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The Role of Driving Teachers in Educational Transformation: Learning Leadership and Innovation in Indonesian Schools

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ABSTRACT: Improving educational quality requires systematic learning innovation, teacher empowerment, and effective leadership at the school level. This study examines the role of Driving Teachers (Guru Penggerak) in fostering educational transformation through learning leadership, professional collaboration, and community engagement in North Kolaka, Indonesia. Employing a descriptive qualitative design with a phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with key participants involved in the Driving Teacher program. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify core themes reflecting participants' lived experiences and perceptions. The findings reveal that Driving Teachers play a strategic role in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile through four key dimensions: learning leadership, self-development, student-centered learning, and instructional innovation. These roles are reflected in the development of students' faith and piety, noble character, global diversity awareness, mutual cooperation, independence, and critical and creative thinking. Additionally, Driving Teachers contribute to improving teacher competence, enhancing student learning outcomes, and cultivating a collaborative school culture involving parents and the wider community.

Keywords: educational leadership; learning innovation; pancasila student profile; student-centered learning; teacher professional development.

ABSTRAK: Peningkatan mutu pendidikan memerlukan inovasi pembelajaran yang sistematis, pemberdayaan guru, serta kepemimpinan yang efektif di tingkat sekolah. Penelitian ini mengkaji peran Guru Penggerak dalam mendorong transformasi pendidikan melalui kepemimpinan pembelajaran, kolaborasi profesional, dan keterlibatan masyarakat di Kabupaten Kolaka Utara, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan para partisipan yang terlibat dalam Program Guru Penggerak. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi tema-tema utama yang merefleksikan pengalaman dan persepsi

partisipan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Guru Penggerak memiliki peran strategis dalam pembentukan Profil Pelajar Pancasila melalui empat dimensi utama, yaitu kepemimpinan pembelajaran, pengembangan diri, pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa, dan inovasi pembelajaran. Peran tersebut tercermin dalam penguatan nilai iman dan takwa, akhlak mulia, kebinekaan global, gotong royong, kemandirian, serta kemampuan bernalar kritis dan kreatif pada peserta didik. Selain itu, Guru Penggerak berkontribusi dalam peningkatan kompetensi guru, hasil belajar siswa, serta terciptanya budaya kolaboratif di sekolah yang melibatkan orang tua dan masyarakat.

Kata kunci: kepemimpinan pendidikan; inovasi pembelajaran; profil pelajar Pancasila; pembelajaran berpusat pada peserta didik; pengembangan profesional guru.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in driving national development, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia, where educational reform remains an ongoing priority. In the context of the 21st century—often referred to as the knowledge era—education is no longer limited to knowledge transmission but has become a fundamental driver of economic growth, community empowerment, and industrial development (Mukhadis, 2020). Consequently, contemporary education systems are required to equip learners with adaptive competencies that enable them to respond effectively to rapid social, technological, and global changes.

The 21st century is also characterized by the emergence of learning partnerships that emphasize the development of essential competencies, including information, media, and technology literacy, innovation skills, as well as life and career skills (Qulsum & Hermanto, 2022). In this paradigm, students are expected not only to master academic content but also to develop the capacity to become productive, resilient, and globally competitive individuals. However, alongside cognitive competencies, 21st-century education increasingly highlights the importance of character development as a foundational element of holistic education.

In Indonesia, character education is closely linked to national values rooted in Pancasila, the state ideology that embodies the nation's moral and philosophical foundations. The importance of integrating these values into education is formally articulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22 of 2020, which emphasizes the development of the Pancasila Student Profile. This profile encompasses six core dimensions: faith and devotion to God Almighty, noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, and critical and creative reasoning (Kahfi, 2022). The Pancasila Student Profile serves as a strategic framework for nurturing students who are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded and socially responsible.

Teachers play a central role in achieving these educational objectives. In response to the need for transformational educators, the Indonesian government introduced the Leading Teacher Education Program (Program Guru Penggerak), which aims to develop teachers as instructional leaders and agents of change within the school ecosystem. Leading Teachers are expected to implement student-centered learning, foster professional collaboration, and serve as role models in cultivating the values of the Pancasila Student Profile (Guru et al., 2020). Through instructional leadership, peer coaching, and community engagement, Leading Teachers are positioned as key actors in strengthening both academic quality and character education (Agustin et al., 2023).

Despite the strategic importance of the Leading Teacher program, its implementation in schools faces significant challenges. Previous studies indicate that the integration of character values into daily learning is often constrained by limited instructional time, insufficient training on character education, suboptimal use of educational technology, and low student engagement (Kahfi, 2022; Qulsum & Hermanto, 2022). Moreover, many schools continue to prioritize academic achievement over character development, resulting in the incomplete internalization of Pancasila values among students. Teachers, including those designated as Leading Teachers, frequently encounter difficulties in designing innovative lesson plans, applying effective learning models, and addressing diverse student needs (Intania et al., 2023).

These challenges highlight a critical gap between policy intentions and field-level implementation. While the Leading Teacher program is designed to strengthen the realization of the Pancasila Student Profile, empirical evidence regarding its actual impact on student character development remains limited, particularly from the perspective of teachers' lived experiences. Understanding how Leading Teachers navigate structural constraints, pedagogical demands, and contextual challenges is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of the program and identifying areas for improvement. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the role of Leading Teachers in shaping student character in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile, with a particular focus on the challenges encountered in practice. Using a phenomenological approach, this research examines the subjective experiences of both Leading Teachers and non-Leading Teachers in implementing character education policies at the school level. By capturing these experiences, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights that can inform policy refinement, enhance teacher training programs, strengthen technological and institutional support, and promote more effective collaboration among educational stakeholders. Ultimately, this research is expected to contribute to the improvement of educational quality and the development of a generation of Indonesian students who are intellectually competent and firmly grounded in the noble values of Pancasila.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding disciplinary practices in student discipline at SD Negeri 68 Kendari. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how disciplinary actions are perceived, interpreted, and implemented within the school context, particularly in relation to differing viewpoints among teachers (Sulistyo, 2023).

The focus of this research was the phenomenon of differing perceptions of teacher disciplinary actions. The research participants consisted of seven teachers, including one curriculum teacher, one school principal, and five homeroom teachers. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria: (1) teachers with direct experience in implementing student disciplinary actions, (2) teachers involved in formulating school disciplinary rules, and (3) teachers who actively participate in handling student discipline. This selection was intended to ensure the relevance and depth of the data collected.

The study was conducted over a three-month period, from September to November 2024. Data collection was carried out in three main stages (Ahmad & Muslimah, 2021). The first stage was the preparation phase, which involved reviewing relevant literature on teacher perceptions, disciplinary practices, and

conflict in educational settings; developing research instruments such as semi-structured interview guides, observation checklists, and documentation formats; and obtaining the necessary research permits. The second stage was the data collection phase. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with the selected participants to explore their views and experiences related to disciplinary actions. In addition, direct observations were conducted within the school environment to examine how disciplinary practices were implemented and how interactions between teachers and students occurred in real contexts. Relevant documents, including school disciplinary policies and student violation records, were also collected to support and triangulate the data. The third stage involved data analysis using thematic analysis techniques. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were systematically organized and coded to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships. The analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of data reduction, data display in narrative and tabular forms, and conclusion drawing. The findings were then interpreted to reflect the perceptions, experiences, and contextual realities faced by teachers in implementing disciplinary actions (Wijaya, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Feedback Culture and Continuous Professional Development of Leading Teachers

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of leading teachers in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile (P3) in North Kolaka. Leading teachers function not only as instructional practitioners but also as learning leaders who model values, attitudes, and behaviors aligned with Pancasila principles. Their influence extends beyond cognitive instruction to character formation grounded in mutual cooperation, peace, justice, and social welfare.

Based on questionnaire data collected from both leading and non-leading teachers, the implementation of teacher role modeling was reported at a high level. A total of 53.1% of respondents indicated that role modeling was applied *very often*, while 44.9% stated it was applied *frequently*. These results suggest that the majority of leading teachers consistently demonstrate behaviors that reflect Pancasila values, positioning themselves as key reference figures in students' character development.

Qualitative data further support these findings. A leading teacher from Pakue 1 Public Elementary School emphasized that teachers serve not only as educators but also as parental figures for students. According to the respondent, daily behaviors and attitudes demonstrated by teachers significantly influence students' character formation, as teachers transmit values through concrete actions rather than solely through instructional content. Similarly, a leading teacher from SMK 4 North Kolaka affirmed that teacher role models are instrumental in preparing students to face future challenges by instilling strong moral and social foundations.

The study also reveals that leading teachers play a crucial role in creating a supportive learning environment. Teachers are expected to foster a conducive, inclusive, and motivating atmosphere where students feel valued and accepted. A respondent from SMK 4 North Kolaka noted that close collaboration among teachers, students, and the broader school community contributes to a dynamic educational ecosystem. In this context, teachers act as facilitators who guide and motivate students throughout their learning and personal development processes.

In terms of instructional practices, leading teachers adopt a student-centered learning approach that addresses students' academic, social, and emotional needs holistically. Students are viewed as whole individuals, encompassing physical, emotional, and social dimensions. As a result, teachers prioritize the creation of safe and inclusive learning spaces that enable optimal student growth and integrity-based character development.

The integration of technology in learning also emerged as a prominent finding. Leading teachers in North Kolaka utilize various digital tools such as Kahoot, Google Sites, and Quizizz to enhance engagement and relevance in the learning process. Technology-based learning not only increases student motivation but also supports flexible instruction tailored to diverse learning styles and individual potentials. This approach enables students to better connect theoretical material with real-life applications.

The results indicate a strong commitment among leading teachers to continuous professional development. Survey data show that 53.1% of respondents reported receiving feedback *frequently*, while 44.9% received feedback *very frequently*. This reflects a culture of reflective practice and openness to improvement among leading teachers. Through constructive feedback, training, and independent learning, they continually refine their instructional strategies.

The findings demonstrate that leading teachers in North Kolaka function as agents of change who actively contribute to the formation of the Pancasila Student Profile. By combining strong role modeling, supportive learning environments, student-centered pedagogy, technological integration, and continuous self-development, leading teachers effectively foster students' character and equip them with essential 21st-century competencies.

Leading Teachers as Agents of Change in Shaping the Pancasila Student Profile

This study reveals that leading teachers in North Kolaka Regency play a pivotal role as agents of change in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile. Through various pedagogical strategies aligned with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile—faith and devotion to God Almighty, global diversity, mutual cooperation,

independence, critical thinking, and creativity—leading teachers demonstrate consistent efforts to integrate character education into daily learning practices. Data obtained from interviews, questionnaires, observations, and document analysis indicate that these teachers possess rich subjective experiences and make tangible contributions to fostering positive changes within schools and their surrounding communities.

Faith, Devotion, and Noble Character

The findings show that leading teachers place strong emphasis on cultivating students' faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble moral character. This is primarily implemented through habitual religious practices and exemplary behavior in everyday school activities. Teachers routinely guide students to pray before and after lessons and explicitly teach moral values and religious ethics. A leading teacher from SDN 11 Kodeoha stated that beginning and ending lessons with prayer is intended not only as a religious obligation but also as a means of nurturing students' spiritual closeness to God. In addition, teachers actively promote tolerance by encouraging students to respect diverse religious beliefs within the school environment, reinforcing attitudes of mutual respect and moral integrity.

Development of Global Diversity Awareness

Another key finding relates to the development of students' global diversity attitudes. Leading teachers consistently introduce values of cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic respect through inclusive learning practices. Teachers model simple but meaningful behaviors, such as refraining from judgment based on religious or cultural backgrounds and appreciating cultural differences. Inclusive classroom activities and student participation in cross-cultural and interfaith school events serve as important mechanisms for nurturing pluralistic attitudes and openness toward diversity.

Strengthening Mutual Cooperation

The principle of mutual cooperation emerges as a central component of the learning practices implemented by leading teachers. Findings indicate that teachers frequently design collaborative activities involving students, parents, and the wider school community. For example, social activities such as school clean-up programs engage multiple stakeholders to achieve shared goals. Classroom-based collaborative learning strategies, including group discussions and cooperative tasks, are also widely applied to foster teamwork, tolerance, and collective responsibility among students.

Fostering Student Independence

The results further demonstrate that leading teachers actively promote student independence by providing structured autonomy in the learning process. Students are encouraged to set learning goals, select learning strategies, and manage their own schedules under teacher guidance. A leading teacher from SMKN 4 North Kolaka reported that students are given opportunities to choose learning methods that suit their preferences while being held accountable for their progress. Project-based learning activities further support the development of discipline, responsibility, and self-management skills.

Development of Critical and Creative Reasoning

Critical and creative reasoning skills are also identified as a major focus of leading teachers' instructional practices. Teachers guide students to analyze information critically, consider multiple perspectives, and make evidence-based decisions. Learning activities that stimulate creativity—such as art-based tasks, problem-solving exercises, and small-scale research projects—are commonly implemented. These practices encourage curiosity, imagination, and innovative thinking among students.

Categories of Emerging Findings

Based on thematic data analysis, four major categories of findings emerged from the practices of leading teachers in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile in North Kolaka:

Table 1. Thematic Data Analysis Results

Findings	Description
1. Strong Teacher Role Modeling	Teachers consistently demonstrate behaviors aligned with Pancasila values.
2. Inclusive and Collaborative Approaches	Both within and beyond the classroom, fostering respect for diversity and cooperation.
3. Focus on Independent Character Development	Enabling students to take responsibility for their learning and personal growth.
4. Enhancement of Critical and Creative Skills	Preparing students to face future challenges in a rapidly changing world.

The findings indicate that through consistent practice, real-life exemplification, and student-centered strategies, leading teachers have successfully contributed to the formation of students who are intellectually capable, morally grounded, independent, and open to diversity.

Leading Teachers, Student-Centered Learning, and Character Education: A Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study indicate that leading teachers in North Kolaka Regency play a central role in forming the Pancasila Student Profile through the implementation of student-centered education. Questionnaire and interview data reveal that these teachers consciously orient their instructional practices toward strengthening students' character resilience in accordance with Pancasila values. This orientation reflects an understanding that students come from diverse cultural, social, and personal backgrounds, requiring learning approaches that are inclusive, adaptive, and holistic.

The results further demonstrate that leading teachers perceive their role not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as moral guides and character builders. This aligns with the view of Nurhantara et al. (2023), who emphasize that teachers, as both educators and parental figures, significantly influence students' attitudes, actions, and mindsets through daily exemplification of values. The findings reinforce Freire's (2018) perspective that education is not value-neutral; teachers bear responsibility for shaping students' moral and ethical orientations alongside their intellectual development. In this context, leading teachers act as learning leaders who embody Pancasila values in practice, thereby internalizing these values in students through lived experience.

As learning leaders, leading teachers in North Kolaka demonstrate exemplary behavior and engage in continuous self-development to prepare students for future challenges. This confirms their role as agents of transformation within the educational ecosystem, as described by the Ministry of Education and Culture (as cited in Agustina et al., 2023). The findings show that leading teachers not only implement student-centered learning themselves but also actively encourage and support other educators to adopt similar approaches, thereby amplifying the impact of Pancasila-based education at the institutional level.

Collaboration emerges as a critical dimension in the formation of the Pancasila Student Profile. The study shows that leading teachers foster synergy among teachers, students, parents, and the broader school community. Such collaboration contributes to a harmonious and productive educational environment and supports the realization of holistic and inclusive education. This finding supports Kusumah's (2020) argument that teachers must function as driving forces capable of responding to dynamic and evolving educational policies through collaborative and adaptive practices.

Another important discussion point concerns professional self-development. The findings indicate that leading teachers are open to feedback and engage in continuous professional learning as part of their commitment to improving

educational quality. This reflects an awareness that ongoing reflection and learning are essential to addressing contemporary educational challenges, particularly the challenge of producing students who excel not only cognitively but also morally. This finding is consistent with Qulsum and Hermanto (2022), who argue that teachers' direct interactions with students position them as key actors in character education and moral development.

The implementation of student-centered learning by leading teachers further illustrates their holistic understanding of students' needs and potentials. Teachers recognize students as individuals with interconnected physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions. By accommodating these dimensions through varied instructional methods—such as discussions, problem-based learning, experiments, and technology-assisted learning—teachers contribute to the development of both cognitive and non-cognitive competencies. This supports the findings of Sakdiah et al. (2023), which highlight the role of driving schools in fostering literacy, numeracy, and character development simultaneously.

The study also underscores the importance of creating a safe, comfortable, and inclusive learning environment. Leading teachers intentionally cultivate environments where students feel accepted, valued, and motivated to learn. Effective communication, respect for diversity, and adequate learning facilities collectively support holistic student development. Such environments are essential for internalizing Pancasila values, as students are more likely to develop positive character traits when they feel psychologically and socially secure.

In addition, the integration of technology-based learning innovations represents a strategic response by leading teachers to contemporary educational demands. The use of e-learning platforms, interactive media, and educational applications enhances student engagement and supports collaborative learning. Furthermore, the development of contextual teaching materials that connect learning content to students' everyday experiences strengthens the relevance and meaning of learning. This aligns with Muniati (as cited in Suyamti et al., 2024), who emphasizes that quality education must prepare students to compete globally while maintaining strong moral foundations.

The discussion highlights that leading teachers in North Kolaka have effectively fulfilled their role in shaping students in line with the Pancasila Student Profile. Their practices resonate with the vision of the Driving Teacher Program, which aims to develop educational leaders capable of fostering holistic, student-centered learning. As noted by Hafifah et al. (2022), the urgency of the Pancasila Student Profile lies in its potential to strengthen national values, moral maturity, civic responsibility, and 21st-century competencies. The findings of this study confirm that leading teachers in North Kolaka contribute meaningfully to

these goals by integrating character education, collaborative practices, technological innovation, and continuous professional development into their teaching.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the role of Leading Teachers is fundamental in shaping students' character in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile, which encompasses six core dimensions. Through instructional leadership, Leading Teachers create learning environments that encourage students to actively participate in the learning process, develop independence, and enhance critical thinking skills. By positioning students as active learners who take responsibility for their own learning, teachers contribute significantly to holistic character development aligned with Pancasila values. Furthermore, the findings indicate that continuous teacher self-development plays a crucial role in reinforcing character education. Leading Teachers who actively improve their professional competencies serve as concrete role models for students, demonstrating the importance of lifelong learning and adaptability. This commitment to self-development enables teachers to design more innovative and engaging learning experiences, particularly through the integration of technology-based and project-based learning approaches. Such innovations provide meaningful opportunities for students to collaborate, strengthen mutual cooperation, and express creativity while engaging with real-life problems.

Despite challenges related to limited resources and access to technology, the practices implemented by Leading Teachers in North Kolaka demonstrate that effective instructional leadership, ongoing self-development, and pedagogical innovation can significantly influence the formation of students who excel not only academically but also embody the noble values of Pancasila. These findings affirm that Leading Teachers function as key agents of educational transformation in fostering character resilience and 21st-century competencies.

Based on these conclusions, this study proposes a conceptual model entitled "Educational Transformation through Leading Teachers: Developing Student Character Based on the Pancasila Student Profile. The model emphasizes four interconnected components: (1) technology and project-based learning innovation grounded in Pancasila values, (2) the strengthening of student-centered learning strategies, (3) a continuous self-development approach for teachers, and (4) the optimization of accessible learning resources through collaboration among schools, government, and communities.

Training in technology integration and project-based learning is essential to enhance teachers' creativity and effectiveness in facilitating collaborative and

value-based learning experiences (Anita et al., 2023). In addition, strengthening student-centered learning strategies through constructivist and problem-based approaches enables students to think critically, act independently, and take responsibility for their learning (Pertiwi et al., 2022). Continuous professional development supported by feedback, mentoring, and professional learning communities further strengthens teachers' capacity to address students' academic, social, and emotional needs (Munir et al., 2023). Finally, collaborative efforts to provide affordable learning resources and shared platforms are crucial to overcoming limitations in technology and infrastructure, particularly in resource-constrained contexts (Khosyiin et al., 2024).

In conclusion, empowering Leading Teachers through instructional leadership, continuous professional development, and innovation-oriented support systems is a strategic pathway to strengthening the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile. Such efforts not only support academic excellence but also ensure the development of students who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly complex global environment.

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