



Vocational Learning Management for Students with Special Needs: A POACE-Based Case Study at SLB Negeri 1 Padang

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Abstract: This study analyzes the management of vocational learning for students with special needs at SLB Negeri 1 Padang by applying the POACE framework: Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling, and Evaluating. The research addresses the problem of inconsistent learning management and limited alignment between vocational programs and students' functional needs. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving school leaders, vocational teachers, and students. The data were analyzed through Miles and Huberman's interactive model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the implementation of POACE is present but uneven. Planning is not yet based on comprehensive student assessments; organizing is hindered by mismatches between teacher expertise and assigned tasks; actuating is limited by insufficient adaptive learning resources; controlling lacks structured monitoring instruments; and evaluation does not include competency measurement or pathways to employment readiness. Overall, the study concludes that vocational learning management requires more systematic, data-driven, and inclusive strategies. Strengthening each POACE component is essential to improving the relevance and effectiveness of vocational education for students with special needs.

Keywords: Inclusive school management; POACE; Special needs students; Vocational education

Introduction

Education is a fundamental process that enables individuals to adapt to their environment and participate meaningfully in society. Inclusive education emphasizes that every learner, regardless of ability, has the right to access meaningful learning opportunities that develop independence and social participation. In Indonesia, this principle is reinforced through Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which mandates that education must be responsive to the diverse needs, potentials, and abilities of all learners, including students with special needs. In this framework, vocational education becomes a strategic pathway for preparing students with disabilities to

achieve functional independence and meaningful participation in everyday life.

Vocational education is defined as a form of learning that equips students with applied competencies relevant to specific fields of work (Pavlova, 2019). For students with special needs, vocational learning contributes not only to the acquisition of practical skills but also to the development of independence, self-confidence, motivation, and adaptive behavior. Sudira (2021) explains that vocational learning in special schools should be oriented toward functional skills that enhance students' productivity and social integration. Likewise, Sutarna et al. (2020) highlight several key indicators of effective vocational learning, including mastery of technical competencies, practical application, soft skills development, employability, and adequate

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learning infrastructure. These indicators underline the need for vocational programs that are aligned with labor market demands and tailored to the unique characteristics of learners in special education settings.

Despite its strategic importance, the implementation of vocational education in special schools often faces significant challenges. At SLB Negeri 1 Padang, vocational learning covers various skill areas such as culinary arts, fashion, beauty, information technology, souvenir making, and plant cultivation. However, recent school data (SLB Negeri 1 Padang, 2023) shows that around 65% of graduates have not been absorbed into the workforce nor established independent entrepreneurial activities. This gap indicates a misalignment between vocational learning processes and real-world outcomes. Additional challenges in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka – such as insufficient teacher training, limited facilities, and poor integration between policy and classroom practice (Nurussalami & Muhammad, 2024) – further complicate the management of vocational learning. These issues signal the need for a more structured, responsive, and data-driven managerial approach.

At SLB Negeri 1 Padang, vocational education is delivered through various skill areas, such as culinary arts, fashion, beauty, information technology, souvenir making, and plant cultivation. However, recent school data (SLB Negeri 1 Padang, 2023) shows that approximately 65% of vocational program graduates have not been absorbed into the workforce or become independent entrepreneurs. This finding highlights a significant gap between the learning process and real-world outcomes, indicating the need for improved vocational learning management.

The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in special schools (SLB) aims to support differentiated and project-based learning approaches tailored to students' profiles (BSKAP, 2022). Nevertheless, challenges remain, such as insufficient teacher training, lack of appropriate facilities, and weak integration between policy and classroom practices (Nurussalami & Muhammad, 2024). These issues have made the implementation of effective and responsive vocational learning management even more critical.

Previous studies have noted the importance of effective management in vocational learning, yet research specifically examining how managerial functions operate in special education settings remains limited. To address this gap, the present study adopts the POACE managerial model Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling, and Evaluating as a comprehensive framework for analyzing vocational learning management. While prior research has explored vocational learning outcomes and curriculum implementation, few studies have systematically

examined the managerial processes that underlie them. This constitutes the novelty of the research. Using the POACE lens allows for a structured evaluation of how planning aligns with student needs, how resources and roles are organized, how learning activities are implemented, how monitoring is carried out, and how evaluations inform improvement.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the vocational learning management process at SLB Negeri 1 Padang through the POACE framework. The findings are expected to strengthen vocational education practices for students with special needs and provide evidence-based recommendations for both policy development and school-level improvement.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the vocational learning management process at SLB Negeri 1 Padang through the POACE lens. The findings are expected to contribute to the strengthening of vocational education practices for students with special needs and offer evidence-based recommendations for policy and school-level improvements.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. This type of research is appropriate for exploring complex educational phenomena and understanding managerial practices in natural settings, particularly in contexts involving students with special needs (Sugiyono, 2020). The research is guided by the POACE managerial framework (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling, Evaluating), which provides a structured lens for examining the management of vocational learning at SLB Negeri 1 Padang (Miles, Huberman et al., 2019). The study was conducted at SLB Negeri 1 Padang, a public special school providing vocational education for students with intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, autism, and Down syndrome. Participants were selected purposively and consisted of the school principal, the vice principal for curriculum, seven vocational teachers, and five students.

The study was conducted at SLB Negeri 1 Padang, a public special school that offers vocational education to students with various types of disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, autism, and Down syndrome. Participants were selected purposively, consisting of the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, seven vocational skill teachers, and five students enrolled in vocational programs. These individuals were directly involved in or affected by the management of vocational learning, making them valuable sources of information for the research.

Data collection was conducted in three stages. In-depth interviews with school leaders, vocational teachers, and students to obtain insights into the

planning and implementation of vocational learning. Participant observation focusing on instructional activities conducted in classrooms and workshops. Document analysis, including curriculum documents, teaching plans, and assessment records, to examine alignment between planning and actual learning activities. These stages enabled data triangulation to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2021).

Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2019) interactive model, consisting of: Data condensation (selecting, simplifying, and focusing data). Data display (organizing data into POACE-based thematic categories). Conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis was conducted according to the five POACE components: Planning: alignment of curriculum, student needs, and learning resources. Organizing: allocation of roles and responsibilities. Actuating: instructional practices and student engagement. Controlling: monitoring and supervision practices. Evaluating: assessment of learning effectiveness and the use of evaluation results for improvement. The findings were interpreted in relation to current policies in inclusive and vocational education, particularly those related to the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in special schools (Nurussalami & Muhammad, 2024).

Result and Discussion

Result

This study explored the management of vocational learning at SLB Negeri 1 Padang through the POACE framework, which includes five key components: Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling, and Evaluating. Each of these managerial stages plays a crucial role in determining how effectively vocational education is implemented for students with special needs. Based on in-depth interviews with school leaders, vocational teachers, and students, as well as classroom observations and document analysis, this study identified various strengths and weaknesses across the five components. The detailed findings are presented below.

Planning

The planning of vocational learning at SLB Negeri 1 Padang was conducted annually based on internal discussions among the school leadership team and teachers. The curriculum planning was formally guided by the Kurikulum Merdeka and translated into the school's operational curriculum (KOSP). Teachers developed syllabi, lesson plans, and teaching modules adapted to the student profiles. However, this process was not grounded in data such as tracer studies or labor

market analysis. The school lacked a systematic mechanism to assess whether its vocational offerings were aligned with the demands of the local industry or with graduates' career outcomes. Furthermore, curriculum decisions were made in isolation, without consulting external stakeholders such as parents, employers, or alumni.

The planning component is essential for determining the overall direction and quality of vocational learning programs. Effective planning ensures that curriculum design, learning targets, and resource allocation are aligned with student needs and broader employment demands. In the context of special needs education, planning becomes even more crucial because students require adaptive approaches, individualized goals, and environment-specific strategies. The following table summarizes the key findings related to the planning process at SLB Negeri 1 Padang.

Table 1. Vocational Learning Planning at SLB Negeri 1 Padang

Planning Element	Description
Curriculum Reference	Kurikulum Merdeka and KOSP
Needs Assessment	No formal tracer study or market analysis
Stakeholder Involvement	Absent (no partnerships with industry or alumni input)
Vocational Goals Clarity	General and unmeasured
Basis for Decision-Making	Teacher availability and existing resources

Organizing

Organizing is a crucial managerial component because it ensures that roles, responsibilities, and resources are distributed effectively across personnel involved in vocational learning. In special education settings, organizing becomes even more important as teachers must handle diverse student needs, varying levels of functional skills, and individualized learning plans. The effectiveness of learning implementation strongly depends on whether organizational structures support collaboration and instructional coherence. The following table presents the organization-related findings in this research.

Furthermore, the school lacked written job descriptions and formal structures for coordinating vocational departments. Collaboration among vocational teachers was limited to informal sharing of ideas, and there were no scheduled team meetings or cross-departmental planning sessions. Classroom space and workshop facilities were shared across different skills programs, often leading to scheduling conflicts and inadequate hands-on practice time for students.

Table 2. Summary of Vocational Organizing at SLB Negeri 1 Padang

Organizing Aspect	Description
Teacher Placement	Based on availability, not qualifications
Coordination Mechanism	Informal; no structured departmental collaboration
Infrastructure	Shared among different programs; not industry-standard
Job Descriptions	Absent
Resource Distribution	Uneven, constrained by limited funding

Actuating

Actuating is the managerial stage where plans are translated into real instructional practices. In vocational education for students with special needs, this component emphasizes how teachers motivate, guide, and facilitate hands-on learning experiences aligned with students' abilities. Actuating also reflects the pedagogical strategies chosen to stimulate independence and skill mastery. The table below summarizes how actuating was implemented in the vocational learning process at SLB Negeri 1 Padang.

The implementation of vocational learning activities consisted of both classroom instruction and practical sessions in school-based workshops. Teachers attempted to incorporate differentiated instruction and project-based learning in line with Kurikulum Merdeka principles. However, classroom observations revealed that many lessons remained teacher-centered, with limited hands-on practice or student-driven projects. This was largely due to a lack of training on inclusive pedagogical models and inadequate access to modern tools or learning aids. Teachers expressed that their instructional creativity was constrained by the lack of time, support, and infrastructure.

Table 3. Summary of Vocational Learning Implementation

Implementation Element	Description
Learning Approach	Mostly conventional; some PjBL attempted
Teaching Aids	Minimal, often improvised
Student Engagement	Strong during practice, lower in theory-based sessions
Differentiation	Limited; dependent on teacher initiative
Challenges	Lack of teacher training and adequate tools

Students, on the other hand, responded positively to practical activities. Many showed enthusiasm during practice sessions, particularly in fields such as cooking, souvenir-making, and garment production. Yet, the variety of teaching methods remained narrow, and students with more complex needs (such as those with

severe intellectual disabilities or autism) often received limited individualized attention. Instructional materials were outdated and often developed by teachers independently without centralized guidance.

Controlling

Controlling ensures that all learning activities proceed according to plan and that deviations are identified early for improvement. In the context of special needs vocational education, systematic monitoring can help teachers evaluate whether students are progressing according to their individualized learning goals. However, the findings of this study indicate that the controlling process is not yet optimal due to limited monitoring mechanisms and the absence of structured supervision. The following table summarizes key issues related to controlling.

Moreover, the school did not conduct performance tracking for vocational students in relation to skills mastery, practical readiness, or portfolio development. The lack of data from student assessments made it difficult to determine whether the learning objectives were being met. Supervision also failed to address the gaps between curriculum plans and classroom realities, such as insufficient practice time or tool unavailability.

Table 4. Summary of Controlling Activities

Control Element	Description
Supervision Frequency	Irregular, mostly informal
Focus of Monitoring	Administrative compliance, not pedagogical quality
Feedback	General and undocumented
Student Performance Tracking	Absent
Follow-up Actions	Not implemented systematically

Evaluating

Evaluating is the final stage of the POACE model, focusing on assessing the effectiveness of vocational programs and the extent to which learning goals are achieved. In special schools, evaluation should also measure functional skills, independence, and readiness for employment or daily living. However, this study found that evaluation practices at SLB Negeri 1 Padang have not yet reached this standard, as assessments rely mostly on teacher judgment without clear criteria or follow-up action. The table below outlines the key findings on evaluation.

No follow-up evaluation mechanisms were in place to revise the curriculum or teaching methods based on assessment outcomes. The school had not yet involved external parties such as industry representatives, alumni, or parents in the evaluation process. As a result, evaluation remained internal and largely subjective, preventing evidence-based improvement.

Table 5. Summary of Evaluation Practices

Evaluation Element	Description
Assessment Methods	Teacher-designed; limited rubrics
Focus Areas	Task completion, behavior, attendance
Outcome-Based Evaluation	Absent
Industry Involvement	None
Program Revision Mechanism	Not established

In summary, while SLB Negeri 1 Padang has made significant efforts to implement vocational learning for students with special needs, the findings indicate several systemic gaps. Planning lacks alignment with real labor market needs. Organizing remains informal and limited by human resource constraints. Implementation shows potential but is hindered by lack of resources and inclusive teaching strategies. Control and evaluation are conducted inconsistently, without structured tools or data utilization. To enhance the quality and impact of vocational education in this context, a more integrated, data-driven, and collaborative management approach is required—one that aligns school planning with student potential and workforce demands.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the planning component at SLB Negeri 1 Padang has not yet reached a systematic and data-driven standard. Planning activities were carried out mainly based on teacher experience, without tracer studies, stakeholder involvement, or alignment with labor market needs. This condition is directly related to the research objective, which is to analyze the suitability of planning with the POACE framework.

These findings are consistent with Sutarna et al. (2020), who emphasize that effective vocational learning planning for students with special needs must include external partnerships and analysis of post-school pathways. Similarly, Setiawati (2023) reports that data-driven planning significantly increases the relevance of vocational learning programs. The lack of such data at SLB Negeri 1 Padang suggests a planning process that is reactive rather than anticipatory, reinforcing the need for structured planning aligned with student profiles and employment opportunities.

The study revealed that organizing at SLB Negeri 1 Padang has been implemented but remains limited due to teacher-task mismatches, informal organizational structures, and minimal coordination across departments. This directly influences the school's ability to provide vocational learning that is aligned with industry standards.

This finding aligns with Pavlova (2019), who argues that vocational education requires instructional staff with relevant technical and pedagogical competencies. The mismatch found in this research echoes Nurussalami et al. (2024), who found that weak coordination and undocumented organizational structures hinder effective implementation of inclusive and vocational programs. Thus, the organizing process, although present, does not yet support optimal vocational learning outcomes for students with special needs.

The actuating stage showed mixed results. While students demonstrated high motivation during hands-on learning, instructional practices remained dominated by traditional methods, with minimal use of differentiated, project-based, or technology-assisted learning strategies. This gap reflects one of the research objectives: evaluating the extent to which vocational learning implementation aligns with the POACE framework.

These findings are similar to BSKAP (2022), which states that Kurikulum Merdeka requires continuous teacher mentoring and adaptive learning materials, both of which were limited at the school. Sudira (2021) further emphasizes that vocational learning must integrate soft skills and independence, which are difficult to achieve with conventional teaching methods. Therefore, actuating at SLB Negeri 1 Padang shows potential but requires innovation and more inclusive pedagogical strategies.

The controlling component was found to be the weakest among all POACE elements. Supervision activities occurred occasionally but lacked systematic tools, structured feedback, and consistent follow-up actions. This situation affects the school's ability to identify problems early and support continuous improvement, which is essential for vocational learning quality.

This finding aligns with Miles et al. (2019), who highlight the importance of structured monitoring and reflective feedback in improving educational practice. Previous studies by Setiawati (2023) also note that vocational programs without strong internal supervision tend to stagnate and fail to meet workplace competency standards. Therefore, the limited controlling practices suggest a significant gap in managerial capacity at SLB Negeri 1 Padang.

The evaluation process at SLB Negeri 1 Padang was found to be informal, lacking clear criteria, external validation, and systematic measurement of student readiness for employment or independence. This is directly related to the research objective to assess evaluation practices within the POACE framework.

These findings are consistent with Nurussalami et al. (2024), who observed that many special schools do

not yet implement comprehensive evaluation due to limited expertise and policy support. The absence of outcome-based evaluation also echoes Sutarna et al. (2020), who stress that vocational learning effectiveness must be measured through competency achievement and post-school transitions. Without such evaluations, opportunities for program improvement remain limited.

Overall, the findings indicate uneven implementation of the POACE model. Planning and evaluation are the least developed components, while actuating shows potential but requires innovation. Organizing and controlling also need strengthening to ensure coherence and accountability. These results support Setiawati (2023), who argues that sustainable vocational education improvement for students with disabilities requires strong managerial structures, collaboration among stakeholders, and evidence-based decision-making.

In relation to the research objective, the study demonstrates that although the POACE framework is acknowledged, its practical application at SLB Negeri 1 Padang remains partial. The findings contribute to the literature advocating for systemic reform in vocational learning management in special education, emphasizing the importance of inclusive management practices that respond to student needs and labor market demands.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the management of vocational learning at SLB Negeri 1 Padang using the POACE framework. The findings show that although planning, organizing, actuating, controlling, and evaluating are implemented, their application remains partial and unintegrated. Planning is not yet supported by data such as tracer studies or labor market needs; organizing is limited by teacher-task mismatches; actuating lacks inclusive and innovative pedagogical practices; controlling focuses mainly on administrative compliance; and evaluation does not assess program outcomes or students' transition readiness. In conclusion, strengthening data-driven planning, teacher competency development, systematic supervision, and collaboration with industry is essential to improve the relevance and effectiveness of vocational learning for students with special needs. This study is limited to one school and qualitative data, so further research involving multiple institutions and mixed-method approaches is recommended to obtain broader and more generalizable insights.

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Author Contributions

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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