

Improving the Quality of Educational Services through Strengthening the Competencies of Public Service Administrators

**Hikmat¹, Bambang Mardi Sentosa², Andri Kurniawan³, Aries Denta Putra⁴, T.B
Yudi Muhtadi⁵**

¹ Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf, Indonesia

² Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf, Indonesia

³ Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf, Indonesia

⁴ Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf, Indonesia

⁵ Universitas Islam Syekh Yusuf, Indonesia

Corresponding email: Hikmat.pasca@unis.ac.id

Abstract

The quality of educational services is a strategic determinant of institutional effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction, and sustainable educational development. However, many educational institutions continue to face challenges related to inconsistent administrative performance, limited service competencies, inadequate responsiveness, and insufficient implementation of public service standards. This study aims to analyze how strengthening the competencies of public service administrators contributes to improving the quality of educational services. The research employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving school administrators, education personnel, institutional leaders, teachers, and service users. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while the trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. The findings reveal that competency strengthening encompasses four interrelated dimensions: professional competence, communication competence, digital administrative competence, and public service ethics. The enhancement of these competencies contributes to faster administrative processes, greater service accuracy, improved transparency, stronger accountability, and more responsive interactions with stakeholders. Furthermore, institutional support through continuous professional development, digital transformation, leadership commitment, and standardized service procedures significantly reinforces competency development and organizational performance. The study concludes that strengthening the competencies of public service administrators is a fundamental strategy for enhancing educational service quality by promoting efficiency, effectiveness, and citizen-oriented service delivery. These findings provide practical implications for educational policymakers and institutional leaders in designing sustainable competency development programs that support excellent public service within educational institutions.

Keywords: Educational Service Quality; Public Service Administrators; Competency Development

Introduction

The transformation of the public sector in the digital era, Society 5.0, and the implementation of the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm have driven fundamental

changes in public service governance, including in the education sector. Digitalization, the integration of information technology, and increasing public expectations for fast, transparent, and accountable services require educational institutions to undertake continuous administrative reform. From a New Public Management perspective, public sector organizations are encouraged to adopt the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, performance orientation, and outcome measurement as applied in the private sector (Hood, 1991). However, the development of modern public administration is no longer solely oriented towards bureaucratic efficiency, but has shifted towards a New Public Service approach that positions the public as citizens who must be served through participation, collaboration, transparency, and accountability (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). In this context, education is seen as one of the most strategic public services because it contributes directly to human resource development, increasing national competitiveness, and achieving sustainable development. Therefore, the transformation of educational service administration aims not only to improve operational efficiency but also to create public value through the provision of services that sustainably meet community needs and expectations (Moore, 1995).

This paradigm shift emphasizes that the quality of educational administration services is a key determinant of the effectiveness of educational institutions in delivering academic and non-academic services. Professional, responsive, digitally technology-based administrative services, and user-satisfaction-oriented services will strengthen public trust, increase organizational efficiency, and support good educational governance. The Public Value Theory perspective explains that the success of public organizations is measured not only by achieving administrative targets but also by their ability to generate social benefits felt by the community as service users (Moore, 1995). Therefore, strengthening the competency of public service administrators in educational institutions is a strategic necessity in realizing inclusive, high-quality, and citizen-oriented services. These efforts also support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education, which emphasizes the importance of providing inclusive, quality, equitable education, and supported by an effective, transparent, and sustainable administration system (United Nations, 2015).

The quality of educational services is the level of ability of educational institutions to provide services that meet or exceed the needs, expectations, and satisfaction of stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and the community. This concept encompasses not only academic quality related to the learning process, educator competency, curriculum, and learning outcomes, but also the quality of administrative services that support the effective and efficient implementation of education. Academic quality focuses on achieving learning objectives and developing student competencies, while the quality of administrative services emphasizes the provision of services that are fast, accurate, transparent, responsive, and easily accessible. According to the SERVQUAL model, service quality is measured through five main dimensions, namely reliability (reliability in providing services consistently and appropriately), responsiveness (readiness in responding to the needs of service users), assurance (competence and credibility of officers that foster trust), empathy (care and attention to the individual needs of service users), and tangibles (availability of physical facilities, technology, and service support facilities) (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In the context of education, these five dimensions serve as important indicators in evaluating the quality of administrative services, supporting the success of the overall educational process.

From a Total Quality Management (TQM) perspective, educational service quality is viewed as the result of the commitment of all organizational elements to continuous improvement through effective leadership, human resource involvement, process

standardization, and a focus on customer satisfaction (Deming, 1986). This approach aligns with the concept of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), which emphasizes that service quality improvement must be carried out systematically through evaluation, innovation, and continuous refinement of service processes. Implementing service quality oriented toward these principles has been proven to increase student and parent satisfaction, strengthen the image of educational institutions, and build public trust in the institution's credibility. Thus, administrative service quality is no longer viewed as merely a support function but has become a strategic factor determining institutional competitiveness, the effectiveness of educational governance, and the organization's success in providing added value to all stakeholders.

Public service administrators are human resources responsible for planning, managing, coordinating, and evaluating various administrative services to support the effective and efficient delivery of education. In schools and universities, administrative staff are no longer positioned solely as technical personnel, but as strategic actors who ensure the smooth running of academic and non-academic processes by providing professional, accurate, responsive, and user-oriented services. Based on the perspective of Administrative Theory, organizational effectiveness is determined by the division of tasks, coordination, and systematic administrative management (Fayol, 1949), while Public Administration Theory emphasizes that public organizations must prioritize the principles of effectiveness, accountability, transparency, and service to the community (Rosenbloom et al., 2022). In practice, educational administrators carry out various strategic roles as service providers who provide administrative services to students, educators, and the community; information managers who accurately manage academic data and information; institutional facilitators who support the coordination of various organizational units; and public relations representatives who build communication and positive relationships with stakeholders. From a Human Resource Management perspective, the quality of administrator performance is a determining factor in organizational effectiveness because the success of public services is heavily influenced by the competence, motivation, and professionalism of human resources (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

This strategic role can only be realized if administrators possess adequate competence. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), competence is a fundamental characteristic possessed by an individual that is consistently associated with superior performance in carrying out a task. Competence not only reflects mastery of knowledge regarding regulations, administrative procedures, and information technology, but also encompasses skills in managing services, communicating, solving problems, and utilizing digital administrative systems. Furthermore, competence is also built on attitudes such as commitment, responsibility, service orientation, and collaboration skills, as well as values such as integrity, public service ethics, professionalism, and accountability. In line with the Boyatzis Competency Model, the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values enables individuals to produce effective performance in accordance with organizational demands (Boyatzis, 2008). In the context of educational institutions, administrators who have professional competence, communication competence, digital competence, and service ethics competence will be able to increase the speed, accuracy, transparency, and quality of administrative services, thereby contributing to organizational effectiveness, service user satisfaction, and strengthening educational governance that is oriented towards public services.

Although research on the quality of educational services has grown rapidly, most studies still focus on aspects of learning, teacher competence, principal leadership, and student and parent satisfaction as the primary indicators of educational service success (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Harvey & Green, 1993). Meanwhile, the competence of public

service administrators, as actors managing the educational administration process, has not received adequate attention in the literature. Previous research generally assesses service quality based on user perceptions without outlining the internal mechanisms that explain how strengthening administrator competence can sustainably improve service quality. Furthermore, studies on administrative competence have been conducted more in general government organizations than in educational institutions, resulting in relatively underexplored characteristics of administrative services within schools and universities (Osborne, 2010; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Furthermore, the dimensions of professional competence, communication competence, digital competence, and ethical competence in public service are often analyzed separately, thus lacking a comprehensive conceptual framework to explain the interrelationships between these dimensions in improving the quality of educational services.

This research gap indicates the need for a more holistic approach to understanding the process of strengthening public service administrator competencies to support the transformation of educational services in the digital era. Unlike previous research dominated by quantitative approaches and oriented towards examining relationships between variables, this study uses a qualitative approach to explore in-depth the process of developing administrator competencies, their implementation strategies, and their impact on the effectiveness of administrative services. The research novelty of this study lies in the development of a conceptual model that integrates professional, communication, digital, and ethical competencies in public services as a foundation for improving the quality of educational services. Furthermore, this study positions public service administrators as key actors in the transformation of educational services, not merely as organizational support functions. Through this perspective, this study is expected to explain the mechanisms by which strengthening administrator competencies contributes to increased efficiency, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, and user satisfaction holistically, while also enriching the literature on educational administration and public service management in the era of digital transformation (Boyatzis, 2008; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Moore, 1995).

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of strengthening the competencies of public service administrators in improving the quality of educational services. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore experiences, perceptions, strategies, and service practices that cannot be comprehensively explained through quantitative data. The research location was purposively selected at an educational institution that has implemented various efforts to improve the quality of administrative services. Research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, including educational institution leaders, public service administrators, education personnel, educators, and service users, such as students and parents. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, resulting in rich information regarding administrator competency, public service implementation, and factors influencing the quality of educational services. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, the study employed source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing techniques, ensuring a high level of

reliability in data interpretation. Furthermore, the researcher acted as the primary instrument, directly collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data while maintaining objectivity through reflective note-taking throughout the research process. This methodological approach is expected to yield a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms for strengthening the competence of public service administrators and their contribution to the continuous improvement of efficiency, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, and quality of education services.

Result and Discussion

The research results indicate that the competence of public service administrators is a fundamental factor in determining the quality of administrative services in educational institutions. Prior to the implementation of the competency-building program, most administrators still faced various obstacles, such as limited mastery of information technology, a suboptimal understanding of public service standards, and communication skills that were not fully oriented to the needs of service users. These conditions resulted in relatively slow administrative processes, inconsistencies in information delivery, and low responsiveness to various service requests from students, parents, and educators. These findings indicate that the quality of educational services is not only influenced by academic aspects but is also greatly determined by the administrator's capacity to manage public services professionally. This study also found that strengthening professional competence through educational administration training, understanding public service regulations, and improving document management and administrative information systems skills can improve service delivery effectiveness. Administrators gained a better understanding of operational procedures, were able to complete services more quickly and accurately, and reduced previously common administrative errors. Furthermore, improving digital competence encouraged the use of technology-based administrative applications, the digitization of archives, and the optimization of academic information systems, which accelerated service processes while increasing organizational efficiency.

Further findings indicate that communication competency and public service ethics contribute significantly to increased user satisfaction. Administrators with strong interpersonal communication skills are able to provide clear information, build more positive relationships with students and parents, and resolve complaints more effectively. Furthermore, strengthening the values of integrity, accountability, transparency, and service orientation fosters a more professional and community-centered work culture. These changes increase user confidence in the quality of administrative services while strengthening the image of educational institutions as public organizations providing excellent service.

This study also identified several supporting factors contributing to the success of strengthening administrator competency, including institutional leadership commitment, the availability of ongoing training programs, information technology infrastructure support, and the implementation of clear standard operating procedures for service delivery. Conversely, budget constraints, variations in administrator initial competency, resistance to change, and uneven digital skills are hindering factors in the implementation process. Nevertheless, educational institutions that consistently provide mentoring, supervision, and regular evaluations demonstrate better administrator competency development than those

that have not implemented a sustainable human resource development system. Overall, this study found that strengthening the competencies of public service administrators has a positive impact on the transformation of education service quality by increasing efficiency, responsiveness, reliability, transparency, and accountability. The integration of professional, communication, digital, and service ethics competencies results in faster, more accurate, adaptive, and user-oriented administrative processes. These findings confirm that public service administrators are strategic actors in realizing effective education governance and supporting the continuous improvement of education service quality in the era of digital transformation.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that strengthening the competency of public service administrators is a critical determinant in improving the quality of educational services. This finding indicates that the success of administrative services is determined not only by the availability of operational procedures or supporting infrastructure, but also by the individual administrator's capacity to manage services professionally, responsively, and user-oriented. The New Public Service perspective emphasizes that public organizations must view the public as citizens entitled to quality services, not simply as customers (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Therefore, educational administrators are required to possess competencies that enable them to provide prompt, accurate, transparent, and accountable services. This finding also reinforces the concept of Public Value Theory, which states that the success of a public organization is measured by its ability to create public value through services that provide tangible benefits to the community (Moore, 1995). Therefore, improving administrator competency is a strategic investment in building effective educational governance oriented toward the public interest.

Further research findings demonstrate that professional and digital competencies are key factors in increasing the efficiency of educational administration processes. Mastery of regulations, administrative procedures, and information technology enables administrators to complete services more quickly, reduce administrative errors, and improve data management accuracy. These results align with the competency theory proposed by Spencer and Spencer (1993), which explains that superior performance stems from a combination of knowledge, skills, motives, and individual characteristics. Furthermore, Boyatzis (2008) emphasized that competencies must be continuously developed to enable individuals to adapt to changes in the organizational environment. In the context of education undergoing digital transformation, the ability to utilize administrative information systems, electronic-based services, and digital document management are competencies that significantly determine organizational effectiveness. These findings are consistent with research by the OECD (2023), which indicates that the digital transformation of the education sector is highly dependent on the competency of human resources, particularly administrative staff as public service managers.

This study also found that communication competencies and service ethics contribute significantly to increased user satisfaction. Administrators who are able to communicate effectively, provide information clearly, and demonstrate empathy and professionalism gain higher levels of trust from students and parents. These findings

support the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which places responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as key components of service quality. Furthermore, the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach emphasizes that improving service quality must be achieved through the involvement of all human resources in building a service culture oriented towards continuous improvement (Deming, 1986). Therefore, improving administrator competency not only improves the quality of administrative processes but also creates a more positive service experience, thereby strengthening user satisfaction, institutional reputation, and public trust in educational institutions. Research findings also reveal that the success of strengthening administrator competency is influenced by organizational support, particularly leadership commitment, ongoing training, the availability of information technology, and an organizational culture that supports learning. The Human Resource Management perspective explains that competency development is a systematic process that requires the support of organizational policies to produce sustainable performance improvements (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). These research findings align with a UNESCO study (2023), which showed that improving the quality of educational services requires investment in developing the capacity of educational staff, not just in improving teacher competency. On the other hand, budget constraints, resistance to change, and the digital competency gap remain challenges in implementing educational administration transformation. Therefore, competency development strategies must be designed sustainably through integrated training, mentoring, coaching, and performance evaluation.

Conclusion

The findings reveal that competency strengthening encompasses four interrelated dimensions: professional competence, communication competence, digital administrative competence, and public service ethics. The enhancement of these competencies contributes to faster administrative processes, greater service accuracy, improved transparency, stronger accountability, and more responsive interactions with stakeholders. Furthermore, institutional support through continuous professional development, digital transformation, leadership commitment, and standardized service procedures significantly reinforces competency development and organizational performance. The study concludes that strengthening the competencies of public service administrators is a fundamental strategy for enhancing educational service quality by promoting efficiency, effectiveness, and citizen-oriented service delivery. These findings provide practical implications for educational policymakers and institutional leaders in designing sustainable competency development programs that support excellent public service within educational institutions.

References

- Armstrong, M., & Taylor, S. (2023). *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice* (16th ed.). Kogan Page.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (2008). Competencies in the 21st century. *Journal of Management Development*, 27(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710810840730>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the crisis*. MIT Press.

- Denhardt, J. V., & Denhardt, R. B. (2015). *The new public service: Serving, not steering* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Fayol, H. (1949). *General and industrial management*. Pitman Publishing.
- Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining quality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1), 9–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293930180102>
- Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons? *Public Administration*, 69(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Harvard University Press.
- OECD. (2023). *Education at a glance 2023: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing.
- Osborne, S. P. (Ed.). (2010). *The new public governance? Emerging perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance*. Routledge.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Rosenbloom, D. H., Kravchuk, R. S., & Clerkin, R. M. (2022). *Public administration: Understanding management, politics, and law in the public sector* (9th ed.). Routledge.
- Spencer, L. M., Jr., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. John Wiley & Sons.
- UNESCO. (2023). *Global education monitoring report 2023*. UNESCO.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations.