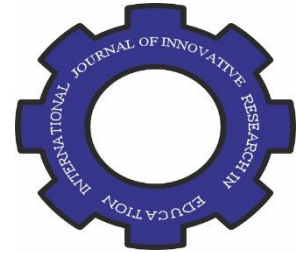




# International Journal of Innovative Research in Education



Volume 11, Issue 2, (2024) 141-149

[www.ijire.eu](http://www.ijire.eu)

## Soft skills-based school evaluation in Indonesian secondary schools

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### Suggested Citation:

Karyanto, Rosemalings, M.V. & Riyanto, Y. (2024). Soft skills-based school evaluation in Indonesian Secondary Schools. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Education*, 11(2), 141-149. <https://doi.org/10.18844/ijire.v11i2.9696>

Received from May 16, 2024; revised from September 23, 2024; accepted from December 1, 2024

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### Abstract

In the 21st century, educational institutions, especially Senior High Schools, both Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools are the main and strategic part as producers or providers of prospective students and prospective workers who are expected to have superior potential and competence, to face big challenges. This study aimed to evaluate soft skills-based schools in Indonesian secondary schools. The type of research conducted is descriptive qualitative research. This research was conducted within 6 months, at a leading high school in Indonesia. The participants included the Principal, Educators, and Students. Data collection techniques in this qualitative research were in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The data that was obtained were analyzed qualitatively and described. The results showed that there were 4 main factors in evaluating the function of school soft skill management, that is assessment instruments, internal & external, supporting and inhibiting factors, and follow-up improvements. Therefore, soft skills management is very necessary for secondary schools in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Evaluation; soft skills; secondary school

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Indonesian educational institutions, especially Senior High Schools, both Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools are the main and strategic part as producers or providers of prospective students and prospective workers who are expected to have superior potential and competence, to face big challenges (Maryanti et al., 2020). The big challenges in question are the first challenges as a result of the trade war between the United States and China, the trade war between the two countries will have an impact on our country's line of choice if we as a nation are not careful in determining our political policies, it will have an impact on the nation's progress (Anggraeni, 2019). Second, according to Siswati (2019), the Industrial Revolution in the era of 4.0 to 5.0, for the Indonesian people we cannot avoid these changes if we want to move forward the question is how we can manage this era as an opportunity to realize dignified progress.

The third challenge is the birth of a new generation called the millennial generation, namely the generation born from the process of the digitalization era of technology, so the realm of education is expected to further improve the quality of human resources to be more competent (Siswati, 2019; Bouhout et al., 2024). The fourth challenge is the existence of ideological polarization, both global and local, this polarization will result in the division of the power of meaning in understanding the meanings contained in the life of society, nation, and state (Raharja, 2019). The fifth challenge is the occurrence of a cultural transformation that is so strong and fast that it results in changes in the social order (Zafi, 2018). The five changes mentioned above will be opportunities on the one hand and will be challenges on the other. Then education will be the key in preparing superior resources towards an advanced Indonesia.

In the context of the transformation of work culture, the industrial world today, both abroad and domestically (Indonesia) there are still many who ask and question the workforce related to graduates from high schools and universities who are felt to be not ready to use and not ready to compete (Cannon, 2000). Resource crackers section to describe some of the quality of graduates at the advanced level of higher education and higher education. The term cracker which describes it seems so ready and resistant to challenges, but once exposed to trials, temptations, and even the slightest difficulties, it is easy to stagnate.

This is to the observations of experts, where high school and college graduates are considered the majority; weak communication skills, lack of honesty level, weak intrapersonal skills, poor cooperation, not being crushed, easily tired, easily bored, joining in, lack of teamwork, low integrity, low sense of humor and poor ethics in breaking work relationships (Hartono, 2019; Siswono et al., 2018). Higher Education is a provider or improvement of the quality of human resources needed in the world of work, in fact, they (educational institutions both at the secondary and higher education levels), learning in secondary education and higher education in Indonesia tend to prioritize hard skills components rather than soft skills.

Based on the research results of Mitsubishi Research Institute in 2002, aspects that affect the level of success in the world of work are described as follows; financial ability contributes 10%, expertise in the field contributes 20%, ability to build networks contributes 30% while 40% is contributed by one's ability from soft skills. Based on the results of this research, all elements that manage human resources, especially educational institutions, both secondary and higher education, should place the development of soft skills potential as a serious priority and policy. Soft skills curricula have been developed and implemented recently in some institutions to imbibe values and traits useful in the labor market (Laurisz et al., 2024; Touloumakos, 2020; Prada et al., 2022). Several parties, both secondary education institutions and higher education / tertiary institutions, of course, know these problems, this can be seen in several secondary schools and colleges that prioritize soft skills education for students or students, but there are also secondary education or colleges that provide putting aside soft skills education in his school, with various arguments built; starting from limited funding, energy, time, facilities and infrastructure to evaluation and follow-up that makes it complicated.

Based on the explanation above, it is fundamental to study the need for superior school management based on students' soft skills, the study is so important that soft skills are for someone to achieve success in their career as discussed above, although it is still a general description. Furthermore, according to Manara (2014),

there are nineteen soft skills that companies need from university graduates as prospective employees. The eleven soft skills that most often appear or are most needed are communication skills, interpersonal skills, ability to work in teams and individually, ability to work under pressure, good personality, honesty, work motivation, discipline, leadership, tenacious or hardworking, and lastly be thorough and detailed.

The most important component of this quality is intangible, namely what is called soft skills or soft disciplines (Sopa et al., 2020; Khanshan & Yousefi 2020). From the results of a survey conducted by NACE USA, it shows that the quality of university graduates who are expected to be in the world of work, get 5 important components in the quality of high school and college graduates who are expected to be able to meet the needs and expectations of the world of work, namely good communication, honesty or integrity. High level, ability to work well together, good intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, these six elements are an important part of the elements of soft skills. The results of the survey conducted by NACE can be used as material for consideration by high school and college graduates to be able to continue their careers in the world of work or other institutions, be it companies or institutions domestically or abroad, of course, the main component that can make them success in the future work is the ability of soft skills that are owned and mastered.

The school environment is always required to further improve and strengthen soft skills (Thu, 2020; Burhanuddin et al., 2024). Soft skills development can run effectively if the educators can provide good examples related to soft skills for the students themselves. As a small example, namely by increasing discipline both in work and attendance and on time. A teacher must be a role model for students to arrive on time and always be disciplined in every work and collection of assignments. Teachers are also required to provide examples that can be applied directly by students and can be implemented sustainably so that it can be used as a culture.

### **1.1. Purpose of study**

From the explanation above, soft skills become a very important and necessary part of the world of work, so schools as part of preparing students before entering the world of work must improve and develop the soft skills of students at school. This study aimed to evaluate soft skills-based schools in Indonesian secondary schools. The type of research conducted is descriptive qualitative research.

## **2. METHOD AND MATERIALS**

The type of research conducted is descriptive qualitative research. Moleong (2007) revealed that a qualitative approach was carried out to understand what had been experienced holistically in the research subject. The location of this research was two schools with the same level, namely SMAN 1 Sidoarjo and SMAN 15 Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. Researchers conducted research in these two different schools because these two schools were able to provide examples of secondary schools that apply good soft skills and become references for superior schools in East Java. Thus, the two schools can provide an overview of the different quality of education.

This research will be conducted within a period of six months, starting from January to June 2021. The stages carried out in this research are as follows, namely the preparation stage, implementation stage, and completion stage.

### **2.1. Participants**

The main data sources through interviews with informants who are the main sources in this study are the Principal, Educators, and Students. While additional data sources are obtained from observations while in the field through observations and documentation results are obtained from photos of activities or other supporting documents.

### **2.2. Data collection tool**

Data collection techniques in this qualitative research are in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. In the process of direct observation, in this case, the researcher goes to the research location and observes the process of implementing the program directly. In addition, the researchers also made a field note related to soft skills-based superior schools at SMAN 1 Sidoarjo and SMAN 15 Surabaya.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Technical data analysis is the process of obtaining data and making reports based on these data in a structured manner on the results of interviews, field notes, and other supporting media obtained to compile research reports. The data analysis technique in this study uses descriptive analysis techniques with more descriptions and results of interviews and documentation studies. The data that has been obtained will be analyzed qualitatively and described in descriptive form so that data related to the evaluation of the application of soft skills is obtained.

### 3. RESULTS

The results of the single site research for each school, namely SMAN 1 Sidoarjo and SMAN 15 Surabaya, then a cross-site analysis related to the evaluation of superior schools based on soft skills in these schools, found the comparison in Table 1 as follows:

**Table 1**

*Cross-site analysis of excellent school evaluation based on soft skills in schools*

| No | Focus                                      | SMAN 1 Sidoarjo  | SMAN 15 Surabaya  |
|----|--|--|---|
| 1  | Evaluation instrument                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instruments are made at the beginning before conducting an evaluation.</li> <li>2. The evaluation instrument is prepared based on the soft skills-based excellent school assessment guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia.</li> <li>3. The evaluation instrument is modified according to the needs of the school.</li> <li>4. The evaluation instruments at SMAN 1 Sidoarjo include assessment of school potential, formulation of the vision, mission, and school programs, design of activities, and implementation of soft skills-based superior school programs.</li> <li>5. The evaluation instrument is used as a standard for evaluating both internal and external evaluations.</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Before conducting an evaluation, it is necessary to start with the manufacture of instruments.</li> <li>2. The soft skills-based superior school evaluation instrument is prepared based on the soft skills-based excellent school assessment guidelines published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. Modified according to the needs of the school.</li> <li>3. The evaluation instrument is used as a standard for evaluating both internal and external evaluations.</li> <li>4. The evaluation instruments at SMAN 1 Sidoarjo include assessment of school potential, formulation of the vision, mission, and school programs, design of activities, and implementation of soft skills-based superior school programs.</li> </ol>   |
| 2  | Evaluation by the school's internal party. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation activities are carried out directly and indirectly.</li> <li>2. Direct activities are usually carried out through meetings, discussions, and other activities. Indirect evaluation is carried out through reporting activities.</li> <li>3. Evaluation of internal parties is carried out by the principal on teachers and employees as well as evaluations carried out by teachers on students implementing soft skills development.</li> <li>4. Evaluations carried out by school principals are related to performance in the implementation of soft skills-based superior school programs.</li> <li>5. Teacher evaluation of students is carried out during the learning process which includes 4 aspects, namely spiritual, social, knowledge, and skill aspects.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation of internal parties is carried out by the principal on teachers and employees and evaluations are carried out by teachers on students implementing soft skills development.</li> <li>2. Evaluation activities are carried out directly and indirectly.</li> <li>3. Direct activities are usually carried out through meetings, discussions, and other activities. Indirect evaluation is carried out through reporting activities.</li> <li>4. The principal evaluates those related to the implementation of the soft skills-based superior school program.</li> <li>5. The teacher evaluates the students and carries out the learning process which includes 4 aspects, namely spiritual, social, knowledge, and skill aspects.</li> <li>6. The final evaluation is in the form of a report card at the end of the semester.</li> </ol> |

| No | Focus   | SMAN 1 Sidoarjo   | SMAN 15 Surabaya   |
|----|---|---|--|
| 3  | Evaluation is carried out by involving stakeholders | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation from external parties is carried out by policymakers, namely the education office and school supervisors. In addition, it is also carried out by school stakeholders in the form of school committees and parents.</li> <li>2. External parties can evaluate superior schools based on soft skills as a whole.</li> <li>3. The education office conducts evaluations through reports from schools based on the EDS (School Self-Evaluation).</li> <li>4. Evaluation from the school committee to ensure that there is community involvement related to the implementation of soft skills development.</li> <li>5. Parents are an important part of participating in the evaluation because family education is part of the formation of children's soft skills.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation is carried out by external parties in the form of policymakers, namely the education office and school supervisors. In addition, it is also carried out by school stakeholders in the form of school committees and parents.</li> <li>2. The education office evaluates through reports from schools based on the EDS (School Self-Evaluation).</li> <li>3. Evaluation from the school committee to ensure that there is community involvement related to the implementation of soft skills development.</li> <li>4. Parents are an important part of participating in the evaluation because family education is part of the formation of children's soft skills.</li> <li>5. External parties can evaluate superior schools based on soft skills as a whole.</li> </ol> |
| 4  | Identification of inhibiting and supporting factors | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The results of the evaluation at SMAN 1 Sidoarjo indicate that there are supporting and inhibiting factors for the soft skills-based superior school program.</li> <li>2. Supporting factors for superior schools based on soft skills are the quality of human resources, adequate facilities and infrastructure, sufficient funding, and the commitment of all parties.</li> <li>3. The inhibiting factor is low commitment to the implementation of soft skills development, community participation is not maximal.</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SMAN 15 Surabaya in the evaluation process shows that there are supporting and inhibiting factors for the soft skills-based superior school program.</li> <li>2. Supporting factors for superior schools based on soft skills are the quality of human resources, adequate facilities and infrastructure, sufficient funding, and the commitment of all parties.</li> <li>3. The inhibiting factor is low commitment to the implementation of soft skills development, community participation is not maximal.</li> <li>4. Supporting factors must always be improved and optimized. As for the inhibiting factors, the school will find a solution for improvement.</li> </ol>  |
| 5  | Follow-up on improvement of evaluation results      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The data collected is then processed into a unified evaluation result.</li> <li>2. The results of the evaluation are then used as material for improving the soft skills-based superior school program in the future.</li> <li>3. Follow-up evaluation using 2 categories. If the results are good and optimal then get a reward and if the evaluation results show that it is not optimal then coaching is given. Coaching is in the form of providing opportunities to participate in training and other training.</li> <li>4. Follow-up on improvement of learning outcomes through remedial and repeat exams.</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The data collected is then processed into a unified evaluation result.</li> <li>2. The results of the evaluation are then used as material for improving the soft skills-based superior school program in the future.</li> <li>3. Follow-up evaluation using 2 categories. If the results are good and optimal then get a reward and if the evaluation results show that it is not optimal then coaching is given.</li> <li>4. Follow-up on improvement of learning outcomes through remedial and repeat exams.</li> </ol>   |

Evaluation of superior schools based on soft skills can be carried out by internal parties consisting of; principals, vice principals, teachers, and education staff. In addition, evaluations are also carried out by external parties, namely; the education office, stakeholders, school committees, and parents. Evaluation in superior schools based on soft skills includes four aspects of student competence, namely; religious aspects, social aspects, knowledge aspects, and skills aspects. In evaluating soft skills-based superior schools, the important concerns and discussions are the factors that support and hinder the soft skills-based superior school process program. So the results of the evaluation of superior schools based on soft skills need to be followed up as an effort for continuous improvement, both materially and non-materially.

Evaluation or assessment of superior school programs based on soft skills in school units is carried out continuously, comprehensively, objectively, honestly, and transparently, and involves relevant education

stakeholders. The indicators for the success of the assessment of superior schools based on soft skills are carried out by referring to the criteria for developing complete and comprehensive soft skills based on the development process from the initial stage to the evaluation. Therefore, at the initial stage, schools are asked to make an initial assessment (initial assessment) at the preparation stage to assess the starting point of the condition of educational institutions before a soft skills-based superior school is held.

The results of the study indicate that the evaluation has been carried out by the school which is the object of research. The two schools evaluated an assessment material for future improvements. The evaluation carried out has a procedure that begins with the preparation of evaluation instruments. The assessment guide is a tool for measuring success, evaluating programs, and being a material for improving the development of superior schools based on soft skills. The soft skills-based excellent school assessment rubric is information to assess the measurement of the implementation of soft skills-based superior schools by the complete and comprehensive soft skills concept, which in each indicator reflects the implementation of the soft skills-based superior school program design process.

The instrument was prepared by the school by referring to the soft skills-based superior school assessment guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The instrument was adopted and then modified to suit the needs of the school. Assessment instruments are used by schools, education offices, and communities to assess success based on criteria for implementing the principles in all activities in schools. After the instrument is made, the next step is the implementation of an evaluation involving various components.

The results showed that the evaluation process for superior schools based on soft skills was carried out by involving 2 components, namely internal and external. Internally involving stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents, and school committees) and externally it can be carried out by parties from outside the school who have a common interest in the successful implementation of the soft skills-based superior school movement in schools, for example, the assessment team from the ministry of education and culture, the education office, and school supervisors.

Evaluations are carried out by schools with various models. Oral evaluation through an annual evaluation meeting at the end of the learning year and also in the form of a written report. This is a step taken by schools to evaluate the implementation of superior schools based on soft skills and the learning process carried out by teachers. This is done so that the school can find out and analyze how successful the teachers and the academic community are in carrying out their performance. Teacher performance assessment aims to determine the ability of teachers in the learning process in an institution or educational institution.

Evaluations conducted at an educational institution have the aim of obtaining the data or information needed and used as a reference in decision-making. The results of this evaluation or monitoring can be used as a reference or support for the institution in its future development. So that the evaluation results can have a positive impact on the sustainability of an educational institution itself. An educational institution can improve its management in terms of context, input, process, output, and outcome.

The purpose of the evaluation is not only for a reporting instrument but evaluation can also be a response to a program that has been running. For example, making a questionnaire related to learning carried out by teachers to students, to evaluate the performance of existing teachers and employees. This questionnaire covers superior schools based on soft skills starting from planning, implementation, and assessment. In the teacher evaluation questionnaire from students, it was carried out randomly and sampled. Several questions represent the process of implementing soft skills including the tools used. Not only that, in the questionnaire, other components related to the personality of teachers and employees can also be added, such as the neatness of teachers and employees, friendliness of teachers and employees, behavior of teachers and employees, and discipline and examples of teachers and employees. This can be used as part of the evaluation of a school institution.

Evaluation is not only carried out by the principal to the teacher but also by the teacher to the students. The evaluation used in this case is through two stages. First, through direct classroom learning such as assignments, quizzes, presentations, and others. The second is through student learning outcomes through

student learning reports. The process of evaluating student learning outcomes will produce a value obtained through the process of measuring the ability of the students themselves. As stated by Welk et al., (2000) assessment is an activity to interpret or describe the measurement results. According to Ariely and Simonson (2003) that assessment is a decision about value. Therefore, the next step after carrying out the measurement is assessment. Assessment is carried out after students answer the questions contained in the test. The results of the student's answers are interpreted in the form of grades.

The results showed that schools in Sidoarjo Regency make evaluation rules or assessments of learning outcomes based on four aspects, namely spiritual aspects, social aspects, knowledge aspects, and skills aspects. According to Williams and Connolly (2006), learning is a behavior change, both observable and not directly observed, and occurs in a person due to experience. It also means that evaluation in schools also refers to Wageman (1995) that learning is an individual effort process to obtain a new behavior change as a whole, as a result of the individual's own experience in their interactions.

Evaluation of soft skills apart from internal elements must also be carried out by external elements. The assessor of superior schools based on soft skills is the school that involves all education stakeholders. To maintain objectivity, assessment of the success of superior schools based on soft skills is carried out at least by involving three main education stakeholders, namely schools, school committees/parents, and supervisors. Community or service representatives can also be involved in making evaluations of superior schools based on soft skills if needed. An evaluation that involves the participation of families and communities is an important part of the success of a superior school program based on soft skills.

In carrying out the evaluation process according to the integrated management cycle or total quality management, there is a follow-up improvement that is carried out continuously. Similar to soft skills, after the evaluation is carried out, what must be done after the evaluation process to make improvement efforts? There are two kinds of follow-up that researchers found in the field, namely follow-up to the improvement of the character education process carried out by the school, and improvement from the teacher for student improvement.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The evaluation of superior schools based on soft skills in secondary schools highlights several important aspects that must be considered. First, the process begins with the development of appropriate assessment instruments designed to measure soft skills like communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. These tools must align with the school's goals for soft skills development, ensuring that they accurately capture students' abilities in these areas. Additionally, the evaluation involves both internal and external stakeholders, including principals, teachers, school committees, parents, and education offices. This multi-perspective approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how effectively soft skills are being fostered within the school environment.

Moreover, the evaluation identifies factors that either support or hinder the successful implementation of a soft skills program. Schools must address challenges such as lack of resources or inadequate teacher training, while also building on positive elements like a strong school culture and community support. Follow-up actions are essential for continuous improvement, ensuring that the evaluation results lead to practical changes in teaching methods, curriculum adjustments, and further stakeholder engagement. This cyclical process helps schools consistently enhance their focus on soft skills, ultimately preparing students for future success.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval:** The study adheres to the ethical guidelines for conducting research.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

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