

**EMPOWERMENT OF INTERNAL POTENTIALS
OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS
IN PREPARATION FOR WORLD-CLASS STANDARD**

By: Suhartanta

Automotive Education Department

Yogyakarta State University

Email: hart_oto@yahoo.co.id

Abstract

In line with the Government Acts Number 20 Year 2003 concerning the national educational system, starting from 2005 the Government has developed initial programs for instituting international-standard schools. Facilitation for these programs also goes to vocational schools that have the potentials to go international. The success of the school internationalization depends on the capacities and commitments of individual schools in the processes of quality improvement.

One of the obstructions faced by these efforts is the wide variety of school environments and conditions which needs different treatments for different schools in order to reach the determined targets. Meanwhile, the running of a school cannot be detached from the influences of the environmental factors, and when such thing happens, it is against the principles of the running of education themselves. Because education in a way provides services to the stake-holders, it will be better to empower these stake- holders in the improvement of the education quality. This cooperative approach concept is in line with that of the school-based school management. This school-based management has been as the school-based quality management (SBQM).

The SBQM concept offers tight cooperation among the school, the society, and the government with their own responsibilities. Through SBQM, the school must be able to translate and capture the essences of macro education and to comprehend its environmental conditions and then, through planning processes, formulate these into micro education in the form of program priorities to be carried out by the school. This way, the school can independently, but still in the referential frame of the national educational policies, carry out its responsibilities in developing its resources in line with the learning needs of the students and the needs of the society. This means that all the internal school potentials should be developed in improving the quality of education.

Key words: international-standard school, school-based quality management, empowerment of internal school potentials

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in improving the quality of Indonesian human resources and elevate their competitiveness in the national, regional, and international levels. The globalization era which has eliminated the borders of nations needs human resources who possess strong competitiveness in technology and management. The vocational school, as one of the middle-level education strata in Indonesia, becomes one of the stepping stones for producing Indonesian human resources who will be able to answer these challenges, who will be able to compete in the international markets.

The government step to institute the National Educational Acts is a strategic policy in improving the quality of education, specifically education quality in the vocational school. The implementation of this national educational policy includes the development of world-class schooling. This program has been carried out since 2005 and has been developed year to year towards a best format. International-standard schooling is based in the Government Decree Number 19 year 2005 concerning national standard education and the Government Acts Number 20 Year 2003 concerning the national educational system. The 2003 Government Acts Chapter 59 item 3 states that the central government and/or regional government is to institute at least one international-standard school. The development of world-class schools is directed towards the improvement of the competitiveness of the Indonesian nation for the international forum.

The success of world-class schooling depends on the program implementation phases shown by the preparedness and competences of the school

together with the amount of obstruction in the implementation processes. There are cases where, at the macro level, programs are predicted to run smoothly but, at the micro levels, they cannot be implemented because of the vast and varied obstructions encountered in the field. It is for this reason that, in order to attain the educational goals, follow-up actions are needed to change external developmental drives into internal potential empowerment of the school. It is in this relation that the present article is written to discuss the internal potential of the empowerment of world-class vocational schools. The objective of this discussion is to show argumentative thought formulation which can be used as an alternative solution to the problems in the implementation of the world-class schools.

DISCUSSION

An international-standard school is one that has possessed all the requirements of the national standards plus that has a referential directions towards one of the Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and/or other advanced countries that have specific superiority to have competitiveness in the international forum (The Education Ministry's Decree Number 24 Year 2006). Educational national standards consist of content standard, process standard, competence standard of graduates, teacher standard, funding standard, and assessment standard. For international-standard schools, all these standards are enriched, strengthened, developed, deepened, and widened through the adaptation and adoption of educational standards of OECD member countries and/or other advanced countries that have possessed specific superiority in the field of education, have been considered as having the quality reputation,

have been acknowledged internationally, and whose graduates possess the competences for international competition.

In order to be able to fulfill those characteristics and concepts about world-class schooling, there are at least two ways that can be conducted by the school. These are (1) adaptation, matching the elements that have already existed in the national standards with those in the OECD member countries and/or other advanced countries that have superiority in educational fields; and (2) adoption, adding certain elements to the national standards using references from those in the OECD member countries and/or other advanced countries that have superiority in educational fields (Hartoyo, 2007). Schools that will conduct adaptation or adoption processes should find an international partner from countries like the USA, UK, Australia, France, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore whose qualities have been internationally acknowledged. Or they can work with training centres, industries, and certification institutions such as Cambridge, IB, TOEFL/TOEIC, ISO, study centres, and multilateral organizations such as the UNESCO.

The educational policies concerning the national standard schooling which later is followed by international-standard schooling policies have been one of the educational innovative movements in the effort of elevating the quality of education so that schools are able to produce qualified human resources. In the specific case of vocational schools, the policies have given the drives for the schools to provide graduates with adequate competencies either for them to continue their education to the higher education level or for them to directly go

to work. The success of world-class schooling certainly depends on the competence and commitment of the individual school towards the processes of quality development. Without the needed preparedness, commitment, and further management, it will be impossible for schools to attain these objectives.

Based on observation in the monitoring and evaluation of the international school programs in various regions, it has been found that schools have conducted physical programs and showed evidence of achievement. However, from the deeper tracing through observation and interviews, it can be seen that the learning-teaching activities have not much changed. Research conducted by Muhammad Ali and Hartoyo (2010) about the implementation of world-class vocational schooling in Yogyakarta shows that, of the eight criteria for school preparedness to run international schooling, the teaching-learning aspect has the lowest score. Meanwhile, preparedness for facilities is in the good category. This means that physical activities are still dominant when schools carry out programs from the government.

This problem may occur for two possible reasons. First, the school members still have the assumption that international schooling program is just like the other programs; in that when the program ends, so do their responsibilities, and things will come back to their previous characteristics. If this is what happens, international schooling programs will not attain their objectives. Secondly, the school members do not have the actual knowledge and competence to improve. If this is what happens, whatever facilities are given to the school will not be able to help the school carry out any development.

There are two other factors that can be used to answer why efforts to elevate the quality of education have not met their expected results. First, educational development strategies have so far been input-oriented. This strategy has the assumption that whenever all educational inputs have been fulfilled, such as the provision of books and learning materials and other instructional media, all the school institutions will automatically be able to produce qualified outputs as expected. It seems that the input-output strategy does not function optimally in educational institutions (schools). The strategy may be applied with good results in economic institutions and industries.

Secondly, the management of education has so far been macro-oriented, ordered by the beurocrates in the central government. As a result, many factors that are well projected in the macro level (central government) do not happen as expected in the micro level (schools). In another word, the complexity of the range of the problems in education often has not been captured wholly and accurately by the central beurocracy.

This discussion gives the understanding that development in education is not only focussed on the provision of educational inputs, but it must also take into account the process factor in education. Educational inputs are absolutely needed; however, within certain limits, they are not an insurance that the improvement of educational quality will automatically occur. In addition, the school is the frontier executioner of education who has students with varied potentials that need varied educational services. Because of this, the school should be dynamic and creative in carrying out its efforts for the improvement of educational quality. This can be

realized if schools with their varied characteristics are given the trust to manage themselves in line with their specific environmental conditions and students' needs.

Improving educational quality is not as easy as turning one's palm down. It needs persistent commitment from all the components of the nation. This is caused by the many factors that are interrelated and inter-influential among each other. However, in spite of the fact of all the difficulties and challenges, the policies for improving educational quality need to be supported and given commitment especially in the implementation in the field. Such support and commitment can be in the form of critical attitudes towards the implementation of innovative programs. Critical attitudes will lead to the accuracy of the implementation of innovative programs as follows (Rogers, 1995).

First, self-concern will look at the characteristics of the innovation, specifically concerning the positive and negative impacts. This will lead to the correct understanding of the innovative concepts and to the correct implementation. Innovation will not be correctly implemented if its concepts are not well understood.

Second, task-concern will look at the way the innovation is implemented in the field to produce changes for educational development. Innovation is conducted in the educational processes to cause changes and improvement with the purpose to elevate quality. Critical attitudes will direct thoughts towards the way the changes are managed by all the components of the institution to attain the objectives.

Third, impact-concern will look at the way the students change the learning strategies and the products of their learning as a result of the implementation of the innovative programs. Innovative programs are expected to improve the students' learning activities and effectiveness such that their learning achievement improves. This impact-concern will also think of the ways in which various cooperation forms can be carried out with other schools that implement the same innovative programs.

As has been discussed above, the government has been committed, or at least has put efforts, to improve educational quality even though, up to the present time, this relatively has not brought about the expected results. One of the obstructions is the highly varied environment of the schools which need highly varied treatments to achieve the intended goals. The running of a school cannot be separated from the influence of its environment and, if such thing happens, it runs against the nature of the implementation of education itself. As, principally, education gives out services to the stakeholders, it should be right that educational stakeholders are empowered to be involved in improving the quality of education.

This idea of joint efforts with stakeholders is in congruence with the school-based approach to education in the framework of educational quality improvement. In addition, it must be understood that, in the series of educational policies, the school is the frontier institution in the educational activities that will determine whether or not these policies are successful. It is for this reason that the school must be given the authority to manage its educational practices

independently. This approach to educational management is known as the school-based quality management.

The concept of school-based management requires the tight cooperation among the school, the community, and the government with their own responsibilities. This concept develops from the intention give independence to the school to actively and dynamically manage all the efforts to improve the quality of education using all the resources it possesses. The school must be able to translate and capture the essence of macro educational policies, understand its environments (strengths and weaknesses), and then, through planning processes, formulate these macro policies into micro policies in the form of priority programs to be implemented and evaluated in line with its visions and missions. In other words, the school needs to be able to improve its decision-making competences. Afterwards, the school must determine its quality targets for the next year. This way, the school has independence, albeit still under the framework of the government policies and supported by adequate facilities, in managing all its resources towards educational quality improvement in line with the characteristics and needs of the students and the community. All this means that all the school internal potentials are empowered towards quality improvement which will support the development of world-class programs.

To manage all these synergic efforts, the school can make use of the services of information and communication technology (ICT). The use of ICT at school, especially vocational schools, will give a lot of benefits in term of learning-teaching processes, elevate the school's ability in responding to the

advancement of science and technology, and improve the competences in the field of work of the related fields of study. The quality of vocational education is measured from the quality and relevance of its graduates with the needs of the field of work (Calhoun and Finch, 1982).

By using ICT, the school can also tie a cooperation with other advanced schools in order to get data or information to overcome current weaknesses (the availability of benchmarking). Besides, the school can also make a cooperation with related industries both inside and outside the country. One final aspect that the school can do is the improvement of the school internal competences, especially those of the teachers, to carry out learning reconstructions in class based on information about the competence needs from the field through empirical activities in the form of classroom action research.

CONCLUSION

The international-standard schooling program must be carried out in that it is a mandate of the National Educational Acts. During the five years of its implementation, the schools still have difficulties in finding the right format of its implementation. However, as a frontier institution in the implementation of educational services, the school must be able to empower all its potentials to develop its: 1) decision-making competence, 2) make use of ICT, 3) carry out learning reconstructions through classroom action research.

REFERENCES

