

# Principal Leadership Strategy in Troubled Times: Studies at SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo

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## ABSTRACT

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The objectives of this study are (1) to find the challenges faced by SMK in difficult times to transform into advanced vocational schools; (2) analyze the principal's leadership strategy in transforming schools in difficult times into advanced vocational schools; (3) analyze the leadership character of the head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo in transforming schools in difficult times into advanced vocational schools. The research uses a qualitative approach with a best practice model. The research was conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo. Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interview techniques. Data analysis was carried out using the thematic approach of Braun and Clark model analysis which includes six steps, namely becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, review themes, define themes and write up. The results showed that (1) the conditions in the difficult times experienced by SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi were limited teachers, small and unpaid students, financial limitations, limited facilities and infrastructure, poor school reputation and competition with other schools. (2) The leadership strategy implemented by the Head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi in transforming schools in difficult times into advanced schools is carried out by increasing the number of students, building networks with various parties and all stakeholders, improving the quality and capacity of teachers,

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improving the image of the school or rebranding to change the image of the school and improving facilities and infrastructure . (3) The leadership character of the head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi in transforming a school in difficult times into an advanced school is reflected in the thinking behavior of future oriented, creative, innovative and communicative, optimistic and daring to take risks, hard work, never give up and motivate, fast, charismatic and exemplary, empathy, observant of opportunities, religious and have a sense of ownership.

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## Introduction

Vocational education has developed since the beginning of human development from prehistoric times to the present. Vocational education carried out by humans in prehistoric times was when parents taught their children to hunt animals and collect plants and fruits as food ingredients (Bukit, 2014). Vocational education as a new system was developed since the second world war. The history of technical and vocational education in Indonesia began with the establishment of the Ambacht School van Soerabaja in 1853 by the private sector, namely the Dutch colonial (Amin et al., 2015).

The number of vocational schools in Indonesia in 2017 was 13,710 units, consisting of 9,802 units of private vocational schools and 3,434 public vocational schools. In 2019 the number of vocational schools in Indonesia was 14,327 units, namely 10,703 units (74.56%) private and the rest public (Kemendikbud, 2019). The number of students in private vocational schools is 2,823,469 or 56.36% of the 5,009,265 vocational high school students in Indonesia (Kemendikbud, 2019). The data above shows that more than half of Indonesia's prospective productive workforce is educated at private vocational schools. This means that private vocational schools contribute significantly to education in Indonesia. The data above shows that the development of private vocational schools is faster than public vocational schools, especially in the last three years. This is in accordance with the government's strategic plan to realize the target percentage of SMA and SMK of 30:70 by 2025 (Ministry of National Education, 2005). The development of the quantity of private vocational schools in Indonesia in recent years is quite proud, but on the other hand, when viewed from the quality side, there are still many private vocational schools that are not good. The development of quantity that is not balanced with improving quality is what is feared to be a contributor to unemployment from SMK graduates (Nasution, 2018).

Minister of Education and Culture (Mendikbud) 2017-2019, Muhadjir Effendy said that 6000

private vocational schools are still not good, and the poor schools will be given the choice of whether to keep the road or stop (Tanjung, 2019). This is in terms of accreditation, infrastructure, teacher capacity and the number of students. This means that there are more poor private vocational schools than good ones. Director of SMK Development, Bakrun revealed that the Minister of Education and Culture will merge or merge small vocational schools because the average private vocational school has less than 100 students and has inadequate facilities and teachers (Awaliyah, 2019). This shows that many private vocational schools have problems both in terms of facilities and teachers. The gap between schools, the quality of input, the quality of teachers, the quality of infrastructure, teacher welfare, government support, parental support, the reputation of schools are also problems faced by private vocational schools (Setiawan et al., 2010).

The biggest problem for private vocational schools is infrastructure, this is because school facilities and infrastructure affect teacher performance and all school activities, both academic and non-academic, (Djatkiko, 2006). Pre-employment facilities also affect student learning achievement, the better the facilities, the better the student's learning achievement (Inayah et al., 2013). Infrastructure also has a contribution to student learning satisfaction (Puspayani & Nyoman, 2012). However, almost all small private vocational schools experience obstacles in fulfilling school infrastructure, especially media for student practice (Safriyadi, 2017). Facilities and infrastructure also have a significant effect on school accreditation, so SMK must have a strategy to meet school facilities and infrastructure in accordance with standards and needs (Rahmadia, p. 14). One of the quality indicators of SMK in Indonesia is the value of school accreditation. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture number 34 of 2018, a good vocational school must meet eight standards, namely graduate competency standards, content standards, learning process standards, educational assessment standards, standards for educators and education personnel, standards for facilities and infrastructure, management management standards, operating cost standards (Kemendikbud, 2018)

Furthermore, the advance or retreat of the school is influenced by the leadership of the principal. Effective principal leadership will make the school develop well (Heriyanti, 2017). In school management, the most dominant and influential element is the principal (Hedarman & Rohim, 2008). The strength of the principal is one of the keys to the success of educational institutions in achieving, maintaining and improving school performance (Usman, 2014). An effective leader is not based on a specific human trait but lies in how far a leader's nature can overcome the circumstances it faces (Usman, 2014). "The principal's leadership determines the perpetuation and existence of the school in times of crisis. In times of crisis, for the benefit of the school, the principal must be willing and courageous to sacrifice, both in the form of thoughts, property, objects and time for the

betterment of the school" (Danim & Suparno, 2009, p. 78). The principal's leadership model includes several types, including democratic, authoritarian, participatory, situational, transactional, transformational (Usman, 2014). (Danim & Suparno, 2009) says that transformational leadership is appropriate when implemented in a school that is going through a time of crisis to transform it into a better school.

The results of the study (Rustamaji et al., 2017) show that the transformational leadership style of the principal has a positive and significant effect on the performance of teachers and employees of private vocational schools in East Jakarta. The research supports that the principal's leadership style has a significant influence on school development.

The principal has an important role in advancing the school, so the principal must have a surefire strategy to lead his school so that it can develop well. The principal's leadership strategy is a plan that a person has with the maximum possible ability to carry out their duties (Wahjosumidjo, 2010). School principals must also have a strategy in dealing with various kinds of changes in government policy. The existence of a merger policy from small SMK-SMK by the government is a signpost for the head of a small SMK to have a surefire strategy in developing the schools he leads so as not to be affected by this merger policy (Awaliyah, 2019). There must be a formulation or formulation to be used as a reference to carry out many breakthroughs for SMK heads in facing various challenges and transforming schools from small and difficult schools into superior schools.

A private vocational school that has successfully transformed from a difficult time to an advanced school is SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi, Purworejo Regency. SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo was established in 2003 but has only seen a fairly rapid development in the last five years. Within 16 years, it has experienced three principal changes. A preliminary study of researchers with an interview with one of the foundation chairmen of the school said that in the past the school was difficult to advance but since it was led by the principal now it has experienced a significant increase. The increase experienced by this school includes the number of students, the addition of majors, the improvement of teacher qualifications, the construction of buildings and cooperation with several companies is also carried out.

Based on the explanation and explanation above, there is a need for research on the leadership styles and strategies of private principals in transforming from a school in small, undesirable and slumped conditions to a superior and quality school. Thus, researchers see the need to conduct research on the principal's leadership strategy in difficult times by studying at SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi, Purworejo Regency, Central Java. It is hoped that by studying the strategy, character, leadership style of the head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi, Purworejo Regency, it can be a reference to develop the school for the better.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative approach that tends to aim to understand the meaning of the case study on leadership strategies applied by the head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo in transforming small schools into superior schools. The research data was taken from the results of interviews, observation data, and documentation data.

Furthermore, the data analysis methods that researchers use are based on *Braun and Clarke* which include:

1. *Becoming familiar with the data*

This stage aims to understand the entire content of the data on the principal's leadership strategy in difficult times. At this stage, the researcher can make a note and get a preliminary impression of the aforementioned data.

2. *Generate initial codes*

It further organizes the data on the principal's leadership strategy in difficult times in a meaningful and systematic way according to the details of the categories.

3. *Search for themes*

Theme patterns that describe the principal's leadership strategies in difficult times should be significant and interesting.

4. *Review themes*

At this stage the most important thing is to review, modify and develop the initial theme that has been identified in the previous step which is about the principal's leadership strategy in difficult times.

5. *Define themes*

This stage is the final refinement of the theme and the goal is to identify the essence of each theme about the principal's leadership strategy in difficult times.

6. *Write up*

The last stage is to present the results of research on the principal's leadership strategy in difficult times in the form of a coherent and good report.

## Result and Discussion

Planning in managing the principal's leadership strategy during a difficult time at SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo to transform towards an advanced school is carried out by reviewing the challenges faced by the principal such as limited human resources, small number of students, financial limitations, limited infrastructure, poor school reputation, and competition with other schools.

Furthermore, the challenges mentioned above, were reviewed and then the Head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo triggered and moved a character-based strategic decision.

### **The principal's strategy to transform schools in difficult times into advanced schools**

The pattern in transforming SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi from a school in difficult times to an advanced school, the principal has several effective strategies used including:

1. Building a Network
2. Change the school's image or *rebrand*
3. improving infrastructure
4. improving school finances

The pattern of a good principal strategy in improving the quality of education is to establish good cooperation with committees, parents, alumni and related government institutions.

The principal's strategy in transforming the Purwodadi Muhammadiyah Vocational School is in harmony with the results of research conducted by (Yulmawati, 2016) which states that a good principal's strategy in improving the quality of education is to establish good cooperation with committees, student guardians, alumni and government agencies that related. Similar research conducted by (Hari, 2009) also revealed that school principals who have succeeded in improving the quality of education ideally have the ability to establish good relationships with stakeholders.

Based on some of the strategies mentioned above, being able to transform SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo into an advanced school, this is blinded by SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi being able to get a central government program, namely from the Directorate of SMK with programs in the form of SMK COE and PK. In addition, it is followed by a matching program with an industry that has a value of 2.7 billion rupiah. The principal's ability to negotiate with industry was able to get a matching of 2.7 billion rupiah. Where that score is the highest score of all vocational schools that get the program. Where other schools only get 500 million to 1.1 billion rupiah at most, SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo is able to get 2.7 billion rupiah. This achievement was obtained because of the shrewdness of the principle in applying accurate strategies both with the industrial world and the SMK directorate.

This is in line with research conducted by (David and Drysdale, 2020) which states that school principals in facing times of crisis and uncertain change must be able to navigate and direct the schools they lead to continue to survive and change for the better. These conditions require school principals to always be able to deal with these problems properly so that the school can develop and progress.

### **Leadership character of the Head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo**

The leadership character of the head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo includes:

1. thinking *future oriented*, creative, innovative and communicative.
2. optimistic and dare to take risks.
3. hard work, unyielding and motivating, fast.
4. charismatic and exemplary, empathetic, observant of seizing opportunities.
5. religious and have a *sense of ownership*.

Through the leadership character mentioned above, success can be achieved and able to change the condition of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi Purworejo which was previously in a difficult time to become an advanced and competitive school in Purworejo Regency.

This is in line with the statement (Mulyasa, 2017) that a person's leadership is closely related to personality, and the personality of the principal as a leader will be reflected in the following traits as honest, confident, responsible, willing to take risks and decisions, big-hearted, and emotionally stable and exemplary

### **Conclusion**

Based on the problems, research objectives, results and discussions that have been submitted, it can be concluded that the leadership strategy applied by the Head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi in transforming schools in difficult times into advanced schools is carried out in the form of, increasing the number of students, building networks with various parties and all stakeholders, improve the quality and capacity of teachers, improve the image of the school or rebranding to change the image of the school and improve facilities and infrastructure.

Furthermore, regarding the leadership of the head of SMK Muhammadiyah Purwodadi in transforming schools in difficult times into advanced schools, it is reflected in the thinking behavior of future oriented, creative, innovative and communicative, optimistic and daring to take risks, hard work, unyielding and motivating, fast, charismatic and exemplary, empathetic, observant of opportunities, religious and have a sense of ownership.

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