to improve the effectiveness of its performance. The leadership of the school principal is the main locomotive in efforts to guarantee the quality of education (Ali & Hasanah, 2021). As a leader, the principal is responsible for coordinating various aspects, starting from curriculum

development, improving learning methods, to human resource management in the school environment. By taking on a broader role, school principals have a significant impact in establishing a quality learning environment that is oriented towards improving the quality of education.

The leadership of the school principal plays a large role in encouraging the active role of teachers as the main movers in the learning process, with the aim of creating an environment of independent learning in schools. School principals have the responsibility to provide direction, empower and develop teachers so they can carry out their role effectively in giving students freedom to manage their own learning. With effective leadership, school principals can create positive dynamics in schools, motivating teachers to be actively involved in efforts to create freedom of learning which has a positive impact on the educational process.

Freedom to Learn

Independent education is an action aimed at creating social change through the central role of educators. Educators are not only transmitters of information, but also facilitators who give students the freedom to develop critical thinking and social responsibility. The important role of educators in shaping students' values, views and skills shows their strategic contribution in creating an inclusive, civilized and empowered society. Independent education is not only about knowledge, but also about empowering individuals to think independently and be proactive about social change. By forming an educational environment, educators play a role in shaping students' character, critical thinking and ability to act. Independent education is the basis for positive social transformation through the unique contribution of educators in forming a generation that is empowered, ethical, and committed to building a better society (Specia & Osman, 2015). According to Saleh (2020) Merdeka Belajar is a program that aims to explore the creative potential of educators and students with the aim of improving the quality of learning. Merdeka Belajar basically gives educators the flexibility or freedom to design the learning process with their students. In its implementation, learning is adapted to the diversity of students, accommodating the development of their individual talents, interests and needs. In this way, learning in the classroom can be differentiated according to the individual conditions of students.

The Role of School Principals in Realizing Freedom of Learning

The Independent Learning Curriculum, which is the result of government policy changes to the 2013 Curriculum, is an important concern for the Wringin 1 Middle School school. As an educational institution that understands the diversity of human abilities as God's creation, SMP Negeri 1 Wringin sees the Independent Learning Curriculum as a means to support the development of students' potential and innovation, as well as providing space for educators to develop creativity and innovation in designing learning. In this research, the role of the school principal is very crucial in ensuring the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Wringin. School principals need to support teachers in adapting to curriculum changes, because this is not easy and takes time. As a leader, the principal has the main responsibility to encourage, support and mobilize educators so that they can carry out their duties in accordance with established standards. The role of the principal in realizing the school goals of SMP Negeri 1 Wringin through the Independent Learning Curriculum involves several aspects, such as providing full support to teachers in adapting to the new curriculum, ensuring the implementation of differentiated learning according to students' abilities, and directing the implementation of the curriculum so that in accordance with the values of SMP Negeri 1 Wringin adopted by the school.

The important role of the school principal as a leader who supports and directs teachers in the Independent Learning Curriculum not only ensures smooth implementation, but also supports the vision and mission of the Wringin 1 Middle School School to achieve transformation and renewal according to the Independent Learning Curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Significant changes in Indonesian education, especially with the adoption of the Merdeka Belajar concept, have changed the learning paradigm by emphasizing student independence, creativity, and active participation in the learning process. The leadership of the school principal is a crucial factor in managing and realizing the concept of Independent Learning at the secondary school level. The importance of the role of the school principal as a leader in designing a solid educational basis for managing and developing the potential of human resources in schools is emphasized. School principals need to have a leadership spirit, innovative abilities, competence, skills and a high level of creativity to support the growth and development of educational institutions.

SMP Negeri 1 Wringin as a secondary education institution faces the challenge of implementing Merdeka Belajar in accordance with the characteristics and context of the school. Therefore, this research aims to deepen and analyze the leadership role of the school principal in realizing the concept of Independent Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Wringin.

The role of the school principal is not only limited to administrative aspects, but also has a strategic dimension in shaping a school culture that supports Independent Learning. In facing the era of technology and globalization, school principals play a key role in preparing students to become independent, creative individuals and ready to face change.

REFERENCES

- Al Faruq, M. H., & Supriyanto, S. (2020). Kepemimpinan Transformasional kepala Ali, S., & Hasanah, E. (2021). Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Menjamin Mutu Pendidikan Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19 di SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education*, 7(1).
- Baharun, H. (2017). Peningkatan kompetensi guru melalui sistem kepemimpinan kepala madrasah. *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah*, 6(1), 1–26.
- Mustaghfiroh, S. (2020). Konsep ‘Merdeka Belajar. Perspektif Aliran Progresivisme John Dewey”. *Jurnal Studi Guru Dan Pembelajaran*. Lampung, 3(1).
- Said, A. (2018). Kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam melestarikan budaya mutu sekolah. *EVALUASI: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 2(1), 257–273.
- Saleh, M. (2020). Merdeka belajar di tengah pandemi Covid-19. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Hardiknas*, 1, 51–56.
- sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu guru. *JDMP (Jurnal Dinamika Manajemen Pendidikan)*, 5(1), 68–76.
- Specia, A., & Osman, A. A. (2015). Education as a Practice of Freedom: Reflections on bell hooks. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(17), 195–199.