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Exploring Innovative Work Behavior among Vocational Educators: A Qualitative Study in Private Vocational Schools in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

As the demands of the modern workforce evolve, the capacity of vocational educators to innovate becomes increasingly critical. However, research on innovative work behavior (IWB) has predominantly focused on public or general education settings, leaving a gap in understanding how IWB manifests in private vocational schools, which often face more acute resource constraints and market pressures. This study examines teachers' IWB at a private vocational high school in East Surabaya, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study investigates how educators generate, promote, and implement innovative practices within the school context. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 participants, including school administrators and teachers across various vocational disciplines, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. Findings reveal that while educators demonstrate robust IWB use, their innovation is specifically triggered by "survival-driven" adaptations to industrial demands and rigid curriculum dynamics. Notably, the role of leadership proved dualistic: acting as both a primary motivator through professional autonomy and a potential barrier through bureaucratic oversight. These results contribute to the literature by providing a contextualized model of IWB in private vocational education, underscoring that institutional support must move beyond administrative compliance to foster a collaborative climate that sustains long-term innovation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Innovation in education has become a crucial factor in improving learning quality and responding to the rapid transformation of work and technology. In vocational education, innovation is particularly important because learning outcomes are expected to align with industrial development and labor market needs. Vocational teachers are therefore required

not only to deliver knowledge but also to design adaptive, contextual, and practice-oriented learning experiences that prepare students for employment [1], [2].

Teachers in Vocational High School (VHS), as the main actors in the vocational learning process, face complex challenges. The development of innovative teaching methods can create a contextual classroom atmosphere and bridge the gap between the world of education and the world of work [3], [4]. Teachers are challenged to address the *link and match* with industry, adapt to changes in the vocational curriculum, and meet the pressure to produce work-ready graduates, while also understanding the extent to which the organization contributes to the emergence of innovative work behavior [5], [6]. These demands position vocational teachers in a dynamic work environment where continuous adaptation and innovation are not optional but essential professional competencies.

Innovative work behavior provides a relevant theoretical lens for understanding how teachers respond to these challenges. De Jong and Den Hartog [10] conceptualize innovative work behavior as a process consisting of idea exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation. In the context of vocational education, idea exploration may occur when teachers identify new learning needs based on industry trends; idea generation appears when teachers design new instructional strategies or media; idea promotion takes place when teachers seek support from colleagues or school leaders; and idea implementation is reflected in the application of innovative learning practices in the classroom. Thus, innovative work behavior is not a single act of creativity but a gradual, context-dependent process shaped by both individual initiative and organizational conditions [12], [14].

The role of vocational teachers requires the ability to teach, educate, guide, and train students to achieve educational goals that align with the demands of the times, specifically to teach competencies that meet the needs of a dynamic, continuously evolving industry [7], [8]. However, teachers often encounter structural constraints such as limited facilities, lack of access to industry-based training, and restricted exposure to recent technological developments. These conditions create systemic pressures that require teachers to innovate within existing limitations [9]. Such conditions highlight the importance of examining how innovation emerges as a form of adaptive work behavior rather than solely as an outcome of ideal organizational support.

Innovative work behavior is shaped by multidimensional factors, such as a supportive work environment, opportunities for professional development, and leadership style, which provide the foundation for exploring new ideas [10]. Teachers who exhibit innovative work behavior can create engaging, relevant, and effective learning experiences. They can utilize educational technology to design flexible curricula and develop responsive teaching strategies that align with students' needs [11]. An example of this innovative work behavior is reflected in the findings of a preliminary study conducted at a school, where teachers successfully created independent video-based learning media and implemented them through the flipped classroom concept, as well as simulation-based learning activities, such as role-play, particularly in vocational subjects focused on design and multimedia. These practices illustrate that innovative work behavior is not limited to idea generation but extends to the practical realization of innovation within instructional settings.

Innovative work behavior is essential for teachers as it directly contributes to the quality of learning [12], [13]. It enables teachers to dynamically adapt their teaching methods to students' evolving needs and development. The use of educational technology allows teachers to design flexible curricula and create responsive learning strategies tailored to students' needs [14], [15]. Innovative work behavior can be explained through the framework of De Jong & Den Hartog, which views innovation as a process involving idea exploration, generation, promotion, and implementation. In vocational education, this process is crucial as teachers must continuously adapt to industry and technological changes. This process-based perspective emphasizes that innovation is not a single act but a sequence of interrelated behaviors occurring within a work context.

According to De Jong & Den Hartog [10], innovative work behavior is defined as an individual's actions that deliberately generate ideas or initiatives to encourage a group or organization to implement new ideas, procedures, and products that are beneficial to the organization. Similarly, Becuwe [16] and Binsaeed [17] emphasize that innovative work behavior is a deliberate, gradual process, spanning from problem identification to idea implementation. This indicates that both internal and external factors shape innovative behavior. Thus, innovative work behavior can be understood as a context-dependent construct influenced by both individual initiative and organizational conditions.

Vocational teachers are required to connect classroom learning processes with the real needs of the workforce. The increasing demand for quality education must be balanced with systematic efforts to foster teachers' creativity and initiative [18]. This includes developing competency-based curricula, building industry collaborations, and creating learning environments that support the mastery of practical skills. Learning in a private Vocational High School (VHS) becomes challenging without teachers' innovative work behavior, as the rapid pace of industrial development may result in graduates whose competencies are misaligned with labor market needs [7], [19]. Therefore, fostering innovative work behavior among vocational teachers becomes a strategic priority in ensuring the relevance and sustainability of vocational education.

Previous studies have examined several determinants of teachers' innovative work behavior, including organizational support, leadership, work climate, self-efficacy, work engagement, and perceived organizational support [20], [21], [35]. Other studies also indicate that transformational leadership and knowledge sharing can strengthen innovative behavior by fostering a supportive, psychologically safe work environment [14], [40]. Although these studies provide important insights, most of them focus on general educational settings, public schools, or quantitative relationships among variables. Limited attention has been given to how teachers in private vocational schools develop, negotiate, and implement innovative work behavior in response to resource limitations, curriculum dynamics, and industry pressures.

This gap is important because private vocational schools often face different institutional conditions from public schools, particularly in terms of resource availability, financial independence, and the need to maintain strong relevance with industry. Therefore, examining innovative work behavior in this context can provide a more contextual

understanding of how innovation emerges as a daily professional practice among vocational teachers.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on teachers at a private Vocational High School (VHS) in East Surabaya, who face distinct challenges compared to those in public schools, particularly due to resource limitations and institutional pressures. Previous studies have highlighted the role of organizational support, leadership, and work climate in shaping innovative work behavior [20], [21]. However, research specifically examining innovative behavior among teachers in private vocational schools remains limited. In addition, prior research has predominantly employed quantitative approaches, leaving a gap in understanding the contextual and experiential processes through which innovative work behavior is enacted in everyday teaching practices.

Most prior studies have focused on public schools or general education contexts. In contrast, vocational education presents unique challenges due to its strong orientation toward practical skills and industry relevance. This positions vocational teachers as key agents who must proactively develop contextual and applicable learning innovations [22], [23]. Accordingly, exploring innovative work behavior within this specific context provides deeper insights into how teachers respond to real-world demands and constraints.

Research on teachers' innovative work behavior is highly important as it is directly related to the success of educational transformation in the global knowledge era. Innovative teachers are a key asset in building a creative, adaptive, and future-oriented education system [24], [25]. A deeper understanding of how innovative work behavior grows and develops within school environments must be continuously enhanced by educational institutions through the design of innovative school policies, teacher training strategies to improve teaching quality, media development, and the effective transformation of information technology systems to foster a culture of innovation within schools. The study of teachers' innovative work behavior is not only relevant to improving individual educator quality but also serves as a foundation for advancing the national education system as a whole [26], [27], [28]. This highlights the broader implication that strengthening innovative work behavior contributes not only to instructional improvement but also to systemic educational development.

Although many studies have examined teachers' innovative work behavior, most prior research has focused on formal educational institutions in general or on public schools with stable resources. There is still limited research that specifically explores how teachers in private vocational schools, who often face challenges such as limited facilities and financial independence pressures, organically develop innovative work behaviors. Therefore, this study aims to explore how teachers in private vocational schools develop and implement innovative work behavior in response to curriculum dynamics and industry demands. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do vocational teachers enact innovative work behavior? Furthermore, (2) What factors influence this process? This research is expected to contribute to the literature on innovative work behavior in vocational education and provide practical implications for school leaders in designing strategies to support teacher development and foster a sustainable culture of innovation. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study seeks to capture the depth and

complexity of teachers' experiences in enacting innovative work behavior within their specific organizational context.

2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive, qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of innovative work behavior among teachers at a private Vocational High School (VHS). This approach was chosen because it is well-suited to describing social phenomena naturally, without manipulating variables, and to interpreting the subjective meanings teachers experience in carrying out their professional roles. In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument, actively involved in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The research design is exploratory, focusing on identifying the forms of teachers' innovative behavior, the influencing factors, and the meanings embedded in them.

The research procedure consisted of several interconnected stages. The first stage involved identifying the phenomenon and formulating the research focus based on preliminary observations and a literature review related to teachers' innovative work behavior. The second stage consisted of planning and determining participants based on specific criteria, followed by data collection through in-depth interviews and documentation. The third stage involved iterative data analysis using a thematic approach, while the final stage included drawing conclusions, verifying results, and composing an interpretive description based on field findings. This process was cyclical and reflective, allowing continuous refinement of data interpretation.

The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling, in which participants were deliberately chosen based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. The total number of participants in this study was twelve, consisting of the principal, vice principals for public relations and student affairs, and nine teachers from four areas of expertise: Accounting (AKL), Visual Communication Design (DKV), Office Management (MP), and Television Production and Broadcasting (PKPT). This composition ensured representation from both managerial and teaching roles within the school. The inclusion of participants from diverse functional roles was intended to capture multiple perspectives on how innovative work behavior is understood and enacted across organizational levels.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted individually with each participant. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the depth of participants' responses and their availability. The interviews were conducted in a quiet, comfortable setting within the school to allow participants to express their experiences openly. Before the interview began, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time. The interview questions focused on teachers' experiences in exploring, generating, promoting, and implementing innovative ideas in vocational learning.

To ensure data validity (trustworthiness), this study applied source triangulation by comparing information from various positions (school management and classroom teachers), as well as technique triangulation through observation of the learning environment. This was done to ensure that the research findings truly represent the empirical reality in the field. The

research data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary source, supported by non-participant observation and documentation as complementary data. The interview guide was developed based on the theory of innovative work behavior proposed by De Jong & Den Hartog [10], which includes four main dimensions: idea exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation. Through these interviews, the researcher explored teachers' experiences, perceptions, and views of the innovation process in schools.

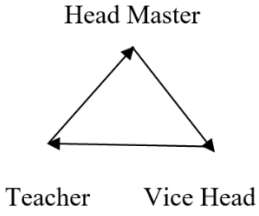

Figure 1. Triangulation Technique Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in three main stages, according to Creswell & Creswell [29]: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, relevant data were selected, coded, and organized into thematic categories aligned with the four dimensions of innovative behavior. In the data display stage, findings were presented in the form of matrices and descriptive narratives to facilitate pattern identification. The final stage involved drawing conclusions, which were continuously verified through triangulation and member checking to ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings. The use of a theory-driven thematic framework enabled the analysis to remain systematically aligned with the conceptual dimensions of innovative work behavior while remaining open to emergent themes from the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The findings reveal that innovative work behavior is widely and consistently enacted by teachers at the private Vocational High School (VHS) in East Surabaya across multiple dimensions. This finding is based on interview data collected from 12 participants, including the principal, vice principals, and teachers with expertise in various areas. Teachers' innovative work behavior is reflected in four main dimensions: idea exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation. These four dimensions consistently appeared in teaching practices, media development, and collaborative work within the school environment. Importantly, these dimensions did not emerge as isolated behaviors but as an interconnected process forming a continuous cycle of innovation in teachers' daily work practices. The findings reinforce the assumption that Vocational High School (VHS) teachers have a strong awareness of the importance of innovation in enhancing graduates' competitiveness and in maintaining the relevance of learning to industry needs.

In the idea exploration dimension, nearly all informants demonstrated active efforts to seek new opportunities for improving the quality of learning. Vocational High School

(VHS) teachers demonstrate strong awareness of the changing demands of industry and the advancement of digital technology, both of which require adapting curricula and teaching methods. One teacher from the Visual Communication Design (DKV) department (G3) stated:

Table 1. Interview Teacher (G3)

"Students today understand visuals faster than text. So, I often look for inspiration from YouTube, TikTok Edukasi, and design forums so that I can adjust the materials according to current trends."

This statement illustrates how teachers search for ideas through digital platforms and professional communities. A similar insight was expressed by an Accounting teacher (G1):

Table 2. Interview Teacher (G1)

"I try to understand the financial applications commonly used in companies today, then adapt them into practical lessons so students won't be left behind."

This phenomenon shows that teachers' idea exploration does not only focus on teaching methods but also on ensuring the relevance of learning content to the needs of the workforce. Moreover, this finding indicates that teachers' awareness of external demands (e.g., industry trends and technological developments) acts as a primary trigger for exploratory behavior. These findings are consistent with Mulligan's [30] research, which highlights that intrinsic motivation and sensitivity to external contexts are the main triggers of creativity and innovation at work. This is also supported by studies showing that a work environment that provides autonomy strengthens individual idea exploration processes [31], [32].

Conceptually, these findings indicate that idea exploration among vocational teachers begins with sensitivity to external changes, particularly technological development, curriculum demands, and industry expectations. Exploration is therefore not merely an individual search for new teaching resources, but a professional response to contextual pressures. In this sense, vocational teachers' innovative work behavior starts when teachers recognize gaps between existing classroom practices and the competencies required in the workplace.

The second dimension, idea generation, describes the extent to which teachers can develop new ideas based on the results of their explorations. Teachers at Vocational High School (VHS) in East Surabaya generally demonstrated a high ability to produce creative learning concepts tailored to the characteristics of vocational students. One Office Management teacher (G7) explained:

Table 3. Interview Teacher (G7)

"Every year, I create a mini office simulation project where students build their own mock office. They learn while practicing all administrative processes, from correspondence to guest services."

A teacher from the Television Production and Broadcasting department (G10) added another form of learning innovation:

Table 4. Interview Teacher (G10)

"We run a student broadcasting project, where students create simple television content. They learn scriptwriting, lighting, and editing. From there, I see that they become more enthusiastic and creative."

These findings indicate that teachers not only respond to changes but also actively create new initiatives that align with the needs of the creative industry. The emergence of such ideas suggests that teachers are not merely adaptive but also proactive in designing contextually relevant innovations. This reinforces the view that idea generation results from the interaction between individual motivation, organizational support, and openness to new experiences [33], [34]. The condition of Vocational High School (VHS) teachers, who are accustomed to facing practical challenges, fosters high adaptive competence and creative thinking skills. This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of Putri & Izzati [35] who revealed that teachers with strong collegial support are more likely to generate pedagogical innovations.

Conceptually, idea generation represents the transformation of external awareness into concrete pedagogical designs. The findings show that vocational teachers do not simply adopt existing practices but reinterpret industry needs into contextual learning projects, simulations, and media-based activities. This suggests that innovation in vocational education is practice-oriented, emerging from teachers' ability to connect curriculum content with authentic occupational tasks.

In the idea promotion dimension, it was found that although teachers have many new ideas, not all of them are easily accepted within the school environment. Most teachers stated that the process of socializing ideas often requires persuasive efforts and good interpersonal communication. One accounting teacher (G2) explained:

Table 5. Interview Teacher (G2)

"Sometimes my ideas are considered too complicated by other teachers. But I usually discuss them first with the vice principal to gain support before implementing them."

A design and visual communication (DKV) teacher (G5) expressed a similar view:

Table 6. Interview Teacher (G3)

"When I have a new idea, I usually show the finished product first. For example, I create a sample learning video and then present it during a teachers' meeting so they can see the result."

This indicates that communication skills and idea promotion strategies are key factors in the success of innovation. The findings also reveal that idea promotion is not a purely individual activity but a socially negotiated process that depends on organizational acceptance and leadership endorsement. The way teachers promote their ideas reflects a shift in the school's organizational culture toward a more open and adaptive environment, although minor resistance still exists from some parties [36]. Idea promotion is often the most challenging stage in the innovation cycle because it requires legitimacy and social support from the work environment. This finding is also consistent with Bak [37], who stated

that leadership support and a collaborative climate are essential prerequisites for the successful implementation of educational innovations.

Conceptually, these findings suggest that idea promotion functions as a social validation process. Innovative ideas require not only creativity but also acceptance, negotiation, and support from colleagues and school leaders. In this stage, innovation becomes a collective process, as teachers must communicate the value of their ideas and build trust before new practices can be adopted within the school environment.

The fourth dimension, idea implementation, describes the extent to which teachers can apply new ideas to their learning practices. The findings show that most Vocational High School (VHS) teachers have implemented innovations in the form of digital media utilization, project-based learning methods, and industry collaboration. One Television Production and Broadcasting teacher (G11) stated:

Table 7. Interview Teacher (G11)

"I apply a production system similar to a professional studio. The students are divided into teams, some become producers, cameramen, and editors. So, they learn while working in teams just like in the real world."

Meanwhile, a Design and Visual Communication (DKV) teacher (G6) explained:

Table 8. Interview Teacher (G6)

"I create commercial design projects. The students collaborate with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to design logos and social media content. This gives them direct, hands-on experience."

These examples illustrate how teachers' developed ideas are successfully applied in practice-oriented learning. The implementation stage demonstrates that innovative work behavior reaches its full expression when ideas are transformed into tangible instructional practices that create value for students and the institution. This finding supports Tico et al. [38], who stated that innovative work behavior reflects an individual's ability to transform ideas into actions that bring value to the organization. The implementation of innovation among Vocational High School teachers also demonstrates a combination of creativity, risk-taking, and professional commitment to improving the quality of learning. This is consistent with Yousaf [39], who found that teachers with high autonomy and a supportive work environment tend to be more consistent in applying innovative ideas.

Conceptually, idea implementation reflects the materialization of innovation into observable teaching practices. At this stage, teachers' ideas become meaningful when they are translated into project-based learning, digital media, simulations, and collaboration with industry or local enterprises. This indicates that innovative work behavior reaches its strongest form when innovation produces direct learning value for students and strengthens the relevance of vocational education.

Overall, the findings suggest that innovative work behavior among vocational teachers operates as a dynamic and cyclical process, beginning with awareness of external demands, followed by idea development, social negotiation, and practical implementation.

This integrated process highlights teachers' capacity to navigate constraints while continuously generating meaningful innovations within their professional context.

3.2. Discussion

The findings confirm that teachers in private vocational schools in East Surabaya widely and consistently engage in innovative work behavior across all dimensions: idea exploration, idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation. This indicates that innovation is not only present at the individual level but has been integrated into teachers' professional practices and the broader school culture. Innovative behavior is therefore better understood as a sustained and structured process rather than a spontaneous or incidental activity. This finding extends understanding of innovative work behavior as a dynamic, cyclical process embedded in everyday professional routines, rather than as isolated acts of innovation.

The strong presence of innovative behavior reflects the emergence of a work culture that prioritizes innovative learning, openness to change, and the improvement of students' competencies. Teachers no longer serve merely as curriculum implementers, but as active learning agents who continuously create renewal and adaptation in response to contemporary needs. This aligns with the concept of a learning organization, in which schools function as institutions that continuously learn, innovate, and adapt to social and industrial environmental changes [40]. In this regard, the school environment operates not only as a formal institution but also as an adaptive system that supports continuous knowledge creation and sharing among its members. Vocational High School (VHS) teachers in East Surabaya show a strong tendency to develop teaching methods and media aligned with industry practices, thereby enhancing students' readiness to face global challenges.

This study also indicates that innovative behavior among Vocational High School teachers does not arise solely from individual motivation but rather from dynamic interactions among personal, institutional, and contextual factors. Personal factors, including intrinsic motivation, work meaningfulness, and professional commitment, drive teachers to innovate despite limitations in facilities or school bureaucracy. Institutional factors are reflected in the support from school leaders, policies that allow room for creativity, and a work climate open to new ideas [41]. Vocational teachers are required to continuously update their competencies and align teaching materials with current professional practices. School leaders play a crucial role in fostering psychological safety, providing teachers with a sense of security to experiment without fear of blame. Meanwhile, contextual factors reflect the unique characteristics of vocational education, which demands close linkages with the industrial world [42]. This interaction suggests that innovative work behavior should be conceptualized as a multilevel phenomenon shaped by the interplay between individual agency and organizational structure.

Among these factors, leadership support appears to be the most influential driver of innovative behavior. Principals who act as transformational leaders can cultivate a spirit of innovation by fostering motivation, trust, and recognition for teachers' initiatives [43]. An inclusive, appreciative leadership style fosters a conducive work environment for the emergence of new ideas. In addition, collaborative opportunities among teachers play a vital

role in strengthening the innovation process by allowing teachers to share experiences, discuss instructional challenges, and collectively develop solutions. This process reinforces a sense of togetherness and builds a shared belief that collaboration can generate meaningful change [44], [45]. These findings highlight that innovation is socially constructed through interaction, rather than being solely an outcome of individual creativity. This collaborative dynamic contributes to the formation of a shared commitment to innovation within the school.

However, the findings should also be interpreted critically. Although teachers demonstrated strong innovative work behavior, the innovation process was not free from resistance and constraints. Some teachers experienced difficulties in promoting their ideas because new initiatives were sometimes perceived as complicated, time-consuming, or difficult to apply by colleagues. This indicates that innovation in schools is not only a matter of individual creativity but also depends on organizational readiness and collective acceptance. In addition, limited facilities, restricted access to updated technology, and unequal opportunities for industry-based training may constrain teachers' ability to sustain innovation. These constraints suggest that innovative work behavior in private vocational schools often develops under pressure and within resource limitations, making institutional support essential for transforming individual initiatives into sustainable school practices.

Another important finding is the role of industry relevance as a key driver of innovation. Teachers in the Visual Communication Design (DKV) field are required to adapt their teaching materials to the latest developments in digital technology and creative trends, while teachers in the Accounting field innovate by introducing industry-standard financial applications used professionally. This indicates that innovative behavior in vocational education is highly contextual, practice-oriented, and directly linked to labor market demands. This reinforces the argument that innovation in vocational settings is necessity-driven, emerging as a response to external pressures rather than as a purely internal initiative. These findings support previous studies that emphasize that innovation in vocational settings depends on alignment between educational practices and industry expectations [46].

The widespread and consistent enactment of innovative work behavior among teachers in a private Vocational High School (VHS) in East Surabaya suggests the presence of an educational ecosystem that actively fosters change and creativity. The innovations that emerge are not isolated activities but rather the result of synergy between intrinsically motivated individuals, visionary school leadership, and supportive social and industrial contexts [47]. This synergy has shaped a school culture that is collaborative, adaptive, and sustainable. In this context, teachers have transformed into change agents who not only transfer knowledge but also create learning experiences that are relevant, inspiring, and future-oriented. This transformation reflects a shift in teachers' professional identity from knowledge transmitters to innovation-driven practitioners. Private Vocational High Schools in East Surabaya demonstrate strong potential to become pioneers in developing vocational education innovation in Indonesia by positioning teachers' innovative behavior as the foundation for improving learning quality and institutional competitiveness.

The findings of this study indicate that principal support is the main catalyst for innovative behavior, in line with De Jong & Den Hartog (2010) on the role of leadership in

facilitating new ideas. This also reinforces the findings of Sudibjo & Prameswari [14] that a psychologically supportive work environment increases teachers' intensity in conducting pedagogical experiments. The uniqueness in the context of private vocational schools is the emergence of 'necessity-driven innovation' driven by the need to link and match with industry partners. This context-specific finding contributes to the literature by highlighting how resource constraints and external pressures can act as catalysts rather than barriers to innovation.

Overall, the findings suggest that innovative behavior among vocational teachers contributes significantly to the development of a collaborative, adaptive, and future-oriented educational environment. Teachers act as change agents, creating meaningful and relevant learning experiences. This study provides empirical evidence that strengthening leadership support, fostering collaboration, and maintaining strong industry linkages are essential strategies for sustaining innovation in vocational education. Furthermore, this study offers a contextual contribution by demonstrating how innovative work behavior is enacted and sustained within private vocational school settings, which have been underexplored in previous research.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth understanding of how teachers enact innovative work behavior in a private Vocational High School in East Surabaya. The findings show that teachers' innovation is a dynamic, context-specific process shaped by individual initiative, school support, and vocational education demands. Innovation is not limited to generating new ideas but also involves recognizing instructional needs, developing contextual learning strategies, gaining support, and applying ideas to meaningful teaching practices.

The study implies that strengthening teachers' innovative work behavior requires supportive leadership, collaborative school culture, continuous professional development, and stronger industry partnerships. Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature by showing that innovation in private vocational schools is both necessity-driven and socially shaped. However, this study is limited by its small number of participants and single-site setting, so the findings should be understood as context-specific rather than generalizable to all vocational schools.

Future research should involve multiple schools, different regions, and diverse institutional types to provide broader comparative insights. Longitudinal or mixed-method studies are also recommended to examine how innovative work behavior develops and is sustained over time. For the general public, this study emphasizes the importance of supporting vocational teachers as key actors in preparing students for the changing world of work, improving learning relevance, and strengthening students' practical competencies.

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