

Administrative staff roles in enhancing service efficiency at a vocational high school

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran tata usaha dalam meningkatkan efisiensi layanan administrasi sekolah, dengan fokus pada tuntutan organisasi yang khas di lembaga pendidikan kejuruan. Dilatarbelakangi oleh masih maraknya pengelolaan administrasi manual di sekolah-sekolah Indonesia dan terbatasnya kajian pada konteks ini, penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan analisis dokumen di SMK Widya Praja Ungaran pada November 2025. Dua belas informan dipilih secara purposive: satu kepala tata usaha, satu staf, lima guru, dan lima siswa. Analisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman; validitas dijamin melalui triangulasi sumber dan metode. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tata usaha menjaga efisiensi di empat domain: pengelolaan persuratan, pengelolaan arsip, layanan warga sekolah, dan dukungan manajemen sekolah. Efisiensi tetap terjaga meski sistem sepenuhnya manual dan hanya ditopang dua tenaga, menunjukkan bahwa efisiensi administrasi tidak semata ditentukan digitalisasi, tetapi juga oleh keteraturan prosedur, kompetensi staf, dan koordinasi organisasi. Penelitian merekomendasikan penguatan kapasitas SDM dan pengembangan sistem digital untuk peningkatan berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: kinerja administrasi; kualitatif deskriptif; layanan administrasi sekolah

Abstract

This study examines the role of the administrative office in improving school administrative service efficiency, with focus on the organizational demands unique to vocational education. Motivated by the prevalence of manual administrative management in Indonesian schools and limited research on this context, the study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentary analysis at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran in November 2025. Twelve informants were selected via purposive sampling: one administrative head, one staff member, five teachers, and five students. Analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model; validity was ensured

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through source and methodological triangulation. Findings show that the administrative office sustains efficiency across four domains: correspondence management, records management, community services, and school management support. Efficiency was maintained despite a fully manual system and a two-person workforce, suggesting that administrative efficiency is shaped not only by digitization but equally by procedural regularity, staff competence, and organizational coordination. The study recommends strengthening human resource capacity and developing digital systems for sustainable improvement.

Keywords: administrative performance; qualitative descriptive; school administration services

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Introduction

Education constitutes a foundational pillar of human resource development, making professionally managed educational administration an institutional imperative (UNESCO, 2023). The operational effectiveness of educational institutions depends substantially on administrative systems that are orderly, well-documented, and procedurally structured. School administration functions as an organizational system that regulates institutional activities, ensures procedural compliance, and supports the optimal achievement of educational goals (Sherlywaty, 2019). Without an efficient administrative infrastructure, schools face the risk of operational disruption, reduced service quality, and compromised educational outcomes.

This study was conducted at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran, a vocational high school that manages a range of educational and vocationally oriented administrative activities. In vocational education institutions, administrative complexity tends to be considerably higher than in general secondary schools due to the additional requirements of managing industrial work placement programs, competency certification processes, and partnerships with the business and industrial sectors. The administrative office (*tata usaha*) occupies a strategic position within the school's organizational structure, responsible for correspondence management, records administration, personnel affairs, institutional data management, and information services to the school community. This function aligns with the provisions of Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 45 of 2019, which designates the administrative office as the unit responsible for general administration, human resources, finance, supplies, and the management of educational data and information.

At the national level, the efficiency of educational administration remains a persistent challenge across Indonesian educational institutions. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2023) reports that more than 40% of schools in Indonesia have not yet fully implemented digital-based administrative systems, meaning that many administrative processes continue to be performed manually. This situation creates vulnerabilities including delays in data processing, document archiving inefficiencies, and suboptimal service delivery to the school community. At the global level, UNESCO (2023) underscores that administrative efficiency is a key indicator of quality and sustainable educational governance. Research by Jennah et al. (2025) demonstrates that digital administrative systems implemented in Finland and Singapore reduced data processing time by up to 40% and increased the productivity of educational staff, illustrating the potential impact of administrative modernization on overall educational quality.

Within the broader context of school quality management, the administrative office also supports the implementation of educational standards, including content standards, process standards, assessment standards, and graduate competency standards. Sherlywaty (2019) notes that the administrative office manages curriculum documents, learning evaluation reports, and

educational records that serve as the basis for managerial decision-making. However, in practice, school administration continues to face obstacles such as limited staffing, heavy workloads, and insufficient facilities and infrastructure (Safitri, 2023). To address these challenges, school administration must be organized professionally through the systematic application of management functions, including planning, organizing, executing, and supervising (Fajriah, 2023).

Information technology represents another key strategy for enhancing administrative service efficiency. Laugi (2018) argues that educational management information systems can accelerate data processing, improve informational accuracy, and reduce dependence on manual administrative processes. Nevertheless, the integration of information technology into school administration has not been fully optimized across many Indonesian educational institutions, a situation directly observed at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran. Preliminary observations at this institution revealed ongoing challenges including delayed document processing, underutilization of available information systems, and uneven distribution of administrative tasks among staff members. These conditions suggest that administrative service efficiency has not yet fully aligned with the principles of effective administrative management.

Prior research has examined various dimensions of school administration, including service quality (Aulia & Umar, 2022), the leadership role of the administrative head (Hasanah et al., 2024), and digital-based administrative management (Rahmah & Elyas, 2024; Pandi, 2022). However, most existing studies have concentrated on service quality or system digitization, while research specifically examining the role of administrative staff in improving the efficiency of administrative services within vocational school contexts remains limited. This gap is particularly significant given the more complex administrative characteristics of vocational institutions, which involve managing vocational programs, industrial placements, competency certification, and industry partnerships.

The novelty of this study lies in two primary respects. First, it conceptually focuses on the role of administrative staff in improving service efficiency within a vocational high school setting, an institutional context that involves a higher level of administrative complexity than general secondary schools. Second, methodologically, this study moves beyond descriptive accounts of service quality to analyze the factors that support and hinder administrative efficiency through the combined theoretical lenses of organizational efficiency theory (Taylor, 1911) and management theory (Terry, 2010). In this study, administrative service efficiency is defined as an organization's capacity to deliver fast, accurate, and precise services by optimally utilizing available resources (Taylor, 1911), while Terry's (2010) management theory provides the framework for analyzing how the administrative office fulfills its managerial role in improving service efficiency.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is administrative management implemented at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran? (2) What role does the administrative office play in improving the efficiency of administrative services? (3) What factors support and hinder the implementation of administrative management, and how do these factors affect the efficiency of school administrative services? By addressing these questions, the study aims to enrich scholarly understanding of school administrative management in vocational education contexts, provide schools with an evidence-based foundation for improving administrative service quality, and support future researchers investigating administrative efficiency in educational institutions.

Research Methods

This study was conducted at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran, located on Jl. Jenderal Gatot Subroto, Ungaran, Central Java, Indonesia. The research site was selected due to the relevance of its administrative context to the study's objectives, specifically the role of the administrative office in improving school administrative service efficiency. The initial observation phase and proposal development were undertaken from November to December 2025, with field data collection conducted on November 27, 2025, through in-depth interviews and direct observation.

Although field data collection was carried out within a single day, the process had been carefully prepared in advance through preliminary observations, purposive informant selection, and coordinated scheduling of interviews with relevant school officials. The interview data were further supplemented by an analysis of administrative documentation, enabling the researcher to obtain

comprehensive and contextually relevant information aligned with the research focus. As Sugiyono (2023) notes, in qualitative research, the depth of data is determined primarily by the accuracy of informant selection and the richness of information obtained rather than the duration of data collection alone.

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods. The qualitative paradigm was selected to enable an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation within their natural context, specifically regarding how the administrative office fulfills its role in improving service efficiency. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, responsible for directly collecting and interpreting data in the field (Sugiyono, 2023). Through this approach, the study sought to document the performance of administrative duties, the mechanisms of administrative service delivery, and various efforts undertaken by staff to improve administrative service efficiency.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby participants were chosen on the basis of specific criteria relevant to the research objectives: (1) direct involvement in school administrative services; (2) familiarity with the administrative procedures in place at the institution; and (3) prior direct interaction with the administrative office. Based on these criteria, the study engaged 12 informants, consisting of 1 administrative head, 1 administrative staff member, 5 teachers, and 5 students. The administrative head and staff member were included due to their central roles in managing school administration, while teachers and students were selected as service users capable of providing substantive perspectives on service quality and efficiency. The selection of five teachers and five students was intended to capture a diverse range of user experiences across different administrative service contexts, including document handling, letter requests, and access to academic data.

Data collection employed three complementary methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentary review. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all informants to gather information on the performance of administrative duties, service mechanisms, and efforts to improve administrative efficiency. Direct observation was carried out within the administrative office to document administrative service processes, including document workflow, staff-user interactions, and the physical document filing system. The documentary review encompassed examination of administrative records including incoming and outgoing mail logs, the administrative office's organizational structure, and relevant school administrative service documents.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman (as cited in Sugiyono, 2023) interactive model, which comprises four interrelated stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data collection stage, raw data were gathered from interviews, observations, and documentation. The data reduction stage involved systematically selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives. Reduced data were then organized into descriptive narratives to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships across findings. Conclusions were drawn incrementally through iterative interpretation of the analyzed data. Data validity was ensured through two triangulation strategies: source triangulation, involving cross-comparison of information obtained from different informant categories (administrative head, administrative staff, teachers, and students); and methodological triangulation, involving cross-comparison of data obtained through different collection methods (interviews, observation, and documentation).

Result and Discussion

Research Result

The findings of this study reveal that the administrative staff at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran play a significant role in sustaining the efficiency of school administrative services. The study analyzed administrative efficiency across four key operational domains: correspondence management, records and document management, administrative services for the school community,

and support for school management functions. A summary of the research findings across these domains is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Research Findings on the Efficiency of Administrative Services

Administrative Aspects	Key Findings	Efficiency Indicators
Mail Administration	Mail processing is still done manually using ledgers for incoming and outgoing mail and a management disposition system	Procedures are clear, information flows smoothly, and there is no backlog of mail
Records Management	Records are stored by document type and time period in folders and filing cabinets	Documents are easy to retrieve, minimizing administrative errors
Administrative Services	Services related to certificates, document legalization, and student administration are handled through a simple procedure	The service process is relatively quick and easy for users to understand
School management support	The administrative office provides academic, personnel, and institutional documents	Data is available to support school decision-making
Administrative challenges	The administrative staff consists of only two people	The workload is heavy, and service may be delayed at times

Efficiency of Correspondence Administration

As shown in Table 1, correspondence administration at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran is conducted manually through logbook-based recording of incoming and outgoing mail. Each incoming letter is classified according to its type and level of urgency prior to being forwarded to the relevant parties, while outgoing letters are prepared in accordance with the school's standard template, assigned a document number, and archived as part of the official school record. Despite the absence of a digital correspondence system, the administrative process was observed to function in an orderly and systematic manner. No accumulation of unprocessed letters or significant delays in information dissemination were identified during the observation period. This finding indicates that the existence of clear work procedures and a well-defined division of tasks enables the administrative staff to maintain the smooth flow of correspondence administration even within the constraints of a manual system.

Efficiency of Administrative Services for School Students

With respect to records management, as summarized in Table 1, the administrative office employs a document classification system organized by record type and retention period. Academic records, personnel records, and institutional documents are stored in labelled folders and filing cabinets, facilitating efficient retrieval when required. The findings indicate that this manual archiving system remains effective in supporting administrative service efficiency, particularly in expediting document retrieval and minimizing administrative errors. The systematic organization of physical archives ensures that school leadership, teachers, and students are able to obtain required documents in a reasonably timely manner.

Efficiency of Administrative Services for School Staff

Table 1 further illustrates that the administrative office functions as the primary administrative service unit for the school community, catering to the needs of students, teachers, and educational staff. Services provided include the issuance of certificates, document authentication,

and the management of student administrative matters. The study findings indicate that the administrative service procedures in place are relatively straightforward and readily understood by service users. Service requests were typically completed within a reasonable timeframe, and no significant user complaints were recorded during the observation period. These findings suggest that the administrative office is capable of delivering responsive and orderly services despite its continued reliance on manual administrative processes.

Administrative Support for School Management Efficiency

Beyond direct service provision, the findings reveal that the administrative office plays an important supporting role in school management by supplying the administrative data required for institutional planning and program implementation. Data managed by the office include academic, personnel, and institutional documents used as a basis for decision-making by school leadership. The availability of well-organized administrative data was found to facilitate timely and accurate access to information for school leaders and teachers, thereby enabling evidence-based institutional decision-making. In this respect, the administrative office functions not merely as a service implementer but also as a strategic enabler of effective school management.

Challenges in Improving the Efficiency of Administrative Services

Notwithstanding these positive findings, Table 1 also highlights significant challenges arising from limited human resources. The administrative unit at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran comprises only two personnel one administrative head and one administrative staff member resulting in multiple administrative tasks being handled concurrently by the same individuals. This concentration of responsibilities was found to increase the administrative workload, particularly during periods of heightened service demand. Furthermore, the predominantly manual nature of administrative activities requires greater time investment and careful attention to detail, compounding the workload burden. These structural limitations represent the primary constraint on further improvements in administrative service efficiency at the institution.

Discussion

The research findings demonstrate that the administrative staff at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran are able to sustain the efficiency of school administrative services despite operating within a manual administrative system and with a substantially limited workforce. These findings carry important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical standpoint, they challenge the prevailing assumption that administrative efficiency is primarily determined by the level of digital technology adoption. Instead, the findings suggest that efficiency is co-produced by a combination of factors including procedural regularity, staff discipline, and effective organizational coordination. This aligns with Permatasari (2025), who explains that administrative efficiency in schools can be achieved when organizations have clear work procedures and structured task distribution in administrative management.

In the domain of correspondence management, the administrative office's success in maintaining uninterrupted information flow illustrates that systematic administrative procedures constitute a critical factor in achieving operational efficiency. A consistent and well-maintained system for recording incoming and outgoing correspondence ensures that every document is traceable and can be followed up in a timely manner. This finding corroborates Idariyanti's (2025) research, which identifies procedural regularity in correspondence management as a key determinant of smooth organizational communication and enhanced administrative efficiency.

With respect to records management, the systematic classification of documents by type and retention period was found to directly support administrative service efficiency by enabling rapid document retrieval when required by school administrators or the school community. Rahmah and Elyas (2024) similarly argue that a clearly defined records classification system improves administrative efficiency by simplifying the processes of document storage and retrieval within organizations.

Although much of the existing literature emphasizes the critical importance of digitizing school administrative systems, the findings of this study demonstrate that manual administrative systems can continue to function efficiently in educational settings characterized by a relatively manageable workload. This may be attributed to the simpler workflow structures, more immediate coordination, and concentrated administrative responsibilities that tend to characterize smaller school administrative units. Hartono et al. (2025) explain that the successful implementation of administrative systems whether manual or digital depends substantially on an organization's capacity to manage work procedures effectively and on the competence of the personnel responsible for executing them.

Regarding administrative services for the school community, the study findings suggest that service efficiency extends beyond process speed to encompass the quality of interactions between administrative staff and service users. Responsiveness, clear communication, and simple service procedures were identified as factors that facilitate service users' access to school administrative services. Khairtati (2024) similarly notes that the communication skills and responsiveness of administrative staff are influential determinants of the effectiveness of administrative services within the school environment.

The findings also underscore the strategic role of the administrative office in supporting broader school management efficiency by providing the data and documentation necessary for institutional decision-making. The availability of well-organized academic, personnel, and institutional documents enables school leadership to obtain required information promptly and accurately. Eka and Dewi (2024) affirm that the administrative office plays a vital role in supporting school management through the provision of accurate and systematically organized administrative data.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study contribute to the existing body of research on school administrative efficiency by demonstrating that efficiency can be achieved through standardized work procedures, consistent task execution, and effective organizational coordination, even in the absence of digital administrative systems. This finding both confirms previous research regarding the importance of systematic administrative management and extends the scholarly understanding that school administrative efficiency emerges from the dynamic interaction between work systems, human resources, and the organizational context of the school.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the administrative staff at SMK Widya Praja Ungaran play a crucial role in improving the efficiency of school administrative services, even within the constraints of a fully manual administrative system and a minimal workforce comprising only one administrative head and one administrative staff member. Administrative service efficiency is evidenced across four key domains: the organized management of correspondence, systematic records and document management, responsive administrative services for the school community, and effective support for the school's managerial functions all of which operate within established procedures and within reasonable timeframes. Theoretically, the findings of this study contribute to the development of school administrative management theory by affirming that administrative service efficiency is not solely determined by technological adoption or resource availability, but is equally shaped by the appropriateness of task distribution, the regularity of work systems, and the competence of administrative personnel. Practically, these findings carry implications for multiple stakeholders: for schools as a foundation for strengthening institutional support for administrative units; for administrative managers as a basis for evaluating and improving administrative service performance; and for education policymakers as a consideration in planning human resource development and the modernization of school administrative systems. This study is not without limitations. The scope is confined to a single vocational school, the informant pool is relatively small, and the administrative technology in use remains suboptimal. Consequently, the findings cannot be broadly generalized to other educational contexts. Future research is therefore recommended to extend the scope of inquiry to multiple schools with varied characteristics, incorporate a wider range of efficiency measurement indicators, and systematically compare manual

and digital-based administrative systems. Such comparative analyses would yield a more comprehensive and generalizable understanding of the factors that shape improvements in school administrative service efficiency.

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