



The Managerial Competence of Vocational High School Principals at SMKN 2 Luwu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the managerial competence of the principal at SMKN 2 Luwu in managing vocational education. Managerial competence is a crucial factor that influences the effectiveness of school leadership, especially in vocational high schools that require practical and industry-oriented learning environments. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings indicate that the principal of SMKN 2 Luwu demonstrates adequate competence in planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating educational activities. However, certain challenges remain, such as limited industry collaboration and resource management constraints. The study concludes that enhancing managerial competence through continuous professional development and strategic partnerships with industry is essential for improving the quality of vocational education. This research contributes to a better understanding of leadership practices in vocational schools and offers recommendations for policy and practice improvement.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of a nation's human resources. In Indonesia, the implementation of education is directed towards adapting to societal changes, developments, and contemporary needs. It is undeniable that education lies at the heart of national progress (Duryat, D. H. M., 2022). Therefore, continuous improvement and development in the educational system are essential. Through education, individuals are able to explore and realize their potential. Consequently, the goals of education remain a central issue in the field of education.

The Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System defines education as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process in which learners actively develop their potential. This development aims to enable learners to possess spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills necessary for themselves, society, the nation, and the state.

As a formal educational institution, schools bear a significant responsibility

in improving the quality of education. Achieving high-quality education requires effective and professional educational management (Karadona, R. I., & Sari, A. P., 2025). Quality educational management can only be realized through professional administration at all levels—national, regional, and institutional—such as schools and non-formal education centers. Therefore, it is imperative for every school to adopt well-structured management practices led by professional personnel (Nurfatimah, S. A., Hasna, S., & Rostika, D., 2022).

In line with this, the government and educational institutions continuously strive to enhance the quality of education through professional management practices. These efforts include the provision of adequate infrastructure, the development of effective learning systems, and the improvement of teacher and school leader competencies. These quality improvement initiatives are carried out through educational and training programs, with the aim of ensuring that teachers and principals are able to enhance their professional competencies sustainably, thereby contributing to the achievement of national educational goals.

The success of a school in organizing effective learning processes and achieving educational objectives efficiently is highly dependent on the role of the school principal. Principals are required to possess professional competencies in guiding and motivating teachers to drive the school organization (Wibowo, A., & Subhan, A. Z., 2020). This is because student achievement is significantly influenced by both the quality of teaching and the leadership demonstrated by the principal. The principal plays a vital role in coordinating, mobilizing, and harmonizing all educational resources available within the school to achieve optimal outcomes.

Principal leadership serves as a key factor in advancing the school's vision, mission, goals, and objectives. To this end, school principals must demonstrate strong managerial and leadership skills, enabling them to take the initiative in improving school quality. According to Mulyasa, H. E. (2022), principals are responsible for supporting and motivating teachers, students, and administrative staff to comply with school rules and regulations. This statement underscores the strategic role of the principal in fostering an effective and productive school environment.

As the school manager, the principal holds the responsibility of improving the quality of education in order to achieve optimal school performance (Karadona, R. I., Fakhruddin, F., & Hudallah, N., 2022). School performance encompasses both academic and non-academic achievements, which are the collective results of the work carried out by the entire school community, including the principal, teaching staff, education personnel, and the school committee (Fitrah, M., 2017). Therefore, principals must possess competencies that align with established standards, particularly in the area of management.

According to Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia (Permendiknas) No. 13 of 2007, a school principal must demonstrate five core competencies: personal, managerial, entrepreneurial, supervisory, and social. Among these, managerial competence is essential and refers to the ability to plan, organize, direct, and supervise activities to achieve goals effectively and efficiently.

However, based on initial observations and interviews conducted at SMKN 2 Luwu, several issues were identified that reflect a lack of effective implementation of managerial competence by the school principal. Some teachers were reported to frequently arrive late, fail to attend meetings for various reasons, and even the

principal was absent during significant events such as the student send-off for field practice. These conditions illustrate a deficiency in supervision and control on the part of the principal as a manager.

Therefore, a more in-depth study is necessary to accurately assess how managerial competence is applied by the principal of SMKN 2 Luwu in practice. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in exploring the topic: *"The Managerial Competence of Vocational High School Principals at SMKN 2 Luwu."*

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at providing an in-depth portrayal of the phenomenon of managerial competence among school principals at SMKN 2 Luwu. This approach was chosen as it aligns with the research objective—to uncover the facts and meanings behind the behaviors, experiences, and perspectives of the research subjects in a natural and contextual manner. The research focused on a case study, examining in detail the implementation of the principal's managerial competencies, the supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as strategies related to human resource management, program planning and execution, and performance evaluation.

Data were collected through structured observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with the principal, teachers, staff, and students serving as informants. To ensure data validity and reliability, the researcher employed triangulation techniques by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through the processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

To further verify data trustworthiness, credibility tests were conducted by increasing persistence, applying technique triangulation, utilizing reference materials, and performing dependability checks through direct supervision by an academic advisor. The entire research process was carried out over a three-month period, from March to June 2021, at SMK Negeri 2 Luwu, Luwu Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Implementation of the Principal's Managerial Competence at SMKN 2 Luwu

The principal of SMKN 2 Luwu has demonstrated strong managerial competence in the development of school planning. This process takes place at the beginning of each academic year through the formation of a School Development Team (TPS), consisting of the principal, vice principals, teachers, and the school committee. The TPS is responsible for formulating key planning documents, including the Medium-Term Work Plan (RKJM), the Annual Work Plan (RKT), and the School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS). The preparation of these plans involves all school stakeholders, considers the existing conditions and needs of the school, and is finalized with the approval of the school committee. However, the principal has not revised the school's vision and mission, arguing that they remain relevant to the current development direction.

Regarding teacher and staff management, the principal plans human resource needs in alignment with the school development plan. In cases of teacher shortages, the principal reports the issue to the local government and, if the matter remains unresolved, recruits honorary staff. The principal also assigns specific job

descriptions to teachers and staff by appointing coordinators for areas such as curriculum, infrastructure, public relations, and student affairs. These assignments are made based on the competencies and functions of each position to ensure optimal use of human resources.

The principal actively encourages teachers and staff to pursue professional development by offering guidance, support, and motivation to participate in training and workshops (Putra, A. B., Nasution, I., & Yahfizham, Y., 2024). Furthermore, the principal instructs teachers to complete essential teaching documents such as lesson plans (RPP) and syllabi, and conducts regular evaluations of teaching practices. Teacher performance evaluations are conducted annually, focusing on their activeness and accountability in carrying out their responsibilities. The principal also provides mentoring to teachers to enhance the quality of instruction, thereby supporting the improvement of overall educational quality at the school.

The principal applies a proportional system of rewards and sanctions. Teachers and staff who demonstrate good performance are entrusted with additional responsibilities or specific roles (Suryadi, A., 2022). Conversely, those whose performance is deemed unsatisfactory receive direct warnings, either verbally or through written statements. This approach aims to foster improvement and seek solutions to the challenges faced by staff, thereby enhancing their performance. This reflects the principal's ability to manage human resources professionally and fairly.

This finding aligns with Mataputun (2018), who states that a school principal should pay attention to the competence levels of teachers and continuously encourage and facilitate their improvement. Similarly, Trianto (2024) asserts that professional development for educators and education personnel involves activities that apply knowledge, technology, and skills to enhance teaching and learning processes and the professionalism of education personnel. Teacher and staff development is essential to maintain and improve performance. These activities can be carried out through on-the-job training and in-service training (Effendi, M., 2021).

The ability to empower educational personnel in schools must be reflected in dynamic guidance, coordination of staff duties, the provision of rewards for high performance, and the application of disciplinary actions for those who fail to fulfill responsibilities effectively (Izhar, M., Zakaria, Z., & Djuwita, P., 2017). A principal with strong managerial competence is more capable of empowering human resources to enhance school performance. The findings of this study indicate that the principal of SMKN 2 Luwu appreciates high-performing teachers and staff by offering verbal praise and increased responsibilities, while underperforming personnel receive warnings and written reprimands.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Follow-Up Planning of School Programs

One of the key indicators of a school principal's managerial competence is the ability to carry out monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of school programs in accordance with proper procedures. Interview results revealed that the principal of SMKN 2 Luwu actively monitors various school activities, including classroom instruction, student council (OSIS) activities, and other administrative operations. Monitoring is conducted directly by the principal through classroom supervision as well as coordination with vice principals in charge of curriculum, finance, facilities

Program evaluations are conducted periodically, particularly at the end of each semester and academic year, to assess the effectiveness of the implemented programs. Based on interviews with several informants, it was found that the principal evaluates various aspects of school activities, such as teaching and learning processes, the use of school funds, the utilization of facilities and infrastructure, and the attendance of teachers and educational staff. This evaluation process is carried out not only on an individual basis but also collectively through school work meetings involving all managerial elements.

This information is reinforced by triangulated sources who confirmed the principal's direct involvement in major activities such as student admissions and active leadership in evaluation meetings. This reflects the principal's high awareness of the importance of evaluation as a foundation for decision-making and continuous improvement in school program implementation.

Furthermore, to follow up on the evaluation results, the principal formulates corrective action plans through evaluation meetings involving all school stakeholders (Ariyanti, N., & Prasetyo, M. A. M., 2021). According to interviews, the principal applies SWOT analysis to identify weaknesses and find solutions to problems encountered in school activities. These follow-up actions may include recommendations for underperforming teachers to attend training or technical guidance programs (bimtek). The collaborative approach adopted by the principal, such as engaging teachers in discussion forums during meetings, aims to develop effective solutions and improve the quality of program implementation overall.

Thus, the principal not only performs monitoring and evaluation functions but also ensures that concrete steps are taken to enhance the quality of education at the school. According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 13 of 2007, a school principal must conduct monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of school programs using appropriate procedures and must plan follow-up actions. Findings from interviews and document reviews indicate that the principal of SMKN 2 Luwu monitors all ongoing school activities, including instructional processes and school events such as student admissions. Evaluation is carried out through classroom supervision, financial audits, evaluation of infrastructure usage, and teacher and staff attendance checks.

Program implementation reporting is conducted during evaluation meetings, where follow-up plans are also developed (Supiana, S., Hermawan, A. H., & Wahyuni, A., 2019). Monitoring serves the supervisory purpose of identifying whether the programs are being implemented as planned, what obstacles arise, and how to overcome them. Meanwhile, evaluation aims to determine whether the school programs have achieved the intended targets.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of the Principal's Managerial Competence at SMKN 2 Luwu

Several factors support the principal's managerial competence at SMKN 2 Luwu. One key factor is the principal's ability to build collaboration and effective cooperation with all stakeholders within the school environment. The principal does not work in isolation but involves teachers in decision-making processes and problem-solving efforts. Moreover, the principal's leadership experience serves as a vital asset that enhances managerial effectiveness. This is supported by statements from teachers who view the principal as an open and participative leader, fostering

In addition, the principal is known for maintaining strong relationships with superiors and external parties such as local government authorities (Rahmat, A., 2021). A good personality and broad professional network have also contributed to the principal's success in fulfilling managerial duties. Based on interview findings with a triangulator, it was revealed that the principal often receives support from superiors and government institutions due to a positive track record over the past 13 years in the position (Hanafie Das, S. W., & Halik, A., 2021). The principal's competence has also been formally recognized through the possession of a school principal certification, indicating successful completion of the school leadership strengthening program. These factors altogether demonstrate that the principal has a strong foundation to carry out managerial responsibilities in a professional and effective manner.

Conversely, several inhibiting factors were also identified. The principal is perceived to have limited ability in utilizing information and communication technology (ICT), which affects the efficiency of administrative and managerial tasks. In addition, the lack of administrative staff (*tata usaha*) presents a challenge, as it hampers the delegation and execution of routine administrative operations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research on the implementation of managerial competence of the principal at SMKN 2 Luwu, Luwu Regency, it can be concluded that the principal has carried out several key aspects of managerial competence. In terms of planning, the principal established a School Development Team (TPS) to prepare planning documents such as the School Work Plan (RKS), Medium-Term Work Plan (RKJM), and Annual Work Plan (RKT), although the formulation of the school's vision and mission has not yet been comprehensively reviewed. In managing human resources, the principal assigned clear job descriptions to teachers and staff, provided guidance, and encouraged professional development through training and workshops. Additionally, performance supervision and assessment are conducted regularly to ensure work effectiveness, accompanied by appropriate rewards and sanctions based on individual performance.

Furthermore, the principal performs monitoring, evaluation, and reporting functions by following appropriate procedures. Monitoring is conducted directly on classroom learning activities and other school programs, while evaluation includes teacher supervision, budget utilization, facilities and infrastructure, and staff attendance. Reports on school activities are delivered during evaluation meetings, and the principal develops follow-up plans using SWOT analysis to address any identified shortcomings. This process reflects the principal's strong commitment to maintaining the quality of program implementation and school activities in alignment with the objectives outlined in the work plans.

Supporting factors for the principal's managerial competence at SMKN 2 Luwu include leadership capability, a strong personal character, and support from all school members and government stakeholders. The principal has successfully fostered harmonious working relationships with both internal and external stakeholders. However, there are also several inhibiting factors in carrying out managerial duties, such as limited proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT) and a shortage of administrative staff, which has led to inefficiencies in handling administrative tasks. These challenges must be addressed

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