

Principal Managerial Competence in Improving Teacher Performance

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the critical role of the principal as an educational leader in cultivating professional and highly competent teachers amidst complex educational challenges, particularly within private early childhood institutions. The purpose of this study is to determine, describe, and deeply analyze how the principal's managerial competence drives the improvement of teacher performance in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). The philosophical foundation of this study is rooted in humanistic educational thinking, while the theoretical framework utilizes George R. Terry's managerial competence model. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, grounded in a constructivist paradigm. Data collection utilized methodological triangulation through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis. Data were systematically sourced from foundations, committees, principals, teachers, and school archives across two private institutions: TK Al-Hikmah and RA Nuururrohmaan. The findings reveal that the principal's managerial functions—planning, organizing, actuating, and evaluating—have been executed with maximum effort. However, implementation faces systemic constraints, including limited human resources, insufficient structural support, resistance to organizational change, and uneven managerial skill sets. Concurrently, teachers face challenges such as role ambiguity regarding delegated tasks and a lack of institutionalized workshops for continuous professional development. Despite these barriers, the principals have initiated strategic solutions, including optimizing infrastructure and actively involving foundations, school committees, parents, and the broader community in the educational process. The study concludes that the effective, collaborative, and systematic managerial competence of the principal exerts a highly significant influence on the continuous improvement of teacher performance.

Introduction

Managerial competence represents a fundamental strategic and operational prerequisite for executing educational leadership tasks effectively. A principal does not merely act as an administrative figurehead; rather, they serve as a dynamic manager tasked with optimizing school resources efficiently to achieve holistic educational objectives. This competence encompasses the mastery of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to plan,

organize, execute, and evaluate all activities related to the learning process and institutional governance.

The urgency of this research lies in the necessity to understand the specific managerial mechanisms that influence the quality of teacher performance, given the increasingly complex challenges of the modern educational landscape. Principals are currently demanded not only to fulfill academic targets but to actively elevate the intrinsic competencies of their teaching staff, foster adaptability to systemic changes, and maintain global competitiveness. Aligning with these demands, principals must innovate in formulating strategic work programs, optimizing both physical and human resources, and building robust, sustainable partnerships with foundations, school committees, parents, and local communities.

While previous studies have extensively examined principal managerial competence—such as Nasar and Majir (2022), who highlighted effective direction and collaborative guidance, and Tanjung et al. (2021), who emphasized the strict adherence to the planning, organizing, actuating, and evaluating cycle—a critical gap remains. Most literature focuses on macro-level implementations in well-funded public sectors. Research detailing the micro-implementation of managerial competence in enhancing teacher performance within resource-constrained, private Early Childhood Education (PAUD) settings in Indonesia remains significantly limited.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analytical focus on the symbiotic relationship between a principal's managerial execution and the subsequent enhancement of teacher performance across four distinct dimensions: planning, organizing, actuating, and evaluating. By adopting this holistic approach, this research aims to provide a concrete contribution to the development of a contextual, resilient, and adaptive school leadership management model. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to describe and analyze how principal managerial competence practically elevates teacher performance.

Method

This study is grounded in a constructivist research paradigm, utilizing a qualitative case study approach to facilitate a deep, contextual exploration of the phenomena (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research methods are systematically deployed to investigate objects within their naturalistic settings, positioning the researcher as the primary data collection instrument (Sugiyono, 2017). By adopting a constructivist lens, the research aims to understand the nuanced, socially constructed realities of educational leadership and teacher interactions.

Data collection was executed through rigorous methodological triangulation, combining in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and comprehensive documentation analysis. The research activities commenced with field observations to capture the authentic, day-to-day managerial dynamics. Purposive sampling was utilized to select key informants—foundation heads, school committee members, principals, and teachers—ensuring high-fidelity qualitative data extraction, as this technique targets individuals with the most comprehensive knowledge of the studied phenomenon (Arikunto, 2002). The analytical framework followed an inductive process to draw descriptive conclusions to construct a holistic understanding of how managerial competencies manifest in practice (Sudaryono, 2017).

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Managerial Competence in the Aspect of Planning

The planning phase serves as the fundamental architecture of educational leadership. Based on rigorous field observations and interviews at TK Al-Hikmah and RA Nuururrohmaan, the principal's managerial competence in planning has been executed with considerable strategic focus.

At TK Al-Hikmah, the principal explicitly bases the annual planning cycle on empirical evaluations of the preceding academic year. As the principal stated, "We structure the annual plan by analyzing previous programs, consulting extensively with the foundation. However, due to time constraints, not all teachers can be involved from the genesis of the draft." This

highlights structural efficiency but reveals a gap in grassroots participatory planning. Conversely, RA Nuururrohmaan adopts a highly participatory approach. The principal noted, "We deliberately involve core teachers and committee members in drafting the annual program." This inclusive planning model directly enhances teacher motivation.

Mulyasa (2009) asserts that effective principals must anchor institutional development to a mutually agreed-upon, quality-oriented vision. In both institutions, the vision and mission are clearly articulated. At TK Al-Hikmah, the vision is periodically socialized during formal staff meetings, linking specific teaching targets directly to the overarching mission. At RA Nuururrohmaan, the vision serves more as a philosophical guide. Teachers expressed that when the principal explicitly ties a daily teaching methodology to the school's long-term vision, their sense of professional purpose deepens.

Both principals exhibited strong competence in identifying what resources are required to boost teacher performance. This aligns with Sagala's (2003) assertion that effective educational planning requires thorough needs analysis. At TK Al-Hikmah, observational data is used to identify specific training needs, though budgetary constraints heavily dictate the realization of these plans. To circumvent this, principals have demonstrated creative problem-solving by planning peer-to-peer mentoring systems.

2. Managerial Competence in the Aspect of Organizing

Organizing involves the rational delegation of authority, the structuring of tasks, and the optimal deployment of physical and financial resources to create a cohesive educational ecosystem.

The distribution of responsibilities at TK Al-Hikmah follows a structured, competency-based paradigm, aligning with Terry's (1972) theory that organizing must assign tasks based on individual capabilities. However, a systemic constraint emerged: the chronic shortage of human resources forces teachers into dual roles. In contrast, RA Nuururrohmaan utilizes a more fluid approach where tasks are often handled communally. While this fosters collegial bonds, it occasionally results in dropped responsibilities.

Creating a robust organizational structure is paramount for institutional stability. At TK Al-Hikmah, the formal organizational chart is meticulously documented, significantly reducing workplace friction. Conversely, RA Nuururrohmaan's organizational structure remains largely informal. The lack of a rigidly enforced structure requires the principal to spend excessive time managing micro-crises, detracting from high-level instructional leadership.

At TK Al-Hikmah, the principal ensures transparent financial organization and strictly inventories physical assets (e.g., APE). This organized environment directly supports teachers. At RA Nuururrohmaan, financial and physical resource organization is less formalized and heavily reliant on foundation intervention. The research underscores that when a principal effectively organizes resources, it minimizes disruptions, allowing teachers to focus entirely on pedagogical delivery.

3. Managerial Competence in the Aspect of Actuating/Implementing

The actuating phase relies heavily on the principal's interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and capacity to motivate.

At TK Al-Hikmah, program coordination is characterized by structured internal communication, including weekly briefings. The principal acts as a facilitator, bridging the gap between theoretical curriculum goals and practical classroom execution. At RA Nuururrohmaan, coordination is flexible and relies on informal channels. While creating a relaxed environment, it lacks the rigor necessary to ensure consistent implementation of complex pedagogical strategies.

According to Siagian (2012), execution requires the leader to move people harmoniously. At TK Al-Hikmah, the principal utilizes a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, maintaining an open-door policy. At RA Nuururrohmaan, motivation is heavily rooted in spiritual values, framing the teaching profession as a religious duty. This

demonstrates that tapping into the core values of the teaching staff can result in profound improvements in instructional quality.

At TK Al-Hikmah, the principal conducts regular, supportive classroom observations. This real-time actuating ensures that deviations from the curriculum are corrected swiftly. At RA Nuururrohmaan, the principal struggles to find the time for consistent classroom observation due to a heavy teaching load. Active and visible participation in the implementation phase by the principal is essential to keep teacher performance aligned with quality standards.

4. Managerial Competence in the Aspect of Evaluating

Effective evaluation is the engine of continuous professional development for teachers. At TK Al-Hikmah, the evaluation process is systematized utilizing standardized supervision instruments. However, some teachers view the evaluation defensively. At RA Nuururrohmaan, the evaluation process is informal, relying on subjective observations rather than structured rubrics. Systematic evaluation with transparent, objective criteria is crucial to provide a clear roadmap for skill refinement.

At TK Al-Hikmah, the principal analyzes evaluation data to identify institutional trends and plans corresponding workshops. Conversely, at RA Nuururrohmaan, the lack of formal documentation prevents meaningful longitudinal analysis. According to Coryn and Stufflebeam's (2014) evaluation theories, analyzing outcomes is essential for informed decision-making and proactive intervention design.

At TK Al-Hikmah, the principal conducts one-on-one post-supervision conferences, providing specific, actionable feedback, which is highly valued by the teachers. Satori (2013) notes that a true evaluative culture relies on meaningful follow-up. At RA Nuururrohmaan, feedback is often delivered informally in passing. Formal, dedicated feedback sessions are necessary to alter deeply ingrained teaching habits and transform evaluation into a catalyst for sustained excellence.

Discussion

The comprehensive findings derived from TK Al-Hikmah and RA Nuururrohmaan provide a profound empirical illustration of how principal managerial competence operates within the specific, resource-constrained ecosystem of private Early Childhood Education in Indonesia. By synthesizing the data through the theoretical lens of George R. Terry's (1953) management functions, it becomes evident that the enhancement of teacher performance is the direct result of deliberate managerial actions.

Firstly, effective Planning serves as the psychological and operational bedrock for teacher performance. In environments where resources are scarce, strategic planning transitions from an administrative duty to an essential survival mechanism. The data aligns with Sagala's (2010) assertions that strategic management directly dictates institutional quality. When the principals engaged in systematic needs assessments and formulated clear annual work plans, they effectively reduced teacher anxiety regarding institutional direction. However, RA Nuururrohmaan's inclusive, horizontal approach to drafting programs generated higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to TK Al-Hikmah's structural planning. Allowing teachers to co-construct the school's roadmap significantly enhances their commitment.

Secondly, the dimension of Organizing revealed the vulnerabilities of private institutions, particularly the chronic shortage of human resources forcing role-duality. Despite this, structuring these responsibilities transparently—as seen in TK Al-Hikmah—prevented systemic collapse. This reinforces Robbins and Coulter's (2012) theories, which posit that clarity of structure mitigates workplace inefficiency. Furthermore, organizing physical assets and financial transparency effectively removes logistical burdens from the teachers, serving as an act of removing barriers to optimal pedagogical performance.

The Actuating function proved to be the most human-centric dimension. The execution relies on emotional intelligence, continuous coordination, and localized motivation. The disparity between the two schools highlighted that while informal communication builds trust,

it must be supplemented by structured coordination. Furthermore, the spiritual and moral motivational strategies utilized by the principals proved highly effective. Framing the teaching profession as a noble, ethical endeavor successfully buffered the staff against modest financial compensation, aligning with humanistic management theories.

Finally, the Evaluating dimension emerged as the most critical area requiring professional development. While both leaders possessed an intuitive understanding of their staff, the translation of this intuition into structured evaluation systems was lacking at RA Nuururrohmaan. Developing an evaluative culture is the hallmark of professional management (Satori, 2013). Evaluation only improves teacher performance when followed by specific, constructive feedback and a dedicated plan for professional development. Without rigorous data analysis, evaluations remain inert administrative exercises.

Collectively, this research details the micro-dynamics of managerial competence in private PAUDs, revealing that the four managerial functions are deeply interdependent. A flaw in organizing will inevitably sabotage actuating, which in turn skews evaluation data. The principals' efforts to involve foundations, school committees, and parents are strategic imperatives to disperse the managerial load and secure capital to invest back into the teachers. Ultimately, the continuous enhancement of teacher performance relies on a principal who can seamlessly weave planning, organizing, actuating, and evaluating into a cohesive, improvement-focused institutional culture.

Conclusion

The managerial competence of the principal serves as the primary catalyst and sustaining force for the enhancement of teacher performance at TK Al-Hikmah and RA Nuururrohmaan. This study concludes that the deliberate and systematic application of managerial functions creates a structured and supportive environment in which teachers can optimize their professional capabilities.

Effective planning aligns teacher efforts with clear institutional visions; rigorous organizing removes logistical barriers; dynamic actuating provides necessary motivation; and systematic evaluation ensures continuous pedagogical refinement. While facing systemic hurdles like limited human resources and financial constraints, the principals have demonstrated adaptive leadership. By fostering collaborative partnerships, these leaders bridge resource gaps. To ensure the continuous elevation of educational quality, principals must persistently refine their managerial acumen, shifting from purely administrative oversight to profound, data-driven instructional leadership.

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