

The Role of Teachers Using The Ki Hadjar Dewantara Approach In Implementing Student-Centered Learning: A Study at MAN 2 Model Medan

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Abstract.

Education not only aims to impart knowledge, but also to develop students' potential, character, independence, and social skills. One approach that supports this goal is Student-Centered Learning (SCL), which places students as the main subjects in the learning process. This approach has a strong connection with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thinking regarding education as a process of guiding children according to their nature and potential. This article aims to describe the implementation of SCL, analyze the role of teachers, and examine its relevance to the principles of Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and Tut Wuri Handayani. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach through observation, interviews, and documentation at MAN 2 Model Medan. The results of the study indicate that teachers act as facilitators, guides, motivators, role models, and companions. Teachers provide space for students to ask questions, discuss, express opinions, explore information, solve problems, and develop their potential independently. The application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's principles has proven relevant to the needs of students in the digital era, as long as the freedom to learn is accompanied by direction, responsibility, and character building.

Keywords: *role of teachers, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Student-Centered Learning, character education and MAN 2 Model Medan.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education, in essence, serves not only as a means of imparting knowledge, but also as a process of holistic human development. Through education, students are expected to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, morally, and spiritually. Education also needs to shape individuals who are independent, responsible, collaborative, and equipped to cope with changing times.

Developments in the world of education are driving a shift in the learning paradigm. The learning process is no longer entirely centered on the teacher as the primary source of knowledge. Students need to be given broader opportunities to actively participate in learning. This approach is known as Student-Centered Learning (Weimer, 2002).

In the SCL approach, students are positioned as learning subjects. They not only receive information but also engage in the process of building knowledge and skills. Students are given the opportunity to ask questions, express opinions, explore information, collaborate, solve problems, make decisions, and reflect on their learning experiences (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Prince, 2004).

The implementation of SCL does not eliminate the role of teachers. On the contrary, teachers retain a crucial role in creating a learning environment that supports student engagement. Teachers act as facilitators, guides, motivators, role models, and feedback providers (Felder & Brent, 2009). Teachers are also tasked with ensuring that freedom to learn remains aligned with the direction and goals of education.

This approach is closely related to the thinking of Ki Hadjar Dewantara. Ki Hadjar Dewantara viewed education as a process of guiding all the natural forces within children so they can achieve the highest level of safety and happiness as human beings and members of society (Dewantara, 1977). Based on this view, teachers should not impose their will on students, but rather help them develop according to their potential, interests, needs, and the times.

The well-known principles in Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thinking are Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and Tut Wuri Handayani. These principles illustrate the dynamic role of teachers. When in front, teachers set an example. When among students, teachers build enthusiasm and a desire to learn. When behind, teachers provide encouragement so that students can develop independently (Majelis Agung Persatuan Taman Siswa, 1992).

Based on this description, it is important to examine the role of teachers in implementing student-centered learning at MAN 2 Model Medan and how this practice reflects Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational thinking.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Student-Centered Learning

Student-Centered Learning is a learning approach that places students at the center of the learning process. In this approach, students not only receive material from the teacher but are actively involved in building knowledge, skills, attitudes, and learning experiences (Lea et al., 2003).

Some of the characteristics of SCL include:

- a. Students actively participate in the learning process.
- b. The teacher acts as a facilitator and guide.
- c. Students are encouraged to learn independently.
- d. Students are given the opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions.
- e. Learning is done through discussions, group work, projects, problem solving, and exploratory activities (Slavin, 2014).
- f. Assessment takes into account the learning process and outcomes.
- g. Learning encourages responsibility, creativity, communication, and critical thinking skills (Hattie, 2009).

The success of SCL does not mean teachers become passive. Teachers must still design learning objectives, choose appropriate methods, manage the classroom, provide direction, monitor student progress, and provide feedback (Weimer, 2002). Therefore, SCL requires teachers who are able to create a balance between learning freedom and responsibility.

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Educational Thoughts

Ki Hadjar Dewantara viewed education as a process of guiding a child's development. Education should not be solely oriented toward mastering material, but should also help students develop in accordance with the dictates of nature and the dictates of their time (Dewantara, 1967).

The concept of guidance implies that teachers provide direction, support, mentoring, and an environment that allows students to grow optimally. Teachers do not impose their will, but rather help students discover and develop their potential.

The principles of Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and Tut Wuri Handayani can be explained as follows:

- a. **Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha**, meaning that when teachers are in front they must be able to be role models in attitude, behavior, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others.
- b. **Ing Madya Mangun Karsa**, meaning that when teachers are among students they must be able to build enthusiasm, motivation, courage and a desire to learn.
- c. **Tut Wuri Handayani**, meaning that teachers provide encouragement, trust and support from behind so that students are able to develop independently (Supreme Council of the Taman Siswa Association, 1992).

These three principles are strongly related to SCL. The teacher remains a key figure in learning, but he or she does not dominate the entire learning process. Students are given space to play an active role, while the teacher serves as a guide and mentor (Fauzi & Prasetyo, 2023).

Character Education in SCL

Student-centered learning not only develops academic skills but can also serve as a vehicle for character education. Discussions, group work, presentations, projects, and problem-solving activities can instill the values of cooperation, responsibility, discipline, honesty, tolerance, and independence (Lickona, 1991; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

Character education will be more effective when applied through real-life experiences. Students are not only taught the importance of responsibility but also involved in tasks that require them to be accountable for the process and results of their work (Yanti et al., 2024).

Studies on the role of teachers in character education during the Independent Curriculum era show that the implementation of SCL can help develop student independence, creativity, mental resilience, leadership, and empathy (Pratama & Sari, 2026). Project-based learning can also strengthen critical thinking skills, creativity, discipline, collaboration, and responsibility (Johnson et al., 2014).

SCL in the Digital Age

Technological advancements have changed the way students acquire information. Students learn not only from textbooks and teacher explanations, but also from the internet, instructional videos, social media, and various digital platforms (UNESCO, 2023).

This situation reinforces the importance of teachers' roles as guides and information filterers. Teachers need to help students distinguish between true and false information, use reliable sources, respect copyright, and maintain ethical digital communication (Ningrum & Rohman, 2024).

The use of technology also needs to be aligned with learning objectives. Technology is not the primary goal, but rather a tool to enhance the learning experience. Teachers can utilize technology for simple research activities, presentations, online discussions, project creation, and learning reflection (Tomlinson, 2014).

Differentiated Learning

Students have different abilities, interests, learning styles, and backgrounds. Therefore, teachers need to consider this diversity when designing learning (Tomlinson, 2017).

Differentiated learning can be implemented through a variety of materials, processes, products, and learning environments. Students can be given the option to present their work in written form, presentations, videos, posters, infographics, or other formats appropriate to the learning objectives (McCombs & Whisler, 1997).

This approach supports Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thinking because it provides students with the opportunity to develop according to their individual potential and needs. The teacher still sets the learning objectives but provides students with a choice of methods to achieve them.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach was chosen to gain insight into the role of teachers in implementing Student-Centered Learning and its relationship to the thinking of Ki Hadjar Dewantara.

The research was conducted at MAN 2 Model Medan. The research subjects consisted of a teacher and students in one class. The main informant in the interview was Mrs. Madina Qudisia Lubis, M.Pd.

Data collection technique

Data was collected through the following techniques:

1. **Observation**, namely directly observing the learning process in class, interactions between teachers and students, and student activities during learning.
2. **Interview**, namely conducting a question and answer session with the teacher regarding the application of SCL and the thoughts of Ki Hadjar Dewantara.
3. **Documentation**, namely collecting photos, notes and documents related to the implementation of mini research.

Table 1. Focus of Observation

Aspect	Indicator
Student activities	Ask questions, discuss, express opinions, and complete assignments
The role of teachers	Facilitator, mentor, motivator, and feedback provider
Independence	Able to make decisions and complete tasks
Interaction	Two-way communication occurs between teachers and students
Exemplary behavior	Teachers provide examples of positive attitudes and behavior
Motivation	Teachers encourage students to be active and confident
Support	Teachers provide opportunities for students to develop independently

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Observation and interview data were compared with the characteristics of SCL and Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational principles.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Student-Centered Learning

Based on observations, the learning process at MAN 2 Model Medan exhibits several characteristics of SCL. The teacher does not completely dominate the learning process. Students are given the opportunity to discuss, answer questions, express opinions, explore the material, and complete assignments individually and in groups (Prince, 2004).

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher explains the objectives and activities to be carried out. Afterward, students are given the opportunity to study the material, discuss it, seek information, and complete assignments. The teacher circulates around to observe student activities and provide assistance if any difficulties arise.

This process demonstrates two-way communication. Students not only listen to the teacher's explanations but also engage in activities that require thinking, communication, collaboration, and decision-making skills. This aligns with the SCL principle, which positions students as active participants in learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

The Role of Teachers as Facilitators and Guides

Teachers at MAN 2 Model Medan view their role not only as delivering material but also as guiding students to develop according to their potential. Students at the Madrasah Aliyah level already possess critical thinking and decision-making skills. Therefore, teachers do not need to dominate all learning activities (Weimer, 2002).

Teachers provide opportunities for students to ask questions, discuss, express opinions, and find solutions independently. In this case, teachers act as facilitators, providing direction and a learning environment, as well as mentors, helping students when they encounter difficulties (Felder & Brent, 2009).

This role demonstrates the application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational concept that education is a guiding process. The teacher continues to provide direction, but students are given space to be a key part of the learning process (Dewantara, 1977).

Teachers as Role Models

The principle of Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha is evident in teachers' efforts to provide examples through their daily behavior. Teachers recognize that students learn more easily from what they see than from what is simply conveyed (Majelis Agung Persatuan Taman Siswa, 1992).

In terms of discipline, teachers strive to arrive on time before requiring students to do the same. In terms of communication, teachers strive to listen to students' opinions and respect differing perspectives. Teachers also strive to demonstrate honesty, responsibility, consistency, and respect for others. This role model is important because character education cannot be delivered solely through advice. Character values need to be embodied in teachers' attitudes and actions (Lickona, 1991; Yanti et al., 2024).

Teachers as Spirit Builders

The principle of "Ing Madya Mangun Karsa" is applied when teachers are with students to foster an active and enjoyable learning environment. When students appear passive or bored, teachers don't immediately assume they're lazy. They first seek to understand the cause (Fauzi & Prasetyo, 2023).

To overcome boredom, teachers can change their teaching methods through group discussions, simple games, case studies, or questions related to students' lives. Teachers also strive to engage with students' learning environment, rather than simply standing in front of the class and delivering material.

This approach demonstrates that teachers strive to build motivation within the learning process. Students feel supported and not left to navigate the learning process alone (Hattie, 2009).

Teachers as Support Providers

The Tut Wuri Handayani principle is implemented by providing students with space and trust to develop their interests and potential. In project assignments, for example, students are given the opportunity to develop ideas, divide tasks, and choose how to present their work (Tomlinson, 2017).

However, this freedom doesn't mean students are left without direction. Teachers still set boundaries, monitor the process, and provide assistance when needed. In this way, students learn to take responsibility for the choices and decisions they make.

Freedom in learning needs to be understood as responsible freedom. Students have the space to express themselves, but must still adhere to learning objectives, rules, ethics, and the common good (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

Among Approach in Fostering Students

Ki Hadjar Dewantara emphasized the Among system, which teaches through guidance, support, and responsible freedom. This principle is evident in how teachers handle students who break the rules or experience a decline in performance (Dewantara, 1967).

The teacher doesn't immediately scold the student in front of their peers. Instead, the teacher tries to find out the cause of the behavior and invites the student to talk privately. Afterward, the teacher explains the impact of the behavior and encourages the student to find a solution.

If student performance declines, teachers also consider various possibilities, such as difficulty understanding the material, low motivation, friendship problems, or personal circumstances. Consequences can still be imposed if necessary, but the primary goal is to improve behavior, not to embarrass the student (Ningrum & Rohman, 2024).

Freedom of Speech and Responsibility

In learning, students are given the opportunity to express their opinions, even if they differ from those of their teachers or peers. However, teachers emphasize that freedom of expression must be accompanied by politeness, clear reasoning, and responsibility (Slavin, 2014).

Students are also given individual and group assignments. Through these assignments, they learn to take responsibility for their work, respect the roles of group members, fulfill obligations, and accept the consequences of their decisions (Johnson et al., 2014).

Thus, the concept of Freedom to Learn should not be understood as unlimited freedom. Freedom must be accompanied by responsibility, ethics, discipline, and respect for others (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

Utilization of Local Technology and Culture

Today's students live in an environment closely connected to digital technology. Teachers utilize videos, digital presentations, the internet, and various learning platforms to help students understand the material (UNESCO, 2023).

However, the use of technology requires ethical education. Students should be guided to seek information correctly, respect the work of others, maintain good manners in communication, and use social media responsibly (Pratama & Sari, 2026).

In addition to leveraging technology, learning can also be linked to the local environment and culture. Learning materials related to the lives of the local community will help students understand their identity and social environment. This way, students not only develop digital skills but also maintain character and a sense of local culture (Fauzi & Prasetyo, 2023).

Integration of Character Education

Character education doesn't always have to be delivered through special activities. Character values can be instilled through everyday learning activities. When working in groups, students learn to cooperate and respect the opinions of others. When completing assignments, they learn responsibility and honesty (Lickona, 1991).

Through presentations, students learn self-confidence, communication skills, and respect for their peers. Through discussions, they learn to accept differences of opinion. Thus, academic education and character education can coexist (Yanti et al., 2024).

Differentiated Learning

Students have different abilities, interests, learning styles, and backgrounds. Therefore, teachers need to consider this diversity when designing learning (Tomlinson, 2014).

Teachers give students choices in determining how to complete assignments, project themes, or presentation formats. Visual learners can create posters or infographics, while verbal learners can write or present verbally.

This approach supports Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thinking because it provides opportunities for students to develop according to their individual potential and needs (Dewantara, 1977).

Teacher Challenges

The biggest challenge for teachers in implementing Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy is dealing with the diversity of their students. Each student has different abilities, interests, backgrounds, characters, and learning styles. Therefore, teachers cannot use the same method for all students (Weimer, 2002).

Technological developments also require teachers to continuously learn. Teachers need to develop skills in using learning media, selecting relevant information, and adapting teaching methods to the characteristics of the current generation (UNESCO, 2023).

Efforts that teachers can take include reflecting after teaching, trying various methods, getting to know students more closely, and being open to learning from students and the times. A teacher who aligns with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy is one who continually strives to be a role model, builds enthusiasm, and provides space for students to develop (Majelis Agung Persatuan Taman Siswa, 1992).

V. CONCLUSION

The implementation of Student-Centered Learning at MAN 2 Model Medan demonstrates that students have been given space to play an active role in the learning process. They engage in activities such as asking questions, discussing, expressing opinions, collaborating, completing assignments, exploring information, and solving problems. In student-centered learning, teachers serve not only as transmitters of material but also as facilitators, guides, motivators, role models, feedback providers, and mentors in student development.

This role aligns with the thinking of Ki Hadjar Dewantara. The principle of Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha is realized through the teacher's exemplary behavior. The principle of Ing Madya Mangun Karsa is implemented through efforts to build student enthusiasm and motivation. Meanwhile, the principle of Tut Wuri Handayani is implemented by providing trust, support, and space for students to develop independently. Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thinking remains relevant to educational needs in the digital era. Students need to be given the freedom to express themselves, express their opinions, explore information, and develop their potential. However, this freedom must still be accompanied by direction, responsibility, ethics, and character building.

Thus, the success of SCL depends heavily on the teacher's ability to create an active, democratic, supportive learning environment that respects the uniqueness of each student. Teachers are not the sole center of learning, but rather guides who help students grow according to their potential, needs, and the changing times.

Suggestion

For teachers, the implementation of SCL needs to be continuously developed by providing opportunities for students to ask questions, discuss, express opinions, solve problems, and develop creativity. Teachers also need to strengthen their roles as facilitators, guides, motivators, and role models.

For schools, support is needed in the form of learning facilities, training and development of teacher competencies, as well as a school environment that supports student independence and creativity.

For students, the freedom to learn should be used responsibly. Students need to be more active, confident, able to work collaboratively, respect differences, and strive to develop their potential.

In the face of technological developments, teachers need to utilize it as a learning tool without neglecting ethics, character, local culture, and social values. This way, students will not only develop academic and digital skills but also assume responsibilities as members of society.

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