

The impact of school principals' roles on education quality in vocational high schools in blora regency

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ABSTRACT

The quality of education in State Vocational High Schools in Blora Regency is still not optimal. This study was conducted to analyze the influence of the principal's role on the quality of education. The study used a quantitative approach with an ex post facto type. The study population was 383 State Vocational High School teachers in Blora Regency, with a sample of 196 teachers through proportional random sampling. The data collection instrument was a Likert scale questionnaire, and data analysis was carried out using simple and multiple linear regression with the help of SPSS 29. The role of the principal has a positive and significant effect on the quality of education, although its contribution is relatively small. The R^2 value of 0.082 indicates that the role of the principal only contributes 8.2% to improving the quality of education, while 91.8% is influenced by other factors. The dominant dimensions of the principal's role are as an administrator (90%), creator of school climate (88.4%), and educator (87.2%). Although the quantitative contribution of the principal's role to the quality of education is low, qualitatively it is still considered important and strategic. Improving the quality of education requires synergistic support from teachers, facilities and infrastructure, school management, and cooperation with parents and the community.

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Introduction

Education is a crucial factor in improving the quality of human resources and national competitiveness. One indicator of educational success is school quality, reflected in the quality of the learning process, graduate competencies, and a conducive academic environment. Educational quality is determined not only by the curriculum and infrastructure, but also by the leadership of the principal, who is the driving force behind all activities within the school (Maulidin & Lukitasari, 2024).

Education has a strategic role in forming quality human resources, so that improving the quality of education is the main focus of school administration. One of the important factors that affect the quality of education is the leadership of the principal. The principal plays not only the role of an administrator, but also as an educator, manager, supervisor, leader, entrepreneur, as well as the creator of a favorable school climate. The effectiveness of the principal in carrying out this role largely determines the success of the learning process, resource management, to the achievement of educational goals (Nor & Suriansyah, 2024).

The principal plays a strategic role in determining the direction of school development. The principal functions as an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. These roles require the principal to be able to manage existing resources, create a

conducive learning climate, and develop teaching staff to carry out their duties professionally. Thus, the principal plays a role not only in administrative aspects but also in improving the quality of learning (Yulina, 2017).

Several previous studies have shown that the principal's role significantly influences educational quality. Setiawati found that the principal's role, along with school-based management, significantly contributes to improving school quality (Setiawati, 2023). Similarly, research by Supartilah & Pardimin confirms that principal leadership plays a strategic role in managing resources and developing teaching staff as an effort to improve educational quality. These findings reinforce the argument that a school's success in achieving quality standards is largely determined by the quality of the principal's leadership (Supartilah & Pardimin, 2021).

In the context of vocational education, such as state vocational schools, the role of the principal becomes increasingly crucial because schools are required to produce graduates who are competent, ready to work, and able to compete in the industrial world. The quality of education in vocational schools is not only measured by academic achievement, but also practical skills, discipline, and adaptation to technological developments. Therefore, it takes a visionary principal, innovative, and able to build collaboration with various parties to ensure the success of graduates in the world of work (Putri et al., 2025).

The quality of education is also greatly influenced by various factors, including Principal Leadership, teacher competence in mastering information and Communication Technology (ICT), and optimal management of facilities and infrastructure (Azizah & Subiyantoro, 2023). Principals play a strategic role as managers, leaders, and innovators in creating a conducive learning environment. Visionary principals are able to mobilize teachers and education personnel to work professionally, so that the quality of education can be improved (Fadhli, 2016). However, differences in principal leadership styles still cause variations in the quality of learning in schools (Fitriyanti & Sirozi, 2024).

Especially in Blora Regency, SMK negeri has an important role in preparing graduates who are productive, creative, innovative, and according to the needs of the industrial world as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Ramdhani & Adawiyah, 2023). However, the facts show that the quality of education at SMK Blora is not optimal, as seen from the quality gap between schools, the low competitiveness of graduates in the world of work, and the need to improve the quality of learning (Julaeha, 2021). This condition indicates that the leadership of the principal is not fully effective, so it is important to assess the extent to which the role of the principal has a real effect on the quality of education in SMK Negeri Blora Regency.

The principal holds a strategic position in determining the direction and quality of education delivery at the school. As a leader, the principal is not only responsible for administrative tasks but also for creating a conducive school climate, developing teaching staff, and guiding the entire school community toward achieving educational goals (Hidayat, 2023). Menurut Mulyasa, kepala sekolah memiliki peran ganda, yaitu sebagai *educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator*, dan *motivator*. Peran ini menuntut kepala sekolah untuk mampu mengelola seluruh aspek sekolah secara efektif dan efisien agar tercapai kualitas pembelajaran yang optimal (Mulyasa, 2022).

Mulyasa, the role of the principal is an important and most decisive part in the success or failure of education carried out by teachers and education personnel (Mulyasa, 2022). Successful principals according to Kompri are those who understand the existence of schools as complex and unique organizations and are able to play and understand their role in leading the way of the educational process in schools. Effective principals must also have a clear vision and the ability to adapt to change in order to create a supportive learning environment for all parties in the school (Kompri, 2017).

Mulyasa suggested fourteen roles of school principals, namely: (a) principal as business manager, (b) principal as office manager, (c) principal as administrator, (d) principal as professional leader, (e) principal as organizer, (f) principal as motivator or staff mobilizer, (g) principal as supervisor, (h) principal as curriculum consultant, (i) principal as educator, (j) principal as

psychologist, (k) principal as school authority, (l) principal as good executive, (m) principal as school community relations officer, and (n) principal as community leader (Mulyasa, 2022).

The role of the school principal in the perspective of the National Education Department of National Education 2006 as cited by Helmawati there are seven main roles of the school principal, namely as: 1) educator; 2) manager; 3) administrator; 4) supervisor; 5) leader; 6) creator of work climate, and 7) guidance and counseling services, states that there are seven main roles of school principals, namely: educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator (Dalimunthe, 2021).

As an administrator, the principal is responsible for managing school programs, preparing plans, carrying out organizing, and ensuring the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure (Hadiati & Wachidah, 2025). Purwanto emphasized that the principal's administrative role is crucial to the orderliness and smooth running of teaching and learning activities. The principal's role is also seen as a climate creator, creating a conducive school climate (Nurmayani et al., 2024). Hoy & Miskel stated that a positive school climate has a direct influence on student learning motivation, teacher work enthusiasm, and the achievement of educational goals (Nurdin, 2015). By creating a harmonious atmosphere, the principal can increase the participation of all school members in the educational process.

In addition, the principal acts as an educator who fosters and enhances teacher professionalism. Supriyono emphasized that the principal must be a mentor in developing teacher competencies, both in pedagogical, professional, and personality aspects, so that the quality of classroom learning continues to improve (Masruroh et al., 2022). Furthermore, the role of the principal is also related to the overall quality of education. Setiawati's research shows that the principal's role has a positive and significant impact on school quality, both partially and simultaneously with school-based management. This aligns with the findings of Supartilah & Pardimin, who stated that principal leadership through resource management and teacher development is a key factor in improving educational quality (Supartilah & Pardimin, 2021).

Thus, it can be concluded that the principal's role is complex and integral, encompassing managerial, educational, and supervisory functions, as well as creating a conducive school climate. All of these roles are interconnected in shaping improved educational quality. All of these roles are inseparable; they form a unified whole, resulting in significantly improved educational quality.

Quality education is not something that happens by itself, it is the result of an educational process that runs well, effectively and efficiently. This process involves various aspects, such as a relevant curriculum, qualified educators, and adequate facilities to support learning (Hasibuan & Pd, 2025). Suryadi and Tilaar explain that the quality of education is the ability of the education system that is directed effectively to increase the added value of input factors in order to produce the highest possible output (Fachrudin, 2021). In other words, the quality of education is not only measured by how well the teaching and learning process takes place, but also how much can be achieved in improving the competence and quality of life of students.

Quality in the context of educational outcomes refers to the achievements made by schools in each period of time. Student achievement can be in the form of academic test results and achievements in other fields, such as achievements in sports, arts, skills, and others. School achievements can be in the form of intangible conditions, such as an atmosphere of discipline, intimacy, mutual respect, cleanliness, and so on (Cahyana, 2010).

Umiarso and Gojali stated that the quality of education is the degree of excellence in school management effectively and efficiently to produce academic and extracurricular excellence in students who are declared to have graduated for one level of education or completed a certain learning program (Mahani, 2023). Yusuf stated that the quality of education is the result of learning, which concerns the achievement of teaching and learning achieved by students both related to knowledge, attitudes or behavior after studying education in a certain period / semester which is expressed in the form of report cards / semester grades (Kartika & Arifudin, 2020).

Quality in education is seen and defined as "a program or result of an education management that aims to meet the expectations of education customers in accordance with the

level of needs and development of society or the world of work (Umam, 2020). According to Zahroh, the quality of education is the ability or competence of educational institutions in utilizing and managing educational resources, which are used to improve the learning ability of students as optimally as possible (Zahroh, 2018). According to Firnando, the quality of education is the degree of excellence in the management of education effectively and efficiently to produce academic and extra-curricular excellence in students who have graduated for a certain level of learning education (Arifin, 2018).

The quality of education, as summarized from several experts' opinions, is the ability of educational institutions to utilize and manage educational resources effectively and efficiently to meet the expectations of educational customers in accordance with the level of needs and development of society. This includes improving the quality of teaching, learning, and administrative management that supports the success of education. To achieve good quality education, educational institutions need to implement a continuous evaluation system to ensure that the process and results of education continue to improve in accordance with the standards set (Afif et al., 2016).

Method

This research uses a quantitative approach with an ex post facto approach. This approach was chosen because it focuses on measuring quantifiable variables and analyzing the relationships between them statistically. The ex post facto approach was chosen because the researcher did not manipulate the independent variables but instead examined facts that had already occurred to determine their impact on the dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2013). The study population consisted of all 383 teachers at State Vocational High Schools (SMKN) in Blora Regency. A sample of 196 teachers was selected from this population using proportional random sampling. This technique was chosen because each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, taking into account the proportion of teachers at each school. Therefore, the selected sample is expected to represent the population proportionally (Arikunto, 2010). The sample was obtained using the following formula:

$$nh = (Nh/N) \times n$$

The research instrument was a questionnaire with a Likert scale compiled based on the research variable indicators. The Likert scale was used to measure respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and assessments of the principal's role and the quality of education. Before use, the research instrument was first tested for validity and reliability. Validity testing was conducted to ensure each question item was able to accurately measure the variable indicators, while reliability testing was used to ensure the consistency of the measurement results. This testing refers to the Supratman & Purwaningtias guidelines, which suggest that a good instrument must have adequate validity and reliability values. The research instrument was a questionnaire with a Likert scale compiled based on the research variable indicators. The Likert scale was used to measure respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and assessments of the principal's role and the quality of education. Before use, the research instrument was first tested for validity and reliability. Validity testing was conducted to ensure each question item was able to accurately measure the variable indicators, while reliability testing was used to ensure the consistency of the measurement results. This testing refers to the Supratman & Purwaningtias guidelines, which suggest that a good instrument must have adequate validity and reliability values (Supratman & Purwaningtias, 2018). Data analysis in this study was conducted in several stages. First, descriptive analysis was used to describe the condition of the research variables based on data obtained from respondents. Second, prerequisite analysis tests were conducted, including a normality test to ensure normal data distribution, a linearity test to determine whether the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is linear, a multicollinearity test to ensure there is no high correlation between the independent variables, and a heteroscedasticity test to check for equality of variance in the regression model (Priadana & Sunarsi, 2021).

After all prerequisite tests were met, the next stage was hypothesis testing. Hypothesis testing was conducted using simple regression analysis to partially determine the influence of the principal's role on educational quality, as well as multiple regression analysis to see the simultaneous influence if the principal's role variable was studied together with other factors. The entire data analysis process was conducted using SPSS version 29 for Windows software, in accordance with Basuki's recommendation that SPSS is an effective and accurate statistical analysis tool for processing quantitative research data (Basuki, 2015). With this systematic research method, it is hoped that the research results can provide a valid and reliable empirical picture regarding the influence of the principal's role on the quality of education in SMKN throughout Blora Regency.

Result

Based on the collected data, the researcher processed the data to analyze the influence of variable X, namely the role of the principal, on variable Y, namely the quality of education, especially in SMKN throughout Blora Regency. The following are the results of data processing using SPSS with a simple regression analysis between the role of the principal (X) on the quality of education (Y), namely:

The Simple Regression Analysis Table of X and Y

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	93,088	10,728		8,677	<,001
	PERAN KEPALA SEKOLAH	,213	,050	,294	4,288	<,001

The results of descriptive analysis show that the average variable score is in the good enough category. This can be explained. Where it can be seen that the role of the Principal (X): the average score is 215.48. The principal is quite successful in his role as an educator (82.4%), but is still weak in the aspect of climate creator (42%). Then, the prerequisite test results show that the data is normally distributed, homogeneous, linear, free of multicollinearity, and free of heteroscedasticity. Then, the data obtained is processed using the regression test shows. Based on the regression test, the results obtained, namely the effect of the role of the principal on the quality of education: regression equation $Y = 93.088 + 0.213X_1$; correlation coefficient 0.294; contribution 8.2%.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that although the quantitative contribution of the role of the principal to the quality of education is relatively low, substantially its role remains crucial. This indicates that the quality of education at SMKN Blora depends not only on the leadership of the principal, but also on other factors such as student motivation, parental support, teacher quality, school culture, and curriculum relevance. Thus, the principal acts as a catalyst that can integrate these factors in order to produce optimal quality of Education.

Per-dimensional analysis shows that the administrative aspects of the principal becomes the main support for the success of school management. A well-organized administration provides certainty in the implementation of school programs and prevents chaos in resource management. On the other hand, the role of the principal as the creator of the school climate and as an educator also proved dominant, because the success of education is strongly influenced by a conducive learning atmosphere and direct coaching of teachers and students.

In addition, the role of principals as leaders, managers and supervisors affirms the importance of transformational leadership that not only directs, but also motivates and develops the capacity of teachers. The functions of academic supervision, resource management, and

exemplary leadership are proven to have a real impact on the quality of the teaching and learning process, although in statistical measurements their contribution appears to be limited.

Meanwhile, the entrepreneurial dimension shows that innovation and openness of school principals to external cooperation can be key factors in building school independence. This is important considering that vocational schools are required to be able to adapt to the needs of the industrial world. Thus, the low quantitative contribution cannot be interpreted as the weak role of the principal, but rather confirms that the leadership of the principal is a strategic factor that must synergize with other variables to produce a superior and competitive quality of Education.

All dimensions have an Extraction value above 0.80, meaning that each contributes very strongly in shaping the principal role variable. The roles of Administrator, Climate Creator, and Educator are the three dimensions with the highest contribution in the context of this study. These three dimensions are the main focus that needs to be considered in an effort to improve the overall role of the principal.

This finding is in line with research conducted by Setiawati entitled "The Influence of the Role of Principals and School-Based Management on School Quality", the findings of this study indicate that the role of principals has a significant effect on the quality of education. In her research, Setiawati concluded that there is a positive and significant influence between the role of the principal on school quality, both partially and simultaneously with school-based management. This strengthens the evidence that the role of the principal is a key factor in improving the quality of education in the school environment (Setiawati, 2023).

The regression results in this study, namely the equation $Y = 93.088 + 0.213 X_1$, with a significance value of $0.001 < 0.05$ and R^2 of 0.082, which indicates that the role of the principal contributes 8.2% to the quality of education. Dominant dimensions such as administrator, climate creator, and educator reinforce the importance of principals in shaping a conducive learning environment. This finding is also in line with research conducted by Supartilah and Pardimin (2021) which confirms that school principals play a strategic role in improving the quality of education through leadership, resource management, and educator development.

The results of the research description and theoretical studies discussed in the introduction section, it can be concluded that the effect of the principal's role on the quality of education in Blora Regency State Vocational Schools is in the weak but significant category. This is shown through the regression test results that produce the equation $Y = 93.088 + 0.213 X_1$, with a significance value of $0.001 < 0.05$, which means the relationship is statistically significant. However, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.082 shows that the role of the principal only contributes 8.2% to the quality of education, while the remaining 91.8% is influenced by other factors such as student learning motivation, teacher quality, curriculum and school culture.

The role of the principal is important and significantly influential, although the strength of its influence is quantitatively low, so it needs to be supported by other aspects to be able to improve the quality of education optimally. Support from teachers, the availability of infrastructure and facilities, and the implementation of effective school management are important elements that can strengthen the role of the principal. The synergy between these elements will create a more conducive educational environment to achieve higher quality.

The results of this study indicate that all dimensions of the principal's role have extraction values above 0.80, indicating a very strong contribution to the formation of the principal's role variables. The administrator, climate creator, and educator dimensions emerged as dominant aspects. This is in line with the educational leadership theory proposed by Mulyasa, which states that the principal has a strategic role as an administrator who manages the organization's operations, an educator who directs and fosters teaching staff, and a climate creator who creates a conducive school climate (Mulyasa, 2022). Thus, the empirical findings of this study strengthen the theoretical framework that these three dimensions are the core of the principal's leadership in improving the quality of education.

Furthermore, the results of this study support previous research. In her study, "The Influence of the Principal's Role and School-Based Management on School Quality," Setiawati found that the

principal's role has a positive and significant impact on school quality, both partially and simultaneously, along with school-based management (Setiawati, 2023). In other words, the principal is a key factor determining the direction and quality of education delivery. This finding aligns with the research regression results, which showed an 8.2% contribution to education quality. Although still low, it is statistically significant ($p\text{-value } 0.001 < 0.05$).

Similarly, Supartilah and Pardimin also emphasized that the principal plays a strategic role in improving education quality through leadership, resource management, and teacher development (Supartilah & Pardimin, 2021). Thus, the results of this study confirm the argument that although the principal's role only contributes partially (8.2%), their presence remains crucial in creating a quality learning ecosystem.

However, this relatively small quantitative contribution ($R^2 = 0.082$) also indicates that other factors have a more dominant influence on educational quality. This aligns with Usman's opinion that educational quality is influenced by various factors, including teacher quality, student motivation, curriculum, and school infrastructure (Usman et al., 2022). Therefore, collaborative support from teachers, effective school management, and a strong learning culture need to be prioritized to strengthen the positive impact of the principal's role.

Therefore, the results of this study are not only consistent with educational leadership theory but also reinforce previous research findings that emphasize the importance of the principal's role as a driving force for improving educational quality. Although their quantitative contribution must be supported by other factors for optimal results, the principal plays a significant role in improving educational quality in the future.

Conclusion

The results showed that the role of school principals positively and significantly influenced the quality of education in state vocational schools in Blora Regency, although the level of influence was relatively low. This is evidenced by the regression equation $Y = 93.088 + 0.213X_1$, a significance value of $0.001 < 0.05$, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.082. This means that the role of the principal only contributes 8.2% to improving the quality of education, while 91.8% is influenced by other factors such as student learning motivation, the role of parents, school culture, teacher quality and curriculum. Analysis of the dimensions of the principal's role shows that the administrator (90%), climate creator (88.4%) and educator (87.2%) aspects are the dominant dimensions that contribute most to shaping the quality of education. This confirms that the success of principals in managing administration, creating a conducive school climate and performing educative functions are key factors in improving quality. Thus, although the quantitative contribution of the principal's role is relatively small, qualitatively its role remains significant and strategic. Therefore, improving the quality of education requires synergistic support from other factors, including teachers, infrastructure, school management, and collaboration with parents and the community, in order to create an optimal and competitive learning environment.

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