

The Role of the School Principal in Managing Teacher Human Resources for Merdeka Curriculum Implementation: Case Study at SDN Sugihwaras 01

Mustiko Setyaning Budi^{1✉}, Uci Ulfa Nur'afifah², Novia Rahma Rista Utami³
(1,2,3) Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, STKIP Modern Ngawi, Indonesia

✉ Corresponding author
(mustikosb19@gmail.com)

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memperoleh gambaran mengenai peran kepala sekolah dalam mengelola SDM untuk mengimplementasikan kurikulum merdeka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan rancangan studi kasus. Peneliti melakukan pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan studi dokumentasi. Peneliti berusaha memahami makna peristiwa serta interaksi dengan melibatkan kepala sekolah dan guru, sehingga peneliti dapat memahami konsep serta peran kepala sekolah dalam mengelola SDM guru untuk mengimplementasikan kurikulum merdeka di sekolah dasar. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menerapkan kegiatan *home visit* sebagai upaya untuk membina hubungan kekeluargaan dengan guru. Kepala sekolah menjadi figur inspiratif dengan berbekal pengalaman melalui partisipasi dalam lomba kepala sekolah inspiratif. Kepala sekolah bersama guru menciptakan iklim kerja yang kondusif dengan menumbuhkembangkan rasa memiliki terhadap sekolah. Kepala sekolah melibatkan guru dalam menciptakan program *Sugih Waras* yang mendukung implementasi kurikulum merdeka. Pelaksanaan implementasi kurikulum merdeka membuat guru lebih profesional melalui berbagai macam kegiatan pembinaan maupun pelatihan.

Kata Kunci: Peran Kepala Sekolah, Pengelolaan SDM, Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka

Abstract

This research aims to obtain an overview of the role of school principals in managing human resources for Merdeka Curriculum Implementation. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. Researchers collected data through observation, interviews and documentation studies. Researchers try to understand the meaning of events and interactions by involving school principals and teachers, so that researchers can understand the concept and role of school principals in managing teacher human resources for Merdeka Curriculum Implementation in elementary schools. Research findings show that school principals implement home visit activities as an effort to foster family relationships with teachers. School principals become inspirational figures armed with experience through participation in inspirational school principal competitions. The principal and teachers create a conducive work climate by fostering a sense of belonging to the school. The school principal involved teachers in creating the *Sugih Waras* program which supports Merdeka Curriculum Implementation. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum makes teachers more professional through various kinds of coaching and training activities.

Keywords: Role of the Principal, Human Resource Management, Merdeka Curriculum Implementation

INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum was officially introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) on February 11 2022 via an online platform on the ministry's official website. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to be simpler, more concise and flexible with the aim of supporting learning recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic which caused learning loss (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Implementation of policies related to the Merdeka Curriculum aims to respond to the need to improve human resources and improving the quality of education in Indonesia (Vhalery et al., 2022). Mulyasa (2023) emphasized that educational institutions have a big responsibility so they need to make preparations, one of which is by improving the quality and quality of education.

Improving the quality of education from the elementary (school) level is the main focus in implementing policies. The principal as the main leader at the school level has a very important role in making this happen (Waty, 2022). The role of the principal is considered a dynamic aspect of status which is realized when a person exercises the rights and obligations in accordance with his position (Siregar, 2022). The principal, as the main figure of the school organization, plays a crucial role in communicating values and hopes to all school members. Therefore, the school principal has a fundamental responsibility in designing, managing and motivating all elements in the school in order to maintain the smooth running of the organization, especially in facing new educational policy changes from the central government.

The success of a school is largely determined by the managerial quality of the principal himself, especially his ability to build a conducive working atmosphere (Malaikosa, 2021). As a school principal leader, he is expected to be able to handle all components of education so that they work together to create an institution that is trusted by the community as a forum for improving the quality of human resources (Ritonga & Fadhli, 2020). The quality of human resources in schools must be able to be managed and improved properly by the school principal so that the vision, mission and goals of the school will be achieved according to the expectations of all residents and the goals of the school (Abrori & Muali, 2020). The leadership of the school principal has a big influence on improving the quality of human resources in schools in creating a conducive work climate.

Based on the results of a preliminary study, in the 2023/2024 school year, SD Negeri Sugihwaras 1 experienced a change of principal. With a new principal, SD Negeri Sugihwaras 1 again won competitions held at the sub-district level. In fact, SD Negeri Sugihwaras 1 participated participate in activities carried out by the Madiun Regency government as a representative from Saradan District. Therefore, based on existing phenomena and supported by previous research, the researcher took the title of the role of the school principal in managing human resources for Merdeka Curriculum Implementation in elementary schools. This title was chosen by researchers as an update to previous research and to understand the role of school principals in managing human resources in the school environment for the successful Merdeka Curriculum Implementation.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is research used to examine the natural conditions of an object, where the researcher acts as the main instrument (Sugiyono, 2023). Natural conditions reflect the situation as it is, without any intervention that could affect the scientific nature of the research object. This research uses a descriptive method because it aims to describe or describe the phenomena that occur at the research location. This research was carried out at SD Negeri Sugihwaras 1 based on new things discovered by researchers related to the role of the principal in managing human resources in the school. There are two data analyzed in this research. The first data is data about the role of school principals in managing human resources. The scope of the data includes the role of the principal as a leader and as a creator of the work climate. The second data is data about the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The data will be divided into three details, namely planning, implementation and obstacles. These data are data resulting from observation, interviews and documentation activities. After the researcher collected the data, the researcher carried out data analysis. In data analysis, data analysis

guidelines and data analysis procedures will be explained which will describe the role of school principals in managing human resources and planning, implementation and obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The school principal plays an important role for Merdeka Curriculum Implementation at schools. There are several indicators in optimizing the role of school principals as leaders and as creators of a work climate. Based on existing indicators, researchers discovered new things at the research site, namely SDN Sugihwaras 01. The research findings are detailed in the following table.

Table 1. Research Findings

Indicator	Research Findings
The school principal's efforts as a leader are in improving leadership and followership relationships to optimize of Merdeka Curriculum Implementation.	The principal carries out activities home visits.
The leadership style of the school principal in Merdeka Curriculum Implementation.	The principal shared his experiences from participating in the inspirational principal competition.
The school principal's efforts as a leader in creating a conducive work climate culture to support improving the quality of human resources in schools which supports the successful Merdeka Curriculum Implementation.	The school principal made changes by bravely speaking up to the local village government regarding improving the school environment.
	The school principal holds coaching activities for support the successful Merdeka Curriculum Implementation which is also participated in by human resources from other school teachers in one group.
	The principal created a "Sugih Waras" program.

Table 1 shows the research findings in research conducted at SDN Sugihwaras 01. The school principal's efforts as a leader in improving leadership and followership relationships to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum were carried out by providing home visit activities. The home visit activity also aims to foster family relationships between the school principal and existing teacher resources. Procurement of home visit activities is based on the human resource background of teachers at SDN Sugihwaras 01.

Before the current principal took office, there was a vacancy in the position of principal at SDN Sugihwaras 01. This vacancy meant that the existing teachers were accustomed to running independently without the role of the principal. To restore and change this habit, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 finally held a home visit activity. Home visits are carried out by the school principal regularly every month. The principal takes turns visiting the teacher's residence to strengthen the family relationship. From the home visit activities carried out by the principal, the teacher human resources felt like they had a leader again. It is easier for school principals to coordinate with teachers regarding the implementation of planned policies. Thus, the home visit activity can improve leadership and followership relationships to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The leadership style demonstrated by the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is a source of inspiration for existing teacher human resources. The principal shared his experiences from participating in the inspirational principal competition. This

behavior was carried out by the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 to show that experience is the best teacher. With the experience that the principal has, the principal wishes to inspire existing teacher human resources. In terms of In this case, the principal shows an attitude as an inspirational leader. This attitude is implemented with the hope that if teacher human resources can be inspired, then teacher human resources will show creativity in planning and implementing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

School principals as leaders in creating a conducive work climate culture also strive to improve the quality of human resources in schools. These efforts can support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 held coaching activities to support the successful Merdeka Curriculum Implementation. Examples of coaching activities that are held include coaching related to guidelines for the substance of managing the performance of school heads and teachers. This activity has never been held by other schools in the same cluster, so teachers from other schools in the same cluster took part in coaching activities at SDN Sugihwaras 01. The activities held were based on regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture regarding the rights of school institutions to hold activities that support success implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. These coaching activities show that the school principal plays a role as a leader who can create a conducive work environment because he is able to form family relationships with other schools.

In optimizing his role as a leader who is able to create a conducive work climate, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 is able to make new changes. The principal made new changes bravely speak up to the local village government regarding improving the school environment. Apart from showing his responsibility as a leader, this behavior also shows the courage of the school principal. Environmental improvements are proposed to the local village government because SDN Sugihwaras 01 is always affected by waterlogging during the rainy season. This disrupted the learning process at school, so the school principal spoke up to the local village government. The problem that had existed for a long time was finally resolved with the courage of the school principal. The efforts made can create a conducive environment that fosters feelings of comfort at school, so that it can support a conducive work climate culture.

Apart from improving the physical environment carried out by the school principal, a new program was also created, namely the "Sugih Waras" program. This program was created as an effort to support the implementation of an Merdeka Curriculum related to human resources in schools, including school principals, teachers and students. In fact, students' parents are also indirectly involved in the program. This program is a routine activity that is held once a week, namely on Saturday. The "Sugih Waras" program emerged from the idea of the principal who took the name of this school. "Sugih Waras" comes from two Javanese words. "Sugih" means rich, while "Waras" means healthy.

The activity that represents the word "Sugih" is an entrepreneurial activity, namely market day. In market day activities students act as producers and consumers. Students practice buying and selling directly accompanied by their respective class teachers. In this case, teachers train students to become entrepreneurs. Then, activities that represent the word "Waras" are activities related to physical fitness, namely sports activities. The activity carried out was group exercise. Group exercise activities are carried out in the morning after the class bell rings. This activity was attended by the school principal, teachers and students. After the group exercise activity was over, the market day activities began. Through the "Sugih Waras" program, it is hoped that the human resources at SDN Sugihwaras 01 will become rich and healthy people, whether in science or otherwise so that they can improve their quality as humans. By improving the quality of existing human resources, it can support the success of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

Discussion

The Role of the Principal in Managing Teacher Human Resources at SDN Sugihwaras 01

The school principal must be able to position himself as a leader in the school organization he leads. In his role as a leader, the principal tries to create good interpersonal relationships by being more task-oriented and subordinate (Saputra & Ramadan, 2023). Task-oriented and subordinate relationships prioritize common interests. Shared interests can occur if the school

principal is able to optimize his role as a leader and creator of the work climate in the school.

The school principal has an important role as a leader, so optimizing the role of the school principal must be carried out carefully (Abrori & Muali, 2020). In this case, the principal needs teacher involvement, so the principal must be able to manage his educators. Teachers must be involved because human resource management is closely related to the management of individuals in the organization, so that these individuals contribute to achieving goals (Suryana & Iskandar, 2022). The task- and subordinate-oriented interpersonal relationships implemented by the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 are carried out by placing each existing human resource in a position or task according to their competence. Determination of tasks is discussed in meeting activities. Deliberation needs to be carried out in every position or task determination so that it is accepted in a happy manner (Abrori & Muali, 2020). However, the capabilities of each existing resource remain the main consideration.

The principal is also a leader who is likened to being a driving force in the successful achievement of school goals. The role of the leader will determine where and what the organization he leads will become (Abrori & Muali, 2020). Organizational success is largely determined by the role of leaders who are able to mobilize their human resources (Suryana & Iskandar, 2022). The principal who determines the center point and rhythm in the school must be a source of inspiration for teachers (Suryana & Iskandar, 2022). The principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 inspired teachers with his experience through his participation in the inspirational principal competition.

School principals who are able to lead well are also expected to be able to create a conducive work climate. This is in accordance with research by Malaikosa (2021) which states that the success of a school is largely determined by the leadership ability of the school principal, especially the ability to build a conducive working atmosphere. Apart from school principals, teachers also have a role in creating a conducive work climate (Ritonga & Fadhli, 2020). Therefore, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 created a home visit activity as a means to build good relationships with teachers and their families. It is hoped that the home visit activity can be an example of a positive activity that supports the creation of a conducive work climate culture.

School principals with all their competencies and skills must help teachers to create a conducive work climate. Synergistic efforts between school principals and teachers are very necessary in that matter. In accordance with research conducted by Ritonga & Fadhli (2020), which emphasizes that school principals and teachers are colleagues who cannot be separated and must always have the same vision and mission in creating a good working atmosphere. Another effort made by the school principal was to start implementing school discipline, especially time discipline. School principals apply time discipline as a method for improving human resources that supports a good working atmosphere (Saputra & Ramadan, 2023). The principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 tries to be a good example for teachers. With various efforts made, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 demonstrated his role as a leader and was able to create a conducive work climate.

Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Sugihwaras 01

The implementation of an Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools cannot be separated from the role of the principal as the highest policy maker in the school. The formulation of planning for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out in a meeting activity. In the meeting held, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 first shared perceptions regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The school principal directs the school community to have the same perception about the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum (Isa et al., 2022). If the perception between the school principal and teacher human resources is the same, it will make it easier to formulate plans for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

Learning planning in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum needs to be well understood by teachers, so that school principals must optimize their role. The school principal has a central role in implementing the concept of independent learning in elementary schools (Suryana & Iskandar, 2022). The principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 builds good cooperation with existing teacher human resources. Collaboration needs to be carried out because it is the key to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Isa et al., 2022). The cooperation carried out in meeting activities results in a joint decision. The results of the annual meeting of SDN Sugihwaras 01 with the jointly agreed

agenda for planning the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, namely: (1) preparing a teacher development program; (2) development of teaching materials; and (3) guidance for the use of ICT.

In its implementation, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 played his corporative logic. School principals must be able to play their corporate logic by prioritizing efficiency, risk management and predictive capabilities (Megayanti & Asri, 2022). Therefore, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 acts like a chief executive officer (CEO) in a company. Based on research, it is also known that the head SDN Sugihwaras 01 school schedules activities related to the Merdeka Curriculum in accordance with central government policy. This is in accordance with research by (Isa et al., 2022) which emphasizes that the scheduling of activities in the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out so that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out effectively and efficiently in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum policy.

The principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 is making efforts to optimize teacher competency. School principals as drivers of change can make breakthroughs in schools (Megayanti & Asri, 2022). School principals implement policies that support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Suryana & Iskandar, 2022). The principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 invites teachers to take part in limited training and webinars. The principal must involve teachers in training both carried out at school (in house training) and outside of school to improve their professionalism and to impart the results of the training to other teachers (Abrori & Muali, 2020). The principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 also provides guidance to support Merdeka Curriculum Implementation. This coaching is related to substantive guidance in managing the performance of teachers and school principals. The school principal plays the role of resource person and consultant in these activities.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been running for approximately two years. In the implementation process, it turns out it is not as easy as imagined. Various obstacles arise and require in-depth analysis and solutions to achieve national educational goals within the framework of an Merdeka Curriculum. Existing obstacles must be responded to with a critical and comprehensive approach, especially by parties who have an interest, especially school principals as leaders in educational units. The obstacles that occur in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Sugihwaras 01 originate from teacher human resources in mastering IT and providing supporting facilities. Obstacles in the aspect of IT mastery by teacher human resources are faced by creating peer teaching activities (peer tutors). Peer teaching activities (peer tutoring) are carried out to increase teacher understanding and help teachers understand what they do not understand. School principals are required to be able to bring their institutions into institutions that are competitive and able to follow the movement of technological advances (Ritonga & Fadhli, 2020). Therefore, the principal of SDN Sugihwaras 01 made peer teaching (peer tutoring) activities more effective. In the aspect of supporting facilities, the school principal has proposed compliance with the relevant agencies. It is necessary to provide adequate facilities (Ritonga & Fadhli, 2020). Obstacles in the aspect of fulfilling facilities to support Merdeka Curriculum Implementation at SDN Sugihwaras 01 are just waiting for a decision from the relevant department.

CONCLUSION

Merdeka Curriculum Implementation can run well by optimizing the role of the school principal, especially in managing human resources. The principal as a leader must establish good relationships with teachers so that a conducive working atmosphere can be formed. The principal strives to create good interpersonal relationships by being task-oriented and subordinate. With the efforts made, the principal continues to base it on the competence of the teacher. Teacher competency is developed through various coaching activities carried out by the school principal and from outside the school. The synergy formed between the principal and teachers can lead the school to achieve the desired school goals.

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