



Principal Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance: A Comparative Case Study of Two Vocational High Schools in Sukabumi Regency

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Abstract:

This study investigates principal leadership in improving teacher performance at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, Sukabumi Regency, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design involving two school principals and two teachers selected purposively. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was structured around the managerial functions of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC), complemented by a situational leadership perspective. The findings reveal that both principals implemented the four managerial functions, but with different leadership patterns. SMK Ar-Rahma demonstrated a more directive and priority-oriented approach, emphasizing discipline, administrative compliance, structural clarity, and direct guidance, while SMK Tunas Bhayangkara showed a more participatory, communicative, and delegative approach. Differences were also identified in workload distribution, teacher involvement, supervision mechanisms, and follow-up practices. The findings indicate that principal leadership effectiveness is not determined by the use of a single leadership style, but by the ability to adapt managerial functions and leadership behavior to teacher readiness, organizational conditions, and available resources. The study contributes to educational leadership research by integrating the POAC framework with situational leadership in explaining teacher performance improvement within resource-constrained vocational school contexts. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of participatory planning, proportional task allocation, differentiated leadership, and systematic supervision follow-up in strengthening teacher performance.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

The transformation of education in response to globalization, digitalization, and rapid changes in the labor market has placed vocational education in an increasingly strategic position in human resource development (Pan et al., 2025). Vocational High Schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*—SMKs) are expected not only to produce graduates with technical competencies but also to develop individuals who are adaptive, productive, technologically responsive, and prepared to meet the evolving demands of the workplace (Jagannathan et al., 2019; Ogunleeye, 2026). These expectations make the quality of the teaching and learning process a critical determinant of vocational education outcomes. Within this context, teachers occupy a central position because curriculum implementation, student competency development, instructional innovation, and the alignment between school-based learning and occupational demands largely depend on teacher performance. Improving teacher performance, therefore, should not be regarded merely as an individual responsibility but as an organizational issue that requires effective school leadership and management (Deutscher et al., 2026; Subiantoro et al., 2025).

Teacher performance is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including professional competence, motivation, organizational conditions, resource availability, communication, and leadership practices (Romero-González et al., 2023). From an organizational behavior perspective, individual performance is shaped not only by personal capabilities but also by the organizational environment in which individuals perform their professional roles (Robbins & Judge, 2017). In educational organizations, the principal occupies a strategic position as both an instructional leader and a manager responsible for mobilizing school resources toward educational goals. Yukl (2010) defines leadership as a process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be accomplished and how it can be effectively achieved. Accordingly, principal leadership extends beyond administrative authority; it involves creating a productive working climate, strengthening teacher professionalism, facilitating effective communication, providing professional support, and directing school practices toward continuous improvement in teaching quality.

The strategic role of school principals is also reinforced by the national regulatory framework governing school leadership in Indonesia. Current regulations emphasize competency, performance, professionalism, and accountability in the appointment and performance of school principals (Hartiwi et al., 2020). In managerial terms, this leadership responsibility can be examined through Terry's (2012) four fundamental management functions: *planning*, *organizing*, *actuating*, and *controlling* (POAC) (Chopra & Meindl, 2001; Terry, 1958). In the school context, *planning* refers to the principal's ability to determine priorities and formulate programs for improving teacher performance; *organizing* concerns the distribution of duties, authority, responsibilities, and organizational resources; *actuating* involves directing, motivating, communicating with, and empowering teachers; while *controlling* includes supervision, performance evaluation, follow-up actions, and continuous improvement. The effectiveness of principal leadership can therefore be assessed by examining how these four managerial functions are translated into actual practices within the school organization.

Nevertheless, the implementation of managerial functions does not occur under homogeneous organizational conditions (Martela, 2023). Teachers differ in professional competence, experience, motivation, commitment, and readiness to assume responsibilities. Such differences require principals to adopt leadership approaches that are responsive to the needs and characteristics of individual teachers. The situational leadership perspective proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1988) is particularly relevant in this regard because it emphasizes the need

for leaders to adjust directive and supportive behaviors according to followers' levels of readiness. In vocational schools, this perspective is especially pertinent because teachers have diverse professional backgrounds and responsibilities, including general and vocationally oriented subjects. Some teachers may require direct guidance and intensive supervision, whereas teachers with stronger competence and professional commitment may benefit more from participatory decision-making, professional autonomy, and delegated authority. Principal leadership in improving teacher performance should therefore be understood as a contextual process in which managerial functions are adapted to teachers' characteristics and the organizational conditions of each school (Lee, 2022; Montgomery & Dacin, 2020).

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the strategic role of principal leadership in shaping teacher performance and school effectiveness (Pardosi & Utari, 2022). Research on educational leadership has shown that principals can influence teacher motivation, organizational commitment, professional behavior, and instructional performance through communication, supervision, recognition, and the establishment of supportive organizational cultures (Pranitasari, 2020). Studies examining managerial functions have similarly indicated that systematic planning, appropriate task distribution, effective implementation, and continuous supervision are essential for improving teacher performance. These findings provide an important theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between leadership and teacher performance. However, much of the existing literature has examined principal leadership either as a predictor of teacher performance through quantitative relationships or through isolated leadership styles. Consequently, there remains a need for a more contextual explanation of **how principals actually perform managerial functions in everyday school practices, how they adapt their leadership behaviors to teachers' conditions, and why different leadership practices emerge across schools facing different organizational constraints.**

This issue is particularly relevant at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara in Sukabumi Regency, West Java. Preliminary findings indicate that although the principals of both schools have undertaken various efforts to improve teacher performance, the implementation of leadership and managerial functions differs between the two institutional contexts. At SMK Ar-Rahma, teacher development planning tends to be relatively simple and priority-based due to limited organizational resources. Teacher assignments have generally considered educational backgrounds and competencies; however, workloads have not always been distributed evenly, particularly among teachers responsible for vocational subjects. Supervision is undertaken through classroom observations, reviews of instructional documents, and attendance monitoring, yet follow-up activities have not consistently developed into sustained professional development. These conditions indicate that managerial control has been implemented, but its developmental function still requires strengthening.

In contrast, principal leadership at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara demonstrates a relatively more participatory and dialogical pattern. Teachers are provided with greater opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, communication between the principal and teachers is more open, and some responsibilities are delegated according to teachers' competencies. Planning practices also tend to involve broader participation, while evaluation and follow-up mechanisms are more systematically documented. Nevertheless, SMK Tunas Bhayangkara also operates under limitations in facilities and other organizational resources, which can constrain the implementation of teacher development programs. Thus, although the two schools face relatively similar challenges as vocational educational institutions, the ways in which their principals plan, organize, actuate, supervise, and respond to resource limitations demonstrate distinctive leadership patterns.

The comparison between SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara reveals that the issue of improving teacher performance cannot be explained solely by whether principal

leadership functions are present or absent. More importantly, it concerns **how leadership functions are implemented, adapted, and followed up within specific organizational contexts**. At SMK Ar-Rahma, a relatively directive approach is evident in practices emphasizing discipline, administrative compliance, and direct instruction, while at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, principal leadership tends to provide broader opportunities for participation and delegation. At the same time, both schools continue to experience resource constraints that influence teacher development and school management. This empirical variation provides an important basis for investigating principal leadership as a context-dependent managerial process rather than as a uniform set of leadership behaviors.

Based on the state of the art and the empirical conditions identified in the two research sites, three major research gaps can be identified. First, at the conceptual level, there remains limited integration between the POAC managerial framework and situational leadership theory in explaining teacher performance improvement. Existing research frequently examines managerial functions and leadership styles separately, although actual school leadership requires principals to simultaneously manage organizational processes and adapt their leadership behaviors to teachers' readiness and professional needs. Second, at the methodological level, studies dominated by variable-based and quantitative approaches provide evidence of associations between leadership and teacher performance but offer limited explanations of the processes, strategies, constraints, and adaptive actions through which such relationships operate in actual school settings. Third, at the contextual level, there remains a need for in-depth comparative evidence from vocational high schools operating under resource constraints, particularly studies that examine how differences in organizational context shape principal leadership practices.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in its **integrative and comparative analysis of principal leadership through the POAC managerial framework and situational leadership perspective at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara in Sukabumi Regency**. Rather than merely examining whether principal leadership is associated with teacher performance, this study explores how principals plan teacher development, organize duties and responsibilities, motivate and empower teachers, conduct supervision and evaluation, and adapt their leadership behaviors to different teacher and organizational conditions. The comparative case approach further enables the study to identify similarities and differences in leadership practices between two vocational high schools that encounter resource limitations but demonstrate different managerial and interpersonal leadership patterns. This approach is expected to provide a more contextual understanding of principal leadership in improving teacher performance within vocational education settings.

Therefore, this study aims to **describe and analyze principal leadership in improving teacher performance at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, Sukabumi Regency**. Specifically, the study examines: (1) principal leadership in planning programs and priorities for improving teacher performance; (2) the organization and distribution of teacher duties, responsibilities, and authority; (3) leadership implementation through direction, motivation, communication, participation, and delegation; (4) supervision, evaluation, and follow-up practices related to teacher performance; and (5) contextual constraints and adaptive strategies that influence leadership effectiveness in the two schools.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it is expected to contribute to educational leadership literature by providing an integrative understanding of managerial functions and situational leadership in relation to teacher performance within vocational school contexts. Empirically, the study provides comparative evidence of how principal leadership operates under different organizational conditions at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara. Practically, the findings may assist school principals in strengthening planning, task organization, teacher empowerment, professional communication, supervision,

and follow-up mechanisms. The findings may also provide a basis for school foundations and educational authorities to design leadership development and teacher professional development programs that are more responsive to the actual conditions of vocational schools. Ultimately, strengthening context-sensitive principal leadership is expected to support sustainable improvements in teacher performance and the quality of vocational education.



Method (منهج)

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of principal leadership in improving teacher performance at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, Sukabumi Regency, West Java, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding leadership practices, managerial processes, interactions, and contextual conditions as experienced by participants in their natural school settings. The case study design enabled the researchers to explore principal leadership comprehensively within two specific vocational school contexts and to identify similarities and differences in the implementation of leadership practices across the two cases (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Khan, 2022; Yin, 2017).

The study was guided by the managerial framework of *Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling* (POAC). These four managerial functions were used as analytical dimensions to examine how school principals planned teacher development activities, organized duties and responsibilities, implemented leadership practices, and supervised teacher performance. In addition, the study considered the situational characteristics of leadership practices, particularly the extent to which principals adjusted their approaches to teachers' competencies, readiness, and professional needs (Terry, 1958).

Research Setting

The study was conducted from May to September 2025 at two private vocational high schools in Sukabumi Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The first research site was SMK Ar-Rahma, located in Bojongpari, Jayabakti Village, Cidahu District, Sukabumi Regency. The second site was SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, located in Jabon Manglid, Cidahu Village, Cidahu District, Sukabumi Regency.

The selection of these two schools was relevant to the research objective because both institutions are vocational high schools operating within the same regional context but demonstrating different leadership practices and organizational conditions. The two cases therefore provided an opportunity to examine how principal leadership was implemented under different school circumstances, particularly in relation to teacher management, resource limitations, communication patterns, and supervision practices.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in school leadership and teacher performance management. The participants consisted of two school principals and two teachers from SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara. The principals were selected because they were directly responsible for planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising school programs related to teacher performance. Teachers were included to provide complementary perspectives regarding the implementation and perceived effects of principal leadership practices.

Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants had sufficient knowledge and direct experience of the phenomena under investigation. The selection of participants was

therefore based on their roles and involvement rather than statistical representativeness, consistent with the characteristics of qualitative case study research (Adrias & Ruswandi, 2025; Khan, 2022; Rusandi & Rusli, 2021).

Data Collection

Data were collected through three techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. The use of multiple data sources was intended to obtain a comprehensive understanding of principal leadership practices and to strengthen the credibility of the findings through triangulation.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with school principals and teachers to explore their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of leadership practices related to teacher performance. The interviews focused on the four managerial functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, as well as leadership communication, motivation, delegation, supervision, resource limitations, and strategies used to improve teacher performance. The semi-structured format enabled the researchers to maintain consistency across major research themes while allowing participants to elaborate on issues that emerged during the interviews.

Observation was conducted to examine leadership and managerial practices directly within the natural school environment. The observations focused on interactions between principals and teachers, coordination activities, task implementation, communication patterns, teacher supervision, and other managerial practices relevant to improving teacher performance. Observation data were used to complement interview accounts and to provide contextual evidence regarding the actual implementation of leadership practices in both schools.

Document analysis was also employed to examine available school records relevant to principal leadership and teacher performance. The documents included meeting records, activity reports, evaluation documents, instructional administration records, and other school documents related to planning, implementation, supervision, and teacher development. Documentary evidence was used to corroborate data obtained from interviews and observations and to strengthen the contextual interpretation of the findings (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative data analysis model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the research process rather than exclusively after data collection had been completed. In the data reduction stage, interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents were reviewed and organized according to the research focus. Data were classified into major categories corresponding to the POAC framework: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Additional categories related to leadership style, teacher participation, communication, resource constraints, supervision, and follow-up practices were identified when they emerged from the data (Miles et al., 2014).

During data display, the categorized findings were organized systematically to facilitate comparison within and across the two research sites. Particular attention was given to similarities and differences between SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara in the ways principals planned teacher development, distributed responsibilities, motivated and involved teachers, conducted supervision, and responded to organizational constraints. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions. Emerging interpretations were continuously compared with interview data, observation findings, and documentary evidence. Cross-case comparison was used to identify recurring patterns as well as context-specific differences in principal leadership practices at the two schools.

Trustworthiness of the Data

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information provided by school principals and teachers. Methodological triangulation involved comparing data obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Time triangulation was used by examining information collected at different stages of the research period to assess the consistency of participants' accounts and observed practices. The researchers also compared evidence obtained from different data sources before drawing conclusions. When discrepancies emerged, the relevant information was re-examined across interview records, field observations, and available documents. This process was intended to ensure that the findings reflected the empirical conditions of SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara rather than relying on a single source of information (Alexander, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017; Shenton, 2004).

Research Procedure

The study was conducted through several interconnected stages. The initial stage involved defining the research focus and developing the research design based on principal leadership and teacher performance. This was followed by participant selection and data collection through interviews, observations, and document analysis at both research sites. The collected data were subsequently organized, reduced, categorized, and compared according to the analytical framework. Triangulation was conducted throughout the process to assess the credibility and consistency of the evidence. The final stage involved cross-case interpretation and the formulation of conclusions regarding the similarities, differences, constraints, and adaptive leadership practices observed at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara.

Result (نتائج)

Planning for Improving Teacher Performance

The findings indicate that planning for teacher performance improvement was implemented in both SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, although the orientation and level of participation differed between the two schools. At SMK Ar-Rahma, planning tended to emphasize priority setting, teacher discipline, fulfillment of instructional responsibilities, and adjustment to limited school resources. Teacher development programs were therefore designed selectively by considering the most urgent needs and the school's available capacity. This pattern suggests that planning at SMK Ar-Rahma was relatively pragmatic and resource-oriented, with the principal prioritizing activities considered essential for maintaining the continuity of teaching and teacher responsibilities.

At SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, the planning process demonstrated a more participatory orientation. The principal involved teachers in discussions concerning professional development needs, program implementation, and school priorities. This participatory approach provided teachers with opportunities to contribute to the formulation of activities related to their professional responsibilities. Compared with SMK Ar-Rahma, planning at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara appeared to be more collaborative and adaptive, although the school continued to face limitations in facilities and other supporting resources. These findings indicate that differences in planning practices were not solely determined by resource availability, but also by how principals organized participation and communication during the planning process.

The interview data further show that the principal's understanding of teachers' actual conditions was considered an important basis for planning. One principal stated, **"The role of the principal is not only to give instructions but also to understand the condition of teachers**

because teachers are the main resource in determining the quality of learning” (Interview, A1). This statement reflects an awareness that planning for teacher performance improvement should not be restricted to administrative targets. Instead, it requires consideration of teachers' professional conditions, capabilities, and needs. In this sense, planning functions as an initial leadership mechanism through which principals identify priorities and determine the type of support required by teachers.

The comparison between the two schools therefore reveals two different planning tendencies. SMK Ar-Rahma demonstrated a more priority-based and directive planning pattern, particularly because of limited resources and the need to ensure teacher discipline and administrative readiness. In contrast, SMK Tunas Bhayangkara demonstrated a more participatory planning pattern by involving teachers in identifying needs and discussing school programs. Despite these differences, both schools positioned planning as an essential foundation for improving teacher performance because it determined priorities, clarified responsibilities, and provided direction for subsequent managerial actions.

Table 1. Comparison of Planning Practices for Teacher Performance Improvement

Planning Aspect	SMK Ar-Rahma	SMK Tunas Bhayangkara	Interpretation
Planning orientation	Priority-based and pragmatic	Participatory and collaborative	The two schools apply different planning orientations according to organizational conditions
Teacher involvement	Relatively limited and principal-directed	Teachers are more actively involved in discussions	Participation affects the degree of shared responsibility in planning
Main focus	Discipline, instructional administration, and priority needs	Teacher development needs and program participation	SMK Ar-Rahma emphasizes immediate operational needs, while SMK Tunas Bhayangkara gives greater space to professional participation
Resource consideration	Programs are adjusted to limited resources	Programs are also constrained by facilities and resources	Resource limitations influence planning in both schools
Leadership implication	More directive and priority-oriented	More participatory and adaptive	Planning reflects differences in leadership practices across the two cases

Overall, the findings demonstrate that planning for teacher performance improvement at both schools was shaped by the interaction between leadership approach and organizational conditions. The principal of SMK Ar-Rahma tended to employ a more selective and priority-oriented approach in response to resource limitations, whereas the principal of SMK Tunas Bhayangkara placed greater emphasis on participation and collaborative decision-making. These differences indicate that effective planning in vocational schools is not necessarily characterized by a single standardized model; rather, it depends on the principal's ability to align school

priorities, teacher needs, and available resources within the specific institutional context.

Organizing Teacher Duties and Responsibilities

The findings show that the organizing function in both SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara was primarily reflected in the distribution of duties, authority, and responsibilities among teachers. In both schools, principals attempted to assign teaching and additional responsibilities based on teachers' competencies and educational backgrounds. This indicates that the organizing process was not conducted arbitrarily, but was intended to create a functional alignment between individual teacher capabilities and school needs. However, the effectiveness of this process differed between the two schools, particularly in relation to workload distribution and the flexibility of organizational arrangements.

At SMK Ar-Rahma, the organizational structure was relatively clear and hierarchical, with specific divisions of duties and responsibilities. Teachers were generally assigned according to their educational backgrounds and competencies, but the findings indicate that workloads were not always evenly distributed. This issue was particularly evident among teachers responsible for vocational or productive subjects, where additional teaching hours and specialized responsibilities created heavier workloads for certain individuals. These conditions suggest that although the principle of competency-based task allocation had been implemented, the organizing process still faced challenges in achieving proportional workload distribution.

In contrast, SMK Tunas Bhayangkara demonstrated a relatively more flexible and collaborative organizing pattern. The principal also allocated duties according to teachers' competencies, but greater attention was given to communication and coordination in determining responsibilities. This approach enabled teachers to understand their respective roles while maintaining opportunities for discussion when adjustments were required. Although limited human and material resources remained a challenge, the organizing process tended to emphasize functional suitability and shared responsibility rather than solely hierarchical assignment.

The organizational approach was also reflected in the principal's effort to ensure that duties were adjusted to teachers' capabilities. As indicated in the research findings, responsibilities at both schools were generally assigned according to competence and professional background. This pattern demonstrates that the principals recognized the importance of matching tasks with individual capabilities in order to maintain instructional effectiveness. Nevertheless, the uneven workload identified at SMK Ar-Rahma indicates that competency-based assignment alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by a balanced consideration of workload, teaching hours, and additional responsibilities.

The comparison of the two cases indicates that organizing teacher duties involves more than establishing a formal organizational structure. It requires principals to balance competence, workload, authority, coordination, and available human resources. SMK Ar-Rahma showed a more structured and hierarchical pattern, whereas SMK Tunas Bhayangkara demonstrated a comparatively more flexible and communicative arrangement. The findings therefore suggest that the effectiveness of organizing is determined not only by clarity of task allocation but also by the principal's capacity to maintain proportionality and adapt organizational arrangements to teachers' actual working conditions.

Table 2. Comparison of Organizing Practices for Teacher Duties and Responsibilities

Organizing Aspect	SMK Ar-Rahma	SMK Tunas Bhayangkara	Interpretation
Basis for task	Educational	Teacher competence	Both schools apply

allocation	background teacher competence	and	and suitability	functional	competency-based allocation	task
Organizational pattern	More structured and hierarchical	and	More flexible and collaborative	and	The two schools differ in the way responsibilities are coordinated	
Workload distribution	Not proportional, particularly vocational-subject teachers	always for	Relatively adjustable through coordination	more through	Workload remains an important issue in organizing teacher responsibilities	balance
Coordination	Conducted through formal meetings and routine communication		More open communication and coordination		Communication supports adjustment of duties and responsibilities	
Leadership implication	Emphasis on clarity and structural control		Emphasis on role suitability and coordination		Effective organizing requires both structural clarity and adaptive coordination	

Overall, the findings indicate that the organizing function at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara has generally supported the implementation of teacher responsibilities through competency-based task allocation. However, the comparison also reveals that organizational effectiveness depends on the principal's ability to balance formal role clarity with workload proportionality and communication. The uneven workload found at SMK Ar-Rahma highlights the need for more systematic workload consideration, while the more flexible coordination at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara illustrates how communication can support adaptive task distribution within a resource-constrained vocational school context.

Actuating through Leadership, Motivation, and Teacher Involvement

The findings indicate that the actuating function at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara was implemented through different patterns of direction, motivation, communication, teacher involvement, and delegation. At SMK Ar-Rahma, the principal tended to exercise a more directive form of leadership by emphasizing discipline, compliance with school regulations, and the fulfillment of instructional responsibilities. Direct instructions were frequently used to ensure that teachers completed their duties according to established expectations. This approach was accompanied by motivational efforts intended to strengthen teachers' commitment to their professional responsibilities.

At SMK Ar-Rahma, the principal's leadership practices reflected a stronger emphasis on *telling* and *selling* behaviors. Teachers who required greater direction received explicit instructions, while motivational communication was used to encourage compliance and maintain work discipline. This approach appeared to support order and clarity in task implementation, particularly for teachers who required more intensive guidance. However, the findings also suggest that an excessively directive pattern may limit opportunities for teachers to exercise greater autonomy and creativity when leadership remains centered on instruction rather than participation.

Despite this relatively directive orientation, the principal of SMK Ar-Rahma also demonstrated awareness of the importance of understanding teachers' conditions. One principal

stated, “The role of the principal is not only to give instructions but also to understand the condition of teachers because teachers are the main resource in determining the quality of learning” (Interview, A1). This statement indicates that leadership implementation was not understood solely as the exercise of authority. Rather, the principal recognized that effective leadership also requires sensitivity to teachers' professional and personal conditions. This creates an important link between directive leadership and the supportive dimensions required to sustain teacher motivation.

In contrast, the actuating function at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara was characterized by a more participatory and delegative leadership pattern. The principal provided teachers with greater opportunities to participate in decision-making and delegated some responsibilities according to their competencies. Communication between the principal and teachers was also more open and dialogical, allowing teachers to express views and participate more actively in school activities. This approach reflects a shift from leadership based primarily on direct instruction toward leadership that emphasizes professional trust, shared responsibility, and teacher involvement.

The comparison between the two schools therefore demonstrates that the actuating function was strongly influenced by differences in leadership orientation. SMK Ar-Rahma relied more heavily on direct guidance and motivational reinforcement, whereas SMK Tunas Bhayangkara provided broader space for participation and delegation. Nevertheless, both approaches were directed toward the same objective of improving teacher responsibility and performance. The findings suggest that effective actuating does not depend on a single leadership style, but on the principal's ability to balance direction and support according to teachers' readiness, organizational needs, and contextual conditions.

Table 3. Comparison of Actuating Practices in Principal Leadership

Actuating Aspect	SMK Ar-Rahma	SMK Tunas Bhayangkara	Interpretation
Leadership orientation	More directive	More participatory and delegative	Leadership practices differ according to teacher and organizational conditions
Direction	Explicit instructions and emphasis on compliance	Direction combined with teacher involvement	SMK Ar-Rahma relies more on direct guidance, while SMK Tunas Bhayangkara provides greater professional space
Motivation	Reinforcement of discipline and responsibility	Encouragement through participation and trust	Motivation is implemented through different leadership mechanisms
Communication	More principal-directed	More open and dialogical	Communication influences the degree of teacher involvement
Teacher participation	Relatively limited in decision-making	Greater participation in decision-making	Participation strengthens shared responsibility
Delegation	More limited	Responsibilities are delegated according	Delegation reflects differences in professional

to teacher trust and teacher autonomy
competence

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of the actuating function at the two schools reflects different forms of situational leadership. The more directive approach at SMK Ar-Rahma was oriented toward maintaining discipline, clarity, and compliance, whereas the participatory and delegative approach at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara emphasized teacher involvement, communication, and professional trust. These differences indicate that principal leadership in improving teacher performance is not necessarily effective through uniform behavior; rather, its effectiveness depends on how principals adjust the balance between direction, support, participation, and delegation to the readiness of teachers and the organizational context of each school.

Controlling through Supervision, Evaluation, and Follow-Up

The findings indicate that the controlling function was implemented at both SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara through supervision, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up activities, although the mechanisms differed between the two schools. At SMK Ar-Rahma, supervision tended to be more formal and administrative. The principal conducted classroom observations, reviewed teachers' instructional documents, and monitored attendance as part of routine control over teacher performance. These practices enabled the principal to identify whether teachers had fulfilled their instructional and administrative responsibilities. However, the findings indicate that supervision was more strongly oriented toward monitoring compliance than toward sustained professional development.

A critical issue identified at SMK Ar-Rahma concerned the follow-up stage of supervision. Although classroom observations and administrative monitoring were conducted regularly, the findings suggest that the results of supervision were not always followed by systematic and continuous professional assistance. In some cases, evaluation primarily resulted in the identification and documentation of weaknesses without being consistently translated into subsequent coaching or developmental actions. This indicates that the controlling function had been established procedurally, but the feedback loop between supervision, professional guidance, and performance improvement remained insufficiently developed. Consequently, the effectiveness of controlling depended not merely on the frequency of supervision but also on the extent to which evaluation results were transformed into concrete improvement measures.

A different pattern was identified at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, where supervision and evaluation tended to be more communicative and dialogical. The principal frequently used personal discussions with teachers to evaluate instructional practices and address problems encountered in carrying out their responsibilities. Evaluation activities were also supported by meeting minutes and formal evaluation records, and the findings indicate that follow-up was implemented more consistently. Nevertheless, resource limitations continued to influence the school's ability to provide optimal support for improvement programs. As expressed by the principal, **"Our school has limited facilities, but as the principal I try to do my best so that the programs can continue to run"** (Interview, A2). This statement illustrates that the controlling process occurred within organizational constraints that required the principal to combine evaluation with adaptive efforts to maintain program continuity.

The cross-case comparison therefore demonstrates that the effectiveness of controlling was influenced by both the supervision mechanism and the quality of follow-up. SMK Ar-Rahma showed stronger emphasis on formal monitoring through classroom observation, instructional documentation, and teacher attendance, but its developmental follow-up remained less consistent. In contrast, SMK Tunas Bhayangkara combined evaluation with more dialogical

communication and relatively systematic follow-up. These differences suggest that supervision becomes more meaningful for teacher performance improvement when monitoring is followed by feedback, professional dialogue, and concrete corrective or developmental actions.

Table 4. Comparison of Controlling Practices for Teacher Performance

Controlling Aspect	SMK Ar-Rahma	SMK Tunas Bhayangkara	Interpretation
Supervision orientation	More formal and administrative	More communicative and dialogical	The schools differ in the interactional character of supervision
Supervision mechanisms	Classroom observation, review of instructional documents, and attendance monitoring	Evaluation through supervision, discussion, and communication with teachers	Both schools monitor teacher performance through different mechanisms
Evaluation focus	Compliance and identification of weaknesses	Performance evaluation combined with professional dialogue	Evaluation at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara provides greater space for teacher feedback
Documentation	Administrative supervision records	Meeting minutes and documented evaluation records	Documentation supports accountability in the controlling process
Follow-up	Conducted, but not consistently developed into continuous professional coaching	Relatively more systematic and consistently followed up	Follow-up is a major factor differentiating the effectiveness of supervision
Contextual constraint	Limited resources affect continuous development activities	Limited facilities and resources influence program implementation	Resource limitations affect controlling practices in both schools

Overall, the findings demonstrate that controlling contributes to teacher performance improvement when supervision extends beyond administrative monitoring and becomes a continuous process of evaluation, feedback, and professional follow-up. At SMK Ar-Rahma, established monitoring mechanisms provide a foundation for controlling, but the limited continuity of follow-up reduces their developmental potential. At SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, the more dialogical evaluation process and relatively consistent follow-up indicate a stronger connection between supervision and corrective action. The comparison suggests that effective controlling in vocational schools requires principals not only to identify performance gaps but also to convert supervision findings into context-sensitive professional support and continuous improvement.

The findings demonstrate that principal leadership in improving teacher performance at



Discussion (مناقشة)

SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara operates through an interconnected managerial process rather than through isolated leadership actions. Planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling collectively shape the conditions under which teachers perform their professional responsibilities. At both schools, planning establishes priorities for teacher development, organizing aligns responsibilities with teacher competencies, actuating translates managerial intentions into motivation and professional engagement, and controlling provides mechanisms for monitoring and improvement. However, the two schools differ in how these functions are enacted. SMK Ar-Rahma tends to emphasize priority setting, structural clarity, discipline, and direct guidance, whereas SMK Tunas Bhayangkara demonstrates relatively stronger participation, communication, delegation, and dialogical evaluation. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of principal leadership lies not merely in the implementation of managerial functions but in the capacity to adapt those functions to the organizational conditions and professional characteristics of teachers. This interpretation is consistent with evidence showing that the effects of principal leadership are context-dependent rather than uniformly produced by one particular leadership model. A meta-meta-analysis of principal leadership research similarly found that educational context moderates leadership effects and that there is insufficient evidence to claim that one leadership model is universally superior to others.

The planning and organizing findings further suggest that improving teacher performance begins with the principal's capacity to translate school priorities into realistic organizational arrangements. At SMK Ar-Rahma, resource constraints encourage a more selective and priority-oriented planning process, while at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, planning provides greater opportunities for teacher involvement. Despite these differences, both schools attempt to allocate duties according to teacher competence. The uneven workload identified at SMK Ar-Rahma, particularly among vocational-subject teachers, nevertheless demonstrates that competency-based allocation does not automatically guarantee organizational effectiveness when workload proportionality and resource capacity are not simultaneously considered. This finding supports the broader argument that principal leadership influences teachers not only directly but also by shaping organizational conditions that enable professional learning and effective work. Li, Hallinger, and Ko found that principal leadership is related to teacher learning through the development of school organizational capacity, emphasizing that leadership effectiveness is closely connected to the conditions principals establish for teachers' professional work. Similarly, recent evidence indicates that working conditions, collegial support, and leadership-related factors interact with teachers' motivation, self-efficacy, and teaching quality (Hallinger & Murphy J., 1985; Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

The most distinctive contrast between the two schools emerges in the actuating function. SMK Ar-Rahma demonstrates a relatively directive orientation characterized by explicit instructions, reinforcement of discipline, and motivational guidance, whereas SMK Tunas Bhayangkara provides greater opportunities for participation, professional communication, and delegation. Rather than interpreting these differences as evidence that one approach is inherently more effective, the findings are better understood through situational leadership theory. Hersey and Blanchard argue that leadership behavior should be adapted to followers' readiness by varying the degree of direction and support provided by the leader. From this perspective, directive behavior may be functional when teachers require greater clarity or guidance, while participation and delegation become increasingly appropriate when teachers demonstrate greater professional readiness and capacity for autonomous responsibility. The present findings therefore suggest that principal leadership effectiveness depends on the ability to calibrate authority, support, participation, and autonomy rather than consistently applying a single

leadership style. This interpretation is also supported by an Indonesian multi-site qualitative study which found that principals enhanced teacher performance through combinations of motivating, mobilizing, directing, and evaluating rather than relying on a single leadership behavior (Alanny et al., 2024; Sunaryo, 2020).

The findings concerning motivation, communication, participation, and delegation also show that principal leadership affects teacher performance through relational and organizational mechanisms. The more participatory pattern found at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara allows teachers to contribute to decisions and assume delegated responsibilities, potentially strengthening ownership of school activities and professional responsibility. At SMK Ar-Rahma, direct guidance provides clearer behavioral expectations but requires sufficient supportive interaction to prevent direction from becoming merely administrative control. This interpretation is consistent with studies demonstrating that principal leadership influences teacher outcomes through motivation and school organizational processes. Finnigan found that principal instructional leadership and support for organizational change were associated with dimensions of teacher motivation, while Wiyono demonstrated relationships among principal leadership development, teachers' work motivation, teamwork effectiveness, and school improvement in the Indonesian context. More recent evidence likewise indicates that instructional leadership can strengthen teacher motivation by fostering the characteristics of a learning organization. Thus, teacher performance should be understood not simply as the result of managerial instruction, but as an outcome partly shaped by the quality of professional relationships, motivation, trust, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

The controlling findings reinforce this interpretation by demonstrating that supervision becomes developmentally meaningful only when monitoring is connected to feedback and follow-up. At SMK Ar-Rahma, classroom observations, instructional-document reviews, and attendance monitoring provide formal mechanisms for identifying performance weaknesses, but the developmental potential of supervision is reduced when identified weaknesses are not consistently followed by professional coaching. Conversely, the more dialogical evaluation practices at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara establish a closer connection between monitoring, professional communication, and corrective action. This finding corresponds with research showing that principal instructional leadership is connected with teacher professional development and that leadership practices can create conditions supporting continuous teacher learning. Research on teacher performance appraisal has similarly emphasized that effective principal instructional leadership within evaluation processes requires supervision to contribute to instructional improvement rather than function solely as an accountability procedure. Consequently, the crucial element of controlling is not simply whether supervision occurs, but whether the information generated through supervision is converted into feedback, professional learning, and sustained improvement (Sanjani et al., 2025; Sugiart et al., 2024).

Taken together, the four managerial functions reveal that principal leadership at the two schools is best conceptualized as an adaptive managerial cycle. Planning determines priorities, organizing establishes roles and working arrangements, actuating mobilizes professional commitment, and controlling generates information that should inform subsequent improvement. The empirical differences between SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara demonstrate that this cycle is conditioned by resource availability, teacher characteristics, communication patterns, and the principal's leadership orientation. The findings therefore extend a purely procedural understanding of POAC: the four functions do not operate mechanically but acquire their effectiveness through leadership behaviors adapted to context. This is particularly important in resource-constrained vocational schools, where principals may be unable to rely on extensive financial or infrastructural resources and must instead mobilize available human resources through prioritization, communication, participation, and adaptive supervision. This

interpretation is consistent with research showing that leadership effects on school and teacher outcomes are frequently indirect, operating through school climate, organizational capacity, and teacher performance rather than through leadership actions alone.

The principal contribution of this study is therefore the proposition that **teacher performance improvement in vocational schools is supported by the contextual integration of managerial functions and adaptive leadership behavior rather than by the uniform application of a single leadership style**. By comparing SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, the study demonstrates that the same POAC functions can produce different managerial configurations: a more directive, discipline- and priority-oriented configuration at SMK Ar-Rahma and a more participatory, communicative, and delegative configuration at SMK Tunas Bhayangkara. This comparative evidence contributes to educational leadership literature by connecting the procedural dimension of POAC with the behavioral logic of situational leadership in two resource-constrained vocational school contexts. Practically, the findings imply that principal development should move beyond training principals to perform standardized managerial tasks and instead strengthen their capacity to diagnose teacher readiness, distribute responsibilities proportionally, mobilize participation, provide differentiated support, and convert supervision findings into sustained professional development. In this way, the study offers a context-sensitive explanation of how principal leadership can support teacher performance improvement in private vocational schools



Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that principal leadership plays a central role in improving teacher performance at SMK Ar-Rahma and SMK Tunas Bhayangkara, Sukabumi Regency, through the integrated implementation of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Although both principals performed the same managerial functions, the ways in which these functions were implemented differed according to the organizational context and teacher conditions. SMK Ar-Rahma demonstrated a more directive and priority-oriented leadership pattern, particularly in emphasizing discipline, administrative compliance, structural clarity, and direct guidance, while SMK Tunas Bhayangkara showed a more participatory, communicative, and delegative pattern. These findings indicate that principal leadership effectiveness does not depend on the application of a single standardized leadership style, but on the principal's ability to adapt managerial functions and leadership behavior to teacher readiness, school priorities, and available resources. Thus, improving teacher performance in vocational schools requires not only the implementation of managerial procedures but also context-sensitive leadership that combines direction, support, participation, supervision, and continuous professional follow-up.

This study is limited by its qualitative case study design involving only two private vocational high schools and a relatively small number of participants; therefore, the findings are intended to provide contextual understanding rather than statistical generalization to all vocational schools. The study also focused primarily on principal and teacher perspectives and did not examine teacher performance through longitudinal measures or broader stakeholder perspectives. Future research is therefore recommended to involve a larger and more diverse range of vocational schools, include additional participants such as vice principals, school foundation representatives, students, and supervisors, and employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs to examine changes in teacher performance over time. Practically, school principals should strengthen participatory planning, proportional workload distribution, differentiated leadership based on teacher readiness, and systematic follow-up after supervision, while school foundations and educational authorities should provide sustained leadership

development and professional support to help principals manage teacher performance effectively under varying resource conditions.



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