

Emphasising Managerial Skills and Training Areas: A Study on Initial Managerial Skills of Aspiring Principals in Indonesia

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This qualitative research explores managerial skills of a group of 78 Indonesian aspiring principals and identifies areas that need to be emphasised in the principal preparation training. A test consisting of 19 questions was constructed to examine the levels of managerial skills of the aspiring principals. More than half of aspiring principals in Indonesia are female, but their managerial skills are lower than those of their male colleagues. Therefore, they should be more motivated and equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills before training. The 41-50 year old age group is recommended for principal preparation training. Aspiring principals in this group demonstrated higher managerial skills than other age groups. In general, all areas of managerial skills should be improved, but the three weakest areas that should be emphasised are monitoring and evaluation, ICT utilisation, and management of school assets. The implications of the findings on managerial skills are discussed.

Key words: Managerial Skills, Training Areas, Aspiring Principle

Introduction

The importance of managerial skills has been confirmed by many studies. Slater and Nelson (2013) state that a school principal has two important roles: as the instructional leader and as the manager of the school. Smith, Sparks and Thurlow (2001) argue that no principal is characterised by certain roles; good principals play different roles in different circumstances. However, Morris (cited in Sharp, 2003, p.9) states that “although instructional leadership remains the central expectation of the principalship, the scope of the school-site management role has grown substantially over the years.”



As a consequence, the nature and aims to optimise managerial skills has changed significantly. Jahari (2020), Holten (2015), and Sulistyorini (2001) proved that there was a strong relationship between principals' managerial skills and teachers' performance, while Sulfiati (2013) also found that managerial skills significantly contribute to teachers' motivation. Botha (2015) argues that principals' managerial competence is a key for teacher professionalism.

To realise this aspiration, trainee principals should be equipped with managerial competencies. Training institutions should pay special attention to how these skills can be emphasised and transformed in principal preparation training programs, in order to produce graduates who can manage schools efficiently.

The Importance of Managerial Skills

Sharp (2003) explains that required principals' competencies in the 1980s related to instructional leadership. The principal label was attached to professors or outstanding teachers, because at that time schools had to be led by the most talented people. By the early 1900s, principals were playing different roles as school managers and instructional leaders, and were responsible for school/community relations. Drake and Roe (1999) found that the baby boom years meant the instructional role of principals diminished, because principals spent their time recruiting new teachers, planning new buildings and organising the large increase in students.

The two functions, instructional leadership and school management, are both important and neither can be ignored. But when many principals spend their day more on the instructional function, they may neglect the managerial function. This was proven by The National Association of Secondary School Principals in Virginia when they asked principals to rank what activities they would like to do, and what they actually do in their daily activities. Program development was ranked the first activity which principals wished to do, while school management ranked first in the actual activity undertaken, followed by personnel management, student activities and student behaviour in second, third, and fourth places (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990).

Farah (2013) used nine self-assessments to identify nine tasks from the nine alphabet letters that the word principal consists of. The nine tasks are;

- P- Plans school activities and provides guidelines,
- R- Respects the wishes of the school population, replies their requirements and listens,
- I- Indicates and commands school population and never dictates orders,
- N- Networks to the school population and makes timely contacts,
- C- Consults with school population and conducts constructive changes,
- I- Instructs school population and accepts new ideas,

- P- Participates in school activities and encourages teamwork,
- A- Attracts school population and motivates them to learn and teach hard,
- L- Leads school population to the right direction and learns from them.

The nine tasks showed that from the first to the last task most of the tasks are in the managerial area. Farah (2013) concluded that principals' tasks are unique and require sufficient knowledge's and skills.

Another study on principals' competencies conducted by Mustamin and Yasin (2012) compared three regulations, Ministry of Education Malaysia; Florida Department of Education, and Ministry of National Education Indonesia. This study revealed that the competence of school principals is based on schools; teachers (staff); and students. Meanwhile, the paperwork of school principals are mostly school oriented, then teaching and learning oriented, and operational oriented (Mustamin & Yasin, 2012). The school principals' must have the ability and skill to play different roles to perform their jobs, in financial, material and human resource management, maintaining security and their student's academic performance (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000).

Lynch, et al. (2017) stated that internal school direction is generally managed by the school principal, consequently school leadership plays a pivotal role in the execution of positive educational change.

The shift in the focus of the role of principals from instructional leader to school manager means further discussion is required of what principals' duties are in terms of managerial competence. Mintzberg (cited in Rajadhyaksha, 2005), found that managerial competence is a series of interpersonal, informational, and decision-making abilities (Rajadhyaksha, 2005, pp. 47-56). The interpersonal skills include the ability to understand, mobilise and empower all stakeholders to achieve school goals, while informational skills include the ability to convey ideas, communicate, and use information and communication technology. Based on these two abilities, decision making is the ability to understand, move and empower all stakeholders (interpersonal skills) and that to convey ideas, communicate, and use information and communication technology (informational abilities).

Principals should have a clear vision, mission, organisational structure, and working methods. In order to achieve higher goals, they should have good cooperation with school stakeholders (Gurr, 2015). Good principals shape a positive school culture, which is built from the best practices of teachers, students and administration staff. They should understand how to influence, move, develop and empower teachers, students and administration staff, so that they can all move in one direction (Sybout, 1994).



Managerial Skills of Principals in Indonesia

Indonesia has large number of schools. The number of primary school in Indonesia is 148,244, junior high schools 38,960, and senior high schools 13,495 (<http://statistik.data.kemdikbud.go.id>). This means it is very challenging for the Indonesian government to improve principals' competencies. In the years prior to 2010, school principals in Indonesia were not required to complete any training programs. Since 2010, the government conducted a pilot project for a principal preparation training, to upgrade the skills of aspiring principals. A certificate of principalship is given to aspiring principals at the end of the program as proof that they have met specific leadership requirements before assuming the role of principalship. However, due to financial problems, just a small number of aspiring principals have been able to join the program (ACDP, 2016).

In Indonesia, newly appointed principals and aspiring ones are required to have good mastery of managerial skills. In the years prior to 2018, they were not required to have any managerial experience before appointment. However, a new regulation concerning principal preparation was introduced. The Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (2018) states that the requirements for being a school principal are as follows:

- Have a bachelor's degree.
- Have 5 years' teaching experience.
- Have a minimum III/c grade.
- Have teaching certification.
- Have managerial experience.
- Maximum of 56 years old on first appointment.

Since 2018, therefore, there has been a significant change, especially regarding the managerial experience requirement. If teachers have a master's degree, but do not have any managerial experience, they cannot apply to be a principal. Only those who meet all the requirements will pass the administrative selection, and will then undertake potential leadership assessment in the academic selection process.

Potential aspiring principals who meet the administrative and academic requirements then take part in principal preparation training (PPT) for 300 hours. This training aims to improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of aspiring principals in school management, supervision and entrepreneurship. The training consists of three phases: in-service learning 1; on-job learning; and in-service training 2. In-service learning 1 is face-to-face learning aimed at equipping trainees with managerial, supervisory and entrepreneurial competencies. On-job learning is an internship program in which the aspiring principals implement the theories learnt with senior principal guidance, and in-service learning 2 is face-to-face training involving the reporting of

portfolios and internship conducted by the trainees (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, 2018).

The Education Sector Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP) reviewed the quality and subject matter of PPT in Indonesia. Most respondents claimed that the quality of PPT was excellent, especially when compared to other training. The reasons given were that: 1) this training provided understanding and guidance on how to become a principal; 2) it was able improve the quality and competence of school principals; and 3) it helped school principals manage school administration appropriately. Moreover, according to PPT participants, the training materials provided at PPT were deemed to be 'relevant' or 'highly relevant'. In particular, between half to two thirds of respondents from vocational high schools considered PPT material to be 'highly relevant' (ACDP, 2016).

However, there was originally a wide gap between new requirements and the actual initial capacity of aspiring principals. Rosalina (2013) found that the managerial competence of principals in Padang Timur scored only 78.6%. Therefore, training and guidance from school supervisors was urgently needed. The ACDP study of 2013 also proved that the managerial skills of principals were low, with the ability to use ICT (Information and Communication Technology) for school administration and management ranking lowest (ACDP, 2013). Juwita and Saefudin (2017) conducted a study of 919 aspiring principals from ten provinces and 33 regencies who had participated in PPT in 2016. Their study found that their mean initial capacity in terms of managerial competence was 2.8 (between fair and good). The lowest indicators of managerial competency were the mastery of ICT and the implementation of monitoring and evaluation.

Study Objectives

Optimising managerial skills is a key to successful principalship. However, aspiring principals in Indonesia have insufficient managerial competencies before being appointed. The results of this study will help training organisers to develop training materials; education authorities to prepare teachers based on the new principal requirements; and aspiring principals to optimise their experience in school management before joining PPT. Therefore, the study aims to answer the following two research questions:

1. At what level are managerial skills of aspiring principals in Indonesia?
2. What areas need to be emphasised in principal preparation training in Indonesia?

Method

Research Paradigm, Study Population and Sampling Techniques

A qualitative research approach is used in this study as it is exploratory and flexible (Hartley, 2004). Other opinions suggest that the descriptive approach is a way of researching the status of a human group, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present (Nazir, 2011). Based on the above criteria, this descriptive study aims to define the managerial skills of aspiring principals in Indonesia and to identify aspects that need to be emphasised in principal preparation training (PPT).

The study population consisted of aspiring principals who joined PPT in Indonesia. From this population, based on the clustered random sampling technique, 78 trainees were chosen to be participants.

Pilot testing and Data Collection

The test consisted of 19 items derived from the managerial competence indicators in Regulation of The Minister of Education and Culture number 13 year 2007 (Table 1).

Table 1: List of Managerial Competence Indicators

No	Managerial Steps	Indicators
1	Planning	Be able to arrange school plans.
2	Implementation	Be able to manage school resources including teachers, staff, students, the school curriculum, finance, school assets, and school administration systems.
3	Evaluation	Be able to carry out monitoring and evaluation of school programs.

The 19 multiple choice item test was formulated to answer the research questions and was assessed by a validity and reliability test. The validity test showed that $r_{\text{count}} > r_{\text{table}}$ (0.3494), while the reliability test showed a very high score (0.947). Based on these results, a significant correlation value is shown by r_{table} or the correlation coefficient, which is higher than 0.3494. Therefore, the test items used in the study are valid.

For the main data collection, the participants sat a test before training. In the first part of the test, the participants filled the following variables:

1. Gender
2. Age

3. Length of teaching experience

Data analysis is a step-by-step process aimed at discovering and identifying patterns, to search for themes and categories, and to make sense from collected data sets (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). The test scores were input into SPSS, analysed item by item, and interpreted.

Results

In this section, the findings are presented following the data analysis. The two main topics resulting from the study are:

1. The managerial skills of aspiring principals in Indonesia.
2. The aspects which need to be emphasised in principal preparation training (PPT) in Indonesia.

Participant Profile

A total of 78 tests were taken by the PPT participants, and the resulting data presented a very interesting profile of them. Of the 78, 87% came from primary schools. The sample was composed of 56 female and 22 male participants (Table 2). Primary school female participants outnumbered males, while secondary school male participants outnumbered females. This finding is in line with those of Pang (2007) and Ng (2010), who established that there were more female aspirants in Hong Kong than male in the primary section, but more male aspirants in the secondary section.

Table 2: Gender of Aspiring Principals

Gender	Male	Female
Aspiring Principals	22 (28.2%)	56 (71.8%)

The participants were aged between 31 and over 55 years old. As shown in Table 3, more than half (59%) were between 51 and 55 years old, 35.9% were in 41-50 year old range, and 5.1% were 31-40 years of age .

The participants had worked as teachers for 10 to 38 years; the majority (32.1%) had between 26 and 30 years teaching experience. 20.5% of the participants had worked as principals for 10-15 years and 17.9% for 31-35 years (Table 4).

Table 3: Age of Aspiring Principals

Age	31-40 years old	41-50 years old	51-55 years old
Aspiring Principals	4 (5.1%)	28 (35.9%)	46 (59%)

Table 4: Teaching Experience of Aspiring Principals

Teaching Experience	Aspiring Principals (%)
10-15 years	16 (20.5%)
16-20 years	11 (14.1%)
21-25 years	10 (12.8%)
26-30 years	26 (32.1%)
31-35 years	14 (17.9%)
36-40 Years	1 (2.6%)

Finding 1: Managerial skills of aspiring principals in Indonesia

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for gender, indicating that there were more male participants than female ones ($M = 48.52$) and ($M = 46.72$), but there was no statistical difference between them.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	56	46.72	10.83
Male	22	48.52	12.37
Total	78	47.35	11.34

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics of the age groups and indicates that there were more participants in the 41-50 year old group than those in the 51-60 year old category ($M = 50.94$) and ($M = 46.07$), but there was no significant difference between them.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for age groups

Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
31-40 years old	3	37.07	14.32
41-50 years old	26	50.94	9.70
51-60 years old	49	46.07	11.55
Total	78	47.35	11.34

Finding 2: PPT Areas Which Need to be Emphasised

From the first finding, it is revealed that managerial skills of aspiring principals in Indonesia scored only 47 out of 100. Table 8 shows individual managerial skill areas. The principal trainees have more competence in the area of ‘student management’ (66%) than in the sixth area, ‘teachers’ qualifications and competencies’ (48%) and the third area, ‘curriculum development’ (44%). In the areas of ‘monitoring and evaluation’ (16%), ‘management of school assets’ (17%), and ‘ICT utilisation’ (18%), less competence was demonstrated. Consequently, these three areas should be emphasised in principal preparation training.

Table 8: Aspiring principals’ achievement in areas of managerial skills

Managerial skill area	1. School plan development			2. School finance management			3. Curriculum development		4. Student management	
Item test	Identify national standards	Interpret principles of school planning	Design a school plan	Interpret principles of school finance	Categorise a priority program	Develop a system of school finance	Identify 21st century needs	Design a model of curriculum development	Summarise the needs of student admission	Design an extra-curricular program
Percentage of correct answers	26%	40%	18%	23%	43%	31%	42%	46%	68%	63%
Percentage of managerial skill mastery	28%			32%			44%		66%	
Managerial skill indicator	5. Teachers' qualifications and competencies		6. Staff qualifications and competencies		7. Management of school assets		8. ICT utilisation	9. Monitoring & evaluation		
Item test	Identify teachers' qualifications	Assess teachers' competencies	Identify staff qualifications	Assess staff competencies	Identify needs	Compare priority needs	Design a model of instructional multimedia	Give a definition of M&E	Design an action plan	
Percentage of correct answers	2%	43%	52%	44%	26%	8%	18%	14%	18%	
Percentage of managerial skill mastery	23%		48%		17%		18%	16%		

Remarks

It is worth noting that the ANOVA analysis did not find any significant variances regarding gender, age groups, and years of experience. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture states that two of the requirements of aspiring principals is a minimum of 5 years’ teaching experience and a maximum age of 56 in the first year of appointment. However, no variations could be identified based on these two requirements.



Discussion

The data analysis showed that the average level of managerial skills of the aspiring principals in Indonesia was insufficient (46 out of 100). More than half of them were female, but they rated lower than their male colleagues. It was worth investigating how female participants could be motivated and encouraged to have the same managerial skills as the males.

Even though the ANOVA analysis found no significant variances regarding gender, the test mean score raised an interesting issue. Aspiring principals between the ages of 41–50 rated as rather high compared to the following group aged 51–60. This shows how managerial skills become stronger as age increases, although then diminishing in the 51-60 age group. This finding was similar to that of a study in Sweden. Swedish principals are generally younger and more inexperienced than those in other countries. For that reason, with increased age they become more competent and experienced (Nordholm, Arnqvist, & Nihlfors, 2020).

However, the skills of aspiring principals in Indonesia were in decline by the age of 51-60. In line with this result, the study conducted by Juwita and Siswandari (2018) revealed that most aspiring principals at primary school level were in the 51-60 age group, and that their managerial skills were the lowest among principals at other levels due to physical and psychological factors. The physical factor is closely related to health, which can affect the ability to perform principalship assignments. On the other hand, the psychological factor is closely related to intelligence, good memory, desire or motivation, concentration, and attention. These physical and psychological factors affect the managerial skills of trainee principals in the 51-60 age group. With increased age, the managerial skills of aspiring principals in Indonesia become stronger, but then weaken before retirement age (60 years old).

In terms of teaching experience, aspiring principals should have a minimum of 5 years' experience as teachers before being appointed. For comparison, the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2011), as cited by Gumus (2015), states that one of the requirements of being a school principal in the US is 1-3 years' teaching experience. In England, primary and secondary school principals should have previous experience as teachers or as middle managers (e.g. Key Stage Coordinator in primary schools, or Head of Department or Year in secondary schools), followed by experience in a school's Senior Management Team as a Deputy or Acting Head before becoming a school principal (Brundett, 2001).

Indonesian aspiring principals who join principal preparation training have a minimum of 10 years' and a maximum of 36 years experience as teachers. Becoming a school principal is Indonesian teachers' career path; good teachers should become good principals. The data analysis shows that the managerial skills of those with 26-30 years' teaching experience was



the highest. Managerial skills improve as the years of experience increase, but become weaker after 36-40 years.

Ng (2010) found that more than half (60%) of aspiring principals in Hong Kong had 16-25 years of experience, around one-third had 6-15 years and another third had 26 years of experience or more. However, many of them wanted to improve their skills by taking principal preparation training, especially in the areas of 'staff resources management', and 'external communication and connection to the outside world'.

Indonesian trainee principals have insufficient managerial capacity, scoring only 46 out of a maximum of 100. In the years prior to 2010, aspiring principals were not required to complete any training programs to improve their skills. Since 2010, a pilot project of principal preparation training has been implemented to certify that intending principals were ready to take up their post (ACDP, 2016). This could be a possible explanation for why aspiring principals in Indonesia have insufficient managerial skills. The studies conducted in the United States have revealed that a large number of principal preparation training programs select participants based on academic qualifications only, without further research on candidate skills (ACDP, 2016). Other evaluation studies have shown that particular attention should be paid to the role of school principals in terms of educational leadership, administration and management, and these are skill areas which should be emphasised in principal preparation training. Research evaluations in Australia, Europe and the United States have revealed that many principal preparation programs do not provide mentoring or coaching, to ensure the success of school principals in their assignments (Slater & Nelson, 2013).

In 2018, a new requirement was introduced related to Indonesian principal preparation training. Aspiring principals were required to have managerial experience (eg., as vice principal, head of library, head of laboratory, board of teacher association) in the two years before appointment (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018). This study was conducted in 2019, when the requirement had recently been applied. This could be another explanation why the intending principals had insufficient managerial competence.

Analysing in more depth what areas of managerial competence needs to be improved, the data analysis showed that these were 'monitoring and evaluation' (16%), 'management of school assets' (17%), and 'ICT utilisation' (18%). A related study conducted by Juwita and Saefudin (2017), which involved 919 aspiring principals from 33 districts in Indonesia, found that their managerial competence was in the moderate category. The lowest indicators were in monitoring and evaluation, and digital literacy. Juwita and Siswandari (2018) also found that around 98% of principal preparation training participants brought a laptop and had a smartphone connected to the internet. Nevertheless, not all of them were able to operate their



laptops and use them as a resource for learning. Both studies strengthen our finding that monitoring and evaluation, and ICT literacy are at a poor level.

In terms of management of school assets, the Indonesian aspiring principals only mastered 17% out of 100% of managerial skills mastery. They found difficulties in identifying needs, determining priority needs, and raising funds to manage the assets. According to Ng (2010), in Hong Kong, the capacity of aspiring principals was in the moderate category, only scoring 3.28 out of 6. The Pearson correlation test demonstrated the significant correlation between teaching experience and management of school assets. It suggested that aspiring principals with more years of teaching experience were more competent in the management of school assets ($r=0.321$, $p<0.01$) (Ng, 2010). Hong Kong also conducted a needs analysis aimed at understanding the areas of strengths and weaknesses for the development of aspiring principal skills. The results of this needs analysis were used to design training courses. After completing certain courses, aspiring principals should have a portfolio of career highlights in the form of reflective journals (Education Department, 2002) and this is an interesting strategy that Indonesia could adopt to improve the skills of aspiring principals.

Conclusion

In spite of no significant variances being found in the ANOVA analysis, the study has several significant implications for training providers who wish to improve the quality of principal preparation training, as well as for policy makers. More than half the aspiring principals in Indonesia are female, but their managerial skills are lower than those of their male colleagues. They should therefore be more motivated and equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills before training.

The 41-50 year old age group is recommended for principal preparation training. Those in this group demonstrated the highest managerial skills. In term of teaching experience, it is recommended that intending principals take PPT after 26-30 years of teaching experience. Managerial skills play an important role in determining the success of principalship, enabling aspiring principals to develop their school plans, manage their resources (teachers, students, staff, school assets, school finance), develop curriculums, utilise ICT, and undertake monitoring and evaluation of all school programs. A lack of managerial skills affects the quality of principalship and school effectiveness; the managerial capacity of aspiring principals in Indonesia was in the insufficient category. In general, all areas of managerial skills should be improved, but the three weakest areas should be emphasised, namely monitoring and evaluation, ICT utilisation, and management of school assets.



Needs analysis should be conducted with the aim of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of aspiring principal skills. The results of such analysis can become a baseline for designing principal preparation training in order to improve the areas of weakness.

Regarding the limitations of the study, it is important to highlight that the data were obtained in the Indonesian school context and with a limited number of respondents. Consequently, further study is encouraged in different contexts and involving more participants.

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