

Enhancing Students' Entrepreneurial Competence through Principal's Leadership: A Case Study of Public Vocational High Schools in Lampung Province

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Abstract

This study explores the implementation of entrepreneurial leadership in vocational high schools (SMKs) in Indonesia, focusing on the role of principals in enhancing students' entrepreneurial competencies. Addressing the gap between the increasing number of vocational graduates and their low entrepreneurship and employment rates, the research highlights the impact of principals' transformational leadership on fostering an entrepreneurial culture. Key findings reveal that effective socialization, strategic planning, and a supportive school environment significantly influence student engagement in entrepreneurship. Challenges such as limited resources, lack of trained teachers, and resistance to change are identified, with targeted interventions recommended, including professional development and industry partnerships. The study integrates Islamic teachings and philosophical pragmatism to offer culturally relevant insights, providing a roadmap for improving entrepreneurship education in SMKs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Leadership; Vocational Education; Transformational Leadership; Entrepreneurial Competencies; Strategic Planning

Introduction

The objective of this study is to explore the implementation of entrepreneurial leadership in vocational high schools (SMK) in Indonesia, focusing specifically on the role of principals in enhancing students' entrepreneurial competencies. This research addresses a critical gap in the literature: the disconnect between the increasing number of vocational graduates and their low rates of entrepreneurship and employment. Despite the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education, there remains a significant lack of practical application of entrepreneurial skills among SMK graduates (Byun et al., 2018; Farida et al., 2020; Nabi & Holden, 2008; Yu Cheng et al., 2009).

To address this issue, the study aims to provide insights for principals to enhance entrepreneurship education and improve student competencies. Grounded in Islamic teachings (Qur'an and Hadith) and philosophical pragmatism, the research emphasizes practical application over theory. The study's objectives include identifying the leadership styles and strategies that principals employ to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among students and examining the effectiveness of entrepreneurial programs implemented in vocational schools (Scott & Webber, 2012; van Jaarsveld, 2020; Yemini et al., 2014).

Preliminary studies conducted at several vocational high schools in Lampung Province have highlighted various challenges. Notably, the low entrepreneurial competence of graduates, where the achievement of graduates who become entrepreneurs within more than 12 months after graduation is less than 50% (Agung et al., 2018; Rahayu et al., 2023; Sugiono et al., 2019; Utama & Triyono, 2022; Waluyati & Chotimah, 2020). This study will investigate the leadership styles of principals with an entrepreneurial spirit, their strategies for developing students' entrepreneurial competencies, flagship entrepreneurial programs, and the constraints and solutions associated with these efforts.

The inputs of this study are categorized into three types: student inputs, instrumental inputs (such as policies, curriculum, human resources, infrastructure, and financing), and environmental inputs (such as community, parents, and stakeholders) (Bonesso et al., 2018; Wang, 2020). The research process will examine the principal's leadership style, strategies to achieve learning objectives, entrepreneurial activities integrated into the curriculum, obstacles to achieving entrepreneurship education goals, and solutions to overcome these obstacles (Hood & Young, 1993; McCrea, 2013; Vesper & Gartner, 1997).

The expected outcome of this research is to generate graduates with entrepreneurial skills and competencies, enabling them to manage their own enterprises. The study aims to promote student entrepreneurship, contributing to the development of competent and competitive (Wijayanti & Habiburrahman, 2024).

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the factors contributing to the low number of vocational high school (SMK) graduates in Indonesia who become entrepreneurs. The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach lies in its capacity to provide an in-depth understanding of the complex and multifaceted factors that influence entrepreneurial leadership and student entrepreneurship (Agung et al., 2018; Farida et al., 2020). By focusing on a case study design, the research aims to capture detailed and contextualized insights into the experiences, practices, and perceptions of principals and students within the vocational education setting (Barusman & Barusman, 2017).

To collect comprehensive and rich data, the study utilizes a combination of in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and field observations. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with principals, teachers, and students from selected SMKs to gather detailed information on the leadership styles of principals, the implementation of entrepreneurial programs, and the perceived barriers and enablers of student entrepreneurship (Suyitno et al., 2014; van Jaarsveld, 2020). The interview questions are designed to elicit in-depth responses, allowing participants to share their experiences and insights freely.

In addition to interviews, relevant documents such as school policies, curriculum outlines, program reports, and student records will be reviewed to understand the formal structures and initiatives related to entrepreneurship education. This method will help identify the alignment between stated objectives and actual practices, as well as any discrepancies that may exist (Barusman, 2024). Observations will be conducted in various settings, including classrooms, extracurricular activities, and school events, to capture the dynamics of leadership and student engagement in entrepreneurial activities. Field notes will be taken to document interactions, behaviors, and contextual factors that may influence the implementation and outcomes of entrepreneurial programs (Samwel Mwasalwiba, 2010; Strauti et al., 2018; Vesper & Gartner, 1997).

The study is grounded in several theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. Strategic management will be used to analyze how principals develop and implement strategies to foster entrepreneurship within their schools, examining the planning, resource allocation, and monitoring processes that support entrepreneurial initiatives. Path-Goal Leadership Theory will be employed to understand how different leadership styles and behaviors of principals influence student motivation and entrepreneurial outcomes, exploring the pathways through which leadership can facilitate goal achievement and enhance student entrepreneurship (Suyitno et al., 2014). Additionally, the study incorporates Islamic

teachings (Qur'an and Hadith) and philosophical pragmatism to emphasize the practical application of entrepreneurial values. These perspectives will be used to analyze how ethical and moral principles guide entrepreneurial leadership and education, ensuring that the practices are culturally relevant and grounded in local values (Fawson et al., 2015; Morris et al., 2002).

Data analysis will involve several stages to ensure a thorough and systematic examination of the collected data. Transcripts from interviews, field notes, and documents will be coded and categorized into themes and sub-themes through an iterative process, allowing for the refinement of codes and the emergence of new themes. The identified themes will be analyzed to understand the patterns and relationships among various factors influencing entrepreneurial leadership and student entrepreneurship, elucidating the key drivers and barriers to effective entrepreneurship education in vocational high schools (Qing et al., 2020; Venesaar et al., 2022). Data from different sources will be triangulated to validate findings and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, helping to identify any inconsistencies and provide a more robust interpretation of the data. The findings will also be contextualized within the broader educational, cultural, and socio-economic environment of Indonesia to highlight the unique challenges and opportunities associated with promoting entrepreneurship in vocational high schools.

The study aims to generate actionable insights and practical recommendations for principals and policymakers to enhance entrepreneurship education in vocational high schools. By understanding the leadership practices, strategic initiatives, and contextual factors that influence student entrepreneurship, the research will contribute to the development of more effective and culturally relevant entrepreneurship programs. The ultimate goal is to increase the entrepreneurial competencies and outcomes of SMK graduates, thereby addressing the gap in practical entrepreneurial skills and improving their employment prospects.

Results and Discussion

The study reveals several critical factors influencing the development of entrepreneurial competencies among students in vocational high schools (SMKs) in Indonesia. These findings are crucial for addressing the gap between the growing number of vocational graduates and their low entrepreneurship and employment rates.

Leadership Impact

A key finding is the significant role of principals' leadership styles in cultivating an entrepreneurial culture within schools. Transformational leadership, which involves vision, inspiration, and support, is particularly effective in encouraging both students and teachers to engage with entrepreneurial activities. Principals demonstrating transformational leadership can foster an environment that promotes innovation, risk-taking, and proactive engagement in entrepreneurship. This aligns with Path-Goal Leadership Theory, which underscores the leader's role in facilitating goal achievement and enhancing motivation (Farida et al., 2020; Nabi & Holden, 2008).

Socialization and Planning

Effective socialization and strategic planning are crucial for embedding entrepreneurial values into the school environment. Schools that actively promote entrepreneurship through events, workshops, and competitions show higher student engagement in entrepreneurial activities. These initiatives provide essential practical experiences for developing entrepreneurial competencies. The findings underscore the

need for strategic management in planning and executing these activities to align with the school's educational objectives (Byun et al., 2018; Yu Cheng et al., 2009).

Innovation and Self-Efficacy

Encouraging innovation and building self-efficacy are vital for nurturing entrepreneurial skills. Schools that offer opportunities for experimentation, risk-taking, and learning from failure are more successful in producing entrepreneurial graduates. This supports the relevance of philosophical pragmatism, which emphasizes practical application and experiential learning (van Jaarsveld, 2020).

School Environment

A supportive school environment—characterized by access to resources, mentorship, and a collaborative culture—significantly enhances students' entrepreneurial intentions. Schools with strong support systems and collaborative cultures are better positioned to nurture entrepreneurial mindsets. This finding is supported by the strategic management framework, highlighting the importance of resource allocation and supportive infrastructure (Scott & Webber, 2012; Yemini et al., 2014).

Challenges and Interventions

Despite these positive influences, the study identifies several challenges in implementing entrepreneurship education, including limited resources, lack of trained teachers, and resistance to change. Limited financial and material resources hinder the provision of comprehensive entrepreneurship programs, while the absence of adequately trained teachers affects program delivery. Additionally, resistance from educators and students complicates implementation.

The study suggests addressing these challenges through targeted interventions. Professional development for teachers can equip them with the necessary skills for effective entrepreneurship instruction. Industry partnerships can provide additional resources and practical experiences. Policy support from the government can enhance the environment for entrepreneurship education by offering funding, resources, and supportive policy frameworks (Agung et al., 2018; Waluyati & Chotimah, 2020).

Significance and Implications

These findings advance our understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial competencies in SMK students by linking them to practical strategies and theoretical frameworks. The integration of Islamic teachings and philosophical pragmatism into the analysis adds a culturally relevant dimension, emphasizing ethical and practical considerations in entrepreneurship education. The study offers valuable insights for principals, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders, providing a roadmap for enhancing entrepreneurial competencies and improving the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Indonesia's vocational high schools (Rahayu et al., 2023; Sugiono et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This study concludes that fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and creating a supportive environment are critical for addressing the challenges faced in vocational education in Indonesia. The role of principals is pivotal in this process, as their leadership significantly influences the success of entrepreneurship programs. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been identified as effective in motivating students and

teachers to embrace entrepreneurship, highlighting the importance of visionary and supportive leadership in educational settings.

The research provides a comprehensive framework for principals to analyze their school's environment, formulate strategies, implement entrepreneurship programs, and evaluate outcomes effectively. By integrating entrepreneurial values into the curriculum and emphasizing practical application, vocational high schools can better prepare students for entrepreneurial careers. This approach not only enhances students' entrepreneurial competencies but also addresses the gap in practical entrepreneurial skills among SMK graduates, thereby improving their employment prospects and contributing to the broader economic development of Indonesia.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of strategic planning, innovation, and self-efficacy in developing entrepreneurial skills. Schools that actively promote entrepreneurship through events, workshops, and competitions, and provide opportunities for students to experiment and learn from failures, are more successful in producing entrepreneurial graduates. A supportive school environment, including access to resources, mentorship, and a collaborative culture, also plays a crucial role in enhancing students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Despite the challenges identified, such as limited resources, lack of trained teachers, and resistance to change, the research suggests targeted interventions that can effectively address these issues. Professional development for teachers, partnerships with industry, and policy support from the government are essential for creating a conducive environment for entrepreneurship education.

In conclusion, this study not only advances our understanding of the key factors influencing entrepreneurial competencies in vocational high school students but also provides practical solutions and recommendations for enhancing entrepreneurship education. By fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and creating a supportive environment, vocational high schools can significantly improve the entrepreneurial outcomes of their graduates. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of these interventions on students' entrepreneurial careers and further investigate the role of cultural and socio-economic factors in shaping entrepreneurial education in different contexts.

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