

# Principal Managerial Competence in Realizing Excellent and Quality Vocational High Schools at East Borneo

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## Abstract

This study aims to describe the managerial competence of principals in turning their schools into centers of excellence. This concept is derived from the experience expressed by the leaders responsible for the development of quality management in public and private vocational high schools at East Borneo. This research is a comparative study that uses a qualitative approach with a case study method at two vocational high schools in East Borneo. Collecting data using interview, observation, and documentation methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain information and excellent school programs from the six informants who participated in this study. They consist of two principals, two curriculum officers, and two teachers who support the flagship program in their school. The results of this study indicate that the principal leads his school to realize a superior and quality Vocational High School; this is the implementation of their managerial competence. Vocational High Schools are organized to prepare a skilled middle-level workforce to support national development in employment and career selection and develop student competencies to compete globally and create jobs. Public and Private Vocational Schools in East Borneo have great potential to become centers of excellence. The principal's managerial competence supports this. Adequate infrastructure according to standard equipment in the industry. In addition, they apply all the knowledge obtained from school about attitudes, manners, character, and Pancasila student profiles in the studio environment and the community in their environment. The Center for Excellence Vocational School's management responsibilities includes developing policies, conducting research, and proposing ideas to the Directorate of Education. Following that, a schedule of tasks is completed to acquire tangible and intangible infrastructure and mentoring activities related to each vocational school's area of specialization.

**Keywords:** managerial competencies, principals, vocational high school, excellent, quality of education

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## 1. Introduction

Current technological developments require the availability of competent and reliable workers in various fields so that a country can survive and play a role in an era full of competition and simultaneously open and take advantage of every opportunity. To increase a country's economic growth, the strategy considered adequate is to industrialize. A nation's quality can be improved through education since the advancements described above can be used to gauge a nation's growth (Azainil et al., 2018). Therefore, educational institutions must work to implement innovative educational practices under professional administration in order to generate graduates who are reliable on the intellectual, practical, and spiritual levels and are prepared to join the community.

According to a recent study by Azainil et al., (2018), a quality assurance system must be put in place in order to overcome numerous challenges and raise the standard of instruction in schools. Some of these challenges relate to factors like principal leadership, managerial proficiency, money, infrastructure, and organizational culture. Others concern teacher motivation, student learning achievement, learning curriculum, supervision, and reporting (Hanim & Wazir, 2021). As a result, despite the government's efforts to implement a number of pro-education measures, they frequently have little to no impact on raising educational standards.

The principal is essential to increase a school's effectiveness and performance (Day et al., 2016). The principal's role is unique because it bridges the gap between the school's internal operations and the general public. As a result, the principal must have the cooperation, trust, and active participation of every group within the institution in order to

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fulfill his or her leadership responsibilities (Zhang et al., 2018). Despite the principle's crucial contribution to raising the standard of instruction in schools, other studies, particularly in poor nations, indicates that the principal plays a very small influence in enhancing education (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). The results of comparative studies at the international level report that schools have so far not performed as expected (Knapp, 2020). There are difficulties for principals in carrying out their leadership roles in schools, even though organizational management skills, leadership, and principal distribution significantly affect school outcomes and the quality of education (Abonyi & Sofo, 2019; Hanim et al., 2019; Warman et al., 2022).

This study examines the competence of principals, with a focus on vocational high schools. To realize the educational goals mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Vocational High Schools play an essential role in creating professional human resources. Graduates are prepared to enter the world of work (Hambali, 2019; Kreisman & Stange, 2020). Therefore, if the input is good, but the teaching and learning process is not good, then the output will not be optimal and it will be difficult for graduates to get a job (Warman, Harliansyah, et al., 2021; Warman, Lorensius, et al., 2021) In this case, The role of the principal is very important because it can provide a climate that allows teachers to work with enthusiasm. With their managerial competence, principals build and maintain positive teacher performance (Lorensius, Anggal, et al., 2022; May et al., 2020).

Excellent schools are national schools that prepare students based on Indonesian national education standards and international standards so that graduates have international competitiveness (Anggal et al., 2021). Thus, excellent vocational schools are educational programs consisting of 8 main components, namely: graduate competency standards, content standards, process standards, educators and education personnel standards, facilities and infrastructure standards, funding standards, management standards, and assessment standards. So, in this case the managerial competence of the principal at the school level is very important to realize a superior and quality vocational school today (Anggal et al., 2019). The principal's managerial competence at the planning level also varies greatly according to the level of administrative position in the organization.

Alfionita et al., (2019) emphasized that the principal is one of the most important components of education in improving the quality of teachers. The implementation of the principal's managerial duties in planning for quality improvement in the education unit as an organizational system is intended to achieve goals. The aim is to be able to improve the quality of education and obtain good results in a series of educational and learning activities that are highly dependent on the figure of the teacher in the school (Dee & Wyckoff, 2015). This is in accordance with the results of research conducted by Permana (2017), that improving education can be done through performance appraisal. In line with this, Setiyadi and Rosalina (2021) argues that the principal's policies affect the performance of teachers to realize school change and progress.

In light of the limits that exist in them as humans, there is a strong need to strengthen the managerial skills of the principals. Given that humans are not all-encompassing animals, this self-awareness is essential. Mulyasa (2007) asserts that not all school administrators possess the knowledge necessary to perform their responsibilities and contribute to raising academic standards. Huda et al., (2020) argue that teachers are assigned as facilitators whose role is to learn optimally by using various strategies, methods, media, and learning resources through school educational institutions, whether established by the government or by the government or private. Teacher performance cannot be separated from the education management paradigm which gives the principal authority to plan for improving the quality of education in schools (Warman, Harliansyah, et al., 2021). Therefore, this researcher contributes to the managerial competence of principals in realizing superior and quality vocational schools.

Vocational High School is a state-owned educational institution under the authority of the East Kalimantan Provincial Government (Kreisman & Stange, 2020). Changes in the transition from the Regency Government to the Provincial Government under the Regional Office of the Ministry of Education and Culture of East Kalimantan Province as a realization of the regional autonomy policy that divides authority into the possession of the central government and provincial governments. Due to changes in Law Number 32 of 2004 and Law Number 23 of 2014, which use the principle of concurrent function, including changes in the term authority/authority into affairs.

The arrangement of State and Private Vocational Schools as a logical consequence of the change in authority above requires implementing strategies based on Presidential Instruction number 9 of 2016 concerning the revitalization of Vocational High Schools to strengthen the competitiveness of graduates in producing competitively reliable human resources. One alignment effort is to integrate the learning curriculum in Vocational Schools tailored to the competencies of graduates required by the Business World and the Industrial World. Alignment is carried out by cooperating with parties who are committed to sharing their knowledge and concern in accepting vocational high school graduates from their partners (Lorensius, Hanim, et al., 2022).

Research Question: The questions to direct this research are how to make vocational high schools become centers of excellence through the managerial competence of principals?

## 2. Research Method and Materials

### 2.1. Research Design

This study aims to describe the managerial competence of principals in turning their schools into centers of excellence. This concept is derived from the experience expressed by the leaders responsible for the development of quality management in public and private vocational high schools at East Borneo. Data was obtained from informants through interviews in the search for answers about the meaning of a phenomenon. Initially, the researcher determined the scope of the research regarding the managerial competence of the principal that could impact the realization of a center of excellence-based vocational high school.

This study uses a comparative study design with a qualitative approach. Creswell and Poth, (2016) considers research design as “detailed plans and procedures of data collection and analysis.” The reason why research design is crucial is twofold. First, the research design will help the data collection process. Second, it will ensure that the collected data correctly answers the research questions and avoid any uncertain aspects of the research.

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach to answer and understand the problem of principal managerial competence. Because he wanted to investigate the organizational skills of the principal and how the principal's performance in realizing a superior and quality school. A qualitative approach would be the researcher's intention to examine the dimensions of the social world, the texture of life, understanding experiences, and relationships. In addition, because the nature of the data collected in this study is descriptive, the qualitative approach is the most suitable approach to use. Thus, qualitative research methods can provide data, structure analysis, and communicate their impact (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

### 2.2. Participants and Procedures

This research process was carried out for four months, starting from September–December 2021. Two principals, two vice principals for curriculum, and two teachers participated in this report. Participants were specially selected, given a consent form to fill out, and informed about the research process and its benefits. In conducting research, the need to find strategies to unify the various components of project design is unavoidable.

**Table 1.** Description of Informants at State and Private Vocational Schools in East Borneo

No	Name	Gender	Position	School Status
1.	HA	Female	Principal	Public school
2.	MS	Female	Curriculum Field	Public school
3.	PW	Male	Teacher	Public school
4.	RM	Female	Principal	Private school
5.	SM	Male	Curriculum Field	Private school
6.	PM	Male	Teacher	Private school

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Researchers understand very well the philosophical views behind using the approach taken, especially concepts related to the study of how informants experience this phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Next, the researcher compiles a list of questions that have the potential to reveal the meaning of the individual experiences of the research subjects so that necessary everyday experiences that they have experienced so far can emerge. Through this interview process, researchers tried to explore research subjects' experiences regarding principals' managerial competence in realizing their schools to be centers of excellence.

To answer the question of how the managerial competence of principals in realizing a superior and quality school, the researcher used semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in Indonesian, as a data collection technique. The researcher believes that this data collection technique provides us with the in-depth data needed to examine and understand the problem under investigation. Creswell and Poth (2016) state that semi-structured interviews are one of the most powerful ways to try to understand fellow human beings. This will enable the researcher to examine the

principal's motivational strategies and behavior of management skills. The interview lasted about thirty to sixty minutes.

The data from interview sessions were transcribed by the researchers in order to find relevant information. The data were then categorized into specific categories and analyzed by using three interrelated coding techniques: open coding, axial and selective coding (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Common emerging themes from the interview data were identified by the researchers, coded and classified accordingly, to produce conceptual framework (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The process of this thematic analysis, through a coding process, was an important step in the data analysis stage. These themes were then discussed and elaborated on by referring to the literature. This means that the data collected from in-depth interview, having been transcribed in detail, were carefully examined using open coding, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2016) to find common emerging themes in the data.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### *3.1. Featured Vocational High School Concepts and Profiles*

Superior Schools are national schools that prepare students based on Indonesian national education standards and international standards so that graduates have global competitiveness. The Center of Excellence Vocational School is a vocational development program with certain expertise competencies in improving quality and performance, which is strengthened through partnerships and alignment with the business world, industry, the world of work, which eventually becomes a reference vocational school that can function as a driving school and a center for quality and performance improvement. other high schools.

The Center of Excellence Vocational School is a vocational high school that can produce graduates who are competent in specific skill competencies and are absorbed in the business world, industry, and the world of work and can continue to higher education through a program to align vocational education systematically and comprehensively with the business world, the industrial world, and the world of work.

The final target of this program is to refer vocational schools that can function as centers of excellence, quality improvement, and referrals for other vocational schools. This is explained by the informant as follows: "We strive for our school to be a center of excellence because this is our main program to produce graduates who are competent in the fields they take at this school, especially for the creative industry; this is our hope. We have prepared a work plan and submitted it to the government to get full support for this program" (Principal of State Vocational School).

In contrast to that experienced by Private Vocational Schools, they are rather difficult to turn their school into a center of excellence because they are constrained by costs to realize their school programs. "We have school programs as centers of excellence, especially in the IT field, but all of this costs money; while our operational costs are not yet supported, our students are also limited, so we need priority programs to determine what we will do first" (Principal of Private Vocational School),

In general, the Vocational Center of Excellence program aims to produce graduates who are absorbed in the world of work or become entrepreneurs through in-depth and comprehensive alignment of vocational education with the world of work and is expected to become a center for quality improvement and referrals for other vocational schools.

The government has a vital role in the Center of Excellence Vocational High School program. The vision of Vocational Education in Indonesia is "Realizing vocational education as a national economic strength through increasing student competence in line with the industrial world, business world, and the world of work." So, the role of all parties in realizing the Center of Excellence Vocational High School program is vital. We focus on developing Vocational Human Resources with a new integrated paradigm to impact other schools with incentives for physical and non-physical assistance, including principal training, vocational teacher training, curriculum training (learning with a new paradigm), and digitizing training schools.

The purpose of this Center of Excellence Vocational School is; (1) Strengthening partnerships between the Ministry of Education and Culture and local governments in mentoring Vocational High Schools of Excellence; (2) Strengthening the quality of vocational human resources, including principals, school supervisors, and teachers to realize work-based management and learning; (3) Strengthening the competence of soft skills and hard skills of students in accordance with the needs of the world of work, as well as developing characters that are in accordance with the values of Pancasila; (4) Realizing data-based planning through school-based management; Increase efficiency and reduce complexity in schools by using digital platforms; (5) Improving the facilities and infrastructure

for student learning practices that are standardized in the world of work; (6) Strengthening partnerships and cooperation between the government and the world of work in the development and mentoring of Vocational High Schools of Excellence.

### *3.2. Implementation of Principal Managerial Competencies School*

Implementing the principal's managerial competence in the planning of the Center of Excellence is the implementation of programs relevant to improving the quality of education. The managerial competencies of public and private vocational school principals are described as follows:

#### *3.2.1. School Planning*

School planning carried out at Public and Private Vocational Schools at East Borneo is carried out through the preparation of a school planning program which is carried out at the beginning of the year and conveys each program item to be implemented to all teachers, staff, and employees at the school, because teachers, staff and employees are the partners or co-workers at school. However, in its implementation every year, the principal never has involved teachers, staff, and employees and has never deliberated in preparing planning programs in schools.

#### *3.2.2. Organizing*

Organizing schools to develop schools by the needs carried out in Public and Private Vocational Schools at East Borneo is to complete all the requirements teachers need in the teaching and learning process in schools so that students are interested in the learning process provided by the teacher in the classroom. But in practice, there has been no development carried out by the principal to develop schools through the Center of Excellence Vocational School program.

#### *3.2.3. Empowerment of School Resources and Human Resources*

To empower and improve school resources and human resources in Public and Private Vocational Schools at East Borneo, it is to maintain and care for all assets in schools and send teachers to participate in training, both through teacher consultations and activities carried out by local, provincial and local governments. Central government. However, in its implementation, both in empowering school resources and human resources in schools, schools have no way or steps taken by schools and never involve teachers in making decisions. Meanwhile, the results of document observations in the field show no documents regarding the list of teacher training programs and school needs.

Managing teachers and staff in the context of utilizing human resources in Public and Private Vocational Schools at East Borneo by improving the learning system, teachers are more active in guiding students and providing incentives in every effort made by teachers and paying attention to every need needed by staff at school. In its implementation, it has never been involved in the work charged, making breakthroughs and equipping teachers with the development of science and technology. Meanwhile, in staff empowerment, the principal has not seen significant results in implementing school performance.

#### *3.2.4. School Management*

To manage change and school development towards effective learning in Public and Private Vocational Schools at East Borneo, involving teachers in implementing a student center so that students are more active in education and each student can express opinions. School development involves all parties, teachers, staff, and employees; in the learning process, teachers must use learning methods that students easily understand. Gradually, the school tries to create a comfortable and conducive atmosphere. But in practice, schools have never included teachers in showing programs that lead to effective learning, and there is no management of school change toward effective learning.

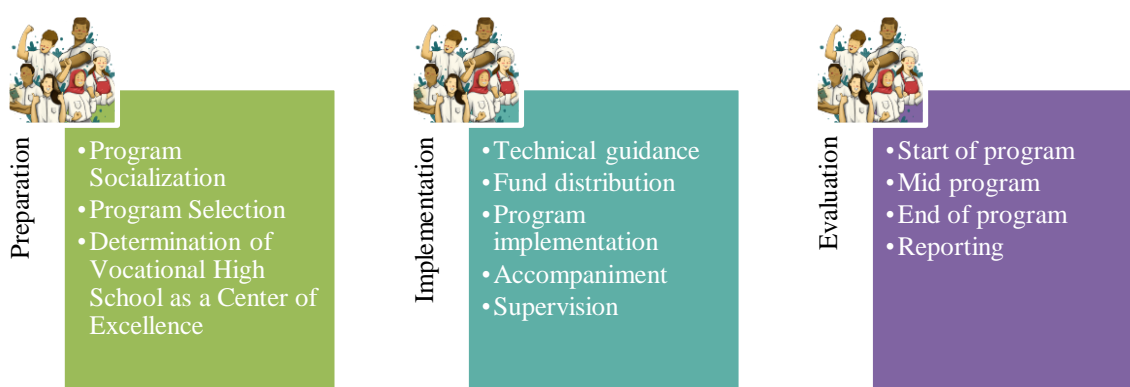
Based on Presidential instruction number 9 of 2016 concerning the revitalization of Vocational Schools, which aims to improve the quality and competitiveness of Human Resources in the face of globalization with the emergence of the industrial revolution 4.0, which is impossible to avoid, accompanied by free trade flows both at ASEAN and International levels, concrete steps are needed. In education. The main sectors are revitalizing the Maritime, Agriculture, Health, Tourism, and Creative Industries vocational schools. Government programs, such as regional excellence-based programs, Industrial Vocational High Schools, Teaching factories, Competency Certification Programs for students, and others, have been rolled out.

The Center for Excellence Vocational School is a decision of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology number 165/M/2021; it is a program that focuses on developing the performance and improving the quality of the Center of Excellence Vocational School through alignment partnerships with the business world and industry. The Center of Excellence Vocational High School program aims to continuously improve the quality of vocational high school students according to the needs of today's industry. This reduces the gap between labor availability and expected industry demand.

The preparation, implementation and evaluation of the learning system at the Vocational High School of Excellence requires complex stakeholders, both from student input, parents, teacher readiness in learning, the active role of industry, the role of school supervisors, the supervisory role of universities, and the government. In particular, the Center for Excellence Vocational School aims to strengthen the partnership between the Ministry of Education and Culture and local governments, to make the Center of Excellence Vocational School stronger, to improve the soft skills and hard skills of students according to industrial demand with Pancasila character, the use of digital platforms in planning and implementation of learning, the fulfillment of infrastructure that industry standards, strengthening partnerships with the World of Work.

They are managing curriculum development and learning activities by the direction and goals of schools at Public and Private Vocational Schools at East Borneo by holding deliberation to find solutions to every problem in the student learning process, making breakthroughs in achieving better learning outcomes. Furthermore, teachers unable to attend school must entrust assignments or learning materials to the picket teacher so that the teaching and learning process continues as usual.

The flow of the implementation of the Public and Private Center of Excellence vocational high school program at East Borneo is as follows:



**Figure 1.** Flow of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program Implementation

Two further efforts, the vocational high school center of excellence program and the vocational high school center of excellence CoE, were built on the program's foundation. Revitalization focused more on improving school administration, expanding human resources with a new integrated paradigm, and modernizing the curriculum to meet business, industry, and workplace demands. Using digital media as well. The Center of Excellence (CoE) vocational high school is an improving vocational high school program that concentrates or focuses on integrated programs between improving industry-based learning, constructing student practice rooms, and fulfilling vocational practice equipment to produce graduates who are competent in their specialty competencies.

The Center of Excellence Vocational School is a vocational school that can produce graduates who are competent in specific skill competencies and are absorbed in the business world, industry, and the world of work, and can continue to higher education levels with a learning approach that is tailored to the needs of industry 4.0-based students.

The relationship between the Center of Excellence Vocational High Schools is that legally they both refer to Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2016 concerning the Revitalization of Vocational High Schools, Focusing on human resource development. With the establishment of the Directorate of Vocational Education, there has been a policy change toward the handling and outcome of Vocational High Schools in an integrated and holistic manner, which includes increasing the competence of teachers and education personnel. Has encouraging synergy between vocational education units, in this case, vocational universities and vocational schools, to support more tangible link and match programs.

### 3.3. Constraints and Solutions to Principal Management

In a school or any organization, there will almost always be obstacles or friction in applying a rule and application of management, including efforts to implement management reform. Individual or individual barriers, according to the researcher's experience, are the most dominant obstacles in every planning and implementation. Several reasons arise, one of which is an inadequate level of education, causing a person to lack the ability or competence to keep up with the latest technology.

Organizational barriers are caused by differences in the views of several teachers and employees in the preparation of planning and implementation. Schools or small organizations generally do not experience too significant obstacles. On the other hand, large organizations, of course, have a greater chance of impediment. The principal explained this: "The solutions are especially in vocational high schools, such as individual and managerial barriers." The principal's statement is by the observations of researchers in the field; every day, the principal gets visits from several stakeholders to provide moral support and solutions because vocational high schools are indeed favorite schools, especially in urban areas.

The vice principal's statement is also by the observations of researchers in the field, as the principal always encourages teachers and employees to keep working without being burdened with management constraints in the school because their job is to educate the nation's life and state through schools.

## 4. Conclusion

Public and Private Vocational Schools in East Borneo have great potential to become centers of excellence. The principal's managerial competence supports this. Adequate infrastructure according to standard equipment in the industry. In addition, they apply all the knowledge obtained from school about attitudes, manners, character, and Pancasila student profiles in the studio environment and the community in their environment. The Center for Excellence Vocational School's management responsibilities includes developing policies, conducting research, and proposing ideas to the Directorate of Education. Following that, a schedule of tasks is completed to acquire tangible and intangible infrastructure and mentoring activities related to each vocational school's area of specialization.

The managerial competence of principals at State and Private Vocational Schools in East Borneo to realize a Center of Excellence school is implemented by planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating that is tailored to the needs of the school, in addition to providing clear directions and roles so that teaching staff can carry out their functions and responsibility satisfactorily. The principal provides opportunities for educators to improve or assist in learning.

The principal's strategy in realizing the Center of Excellence Vocational High School is collaborative. This means looking at and paying attention to and supervising his behavior and the teacher's situation or situation, listening to ideas and solving and clarifying teacher problems and difficulties. Teachers are allowed to express their wishes, pay more attention to teachers, and enable teachers to carry out activities that can develop teacher professionalism. In addition, the principal also requires teachers to understand in depth the learning plans made by the teacher to improve the professional competence of teachers in teaching, which in turn can realize the Vocational High School of Excellence.

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