



Strategies of the Principal in Establishing Partnerships with Stakeholders at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan in 2023

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Abstract: *The aim of this research is to describe the principal's strategy in collaborating with partners at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative research method with a case study research design approach. Data collection was carried out using survey questionnaire techniques, observation, interviews and documentation. The results of this research describe the principal's strategy in establishing cooperation with partners at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan by carrying out: planning cooperation, organizing cooperation, implementing cooperation, and evaluating cooperation and also the factors that influence the implementation of cooperation with partners as well as obstacles in collaborate with partners. This research concludes that the strategy of the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan to collaborate with partners is to obtain partners who suit the needs of each skills program, and recruit graduates to be able to work at the collaboration partner's location. Factors that can influence the implementation of collaboration with partners at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, namely the existence of collaborative relationships with the business world and the industrial world, the school can use DU/DI facilities, the existence of student discipline when carrying out work or internship programs, student competency increases, students gain experience working at partner sites and internship sites. Obstacles in collaborating with partners at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan include the difficulty of finding partners who suit the school's needs, the partner's distance is too far, the school's demands for partners are not in line with, and the partner's demands are too high, so the school cannot continue the partnership.*

Keywords: Principal; Partnerships; Stakeholders.

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Introduction

A school is an educational institution with various interconnected dimensions that support and enhance the teaching and learning process aimed at improving quality and developing students' potential. A quality school does not emerge merely from having complete facilities or resources. Instead, a quality school must be created, planned, and implemented effectively.

To establish a quality educational institution, effective leadership is essential for guiding the school. Within an educational institution, the principal holds the highest position and plays a crucial role in the organization. Therefore, the principal's leadership is a decisive factor in the educational process within the school. Enhancing the quality of a school requires the principal's leadership in the educational institution. Without leadership, the educational process, including teaching and learning, will not be effective. A leader designs the tasks and mechanisms supported by staff who perform their duties according to their skills and expertise. Thus, the principal's role is vital for planning, shaping, and directing the school community.

The principal is the highest leader with significant influence over the management of the school. All educational activities within the school are determined by the policies implemented by the school leader to achieve the planned targets. According to Government Regulation No. 28 of 1990, Article 12, Paragraph 1: "The principal is responsible for organizing educational activities, school administration, the development of educational personnel, and the utilization and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure.

The principal, as an educational leader, is entrusted with the authority and confidence of the school community to lead and manage an educational institution. A principal with professional leadership will effectively manage the needs of the educational institution in accordance with the rapid advancements of the times. Effective school management requires strategic planning to ensure that the goals set by the institution are achieved as expected. A strategy is a plan developed by an organizational leader to reach specific objectives. Without a strategy, programs are unlikely to run smoothly. Strategy represents the initial step that a leader must possess to achieve goals. Leadership relies not only on one's own

abilities but also on having a well-defined strategy for effective management.

Strategy integrates all components within an organization, encompassing all essential aspects of the organization. Therefore, determining a strategy requires a high level of commitment from the organization, with the team responsible for advancing the strategy towards achieving the final outcomes. In educational success, particularly in Vocational High Schools (SMKs), there is a vision to produce graduates who are job-ready, skilled, intelligent, and capable of developing themselves to compete in the global market. According to Government Regulation No. 29 of 1990, Article 1, Paragraph 3, Vocational High Schools (SMKs) are educational institutions designed to provide practical learning experiences and emphasize the development of students' abilities and skills to enable them to work effectively after completing their education. In vocational education, students receive training and education both in training centers and in the workplace to gain experience in their field of study. This demonstrates that vocational education aims to enhance knowledge, personality, moral character, and skills for self-sufficiency and further education in their chosen field. Given the rapid advancement of science and technology, vocational education must respond appropriately, necessitating collaboration between schools and the industry to implement various innovative programs. This includes both practical fieldwork and the preparation of facilities and infrastructure by the schools.

Collaboration between vocational schools and the business and industrial sectors is essential due to the rapid technological advancements in these fields. Without such partnerships, schools risk falling behind compared to vocational institutions that have established these connections. The purpose of this collaboration is to facilitate internship programs for students, acquire new knowledge and skills, and accelerate the adjustment period for graduates entering the workforce. Through these partnerships, schools can more effectively improve their quality and provide students with work experience to master standardized productive competencies, internalize industry-oriented attitudes, values, and culture, and cultivate a critical, productive, and competitive work ethic. To establish cooperation, the school principal is expected to have public speaking or communication skills and good relations with the school community, especially school partners, seeing the importance of the principal's role in realizing the school's vision, mission and goals. This is because the role of the principal as a key driver determines the direction of policies. From the above explanation, the researcher concludes that schools, as institutions where teaching and learning activities take place, have various interrelated dimensions. Within the educational institution, the principal plays a crucial role in developing a high-quality educational organization. In vocational schools, it is expected that leaders will have good communication and relationships to establish partnerships with the business and industrial sectors. Such collaborations enable vocational schools to implement fieldwork programs that offer significant benefits to students, ensuring that the programs planned by the principal meet their intended objectives. Based on the information found, the researcher notes that the accreditation status of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan is currently rated as C. The accreditation indicates that the school is not yet as outstanding as other schools in Aceh Singkil Regency. Therefore, collaboration between the school and the business and industrial sectors is essential to support the school in improving its

quality. As the highest leader within the institution, the principal has a significant responsibility to continually improve school management. A school can be considered high-quality if it holds excellent accreditation, as school accreditation is one of the measures to determine the quality of education.

From the results of a survey that researchers conducted on several alumni of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, where the researchers created a Google form https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdpZb_zdGRvNancCijWoR9t2WITF84MI6cFL7EAYjQKwZ5ADA/viewform to find out how many graduates of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan are absorbed in working at internships.

The survey results revealed that out of 45 alumni from SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, 37 alumni were not absorbed for employment at their internship sites, while 8 alumni confirmed that they were employed at their internship locations. Currently, SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan in Aceh Singkil Regency has initiated collaborations with several companies specializing in application and software development in Medan City. The principal of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan has established partnerships with PT. Literasia Edutekno Digital, PT. Kodinglab Integrasi Indonesia, PT. Xtend Indonesia, PT. Dream Arch, and Indigo Space Medan (Indigo-Telkom). The collaboration between SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan and these companies includes several points: aligning the school's curriculum, employing the best graduates from SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, inviting guest teachers from partner companies, and enhancing teacher quality or providing opportunities for teachers to intern at partner companies.

Based on the findings, the researcher assumes that the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan has been and continues to make efforts to establish partnerships with various companies. This commitment can be observed in the principal's initiatives to implement collaboration programs with companies willing to work with the school. Such partnerships are expected to assist the principal in improving the school's accreditation. According to Indonesian Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010, Articles 164, Paragraphs 3 and 4, the benefits of establishing partnerships include enhancing educational quality, expanding partnership networks, organizing international or locally-based excellence programs, educator and staff exchanges, student exchanges, resource utilization, organizing joint programs, extracurricular activities, and other necessary collaborations.

Based on the research context, it can be concluded that collaboration between vocational schools and the business and industrial sectors significantly supports students in completing their education. Therefore, establishing partnerships between schools and the workforce is crucial for improving graduate employability. Through such collaborations, schools can better manage their operations and enhance their accreditation status. Consequently, the author is interested in conducting research titled "Strategies of the Principal in Establishing Partnerships at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan in 2023."

Research Methods

The method employed in this research involves a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study research design. Case study research is an in-depth investigation of an individual, a group, an organization, a program, or similar entities over a specific period.

The goal is to obtain a comprehensive and detailed description of the entity, which is then analyzed to generate theories. The data analysis technique, following Miles and Huberman's model, involves three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. This research will be conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan. The research timeline includes the following activities: needs analysis starting in April 2023, proposal preparation, data collection, and report writing, extending through September 2023. To collect data in the field and address the research focus, the researcher will use data collection methods including surveys, observations, interviews, and documentation.

Result and Discussion

Based on the research findings that have been carried out, data is obtained that the principal's strategy in establishing collaboration with partners is carried out by planning collaboration, organizing collaboration, implementing collaboration, and evaluating collaboration as follows:

Collaboration planning

Collaboration planning is the initial phase in the management of partnerships. This stage involves developing a program that serves as a guideline for executing the previously established activities. Specifically, when establishing partnerships with external stakeholders, it is crucial for school principals, educators, and administrative staff to engage in thorough collaboration planning. Proper planning facilitates the implementation of the agreed-upon programs. Collaboration with partners is conducted in accordance with policies set forth by the government. During meetings, the principal, along with educators and administrative staff, devises a program for collaboration with partners. This program typically includes curriculum alignment between vocational schools and businesses/industries, workforce recruitment, internships (industrial practice), inviting guest lecturers, and procuring equipment from partners. However, in the collaboration planning conducted by the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, the researcher did not find any documented meeting agendas related to the planning of school partnerships.

Organizing cooperation

Organizing collaboration is the second stage in the management of partnerships. This stage involves creating a structure for task division and authority allocation among members within an organization. In any organization or educational institution, organizing is a familiar process. It involves establishing, categorizing, and managing various programs that were previously planned within the organization. By clearly defining roles and responsibilities, the work programs can proceed according to the specific duties of each member.

At SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, the principal organizes collaboration by forming a partnership team. Each department has its own team responsible for establishing partnerships with external entities. However, the researcher did not find any official documentation (such as decrees) regarding the formation of these partnership teams for each department at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan.

Implementation of cooperation

The implementation of collaboration is the third stage in the management of partnerships. This stage occurs after the

organization of tasks and responsibilities assigned to each individual within an organization. The implementation of collaboration involves a series of activities carried out by the organization, supported by policies and resources available to achieve the goals set out in the pre-established collaboration plan.

At SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, collaboration implementation involves activities such as exploring potential partners (DU/DI), communicating with DU/DI, aligning the curriculum with DU/DI, adjusting department needs to DU/DI, matching DU/DI needs with the school's conditions, conducting industrial practice, inviting guest teachers from partners, and formalizing agreements through written Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with DU/DI. The researcher found official documents regarding the school's collaboration with DU/DI in the field. However, there were no documents found detailing the curriculum alignment between the school and its partners.

Collaboration evaluation

The evaluation of collaboration is the final stage in the management of partnerships. It is crucial to evaluate the implementation of previously planned programs. All collaborative programs must be monitored and revised continuously to achieve effective results and improvements in future collaborations. At SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, the school principal has conducted evaluations of collaborations with partners. These evaluations were carried out through meetings with partners, focusing on improving collaborative programs, resolving issues, and establishing new agreements. However, the researcher did not find documents related to the evaluation of collaborations or records of meetings between the school and its partners during the evaluation process.

Factors influencing the implementation of partnerships at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan include the existing collaboration between the school and the business/industrial sectors (DU/DI), the utilization of facilities provided by partners, student discipline during internships or industrial practice at partner locations, increased student competencies, and the valuable work experience gained from these practices. Challenges faced by SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan in establishing partnerships include difficulty in finding suitable partners, long distances to partners, misalignment between the school's demands and the partner's expectations, and excessively high demands from partners, which prevent the continuation of collaborations.

The research findings indicate that the strategies employed by the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan for forming partnerships align with the management functions, including the implementation steps of planning, organizing, executing, and evaluating collaborations. This suggests that the principal's strategy aims to secure partners that meet the needs of each vocational program and recruit graduates for employment with these partners. Factors affecting the implementation of partnerships include the established relationship with the business and industrial sectors, the use of DU/DI facilities, student discipline during internships, increased student competencies, and the acquisition of work experience at partner locations. Challenges include finding suitable partners, long distances, misalignment of expectations, and high demands from partners, all of which hinder the continuation of collaborations.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings and discussion outlined in the previous chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn:

At SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan, prior to establishing collaborations with partners, the school principal and teachers conduct meetings to plan partnerships with the business and industrial sectors. Before forming partnerships with business/industry (DU/DI), the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan forms a team to identify potential partners willing to collaborate with the school. This team consists of educators and administrative staff. The principal uses available government resources to establish partnerships, following the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) prepared by the government. To formalize agreements, the principal drafts a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the partnership with DU/DI.

Evaluation of collaborations with DU/DI has been conducted by the principal at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan. The benefits obtained from these collaborations include exposure to technology used by DU/DI, access to internship placements for students, and more affordable procurement of equipment through partner organizations. Factors influencing the implementation of partnerships at SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan include the established relationships with DU/DI, the use of partner facilities, student discipline, increased student competencies, work experience gained at partner locations, and internships. Challenges faced include difficulties in finding suitable partners, long distances to partners, and misalignment between the school's demands and the partners' expectations.

Recommendation

Based on the discussion and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Establishment of a Permanent Public Relations Team: The principal of SMK Negeri 1 Simpang Kanan should consider forming a permanent public relations team to manage ongoing partnerships with external collaborators. A dedicated public relations team can support the principal in implementing policies mandated by the Ministry of Education, which require schools to establish collaborations with business and industry partners (DU/DI). Given the multifaceted responsibilities of a principal, including resource management and administrative duties, a public relations team would facilitate more effective organization and management of these partnerships.
2. Alignment of Student Skills with DU/DI Needs: As a vocational school engaging in partnerships with both local and external DU/DI entities, the principal should ensure that students' skills align with the needs of DU/DI, starting with

local partners. Since vocational school graduates are prepared for the workforce, it is crucial that they possess competencies and skills relevant to the local job market to enhance their employability within the regional DU/DI sector.

3. Addressing Challenges in Collaboration: To address challenges encountered in establishing and maintaining partnerships, the principal should address issues through regular meetings with partners, maintain open communication, and renegotiate written agreements as necessary. This approach will help resolve problems effectively and sustain productive collaborations.
4. Documentation of School Programs: The principal should document all school programs and activities to maintain a comprehensive archive of school operations. Proper documentation serves as a valuable record for future reference and accountability.
5. Future Research Directions: The findings of this study should serve as a reference for further research. Future studies are encouraged to explore more in-depth strategies employed by principals in forming and managing partnerships with collaborators.

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