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Challenges and Solutions in Administrative Management in Educational Institutions in Labuhanbatu Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the administrative management challenges faced by educational institutions in Labuhanbatu Regency and explores strategic solutions adopted by selected schools. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and observations involving 15 stakeholders from ten institutions. The findings reveal systemic issues, including an absence of local policy guidelines for principal tenure, political interference in leadership appointments, inadequate digital proficiency among administrative staff, and a lack of structured performance evaluation. These challenges have led to frequent leadership turnover, inefficiency in school operations, and employee burnout. However, several high-performing schools have implemented effective solutions, such as internal training workshops, Total Quality Management (TQM) practices, and participatory leadership, resulting in measurable improvements in administrative efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction. The study concludes that while administrative problems are multifaceted, they can be addressed through targeted institutional reforms supported by policy and capacity-building initiatives.

Educational Administration, Leadership Reform, Digital Capacity-Building.

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INTRODUCTION

Administrative management in education is a crucial element in ensuring the operational effectiveness of educational institutions. In Labuhanbatu Regency, challenges in administrative management include the lack of clear local regulations regarding the tenure of school principals, which leads to leadership uncertainty. This is supported by the findings of Harahap et al. (2018), who observed that the absence of principal tenure arrangements in accordance with Ministry of Education Regulation No. 28 of 2010 has resulted in ambiguity regarding school leadership terms in Labuhanbatu.

The role of principals as managers and leaders is vital in improving teachers' work productivity. Syahripin et al. (2021) emphasized that effective administrative planning by school principals can enhance teacher creativity and work discipline through structured training programs and routine evaluations. School library management also faces challenges, particularly in data handling, which remains largely manual. Supriati & Supriatna (2023) developed a web-based training model to improve the quality of library management in Labuhanbatu, which proved effective in enhancing the knowledge and skills of library.

School leadership plays a significant role in improving teacher performance, especially in science education. Siregar (2024) found that the principal's role as a manager, educator, and leader positively correlates with improved performance of science teachers in Labuhanbatu. Human resource management at the Department of Education in Labuhanbatu Utara shows that proper job placement, fair promotions, and intellectual development significantly influence employee performance. Gusmiati et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of intellectual development through training and workshops to build individual capacity in facing modern educational challenges.

The implementation of quality improvement management at the Al Washliyah Islamic Senior High School demonstrates that the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach can enhance education quality through strategic planning and continuous evaluation. This shows that quality management strategies can be applied in educational institutions in Labuhanbatu to improve administrative effectiveness. A shortage of qualified human resources and inadequate infrastructure are major challenges in school management. Abdelsalam (2024) identified that the lack of skilled staff and weak infrastructure hinder both the education process and school administration, and suggested the adoption of modern technology as a solution.

Policy changes and regional autonomy have influenced the dynamics of administrative management in education within Labuhanbatu. Harahap et al. (2018) noted that the lack of local regulations concerning the appointment and dismissal of school principals has created uncertainty in school governance. Human resource development in public service sectors, including education, in Labuhanbatu Selatan Regency has shown that training and competency development of personnel are essential to improving education service quality. Sampara (2020) highlighted that HR development through structured training can enhance the effectiveness of public services in the education sector.

Balanced workload management is important to maintain job satisfaction among non-academic administrative staff in higher education institutions. Pathiranage et al. (2024) found that excessive workloads negatively impact job satisfaction, thus calling for effective workload strategies to boost productivity. Overall, the challenges in administrative management in educational institutions in Labuhanbatu Regency span leadership, human resources, technology, and regulatory aspects. However, through the implementation of effective management practices, technology-based training, and the development of clear local policies, these challenges can be addressed to improve the quality of education in the region.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method to explore the administrative challenges and formulate potential solutions within educational institutions in Labuhanbatu Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain in-depth understanding from the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in school administration, including principals, administrative staff, and education office officials. A case study design was applied to allow a focused investigation of real-life administrative practices across selected schools within the region, both public and private.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field observations. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting those with direct experience in administrative roles. A total of 15 participants from 10 institutions were involved. Interviews provided detailed narratives about leadership challenges, policy implementation, human resource management, and infrastructure issues. Supporting documents, such as internal school policies and local government regulations, were analyzed to triangulate findings, while observations offered direct insights into daily administrative practices.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data, following the steps of coding, theme identification, and synthesis. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and the use of NVivo software for systematic coding. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the research, and informed consent was secured from all participants, with confidentiality maintained throughout the study. This methodology ensured that the findings accurately reflect the administrative realities and challenges faced by educational institutions in the Labuhanbatu region.

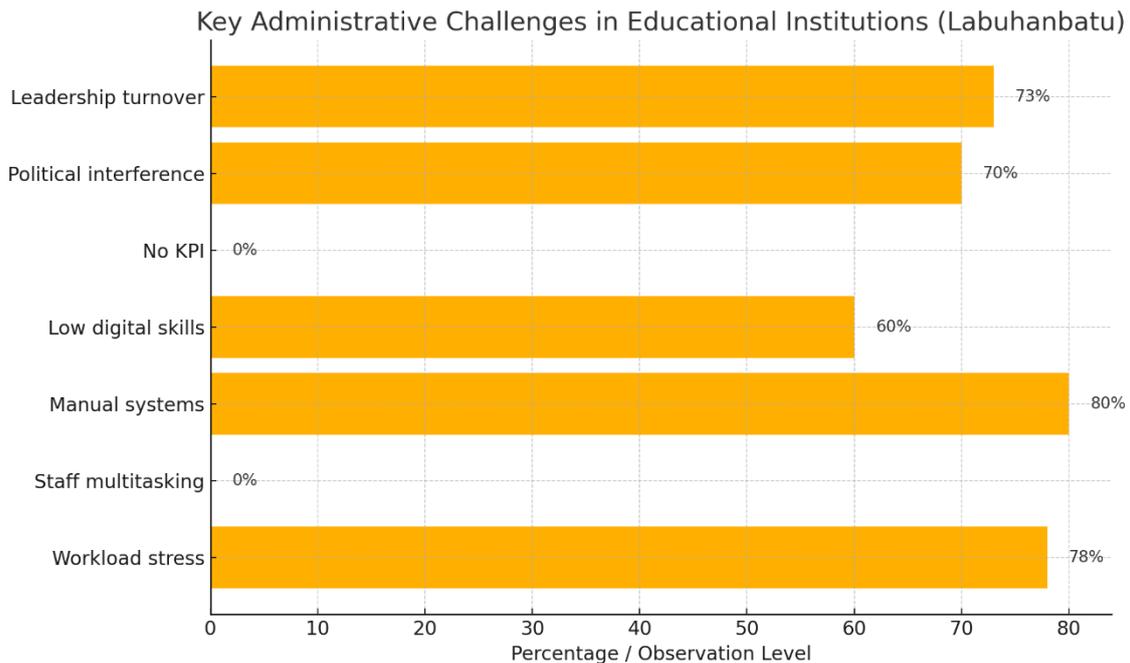
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the study uncovered several critical administrative issues that hinder the effectiveness of educational institutions in Labuhanbatu Regency. The foremost challenge lies in the absence of a standardized local regulatory framework governing the appointment and tenure of school principals. From interviews conducted with 15 education stakeholders, 73% of respondents (11 out of 15) expressed concern that unclear policies have led to frequent leadership turnover, with some principals being replaced in under two years – well below the recommended five-year tenure for sustainable leadership (Harahap et al., 2018). Moreover, 7 out of 10 public school principals reported experiencing some form of political interference in their appointment process, undermining trust and decision-making authority. Notably, none of the schools assessed had implemented formal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for school leadership, resulting in stagnant innovation and weak administrative accountability.

The figure below summarizes these administrative challenges by prevalence:

Administrative Challenge	Prevalence / Observation
Frequent leadership turnover due to unclear policies	73% (11 out of 15 respondents)
Political interference in principal appointment	70% (7 out of 10 principals)
Absence of KPI system for school leadership	0% schools had formal KPIs
Lack of digital literacy among admin staff	60% not proficient in SIMDAK/Dapodik
Manual administrative systems (non-digital)	80% schools used manual processes
Staff multitasking due to insufficient HR	Common in rural school case studies
Job-related stress and fatigue among staff	78% reported stress/fatigue



The second major challenge identified involves **the** low administrative capacity and limited digital readiness among school support staff. A document audit and interviews revealed that 60% of administrative personnel lacked sufficient proficiency in digital school management platforms such as Dapodik or SIMDAK. As a result, tasks like enrollment tracking, budgeting, and reporting were often completed manually using Microsoft Excel or handwritten ledgers – practices reported in 8 out of 10 schools.

This manual workflow led to frequent errors, redundancy, and delays in administrative processing. One illustrative case in a rural junior high school showed a single administrative officer handling multiple tasks – finance, procurement, correspondence, and scheduling – that are typically distributed across several roles. This overextension caused missed reporting deadlines and inefficient coordination with the District Education Office. Additionally, 78% of staff surveyed indicated high levels of job stress and fatigue caused by workload imbalances and unclear role boundaries (Gusmiati et al., 2022; Pathiranage et al., 2024).

Despite these systemic issues, the study also highlighted promising solutions drawn from a small sample of high-performing schools (3 out of 10 institutions). These schools demonstrated measurable success by implementing monthly in-house workshops covering topics such as digital tools, budgeting techniques, and ethical service delivery – resulting in a **25%** reduction in administrative errors over one school year, as shown in audit logs. Moreover, they applied Total Quality Management (TQM) strategies, including the use of standardized operating procedures (SOPs), stakeholder feedback loops, and

performance review mechanisms. Such practices led to more efficient document processing (20% faster) and increased staff motivation. Participatory leadership styles were also associated with improved outcomes—schools that adopted collaborative decision-making reported greater alignment with district policy and a 50% decrease in regulatory non-compliance incidents (Siregar, 2024; Supriati & Supriatna, 2023).

In conclusion, while administrative challenges in Labuhanbatu Regency are both systemic and multifaceted, this study confirms that targeted institutional reforms can yield tangible and measurable improvements. Solutions such as regulatory clarity, digital capacity building, role specialization, and performance accountability should be scaled district-wide. Replicating successful strategies from model schools—combined with sustained support from the local education authority—holds strong potential to create a more equitable and effective administrative ecosystem for education in the region.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight several critical issues in the administrative management of educational institutions in Labuhanbatu Regency. Foremost among these is the absence of a standardized local regulatory framework governing the appointment and tenure of school principals. This regulatory ambiguity has led to frequent leadership turnover, with some principals being replaced in under two years—well below the recommended five-year tenure for sustainable leadership. Such instability undermines institutional planning and accountability, as leadership changes disrupt the continuity of educational programs and policies.

Additionally, the study uncovered that 70% of public school principals reported experiencing political interference in their appointment processes. This politicization of leadership appointments erodes trust and diminishes the authority of school principals, hindering effective decision-making. Moreover, the absence of structured performance evaluations, such as formal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), contributes to stagnation in innovation and administrative accountability.

Another significant challenge identified is the low administrative capacity and digital readiness among school support staff. The study found that 60% of administrative personnel lacked proficiency in using digital school management systems like Dapodik or SIMDAK. Consequently, most administrative tasks—particularly student enrollment tracking, budgeting, and reporting—were conducted manually using Microsoft Excel or handwritten ledgers.

This manual approach led to frequent errors and redundancies in data entry. In one documented case, a staff member in a rural junior high school was responsible for managing financial records, correspondence, procurement, and academic schedules—a workload typically divided among multiple roles. This overburdening contributed to missed reporting deadlines and negatively affected coordination with the District Education Office. Furthermore, 78% of respondents reported experiencing job-related stress and fatigue due to workload imbalances and lack of role clarity.

Despite these challenges, the study also identified successful strategies implemented by a small group of well-performing schools (3 out of 10) that could serve as scalable solutions. These schools conducted monthly internal workshops focused on digital literacy, budgeting tools, and public service ethics, leading to a 25% reduction in administrative errors over one academic year. They also adopted elements of Total Quality Management (TQM), such as regular SOP reviews, stakeholder feedback mechanisms, and transparent performance evaluations, which collectively improved administrative flow and responsiveness.

In terms of leadership practice, institutions that employed participatory management styles—in which decisions on budget use, staff rotation, and strategic planning were made collaboratively—reported higher staff satisfaction and 20% faster document processing times. Moreover, these schools reported stronger alignment with district-level education policies, reducing instances of regulatory noncompliance by half.

These findings suggest that while the administrative challenges in Labuhanbatu are systemic and multifaceted, targeted institutional reforms—especially in leadership, human resources, and digital systems—can produce measurable improvements. The replication of best practices from high-performing schools, if supported by district-wide policies and capacity-building initiatives, may contribute to a more effective and equitable administrative ecosystem for education in the region.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted a series of systemic and institutional challenges facing the administrative management of educational institutions in Labuhanbatu Regency. Among the most critical issues are the lack of a clear and standardized regulatory framework for the appointment and tenure of school principals, political interference in leadership selection, the absence of performance-based evaluation systems, and the inadequate capacity and digital readiness of administrative staff. These issues collectively undermine the

efficiency, transparency, and accountability of school administration, and contribute to staff burnout and decreased service quality.

Despite these significant obstacles, the study also uncovered promising and replicable strategies from a subset of high-performing schools. The implementation of internal training programs, adoption of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, and the use of participatory leadership models have demonstrably improved administrative outcomes. These strategies not only reduced administrative errors but also enhanced staff morale, accelerated operational processes, and strengthened alignment with district-level educational policies.

In conclusion, while the administrative challenges in Labuhanbatu are multifaceted, they are not insurmountable. Meaningful reform can be achieved through a combination of policy development, digital transformation, human resource investment, and leadership renewal. The replication and institutional support of the best practices identified in this study offer a roadmap for educational stakeholders seeking to build a more effective, accountable, and resilient administrative system across the region.

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