# Principals' leadership strategy to improve "link and match" quality for vocational education

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to identify, analyze, and reflect on vocational school leadership strategies for improving the quality of vocational education. The result achieved is forming the principal's leadership strategy in improving the quality of education. This study used a qualitative approach so that the data collection was carried out through observation, document analysis, interviews, and questionnaires. This study can be developed to improve the quality of learning at the vocational school level in line with the implementation process. Academically, the results of this study can be used as a guideline for the development of vocational education management. The development of the school into an educational service organization with high-quality sustainability. The results show that the principal's leadership strategy in improving the quality of education at SMK Negeri 1 Mataram includes articulation of the vision and mission of the school, leadership values of the leaders, awards in the school, social-emotional relationships of principals, and the quality of the "Link and Match" education in schools.

**Keywords:** *link and match, principal's leadership strategy, vocational education*

## INTRODUCTION

Quality schools are led by principals who have a solid commitment to quality. The following experts about the importance of the principal's role; "The most person at school is not the principal; it is the students most in need of individual attention to their needs as a learner. However, the person most able to provide the optimum combination of staff, resources, materials, and methods for a student is the school principal". Secondary schools in Indonesia as educational institutions have unique characteristics compared with other education levels. It can be seen in the demands of high-quality graduates to prepare students to enter the tertiary level, enter the workforce and live in society. As the main person in charge, the principal was de-manded to think and act to improve quality. There are several reasons for the writer's interest in deciding to study the leadership of school principals in improving quality in secondary schools, namely: principal's leadership responsibilities in improving quality, demands quality improvement and improvement in high schools are very high and strategic, middle school organizations are relatively dynamic and complex in terms of their members (Satria, 2016).

Several studies and writings explain that the principal role of school leadership is instructional leaders in schools (Pattanapichet & Wichadee, 2015). It can be found that

several studies on the effectiveness of school improvement see school principals as having a significant role in improving school effectiveness. Tomlinson (García-Garnica, 2018) found the effectiveness of secondary school improvement in Spain in the ESI (Effective School Improvement) program supported by the principal's leadership which naturally gave breadth to organizing teachers. Heck (Naidoo & Petersen, 2016) found that principals' learning leadership influences teacher and staff performance, specifically school academic achievement. The explanation above shows the decisive role of the principal's leadership in creating an effective and quality school (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016). It is indicated in the organization's effectiveness, work morale, teacher productivity, and student achievement. From this, it can be understood that the functions of the principal as an administrator, learning leader, and manager become essential in writing about the head of school.

While the following research findings explain that the principle has a broader organizational role culturally and bureaucratic; Samancioğlu, Kalman, and Sincar (2015) explain that the role of the principal includes: administrators, organizers, value-based jugglers, and helpers, the broker, humanistic, catalysts, and rationalists. Find principals as internal critical agents of change; he was the initiator and planner of school development. Samancioğlu *et al*. (2015) found that school principals play a role in three ways, namely maintaining, surviving, and transforming the school's vision. Gorkani and Sohrabi (2015), through anthropological studies, found that school principals have high authority, learning leaders, a sense of spirit team, build positive interpersonal relationships, a productive school climate, and vital fundraisers. Likewise, Lightfoot's findings in six secondary schools found that the role of the principal was very diverse, namely building a sense of responsibility towards teacher-students and students, maintaining the status quo, creating discipline, and creating a disciplined curriculum. He acts as a leader and learning bureaucrat in schools. Naidoo and Petersen (2016) saw the importance of the relationship between the principal and the teacher, both in his capacity as a learning leader and a school bureaucrat.

In contrast, Akpil and Gündüz (2016) found that the headmaster's leaders in schools excel in their roles as educational leaders and school managers. While the principal's leadership on improving quality, which leads to the formation of a "good school culture" for the learning process, has not been much researched and received attention from education management experts. Only Ihsani, Inderawati, and Vianty (2020) found the role of the school head in managing the culture and school bureaucracy to improve learning.

Based on the above thought, the principal's leadership role is culturally, and bureaucratic in the school is very important. This book intends to explore the principal's leadership for quality culture, including values, beliefs, and behavior, both verbal and material, in the school (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2017). It is interesting because principals have a significant role in building school culture.

The principal's leadership in quality remembrance is an effort to synergize all organization components to commit to school quality. Principal's leadership on the quality of education includes two main elements. *First*, cultural buildings (cultural buildings) include; vision, mission and goals, values and beliefs, reward systems, emotional and social relationships, and organizational design. *Second*, personality building as role modelling including; personal behaviour, leader behaviour, and administrative actions (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016). In contrast, quality is a set of norms or values manifested in schools' behaviors, activities, and symbols to achieve school excellence through continuous quality

improvement (García-Garnica, 2018). Moreover, the tangible manifestation of quality is evident in the quality of school services, the quality of human resources, and the quality of school facilities/infrastructure.

The principal has high authority and influence to improve the quality of education. The weak leadership will be complex in developing a quality culture so that he faces various cultural challenges in school. The form of a decisive leadership role, for example, in the cases of this study, is how he develops his vision and mission, leadership values, reward systems, and social and emotional relationships to form a strong education quality in various school programs and activities—the principal, to develop a quality culture at each of these schools. For example, improving the quality of school services, extracurricular services, and school governance services; improving the quality of educational resources; improving the quality of teachers and staff, and improving the quality of educational facilities/infrastructure (Dessalegn, Bekalu, & Frew, 2016).

Based on the research findings following the opinion of Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) explains the hierarchy of the leadership abilities of the principal, namely the technical leadership ability leads to the principal's task as a manager (management engineer), human leadership ability leads to the human ability of leadership (human engineer), educational leadership ability influences leadership ability in learning and schooling, symbolic leadership ability leads to leadership abilities in symbolic aspects, the principal is assumed to play the role of "cheap" (the role of cheap). Cultural leadership ability leads to the leadership ability of the principal to build strong school culture, the principal acts as a "high priest" (the role of the high priest). According to Moorosi and Bantwini (2016), three of the principals' leadership abilities lead to the essential competencies of leadership to strive for and maintain the quality of schooling as management engineers, human engineers, and the role of cheap. In contrast, the last two roles are the principal's leadership to improve the excellent school organization, where the principal has symbolic and cultural leadership qualities. Likewise, this study accepts the opinion of (Satria, 2016) that the principal's leadership symbolic and cultural approach leads to the formation of a healthy school culture until it breeds a quality culture.

So far, there has been no research that comprehensively analyzes the related "Link and Match" between principal leadership and employment in the education system in vocational high schools. Thus, it is crucial to carry out this research to become a policy requirement for the government in managing the education system, especially in the education process in vocational (vocational) schools.

**METHOD**

The study used a qualitative research approach with a case study design at SMK (Vocational School) 1 Mataram. Researchers chose this school because it has become one of the favorite vocational high schools in Mataram. In addition, this school was also appointed as a pilot school for vocational high schools in the city of Mataram. The data validity test is done through triangulation, dependability, and confirmability (Goldingay *et al*., 2014). Interviews were conducted with all policy stakeholders at the school. This interview was given directly by researchers to the Principal, 10 teachers, 3 educational staff, and 12 representatives students. It was done to cover the broadest possible data so that the results of this study can be more comprehensive and closer to the facts in the field. The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire and interview guide. After the subject

was given, then a questionnaire was given. The researcher then gave interviews with each element of education in the education process in schools. Data analysis uses qualitative data analysis through data collection, data reduction, and concluding/data verification. The results of the analysis were then described and presented descriptively to compare with the literature review that previous researchers had conducted.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The principal's leadership strategy for improving the quality of education is based on findings in Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram. This focus will be discussed as follows: articulation of the vision and mission of the school, the values of the principal's leadership, the reward system, the social and emotional relations of the principal, and the improvement of the quality of the link and match education in the Vocational Senior High School at Mataram.

*Articulation of the school's vision and mission.* Vision is what the organization wants to be in the future (what do we want to have). In contrast, the mission is about the desires of all organization components will be what in the future (what do we want to be). Vision leads to the formation of an organizational self-image; it is a moral bond and a mission in the formation of school culture; it is a cultural bond (cultural bonding) for all components of the school, with other statements that the vision and mission as a reference to think, reference to act and reference to behave, teachers, students, and other staff. This is where the principal's job is so that the vision can be powerful for teachers, students and staff so that the school can improve graduate quality and achievement. The vision can "move" this school to become a high school with a sustainable quality culture from year to year. He can build synergy in all components of the organization. He is the soul and spirit of the organization. The discretion on articulating vision and mission as shown in the Figure 1.

In line with the school's vision, the school mission is a tangible form of understanding of division, implemented in various school work programs each year. The mission interprets the school's vision, implemented in the short-term and long-term plan of activities. So that mission is a dream about what the organization will become in the future. That is, the mission directs the school and its members towards the coveted image of the organization.

As for the form of socialization and application of the school's vision to the organization, the principal seeks to create a conducive school atmosphere through two aspects, namely; static aspects include; school vision and mission, school programs or activities, school regulations, school facilities/infrastructure, parks/playground/sports. Moreover, conversely, the vision and mission will become incomprehensible to all components without intensive socialization. For this reason, the principal needs to socialize the school's vision and mission continuously. The strength of the school's vision and mission is increasing enthusiasm and as a source of inspiration for members to improve work performance and professional motivation. The vision and mission can transform members' morality to improve the quality of education. All school components should have a sense of ownership and responsibility for the vision and mission that has been set.

Based on the explanation, the findings of this research that vision and mission are the primary purposes and activities that make an organization have a unique identity and differentiate it from other organizations. Likewise, Samsu and Rusmini (2016) emphasized the three functions of the school vision, namely, inspiring members of an organization as a

**Figure 1. Articulation of school vision and mission to quality improvement**
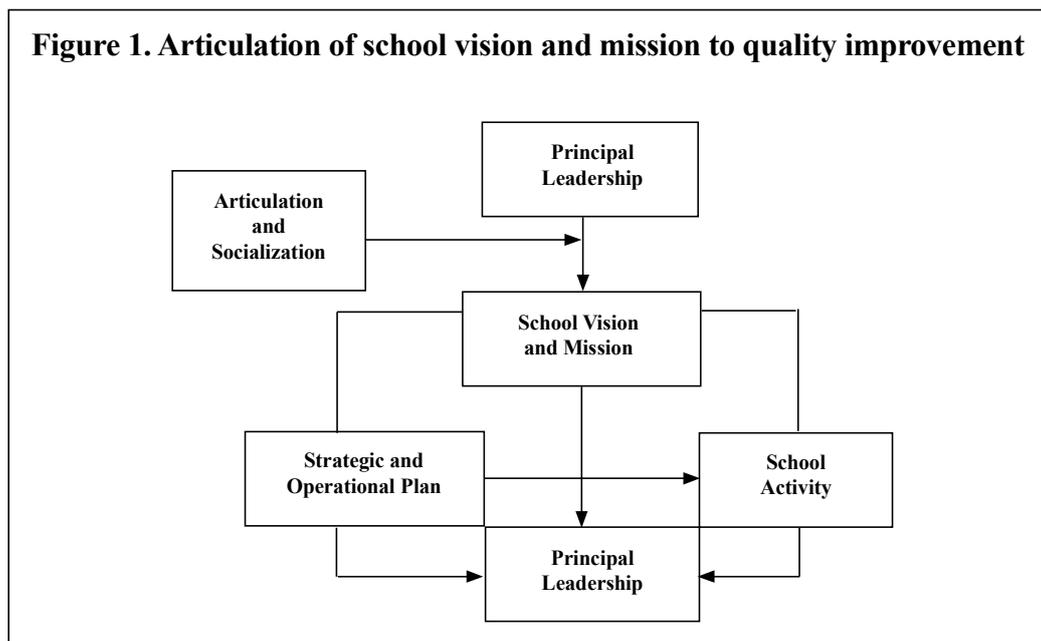


basis for organizational decision-making, and moving members' energy to focus on improving quality. García-Garnica (2018) also explained four steps in building a solid vision: express a vision, explain a vision, implement a vision, and expand the reach. Whereas the vision of the school, according to Akpil and Gündüz (2016), should be the ownership and essential commitment in an organization that covets members and the wider community. In both cases, the principal articulate vision, explained the vision, and carried out and expanded the school's vision.

Whereas Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) explain that organizations are driven by a mission with excellence organizations that are driven by missions are: more efficient, more effective and better, more flexible, and will have higher spirits. According to Naidoo and Petersen (2016), in informing organizational culture, leaders transform the vision, values, and beliefs to become rules and behaviors for all components to form a robust organizational culture. Based on the explanation above, this study calls on the opinion that the meaning of vision and mission are mutually integrated. The vision is the self-esteem and shared goals of the organization's members. Vision can be articulated in the form of mission statements containing the values and central themes of the organization.

The principal tries to make the school's vision and mission be internalized in school life, especially among teachers, students, and employees. He strived for the vision and mission to be a significant factor in forming a quality culture in schools so that the education process went well. Without the optimum role of the school principal to increase the comprehension and application of the school's vision, it is not easy to become the driver value for school life. In the case of Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram, it can also be seen the ability of school principals to express, explain, implement, and clarify the reach of a school's vision so that it becomes an integral part of school life. The principal's self-image of the school's vision impacts the formation of a quality culture (İnandi, Uzun, & Yeşil, 2016).

In the context of the two cases above, the vision and mission of the school is the self-image of the school principal to improve the quality of each school. The principal's articulation

of the school's vision and mission will provide meaning for improving the effectiveness of its leadership in bringing the school into a quality culture school on an ongoing basis from year to year. Here, the principal is very influential in improving the quality of culture in each school (Kaya & Deniz, 2020).
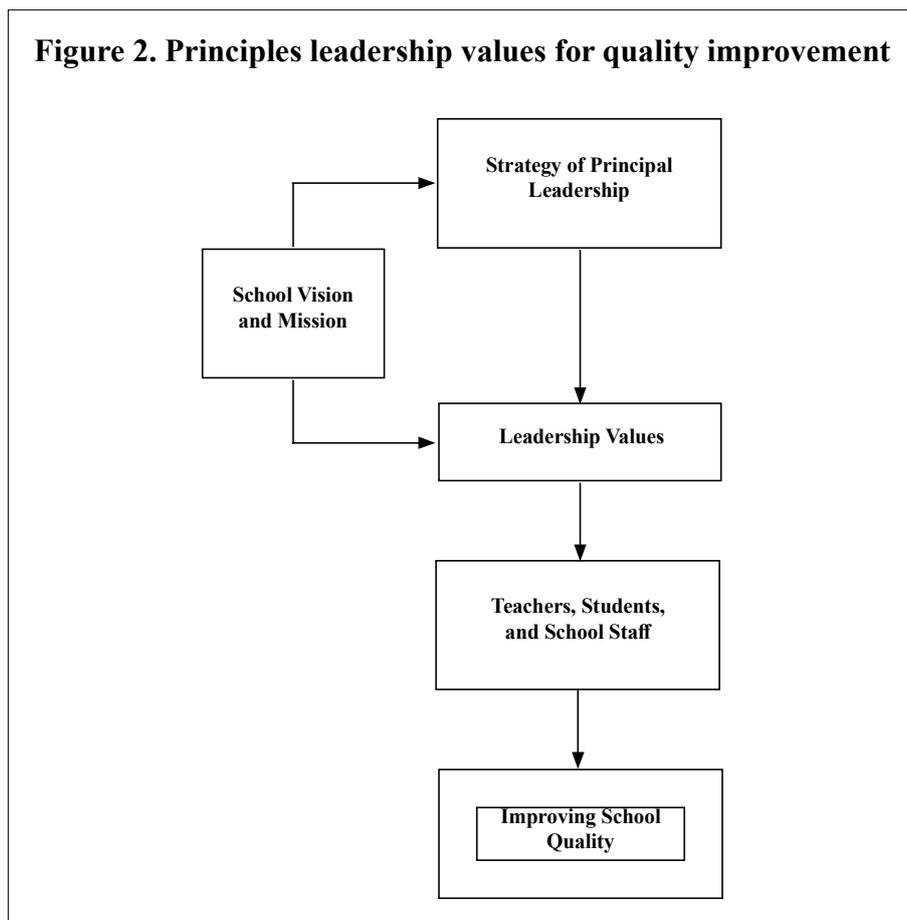
So based on the findings in the two cases above, it is in line with Al-Ani and Al Attar's (2017) opinion that the leader, in this case, the principal, influences, changes, and maintains a strong school culture following the agreed vision of the organization. Meanwhile, according to Bessa, Hastie, Araújo, and Mesquita (2019), educational leaders' primary role includes having a clear vision of the integrated quality of school organizations and having a firm attitude to avoid deviations from organizational culture. The above accepts the opinion of Leonard (2016), who explains research on leadership in school organizations; there are three domains, namely educational leadership, symbolic leadership, and cultural leadership. Educational leadership diagnoses pedagogical and curriculum problems and help teachers solve learning problems. Symbolic leadership refers to the principal's efforts to build consensus among all members of the school organization.

*Principal's leadership values.* Leadership values are a fundamental foundation of the culture of school organizations. In each case, the principal believes in values that can create effective leadership. This value becomes the principal's belief which is then transferred to the lives of school residents. With these values, he seeks to improve the quality of culture. This is related to the principal's efforts to improve leadership effectiveness (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 2014). These values affect the birth of school culture, including the school. Principals' leadership values can be values that are believed to be personally then applied latently in daily life. As for these values, at Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram, namely: high discipline, courage in innovation, democracy for togetherness, and responsibility for duty. The description of principles of leadership values as shown in the Figure 2.

Based on the findings that this study accepts the opinion of Canales, Tejada-Delgado, and Slate (2018) that values and beliefs in school organizations influence the creation of excellent schools, as found, namely quality, effectiveness, equality, efficiency, and empowerment. That school excellence is achieved due to the fundamental values that the school principal believes in: excellence, service, and service, the value of worship (service), and the value of trust (responsibility). Likewise, in the opinion of Hughes, Ginnet, and Curpy (2002), values influence leadership in six ways, namely: values affect leaders' perceptions about situations and problems, values of leaders influence decisions and solutions to a problem, values affect leaders' interpersonal relationships with individuals, values affect leaders' perceptions of individual success and organization, values provide leaders' benchmarks about wrong or right, ethical or unethical behavior, and values influence how leaders accept or reject organizational challenges and goals.

Furthermore, Kaya and Deniz's (2020) opinion explains that cultural values are born from the founders' personal beliefs and top leaders who develop into organizational values. For example, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, a hard worker of 18 hours a day, is a terminal value of excellence, innovation, and high quality, and the values of instruments that support hard work, creativity, and high standards. These values are internalized in the leader's personality, which develops into organizational values.
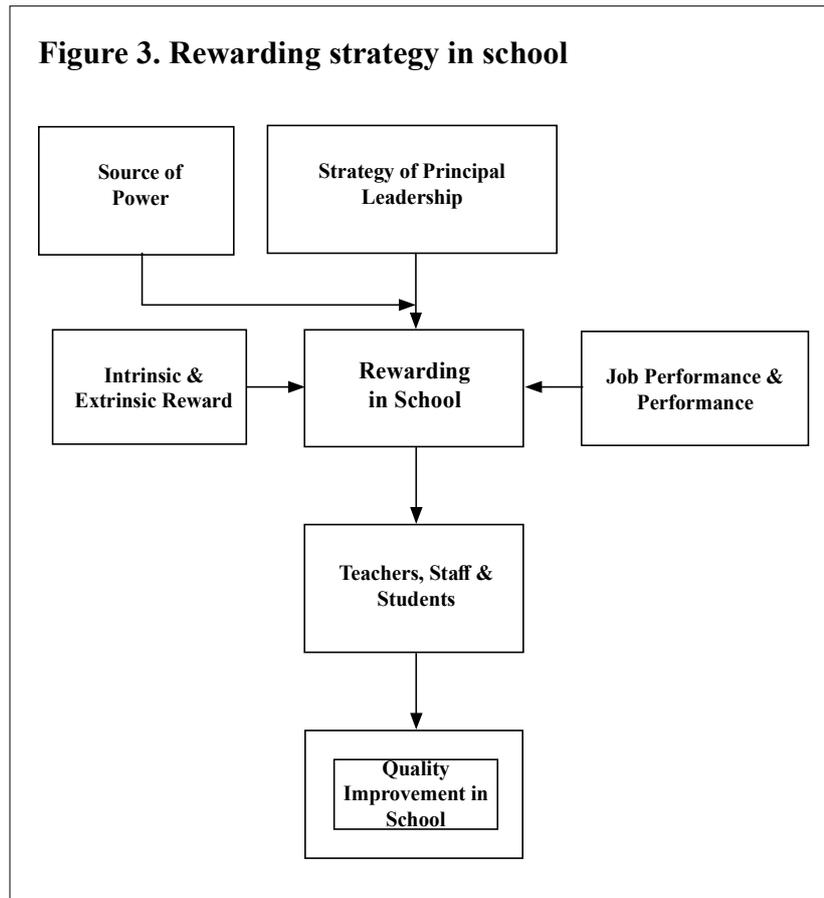
*The reward strategy in schools.* The award is an attempt by the principal to improve the effectiveness of the school organization. He directs leaders to distinguish which activities are

**Figure 2. Principles leadership values for quality improvement**

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rewarded and not. It will ultimately affect the increase in motivation and work performance of all school components. Teachers and staff are motivated to improve their performance if given an appropriate appreciation for implementing their duties (Dessalegn *et al.*, 2016). Reward-based work performance affects improving the performance of all school components. It is a motivation for improving the quality of work of staff teachers and students in schools. Even appreciation is a source of power (source of power) to increase the influence of the principal on his subordinates (Al-Ani & Al Attar, 2017). The strong influence of the principal will influence the effectiveness of leadership that supports the achievement of the vision and mission (Figure 3).

The Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram awards were based on fairness, work motivation and achievement, salary giving, honorarium and incentives, position granting, promotion, and punishment. Teachers and staff who have achievements are promoted to occupy positions such as homeroom teacher, vice-principal, principal, etc. This will undoubtedly affect his well-being because he gets a salary from the additional duties. Likewise, teachers who have accomplished faster get approval from the school principal for submitting their class promotion.

Based on the above research, this study accepts the opinion of Bolsoni-Silva & Loureiro (2014) that leaders create rewards and punishments for giving messages to subordinates; which behaviors (principles, values, and assumptions) are valued and punished. That is, it influences the effectiveness of leadership in organizations. Bessa *et al.* (2019) explain that

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**Figure 3. Rewarding strategy in school**

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│  Source of   │   │  Strategy of     │
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│Extrinsic     │   │   in School      │   │  Performance     │
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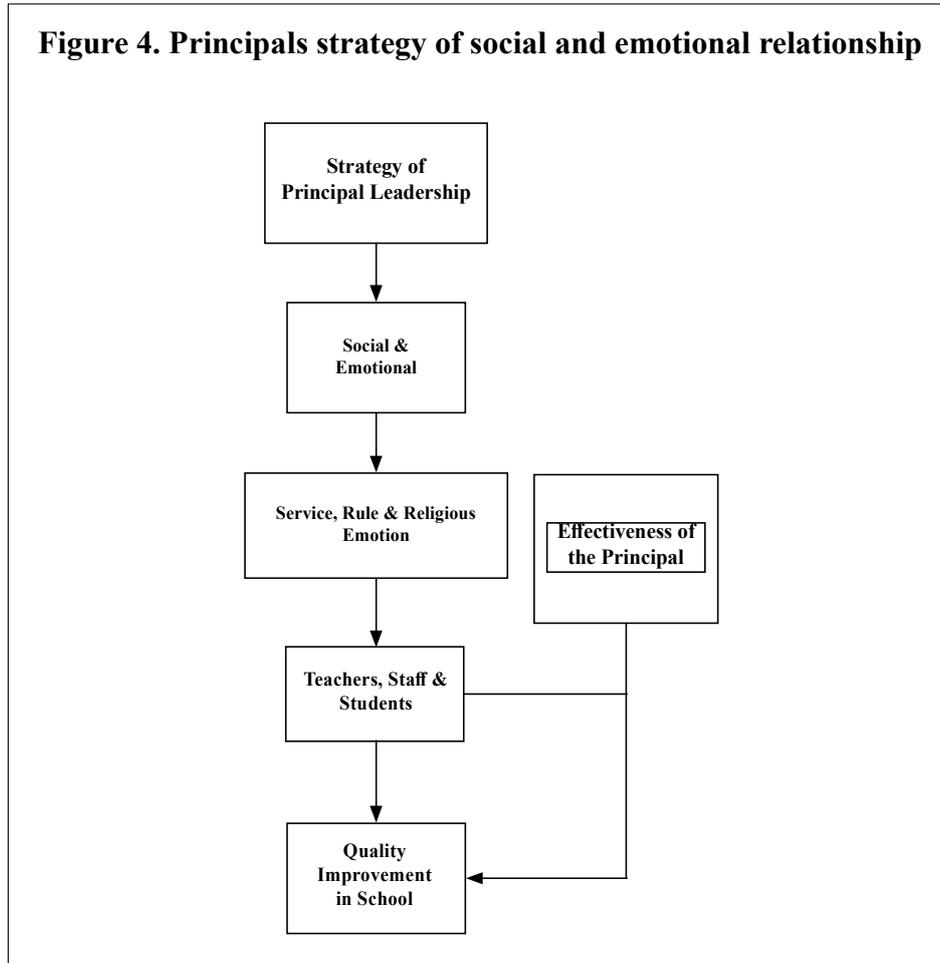
behavior can be influenced by culture, technology, and appreciation. According to Bolsoni-Silva and Loureiro (2014), extrinsic and intrinsic rewards influence the improvement of subordinates' performance on assigned tasks.

Leaders are expected to determine the types of rewards received and awards desired by subordinates, creating a consistent and fair award administration for good performance (Hughes *et al*., 2002). That is why appreciation can be an effort to motivate members of an organization to carry out tasks following the vision, mission, goals, and school programs.

*Principal strategy of social and emotional relationship.* Social and emotional relationships are a form of principal leadership relationship that emphasizes the approach of emotional intelligence. To improve this relationship, The principal creates role models, partnerships, and religious emotions to create meaningful relationships to increase the achievement of the school's vision and mission. An effective relationship influences leadership effectiveness so that solid school culture is formed (Figure 4).

Principals to create leadership effectiveness make relationships with all components of the school (Akpil & Gündüz, 2016). The principal's relationship with the school community is an effort to create a conducive communication climate. That is why he has a relationship of religious example, preparedness, and religious emotions with all school commanders. For example, he conducts coaching in the form of monthly, weekly and informal meetings between teachers, staff, and students to evaluate the achievements of school programs and activities. He supervised the teacher and held discussions with the subject coordinator to

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**Figure 4. Principals strategy of social and emotional relationship**

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solve learning problems in class. The principal contacts teachers, students, and school staff to create effective leadership. The types of relationships are kinship, good relationships, peer relationships, and religious and emotional relationships (Samancioğlu *et al.*, 2015).

Based on the explanation above, this study accepts the opinion of principal school leadership as a form of human relations in school organizations. Here the principal acts as a "human engineer". He emphasizes human relations and interpersonal competence and provides instrumental motivation such as encouragement, recognition, and development opportunities for teachers, students, and school staff.

Kaya and Deniz (2020) explain that the importance of leaders' social and emotional relationships with organizational members to create healthy leadership. It means that the principal's leadership improves the quality of education.

*Improving the quality of "link and match" education.* In each case, the study found a form of quality culture carried out by each school principal to improve school quality. The school principal's quality culture is a tradition for educational improvement designed and planned in the case above. Through efforts that have been made by the principal, the achievement of the school and students can improve from year to year well. The headmaster directs his leadership to build a strong culture of school quality. He seeks to provide an understanding of the vision and mission of the school, applying the values, symbols, awards, and design

of a professional and propositional school organization to build a culture of quality (Roza, Nurhafizah, & Yaswinda, 2019). The principal has a vital role in improving the quality of school services, human resources, and educational facilities/infrastructure. For example, he created learning innovations to improve the quality of education. He has programs to improve quality from year to year. The high school principal's role in school leadership has had an impact on the formation of a strong school culture.

*The school services quality*. The improving quality of extracurricular services will impact improving the education quality in Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram. This service is the leading service for students in schools. Principals are improving teacher quality, covering the quality of teaching planning, teacher order, and teacher performance in teaching and learning activities, facilities/infrastructure, and classroom climate. Invited teachers who increase student achievement to master extracurricular subjects—increase extracurricular services to provide educational services and interests of student talent at school. This service increases the quality of extracurricular programs in school activities, which can support academic and non-academic achievements (Malton, Mallory, & Chance, 2012).

For example, extracurricular service quality services, namely the preparation of extracurricular programs early, such as participants, time, teachers who foster and place for one semester. The head of administration has a vital role in improving the education process with professional administrative support. He provides the best service to students, teachers, and the community in a professional and friendly manner. So that the principal gives attention to improving extracurricular services for students, this service is related to the learning activities that teachers do in class. Here the headmaster creates conditions conducive to learning by fostering teachers, using methods and strategies, and complementing instructional media. Extracurricular services provide important significance for improving the quality of education in Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram. The principal and other school components provide students with better extracurricular and extracurricular services (DiPaola *et al.*, 2017).

*Teacher and school staff quality*. Improving the quality of teachers in Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram is one form of quality culture to improve educational quality continuously. Without good teacher quality, the education quality is challenging to increase from time to time. The teacher spearheads learning even though it functions more as a facilitator in the classroom (Leonard, 2016). For example, he seeks to improve the quality of teachers through the provision of supervision, coordinator of subjects, education and training with the world of business and industry, seminars, and workshops. School's staff is the school's human resources at Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram has become an essential part of the school organization. He manages the school administration professionally to support educational activities professionally. School principals in Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram to improve the quality of teachers make efforts including; providing supervision, teacher's community training, workshops, and conference on learning. Teacher's Course Community development is an effort to improve the quality of teachers' teaching competency. Likewise, the supervision provided by the school head increases the professionalism of teachers. For example, the principal visits the class, calls the teacher to the principal's office, or gives advice to the teacher informally. In this context, the principal tries to improve the quality of administrative staff by sending them for computer training and school administration.

*Quality of school facilities /infrastructure.* In the context of Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram, the principal tried to improve the quality of facilities/infrastructure by complementing learning facilities such as laboratories, libraries, learning media, and others. He budgeted each year for funds to complete the facilities/infrastructure contained in the school cost plan. The funds to complete educational facilities/infrastructure comes from contributions from parents and school entrepreneurs such as the Bisnis Center, Canteen, Screen Printing, and others. The school principal's leadership seeks to improve the quality of schools in Vocational Senior High School 1 Mataram as his commitment. Facilities/ infrastructure is the completeness of schools that can support the education process effectively and efficiently. For this reason, from the beginning, he tried to equip the school building with contributions from parents of new students and student fees. He tried to add to laboratory facilities, learning media, libraries, and others to the completeness.

**CONCLUSION**

The headmaster directs his leadership to improve the quality of education at SMK 1 Mataram. He strives to provide an understanding of the vision and mission of the school, apply the values of leadership, and improve professional quality. The principal has an essential role in creating education quality in the case of SMK 1 Mataram. It improves the quality of school services, the quality of human resources, and educational facilities/infrastructure, improves the quality of education in relation and linkages with the business world and the industrial world. *First*, principal's leadership by articulating the vision and mission of the school in the form of socialization, strategic plans and work plans as well as implementation of the work program of school organizations. *Second*, the principal of SMK 1 Mataram also has leadership values to develop the quality of education such as discipline, responsibility, service and innovation to improve the quality of education. *Third*, the headmaster of the SMK 1 Mataram, school gives awards in the form of intrinsic and ectrensic awards both to improve the quality of education such as awards, incentives, career promotions and promotions in schools. *Fourth*, social and emotional relationship strategies in which the principal increases the quality of education by building social and emotional relationships with teachers, and school staff in the form of peer review, supervision of learning and friendship between teachers at school. *Fifth,* strategies for improving the quality of link and match education through improving service quality, teacher quality, school staff and school infrastructure and improving the quality of business-based learning and the world of industry.

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