

# The Managerial Competence of School Principals in Improving the Quality of Secondary Education

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## Article Information

## Abstract

### Keywords:

Managerial Competence, Education Quality, State Middle School.

Improving student learning outcomes depends on teacher involvement in learning and the principal's good managerial competence in carrying out managerial functions in the school environment. This research aims to find information about the principal's plan to improve the quality of education in Banda Aceh City State Middle Schools and to describe the managerial function of school principals in enhancing the quality of education in Banda Aceh City State Middle Schools. This research uses a field research approach, namely research, where researchers go directly into the field to look for materials close to the truth. The study was conducted directly at State Middle Schools in Banda Aceh City, namely State Middle School 1 and State Middle School 12 in Banda Aceh City. The results of the research prove that the managerial competence possessed by school principals at SMPN 1 and SMPN 12 Banda Aceh City has so far been the basis or guide in the process of placing school principals, which is based on planning ability, organizing ability, ability to carry out school activities and ability to carry out supervision of every activity at school. School principals who have reliable managerial competence can influence progress in the educational environment, teacher performance, the effectiveness of school governance, and the achievement of better educational outcomes.

### Kata kunci:

Kompetensi Manajerial, Mutu Pendidikan, Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri.

### Abstrak.

*Peningkatan hasil belajar siswa sangat tergantung pada keterlibatan guru dalam pembelajaran, serta peran kompetensi manajerial kepala sekolah yang baik dalam menjalankan fungsi manajerial di lingkungan sekolah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan informasi tentang perencanaan kepala sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan di SMP Negeri Kota Banda Aceh serta mendeskripsikan fungsi manajerial kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu di SMP Negeri Kota Banda Aceh. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan (field research) yaitu suatu penelitian di mana peneliti langsung terjun ke lapangan untuk mencari bahan-bahan yang mendekati kebenaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan penelitian lapangan yaitu penelitian dimana peneliti terjun langsung ke lapangan untuk mencari bahan-bahan yang mendekati kebenaran. Penelitian dilakukan langsung di SMP Negeri yang ada di Kota Banda Aceh yaitu di SMP Negeri 1 dan SMP Negeri 12 di Kota Banda Aceh. Hasil penelitian membuktikan bahwa kompetensi manajerial yang dimiliki oleh kepala sekolah di SMPN 1 dan SMPN 12 Kota Banda Aceh, selama ini menjadi landasan atau pedoman dalam proses penempatan kepala sekolah yang didasarkan pada kemampuan perencanaan, kemampuan pengorganisasian, kemampuan melaksanakan kegiatan sekolah dan kemampuan melakukan pengawasan terhadap setiap kegiatan di sekolah. Kepala sekolah yang mempunyai kompetensi manajerial yang handal, maka dapat mempengaruhi kemajuan lingkungan pendidikan, kinerja guru.*

## INTRODUCTION

A principal school can be defined as someone who can lead an educational institution so that it can manage it optimally to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. As stated by (Lubis, S., 2023). Regarding the principal, the principal can be interpreted as the chairman or leader of an official organization or institution. Meanwhile, a school is an institution that is a place to receive and provide lessons to students. One of the standards that school principals must have is the competency dimension, which consists of personality standards, social standards, entrepreneurship, supervision, and managerial (Siahaan A. et al., 2023). These dimensions have been explained in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 13 of 2007 concerning Standards for School Principals/Madrasahs, which explains that to be appointed as a school principal/madrasah, a person must meet the standards of schools/madrasah principals that apply nationally. The development of managerial competence of secondary school principals in Aceh Province is a complex and multidimensional challenge. Some of the problems faced in this process include internal and external factors that are interrelated. One of the main problems in the development of managerial competence of school principals in Aceh is the limitation of resources, both financial and material.

Many schools in Aceh, especially in rural areas, face constraints in terms of limited budgets to conduct professional training and development. In addition, access to quality managerial training is also limited due to remote geographical locations and inadequate infrastructure. This results in school principals in these areas often lacking appropriate training to develop their managerial competencies. Efforts to improve the managerial competence of school principals are very important because many are starting to abandon managerial competence. This can be explained as bad for elementary/secondary schools if managerial competence is ignored (Mustari, M., 2023). Because later it will also affect the educational institution itself. Academic activities can be good if the principal can manage and carry out an educational activity in accordance with what is planned to achieve goals effectively and efficiently (Marwan, Ibrahim, 2023). An elementary school principal must strengthen his or her managerial competence to achieve this goal.

School principals are one of the components of education that affect the improvement of teacher performance. The principal is responsible for organizing educational activities, school administration, developing other academic staff, and utilizing and maintaining facilities and infrastructure. According to (Ibrahim, 2022 & Syarifah 2023), competence is a combination of mastery of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, which is reflected in the habit of thinking and acting on a task/job. Competence also refers to a person's ability to carry out the duties and responsibilities entrusted to him with good results. It is stated that competence is a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that school principals must have in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Competencies are all the basic knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that a principal must possess, which is reflected in habits of thinking and acting that are dynamic, evolving, and achievable and implemented at all times. The above capability specifications are intended so that school principals can carry out their duties properly and with quality. Thus, the competence of a school principal is the knowledge, skills, and basic values reflected by a school principal in the habit of thinking and acting consistently that allows him to be competent in making decisions regarding the provision, utilization, and improvement of the potential of existing resources to improve the quality of education. (Hidayat Sutisna, S., Rozak, A., et al, 2023).

Ministerial Regulation Number 40 of 2021 concerning the Assignment of Teachers as Principals of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The requirements to become a school principal are based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 40 of 2021 concerning the Assignment of Teachers as School Principals dated December 17, 2021, which are as follows: first; Teachers who have a minimum academic qualification of bachelor (S1) or D4; Have an educator certificate; Have a driving teacher certificate; Have a class III/b rank for teachers as civil servants; Have at least two years of managerial experience in educational units, educational organizations, and educational communities; Second; Have never been subjected to moderate and severe disciplinary punishment by the provisions of the law or have never been punished; 56 years when assigned as a school principal (Permendikbud Number 40 of 2021)

By having solid managerial competence, a school principal can play an important role as a leader in school management, including managing teachers and students, as well as mobilizing and developing all potentials in the school so that they can see positive changes in student learning outcomes. This managerial competency includes abilities in several aspects, such as planning, organizational development, leadership, resource management, public relations, and creating a school culture that is conducive and innovative for student learning (Marwan, 2023). The development of managerial competence of school principals requires strong policy support from local governments. However, often existing policies are not supportive or not implemented properly. For example, a managerial training program may have been designed, but its implementation did not run optimally due to a lack of coordination between the local government and the school. In addition, existing regulations are sometimes inflexible and do not adapt to the specific needs of regions such as Aceh which have specificities in terms of social and cultural aspects. This makes it difficult for school principals to adopt and adapt relevant policies to improve their competence. In a school, management is also needed to manage the school to achieve the goals that have been set. The management in question is a system that is built by planning, implementing, and monitoring resources to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. Schools must develop student management in order to succeed because students are subjects and objects in transforming the knowledge and skills needed both academically and environmentally (Syarifah, 2023).

Regarding education in schools, the quality of education always refers to the specifications of educational services, which are academic standards set by government guidelines. The quality of education will be better if all components of education support each other and work together. For example, the managerial competence of the principal is good. The development of managerial competence is also greatly influenced by the ability of the principal to collaborate and build a professional network. In Aceh, there is often a lack of collaboration between school principals, both at the local and national levels. This lack of professional networks results in a lack of knowledge exchange and best practices that can help improve managerial competence. In addition, school principals also need support from the wider education community to gain access to relevant resources, information, and training. To overcome the problems that are raised, a comprehensive and integrated strategy is needed. Local governments need to work with various parties to improve access and quality of managerial training for school principals, including through distance training programs or e-learning. More supportive policies and flexible regulations should be implemented to help principals develop their competencies effectively. The integration of cultural values and customs in competency development programs can help school principals strike a balance between

modern management and local wisdom and incentives need to be given to school principals who demonstrate effective and innovative leadership. Additionally, a continuous leadership development program can help improve motivation and performance. Establishing professional networks and discussion forums for principals can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, as well as provide the necessary support for competency development. In this case, the quality of the school can improve. However, this paper looks at the level of managerial competence of school principals. This can improve the quality of schools in terms of planning, implementation, organization, and assessment of the school activity process; All components of education support each other and work together. Actually, there has been previous research (Ellianis, E., 2023; Nuriah, et al, 2023; Mustari, 2023) however, this research is important to study because it contributes to strengthening the role of school principals in improving the competence of educators in schools, especially in secondary schools in the Aceh region with a clear differentiation because the leadership culture in the Aceh region is very different from other regions in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This research was carried out at SMP Negeri 1 and SMP Negeri 12 Banda Aceh City; This research is quantitative. The researcher made a questionnaire instrument in accordance with the theory that the researcher had chosen. Then the researcher selects several respondents who are in accordance with the criteria set by the researcher previously. In making criteria, the researcher made observations to the research location, both the first and second locations.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted a test of the validity and realism of the instrument by involving several respondents. After the researcher confirms that the instrument is valid and reliable, then the researcher distributes it to the informant to be filled in according to the existing reality. Furthermore, data will be collected and coded according to the problems explored and the purpose of the research is to find the leadership behavior of the principals of SMPN 1 and SMP N 12 Banda Aceh.

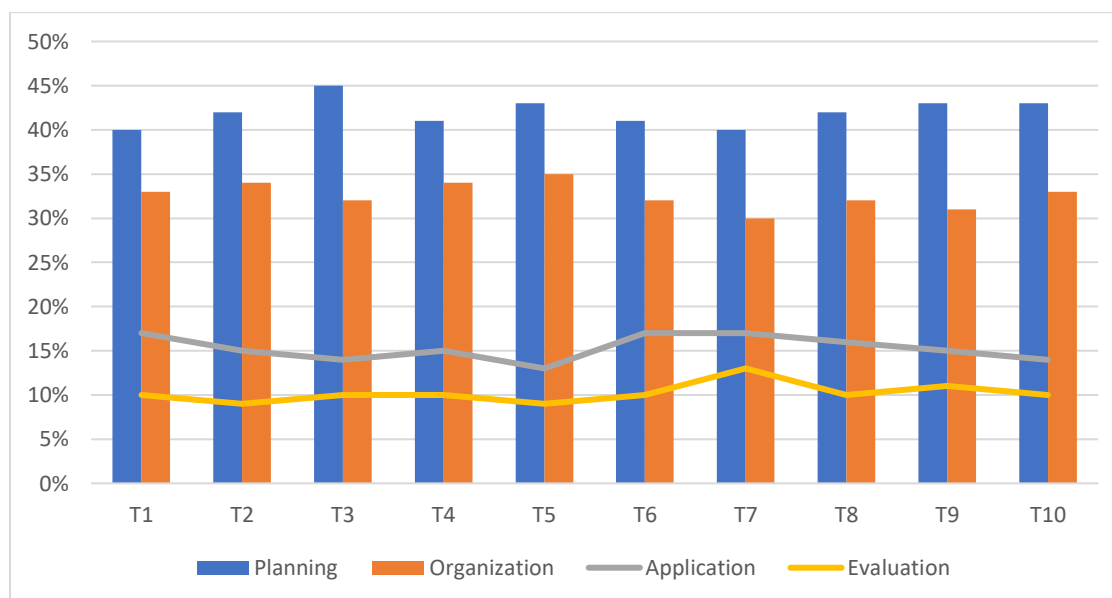
There are two data, namely, primary and secondary data which will be the main tool in describing the formulation of the problem and the objectives of the research that have been obtained. Primary data are observational data, interviews, and teacher questionnaires based on references supporting this study (Arikunto, 2019). The research subject has a very strategic role because the research subject is data on variables observed by the principal's management every day.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

Part of the planning carried out by the principal of SMPN Banda Aceh can be explained that the two principals of SMPN 1 and SMPN 12 have known and understood the main objectives of the planning carried out by each in order to create a more effective learning environment and ensure that all students have the opportunity to the same thing to develop its potential reaching 45%. An essential aspect of school management is how the school decision-making process in the application reaches 30% by the principal, school organizational management runs well, reaching 15%, and part of the principal's performance evaluation reaches 11 %. Furthermore, the research

results on the principal's managerial implementation include management or playing, then the work organization created by teamwork, followed by implementation in the field or work application, and then an evaluation of all work management activities. The many aspects of a school principal's managerial competence require the principal's ability to develop continually. This may require the development of effective strategies to ensure the principal's mastery of managerial competencies is complete and can be implemented optimally. The data presented in the principal's management includes application planning, organization, and evaluation at SMP Negeri 1 from the results of data questionnaire processing from senior teachers, as shown in the following picture.

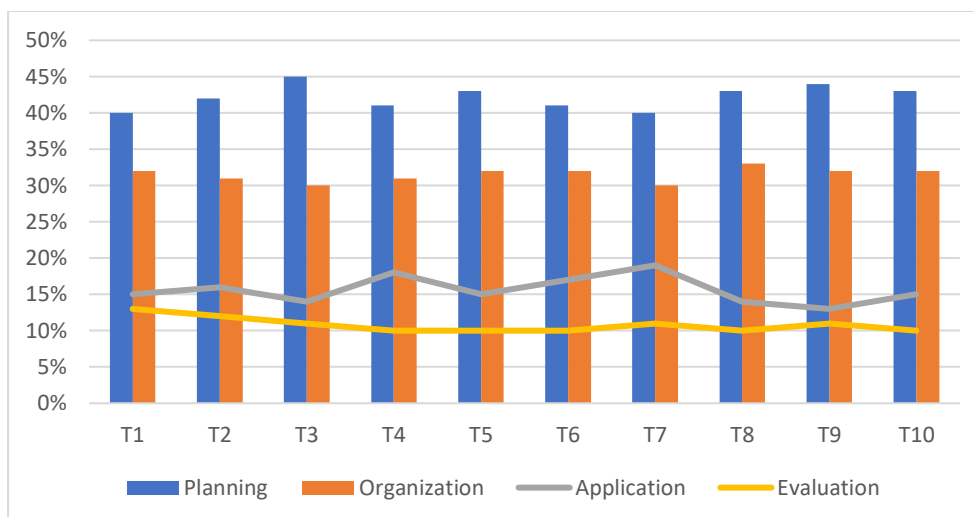


Source: Processed data

Figure 1 Managerial of SMP N 1 Banda Aceh

### Principal Managerial

The school principal's managerial activities involve comprehensive aspects ranging from preparing school plans, developing school organizations, and empowering school resources to supervise the implementation of school activities by applicable supervision standards (Darmansah, T. 2023). The many aspects of a school principal's managerial competence require the principal's ability to develop continually. This requires the development of effective strategies to ensure that the principal's mastery of managerial competencies is complete and can be implemented optimally (Nuriah et al., 2023). The graphic description below regarding planning, application, organization, and evaluation at SMPN 12 is almost the same as that at SMPN 1, namely the planning section, which is very prominent, and the evaluation section, which has low attention, reaching 7-10%.



Source: Processed data

Figure 2 Managerial of SMP N 12 Banda Aceh

## DISCUSSION

In the context of education, school principals have an important role as leaders who not only focus on the academic aspect, but also on the overall management of the school. In Aceh, the challenges faced by secondary school principals are increasingly complex along with the social, cultural, and political dynamics typical of the area. The managerial competencies that must be possessed by school principals include various aspects, ranging from strategic planning, human resource management, to curriculum development that is relevant to local needs. This article will discuss in depth these competencies as well as the challenges faced and strategies that can be implemented to improve the managerial quality of secondary school principals in Aceh.

The research conducted on the principals of SMPN 1 and SMPN 12 Banda Aceh provides an in-depth picture of the level of understanding and application of managerial competencies in the two schools. The main focus of this research is on the aspects of planning, decision-making, organizational management, and principal performance evaluation. The results showed that both principals understood the main purpose of school planning, which aims to create a more effective learning environment and ensure equal opportunities for all students to develop their potential. However, the achievement rate of this goal only reaches 45%. This indicates that there is significant room for improvement. Factors that influence this low achievement may include: **Limited resources**, both financial and material that may not be adequate to support the effective implementation of the plan. **Stakeholder involvement**, low participation from teachers, students, and parents in the planning process can reduce the effectiveness of the plan made. Specific social and cultural factors in Aceh that may affect the implementation of planning (Amri, 2018).

The decision-making aspect by the principal only reached 30% of expectations. This indicates that there are problems in the decision-making process that can be caused by **less strong Leadership**, the Principal may lack the leadership skills necessary to make quick and appropriate decisions. **Ineffective communication**, Lack of clear communication between the principal and staff and teachers can cause the decisions taken to not be implemented properly. **Lack of data**

**and information,** Decision making that is not based on accurate data and information can reduce the effectiveness of these decisions (Sugiana, 2023).

The management of the school organization is doing well but only reaches 15%. This shows that there are major challenges in organizing and managing schools effectively. Some possible causes of this low achievement include inefficient organizational structures, organizational structures that are too bureaucratic or unclear can hinder workflow and coordination. Poor time management, lack of ability to manage time can lead to managerial tasks being delayed or not completed on time. Low staff motivation, without sufficient support and motivation, staff and teachers may be less enthusiastic in carrying out organizational tasks. The performance evaluation of the principal only reached 11%, indicating weaknesses in the evaluation and follow-up process. This can be due to the lack of an effective evaluation system, an incomplete or unobjective evaluation system can hinder the identification of areas that need improvement. Lack of feedback, lack of constructive feedback from staff and teachers can reduce the opportunity for principals to improve their performance. Evaluation that is not followed by a concrete follow-up plan can make the evaluation process ineffective (Fitrianti, 2018). Managerial implementation includes work team management, work organization, field applications, and evaluation of management activities. School principals need to develop effective strategies to ensure optimal mastery and implementation of managerial competencies. The main challenges in this implementation include team collaboration, the principal needs to ensure solid and collaborative teamwork to achieve the school's goals. Adaptation in the field, the ability to adapt plans and policies according to real conditions in the field. Continuous evaluation, continuous evaluation of all managerial activities to ensure continuous improvement (Badawi, 2024b; Barnoto, 2020).

In addition to strategic planning, human resource management (HR) is a crucial aspect in the managerial competence of school principals (Abrori & Muali, 2020). School principals in Aceh must be able to manage teachers and staff effectively, motivate them to achieve their best performance, and ensure continuous professional development. In areas that may have limitations in terms of resources and access to training, school principals must be creative in finding solutions. Collaboration with higher education institutions and non-governmental organizations can open up training and capacity-building opportunities for teachers. In addition, creating a supportive and collaborative work environment will increase job satisfaction and teachers' commitment to the school (Badawi, 2024a; Sunardi & Satori, 2024).

The development of a curriculum that is relevant and responsive to local needs is a challenge that must be overcome by secondary school principals in Aceh. An adaptive and contextual curriculum not only improves the quality of education but also ensures that students gain knowledge and skills that are relevant to their daily lives. School principals must be able to identify educational needs in their communities and work closely with various stakeholders to develop appropriate curricula. For example, the integration of environmental education that utilizes Aceh's natural resources and local ecosystem can be a concrete example of how the curriculum can be adapted to the local context. Additionally, project-based teaching that engages students in real-life activities in their communities can increase learning engagement and motivation. Overall, improving the managerial competence of secondary school principals in Aceh requires a holistic and contextual approach. By understanding the unique challenges faced and implementing appropriate strategies, principals can become effective and innovative leaders. This increase in competence will ultimately contribute to a better quality of education in Aceh, which not only

produces bright graduates but also individuals who have a strong attachment to their cultural and social values.

In the managerial process, the principal must carry out management functions: Planning the school activity program, organizing the main school tasks, driving applications for the entire school system, and monitoring/evaluating school performance. Meanwhile, SMPN 1 and SMPN 12 Banda Aceh City including SMPN in Banda Aceh City, which also participated in various activities, such as flag ceremonies and teacher competitions, in commemoration of National Teacher's Day in 2023. This school has also won an award in the category of activity organizer. Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) and Innovative Teacher Expectations in Banda Aceh City (Ajepri et al.; R., 2022). Planning for the development of education personnel is one of the steps taken by school principals towards teachers by involving teachers and staff in activities, such as training, improvement, seminars, workshops, apprenticeships, and mentoring, which can be organized by government agencies, universities, or non-profit institutions (Bella et al., 2023).

Both principals from SMPN 1 and SMPN 12 in Banda Aceh have a strong understanding of their planning objectives. They aim to create a more effective learning environment and ensure that all learners have the same opportunity to develop their potential. This is an important step in improving the quality of education in schools. In this case, the importance of the decision-making process in school management greatly determines the future of the school. The principal must ensure that this process runs well, with a target of 30% achievement. This shows the importance of effective leadership in managing schools. Evaluation of the performance of school principals is also an important thing to do, with an achievement of 11%. This shows the importance of self-reflection and continuous improvement in school leadership (Fauzi, et al., 2023).

The managerial process carried out by the principal includes planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. This confirms that the principal must be able to perform the management function effectively to achieve the school's goals. SMPN 1 and SMPN 12 are active in various activities, such as flag ceremonies and teacher competitions, and win awards in certain categories. This shows the school's commitment to improving the quality of education and participating in activities that strengthen the school community.

The managerial activities of the principal cover various aspects, from planning to evaluation. This includes developing effective school planning, developing a sound organizational structure, utilizing existing resources, and overseeing the implementation of activities in accordance with applicable standards. Due to the many aspects of the principal's managerial competence, this shows the need for the principal to continue to grow (Ningsih, 2024).

This research shows the importance of adaptive leadership and the ability to learn continuously in the face of challenges and changes in the educational environment. The development of an effective strategy is necessary to ensure that the principal can master the managerial competencies thoroughly and can apply them to the fullest. It covers a wide range of approaches in professional development, such as coaching, coaching, and self-development. The graph presented shows that the pattern of planning, implementation, organization, and evaluation in SMPN12 is almost the same as that in SMPN1. Planning is the main focus with evaluation being a lower concern. This suggests that there is potential to increase attention to evaluation as an integral part of the school managerial process (Pasaribu, 2017). Previous research (Ellianis, E., 2023) stated that the managerial competence of school principals has a significant effect on the quality of public elementary schools in Bekasi City, West Java. If the managerial competence of



the principal is good, the quality of the school can improve. On the other hand, if the managerial competence of the principal is not good, then the quality of the school can decrease. Thus, this study concludes that the managerial competence of school principals can improve the quality of education (Atstsaury, Hadiyanto, & Supian, 2024; Daheri, Meliani, Putra, Saputra, & Syarifah, 2023; Huda & Rokhman, 2021).

The implementation aspect of the school principal includes activities that directly supervise the teaching and learning process, classroom management, curriculum development, evaluation of learning outcomes, and management of human resources, finance, and school infrastructure. To create a conducive and effective learning environment, the principal also builds good relationships with all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, the community, and other related parties (Susanti, S., 2023). In the context of supervision in the school environment, internal supervision is carried out by people or entities within the organizational unit concerned, and external supervision is carried out by supervisory units outside the supervised organizational unit, such as the Financial Audit Agency (BPK). Thus, supervision carried out by school principals is an integral part of efforts to ensure the achievement of the expected educational quality standards in the school environment (Komara, E., 2023) (Arifin, Sutama, Aryani, Prayitno, & Waston, 2023; Nilda, Hifza, & Ubabuddin, 2020; Sirojuddin, Aprilianto, & Zahari, 2021). This study's findings significantly contribute to strengthening the managerial competence of school principals, especially secondary schools in Aceh and areas with the same culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

Managerial Competence of School Principals in Improving the Quality of Education at State High Schools in Banda Aceh City: The researcher concluded that the managerial competence possessed by school principals at SMPN 1 and SMPN 12 in Banda Aceh City has so far become the basis or guideline in the process of placing school principals based on dimensions, namely planning ability, organizational ability, ability to carry out school activities and ability to supervise every activity in school. The research results based on planning can conclude that the principal is responsible for developing plans and strategies to guide educational activities. This includes setting goals, preparing budgets, and planning human, financial, and information resources to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently. The principal's leadership behavior in improving teacher performance in learning at Banda Aceh State Junior High School has become even better. From this study, it is also known that the leadership patterns and behavior of school principals in Aceh are different from the leadership patterns and behaviors in other regions, especially in big cities on the island of Java.

Principals need to strengthen their managerial competencies in various aspects, including planning, decision-making, organizational management, and performance evaluation. to improve the managerial competence of school principals is: Conducting more intensive and continuous training programs for school principals, which are focused on improving managerial competence. Local governments need to provide stronger policy support to assist school principals in developing and implementing effective managerial plans. Develop a more comprehensive and objective evaluation system, and ensure concrete follow-up from the evaluation results. Increase the involvement of teachers, staff, students, and parents in the planning and decision-making process to improve the effectiveness of school management.

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