



## Strategy for Improving the Competence of Graduates of the Master of Education Management Faculty at the Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI) University in Semarang

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe strategies to improve graduate competencies and identify obstacles and efforts to overcome them in the Master of Educational Management, Universitas PGRI Semarang. The research approach used is qualitative with a case study design. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and document studies for three months, then analyzed using thematic analysis, content analysis, and triangulation techniques to ensure the credibility of the data. The results of the study revealed five main strategies implemented, namely: integration of applicable information technology in the curriculum, strengthening management science based on local wisdom, transformation of educational leadership, increasing scientific publications, and the application of flexible lecture and thesis guidance mechanisms. The main obstacle faced comes from the profile of students who have mostly worked, so they experience difficulties in time management, concentration in thesis preparation, and adaptation to the demands of academic writing. This study concludes that contextual and flexible strategies are needed to bridge the gap between academia and the world of work.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education plays a strategic role in producing superior and globally competitive human resources. At the master's level, this responsibility becomes even more crucial as graduates are expected to become adaptive, professional, and visionary learning leaders and educational managers. According to the OECD (2019) and UNESCO (2021), 21st-century graduate competencies require critical thinking skills, digital literacy, collaborative leadership, and strong social skills. In Indonesia, the dynamics of globalization and the acceleration of digital transformation drive the need for a systematic strategy to improve the competencies of university graduates, including in the field of Educational Management (Andayani & Nugroho, 2022; Susanto, 2023).

Empirically, various studies show that there is still a gap between graduate competencies and the needs of the workforce. Rofaida & Gautama (2021) in *Strategies for Improving the Competence of College Graduates through Alumni Tracking Studies* found that graduates of management study programs have weaknesses in English language skills, technological literacy, communication, and leadership. Similar findings were also revealed in research *Quality of Graduates of the Master of Physical Education FIK UNY (2023)*, which shows a difference in perceptions between graduate competencies and the expectations of graduate users in education and industry. This fact emphasizes the importance of efforts to improve the quality and relevance of graduate competencies, particularly in master's programs in educational management. Research on strategies for improving graduate competency is essential to provide knowledge and share experiences from universities in an effort to minimize the gap between graduate competencies and the needs of the workforce. Based on the background and research gaps, this research aims to:

1. Describes the strategy for improving graduate competency in the Master of Educational Management at PGRI Semarang University.

Describes the obstacles and efforts to overcome these obstacles in improving the competency of graduates in the Master of Educational Management at PGRI Semarang University.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Based on the review results, this study supports and complements previous research. Studies such as those conducted by Rofaida & Gautama (2021) and Gani et al. (2023) have emphasized the importance of continuous evaluation of graduate competencies through a tracer study approach. However, these studies still focused on measuring and identifying competency gaps, rather than developing an integrative and contextual strategy model. Therefore, this study not only supports previous findings but also addresses limitations by developing a strategic model for improving graduate competencies based on empirical data from alumni and users of Master of Educational Management graduates from PGRI Semarang University. Improving the quality of education in higher education needs to be done immediately to improve quality. Quality improvement can basically be done through strategies to improve people, structure, technology, and organizational processes. In relation to the study of

strategies to improve the quality of graduates in higher education, changes are made to the human and technology subsystems, which include: (1) students who are educated; (2) lecturers as educators and teachers; and (3) facilities and infrastructure. To get students with the best potential, a selection system can be implemented that only considers quality, not the target number of students so that the output (graduates) produced will be in demand in the labor market. Lecturers, in addition to being teachers, are also educators who educate prospective economists to become moral human beings as the goal of education (Rosul Asmawi, 2005).

Evaluation of the extent to which the competencies of college graduates are ready to face the demands of the professional world, the college curriculum is important in preparing graduates who are ready to work and able to compete in the professional world, technological developments and changes in global economic dynamics, career trends and opportunities for college graduates experiencing technological transformation and digitalization have changed the professional world significantly. With strong cooperation and commitment from all parties, it is hoped that the gap between higher education and the professional world can be minimized, so that college graduates are created who are ready to compete and work in this challenging era (Pramesti D, Meisya I. N and Amrillah R. 2024).

#### *Research Novelty Statement*

This research has clear scientific novelty, namely producing a description of the strategies implemented by the Faculty of Educational Management Masters at PGRI Semarang University in improving graduate competencies that are applied and developed by graduates in the workplace. Thus, this research provides a theoretical contribution in developing the concept of competency improvement strategies in higher education, as well as a practical contribution in the form of an implementable model for faculties and master's programs at PGRI Semarang University and in the workplace.

## **METODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative approach. The type of research used is a case study at the Faculty of Educational Management Masters, PGRI Semarang University. The research period was carried out for 2 months from September 5 to November 5, 2025. Data sources in this study consist of primary data sources and secondary data, and data collection techniques using interviews, observations, document studies. The data analysis technique used in this study is the data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative data analysis, with Data Collection: Collecting data through interviews, observations, and document studies. Data Reduction: Summarizing, selecting, and focusing data that is relevant to the problem formulation. Data Display: Presenting data in narrative form, tables, or diagrams to facilitate understanding. Drawing conclusions based on the data that has been analyzed, and verifying conclusions with informants.

Interview and Observation Data Analysis Techniques: Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques. Researchers identified the main themes emerging from the interview and observation data and then grouped the

data into these themes. Document Data Analysis: Document data will be analyzed using content analysis techniques. Researchers will identify key themes from the documents and analyze how these themes relate to graduate competency improvement strategies. Triangulation: To increase the credibility of the data, researchers will use triangulation techniques, namely comparing and confirming data from various sources (interviews, observations, documents) and informants.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The Master of Educational Management Faculty of the Republic of Indonesia Teachers Association PGRI Semarang University is located on Jalan Soekarno -Hatta, Tlogosari Semarang, postal code 50196. PGRI Semarang University is a University that has the goal of realizing superior intellectuals, and self-identity, realizing the quality of scientific knowledge and research-based learning, realizing devotion to the community that benefits life and living and implementing exemplary in the implementation of education, research, and community service. The vision of the Master of Educational Management of PGRI Semarang University is to become a Center for Postgraduate Education that is quality, ethical, and environmentally friendly in accordance with the needs of national development and the development of local, regional and global communities through the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. One of its missions is to conduct academic research to solve multi-field problems experienced by society and the government. Graduate competencies to achieve this mission are expected to be research conducted by students in accordance with the demands of the world of work and based on local wisdom. The strategies adopted by the Faculty of Masters in Educational Management, PGRI Semarang University to improve graduate competency are:

1. Lecture and research materials consistently relate to technology applicable to the workplace, particularly in educational institutions, universities, government agencies, and private institutions. The application and development of technology and information systems, for example, include information systems on the learning process, data on student or teacher discipline, and the condition of educational facilities and infrastructure.
2. Providing, strengthening and developing knowledge about management based on local wisdom.
3. Transforming educational unit leadership based on local wisdom.
4. Scientific research publications must be at least Synta 3 and at least 25% of publications must be in international journals.
5. Flexible lecture and thesis guidance mechanisms

The obstacles faced in implementing the Master of Educational Management strategy at PGRI Semarang University are:

1. Most students are already working, so the expected three or four semesters of study require a proper strategy. Students struggle to balance their time between work, studies, and family responsibilities.
2. Some students are late in attending lectures and submitting assignments.

3. Most students work as teachers or principals who are not accustomed to writing books or scientific papers.
4. Working students find it difficult to focus on preparing proposals and thesis reports.
5. Lack of consultation time with the supervisor.

The strategies implemented by the Faculty of Management Masters of PGRI Semarang University to improve graduate competency are highly aligned with the demands of the workforce. Mastery of technology and information systems applicable to the workplace and management based on local wisdom is what makes their knowledge useful in the workplace, especially in educational units or other educational institutions. The strategy of having a flexible lecture mechanism and thesis guidance because the majority of Masters of Educational Management students are working. The flexible lecture and guidance time is an effort to minimize the constraints that because most students work, some students are late in attending or submitting assignments, have difficulty focusing on preparing theses and lack of time for consultations with supervisors. Flexible lecture times include holding lectures not only offline/face to face only but facilitated by lectures Hybrid and full online. Thesis guidance can also be done online and if the guidance offline, students are expected to make an appointment with their supervisor in advance to ensure their rights are met and their targets are achieved. One way to address the reality that students, most of whom are teachers and principals, lack the habit of writing, whether books or scientific papers, is by having the faculty hold article writing workshops and assigning scientific articles to be published in journals, under the guidance of their lecturers. The advantages of Master of Educational Management students, most of whom are already working as teachers or school principals, include:

1. Having direct field experience makes it easy to relate the theory learned in lectures to the workplace. New knowledge from lectures can be implemented, resulting in meaningful learning.
2. Having an extensive professional network, for example, within the Department of Education and government or private agencies. This network strongly supports research collaboration, program implementation, and the development of educational unit innovations.
3. Students' learning motivation is high and solution-oriented because students have directly experienced the obstacles that exist in the workplace.
4. Make a real contribution to improving the quality of the schools where they work.

Becoming agents of change in the workplace. As practitioners, they can be drivers of innovation in their schools or regions and inspire colleagues to continue learning and innovating.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the overall analysis, it can be concluded that the Master of Educational Management program at PGRI Semarang University has implemented a number of relevant and contextual strategies to improve the

competency of its graduates. These strategies focus on meeting the demands of the modern workplace by emphasizing mastery of information technology, local wisdom values in management, and improving the quality of research and scientific publications. Flexibility in the lecture process and guidance are key to adapting to the characteristics of students, most of whom are active educational practitioners. Overall, this effort to improve graduate competency not only contributes to reducing the gap between academic competency and workplace needs but also enriches the scientific knowledge of educational management with implementable strategic models. The success of this strategy is supported by the students' intrinsic potential as practitioners who bring field experience, professional networks, and high motivation to solve real-world problems. The implication of this research is the importance of a student-centered approach (student-centered) and oriented towards practical solutions in providing quality and impactful master's education.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

Further studies that need to be carried out are to deepen tracer study to get feedback loop from graduate users (schools, agencies, and other stakeholders). This data can serve as the basis for developing more adaptive competency improvement strategies.

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