



Democratic Leadership in Educational Contexts: A Literature Review

Erlan Heryanto^{1*}, Hasan Hariri², Atik Rusdiani³

^{1*}(Education Administration, University of Lampung, Erlan Heryanto)

²(Education Administration, University of Lampung, Hasan Hariri)

³(Education Administration, University of Lampung, Atik Rusdiani)

* Corresponding Author. E-mail: erlanheryanto.eh1@gmail.com

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Abstrak

Salah satu gaya kepemimpinan yang relevan dalam konteks pendidikan adalah kepemimpinan demokratis, yang menekankan partisipasi aktif seluruh anggota sekolah dalam proses pengambilan keputusan dan pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara mendalam implementasi dan dampak kepemimpinan demokratis dalam dunia pendidikan melalui metode tinjauan literatur terhadap artikel nasional dan internasional yang terbit pada tahun 2021–2025. Hasil tinjauan menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan demokratis berkontribusi positif terhadap peningkatan motivasi kerja, kompetensi pedagogik, disiplin, dan kinerja guru, serta menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif dan kolaboratif bagi siswa. Selain itu, gaya kepemimpinan ini juga mendukung implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dan peningkatan mutu lulusan. Namun, tantangan seperti waktu pengambilan keputusan yang lebih panjang dan keterbatasan sumber daya masih menjadi hambatan dalam praktiknya. Oleh karena itu, dibutuhkan strategi implementasi yang tepat agar kepemimpinan demokratis dapat memberikan dampak yang optimal dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan secara holistik.

Kata Kunci: kepemimpinan demokratis, pendidikan, kepala sekolah, motivasi guru, kualitas pembelajaran

Abstract

One of the relevant leadership styles in the context of education is democratic leadership, which emphasizes the active participation of all school members in the decision-making process and learning. This research aims to examine in depth the implementation and impact of democratic leadership in education through a literature review method of national and international articles published in 2021-2025. The results of the review show that democratic leadership positively contributes to improving teachers' work motivation, pedagogical competence, discipline and performance, as well as creating an inclusive and collaborative learning environment for students. In addition, this leadership style also supports the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and improving the quality of graduates. However, challenges such as longer decision-making times and limited resources are still obstacles in practice. Therefore, an appropriate implementation strategy is needed so that democratic leadership can have an optimal impact in improving the quality of education holistically.

Keywords: democratic leadership, education, principal, teacher motivation, learning quality

INTRODUCTION

Education is a complex and multidimensional concept, covering various aspects of human life. In the Indonesian context, education can be understood as an effort to humanize human beings, which means that education serves to develop individual potential both physically and spiritually, as well as forming a full character and personality [1, 2]. Education is not only limited to academic aspects, but also includes the development of moral and social values that are important for social life [3]. Therefore, education in Indonesia must be able to answer the challenges of the times and the evolving needs of society.

Education management is a discipline that has an important role in the management of educational institutions. According to Mukthamar, et al. [1] education management is defined as the art of carrying out work through people, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in achieving the goals of educational organizations. In this context, education management not only focuses on managing human resources, but also includes planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling various aspects of education, such as curriculum, learning, and evaluation. The success of education management is strongly influenced by the role of leadership, where leaders have the responsibility of directing, motivating and providing examples for all members of the organization to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently [2].

One leadership style in educational organizations is democratic leadership, which involves the active participation of all team members, including principals, teachers, students and staff, in decisions that affect the learning environment. This leadership style values the contribution of each individual and encourages a collaborative and innovative working atmosphere. According to

Chumaidah, et al. [3], leadership is an activity that involves influencing and motivating members to achieve common goals. Meanwhile, Hutahaean and SE [4] emphasized that leadership success is influenced by leader characteristics and the level of team member involvement. The main characteristics of democratic leadership are openness, respect for input, and empowerment of team members to participate in the decision-making process, thus creating an inclusive and productive work environment [5, 6].

Democratic leadership in education has a significant impact on the quality of learning, both in terms of motivation and performance of students and teachers. This leadership style encourages the active participation of all school members in the learning process, thus increasing the sense of ownership and responsibility for learning outcomes [7]. Research shows that the application of democratic leadership by teachers and principals can spur student learning motivation and support the development of more creative and innovative teaching methods [8]. In addition, principals who apply democratic leadership provide space for teachers to contribute to decision-making, which in turn increases teacher commitment and performance in carrying out teaching tasks.

The role of the principal as a democratic leader is crucial in building a collaborative and participatory work culture. According to Mardizal and Jalinus [9], principals should function as strategic partners who involve all team members, from teachers to students, in the decision-making process. Research conducted by Radjak, et al. [10] showed that the application of democratic leadership by principals was able to improve the quality of education in vocational secondary schools. In addition, empowering teachers in decision-making is proven to improve their competence, motivation and performance, which has a positive impact on achieving

organizational goals. Democratic leadership also encourages the creation of a participatory culture that strengthens relationships between team members and increases commitment to the school's vision and mission [11].

Although various studies have shown that democratic leadership has a positive impact on the quality of learning, motivation, and performance of teachers and students, studies on the implementation of democratic leadership in the context of education still tend to be limited to the theoretical aspects and have not deeply discussed how this leadership practice is applied in various levels of education. Furthermore, previous studies have been limited in describing the impact of democratic leadership on non-academic aspects, such as character development, school culture and organizational climate. In fact, democratic leadership has the potential to create an inclusive environment and strengthen the values of participation, collaboration and shared responsibility. Therefore, a more in-depth literature review is needed to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation, challenges and impact of democratic leadership in various aspects of

education, both academic and non-academic, as an effort to support holistic improvement in the quality of education.

METHOD

This research uses the literature review method, which aims to identify, search, evaluate, and interpret all existing research on the topic. Data was obtained from national and international articles searched on Google Scholar published in 2021 to 2025. The review process began with Google Scholar to find international and national articles using the keywords "Democratic Leadership in Educational Contexts". Next, the articles were systematically analyzed and organized into propositions to ensure their connectedness, resulting in informative articles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Research related to Democratic Leadership in Educational Contexts which is the subject matter of this study is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Review Table

No	Author and Year	Method	Result
1.	Robisah, et al. [1]	Kuantitatif	The results showed that democratic leadership style has a significant positive influence on teachers' work motivation and pedagogical competence. The study also found that a participative leadership approach helps to create a supportive work environment and improve teacher performance.
2.	Maharani, et al. [2]	Kuantitatif	Democratic leadership style has a positive and significant influence on teacher discipline and performance.
3.	Mirsa, et al. [3]	Kualitatif	The principal applies a democratic leadership style that involves teachers' participation in decision-making, increases their sense of ownership and responsibility, and creates a conducive school environment.

4.	Kumowal and Tuerah [4]	Literature	The study concludes that democratic leadership enhances the learning process, making it more engaging. It encourages student feedback and engagement, creates a lively classroom environment and supports learning.
5.	Rahmawati and Aliyyah [5]	Kualitatif	There are challenges in decision-making, but democratic leadership promotes cooperation, creativity, and responsibility.
6.	Yus, et al. [6]	Kualitatif	The dominant democratic leadership style improves interpersonal relationships, is task-focused, and is effective in the implementation of RTCs.
7.	Endaryono, et al. [7]	Kualitatif	Democratic leadership style increases involvement, strengthens graduate competencies, and involves all elements in decision-making and ongoing evaluation.
8.	Suprianto, et al. [8]	Kualitatif	Democratic leadership plays an important role in improving student sporting achievement, but faces resource challenges and resistance from some teachers.
9.	Alfarabi, et al. [9]	Kualitatif	It was found that madrasah principals have good planning and communication skills, which have a positive effect on teacher performance. The research also showed a need to involve teachers more in decision-making.
10.	Fahri and Lubis [10]	Kualitatif	Teachers' democratic leadership style is instrumental in spurring students' motivation and increasing their engagement in the learning process.

Discussion

Leadership in education plays an important role in determining the success of educational institutions. One leadership style that is widely applied is democratic leadership. This style emphasizes the active participation of all parties, especially teachers and education personnel, in decision-making and the learning process [21]. This literature review aims to analyze the impact of democratic leadership on various aspects of education, including motivation, pedagogical competence, teacher performance, discipline and the overall quality of education.

Various studies in the field of educational leadership highlight the importance of

democratic leadership styles in improving various aspects of education. This study aims to [20]analyze the influence of principals' democratic leadership on teachers' work motivation, pedagogical competence, discipline, and performance. In addition, several studies have also explored how democratic leadership plays a role in implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum (KMB), improving the quality of graduates, and involving teachers in decision-making [16]. In addition, other studies have also focused on the relevance of democratic leadership in Christian education, its influence on student sports achievement, and its role in increasing student learning motivation [18].

Various research methods were used in this review, including quantitative, qualitative and literature review approaches. Quantitative research such as that conducted by [12] and [13] measured the effect of democratic leadership on teachers' work motivation, pedagogical competence, discipline and performance using statistical analysis. Meanwhile, qualitative research such as that conducted by [7, 15, 16] used interviews, observations, and document analysis to understand how democratic leadership is applied in various school contexts. In addition, literature research such as that conducted by [14] explored the relevance of democratic leadership in the learning process based on various academic sources.

The results of this study show that democratic leadership has a wide-ranging impact in education, both in improving the quality of teachers and students. The participatory approach applied in democratic leadership allows teachers to feel more valued and have an active role in decision-making, thus improving their motivation and performance. In the context of learning, democratic leadership not only affects the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence but also creates a more conducive learning environment for students. This is in accordance with research by [14] which shows that democratic leadership in Christian education is able to increase student interaction and involvement in the teaching and learning process.

However, while democratic leadership has many benefits, there are some challenges that need to be considered. [15] found that decision-making in democratic leadership often takes longer because it involves various parties. In addition, [11] revealed that there are obstacles in implementing democratic leadership in the world of sports due to limited resources and resistance from

some teachers. Therefore, it is important for principals and other educational leaders to adapt their leadership style to the needs and conditions of the school environment in order to optimize leadership effectiveness.

Overall, the findings from various studies show that democratic leadership plays an important role in improving the quality of education. By providing opportunities for teachers and students to more actively participate in the learning and decision-making process, it can create a more inclusive, innovative and quality-oriented school environment. Therefore, the implementation of democratic leadership in schools needs to be supported and developed in order to have a wider positive impact on education.

CONCLUSION

Democratic leadership has a significant positive influence in education, both on teachers and students. Various studies have shown that this leadership approach can increase work motivation, pedagogical competence, discipline, and teacher performance, as well as create a more conducive learning environment for students. In addition, democratic leadership has also proven effective in implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, improving the quality of graduates, and increasing student achievement in various fields, including sports. However, there are some challenges in its implementation, such as a longer decision-making process and constraints in resources. Therefore, an appropriate strategy is needed so that democratic leadership can be implemented optimally and have a wider impact on improving the quality of education.

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