



## Managerial Competence of School Principals in Fostering Educational Innovation in Elementary Schools of Aceh Tamiang Regency

Junita<sup>1\*</sup>, Munawar<sup>1</sup>, Saiful Bahri<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Program Studi Magister Administrasi Pendidikan, Universitas Al Muslim, Matang Glumpang Dua, Aceh, Indonesia

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: October, 2025

Received in revised from: November, 2025

Accepted: December, 2025

Available online: January, 20, 2026

**Keywords:** *managerial competence, school leadership, educational innovation, elementary education, qualitative study,*

### ABSTRACT

The rapid progression of education in the 21st century has increased the necessity for innovation in schools, especially at the primary level where fundamental skills are cultivated. School principals serve as pivotal agents of change, with administrative proficiency being a crucial factor in promoting sustainable educational innovation. This study examines the role of principals' managerial ability in fostering and executing innovation in public elementary schools in Aceh Tamiang Regency, Indonesia. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive methodology, data were gathered via in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving principals and educators from three public elementary institutions. The results indicate that principals' managerial competence—exemplified by systematic planning, collaborative organization, consistent execution, and ongoing supervision—substantially fosters innovation in educational practices, school administration, and organizational culture. Nonetheless, difficulties pertaining to inadequate infrastructure, digital preparedness, and inconsistent teacher proficiency persist as barriers to the sustainability of innovation. The study finds that enhancing principals' managerial competency via ongoing professional development and institutional support is crucial for promoting educational innovation, especially in regional elementary school settings.

### 1. Introduction

Educational systems worldwide are undergoing a transformation influenced by globalization, swift technical advancements, and changing social demands. These dynamics demand that schools move beyond conventional, teacher-centred learning and adopt transformative pedagogies that foster higher-order thinking, innovation, and interpersonal skills (Bahri et al., 2025). In this evolving context, educational institutions must provide students not only with factual information but also with the ability to analyse, innovate, and adapt within intricate, interrelated environments (Lu & Chen, 2025). This change holds increased importance in the elementary level. Early education is fundamental for cultivating cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence, and social awareness—attributes vital for lifetime learning and global citizenship (Mustoip et al., 2023). Implementing innovative methods at this stage—such as project-based learning, digital literacy integration, and collaborative problem-solving—establishes a foundation for curiosity-driven inquiry and the development of

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [junitamarp@gmail.com](mailto:junitamarp@gmail.com)

<https://doi.org/10.56806/jh.v6i4.377>

resilience(Supraptini & Syhabuddin, 2023). Consequently, rethinking primary education is not a marginal change but a strategic necessity for cultivating flexible, innovative, and ethically principled future generations(Nargis et al., 2024).

Educational innovation seldom occurs by coincidence; it is a purposeful process influenced by the calibre and guidance of leadership in educational institutions(Marwan et al., 2024). Principals, as essential agents of educational change, serve as crucial middlemen who comprehend policy frameworks, adapt them to local requirements, and convert them into implementable solutions. Their influence transcends administrative coordination; they foster an institutional culture that prioritizes innovation, collaboration, and reflective practice. In the leadership context, managerial competence emerges as a critical driver of innovation. It entails a strategic amalgamation of planning, organization, execution, and oversight that guarantees educational programs are coherent and sustainable. Effective administrators utilize these qualities to integrate human and material resources with educational objectives, enhance teacher capabilities, and facilitate systemic change with precision and intent. Through prudent managerial judgment, they improve operational efficiency and cultivate an environment that empowers instructors to embrace creative risks, thereby providing students with innovative educational experiences(Bello, 2023).

In Indonesia, the importance of principals' managerial competence is institutionally established in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 13 of 2007, which identifies it as a core competency required of school leaders. This policy emphasizes that good administration is essential for attaining educational quality and promoting school progress. Managerial competence, as delineated in the rule, transcends standard administrative tasks to include strategic planning, program execution, assessment, and the establishment of an organizational environment that fosters innovation and ongoing learning(Lumban Gaol, 2023).

Nevertheless, despite this formal acknowledgment, empirical research indicates significant discrepancies in the manifestation of management competence within Indonesia's varied educational environments. Schools in urban areas frequently exhibit better organized management approaches, supported by enhanced institutional capacities and access to professional development opportunities. In contrast, individuals in rural or under-resourced regions may encounter systemic obstacles—such as inadequate finance, insufficient training, and substantial administrative burdens—that impede the practice of effective leadership. In these situations, the principal's personal leadership ability is a crucial determinant of whether innovation flourishes or falters. Thus, whereas legal frameworks offer a foundational structure, the actualization of management competence relies on the principal's vision, adaptability, and capacity to creatively deploy human and material resources within contextual limitations(Muttaqin et al., 2023).

Aceh Tamiang Regency represents a heterogeneous educational environment in which public elementary schools' function under ongoing structural and contextual difficulties. Numerous institutions in this region face inadequate infrastructure, variations in teacher professional proficiency, and limited access to digital technology, all of which obstruct the use of modern pedagogical frameworks. Systemic limits frequently exert significant pressure on school leaders to uphold educational quality notwithstanding resource scarcity and institutional restraints(White et al., 2025).

Notably, within this difficult context, several schools have arisen as centres of significant innovation, showcasing inventive adaptations in pedagogy, administration, and community involvement. These achievements often arise from the innovative leadership and managerial proficiency of their principals, who leverage existing resources, foster collaborative environments, and effectively link local capabilities with overarching educational objectives. Such instances necessitate a thorough analysis of how managerial proficiency—defined by the tasks of planning,

organizing, executing, and overseeing—transforms into tangible, context-sensitive practices that foster creativity. Comprehending these dynamics is essential for improving leadership development in resource-constrained areas and for guiding national programs aimed at addressing educational disparities through effective and contextually relevant school management (de Jong et al., 2020).

Previous research on principals' administrative competence have primarily utilized normative or quantitative frameworks, focusing on measurement and correlation instead of contextual comprehension (Chen, 2022). Numerous research has aimed to ascertain the statistical relationship between managerial competency and outcomes such as teacher performance, organizational climate, or overall school effectiveness (Magolama, 2024). Although these studies have enhanced the theoretical acknowledgment of managerial competence as an essential leadership factor, they frequently neglect the procedural and contextual elements of how this competence is effectively applied within the intricate realities of school management (Brauckmann et al., 2023).

Thus, a significant void exists in qualitative research that investigates the lived experiences, decision-making processes, and adaptive methods by which principals demonstrate managerial competency daily (Atstsaury et al., 2024). The direct correlation between management competency and the emergence of educational innovation remains inadequately examined, especially in resource-limited environments where formal institutions and regulations are insufficient to effectuate change (Hilman & Tejawiani, 2025).

This study aims to examine how principals' managerial competence serves as a catalyst for educational innovation in public elementary schools in Aceh Tamiang Regency. This research seeks to elucidate the contextual mechanisms, leadership behaviours, and institutional conditions that empower principals to convert administrative talents into enduring innovation and school enhancement by emphasizing practical applications over abstract criteria.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Managerial Competence of School Principals*

Managerial competence refers to the overall capability of school principals to lead and maintain educational institutions through a methodical process that includes systematic planning, effective organization, intentional execution, and ongoing oversight. It transcends mere technical administration to represent a strategic leadership role that guarantees alignment among institutional resources, educational goals, and changing educational needs. Academics emphasize that management proficiency is primarily concerned with strategy adaptability and organizational coherence. Effective principals leverage this expertise to create distinct visions, convert them into actionable initiatives, and synchronize people and material resources towards common objectives. Furthermore, they exhibit agility in responding to regulatory changes, technology progress, and contextual obstacles, guaranteeing that management functions are dynamic rather than merely procedural. Managerial competency serves as the nexus between operational efficiency and transformative leadership, facilitating schools to operate effectively while also fostering innovation, evolution, and ongoing improvement in the quest for educational excellence (Daulay et al., 2024).

In educational leadership theory, managerial competency is fundamentally based on the classical management framework of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC), which establishes a methodical foundation for effective school governance. Competent principals, through planning, establish strategic visions and convert them into logical, executable objectives that fit with institutional priorities. During the organizing phase, they systematically arrange human and material resources, guaranteeing clarity in roles, delegation, and workflow. The actuating function highlights the human aspect of leadership—motivating and inspiring educators, promoting professional teamwork, and cultivating a culture of collective responsibility. Ultimately, controlling entails ongoing

monitoring and assessment to guarantee that execution corresponds with objectives and that requisite modifications are implemented in response to arising obstacles. Empirical research repeatedly shows that principals with strong managerial competence excel in balancing stability and adaptation. They establish organizational systems that are sufficiently structured to guarantee operational efficiency while remaining adaptable to foster innovation and change. Such leaders excel at cultivating cultures that promote innovation while maintaining responsibility. Thus, management competence functions as both a basis for organizational structure and a strategic facilitator of ongoing educational innovation and enhancement in varied and resource-rich environments (Striepe & Cunningham, 2022).

## *2.2 Educational Innovation in Schools*

Educational innovation involves the intentional implementation, modification, and utilization of novel concepts, techniques, technologies, or organizational practices aimed at improving the quality, relevance, and efficacy of education. It demonstrates a proactive approach to the changing requirements of learners, society, and global knowledge frameworks. Educational innovation is not limited to individual improvements; it embodies a systematic process of renewal that transforms the conceptualization of learning, teaching, and management within schools (Ağalday, 2025).

In practice, innovation can occur in various aspects of education. The process may encompass curricular transformation, such as the integration of interdisciplinary themes or competency-based learning frameworks; pedagogical innovation, including student-centered and inquiry-based instructional strategies; and assessment reform, prioritizing authentic, formative, and performance-based evaluation methods. Furthermore, the utilization of digital technologies—ranging from adaptive learning platforms to virtual collaboration tools—has emerged as a hallmark of contemporary educational innovation. Innovations in school management and leadership are equally significant, as data-driven decision-making, participatory governance, and community collaborations foster adaptive and resilient learning environments. These innovations seek not just to enhance current methods but also to transform educational paradigms towards inclusivity, creativity, and ongoing advancement (Mavi et al., 2025).

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory provides a robust framework for analyzing the introduction, adoption, and institutionalization of new ideas and practices in educational organizations. The theory asserts that the rate and efficacy of innovation adoption hinge on five principal attributes: relative advantage (the perceived enhancement the innovation provides over current practices), compatibility (its congruence with established values, experiences, and requirements), complexity (the perceived challenge of comprehending or executing it), trialability (the degree to which it can be assessed on a limited scale), and observability (the visibility of its outcomes to others) (Menzli et al., 2022).

In educational institutions, these characteristics underscore the essential function of principals as change agents who navigate the divide between policy objectives and classroom realities. Effective principals promote innovation by amplifying perceived benefits, integrating new programs with educators' professional beliefs, streamlining implementation through explicit guidance, and offering chances for experimentation and collaborative learning. They enhance observability by highlighting successful practices, acknowledging innovators, and fostering a culture of collective learning. By implementing these activities, principals mitigate resistance, foster trust, and integrate innovation into the school's operational and cultural framework. Rogers' paradigm emphasizes that educational innovation involves not just the introduction of new techniques, but also the strategic management of the social processes that facilitate the acceptance and sustainability of change (Thien & Hallinger, 2025).

### *2.3 Principals as Agents of Innovation*

Principals are widely acknowledged as catalysts for change, whose leadership significantly influences school culture, organizational learning, and teachers' receptiveness to innovation. Their influence transcends administrative oversight to foster an environment that prioritizes research, experimentation, and ongoing enhancement. By delineating a clear vision for transformation and integrating it with common institutional objectives, principals foster a collective sense of purpose that inspires teachers to adopt innovative pedagogical and technical methodologies (Oduro & Kobeli, 2025).

With visionary leadership and competent managerial skills, school leaders may successfully convert schools into vibrant learning communities. They promote professional collaboration via team teaching, peer mentorship, and participatory decision-making, cultivating trust and collective accountability. Furthermore, by advocating for reflective practice, they empower educators to critically assess and enhance their teaching strategies in accordance with student requirements and evolving trends. Empirical research regularly shows that schools governed by innovative and supportive principals are markedly more inclined to implement learner-centred pedagogies, effectively integrate digital technology, and maintain enduring enhancements in teaching quality. Such principals serve as the catalyst that connects policy objectives with classroom realities, ensuring that innovation is ingrained and sustained within the school's culture (Evans et al., 2023).

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1 Research Approach and Design*

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research approach to investigate how principals demonstrate administrative competency in fostering educational innovation within their schools. This methodological decision was driven by the necessity to acquire comprehensive, contextually anchored insights into leadership behavior as it manifests in actual educational settings. The qualitative technique prioritizes investigation, interpretation, and meaning-making over measuring variables or testing hypotheses, enabling the researcher to capture the complexity and nuance of principals' management practices.

This design proposes to describe the processes, interactions, and contextual elements influencing how principals strategize, organize, execute, and oversee innovation activities. It facilitates the documentation of genuine experiences, viewpoints, and methodologies employed by school leaders in managing both opportunities and limitations. This method contextualizes administrative competence within its inherent educational environment, offering a thorough depiction of leadership as a dynamic, adaptive process that connects formal managerial duties with the innovative, human aspects of educational transformation (Stanley, 2023).

### *3.2 Research Setting and Participants*

The study was conducted in three public elementary schools in Aceh Tamiang Regency—SD Negeri Sriwijaya, SD Negeri Kuala simpang, and SD Negeri Karang Baru—each exemplifying varied contextual and organizational attributes within the region's educational framework. These sites were deliberately chosen to encompass variances in school administration methods, resource availability, and innovation experiences, so enhancing the depth and usefulness of the study's findings.

The participants comprised three school administrators and six teachers, selected by purposive sampling to guarantee the inclusion of persons with direct expertise in leadership and innovation processes. The administrators offered insights on administrative decision-making, planning, and organizational tactics, whereas the teachers supplied thoughts on implementation, collaboration, and classroom-level transformation. This assembly of participants facilitated a nuanced

comprehension of the operational dynamics of management competence across many tiers of school functions, encompassing administrative planning and pedagogical innovation. The study aimed to produce contextually relevant and practice-focused insights into the dynamics of educational leadership and innovation in public schools of Aceh Tamiang by involving those most actively engaged in school improvement initiatives.

### *3.3 Data Collection Techniques*

Data was obtained using varied qualitative methods to assure depth, trustworthiness, and contextual comprehension of supervisory processes. Initially, comprehensive interviews were carried out with principals, teachers, and school supervisors to examine their experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of coaching-based academic supervision, specifically about its impact on instructional enhancement and professional development. Secondly, non-participant observations were conducted during supervision sessions and classroom instructional activities to document the interactional processes, communication patterns, and supervisory tactics employed in real-world contexts. These observations allowed the researcher to analyze the implementation of coaching principles in real-time practice. Third, document analysis was conducted by examining supervision reports, lesson plans, instructional documentation, and school administrative records to corroborate interview and observation findings while identifying written evidence of supervisory procedures, follow-up actions, and performance development. The triangulation of interviews, observations, and documentation enhanced the reliability of the data and offered a thorough comprehension of coaching-based supervision as executed in practice.

### *3.4 Data Analysis*

This study employed several different methods of data collecting to acquire a thorough understanding of principals' administrative competency and its influence on promoting educational innovation. The principal methodologies comprised semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, each fulfilling a specific yet interconnected role in elucidating the intricacies of school leadership practices.

Semi-structured interviews were performed with principals and teachers to provide comprehensive insights into their experiences, perceptions, and reflections concerning leadership approaches and innovation processes. This adaptable framework facilitated comprehensive exploration while preserving a uniform emphasis among participants. Non-participant observations were utilized to analyze genuine behaviors and interactions in educational environments, encompassing management meetings, instructional oversight, and classroom innovation initiatives, thus offering contextual evidence of the manifestation of managerial competence in everyday practice. Furthermore, the examination of school development plans, innovation program reports, and supervision records yielded corroborative data regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes within the schools.

The data underwent thematic analysis, which included methodical reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation to discern repeating patterns and underlying meanings. To augment the reliability of the findings, various validation strategies were employed, including data source triangulation, member checking to verify interpretation accuracy with participants, and extended field engagement to ensure a profound and credible comprehension of the school contexts. The implementation of these methodological rigor measures enhanced the reliability and validity of the study's conclusions.

## **4. Results**

### *4.1 Managerial Competence in School Innovation Planning.*

The findings indicate that the principal effectively implemented participatory and systematic planning functions as a basis for promoting school-based innovation. The planning process was characterized by collaborative decision-making, involving teachers, educational staff, and key stakeholders who participated actively in regularly structured meetings and consultative forums, rather than a top-down approach. This mechanism ensured that innovation initiatives were strategically aligned with the school's vision and mission while being contextually relevant to its operational realities. The involvement of teachers in shaping the school's strategic direction, including the formulation of its vision, mission, objectives, and innovation programs, demonstrates the principal's dedication to shared governance and distributed leadership. Participatory practices demonstrate a deliberate attempt to foster collective ownership of innovation, improve teacher agency, and reinforce institutional coherence. The principal converts planning from a simple procedural requirement into a collaborative strategic process, enhancing commitment and accountability within the school community. This finding supports existing research that highlights participatory planning as a key factor in sustainable educational innovation and organizational learning.

School principals possessing comprehensive managerial skills are anticipated to develop and communicate the school's vision and mission through collaborative procedures, ensuring these core statements act as common reference points for directing innovation efforts. When establishing strategic direction through open discourse and consensus-building, the vision and mission evolve beyond administrative formalities into dynamic documents that embody the aspirations and commitments of the entire school community. The planning process is carried out in a participatory manner by involving teachers, educational staff, school committees, and parent representatives, so that the resulting plan is realistic and in line with the school's needs. The innovation program plan is outlined in the Annual Activity Plan (RKT) document, which contains the vision, mission, objectives, and strategic steps for school development.

### *4.2 Managerial Competence in Organizing School Innovation.*

The principal has implemented a coherent and effective organizational framework aligned with the criteria outlined by the Education Office, guaranteeing clarity in roles and accountability at all levels. Task assignments are cooperatively established in meetings that evaluate instructors' qualifications, expertise, and professional interests, thereby optimizing resource usage and fostering fairness and engagement. Moreover, the principle has robust conflict management and interpersonal abilities, effectively handling task allocation difficulties through persuasive communication and collaborative problem-solving. This method preserves organizational cohesion while fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and shared accountability internally at the school.

The principal's proactive engagement in establishing collaborations with external stakeholders, such as government agencies, colleges, and community organizations, substantially strengthens the school's institutional capability and resource base. These agreements provide access to knowledge, finance, and innovation opportunities, ultimately strengthening the school's capacity to execute and maintain development projects. Subsequent to the endorsement of the innovation plan, the principal systematically organizes resources, assuring the efficient coordination and utilization of personal, financial, and material assets to attain the defined objectives. This technique demonstrates a strategic approach to network-based school management, wherein internal planning and external collaboration work together to enhance educational quality and promote sustainable innovation.

Efficient organizational structuring defines roles, duties, and authority lines, ensuring coherence and coordination in accomplishing the school's innovation goals. When conflicts emerge—especially about task distribution—the principal addresses them with a persuasive and interpersonal strategy, promoting communication and mutual comprehension. In situations necessitating supplementary assistance, the principal enlists the school supervisor to facilitate and enhance transparency in the decision-making process. The principal actively looks for collaborative agreements with external groups, such as government agencies, higher education institutions, and community organizations, in addition to managing internal operations. This external partnership exemplifies a vital aspect of management competence, allowing the principal to use supplementary experience, funds, and creative practices that enhance the school's ability for ongoing improvement. This combined emphasis on internal cohesion and outward collaboration highlights a holistic leadership strategy vital for maintaining significant educational innovation.

#### *4.3 Managerial Competence in Implementing School Innovation.*

The principal actively and strategically facilitates the implementation of innovation programs, ensuring consistency between planning and execution through consistent coordination, mentorship, and advice. The principal utilizes digital technologies to improve transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness in the management of school activities. The principal serves continuously as a coordinator and facilitator, demonstrating instructional and management leadership by modeling innovative conduct and cultivating a supportive climate that encourages teachers to explore and refine new instructional approaches. This method further strengthens professional collaboration but also integrates innovation as a shared and enduring organizational culture, presenting the principal as both a catalyst and facilitator of innovative educational change.

The results reveal that the principle exhibits a robust actuating role in guiding and maintaining school innovation by engaging actively and directly in program implementation. The principal, serving as both coordinator and facilitator, offers ongoing direction, advice, and incentive to teachers, ensuring that innovative activities are conducted efficiently and matched with institutional objectives. Coordination is upheld by frequent meetings, review forums, and the deliberate implementation of digital technologies for communication and monitoring, thereby augmenting transparency and operational efficiency. A fundamental element of this leadership approach is the principal's dedication to the professional development of teachers. Educators are urged to participate in Teacher Working Groups (KKG), online training, and various creative capacity-building initiatives aimed at improving pedagogical and technological proficiency. Nevertheless, the survey also reveals discrepancies in teacher enthusiasm, especially among senior educators who have difficulties in adjusting to modern technologies. This highlights the necessity for a sustained and differentiated professional development strategy that caters to varied teacher needs and fosters equal engagement in innovation.

The principle serves as a facilitator and role model, delivering direct support in problem-solving, offering constructive feedback, and coordinating resources in partnership with the BOS treasurer to optimize time and budget allocation. The principal enhances coordination and fosters a culture of transparency, collaboration, and responsibility by integrating technical tools for monitoring and communication. The driving force of school innovation is demonstrated through the principal's proactive involvement and adaptive leadership, which connect management effectiveness with the social aspects of change and professional development.

The implementation strategies in Aceh Tamiang highlight the significance of contextual adaptation in executing school innovations, considering the region's lack of resources, difficult geographical conditions, and limited access to foreign professional training. In response, school principals

demonstrate context-sensitive administrative proficiency by utilizing local resources, promoting inter-teacher collaboration, and establishing school-based learning communities as strategic means to stimulate internal innovation.

This local method signifies a substantial progression in administrative and leadership practices, as it adeptly integrates transformational leadership principles—visionary guidance, motivation, and empowerment—with adaptive management strategies customized to contextual limitations. By incorporating these elements, principals sustain innovation despite systemic constraints and foster a culture of communal creativity, resilience, and continual learning. This integration of transformational and adaptive leadership highlights a new model of school management in resource-constrained environments—one that reconceptualizes innovation as a process arising from contextual creativity rather than external reliance.

#### *4.4 Managerial Competence in Monitoring School Innovation.*

Systematic and ongoing monitoring and assessment conducts to guarantee the effective implementation of school innovation projects. Supervision is executed through formal meetings, direct observations, activity report reviews, and verification of program adherence to set timelines, targets, and performance indicators. This systematic method allows the principal to uphold procedural responsibility and qualitative supervision of innovation results. The outcomes of these assessments provide the basis for evidence-based decision-making. The principal delivers impartial, constructive, and solution-focused feedback, prioritizing enhancement over adherence. By converting evaluation into a collaborative learning process, the principal cultivates a culture of reflection and professional development, guaranteeing that innovation initiatives stay dynamic, adaptive, and continuously enhanced. This technique illustrates the regulatory aspect of management competence, wherein monitoring transforms into a tool for fostering innovation and organizational learning.

The principle develops objective, constructive, and solution-focused recommendations based on systematic evaluation outcomes to improve the quality and efficacy of innovation projects. These recommendations are executed by specific guidance, continuous support, and tactical modifications to implementation strategies, ensuring that feedback directly influences practice. Evaluation, as an essential managerial role, not only assesses outcomes but also ensures the sustainability and continuous improvement of program quality. Thorough documentation and reporting of innovative activities are systematically arranged, serving as vital references for future decision-making and program enhancement. This evidence-based methodology guarantees that innovation inside the educational system is entrenched rather than sporadic, highlighting a continuous commitment to enhancement and learning. Thus, evaluation evolves into a cyclical process of reflection, adaptation, and renewal, illustrating that educational innovations are intended for sustained development and ongoing transformation, rather than ephemeral conformity or isolated successes.

#### *4.5 Principal's Managerial Competence in Creating Innovation at School.*

The principal's managerial innovation is manifested in the digitalization of administrative systems, the improvement of school service efficiency, and the establishment of policies that actively foster innovation. The transition to digital administration optimizes data management, expedites service delivery, and markedly enhances the operational efficiency of educators and personnel, allowing them to concentrate more on instructional and developmental activities. The burgeoning culture of innovation is bolstered by the principal's receptiveness to novel concepts, continual moral encouragement and administrative backing, and ongoing professional mentorship for the school community. By cultivating this atmosphere, the principal institutionalizes technological and

procedural breakthroughs while building an organizational ethos rooted in collaboration, creativity, and continuous development. Thus, the principal's managerial proficiency plays a strategic and transformative role, cultivating a school environment that is innovative and inclusive, ultimately aimed at improving educational quality and institutional sustainability.

The results of this study closely correspond with the conditions of primary schools functioning with restricted technology and human resources. The findings indicate that educational innovation is not inherently reliant on advanced technologies; rather, it can arise from straightforward yet strategic managerial innovations, including the enhancement of internal communication systems, the incremental digitization of administration, and the use of school social media platforms to improve transparency and information dissemination. In rural and resource-limited environments, these approaches highlight the importance of adaptive, participatory, and contextually relevant leadership rather than inflexible instructional paradigms. Principals with a profound comprehension of their schools' socio-cultural context, teacher competencies, and kids' developmental requirements are more adept at formulating and executing feasible, scalable, and enduring innovations. This adaptive managerial strategy converts limitations into possibilities, establishing the school as a learning organization that progresses through cooperation, reflection, and localized problem-solving. Consequently, the study emphasizes that contextual responsiveness and participatory involvement are essential factors for successful innovation in elementary education.

The durability of primary school innovation in Aceh Tamiang is contingent upon its integration into the school's organizational culture. Innovation persists when it integrates into routine routines instead than becoming a transient undertaking. The principal's receptiveness to innovative concepts, bolstered by a structured system of oversight, assessment, and record-keeping, has cultivated a school environment favourable to ongoing renewal, introspection, and enhancement.

From a practical viewpoint, educational institutions must incorporate innovation as a continuous organizational process—integrated within planning, execution, and assessment cycles—rather than regarding it as an isolated initiative. Systematic documentation and organized reporting of innovation initiatives provide transparency and accountability while supplying essential data for evidence-based decision-making and the formulation of future enhancement strategies. This strategy enables schools to transform into learning organizations that can adaptively respond to evolving educational requirements and societal changes. Consequently, innovation transforms into a continuous cultural practice that supports the enduring progress and significance of elementary education in Aceh Tamiang.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study concludes that the managerial competence of principals is a crucial determinant in the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of educational innovation in public primary schools in Aceh Tamiang. The combination of systematic planning, participative organization, consistent program execution, and constant oversight has facilitated the transformation of innovation from isolated initiatives into a fundamental aspect of the school's organizational culture. The results confirm that efficient managerial practices—rooted on collaboration, adaptability, and reflective assessment—establish the structural and cultural foundations essential for continuous enhancement. Therefore, enhancing principals' managerial competence through intensive professional development, policy reinforcement, and tailored leadership training becomes a strategic priority for improving the quality and sustainability of education, especially in limited resources regional contexts. The enhancement of managerial competence is not only an administrative requirement but also a catalyst for ongoing school innovation and pedagogical achievement.

## References

- Ağalday, B. (2025). Fostering teacher commitment through inclusive leadership: the mediating roles of teacher collaboration and teacher professionalism. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 63(6), 551–567. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2025-0130>
- Atstsauray, S., Hadiyanto, & Supian. (2024). Principal's Strategy to Improve Teachers Professional Competence. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 5(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.31538/MUNADDHOMAH.V5I1.775>
- Bahri, S., Munawar, & Novita, L. (2025). Pengembangan Profesionalisme Guru melalui Prilaku Inovatif dan Partisipatif Guru. *Jurnal Serambi Ilmu*, 26(1), 26–42. <https://doi.org/10.32672/JSI.V26I1.2259>
- Bello, A. S. (2023). Innovative Experiences in Teaching and Learning. *Overcoming Challenges in Online Learning: Perspectives from Asia and Africa*, 171–179. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003342335-20/INNOVATIVE-EXPERIENCES-TEACHING-LEARNING-AISHATU-SALIHU-BELLO>
- Brauckmann, S., Pashiardis, P., & Ärlestig, H. (2023). Bringing context and educational leadership together: fostering the professional development of school principals. *Professional Development in Education*, 49(1), 4–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1747105;ISSUE:ISSUE:DOI>
- Chen, C. C. (2022). Practice of leadership competencies by a principal: case study of a public experimental school in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Education Review* 2022 25:1, 25(1), 159–170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S12564-022-09813-1>
- Daulay, B., Haidir, & Firmansyah. (2024). The influence of managerial competence and achievement motivation on the leadership effectiveness of high school principals. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 43(2), 411–421. <https://doi.org/10.21831/CP.V43I2.61912>
- de Jong, W. A., Lockhorst, D., de Kleijn, R. A. M., Noordegraaf, M., & van Tartwijk, J. W. F. (2020). Leadership practices in collaborative innovation: A study among Dutch school principals. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220962098;WEBSITE:WEBSITE:SAGE;ISSUE:ISSUE:DOI>
- Evans, M., Trolli, E., Pierson, A., & Tilak, S. (2023). Designing courses with sustainable virtual learning communities: a STEM teacher candidate course that extends beyond higher education. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* 2023 37:1, 37(1), 225–247. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S12528-023-09391-0>
- Hilman, F. F., & Tejawiani, I. (2025). Principal Leadership Management in Improving Graduate Quality. *Journal of Innovation and Research in Primary Education*, 4(4), 2186–2195. <https://doi.org/10.56916/JIRPE.V4I4.2047>
- Lu, S. H., & Chen, C. C. (2025). Principals' distributed leadership and the effectiveness of school innovation management: the mediating role of school organisational culture. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 63(2), 129–143. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2024-0109>
- Lumban Gaol, N. T. (2023). School leadership in Indonesia: A systematic literature review. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 51(4), 831–848. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211010811;ISSUE:ISSUE:DOI>
- Magolama, A. A. (2024). The Influence of Administrative Managerial Competency and Innovative Strategies on Teaching Performance in a State University. *Library of Progress-Library Science, Information Technology & Computer*, 44(3), 6049. <https://openurl.ebsco.com/contentitem/gcd:180917789?sid=ebsco:plink:crawler&id=ebsco:gcd:180917789>

- Marwan, M., Siraj, S., & Marisa, R. (2024). Model Pendidikan Berbasis Nilai Keislaman, Pancasila, dan Kearifan Lokal dalam Mendukung Kurikulum Merdeka. *Indonesian Research Journal on Education*, 4(4), 122–126. <https://doi.org/10.31004/IRJE.V4I4.1087>
- Mavi, D., Tuti, G., & Özdemir, M. (2025). Instructional leadership as a catalyst for teacher professionalism: a multilevel mediation model of teacher collaboration. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 63(6), 536–550. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-02-2025-0055>
- Menzli, L. J., Smirani, L. K., Boulahia, J. A., & Hadjouni, M. (2022). Investigation of open educational resources adoption in higher education using Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory. *Heliyon*, 8(7), e09885. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09885>
- Mustoip, S., Tabroni, I., Sulaiman, S., & Marliani, L. (2023). Promoting Equity and Excellence in Elementary Education: A Global Approach to School Management and Leadership. *IJOBBA : International Journal of Bunga Bangsa Cirebon*, 2(2), 210-217–210 – 217. <https://jurnal.uibbc.ac.id/index.php/ijobba/article/view/2574>
- Muttaqin, I., Tursina, N., Sudrajat, A., Yuliza, U., Novianto, N., Fahri Ramadhan, F., & Edi Kurnanto, M. (2023). The effect of academic supervision, managerial competence, and teacher empowerment on teacher performance: the mediating role of teacher commitment. *F1000Research*, 12, 743. <https://doi.org/10.12688/F1000RESEARCH.128502.2>
- Nargis, S., Firmansyah, J., Manajerial, K., Pendidikan, M., & Menengah Pertama Negeri Abstrak, S. (2024). The Managerial Competence of School Principals in Improving the Quality of Secondary Education. *Nidhomul Haq : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 9(3), 542–553. <https://doi.org/10.31538/NDHQ.V9I3.1>
- Oduro, F., & Kobeli, L. M. (2025). Distributed leadership and inclusive education for underserved groups: examining the mediating role of teacher autonomy. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 63(5), 411–425. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-08-2024-0287>
- Stanley, M. (2023). Qualitative Descriptive: A Very Good Place to Start. *Qualitative Research Methodologies for Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy: Second Edition*, 52–67. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003456216-4/QUALITATIVE-DESCRIPTIVE-MANDY-STANLEY>
- Striepe, M., & Cunningham, C. (2022). Understanding educational leadership during times of crises: a scoping review. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 60(2), 133–147. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-03-2021-0057>
- Suprptini, Y., & Syihabuddin, S. (2023). LEADERSHIP OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ENHANCING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE IN THE ERA OF 4.0: A LITERATURE REVIEW PERSPECTIVE. *Prosiding Business Adaptability, Change Management and Technopreneur Conferences*, 1(2), 470–480. <https://doi.org/10.46306/BACMATECH.V1I2.42>
- Thien, L. M., & Hallinger, P. (2025). Linear and nonlinear dynamics between principal instructional leadership, teacher professional learning and teacher self-efficacy: a complexity theory approach. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-06-2025-0248/1322659>
- White, R., Lowery, C., & Johnson, J. (2025). Enhancing high-quality education through systemic school leadership: a systematic review. *Quality Education for All*, 2(1), 227–244. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QEA-09-2024-0096/FULL/PDF>