



## Research Article

# THE SELF DETERMINATION OF THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL'S PRINCIPALS IN IMPROVING THE GRADUATES' COMPETENCES

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the role of self determination of the vocational school's principals in improving the graduates' competences, as well as factors that might influence such self determination. The self determination of a vocational school's principal is a core component for a study because a principal with strong self determination will tend to work hard in order to achieve the visions and missions of the vocational school. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics over 110 respondents who were sampled randomly from the total of 154 principals of vocational schools in Medan. The findings of the study indicate that the self determination of the vocational school's principals is categorized as good. Meanwhile, factors which might contribute to the construction of such self determination are as follows: 1) they are determined to work hard until they achieve the goals, 2) they are highly initiative in solving problems, 3) they are humble, 4) they can control and manage all things for completing their duty, and 5) they can cope with stress. The attempt that the principals made in improving their graduates' competences is by providing follow-ups to the results of supervisions in order to improve the learning. Also, improving their diligence in solving problems by initiating new ideas, and improving the determination to work hard by developing the willing to solve problems which might occur in school and by not putting off any responsibilities, as well as by appreciating other people's contribution are the kinds of success they have achieved in improving their attempts to improve their graduates' competences.

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of a principal is the core to a school's success, thus it is insisted that the principals have vision and knowledgeable particularly in relation to school and that they have good competences in realizing an effective leadership (Direktorat Jenderal Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan dan Tenaga Kependidikan Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2009). According to the regulations of Ministry of National Education Number 13 in 2007 on Standard of Vocational School's Principal which read that there are five dimensions of competences that a principal should own, namely: personal, managerial, entrepreneurship, supervision, pedagogic, professionalism, and social. Some indicators which indicate characteristics of a school-based management concept are among others; (a) the school environment is safe and well regulated, (b) the school has missions and quality targets to be achieved, (c) the school owns a strong leadership, (d) there is a high expectation from school personnel (principal, teachers, other staff, and students) to perform well, (e) there is a continuous process of

development performed by school staff to fulfill the demands of IT, (f) there is a continuous evaluation over every academic and administrative aspect, and the follow-up to improve the quality, and (g) there is intensive communication and support among parents/ society (Veitzal Rivai dan Sylviana Murni, 2009). It is also described that there are several principles in performing the School-based Management through the implementation of School-based Management, namely; (a) focus should be placed on the process by continuously informing the quality improvement, (b) the decisions regarding the quality should be made by the school service users, (c) any achievement made in school should be gained by interpreting the school vision, not by force of rules, (d) the school should produce students who have knowledge, skills, the quality of wisdom, characters, and emotional maturity. The Directorate General of Educational Quality Improvement and Staff of Department of National Education explains that to realize the principles of the School-based Management through the implementation of the School-based Management, it is recommended that principals be professional and have effective leadership (Direktorat Jenderal Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan dan Tenaga Kependidikan Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2009). Besides, the professionalism of a principal has to be maintained so that the educational quality improvement can

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develop and advance as to follow the needs of development. Improving the professionalism of a principal is done to reach an effective principal who can perform his/her duties appropriately. Discussing such effective principal, the Directorate of Educational Staff has stated that a principal can be considered effective if he/ she can provide answers for the following questions: (1) why is good education needed in a school; (2) what is required to improve the quality of school; and (3) how can a school be managed to gain the best achievement. Finch and McGough explain that dimensions of leadership in vocational education include human dimension, task dimension and environment dimension. The human dimension includes the human relation competence, creativity, commitment, flexibility, and future orientation. Besides, the environment dimension includes school, society and work field. Finally, the task dimension includes planning, development, management, and evaluation (Curtis *et al.*, 1982).

There is a correlation between the human dimension, environment dimension and the leadership tasks for vocational education. If the leader of vocational education has made a decision on an activity which is related to one of the aforementioned dimensions, the other two dimensions should be taken into considerations, too. By considering the other dimensions the leadership for the vocational education may be capable of improving the school performance through the management of school, students, and teachers as the core components to achieve the goals of the vocational schools. Such description indicates that leadership for vocational education is multidimensional and that it involves many kinds of involvement with human, task and environment. To realize the principles which a principal should hold for conducting the School-based Management through the implementation of the School-based Management, it is recommended that the principal have strong self determination thus an effective leadership can be realized.

The self determination of a vocational school's principal is the core in the attempt to improve the quality of graduates, because by having strong self determination, a principal will be determined to work hard until he/ she realizes the vision and missions of the school. A principal with strong self determination will be determined to work hard until they achieve the goals, highly initiative in solving problems, humble, can control and manage all things for completing their duty, and can cope with stress. A principal like that will make his/ her attempt to appreciate people under his/ her management so that the principal and the staff altogether can make quality graduates (Rosnelli dan Sri Milfayetty, 2013).

The importance of self determination has been reported in a study of four universities in business countries, consisting of Harvard University, Stanford University, and University of Chicago that states the self determination is capable in improving the staff performance (Colquitt *et al.*, 2009). It is confirmed in the theory of Kreitner and Kinicki that says any individuals with strong self determination will show high performance over duties that involve learning or problem solving (Kreitner Robert and Kinicki Angelo, 2007). Self determination becomes crucial because by having strong self determination one will be able to find solutions to problems faced so that all tasks and duties can be completed well

## Theoretical and Thinking Framework

### Definition of Self determination

Self determination is a faith of oneself that one's fate is determined by no one but himself (Slocum and dan Hellrigel, 2009). Determining one's own fate or self determination is a personality trait. It is also explained that several personality traits related to stress are verbal persuasion and self determination. One having strong self determination tends to believe that he/ she can complete tasks and cope with stress (Colquitt *et al.*, 2009). Self determination is a force for intrinsic motivation which allows a person to complete tasks within which he finds meaningfulness, thus he enjoys the tasks (Thomas, 2000). Besides, self determination is a strong will to complete tasks by mustering all knowledge, effort, attention, and refining his/ her diligence (Colquitt *et al.*, 2009). It is also a strong will to succeed in completing tasks by being humble, i.e. assessing realistically over his/ her own success and appreciating other people's contribution (Kreitner Robert and Kinicki Angelo, 2007). Self determination is also one of personality variables, defined as an individual faith over one's own capability to control one's fate. Having such faith that the fate or events happening in one's life is under his/ her own control allows him/ her to be regarded as having a strong self determination (Rotter *et al.*, 1972). According to the aforementioned theory, therefore, self determination is conceptually defined as a strong will of a leader to be determined to succeed. On the other hand, the operational definition of self determination is a strong will of vocational school's principals to be determined to succeed.

### Characteristics of Self determination

The study report of Julian B. Rotter indicates that people with strong self determination believe more that; a) promotion is obtained from their hard work and diligence, b) when they think they are on the right side, they can convince other people, c) in the case of obtaining score, they argue that score is taken from their hard work, the luck factor only takes a very little portion in it, d) they think they can change the course of life if they can make other people hear them, e) they think they are the determining factor to their fate, f) socializing with other people is a skill that requires practice (Kreitner Robert and Kinicki Angelo, 2007). As reported by Kreitner and Kinicki, it is shown that individuals with strong self determination are those who, as follows: a) show high motivation for work, b) have strong expectations and attempts to perform at their best, c) perform high dedication to work that involves learning or problem solving, if their performance is rewarded, d) there is high correlation between their satisfaction at work and performance in those having strong self determination, e) are being paid higher and receive salary increment more than those with weaker self determination, and f) are humble which is shown by appreciating other people's contribution (Kreitner Robert and Kinicki Angelo, 2007). On the other hand, individuals with weaker self determination tend to have higher anxiety compared to those with stronger self determination. The concept about self determination used by has four basic concepts, namely: a) the potential of behavior is directed to achieve the expected life, b) strong expectation, c) having solutions to problems, d) capable of controlling psychological mood. Individuals with strong self determination are: a) hard

workers, b) highly initiative, c) determined to find problem solutions, d) thinking in effective way, e) having perceptions that success takes efforts. Individuals with strong self determination have faith in themselves that they control their own fates, always attempt to achieve their expectations, take more effective and efficient actions, can communicate well and cope with their stress (Slocum and dan Hellrigel, 2009). The characteristics of self determination is having strong intrinsic motivation which becomes force to their goals, working hard to complete tasks within which they find meaningfulness, can enjoy their work, can convince other people that their work is their passion (Thomas, 2000). These individuals will be able to direct their thought to high confidence in order to start and finish their work successfully, control things they want, see troubles at work as challenges to success. Therefore, according to the theoretical framework, the indicators for self determination are set as follows: 1) be determined to succeed, 2) have high initiative to solve problems, 3) are humble, 4) control things they want to complete their duties or tasks, and 5) can cope with stress.

### The Advantages of Self determination

Individuals that have strong self determination hardly see troubles at work as challenges that may lead to failure. Troubles or obstacles are seen as challenges in their way to success. These individuals will tend to muster all their knowledge, effort, attention, and will refine their diligence in working so that they achieve the goal which is the task completion. The strong self determination is a basic requirement to gain trust, for gaining trust one should have confidence, be reliable, and be particularly competent (Pasaribu, 2011). Apart from that, by building such characteristics namely confidence, reliability and competence in oneself will allow other people to consider collaborating by expecting that both parties will mutually be useful for each other. That people with strong self determination have strong expectation over things and give out the best of their effort to achieve to give the best performance, still have humility. Humility is a kind of good deed. Being humble or modest means not only self declare but also need for other people's appreciation. When one is humble, he/ she is not arrogant. The attitude of being humble involves the capability to evaluate success, failure work, and life appropriately. People with strong self determination in completing their duty will find meaningfulness in their work and humility thus they do it enjoyably so as for other people in their surroundings. Therefore, self determination can bring trust from colleagues, therefore performance can be enhanced (Rosnelli, 2016). Leaders who can plant this personality trait within themselves can make people under their management feel as if their leaders' goals also belong to them. These types of individuals will direct their thought, control things they want, see troubles or obstacles at work as challenges in their way to success, muster all knowledge, effort, attention, and refine their diligence in working until they can achieve their goals and complete their tasks.

## RESULTS

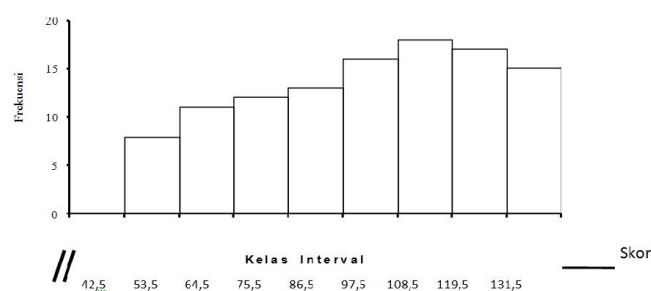
The variable of self determination consists of six (6) indicators, including: 1) can direct their knowledge, effort, and attention,

2) can refine their diligence, 3) have solutions to problems, 4) can control themselves, 5) be determined to work hard, and 6) appreciate other people's contribution in achieving the organization's goals. The score distribution of the variable of self determination can be seen in the appendices. The ideal mean of self determination is 81, the lowest ideal score is 27, the highest ideal score is 135, with the median score is 81, the ideal standard deviation is 18. Meanwhile, the obtained mean of the measurement score of self determination is 91.26, with the lowest score obtained in the measurement is 43, the highest score is 127, the median is 94, the range is 84, the standard deviation is 23.36, and the variance is 558,52. The frequency distribution of the self determination variable is displayed in the table 1.

**Table 1. The Frequency Distribution of Self Determination Variable**

No	Interval Class	Val	Relative Percentage (%)	Cumulative Frequency
1	43 - 53	8	7,27	8
2	54 - 64	11	10,00	19
3	65 - 75	12	10,91	31
4	76 - 86	13	11,82	44
5	87 - 97	16	14,55	60
6	98 - 108	18	16,36	78
7	109 - 119	17	15,46	95
8	120 - 130	15	13,64	110
	Jumlah	110	100,00	

The result of measurement of self determination is generally dominated by the interval of 98 – 108 for as many as 18 respondents or 16.36%. The percentage for the lowest score in the interval of 45 – 53 is 4 people or 7.27%. meanwhile, the average score of 91.26 is in the interval of 87 97. Additionally, as much as 40.00% (44 respondents) are below the average, while the 45.46% (50 respondents) are above the average. The histogram of the frequency distribution of the Self determination score is reflected in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Histogram of Self determination Variable Score**

The score distribution of the self determination variable ( $X_1$ ) approximates to symmetry. In order to know the quality of this variable ( $X_1$ ), the score of mean and standard deviation of the empirical data are compared to the mean and standard deviation of the ideal score. The ideal mean score of the study for this variable is measured using the measurement of normal curve, as in the following: the minimum score of theoretical data is 27, and the maximum ideal score is 135. To this, the ideal mean score is 81, while the ideal standard deviation is 18. With the ideal mean of 81, the data classification is done over four categories of score, which include: 109 – higher is good, 82 – 108 is fair, 55 – 81 is poor, and 50 – lower is very poor.

The mean score of the measurement of the self determination variable is above the ideal mean score. The tendency of the self determination variable is displayed as follows.

**Table 2. The Tendency Level of Self determination**

No	Range	Absolute Frequency	Relative Percentage (%)	Category
1	≤ 54	9	8,18	Low
2	55 – 81	30	27,27	Poor
3	82 – 108	39	35,46	Fair
4	≥ 109	32	29,09	Good
Jumlah		110	100,00	

The tendency scores of the self determination variable of the vocational school's principals are 8.18% (9 respondents) which is categorized as low; 27.27% (30 respondents) which is categorized as poor; 35, 46% (39 respondents) categorized as fair; and 29.09% (32 respondents) categorized as good. Therefore, it is interpreted that the self determination of the vocational school's principals are in the category of "fair". Although it is concluded that generally the vocational school's principals are in the "fair" category of the self determination, it is not to ignore the other 27.27% of the principals whose self determination are still in the category of poor, and the other 8.18% are in the category of very poor. These scores indicate that the principals still have to refine their self determination in order to possess even stronger self determination. The correlation between indicators towards the total score is described as in the following: 1) "being capable to direct their knowledge, effort, and attention" obtained 0.86; 2) "refining their diligence" was scored 0.93; 3) "having solutions to problems" was scored 0.91; 4) "being capable to control themselves" obtained 0.93; 5) "being determined to succeed" was scored 0.94; and 6) "appreciating other people's contribution to achieving the organizational goals" was scored 0.77. Of all six indicators of self determination as described above, the correlation presented by the indicator of being determined to work hard has the highest score of all towards the total score, which is 0.94, while the indicator of appreciating other people's contribution has the lowest correlation towards the total score, which is 0.77.

The average score for the indicators of self determination variable of the vocational school's principals is at 3,380. The findings of this study suggest that the principals need to refine their self determination by many ways, such as by taking effort to direct their knowledge, effort, and attention in conducting the school supervision. It is also important that the principals refine their diligence in solving problems by initiating ideas, enhancing their determination to succeed, and appreciating other people's contribution in achieving the organizational goals. Meanwhile, among all six indicators for self determination, the indicator of being determined to succeed has the lowest score of 3.26, whereas the indicator of being capable to control themselves is in the highest with 3.50. These findings indicate that it is necessary to enhance more the determination to achieve success by developing the attitude of problem solving in school, not putting off any tasks, and appreciating other people's contribution to their achievement during the process of enhancing the teaching and learning quality in school

## Conclusion

Based on the data analysis of the present study, it is concluded that, as follows.

- The self determination of the vocational school's principals in Medan is mostly within the category of fair. The correlation of each indicator towards the total score is described as follows: 1) "being capable to direct their knowledge, effort, and attention" obtained 0.86; 2) "refining their diligence" was scored 0.93; 3) "having solutions to problems" was scored 0.91; 4) "being capable to control themselves" obtained 0.93; 5) "being determined to succeed" was scored 0.94; and 6) "appreciating other people's contribution to achieving the organizational goals" was scored 0.77. According to these scores, the correlation for the indicator of being determined to succeed is the highest score towards the total score, while the indicator of appreciating other people's contribution has the lowest correlation towards the total score.
- The factors which contribute to the principals' self determination are: 1) they are determined to work hard until they achieve the goals, 2) they are highly initiative in solving problems, 3) they are humble, 4) they can control and manage all things for completing their duty, and 5) they can cope with stress.

## Suggestions

On the basis of the aforementioned conclusions, the following suggestions are proposed.

- Attempts can be made by the vocational school's principals in order to enhance their self determination especially in enhancing their graduates' competences by directing their knowledge, effort, and attention in conducting the school supervision. The result of this supervision should be later followed by refining the teaching and learning process, maintaining the media and infrastructure for practical work and laboratory or workshop, improving the teachers' competences as well as the learning atmosphere in the classes.
- It is recommended that the principals refine their diligence in solving problems by initiating new ideas, enhancing their determination to achieve success and appreciating other people's contribution in the achievement of the organizational goals.
- It is suggested that the principals enhance the personality trait, which is self determination, by getting themselves accustomed to work hard by developing the attitude of problem solving in the school, not putting off any tasks, and appreciating other people's contribution in the achievement during the attempt of enhancing the graduates' competences.

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