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Exploring The Role Of Teacher Leaders In The Implementation Of The Independent Curriculum

Nur Hakim[1], Ari Susetiyo[2*], Riska Latifatul Husna[3]
[1,2] *Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Tribakti Lirboyo, Kediri, Indonesia*
[3] *Faculty of Tarbiyah, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Sorong, Indonesia*

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum at several educational institutions continues to encounter various challenges. These include teachers focusing solely on instruction without sufficiently addressing students' overall development, a limited understanding of the Merdeka curriculum concept, continued dependence on traditional teaching methods, minimal use of information technology, and difficulties in applying differentiated learning strategies. In this context, having a teacher leader is crucial as both an instructional leader and a change agent dedicated to advancing educational reform. SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru is among the schools actively implementing the Merdeka curriculum, where the teacher leader plays a central role in driving change. This study investigates: (1) the role of the teacher leader in implementing the Merdeka curriculum at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru, and (2) how their role is evaluated during the process. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data was gathered through observations, interviews, and documentation. Participants included the principal, homeroom teachers, students, and the teacher leader directly involved in curriculum implementation. Data analysis consisted of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, providing a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Results show that the teacher leader at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru fulfills five main roles: instructional leader, learning community facilitator, teacher mentor, discussion and collaboration facilitator, and student leadership developer. Feedback from the principal, teachers, students, and the teacher leader indicates these roles are effectively performed, leading to enhanced learning quality, stronger character development among students, and increased collaboration within the school.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in various schools across Indonesia represents an educational reform effort aimed at creating student-centered learning (Hunaepi dan Suharta 2024). This curriculum emphasizes

✉ *Corresponding Author: arisusetiyotribakti@gmail.com*

flexibility in learning, differentiated instruction, character development, and strengthening students' competencies to meet their individual needs. However, despite its progressive orientation, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces numerous challenges that may hinder the achievement of its intended educational outcomes (Fasinro dkk. 2024).

Several studies have reported that teachers continue to experience difficulties in understanding the concept and practical application of the Independent Curriculum. Common obstacles include limited pedagogical competence in student-centered learning, insufficient mastery of information technology, and difficulties in implementing differentiated learning approaches (Susetiyo dkk. 2023). As a result, many teachers still rely on conventional teaching methods such as one-way lecturing, which often reduces student engagement and limits the development of students' critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative skills (Sihotang dan Siregar 2024).

The success of the Independent Curriculum largely depends on teachers' professional capacity to transform learning practices from teacher-centered instruction into student-centered learning environments that support the holistic development of students' character, competencies, and skills (A'yun dkk. 2023). (Fauzan dkk. 2023). (Suryati dkk. 2023). Therefore, teachers are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to act as facilitators, motivators, mentors, and learning innovators who can create meaningful and adaptive learning experiences (Putri dan Kalstum 2022). In addition, teachers are required to possess effective classroom management skills and continuously improve their professional competence to respond to educational changes and challenges (Akhyak dkk. 2026).

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology introduced the Teacher Leader Program (*Guru Penggerak Program*) to strengthen teachers' leadership capacity and support educational transformation at the school level. Teacher leaders are expected to become instructional leaders, agents of change, facilitators of collaboration, and mentors for fellow teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum effectively. Their role is considered essential in encouraging innovation, improving teacher collaboration, and fostering a positive learning culture within schools.

Previous studies have highlighted the important contribution of teacher leaders in supporting curriculum reform and educational transformation. Nurfadillah and Mustika found that teacher leaders play significant roles as facilitators of learning communities, discussion facilitators, motivators, and developers of professional competence.

Similar findings were reported by Riowati, Nono H., Yoenanto, and Herinda Mardin et al. who emphasized the multidimensional roles of teacher leaders in supporting curriculum implementation and collaborative learning environments.

However, most previous studies primarily focused on identifying the general roles of teacher leaders without specifically examining how these roles are optimized in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the elementary

school level. Existing research also tends to emphasize teachers' perceptions while providing limited perspectives from principals and students regarding the effectiveness of teacher leaders in supporting curriculum implementation. Furthermore, studies discussing the practical strategies used by teacher leaders to overcome implementation challenges in elementary schools remain limited. This condition indicates a clear research gap in understanding how teacher leaders optimize their roles within the real context of Independent Curriculum implementation.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive evaluation of the optimization of teacher leaders' roles in implementing the Independent Curriculum by involving multiple perspectives, including principals, classroom teachers, students, and teacher leaders themselves. Unlike previous studies that mainly describe teacher leadership roles conceptually, this study specifically analyzes how these roles are implemented, optimized, and evaluated in daily educational practices at the elementary school level.

SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru was selected as the research site because it has actively implemented the Independent Curriculum since the 2023/2024 academic year and demonstrates collaborative practices between teacher leaders and other teachers in supporting curriculum implementation. Preliminary observations revealed that although the school has demonstrated relatively successful curriculum implementation, challenges remain, particularly in sustaining teachers' creativity and innovation and in consistently applying student-centered learning approaches.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the role of and optimize teacher leaders in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of teacher leadership studies and, in practice, to improving the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum implementation in elementary schools.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method to explore and analyze the optimization of the *Teacher Leader* (Teacher Leader) role in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to describe social realities within the school environment through in-depth observation of human interactions and learning practices (Sugiyono,2019). The study was conducted as field research, collecting data directly from natural settings within the school. The research took place at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru, located on Jl. Lesmono, Dusun Putuk, Kampungbaru Village, Tanjunganom District, Nganjuk Regency. The location was selected because the school has implemented the *Merdeka Curriculum* and has two teacher leaders actively involved in its implementation. Data collection was carried out in December 2024 through observation and staged interviews.

Primary data sources were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants, consisting of the school principal as the educational leader (Creswell, 2017). The primary research subjects consist of two Teacher Leaders, with classroom teachers serving as collaborators of the Teacher Leaders, and students as the direct recipients of the program's impact. Secondary data sources were obtained from school documents, including archives related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, school profiles, organizational structures, and records of learning activities. Furthermore, additional secondary data were collected from pertinent literature concerning the Merdeka Curriculum policy and the Teacher Leader concept. Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: participatory observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was used to directly observe teaching practices, interactions between *Teacher leader* and colleagues, and the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in daily school activities. Structured interviews were conducted using interview guidelines aligned with the research focus, while allowing flexibility to develop questions based on field conditions. Documentation was carried out to collect data in the form of school archives, activity photos, and other supporting documents relevant to the study (Moleong 2016).

Data analysis was conducted through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw field data based on the research focus on the roles and evaluation of the t*eacher leader*. Data presentation was carried out in the form of a structured narrative text to describe the research findings systematically. Conclusion drawing was performed by comparing field findings with relevant theories and verifying them through data triangulation.

Data validity was tested through triangulation across three aspects. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from various informants to ensure data consistency. Technique triangulation was performed by cross-checking the same data using different methods, such as interviews, observations, and documentation, to verify the accuracy of the information. Time triangulation was carried out by repeating data collection at different times to ensure the stability and consistency of the information obtained from informants.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. The Role of *Teacher Leader* in the Implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru

Based on an interview with Mrs. Toyyibatus Syaadah, a Teacher Leader at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru, the role of the Teacher Leader in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at the school is of considerable importance. A Teacher Leader is not solely an educator but also assumes five essential roles, including that of a learning leader (Mahfirah dkk. 2025). facilitator of learning communities, mentor for other teachers (Alsarawi dan Cieminski, t.t.). A medium for discussion and collaboration among teachers (Citraningsih 2025). And a developer of

students' leadership skills. The following presents the findings of this study regarding the roles of the t*eacher leader* in implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru.

a. *Teacher leader* as Learning Leader

The role of the *Teacher leader* as a learning leader at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru is evident in various initiatives that create engaging, enjoyable, and student-centered learning environments. One concrete example of this effort is the teacher's ability to identify students' learning styles. For instance, when students tend to have a visual learning style, the teacher adjusts teaching methods by using visual media such as pictures or videos, making the learning process more effective and meaningful (Sikumbang dkk. 2024).

The *Merdeka Curriculum* adopts a differentiated learning approach that emphasizes not only learning outcomes but also the planning, implementation, and evaluation of lessons tailored to students' individual characteristics. Therefore, a *Teacher leader* must be able to recognize each student's unique needs and design flexible learning processes that foster their full potential.

This effort reflects the role of the *Teacher leader* as a learning leader who consistently motivates, facilitates, and guides students throughout their learning journey. One example of how teacher leaders act as learning leaders in the Merdeka Curriculum is by using technology such as an LCD projector to present visual materials—images, videos, or interactive presentations. This strategy aligns with students' visual learning preferences, making lessons more engaging, understandable, and meaningful. Through this approach, students become more active participants in class and are encouraged to enhance their academic performance independently.

b. *Teacher leader* as Learning Community Facilitator

The role of teacher leaders as facilitators of learning communities at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru is demonstrated through their active participation in various school-based professional learning activities. Within these learning communities, teachers share ideas, experiences, and solutions to challenges encountered in classroom practice (Jannati dkk. 2023).

The existence of such communities creates a collaborative environment that fosters continuous professional growth among teachers. In these sessions, *Teacher leader* serve as both motivators and agents of change, inspiring their peers to keep improving. For example, when some teachers have not yet fully understood the concept of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, while others have attended training or workshops, the learning community becomes a strategic forum for sharing knowledge and strengthening understanding (Fauzan dkk. 2023).

In this context, teacher leaders act as bridges between new knowledge and practical application in classrooms, promoting a culture of collaborative learning among teachers. SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru indeed has an active learning community involving teachers who regularly meet to discuss, exchange ideas, and find solutions to teaching challenges. This demonstrates that teachers are highly

motivated and collaborative in enhancing the quality of education. The use of an LCD projector also indicates that the school has integrated technology to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

c. *Teacher leader* as Mentors for Other Teachers

The *Teacher leader* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru serve as mentors for other teachers through continuous and tangible professional support. They not only act as role models but also actively assist their peers in developing professional competence by offering guidance, advice, and constructive feedback regarding classroom challenges (Sholeh dkk. 2023).

For instance, when a classroom teacher faces difficulties in handling students with special needs, the *Teacher leader* provides mentoring through experience sharing or relevant suggestions to address the issue effectively. Additionally, teacher leaders provide feedback by evaluating other teachers' learning activities (Nari dkk. 2024).

Thus, the mentoring role of the teacher leader extends beyond simple assistance; it fosters a collaborative, supportive, and growth-oriented professional environment that improves educational quality across the school.

d. *Teacher leader* as Platforms for Discussion and Collaboration among Teachers

The role of *Teacher leaders* as facilitators of discussion and collaboration among teachers at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru is realized through their leadership in sustaining active learning community programs. Within these communities, teacher leaders help bridge communication among teachers to share ideas, experiences, and discuss challenges faced during classroom instruction.They encourage peers to exchange feedback, evaluate teaching practices, and jointly design more effective learning strategies. Such collaboration not only strengthens relationships among teachers but also serves as an essential means of improving the school's overall educational quality.

Teacher leaders (Teacher Leaders) collaborate and engage in discussions with other teachers to share ideas, experiences, and address challenges faced in the classroom learning process. This collaborative role positions the teacher leader as a driving force of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) within the school environment. Their contribution extends beyond individual development to fostering a cohesive learning community that remains open to change and innovation.

e.* Teacher leader *as Developers of Student Leadership

In addition to enhancing the professionalism of fellow teachers, the teacher leader at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru also plays a vital role in nurturing students' leadership qualities. They strive to instill values of independence, discipline, and responsibility, enabling students to develop self-leadership skills. These traits are cultivated through consistent character-building practices embedded in daily classroom routines.

For instance, teachers consistently remind students of their responsibilities such as completing assignments on time, maintaining cleanliness, and

distinguishing between study time and playtime. Through these practices, students gradually learn to recognize personal responsibility and develop discipline as an integral aspect of self-leadership (N. L. A. N. I. Sari dkk. 2025).

Furthermore, *Teacher leader* also foster leadership through participatory approaches that actively engage students in classroom discussions. For example, teachers invite students to express their preferences for learning activities, establish classroom agreements, and determine appropriate consequences for rule violations. This process not only nurtures a sense of responsibility but also fosters ownership of the collectively agreed-upon rules.

When students are given the opportunity to express opinions and are genuinely listened to, they feel valued and gain greater self-confidence. This engagement becomes a concrete step toward cultivating leadership and accountability among students. Thus, teacher leaders not only teach but also shape students' character and leadership abilities, which are essential life skills for their future.

The five roles performed by the *Teacher leader* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru align with the views expressed by Syaiful in his book *Inti Sari Teacher leader* ("The Essence of the Teacher Leader"). He identifies five key roles of the *Teacher leader*:

1. Learning Leader,
2. Coach for Other Teachers,
3. Collaboration Facilitator,
4. Student Leadership Developer, and
5. Community of Practice Activator.

These five roles are not only the defining characteristics of a *Teacher leader* but also serve as indicators of success in fulfilling their mission as agents of educational transformation within their institutions. The consistency between the research findings and theoretical frameworks indicates that the roles of *Teacher leader* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru are well aligned with the conceptual understanding presented in educational literature.

3.1.2 Evaluation of the Role of *Teacher Leader* in the Implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru

The evaluation of the *Teacher Leader* (Teacher Leader) (2023) role is a process of assessing the effectiveness of *Teacher leaders* in carrying out their duties and responsibilities as agents of change in implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* (Abdillah dan Setianingsig 2025). This evaluation not only assesses their success in delivering learning materials but also their contributions in building learning communities, mentoring fellow teachers, fostering collaboration, and promoting student leadership. The evaluation process is carried out systematically through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data on the teacher leader's activities and contributions within the context of teaching and professional development at the school Bidang (Pribadi dkk. 2023).

According to Arikunto and Jabar, evaluation is a systematic and objective process of assessment toward an object to determine its level of success, efficiency, and effectiveness. In this context, teacher performance evaluation can be interpreted as a systematic process to determine the quality, value, and The significance of a teacher's performance in executing their professional responsibilities, including their role as agents of change in schools. The evaluation of the teacher leader's role is based on Supardi's theory of teacher performance (Abdurahman dkk. 2023). which defines it as the outcome of a teacher's efforts reflected through knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes in performing their educational functions. Therefore, evaluating the role of the t*eacher leader* is crucial, as it forms the foundation for assessing their consistency and effectiveness in implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* (Hunaepi dan Suharta 2024).

According to Yanti et al., the purpose of evaluating the role of the t*eacher leader* is to assess teachers' effectiveness in designing differentiated learning, implementing diagnostic and formative assessments, and fostering a positive and adaptive learning environment (Aqodiah dkk. 2023). Pawartani and Suciptaningsih further state that this evaluation can be carried out through classroom observation, teacher self-reflection, and qualitative analysis of students' learning outcomes. Thus, the evaluation of teacher leaders serves both as a measurement tool and as guidance for continuous improvement of their role.

The evaluation can also be conducted by analyzing the opinions, perspectives, and assessments of various stakeholders directly involved in the teaching and learning process at school. In this study, evaluations were conducted through interviews with the principal, classroom teachers, students, and the teacher leaders themselves. The goal was to determine the effectiveness of teacher leaders in carrying out their roles and their impact on the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru.

a. Evaluation from the Principal's Perspective

The principal of SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru assessed that the teacher leaders had performed their roles optimally in supporting the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The principal rated their performance as "very good" and "satisfactory." Although some instances of conventional teaching methods were still observed, these were considered normal during the teaching-learning process. Overall, the teacher leader demonstrated a strong capacity to inspire and motivate other teachers, particularly in learning innovation and inter-teacher collaboration (Asmilasari dkk. 2025; Nari dkk. 2024). Their openness in sharing experiences with colleagues also served as a positive indicator of their optimal contribution to the school. Hence, the principal's evaluation confirmed that *Teacher leader* had made a tangible contribution to improving the quality of learning at the school.

b. Evaluation from the Classroom Teachers' Perspective

Interviews with homeroom teachers for grades 2 and 5 indicated that the presence of the t*eacher leader* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru had a positive impact on supporting both teachers and students. *Teacher leaders* frequently

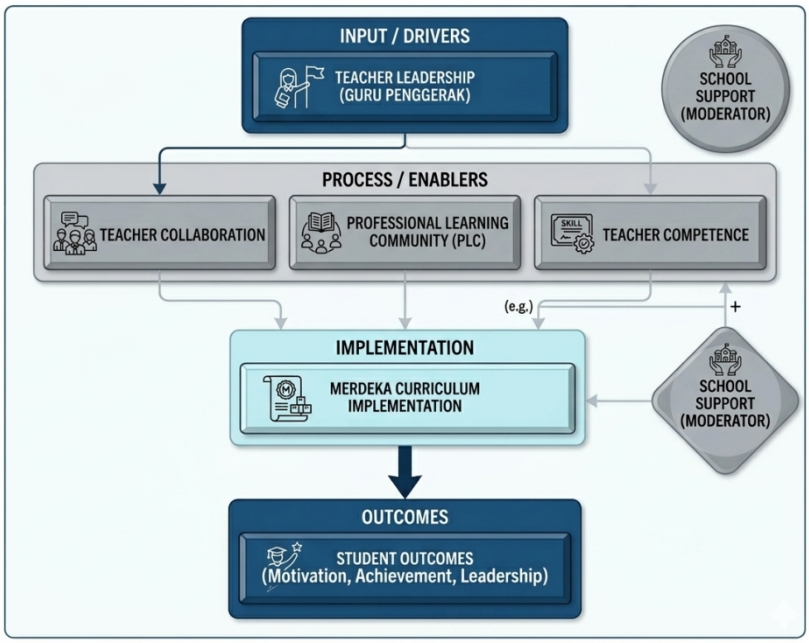
shared innovative teaching ideas and were always ready to assist colleagues facing challenges. One concrete example of their contribution is the successful implementation of school programs, such as “Polite Javanese Language Thursday” and the literacy program, both of which are aligned with the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5) in the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

The “Polite Javanese Language Thursday” program aims to instill politeness and preserve local culture, while the literacy program enhances reading, writing, and critical thinking skills (C. H. Putri dkk. 2023). These initiatives reflect the project-based learning model that characterizes the *Merdeka Curriculum*, focusing on soft-skill development and character building aligned with the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* values. Therefore, based on the classroom teachers’ evaluation, *Teacher leader* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru have effectively fulfilled their roles as innovators and mentors for their peers.

c. Evaluation from the Students’ Perspective

Interviews with students from grades 2 and 5 revealed that the t*eacher leader* successfully created a comfortable, enjoyable, and motivating learning The environment fostered positive student engagement, as they expressed happiness and enthusiasm during lessons. This was attributed to teachers encouraging them at the outset of each session, elucidating the material with clarity and patience, and ensuring comprehensive understanding among all students. (Department of Sport Science, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta Indonesia dkk. 2025).

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT



Students felt respected as their opinions were heard and considered. They also appreciated that the teacher did not overload them with excessive assignments, creating a stress-free and engaging classroom atmosphere. These findings indicate that teacher leaders have successfully implemented the concept of “freedom to learn,” fostering student independence and motivation. Thus, the influence of the teacher leader at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru extends beyond fellow teachers; it also positively impacts students’ comfort and enthusiasm in learning.

d. Evaluation from the *Teacher Leader*’s Perspective

The *Teacher leader* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru stated that they had performed their roles effectively, despite initial challenges such as time constraints and limited program implementation. These challenges were considered natural, given that the *Teacher leader* initiative is a relatively new innovation in education, requiring both technical and mindset adjustments.

Over time, these challenges were gradually overcome through teamwork and collaboration among all school members. Support from the principal, fellow teachers, and students played a vital role in ensuring the smooth execution of programs. Regular evaluations were also conducted to improve and refine initiatives. The unity and collaboration among educators at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru proved essential in overcoming early barriers and ensuring that the *Teacher leader* role was implemented effectively.

Based on evaluations from various stakeholders, the principal, classroom teachers, students, and teacher leaders themselves, it can be concluded that the role of *Teacher leader* at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru has been carried out optimally. Their presence has positively influenced the improvement of learning quality, student character development, and the spirit of collaboration within the

school environment. These findings demonstrate that teacher leaders have consistently fulfilled their five core roles, contributing not only through their actions but also through the broader impact they have created a more open, flexible, and student-centered learning atmosphere.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that teacher leaders play a significant role in supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru. Their roles extend beyond classroom instruction to include leadership in professional collaboration, mentoring, learning innovation, and student character development. These findings indicate that the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum is closely linked to the presence of teacher leaders capable of fostering collaborative, student-centered educational practices within the school environment.

One of the major findings of this study is the role of teacher leaders as instructional leaders who promote differentiated and student-centered learning. The findings revealed that teacher leaders adjusted instructional strategies according to students' learning characteristics by utilizing visual media, interactive learning methods, and technology-based instruction. This finding supports the argument of (Putri dan Kalstum 2022). The Independent Curriculum emphasizes that teachers shift from teacher-centered instruction toward student-centered learning approaches. Similarly, Sihotang and Siregar argued that effective curriculum implementation depends on teachers' ability to create meaningful and engaging learning experiences for students (Sihotang dan Siregar 2024).

The implementation of differentiated learning identified in this study also reflects the broader goals of the Independent Curriculum in accommodating students' individual differences and learning needs. Teacher leaders demonstrated flexibility in designing classroom instruction, which contributed to increased student participation and classroom engagement. This finding aligns with the work of (Fauzan dkk. 2023). Who stated that differentiated learning is an essential component of the Independent Curriculum because it encourages students to learn according to their abilities, interests, and characteristics. Therefore, teacher leadership becomes essential in ensuring that curriculum transformation is implemented effectively at the classroom level.

Another important finding of this study is the role of teacher leaders in developing collaborative professional cultures through learning communities, mentoring activities, and teacher discussions. Teacher leaders facilitated knowledge sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and professional support among teachers. This finding strengthens previous studies conducted by (Nurfadillah dan Mustika 2024). This identified teacher leaders as facilitators of professional learning communities and agents of educational change. However, this study extends previous findings by showing that collaborative culture is not only formed through formal programs but also through continuous interpersonal

interaction, peer mentoring, and collective reflection among teachers within the school environment.

The collaborative practices identified in this study are consistent with the concept of distributed leadership proposed by (Spillane 2012), which emphasizes that educational leadership should not rely solely on school principals but should also involve teachers as active contributors to school improvement. Through collaboration and shared responsibility, teacher leaders at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru were able to encourage innovation and strengthen teachers' readiness in implementing the Independent Curriculum. This finding indicates that teacher leadership contributes not only to individual teacher development but also to institutional capacity building within schools.

This study also revealed that teacher leaders played an important role in mentoring fellow teachers, particularly in addressing classroom challenges and improving instructional practices. Teacher leaders provided constructive feedback, practical guidance, and emotional support for teachers experiencing difficulties in implementing new learning approaches. This finding is consistent (Wenner dan Campbell 2017). (Wenner dan Campbell 2017). Who emphasized that teacher leadership contributes significantly to teacher professional development and instructional improvement. The mentoring role identified in this study further demonstrates that professional growth is more effective when supported by collaborative, collegial relationships among teachers.

In addition to supporting teachers' professional development, teacher leaders helped cultivate students' leadership qualities through participatory learning methodologies. Students engaged actively in classroom discussions, decision-making processes, and the establishment of classroom agreements, thereby fostering responsibility, confidence, and proactive participation. This observation aligns with the principles of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasize character education and student agency as crucial educational outcomes. Whereas previous research primarily focused on teacher leadership in instructional settings, this study demonstrates that teacher leadership also directly influences students' social and leadership development at the elementary school level. Another significant finding of this study is the positive evaluation of teacher leaders from multiple perspectives, including principals, classroom teachers, students, and teacher leaders themselves. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders provides a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of teacher leadership in curriculum implementation. Previous studies generally focused only on teachers' perceptions, whereas this study reveals that teacher leadership also positively influences school culture, student learning experiences, and institutional collaboration. This multi-perspective evaluation strengthens the credibility of the findings and highlights the broader impact of teacher leadership within the school community.

The findings further indicate that the implementation of teacher leadership at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru contributes to the creation of a more flexible, participatory, and student-centered learning environment. The collaborative

relationships established among school members helped reduce challenges encountered during curriculum implementation and encouraged continuous professional improvement. This finding confirms that the success of the Independent Curriculum is not determined solely by curriculum policy but also by the readiness of school communities to collaboratively adapt to educational transformation.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of teacher leaders' roles through a multi-stakeholder evaluation approach involving principals, teachers, students, and teacher leaders themselves within the context of Independent Curriculum implementation at the elementary school level. This study also highlights how teacher leadership contributes not only to instructional improvement but also to the development of collaborative professional culture and student leadership practices in elementary education. Therefore, this study expands the current understanding of teacher leadership by demonstrating its multidimensional contribution to curriculum transformation and school improvement.

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of teacher leadership literature, particularly in the context of curriculum reform and elementary education in Indonesia. Practically, the findings suggest that schools should strengthen teacher leadership programs by encouraging collaborative learning communities, mentoring systems, and participatory learning practices to support the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. In addition, policymakers should provide continuous professional development opportunities and institutional support to optimize the roles of teacher leaders as agents of educational transformation.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted at SD Negeri 2 Kampungbaru, it can be concluded that *Teacher leaders* (Teacher Leaders) play five main roles in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*: as learning leaders, facilitators of learning communities, mentors for other teachers, platforms for discussion and collaboration among educators, and promoters of student leadership. These roles are carried out through various initiatives such as differentiated learning, facilitation of learning communities, professional mentoring, and student character development.

The evaluation of the *Teacher leader*'s roles shows optimal results from the perspectives of school principals, fellow teachers, students, and the *Teacher leader* themselves. The presence of a t*eacher leader* has proven to have a positive impact on improving learning quality, fostering students' character development, and creating a spirit of collaboration within the school environment. Although there were initial challenges, such as time constraints and program

adaptation, these issues were successfully overcome through the support and collaboration of the entire school community.

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