



## The Role of Principal Leadership in Improving the Quality of Education in Schools based on Independent Curriculum

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan pemahaman mengenai peran kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan berbasis kurikulum. Rancangan yang akan digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif. Metode deskripsi kualitatif ini merupakan metode penelitian yang menggambarkan, mendeskripsikan, dan menganalisis objek dari suatu situasi tertentu dari semua data yang diperoleh selama kegiatan lapangan. Wawancara dokumen dan observasi merupakan teknik yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Pada penelitian ini, mengulas mengenai peran kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan di sekolah berbasis kurikulum merdeka di SMP IT An-Nahl. Penerapan desain ini dicapai dengan mengumpulkan data, mengolah data, dan kemudian menyajikan data dengan informasi yang berguna yang mudah dipahami oleh pembaca. Dalam penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus, yang menjadi kasus adalah peran kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan di sekolah berbasis kurikulum merdeka di SMP IT An-Nahl. Dalam proses penentuan informan ini peneliti lebih memilih orang yang benar-benar memahami dan mengerti masalah yang dikaji, yakni dengan menggunakan purposive sampling naturalistik orientasi.

**Kata Kunci:** manajemen, desain, pendidikan

### Abstract

*This study aims to explain the understanding of the role of principal leadership in improving the quality of curriculum-based education. The design that will be used in this study is qualitative research. This qualitative description method is a research method that describes, describes, and analyzes objects from a particular situation from all data obtained during field activities. Document interviews and observations are the techniques used in this study. In this study, it reviews the role of principal leadership in improving the quality of education in schools based on the independent curriculum at SMP IT An-Nahl. The application of this design is achieved by collecting data, processing data, and then presenting data with useful information that is easy for readers to understand. In this study using a case study approach, the case is the role of principal leadership in improving the quality of education in schools based on the independent curriculum at SMP IT An-Nahl. In the process of determining this informant, the researcher prefers people who really understand and understand the problem being studied, namely by using purposive sampling naturalistic orientation.*

**Keywords:** management, design, education

### Introduction

Since the launch of the Independent Curriculum in 2021, education in Indonesia has undergone significant changes. The Independent

Curriculum is one of the Indonesian government's efforts to improve the quality of education by providing flexibility to schools, teachers, and students in the learning process. This curriculum emphasizes more flexible, student-centered

learning, and provides space for the development of students' interests and potential. However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires a paradigm shift in education management, in which the principal plays an important role.

The curriculum is a set of plans that contain objectives, content, learning materials, methods as guidelines for implementing learning activities to achieve predetermined educational goals (Sari, 2019; Suryaman, 2020). It is undeniable that curriculum changes have occurred several times in the world of Indonesian education, these changes will certainly affect the education system, as is currently happening, the change from the 2013 curriculum to the independent learning curriculum. Sahnun & Wibowo, (2023) emphasized that curriculum changes must be in line with the goals that have a major impact on national development.

According to Sudarma (Hattarina, 2022), the implementation of the independent learning curriculum was triggered by a decline in the quality of educational services and Indonesian graduates, as well as a decline in the competitiveness of Indonesian graduates in the 4.0 and 5.0 markets. This Independent Learning Curriculum is a curriculum change policy issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The policy is based on the Decree on Educational Units as Implementers of IKM (Implementation of Independent Curriculum) in the 2022/2023 Academic Year stipulated based on the Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (BSKAP Decree of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology) Number 044/H/KR/2022 Concerning Educational Units Implementing the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in the 2022/2023 Academic Year. Marisa, (2021) explained that there are four main policies in this independent learning program, namely the direction of the UN implementation policy for the last time, Simplification of the preparation of the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) and the zoning system for New Student Admissions (PPDB).

The principal as the leader of the educational institution plays a role in ensuring that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum runs according to the expected goals, namely improving the quality of education through a more creative and adaptive approach. The leadership style of the principal greatly determines how teachers in the school are able to implement this policy effectively. Leadership that is able to encourage innovation,

provide professional support, and create a dynamic learning environment will contribute greatly to the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

The principal is a leader in a school who has full responsibility and plays a major role in advancing the quality of the school he leads (Rizkiani & Salahuddin, 2020). It is undeniable that the principal plays a major role in the success of a school, unlike teachers who have a major role in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. In line with the opinion of (Latifah, 2022) in advancing the quality of education, of course this is an important role that must be carried out by the principal. The success of a school can be seen from how the principal leads. A competent principal is able to make teachers and staff professional, students intelligent and the school community contribute to making the school more advanced.

Improving the quality of education is an inseparable part of the human resource development process. These efforts must be carried out in a planned, directed, and intensive manner, so that they can prepare the nation to enter the era of globalization which is full of competition. (Setyaningsih 2022) The quality of education is directed by Law on the National Education System Number 20 of 2003, namely the development of the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty, have noble morals, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. (Ministry of National Education 2003) Quality education is believed to be the right way to improve the quality of human resources.

The improvement of the quality of education can be seen from the facts obtained by the government as a policy maker by making many changes to the curriculum (program) without any way to balance in organizing the teaching and education staff so that the program is not implemented optimally as expected, because the curriculum program changes while the people who carry out and management of the curriculum implementation are not structured effectively (Agung Priambodo, 2017).

Leadership refers to a person's ability and readiness to influence, encourage, invite, guide, move, and direct people or groups to accept this influence and then do something that can shape the achievement of certain predetermined goals (Ulfathmi et al., 2021).

Leadership in English means "The qualities that a leader should have" or The qualities of a

leader, (Ashby, 2001). Leadership seeks to make changes in an organization by (1) developing a vision of the future and strategies to make the necessary changes, (2) communicating and explaining the vision, and (3) motivating and inspiring others to achieve that vision.

There are other things that a leader also needs to know before making contact with others, namely: (1) planning, (2) organizing, (3) coordinating, and (4) controlling work, (Yukl, 2015). Thoha (2010) stated that leadership is an effort to influence many people through communication in order to achieve a way to influence people with instructions or orders, actions that cause others to act or respond and cause positive changes, important dynamic forces that motivate and coordinate organizations in order to achieve goals, the ability to create self-confidence and support among subordinates in order to achieve organizational goals.

## Method

The design that will be used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research is the process of collecting data in a natural way for the purpose of interpreting and analyzing phenomena when researchers can be the main tool. "In qualitative research, data is not sought through statistical methods or other quantitative measurement methods" (Anggito et al., 2018). Likewise, the descriptive method according to Yuliani (2018) "a method used to analyze or explain findings, but not used to draw broad conclusions".

This qualitative description method is a research method that describes, describes, and analyzes objects from a particular situation from all data obtained during field activities. Document interviews and observations are the techniques used in this study. In this study, it reviews the role of principal leadership in improving the quality of education in schools based on the independent curriculum at SMP IT An-Nahl. The application of this design is achieved by collecting data, processing data, and then presenting data with useful information that is easy for readers to understand. In this study using a case study approach, the case is the role of principal leadership in improving the quality of education in schools based on the independent curriculum at SMP IT An-Nahl.

This research is included in the type of field research, and is a research that is intended to collect information about the phenomena that exist at the

time the research is conducted. In the process of determining this informant, the researcher prefers people who truly understand and understand the problem being studied, namely by using purposive sampling naturalistic orientation. This purposive sampling is relevant to qualitative research. The sample in this study was used to explore information that became the basis for the design of the emerging theory. The qualitative case study approach was chosen because the object of this research is in the form of a process or activity or action of several people who act as principals. This type of research was chosen because it wanted to obtain in-depth information about leadership strategies in improving the quality of education in schools based on the independent curriculum at SMP IT An-Nahl.

This research was conducted at SMP IT An-Nahl with careful consideration. Good access to the research location is very important because it will affect how data is obtained from participants. The researcher has built a positive and trusting relationship with the school, including the staff and management of SMP IT An-Nahl, before the research began. This created a conducive environment for data collection, as well as assisting in obtaining permission and cooperation from the school.

Then, this study was chosen because there has been no previous research that specifically explores the same topic at SMP IT An-Nahl. Therefore, this study is expected to provide a valuable contribution to the understanding related to leadership strategies in improving the quality of education in schools based on the independent curriculum at the school.

Finally, the availability of adequate data and information access from SMP IT An-Nahl is an important consideration. Researchers can easily access the data needed for this study, including school documents, lesson plans, and other related information. This allows researchers to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the context and character of the school.

In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling where according to Creswell (2015) the researcher has respondents and research locations for a study because it can provide information to answer research problems. According to Creswell (2015) this strategy is very commonly used in qualitative research where the research selects respondents who can provide the information needed to answer research questions. The subject selection criteria are based on active participation in

the policy implementation process to ensure that the data obtained reflects a variety of relevant perspectives.

The data collection method used by researchers, namely triangulation, is defined as a data collection technique that combines existing data collection techniques and data sources (Haryono, 2023). If researchers collect data using triangulation, researchers actually collect data while testing the credibility of the data, namely checking the credibility of the data with various data collection techniques and various data sources. Triangulation technique means that researchers use different data collection techniques to obtain data from the same source. Researchers use observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

Qualitative research often combines observation techniques with interviews. During the observation, researchers also conduct interviews with people who are informal. The type of interview used is a semi-structured interview. This type of interview is included in the in-depth interview category, where in its implementation it is freer when compared to structured interviews. The purpose of this type of interview is to find problems more openly.

In addition to interviews, data collection in this study uses documents. The documentation method according to Khilmiyah (2016) is a method used to trace historical data. Documents are records of past activities or events that are relatively recent. Basrowi and Suwandi (2018) explain that this method is a way of collecting data that produces important notes related to the problem being studied, so that complete, valid data will be obtained and not based on estimates.

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(Note: Sub-chapters may differ, depending on the type or research approach used. If there are procedures or steps that are sequential in nature, they can be notated (numbers or letters) according to their position).

## Results and Discussion

SMP IT An-Nahl is one of the private schools in Jambi city that is in demand by the community to send their sons and daughters to school. This is proven by the number of applicants always exceeding the target. Every new school year, the number of applicants is not less than 50 students and 36 students are accepted, namely 1 class. Because in addition to its very strategic location, one of the changes and improvements in quality at the school has occurred, both changes in achievement in academic and non-academic fields

or in physical and non-physical forms. The achievements obtained by the school cannot be separated from the role of the Principal and management and a strong team.

Leadership is an interesting topic to discuss, because leadership is one of the factors that greatly determines the success of an organization besides management. Leadership is the most important part of management, besides other functions. Although there are still many other factors that influence the success of an organization. Leadership occupies a very important position for the running of the system in the organization, besides other factors that also influence the achievement of a goal such as: accurate organizational structure, adequate funding and professional staff.

Table 1. Specifically research participants

No.	Participant	Position
1.	Participant 1	Headmaster
2.	Participant 2	vice principal
3.	Participant 3	Teacher
4.	Participant 4	Teacher
5.	Participant 5	Teacher
6.	Participant 6	Teacher

School Self Evaluation (EDS), SWOT analysis of what sources of strength are owned and opportunities that exist to overcome weaknesses/real conditions of the school and threats that hinder the achievement of improving the quality of education as expected. Implementing an Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) carried out by organized school residents in addition to an External Quality Assurance System carried out by the government, related agencies that aim to monitor programs that are being run to achieve success that is carried out continuously which functions as a control.

The components/areas that are the authority of the school include: curriculum management, teaching and learning process, students, manpower, facilities and infrastructure, finance, school and community relations, and school climate management. The implementation of its implementation refers to eight development standards according to the National Education Standards, where these components include content standards, process standards, graduation standards, educator and education standards, facility and infrastructure standards, management

standards, financing standards, and assessment standards.

### Conclusion

Based on the results of research and data analysis on "the role of principal leadership in improving the quality of education in schools based on the independent curriculum at SMP IT An-Nahl, Jambi City.

The Principal has carried out his main role as a leader and manager well, in addition to his other roles as a strong Entrepreneur in an effort to improve the quality of education. As a strong entrepreneur, hard worker and intelligent creative, innovative, committed and trying to provide an example for his school community.

The strategy implemented to improve the quality of education at SMP IT An-Nahl, Jambi City based on the Independent Curriculum is quite good, this can be seen from the performance of the principal, teachers, employees, and stakeholders in collaborating and establishing communication in carrying out every activity that is their duty and responsibility in order to achieve the expected educational goals.

This performance is carried out by formulating a strategy to improve the quality of education in the school by conducting: environmental analysis, analyzing the gap between the current school conditions and the expected conditions in the medium and short term, addressing the gap gradually, implementing programs and monitoring and evaluating these programs continuously for further action.

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#### Curriculum Vitae

Mundori saya lulusan UIN STS Jambi. Saat ini saya melanjutkan pendidikan S2 di Universitas Jambi. Saat ini saya bekerja sebagai guru di SIT Ash Shiddiiqi.