
Leadership Service Management in Learning Planning in the Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract

The Merdeka Curriculum is the latest curriculum in Indonesia's education system, emphasizing flexibility and independent learning processes. Leadership, particularly that of school principals, plays a crucial role in ensuring effective planning and implementation of learning aligned with this curriculum. This study employs a literature review method to analyze how leadership service management contributes to the effectiveness of learning planning. The findings reveal that school principals' leadership enhances teacher performance, encourages stakeholder engagement, and supports flexibility in learning planning. Despite challenges such as resistance to change and limited resources, strategies like continuous professional development, collaboration, and regular evaluation can address these obstacles. With an adaptive and collaborative leadership approach, the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented more effectively, yielding positive outcomes for students.

Keywords– *Leadership Service Management, Learning Planning, Merdeka Curriculum*



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1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia is continuously undergoing changes and innovations aimed at enhancing the quality of learning. One of the most significant transformations is reflected in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM), which emphasizes school autonomy in designing curricula tailored to the needs of students (Isa, Asrori, & Muharini, 2022). This curriculum is designed to provide flexibility in the learning process, encouraging a more contextual and competency-based approach. By allowing schools to adapt their educational frameworks to local contexts and student characteristics, the Merdeka Curriculum seeks to foster a more inclusive and personalized learning environment. It shifts the focus from a rigid, centralized system to one that prioritizes creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, aligning with the demands of the 21st century. Furthermore, the curriculum aims to empower teachers and school leaders to take a more active role in shaping educational practices, ensuring that learning is not only relevant but also engaging for students. Through this approach, the Merdeka Curriculum aspires to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ultimately preparing students to face real-world challenges with confidence and competence. This progressive shift underscores Indonesia's commitment to creating an education system that is dynamic, responsive, and capable of nurturing well-rounded individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society.

In its implementation, schools face various challenges, particularly in the realm of learning planning. Unstructured planning and a lack of understanding of the concept of flexibility within the Merdeka Curriculum can hinder the effectiveness of learning. Without a clear and well-organized approach, educators may struggle to align their teaching methods with the curriculum's principles, leading to inconsistencies and missed opportunities for student engagement. Therefore, strong leadership and effective leadership service management are essential to ensure that learning planning aligns with the core principles of this curriculum (Mawardi, Mohzana, & Nursaly, 2024). School leaders, particularly principals, play a pivotal role in guiding teachers through the complexities of the

Merdeka Curriculum, fostering a shared understanding of its goals, and providing the necessary support to implement it successfully. Effective leadership service management involves not only strategic planning but also continuous professional development for teachers, collaborative decision-making, and regular evaluation of learning outcomes. By addressing these challenges through adaptive and inclusive leadership, schools can create a more cohesive and dynamic learning environment that maximizes the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum. This, in turn, ensures that students benefit from a more personalized, relevant, and impactful educational experience, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

Leadership service management plays a crucial role in coordinating various aspects of education, including teacher management, resource provision, and the professional development of educators. School principals, as educational leaders, bear the responsibility of guiding teachers to innovate and adopt strategies that align with the characteristics and needs of their students (Rahmafritri, Deswita, & Trisoni, 2024). This involves creating an environment that encourages creativity, collaboration, and continuous improvement, ensuring that the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum are effectively integrated into daily teaching practices. By fostering a culture of adaptability and responsiveness, school leaders can empower teachers to design learning experiences that are both engaging and relevant to students' diverse backgrounds and abilities. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how leadership service management can contribute to the planning of learning that aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as to identify strategies that can be employed to address the challenges in implementing this curriculum. Through a comprehensive examination of leadership practices, resource allocation, and professional development initiatives, the research seeks to provide actionable insights that can enhance the effectiveness of learning planning and ensure the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. By addressing these critical areas, the study aspires to support schools in overcoming obstacles such as resistance to change, resource limitations, and gaps in understanding,

ultimately fostering a more dynamic and student-centered educational system in Indonesia.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the literature review method (Moleong, 2018). Data is collected from various scientific journals and other academic sources relevant to the topic of leadership in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Creswell, 2016). The analysis technique used is descriptive analysis, which involves examining various concepts, theories, and previous research findings to understand how leadership service management contributes to learning planning in schools (Sugiyono, 2019). The validity of the data is strengthened through source triangulation, ensuring that the information obtained is highly accurate and relevant (Patton, 2002). By systematically reviewing and synthesizing existing literature, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of leadership in facilitating the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The descriptive analysis allows for a detailed exploration of key themes, such as the strategies employed by school leaders to support teachers, the challenges faced in aligning learning planning with curriculum principles, and the impact of effective leadership service management on educational outcomes. Through this rigorous and methodical approach, the study seeks to offer valuable insights and evidence-based recommendations that can inform policy and practice, ultimately contributing to the improvement of educational quality and the realization of the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives.

3. Result and Discussion

The results of the literature analysis indicate that the leadership of school principals has a significant impact on the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Effective leadership plays a pivotal role in guiding teachers, fostering a collaborative school culture, and ensuring that the principles

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of the curriculum are integrated into daily teaching practices. School principals who demonstrate strong leadership skills are able to inspire and motivate teachers to adopt innovative and student-centered approaches, aligning their instructional strategies with the flexibility and contextual relevance emphasized by the Merdeka Curriculum. Additionally, their ability to manage resources, provide professional development opportunities, and address challenges such as resistance to change or resource limitations further enhances the implementation process. By creating an environment that supports continuous learning and adaptability, school leaders can empower educators to design meaningful and engaging learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of students. These findings underscore the critical importance of leadership service management in driving the successful adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes and the realization of the curriculum's goals.

Improved Teacher Performance

Supportive leadership that facilitates the professional development of teachers contributes significantly to enhancing their competencies in planning more innovative and adaptive learning experiences (Armiyanti et al., 2023). When school leaders prioritize and invest in continuous professional growth, they empower teachers to stay updated with the latest educational trends, methodologies, and technologies. This, in turn, enables educators to design learning plans that are not only aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum but also tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of their students. By fostering a culture of collaboration and providing opportunities for skill-building, such as workshops, training sessions, and peer learning, school leaders can inspire teachers to experiment with creative teaching strategies and adopt a more student-centered approach. As a result, teachers become more confident and effective in their roles, leading to improved classroom practices and better learning outcomes for students. This highlights the critical role of leadership in creating an environment where teachers feel supported, valued, and

motivated to innovate, ultimately driving the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Stakeholder Engagement

The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires the active involvement and participation of various stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, parents, and the broader school community, to create a conducive learning environment (Rosmini et al., 2024). Collaboration among these groups is essential to ensure that the curriculum's goals are understood, supported, and effectively integrated into the educational process. School leaders play a central role in fostering this collaboration by encouraging open communication, building trust, and creating platforms for dialogue and shared decision-making. Teachers, as the primary implementers of the curriculum, need to be supported through professional development and resources to adapt their teaching methods. Parents and the community, on the other hand, contribute by providing a supportive environment outside the classroom and reinforcing the values and skills emphasized in the curriculum. When all stakeholders work together, they create a cohesive and inclusive educational ecosystem that enhances the learning experience for students. This collective effort not only strengthens the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum but also ensures its sustainability and long-term impact, ultimately fostering a more holistic and effective education system.

Flexibility in Learning Planning

The Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers to adapt teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students, but the success of its implementation heavily depends on leadership support in providing relevant resources and training (Khumaini, Yulia, & Efendi, 2023). This flexibility is a cornerstone of the curriculum, enabling educators to design learning experiences that are contextual, engaging, and tailored to the unique characteristics of their students. However, to fully leverage this flexibility, teachers require access to adequate resources, such as teaching materials, technology, and infrastructure, as well as ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.

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School leaders play a critical role in ensuring that these needs are met by advocating for resource allocation, organizing training programs, and fostering a culture of innovation and experimentation. By providing a supportive environment that encourages teachers to explore new approaches and refine their practices, leaders can empower educators to maximize the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum. This, in turn, leads to more dynamic and effective learning experiences for students, ultimately contributing to the broader goals of improving educational quality and fostering student-centered learning. The interplay between leadership support and teacher adaptability is thus essential for the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, highlighting the importance of strong, responsive leadership in driving educational innovation.

Implementation Challenges

The primary challenges faced by schools in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include limited resources, resistance to change, and a lack of understanding of the curriculum's concepts (Hernawan & Mulyati, 2023). These obstacles can hinder the effective adoption of the curriculum, making it difficult for schools to fully realize its potential. Limited resources, such as inadequate teaching materials, insufficient infrastructure, and constrained budgets, can restrict teachers' ability to design and deliver flexible, student-centered learning experiences. Resistance to change, often stemming from a lack of familiarity with the curriculum's principles or fear of the unknown, can further slow down the implementation process. Additionally, a minimal understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum's core concepts among educators and stakeholders can lead to inconsistencies in its application. To address these challenges, proactive leadership strategies are essential. School leaders must take a hands-on approach by advocating for increased resource allocation, providing targeted training and professional development, and fostering a culture of openness and collaboration. By addressing resistance through clear communication, stakeholder engagement, and gradual implementation, leaders can build trust and encourage buy-in from teachers and the broader school community. Furthermore, promoting a deeper understanding of the curriculum's goals and benefits through workshops,

seminars, and peer learning can help align all stakeholders with its vision. Through these proactive measures, school leaders can effectively overcome barriers, ensuring a smoother and more successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

Challenges and Implementation Strategies

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, while promising in its potential to transform education in Indonesia, is not without its challenges. Key obstacles include resistance to change, limited resources, and the urgent need for teacher capacity development (Hernawan & Mulyati, 2023). Resistance to change often stems from a lack of understanding of the curriculum's principles or apprehension about shifting from traditional teaching methods to more flexible, student-centered approaches. This resistance can slow down the adoption process and create inconsistencies in implementation. Additionally, many schools face resource constraints, such as insufficient teaching materials, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to technology, which can hinder teachers' ability to design and deliver innovative learning experiences. Furthermore, the success of the Merdeka Curriculum heavily relies on the capacity of teachers to adapt their practices, which requires ongoing professional development and support.

To address these challenges, several strategies can be employed. First, continuous professional development is essential to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to implement the curriculum effectively. Training programs, workshops, and seminars can help educators understand the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and develop innovative teaching strategies that align with its goals (Nugroho, 2022). By investing in teacher capacity building, schools can ensure that educators feel confident and prepared to embrace the curriculum's flexibility and student-centered approach.

Fostering collaboration and communication among teachers and staff is crucial for overcoming implementation barriers. Encouraging teamwork and creating platforms for sharing best practices can help educators learn from one

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another and collectively address challenges (Sunyoto, 2023). For example, regular meetings, peer observations, and collaborative planning sessions can promote a culture of mutual support and continuous learning. This collaborative environment not only enhances teacher morale but also leads to more cohesive and effective implementation of the curriculum. Evaluation and reflection should be integral to the implementation process. Conducting regular assessments of curriculum implementation allows schools to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Suryana, 2020). By gathering feedback from teachers, students, and other stakeholders, school leaders can make informed decisions and adjustments to ensure the curriculum meets its intended objectives. Reflection sessions, where educators discuss their experiences and insights, can further enhance the implementation process by fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

The Role of Leadership in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

The leadership of school principals plays a pivotal role in aligning the vision and mission of schools with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum (Rosmini et al., 2024). As the primary drivers of change within educational institutions, school leaders are responsible for creating an environment that supports innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Research indicates that transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating teachers, fostering a shared vision, and encouraging professional growth, significantly enhances teacher commitment and the overall effectiveness of curriculum implementation (Armiyanti et al., 2023). By adopting a transformational approach, school principals can empower teachers to embrace the flexibility and student-centered focus of the Merdeka Curriculum, ensuring that its goals are integrated into daily teaching practices.

In addition to inspiring and motivating educators, effective leadership involves the strategic management of resources and the facilitation of professional development opportunities. School principals must ensure that teachers have access to the necessary tools, materials, and training to implement the curriculum successfully (Zubaedah, Sianturi, & Adla, 2024). This includes

providing workshops, mentoring programs, and collaborative platforms where teachers can share best practices and refine their skills. By prioritizing professional growth, school leaders not only enhance teachers' competencies but also foster a culture of innovation and adaptability, which is essential for the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

School principals play a critical role in addressing challenges such as resistance to change and resource limitations. Through effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning, leaders can build trust and encourage buy-in from teachers, parents, and the broader school community. By creating a supportive and inclusive environment, school principals can ensure that all stakeholders are aligned with the curriculum's objectives and actively contribute to its implementation.

The leadership of school principals is indispensable in driving the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Through transformational leadership, resource management, and a commitment to professional development, school leaders can create a dynamic and responsive educational environment that empowers teachers and benefits students. By addressing challenges and fostering collaboration, school principals can ensure that the Merdeka Curriculum achieves its full potential, ultimately contributing to the improvement of educational quality and the realization of a more student-centered learning system in Indonesia.

Service Management in Learning Planning

Leadership service management plays a crucial role in creating an environment that supports teachers in designing and implementing effective learning experiences aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. This involves providing the necessary resources, training, and infrastructure to ensure that learning planning is both flexible and responsive to the unique needs of students (Khumaini, Yulia, & Efendi, 2023). School principals, as educational leaders, are responsible for identifying teachers' needs, facilitating professional development, and ensuring that schools have the tools and materials required to deliver high-quality education (Siregar et al., 2021). By fostering a culture of collaboration

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and innovation, school leaders can empower teachers to adopt student-centered approaches that align with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. This holistic approach to service management ensures that learning planning is not only aligned with curriculum standards but also adaptable to the diverse contexts and challenges faced by schools.

Several key components of leadership service management contribute to effective learning planning. Transformational leadership, for instance, inspires teachers to innovate and adopt creative teaching strategies, fostering a positive and collaborative school culture (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Effective resource management ensures that schools have the necessary infrastructure, materials, and staffing to support flexible and competency-based learning (Sallis, 2002). Additionally, continuous professional development equips teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively, while robust evaluation systems enable schools to assess the effectiveness of their learning plans and make data-driven improvements (Marzano et al., 2005). These components work together to create a dynamic and adaptive learning environment that supports the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Challenges and Strategies for Implementation

Despite its potential, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum faces several challenges, including resistance to change, limited resources, and the need for teacher capacity development (Hernawan & Mulyati, 2023). To address these challenges, school leaders must adopt proactive strategies such as providing regular training and professional development opportunities for teachers, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and optimizing resource allocation to support flexible learning (Nugroho, 2022). Engaging parents and the community in the learning planning process can also help ensure that teaching methods and materials are relevant to students' needs (Rosmini et al., 2024). Furthermore, implementing formative assessments and regular evaluations allows schools to monitor progress and make continuous improvements to their learning plans (Sunyoto, 2023). By addressing these challenges through strategic leadership and

collaboration, schools can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that aligns with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The Role of Leadership in Driving Success

The success of the Merdeka Curriculum ultimately depends on the effectiveness of school leadership in guiding its implementation. School principals who adopt transformational leadership styles can inspire and motivate teachers to embrace innovative and student-centered approaches, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration (Armiyanti et al., 2023). By prioritizing teacher professional development, managing resources effectively, and engaging stakeholders, school leaders can create an environment where the Merdeka Curriculum thrives. This not only enhances the quality of education but also ensures that learning is relevant, engaging, and responsive to the needs of students. Through strong and adaptive leadership, schools can overcome implementation challenges and realize the full potential of the Merdeka Curriculum, contributing to the development of a more dynamic and inclusive education system in Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

Effective leadership service management in learning planning for the Merdeka Curriculum requires adaptive leadership, strong support for teacher professional development, and responsive strategies to address implementation challenges. This study concludes that proactive and collaborative leadership by school principals plays a critical role in enhancing the effectiveness of learning planning, ensuring flexibility in curriculum implementation, and overcoming obstacles that arise during the process. By fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration, school leaders can empower teachers to design and deliver learning experiences that are both engaging and tailored to the unique needs of students. Additionally, by addressing challenges such as resistance to change, resource limitations, and gaps in understanding, school leaders can create a more supportive and adaptive environment for the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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The shift from the K13 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum represents a significant transformation in Indonesia's education system, emphasizing flexibility, student-centered learning, and contextual relevance. Through effective leadership service management, schools can ensure that this transition is not only smooth but also impactful. By prioritizing teacher development, optimizing resource allocation, and engaging stakeholders, school leaders can create an ecosystem that supports continuous improvement and innovation. This approach not only enhances the quality of education but also ensures that the curriculum's goals are realized in practice.

The success of the Merdeka Curriculum depends on the ability of school leaders to adapt to changing needs, inspire their teams, and foster a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. With a strong focus on leadership, professional growth, and strategic planning, the Merdeka Curriculum has the potential to create a more dynamic and student-centered education system in Indonesia. By embracing these principles, schools can ensure that the curriculum's vision of flexible, relevant, and impactful learning is achieved, benefiting students and preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century.

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