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Principal Raudhatul Athfal's Participatory Behavior Practices in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT. This research aims to describe and analyze the participatory behavioral practices of head Raudhatul Athfal in implementing the independent curriculum. This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type of research. Data was collected using interview, observation and documentation techniques. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model data analysis technique, which consists of data reduction, data display and verification. The research results show that the practice of participatory behavior towards teachers in implementing the independent curriculum and religious moderation at *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA) Nurul Dzikri is carried out through the following three efforts: (1) Involving teachers in making decisions related to the implementation of the independent curriculum; (2) Involving teachers in exercising self-control over their performance in implementing the independent curriculum and giving autonomy to teachers to work to complete their tasks and (3) Involving teachers in controlling leadership practices in implementing the independent curriculum. These three teacher involvements have positioned teachers as designers and primary implementers in implementing the independent curriculum. It gives them broad autonomy to manage the independent curriculum in the classroom. The involvement of teachers in making decisions related to the implementation of the independent curriculum, the involvement of teachers in controlling themselves and controlling the leadership of the school principal in implementing the independent curriculum, as well as their full authority to work following their ideas and creations make teacher performance in implementing the independent curriculum focused, organized and well managed by the school principal.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Headmaster, Participatory behavior, Raudhatul athfal*

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a set of plans that will be used as a guide by teachers in carrying out learning activities. The curriculum is learning software that will determine the pattern of continuity of learning implementation (Forey & Cheung, 2019). Some say the curriculum is the spirit of learning (Liu et al., 2021). Learning can only be done with a curriculum. The curriculum is also considered to be a determining factor in achieving educational goals at the national level (Abdul Razzak, 2016). In the 2022/2023 academic year, various schools and madrasas will begin implementing the independent curriculum. An independent curriculum is referred to as a curriculum that positions students as active learners, and they can learn with complete freedom and flexibility following the characteristics of their growth and development (Zainuri, 2022). The independent curriculum also directs students to have good literacy skills, such as information literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy and spiritual literacy. Literacy skills and the opportunity to access the internet to get as

much information as possible mean that students are expected to have broad knowledge to respond quickly to developments in science, technology and art. Apart from that, in the independent curriculum, there is also a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, which is used to shape students' character to become Pancasila citizens (Fahri et al., 2023). Teachers will realize these expectations by carrying out curriculum management activities. The independent curriculum is managed in such a way, from planning learning activities, organizing learning, implementing learning to assessing learning. The four curriculum management activities are carried out by teachers as the central figures in implementing the independent curriculum under the leadership of the school principal (Fransiska et al., 2023).

The principal, as a leader, has a role as a director for teachers in managing the curriculum (Zhang & Henderson, 2018). He shows various things that teachers must do in managing the independent curriculum. Apart from that, the principal also plays a role as a leader who facilitates teachers in managing the curriculum. It provides various facilities for teachers to prepare learning plans, organize learning activities, implement learning and assess learning. As a facilitator, he also positions himself as the party that involves teachers in making various decisions about implementing the independent curriculum. It also gives authority to teachers to implement the independent curriculum because teachers are the main actors in implementing the curriculum at the class level (Aminah & Nursikin, 2023). He also involves teachers in controlling their performance as leaders in implementing the independent curriculum.

The principal's role as a facilitator for teachers in implementing the independent curriculum makes him practice participatory behavior. Participative behavior is one of four behaviors displayed by a leader when practicing a leadership model called path-goal leadership. Three other behaviors in the practice of path-goal leadership are directive behavior, supportive behavior, and behavior-oriented toward achieving the achievements of its members (Saide et al., 2019).

The principal's participatory behavior in implementing the independent curriculum has resulted in a principal always involving teachers in formulating policies related to the implementation of the independent curriculum, giving teachers confidence to design and implement the independent curriculum and asking teachers to control and evaluate their performance in the implementation of the independent curriculum. It can be done when the principal can lead teachers with a democratic leadership style (Devi & Subiyantoro, 2021). A democratic leadership style can create a communication pattern from the bottom up. The bottom-up communication pattern will result in active teacher involvement in curriculum implementation and various positive changes to support success in curriculum implementation (Carlyon & Branson, 2018). However, unfortunately, not all school principals, such as principal *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA), have the will and ability to provide space for teachers to be involved in decision-making and control their performance. The reason is that he still maintains a top-down communication culture and thinks that leading is controlling and influencing, not serving or facilitating.

Based on the results of interviews with the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, if an RA wants success in implementing the independent curriculum, then the school principal must be able to actively involve teachers in implementing the independent curriculum because teachers are curriculum designers and curriculum implementers. When teachers can be actively involved, the independent curriculum will be implemented optimally. He revealed that one of the keys to RA Nurul Dzikri's success as a pilot project for implementing the independent curriculum was the active involvement of teachers in its implementation. The information obtained by the head of RA Nurul Dzikri motivated the author to carry out this research activity. So, this research aims to describe and analyze the participatory behavioral practices of head Raudhatul Athfal in implementing the independent curriculum.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach. It makes this research descriptive and natural (Kahlke, 2014). The author did not manipulate the research subject or research environment. The type of research used is phenomenological research (Englander, 2016). This research reveals the phenomenon of school principal leadership in implementing the independent curriculum as a new curriculum implemented in Indonesia. The school's principal study came from RA Nurul Dzikri Ngemplak Sleman Yogyakarta, where the RA was appointed as a pilot project in implementing the independent curriculum by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. The focus of the research is on the participatory behavior of school principals in involving teachers as decision-makers implementers who have full authority in implementing the independent curriculum and control the leadership of school principals. Based on this, the subjects in this research were the principals and teachers at RA Nurul Dzikri. The principal of RA Nurul Dzikri has a secondary education background and is an instructor or resource person in training related to the independent curriculum in Indonesia. He is also the chairman of the Indonesian RA Fighters, which mobilizes RA teachers in Indonesia as learning citizens to implement the independent curriculum. Meanwhile, the teachers at RA Nurul Dzikri have a bachelor's degree in education and are certified educators, so they have professional performance in providing educational services.

The data in this research was collected using interviews, observation and documentation techniques. Interviews were conducted freely (unstructured) to gather data from school principals regarding their leadership involving teachers as decision-makers, implementers with full authority in implementing the independent curriculum, and controllers of the principal's leadership. Interviews were also conducted freely (unstructured) with teachers to obtain data related to their involvement in decision-making and their control over the performance of school principals in implementing the independent curriculum. Using the interview technique with a free (unstructured) type of interview, the author conducted the interview based on the outline of the research theme (Dowling et al., 2016). Apart from that, the author also addresses interview questions from sources based on observations or findings in the field. It was done to obtain explanatory data regarding what the author saw or discovered.

Then, the author uses observation techniques to observe the participatory behavioral practices of school principals in implementing the independent curriculum. Meanwhile, the author uses documentation to obtain data in the form of documents related to implementing the independent curriculum. The data collected is then tested for validity using the data source triangulation technique, namely by bringing together data from the school principal and teachers to test the correctness of the data. The data that has been collected and is valid is then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model data analysis technique, which consists of data reduction, data display and verification stages (Miles et al., 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Leaders practice participative behavior to empower their subordinates to achieve organizational goals (House, 1996). Leaders can develop the participative behavior of subordinates in an organization through three steps, including: (1) involving subordinates in making decisions, especially when making decisions related to organizational goals. When this can be done, subordinates will have a clear direction regarding the organization's goals because they are involved in making these decisions; (2) involving subordinates to exercise self-control over their performance and providing autonomy to subordinates to work to complete their tasks; and (3) involving subordinates in controlling their performance as a leader (House, 1975).

Based on the description above, participative behavior from a leader is a form of the leader's appreciation for ideas and suggestions from subordinates to identify and set organizational goals, solve problems and make other decisions that may directly affect them. In this way, knowledge sharing occurs between leaders and subordinates, which makes communication between them run openly and harmoniously and places them as learning citizens (MesutSagnak, 2016). Innovation and creativity can emerge from knowledge sharing between learning communities (Farhan, 2018). Based on the results of data collection, it can be seen that the participatory behavior of the head of RA towards teachers in implementing the independent curriculum at RA Nurul Dzikri is practiced through the following steps:

First, involving teachers in making decisions related to implementing the independent curriculum. Based on the results of interviews with teachers, it can be seen that the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, involves teachers in making decisions about implementing the independent curriculum. For example, when deciding on what learning topics will be given to children, when deciding on various projects that will be given to children to implement the program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, and when deciding on the schedule for implementing project activities. This involvement was carried out by inviting them to attend meetings with school committees and foundations to discuss various matters related to the implementation of the independent curriculum in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation. Based on the results of interviews with teachers, it can be seen that their involvement in important meetings with the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, school committees and foundations mean that they are also involved in decision-making regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum.

Principal of RA Nurul Dzikri revealed that the benefit gained from involving teachers in making decisions is that teachers better understand the purpose of making a decision, which can have implications for creating teacher performance that continues to lead to achieving the vision and mission of RA Nurul Dzikri. Whether we admit it or not, the same vision among teachers can direct them to work in one direction, namely towards achieving a goal that has been determined together (Cardona & Rey, 2022). Involving teachers in decision-making will not only result in teachers having performance that leads to the vision of the institution but can also result in a direct transformation of information from leaders to teachers, which can have implications for creating a transformation of knowledge that makes teachers understand that there needs to be or be done. Change if they want to successfully implement a decision (Newton & Sackney, 2005).

Second, involving teachers to exercise self-control over their performance in implementing the independent curriculum and giving autonomy to teachers to work to complete their tasks. Based on the results of interviews with the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, teachers are allowed to exercise self-control over their performance in implementing the independent curriculum by filling in the self-evaluation instruments that have been provided. Filling out the instrument is carried out independently by assessing performance in terms of preparing learning plans as indicated by ownership of learning plan documents such as (1) CP, TP, and ATP documents; (2) IKTP documents per age group; (3) document for developing topics and sub-topics for intracurricular programs; (4) documents for developing themes and project activities in co-curricular programs (P5); (5) intracurricular teaching module; (6) P5 teaching module; (7) academic calendar documents; (8) teaching schedule document; (9) teacher's daily journal document; and (10) learning assessment documents.

Self-control over teacher performance is also carried out independently by the teachers themselves through reflection activities organized by the head of RA Nurul Dzikri through evaluation meetings on the implementation of the independent curriculum, which are held once a month. In the reflection activity, the teacher conveyed the various inhibiting factors he encountered when implementing the independent curriculum. Then, the head of RA Nurul Dzikri allowed other teachers to provide feedback to overcome these inhibiting factors. If there are no teachers to provide feedback, then the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, will describe solutions to overcome inhibiting factors

in implementing the independent curriculum. However, feedback more often comes from teachers, and the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, uses feedback from fellow teachers to overcome inhibiting factors in implementing the independent curriculum because he believes that teachers, as key figures in learning, have more experience than him.The reason the head of RA Nurul Dzikri uses more feedback from teachers as material for improvement to overcome inhibiting factors in implementing the independent curriculum is that the head of RA Nurul Dzikri has given full autonomy to teachers in implementing the independent curriculum. Based on the results of interviews with teachers, it can be seen that this happened because the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, realized that teachers were the ones who made learning plans and teachers were also the ones who could implement the independent curriculum according to the learning plans they had prepared.

Third, involving teachers in controlling leadership practices in implementing the independent curriculum. Apart from involving teachers in making decisions, the head RA Nurul Dzikri revealed that teachers were also involved in controlling leadership practices in implementing the independent curriculum. This control is carried out by teachers on the performance of the head RA Nurul Dzikri in implementing the independent curriculum by providing criticism and suggestions at each meeting session. Teachers revealed they could always convey criticism and suggestions at the end of each meeting. Criticism and suggestions from teachers were then used as input to improve the performance of the head RA Nurul Dzikri, in implementing the independent curriculum. The teacher also explained that the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, was eager to listen to their criticism and suggestions and could accommodate and implement criticism and suggestions from the teachers. According to the teacher, RA head Nurul Dzikri can do this because he communicates more and leads with a bottom-up pattern.

Based on the results of interviews with teachers, it can be seen that the head of RA, Nurul Dzikri, also controls their performance in implementing the independent curriculum. This control is carried out by carrying out monitoring activities and carrying out supervision activities. Head of RA Nurul Dzikri revealed that in implementing the independent curriculum, he tends to carry out supervision activities using the clinical supervision model. In this clinical supervision model, the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, together with the teachers, identifies the problems faced by the teachers in organizing learning activities. Based on the identification results, alternative solutions are formulated to overcome them. Then, the teacher is asked to implement the alternative solution. Clinical supervision is not only aimed at diagnosing and overcoming problems faced by teachers in carrying out learning activities. Clinical supervision can also be used as a medium for teachers to train their competencies, especially their pedagogical competencies (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

Meanwhile, monitoring is carried out by the head of RA Nurul Dzikri by conducting observations or class visits when learning activities take place. Monitoring activities are follow-up activities to clinical supervision activities. When conducting a class visit, the head of RA Nurul Dziki did not conduct questions and answers with the teacher, so the teacher remained focused on teaching. Monitoring activities are carried out to ascertain whether the teacher has implemented alternative solutions produced in clinical supervision activities or not. After the learning activities were finished, the head of RA Nurul Dzikri, asked the teacher whether he had succeeded in overcoming the problems he faced in organizing learning activities. If this is successful, the clinical supervision activity is considered complete. However, if this is not successful, the head of RA Nurul Dzikri will provide guidance and assistance to the teacher in solving his teaching problems. Here, it is clear that the principal can carry out one of his functions, namely, as a guide for teachers in carrying out learning activities well (Geesa et al., 2021).

Discussion

The school principal's participatory behavioral practices in curriculum implementation are aimed at fully involving teachers in the implementation of the independent curriculum. This was

done because the principal realized that teachers are curriculum designers as well as curriculum managers within the classroom. Involvement efforts were carried out in three ways.

First, involve teachers in making decisions related to the implementation of the independent curriculum. In the context of leadership and management, school principals have the authority to make decisions related to interests in the provision of educational services. This authority can be exercised personally and can also be exercised collectively. Head of RA Nurul Dzikri can make decisions personally, but usually decisions taken personally have various weaknesses. For example: (1) the data used to make decisions is limited because the data only comes from itself (Young et al., 2018); (2) personal decision making by the head of an educational institution shows that he does not fully trust the performance of his teachers and this can invite feelings of distrust in the teacher as well as in his leaders (Da'as, 2021); (3) the goals of decisions taken are more individual because they are taken personally, not collectively, even though various goals in an organization must be collective (Noman et al., 2018); (4) personal decision making means there is no discussion process between leaders and teachers so that there is no leadership cadre formation process through work meeting activities (Dagnew Kelkay, 2020); (5) making personal decisions without involving other parties, especially teachers, can cause teachers to experience difficulties in understanding the decisions made and the implications are that teachers will also experience difficulties in being able to implement decisions taken by their leaders personally (Somech, 2010); and (6) personal decision making creates a gap between leaders and teachers so that there is no principle of equality of position in working to organize educational activities for students (Park, 2018).

Based on the description above, collective decision making in the provision of educational services can provide the following benefits: (1) get a lot of data to make decisions because many parties are involved in making them. A lot of data is certainly varied and there are diverse interests so that the decisions taken will accommodate more various interests; (2) collective decision making involving teachers makes them have confidence in the principal's leadership, there is nothing hidden in the principal's leadership and they are open to accepting various opinions from teachers; (3) the purpose of decision making is collective because it is formulated collectively; (4) there is a discussion process in decision making which can be used as a vehicle for developing teacher cadres to become potential school leaders; (5) collective decision making makes teachers understand the purpose of the decision formulation so that they can be on the same frequency as the school principal in implementing the decision; and (6) involving teachers in collective decision making makes teachers feel valued and makes teachers position themselves as partners of the school principal, not as subordinates of the school principal, thereby creating togetherness between the principal and teachers.

In implementing the independent curriculum at RA, decision making involving teachers is something that must be done. This is because the independent curriculum, which in an RA is called the raudhatul athfal operational curriculum, must be designed by the school principal together with the teachers. There are four steps taken in the design or development of the Raudhatul Athfal operational curriculum, namely: (1) analyzing the characteristics of RA; (2) analyzing RA's vision and mission; (3) organizing learning; (4) planning learning; and (5) mentoring, evaluation and professional development.

Analysis of RA characteristics is carried out by analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges that exist in RA. This can be done optimally when the principal involves the teachers in discussing it. The results of the discussion are then used as material for making a joint decision whether based on the results of the analysis it can be said that RA is ready to implement the independent curriculum or not. Analysis of RA's vision and mission is also carried out with discussions which inevitably involve the school principal having to involve the teachers. RA vision and mission analysis is carried out to determine the relevance of the vision and mission to the learning outcomes set by the government. If the results of the discussion decide that there

is relevance between RA's vision and mission and learning outcomes, the next step is organizing learning and learning planning which is mostly done by the teacher, the principal being the facilitator so it is very unlikely that in these two activities the principal does not involve the teachers. Then, in evaluating the implementation of the independent curriculum, the school principal involves the teachers because teachers are the main implementers in implementing the independent curriculum.

Second, involving teachers to exercise self-control over their performance in implementing the independent curriculum and giving autonomy to teachers to work to complete their tasks. Self-control carried out by teachers in the management context is a supervisory activity carried out independently. This makes the monitoring process more humane. Self-control is carried out by teachers by carrying out reflection activities where from these reflection activities teachers can identify various weaknesses that exist in themselves in implementing the independent curriculum. The results of this identification can be used as material for self-evaluation to improve performance in implementing the independent curriculum. Even though self-control is carried out directly by the teacher, the principal still prepares instruments for them. This is done so that the self-control process can be carried out in a directed manner. School principals can also take advantage of advanced technology to create these instruments, for example by utilizing the Google Form feature (Redmond et al., 2021).

Basically, self-control is carried out as a reflection process in self-evaluation to identify weaknesses as material for making continuous improvement efforts (Yusof et al., 2020). In implementing the independent curriculum, it is essential to do this not only to improve teacher performance in carrying out learning activities but also to make improvements to the various learning strategies designed in the teaching modules that will be created by teachers to convey subsequent learning topics. Then giving autonomy to teachers to work to complete their tasks in implementing the independent curriculum can create a sense of self-confidence in them as learning facilitators. Teacher self-confidence is important in the teacher's success in organizing learning activities (Nanayakkara et al., 2022). Self-confidence in teachers can not only lead to success in organizing learning activities (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017), but it can also give rise to improvisation in teachers in designing creative, interesting and challenging play activities for children in implementing the independent curriculum.

Third, involving teachers in controlling the leadership practices of RA Nurul Dzikri principal in implementing the independent curriculum. The principal can do this because he is a democratic and open-minded leader. The results of other research show that there is a positive relationship between democratic and open-minded principal leadership and teacher performance, namely: (1) creating a positive working relationship between principals and teachers; (2) the principal becomes a person who understands the emotional development of teachers at school; (3) the principal has the ability to overcome teachers' emotional problems while working; and (4) create a pro-social attitude in teachers at work (Hoque & Raya, 2023).

Based on the description above, it can be said that efforts to involve teachers in controlling the principal's leadership practices in implementing the independent curriculum will not only result in control of the principal's leadership but also a harmonious relationship between the principal and teachers and can give rise to pro-social attitudes in teachers in the implementation of the independent curriculum. With this pro-social attitude, teachers will become individuals who care about their leaders and their children. This concern can be used as capital by leaders to optimize teacher performance in implementing the independent curriculum. The results of other research show that pro-social attitudes in teachers can have implications for increasing their work motivation in carrying out learning activities in the classroom. Teacher work motivation can also have implications for children's learning motivation and can develop prosocial attitudes in children (Cheon et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

Participative behavior practice is a key leader behavior in path goal leadership, which can be realized by RA Nurul Dzikri's head through democratic leadership and bottom-up communication. This practice involves involving teachers in decision-making, self-control, and leadership practices, allowing them to manage the independent curriculum and religious moderation. However, the research has not explored how teachers use their autonomy in classroom management, suggesting future research should focus on studying teachers' roles as independent curriculum managers and leaders of students.

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