

## Teacher Leading Program in Improving Learning Transformation in South Sorong District

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the effectiveness of the role of the Leading Teacher in improving learning transformation and identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of the Leading Teacher Program in South Sorong Regency. This study uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and documentation in several schools implementing the program. The results of the study indicate that Leading Teachers have a strategic role in transforming learning through role models, increasing student motivation and competence, and strengthening learning communities in schools. Supporting factors for program implementation include transformative principal leadership and internal teacher motivation. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include limited facilities and infrastructure, difficult-to-access geographical conditions, and lack of support from several principals and fellow teachers. This study recommends strengthening local policies, improving educational facilities, and developing the capacity of principals as learning leaders in order to optimize the role of Leading Teachers in remote areas.

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect in building a country and in improving the quality of human resources and the progress of a nation. In Indonesia, the implementation of education still has many problems that cause disparities in each region (Gorton & Alston, 2012). Based on the 2022 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) report, it states that 82 percent of 15-year-old students have mathematics skills below the PISA standard, namely below level 2. In addition, 75 percent of students of the same age also have low reading skills, or below the PISA standard. This is due to the many educational problems faced by Indonesia, including limited access to education, low competence of teachers and education personnel, limited infrastructure and supporting facilities for education, and an irrelevant

curriculum. According to Patandung & Panggua (2022), the factors that influence the low equality of educational opportunities include: 1) The development of educational institutions is still more directed towards urban areas; 2) The low economic conditions of rural communities, resulting in a lack of community support/participation in taking part in the development of educational institutions; 3) Very limited facilities and infrastructure in rural areas; and 4) Very poor access to technology in rural areas compared to urban areas. These problems were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred several years ago. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning process was hampered by restrictions on community activities, including teaching and learning activities in schools. The government at that time issued a policy of online learning or distance learning via the internet network media with the hope that students could learn even if they did not go to school. In implementing this distance learning policy, it turned out to be faced with various challenges such as limited internet access, inadequate infrastructure, and the readiness of educators to implement distance learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). This condition has an impact on learning loss, especially in remote areas with minimal access to technology such as in South Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province.

In addressing these educational problems, the government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) at that time launched a policy package for the transformation and recovery of learning, one of which is the Leading Teacher Education Program (PGP) (Kariem & Syahril, 2020). The Leading Teacher Education Program (PGP) is a leadership education program for teachers to become learning leaders. The Leading Teacher Education Program (PGP) includes online training, workshops, conferences, and mentoring for six months. This program aims to produce learning leaders who are able to inspire positive change in their schools and communities (Kemendikbudristek, 2020). Graduates of the Leading Teacher Education Program are expected to be able to form an inclusive, collaborative, and adaptive education ecosystem to local challenges. The Leading Teacher Education Program (PGP) is designed to produce educators who are not only academically competent, but also become agents of change in the education ecosystem (Astuti & Ismail, 2021). As the vanguard of educational transformation, graduates of this program are required to internalize core values while simultaneously carrying out strategic roles that have a broad impact on improving the quality of learning and school development. In the education and training process, Teacher Leaders are equipped with various materials presented in three learning module packages. Teacher Leaders who have been declared to have passed must be able to internalize the values and carry out the roles they have learned during their education and training. The values that must be possessed by Teacher Leaders are independent, reflective, innovative, collaborative, and on the side of students. As agents of change, Teacher Leaders must also be able to carry out their roles in schools, namely as learning leaders, becoming coaches for fellow teachers, encouraging collaboration, realizing student leadership, and as motivators of the community of practitioners.

According to Usuh et al. (2024), to improve student learning outcomes, a paradigm shift in learning is needed from a conventional model to a more active and interactive teaching and learning model. The Teacher Leader Education Program (PGP) is designed so that teachers have skills and competencies in learning leadership. During the training, teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills in designing and implementing innovative and student-centered learning that can encourage active involvement and improve student competency. Research by Hargreaves and O'Connor

(2018) emphasizes the importance of collaboration in building teacher capacity. Teacher Leaders are not only expected to be able to teach effectively, but also to be catalysts for change by involving students, fellow teachers, and the community. Through this approach, the learning recovery process is expected to take place faster and more effectively in disadvantaged areas such as South Sorong Regency. The implementation of the Teacher Leader Program in South Sorong Regency faces geographical and cultural challenges, the existence of teacher leaders as agents of change is crucial in efforts to transform learning with all the limitations that exist. Teacher Leaders are required to create an active, creative, and participatory learning environment according to student needs. The implementation of this program is expected to restore students' learning motivation and improve the quality of learning in post-pandemic areas.

Ratnasari & Nugraheni (2024) explained that a comprehensive approach that seeks to improve educational standards is needed to produce the best quality human resources. This Teacher Leader Education Program is one comprehensive approach that does not only focus on one element, but considers various interrelated factors so that the solutions or understanding obtained are more holistic and effective. This Teacher Leader Program requires support from many parties so that this program can run effectively in an effort to improve the quality of education in an area. Currently, the effectiveness of the Teacher Leader Program in South Sorong Regency still needs to be studied further to determine what impacts it has on efforts to improve and transform education in South Sorong Regency. Research on Teacher Leaders is important to ensure whether the hopes and objectives of this program can be achieved or not.

Based on data from the Education and Culture Office of South Sorong Regency in 2024, the number of graduates of the Leading Teacher Program spread across various schools in the South Sorong Regency area was 46 people. These leading teacher graduates have completed their Education and training and received a graduation certificate issued by the Directorate General of Teachers and Education Personnel. The presence of leading teachers in the South Sorong Regency area is expected to contribute to improving the quality of education in their schools. The South Sorong Regency Government is currently running several programs to improve the quality of education that require the support of leading teacher graduates, such as programs to improve the competence of teachers and education personnel, literacy and numeracy, data-based planning, implementation of the Independent Curriculum, All-Day Schools, etc. Graduates of the leading teacher program have made real contributions in the field in implementing various educational transformation improvement programs above. The involvement of leading teachers in these various programs has a positive impact on their school communities and communities outside the school which has an impact on improving the competence of teachers and students.

Although the utilization of Teacher Leaders has become one of the initiatives of the South Sorong Regency government to improve the quality of education, there are several aspects that have not been fully explored. This study will highlight the effectiveness of the teacher leader program in transforming learning and what are the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the successful implementation of the Teacher Leader Program in South Sorong Regency. This study will not only support the development of better programs, but also help overcome obstacles, especially those faced by other remote areas in Indonesia.

## METHOD

Based on the formulation of the problem and research objectives, this research is relevant to use a qualitative approach type considering its characteristics, including natural settings, researcher as key instrument, multiple sources of data, and emergent design (Creswell, 2014:233-234). The qualitative approach was chosen because it is appropriate to explore in-depth information about the experiences, views, and practices carried out by graduates of the Teacher Leader Education Program in their schools. This research was conducted in several educational units that have graduates of the Teacher Leader Education Program (PGP) in South Sorong Regency, West Papua Province.

The data used in this study consists of two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly from the first source through the interaction of researchers with research participants. This data reflects actual information and is relevant to the objectives of the study. Instruments used for primary data collection: a). Semi-structured interview guidelines for in-depth interviews, b). Observation guides to record field findings systematically. Secondary data is data obtained from existing documents and other sources. This data includes information relevant to the research topic, such as school education reports, peer testimonials, policy documents, and publications related to the Teacher Activation Program. Primary Data Collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, field observations while secondary data collection through literature studies was carried out by accessing official documents, reports, and relevant publications through government websites, libraries, and other trusted sources, and document selection and analysis were carried out to ensure the suitability of the data to the research objectives.

The data analysis technique to be used by the researcher is adapted from the interaction model of Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2014). Qualitative data analysis activities start from data collection, then to data reduction and data presentation. Between data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, there is mutual interaction. Every time a conclusion is drawn and/or verified, it means that the data collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and audio-visual materials from various data sources has reached saturation point. Therefore, after drawing conclusions, the researcher returns to data collection.

The validity of the data in this study is an important aspect that ensures the quality and validity of the research results. This study focuses on the Teacher Mover Program to improve learning transformation in South Sorong Regency. To achieve high data validity, an approach based on four validity criteria in qualitative research is applied, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research results that have been described previously, the discussion in this chapter will describe these findings in depth by linking them to theories, policies, and previous research results.

### **1. The effectiveness of the role of the Leading Teacher in improving learning transformation**

The Teacher Leader Program initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology aims to produce learning leaders who are able to create positive changes in the school environment. Graduates of the teacher leader program are expected to be able to transform learning in their schools through learning

leadership, implementing student-centered programs, becoming coaches for their colleagues, and mobilizing learning communities. The findings of this study are in line with this concept, where teacher leaders actually change the learning culture in schools to be more innovative. As stated in the literature, Teacher Leaders act as "agents of change and agents of control" in transforming school culture towards superior learning patterns (Kariem & Syahril, 2020).

The following are research findings on the effectiveness of the role of driving teachers in improving learning transformation.

**a. Exemplary Attitude and Performance of Leading Teachers**

One of the most important components of the education system is the teacher, because teachers are the educational component that directly deals with students (Rasu et al., 2021). The role of the Leading Teacher in leading the learning transformation can be described in several key dimensions. First, the leading teacher becomes a role model in attitude and performance. Leading teachers demonstrate a high commitment to quality learning so that they become an inspiration for students and their colleagues. This is supported by the theory of social motivation; competent and enthusiastic teachers can arouse students' intrinsic motivation through real examples. As inspirational teachers, they create a positive learning environment with effective strategies, such as actively involving students in learning.

The research findings show that the Leading Teacher is able to provide an example in good attitudes and performance at school. The Leading Teacher becomes a role model in terms of discipline, responsibility, and active involvement in school activities. This is in line with the concept of "leadership by example" in the transformational leadership theory by Bass and Avolio (1994), which states that effective leaders are those who demonstrate exemplary behavior that can be imitated by their subordinates.

According to the Director General of GTK (2020), Teacher Leaders are expected to have learning leadership competencies that include exemplary behavior, collaboration, and innovation. By displaying a positive attitude and superior performance, Teacher Leaders create a more professional work culture and have an impact on improving the quality of education. The attitudes, exemplary behavior and good performance of these teacher leaders have a positive impact on the school environment so that schools set positive behavioral and cultural standards to be carried out by all school residents.

**b. Improving Student Learning Motivation**

The direct impact of the role of the Leading Teacher is also seen in the increase in student learning motivation. Leading Teachers generally apply a more humanistic and contextual learning approach. This is in accordance with the principle of Independent Learning which emphasizes the freedom and independence of students in learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2020). Research findings in the field prove that students feel happy, happy and motivated to learn and come to school because leading teachers are able to create innovative, active and enjoyable learning.

**c. Improving student competency**

The transformation of learning is reflected in the increasing competence of students both academically and non-academically. The Teacher Leader Education Program (PGP) encourages students to think critically, communicate effectively, and work together in groups. This is in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile which is the basis of the Merdeka curriculum.

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 56/M/2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Curriculum in the Context of Learning Recovery, teachers are required to develop learning that emphasizes competence and character. The findings of this study reinforce this, informants stated that the presence of the Teacher Leader Education Program (PGP) has succeeded in spurring students' enthusiasm for learning and improving their abilities. Second, Teacher Leaders focus on developing student competencies holistically. He not only teaches material, but also designs learning strategies that instill critical thinking and 21st century skills. The Teacher Leader Education Program (PGP) has contributed significantly and actively in facilitating all learning activities so that there is an increase in student competence holistically. Supporting data such as student learning outcomes and improved Education Report Card results at school further prove the impact of the presence of teacher leaders at school.

#### **d. The Running of Learning Communities in Schools**

One indicator of the learning transformation that has been realized is the formation and operation of a learning community in the school. The Teacher Leader initiates discussion forums between teachers to share good practices and reflect on learning. This is in line with the concept of the "Professional Learning Community (PLC)" which according to DuFour and Eaker (2015) is an important forum for the continuous improvement of teacher competence.

Learning communities create a collaborative and participatory culture in schools, resulting in knowledge transfer and strengthening of effective learning practices. The results of the study prove that all driving teachers spread across schools in South Sorong Regency are able to drive learning communities in schools and outside schools. The role as coaches, mentors, and facilitators carried out by all driving teachers in learning and sharing activities in learning communities proves that Driving Teachers are able to carry out their duties and roles well.

### **2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the Leading Teacher Program**

The success of the implementation of the Teacher Mover program cannot be separated from contextual factors that support or inhibit. Based on the results of the study, supporting and inhibiting factors were found that influenced the implementation of this program.

#### **a. Supporting Factors**

##### **1) Principal Leadership**

Education must have good human resource management, so schools must have superior and quality human resources (Lestari et al., 2023). A qualified, visionary and collaborative principal has proven to be a key factor in driving the transformation of learning carried out together with the entire school community. Inclusive school leadership provides space for Leading Teachers to innovate and influence the learning environment widely. A proactive principal who provides time, resources, or moral encouragement also increases the effectiveness of Leading Teachers. In theory, the principal's transformational leadership can empower teachers to act as learning leaders, in line with the collaborative principles of the Independent Curriculum.

According to Hallinger (2011), the principal's instructional leadership contributes significantly to improving student learning outcomes through support for teachers. In the context of the Teacher Mover program, principals who are actively involved in teacher professional development will accelerate the achievement of

program goals. Research findings prove that the principal's leadership greatly influences the success of the learning transformation program implemented in their schools. Researchers found data that only 4 out of a total of 46 leading teachers in South Sorong Regency were appointed as Principals. The Independent Learning Policy implemented through PGP requires that one of the requirements to be appointed as a principal is to have a Leading Teacher certificate. This confirms the strategic role of leading teachers in education reform. In accordance with Permendikbudristek No.40/2021, teachers assigned to be principals are required to have a Leading Teacher certificate, which reflects the government's belief that leading teachers are capable of leading learning.

## **2) Internal Motivation of the Driving Teacher**

High internal motivation from the Leading Teachers is the main driving force in running the program. They have high self-awareness to learn, innovate, and provide a positive impact on students and schools. This internal motivation is what distinguishes leading teachers from other teachers in schools. Leading teachers who have high motivation tend to be more creative and persistent in facing challenges in the field. In addition, good pedagogical competence and understanding of the independent curriculum strengthen the leading teacher's confidence in carrying out their duties.

Deci and Ryan (2000) in the Self-Determination theory explained that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in achieving optimal performance. Internally motivated Teachers tend to be more consistent, creative, and able to face challenges with a positive spirit. Research findings prove that teachers have high motivation to continue working with or without support from the school community.

### **b. Inhibiting Factors**

#### **1) Limited Educational Facilities and Infrastructure**

In the World Bank report (2018) on the condition of education in Indonesia, it is stated that the quality of school infrastructure greatly affects the effectiveness of learning. Without adequate facilities, teachers cannot implement learning strategies that are oriented towards 21st century competencies. The central and regional governments must build a joint commitment so that the implementation of underdeveloped infrastructure development such as in South Sorong Regency can be implemented immediately in order to support the education transformation program.

Research findings related to the condition of infrastructure and educational facilities at the research location are limited to become a serious obstacle in the implementation of the teacher leader program in South Sorong district. These limited educational infrastructure and facilities include classroom buildings, laboratories, learning aids, and ICT-based equipment, electricity networks, internet networks and clean water. Teacher Leaders have difficulty in innovating learning, communicating or running their leadership programs at school because of this problem.

#### **2) Geographical Conditions, Access and High Transportation Costs**

South Sorong Regency has quite challenging geographical conditions with difficult access and high transportation costs. South Sorong Regency is one of the regencies categorized as underdeveloped according to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023. The topographic conditions of South Sorong Regency, which is filled with mountains and rivers, make access to several areas very difficult to reach. Several coastal areas such as Imekko, still rely on sea and river routes using motorboats (longboats) because there is no adequate land access. This condition makes it difficult for teachers, including Leading Teachers, to carry out their duties at school and outside

of school. Based on research findings, leading teachers who work in this remote area must travel by motorboat or longboat with a very long travel duration, between 4-24 hours for one way. The costs required are also very expensive, ranging from IDR 300,000 to IDR 12,000,000. Meanwhile, for leading teachers who work in mainland areas, they have to travel from home to school for 2-4 hours with badly damaged road conditions. With high costs and long travel times, Teachers often face mobility constraints, which indirectly reduce their effectiveness. This logistical burden is not only tiring, but can also reduce the frequency and quality of teacher interactions with students. In the context of program sustainability theory, geographic location factors are structural barriers that require specific policy interventions.

Research by Satriawan, et al. (2021) states that areas with high geographic challenges require more adaptive policy interventions, such as online training, logistical support, and provision of transportation incentives. Until now, the government has not realized the construction of road infrastructure and the provision of public transportation in remote areas in South Sorong Regency. All teachers, including driving teachers who work in remote areas in South Sorong, are still waiting for development so that they can support their lives and work at school.

### **3) Lack of Support from Principal and Co-workers**

Human resources in schools are the main driving element for school organizations. If human resources have carried out their duties well, then the quality of the school will also be achieved (Lestari et al., 2023). The quality of the principal as the leader of the educational unit greatly influences the quality of education in schools. Likewise, teachers, quality teachers will be able to collaborate with their colleagues in implementing school programs. Based on research findings, not all principals and fellow teachers provide full support to the driving teacher, some even show resistance to change. This is an obstacle to creating a collaborative climate in schools. Research findings prove that the lack of support from the principal and colleagues is one of the factors that hinders the implementation of the driving teacher program in schools. Several respondents stated that it was difficult to implement the program in schools because they were not supported by the principal in terms of policies and operational funding assistance. The results of the study also stated that several colleagues of the driving teacher rejected the existence and activities of the driving teacher at school. The driving teacher needs help from colleagues at school so that the education development program can run optimally.

According to Fullan (2016), resistance to change in educational institutions is often caused by fear of new things, lack of understanding, and time constraints. Therefore, the Teacher Mover program needs to be complemented with an approach that fosters collective awareness through the involvement of the entire school ecosystem.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results and discussions that have been presented in the previous chapter, several things can be concluded as follows: The Leading Teacher Education Program (PGP) has proven to have a significant contribution in encouraging learning transformation in South Sorong Regency. Graduates of the leading teacher program not only show exemplary behavior through professional attitudes and good performance, but are also able to encourage increased learning motivation of students, improve student competence, and build a collaborative culture through empowering

learning communities in schools. This is in line with the objectives of the Leading Teacher Program as stated in Permendikbudristek Number 26 of 2022 which emphasizes the development of learning leadership and transformation of the education ecosystem.

The main supporting factors that strengthen the implementation of the Leading Teacher Program in the field include the transformative leadership of the principal and the internal motivation of the leading teachers themselves. The support of the principal who provides space, opportunity, and trust is the main driving factor in the transformation of learning carried out by the leading teachers. In addition, the enthusiasm and high dedication of the leading teachers to learn and share also greatly influence the success of the program implementation. However, the implementation of this program is not free from various challenges. Several inhibiting factors found include: (1) limited facilities and infrastructure to support learning; (2) the geographical conditions of South Sorong Regency which are difficult to reach and high transportation costs; and (3) minimal support from the principal and colleagues in the school environment. These obstacles hinder the optimization of the role of leading teachers in realizing comprehensive changes in learning.

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