

Leadership Support for School Principals: Strategies for the Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*

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ABSTRACT

The formulation of this thesis problem is how to obtain the Assistance of the Principal in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at 154 Palembang State Elementary School. The results of the study show that the Assistance carried out by the Principal in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the 154 Palembang State Elementary School, has been carried out well. However, it is only in the early stages, namely in the stage of the Independent Learning pathway, in other words, that the educational unit has applied several principles of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the implementation of learning and assessment but still uses the curriculum of the academic unit that is currently implemented, namely Curriculum 13. Thus, the Principal's Assistance in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at 154 Palembang State Elementary School has been implemented. However, the implementation has yet to be fully implemented on the Independent Change and Sharing pathway.

INTRODUCTION

Kurikulum Merdeka is interpreted as a learning design that provides opportunities for students to learn calmly, relaxed, fun, stress-free, and pressure-free to show their natural talents. Freedom of learning focuses on freedom and creative thinking. One of the programs presented by the Ministry of Education and Culture in the launch of independent learning is the start of the driving school program. This program is designed to support every school in creating a generation of lifelong learners with personalities similar to Pancasila students. The program's success requires a teacher's role, "Teachers as the main subject who plays a role are expected to be able to be the driving force to take actions that provide positive things to students" (Angga et al., 2022).

Kurikulum Merdeka is a rearrangement in the national education system in Indonesia, which, according to Cholilah et al. (2023), is to welcome the change and progress of the nation to adapt to the changing times. Likewise, what was conveyed by the Minister of Education and Culture (Divana et al., 2022) is that "education reform cannot be carried out solely using an administrative *approach*, but must carry out cultural transformation." This is also in line with the opinion that "the concept of independent learning can then be accepted considering the vision and mission of Indonesian Education in the future for the creation of quality human beings who can compete in various fields of life" (Febia et al. et al., 2022). With the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it is hoped that students can develop according to their potential and abilities. With the independent curriculum, they get critical, quality, expressive, applicative, varied, and progressive learning. "As well as the change in the new curriculum, cooperation, strong commitment, seriousness and real implementation from all parties is needed so that the Pancasila student profile can be embedded in students" (Andiarini & Nurabadi, 2018; Latifah et al., 2022).

Strong commitment, seriousness, and concrete implementation must first and foremost emerge from school principals and teachers. School principals must play an active role in improving educational institutions by influencing all components of education, such as teachers, students, and the community; according to Febia Ghina Tsuraya et al. (2022), the Principal's workload is full to carry out the primary managerial duties, entrepreneurial development, and supervision of teachers and education personnel.

The task of the Principal is to supervise teachers with various methods, one of which is using the mentoring process as explained in article 1, paragraph 4 of the Directorate General of GTK no. 4831/B/HK/.03.01/2023, mentoring is the activity of school supervisors working with the Principal to improve the capacity and quality of education unit services to carry out student-centered learning using relevant strategies and methods. So, the Principal's object of Assistance is the Teacher as a professional educator. As mentioned in the definition of a teacher according to the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 6 of 2018 Article 1 Paragraph 2, namely a teacher is a professional educator with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, as well as assessing and evaluating students in early

childhood education through formal education, primary education, and secondary education.

The Teacher's duties above will only run smoothly with the Assistance of the Principal. The role of the Principal as a companion is indispensable as a motivator, facilitator, and feedback on teacher performance (Hasibuan et al., 2022). Therefore, Hehakaya and Pollatu (2022) stated that mentoring is an effective tool for empowerment and personal development in helping someone develop their career, especially a teacher's career. Assistance has principles: (1) Collegial principles or peer relationships (Dacholfany et al., 2024). (2) Professional principles, namely relationships for improving professional abilities (Marisyah et al., 2023). (3) The principle of mutual trust (Marsinah et al., 2024). (4) The principle of sustainability (Purwanto, 2023).

At the 154 Palembang State Elementary School, mentoring is routinely carried out every month. However, it is still in a group usually called routine coaching from the School Supervisor or the Principal. While individual or personal Assistance has been implemented, the frequency is situational at certain times, for example, when teachers have problems in the learning process. The Principal assists teachers programmatically with everything related to the learning process at school, from curriculum implementation issues and teacher competencies to facilities and infrastructure to support the teaching process in groups and individually. Therefore, a school principal must be serious in carrying out mentoring, especially individual mentoring, because in this way, it is possible for every Teacher to freely submit complaints both regarding personal problems and related to student problems. With individual Assistance, teachers' privacy can be maintained.

Based on the researcher's observations and feelings as an educator at 154 Palembang State Elementary School, the Principal's implementation of mentoring could have been better, especially personal Assistance. For this reason, the researcher described this thesis as Assistance for School Principals in Implementing the Independent Curriculum at State Elementary School 154 Palembang.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Assistance

Mentoring is interpreted as an effort to pave the way for a person so that his position can develop optimally through the learning process, not by patronizing him; the companion acts as a motivator, facilitator, and feedback. Nuswantoro et al. (2023) state mentoring is a powerful tool of empowerment and personal development; it is an effective way to help a person develop their career; it is a cooperation between two people (mentor and target) who usually work in the same field or share similar experiences; it is a fruitful working relationship based on mutual trust and respect, according to (Harapan, 2019) mentioned that mentoring is a strategy commonly used by the government and non-profit institutions to improve the quality of human resources so that they can identify themselves as part of the problem and try to find alternative solutions to the issues they face. Furthermore, mentoring, according to (Fransiska et al., 2020), is

a process of providing convenience by companions to clients in identifying the need to solve a problem and encouraging them to increase initiative in decision-making so that independence can be achieved.

Based on some of the opinions above, mentoring is an effort to provide Assistance by a professional to people in need, both in the form of material (preparing learning facilities) and immaterial, to open up a person's thinking insight to get out of trouble and develop their careers.

The Leadership Style of the Principal in Mentoring

Leadership style is a leader's way of managing his team to achieve organizational goals, which includes the behaviors, values, and methods used to move team members towards desired achievements. There is no one leadership approach suitable for all situations. Leadership style in the world of education is a manifestation of the behavior of a leader who is concerned with his ability to lead, in this case, the Principal (Rusmaladi et al., 2021). These manifestations usually form a specific pattern. This definition of leadership style is the opinion conveyed by (Harapan, 2019), which states that the leader's overall pattern of action as perceived or referred to by the subordinate is known as a leadership style. Leadership style: a leader who carries out his leadership function with all his philosophy, skills, and attitudes (Irawan et al., 2024; Nasar et al., 2023; Novia et al., 2024). These styles can vary based on motivation, power, or orientation toward a particular task or person (Melinda et al., 2023; Purwanto, 2023, 2024). There are positive and negative leaders among several leadership styles, and the difference is based on how they motivate employees.

If the approach to providing motivation emphasizes rewards (both economic and non-economic), it means that an upbeat leadership style has been used. On the other hand, if his approach emphasizes punishment, he applies a negative leadership style. This second approach can result in acceptable achievement in many situations but comes at a human cost. Leadership style is a process in which there is an element of influence. With a leadership style, there will be cooperation and a vision and mission to achieve common goals in the organization. Leadership style is defined as a pattern of behavior designed to integrate organizational goals with individual objectives to achieve a specific goal. Riyany et al. (2021) provide an overview that the leadership style in educational institutions, namely the education office, tends to be more democratic. This is supported by the level of information dissemination in the current category and the level of authority of the leadership in providing needs that are in the directed category. Meanwhile, the leadership style in school educational institutions is more likely to be autocratic.

METHODOLOGY

The place of this research is State Elementary School 154 Palembang with the address Sungai Putat RT 29 RW 04 Pulo Kerto Village, Gandus District; the research period is approximately three (3) months from January 2024 to March 2024. The informant (informant) in this study is determined based on the abilities/capabilities possessed, namely parties who understand correctly or are related to the problems raised in this study. Agustin et al. (2023) explained that

informants can be equated with research participants, namely research objects from which research data is obtained. Based on the above opinion, the informants in this study are one (1) principal, eight educators or teachers, and three education staff members of State Elementary School 154 Palembang, so there are 12 people.

The research method used in this study is qualitative, which, according to Afini et al. (2023), is usually carried out only as descriptive research. They call the research qualitative descriptive. What is meant by qualitative is the data that is manifested in the word state or adjective, for example, very good (SB), then good (B), and others, which are the continuation of the quality.

Based on some of the opinions above, this study aims to find out how to assist school principals in implementing the independent curriculum at State Elementary School 154 Palembang. In this study, the researcher uses a questionnaire to organize the data, choosing which ones are important and learned and making conclusions so that they are easily understood by themselves and others. Data analysis in qualitative research takes place during the data collection process and after completing data collection in a certain period. According to (Ariya Agustin, 2022), the data analysis technique used in qualitative analysis has four (4) stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and the last step, drawing conclusions and verification.

RESEARCH AND RESULTS

1. Principal Assistance is reviewed from the implementation of EMASLIM-FM) at State Elementary School 154 Palembang

- 1) The mental development of educators and education personnel is related to attitudes and dispositions in creating a conducive climate.
- 2) The moral development of educators and education personnel is related to good teachings, attitudes, and obligations by their respective duties, such as flag ceremonies or regular school meetings.
- 3) Physical coaching of educators and education personnel is related to their physical condition, health, and outward appearance.
- 4) The artistic development of educators and education personnel is related to sensitivity to art and beauty.
- 5) I am planning and formulating a program, as well as objectives and actions that must be carried out.
- 6) Gathering and organizing school resources and school material resources.
- 7) Direct and influence resources to perform their essential tasks.
- 8) It operates the school to ensure that it achieves the goals that have been set.
- 9) Ability to manage the curriculum.
- 10) She is guiding teachers in managing student administration.
- 11) Guiding Educators and Education Personnel in terms of managing personnel administration.
- 12) She is managing facilities and infrastructure for educators and education personnel.
- 13) I am managing archival administration.

- 14) We are managing financial administration effectively and efficiently to support school productivity.
- 15) Awakening and stimulating educators and education personnel to do their duties as best as possible.
- 16) Establish and equip the necessary facilities for the smooth and successful teaching and learning process.
- 17) Together with teachers, they try to develop, find, and use teaching methods that are more in line with the current curriculum guidelines.
- 18) We are fostering good and harmonious cooperation between Educators and Education Personnel.
- 19) We strive to improve the quality and knowledge of Educators and Education Personnel.
- 20) Able to provide guidance and supervision to Educators and Education Personnel.
- 21) Able to increase the will of educators and education personnel.
- 22) Able to open communication and delegate tasks.
- 23) Have the right strategy to establish a harmonious relationship with the environment.
- 24) I am looking for new ideas.
- 25) Integrate every activity.
- 26) You are setting an example for educators and education personnel.
- 27) We are developing innovative learning models.
- 28) Able to foster a healthy and comfortable physical environment.
- 29) We are encouraging a conducive and pleasant work atmosphere.
- 30) Able to encourage Educators and Education Personnel to become disciplined individuals.
- 31) Able to provide various learning resources through the development of learning resource centers.
- 32) Able to be a figure and mediator for developing the community and its surroundings.

2. *Principal Assistance is reviewed from implementing the Independent Curriculum (IKM), in this case, Independent Learning at State Elementary School 154 Palembang.*

- 1) Curriculum Content Competencies and Basic Competencies 13.
- 2) Curriculum Syllabus 13.
- 3) Curriculum Learning Preparation Plan 13.
- 4) Strengthening Curriculum Character 13.
- 5) Curriculum at the Curriculum Education Unit Level 13.
- 6) Independent Curriculum Learning Outcomes.
- 7) Flow of Educational Goals of the Independent Curriculum.
- 8) *Kurikulum Merdeka* Teaching Module.
- 9) Pancasila Student Profil Strengthening Project (P.5) Independent Curriculum.
- 10) Operational Curriculum of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* Education Unit.

3. *Transcript of Interview Results with the Principal*

No	Question	Answer
1	Is PTK mental coaching related to attitudes and dispositions in creating a conducive climate always carried out?	Yes, it is implemented, but not programmatically.
2	Does the moral development of PTK relate to good teachings, attitudes, and obligations, and does it follow their respective duties?	Yes, at the flag ceremony every Monday.
3	Has PTK's physical coaching on their physical condition, health, and appearance been carried out regularly? For example, gymnastics once a week.	Yes, gymnastics is held once a week.
4	What is PTK's artistic coaching related to sensitivity to art and beauty carried out?	Yes, at the time of the art competition at a particular moment.
5	I am planning and formulating a program, and objectives and actions must be carried out periodically.	Yes, once a semester or once a year.
6	Whether gathering and organizing school resources and school material resources is done?	Yes, once a year
7	Is it essential to direct and influence resources to do their duties and always do every opportunity?	Yes, especially in meetings and flag ceremonies.
8	Is controlling the school for the running of the school to achieve the goal always maintained?	Yes, with the way the picket teacher fills the empty hours.
9	Do you have the ability to manage the curriculum by guiding teachers?	Yes, even with Assistance.
10	Have you ever guided teachers in managing student administration?	Have, especially at the beginning of the school year.
11	Have you ever guided education staff in terms of managing personnel administration?	Ever, especially at the beginning of the school year.
12	Has there ever been coaching on how to manage the administration of facilities and infrastructure to education personnel?	Have, especially at the beginning of the school year.
13	Have you ever coached education staff on how to manage archives administration?	Have, especially at the beginning of the school year.
14	Have you ever coached education staff on how to manage financial administration effectively and efficiently to support school productivity?	Have, especially at the beginning of the school year.
15	Do they always give advice and suggestions that awaken and stimulate PTK to carry out their duties as well as possible?	Yes, every opportunity.

16	Does the school budget include points to provide the necessary facilities for the smooth and successful teaching and learning process?	Of course, even though it has not met expectations.
17	Do teachers always try to develop, find, and use teaching methods according to the current curriculum guidelines?	Yes, with the supervisor.
18	Do you always foster good and harmonious cooperation with fellow PTK?	Yes, because that is the capital to achieve the goal.
19	Do you always try to improve the quality and knowledge of PTK?	Yes, by participating in technical guidance.
20	Does it have the ability to provide guidance and supervision to PTK?	Of course, as a KEPSEK must be able to.
21	Does it always motivate PTK to improve its will and abilities?	Yes, by recommending teachers to go to college.
22	Does it have the ability to communicate openly and delegate tasks to PTK?	Yes, because the task is carried out well if the communication is good.
23	Does it have the right strategy to establish a harmonious relationship with PTK and the surrounding environment?	Yes, for example, by holding the release of class VI students.
24	Is it always looking for new ideas in the advancement of education?	Yes, for example, by making independent learning media.
25	Does it always integrate every activity both in the process and outside the educational process?	Yes, for example, by giving group assignments to students.
26	Do you always set an example for Educators and Education Personnel (PTK)?	Of course, for example, time discipline.
27	Do teachers always develop innovative learning models?	Of course, even though it is done by way of Assistance from the supervisor,
28	Does it have the ability to cultivate a healthy and comfortable physical environment?	Yes, for example, with the most comfortable way to choose a class.

29	Do you always encourage a conducive and pleasant work atmosphere for all PTKs?	Yes, with an active way of communication.
30	Does it have the ability to encourage PTK to become a disciplined person?	Yes, by giving an example.
31	Does it have the ability to provide various learning resources through the development of learning resource centers?	Yes, by allocating BOS funds.
32	Do they have the ability to be figures and mediators for the development of society and its surroundings?	Of course, for example, attending invitations from the community.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research that has been described above, either from the results of interviews with principals and teachers at State Elementary School 154 Palembang or through direct observation and looking at existing documents or evidence that have been carried out within approximately three (3) months, the discussion of the analysis of the research data is as follows: How to implement the Assistance of school principals in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in public elementary schools 154 Palembang.

1. Interview Results Data Analysis

- 1) The researcher's interview with the Principal of the 154 Palembang State Elementary School, which involved 32 questions, revealed that all of them were answered convincingly, namely "yes."
- 2) Based on the results of the researcher's interview with the Teacher at 154 Palembang State Elementary School, who were presented with the same questions and the same number, all were answered. However, there was a variation in the answers compared to the Principal's answer because not all questions were answered "yes."

Based on the researcher's analysis of the data from interviews conducted with the Principal and Teacher of the 154 Palembang State Elementary School. There are two (2) questions whose answers are different between the Principal and the Teacher, namely question number 16 and question number 25; the Principal answered "yes," while all teachers answered, "I don't know." The question is,

- 1) Question number 16 is: Is the school budget inclusive of points to provide and complete the necessary facilities for the smooth and successful teaching and learning process?
- 2) Question 25 is: Does it always integrate every activity both in and outside the educational process?

After being examined by these questions, it is natural for teachers to answer that they do not know because the two questions are school programs prepared by the Principal, and the Teacher does not know them; in other words only the Principal knows about it, in terms of the Teacher actually must be involved in the preparation of the school program and budget, this is in line with the opinion (Ihsan, 2022; Isa et al., 2022; Mayanti, 2023) identifies several

advantages of the school-based budgeting system including: (1) schools can show the unique needs of each school, (2) cooperative studies of programs and practices that have been implemented, (3) teacher involvement in determining the school's financial status and restrictions on the use of budgets, (4) a closer relationship between teachers and parents, and (5) decisions are taken closer to the needs of students.

Based on the above quote on point three (3), teachers must be involved in determining the financial status of the school and limiting the use of the budget. This point makes it very clear that teachers must know and be involved in preparing school programs, including budget or financing issues.

2. Observation Data Analysis

Based on the researcher's analysis of the data from direct observation at 154 Palembang State Elementary School, the following things were obtained:

- 1) Of the 32 questions in the interview, five (5) questions can be seen directly, namely: (1) Question number 3, (2) Question number 16, (3) Question number 28, (4) Question number 31, and (5) Question number 32.
- 2) Of the five (5) observations, one is not physically proven, namely, the school budget is listed as a point to provide and complete the facilities necessary for the smooth and successful teaching and learning process.

From the analysis, it is evident that all budgets that are prepared must be accounted for in the form of reports and evaluated for their implementation, according to (Iskandar et al., 2023); in the Public Sector Accounting book, there are four (4) stages of the budget cycle which at the final stage or the fourth stage it is stated that this stage is a stage of reporting and evaluation. At this stage, the budget must be accounted for in the form of a report and evaluated for implementation. This is in line with the opinion of Mulyasa (2023), there are six (6) budgeting principles that have referred to the latest developments in society, namely: (a) democratic, which means that the budget, both related to revenue and related to expenditure, must be determined through a process that includes as many elements of society as possible, in addition to having to be discussed and approved by the legislature; (b) fair, meaning that the budget must be optimally directed to the interests of the public and proportionally allocated to all groups in society according to their needs; (c) transparent, is the process of planning, implementing and accountability of the state budget that must be known not only by the people's representatives, but also by the general public; (d) high morals, meaning that the management of the state budget adheres to the applicable laws and regulations, and always refers to high ethics and morals; (e) prudence, means that the management of the state budget must also be carried out carefully, because the position of resources is limited and expensive. This is increasingly important if it is associated with the element of organizational debt (Oktaviani & Ramayanti, 2023; Pertiwi et al., 2023) and (f) accountable, meaning that the organization's financial management must be accountable at all times internally and externally to the people. Of the six (6) budget principles above, at point (f) accountable, the organization's financial management must be accountable.

3. *Documentation Data Analysis*

Based on the researcher's analysis of documentation data at State Elementary School 154 Palembang related to the learning device (curriculum), which consists of 10 points with the following details:

- 1) Five (5) Curriculum 13 Devices, namely: (1) KI/KD; (2) Syllabus; (3) lesson plans; (4) Character Strengthening; and (5) KTSP.
- 2) Five (5) Independent Curriculum Devices, namely: (1) CP, (2) ATP, (3) Teaching Module, (4) Eng P.5, and (5) KOSP.

So the results obtained for the Curriculum 13 apparatus exist and are complete, while for the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, there is not yet one; therefore, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at State Elementary School 154 Palembang is only limited to the Independent Learning pathway in other words that the educational unit applies several principles of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the implementation of learning and assessment, but still uses the curriculum of the educational unit that is being implemented, namely Curriculum 13. This is not a problem because the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology issued the Decree of the Head of BSKAP Number 034/H/KR/2022 concerning the Education Unit for the Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the 2022/2023 Academic Year (Rahayu et al., 2022; Rusmiati et al., 2023). In the decree, some schools are included in Independent Learning IKM, Independent Transforming IKM, and Independent Sharing, and 154 Palembang State Elementary School has only implemented the Independent Curriculum on the Independent Learning pathway.

Based on the three data analyses of the results of the research above, both interview data, observation data, and documentation data, the Assistance carried out by the Principal in implementing the Independent Curriculum at State Elementary School 154 Palembang has been implemented well, even though it is only in the early stages, namely at the stage of the Independent Learning path. Of the three (3) data analyses, there are a few anomalies that the researcher found in the analysis of the data of the interview results, namely there is a difference in answers between the Principal and the teachers, namely about transparency in school expenditure budgeting about the provision of facilities needed for the smooth and successful teaching and learning process. Then, in the observation results, the budgeting is not supported by authentic physical evidence; in other words, the physical evidence exists, but it may not be physical evidence by the school program that is being implemented because the condition of the 154 Palembang State Elementary School is still in a transition period. Namely, there has just been a change of Principal. Although this is not directly related to the Assistance of the Principal in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it has more or less affected the acceleration of implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at 154 Palembang State Elementary School.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the three data analyses of the research results that have been described in the previous chapter, both from the data from interviews, observation data, and data from the documentation that the Assistance carried

out by the Principal in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at State Elementary School 154 Palembang, has been carried out well. However, it is only at the initial stage, namely in the stage of the Independent Learning pathway in other words that The education unit has applied several principles of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the implementation of learning and assessment but still uses the curriculum of the educational unit that is being implemented, namely Curriculum 13. The Principal's Assistance in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at 154 Palembang State Elementary School has been implemented. However, the implementation has yet to be fully implemented on the Independent Change pathway.

Principals and teachers at 154 Palembang State Elementary School must immediately prepare and equip themselves with an understanding of the Independent Curriculum by participating in face-to-face and online training (zoom). Then, the Principal brings experts to the school to give the Principal and teachers an understanding. So it is hoped that in the upcoming 2024-2025 Academic Year, State Elementary School 154 Palembang can increase the Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (IKM) from the Independent Learning pathway stage to a higher stage, namely to the Independent Change pathway stage, and if possible to an even higher stage, namely the Independent Sharing pathway.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This research is expected to contribute to other researchers who want to develop research related to the implementation of the independent curriculum and support for the implementation of the curriculum by school principals. Through this research, it is hoped that the 154 Palembang State Elementary School will be used as a control tool by principals, teachers, and education staff; with weaknesses and shortcomings, each can improve their respective roles.

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