

The Role Of The Principal Of Ra Nurul Qur'an In Improving The Quality Of Teachers' Teaching At Ra Nurul Qur'an In The 2025/2026 Academic Year

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Article Info

Article history:

Accepted: 15 July 2026

Publish: 08 Agustus 2026

Keywords:

Principal's Role,
Quality of Teaching,
RA Nurul Qur'an.

Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of the principal in improving the quality of teaching and to identify the strategies used by the principal of RA Nurul Qur'an in improving the quality of teaching during the 2025/2026 academic year. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques include observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The research subjects were the principal and one teacher at RA Nurul Qur'an, Pemenang District, North Lombok. The study was conducted from May 25 to June 12, 2026. The results show that: (1) The principal's roles in improving teaching quality include acting as a manager (scheduling supervision, coordinating regular meetings, evaluating programs), a leader (providing motivation, being a role model, listening to complaints, appreciating achievements), an educator (guiding teaching methods, assisting lesson plan preparation, helping with classroom difficulties), and a supervisor (classroom visits, oral feedback, direct demonstration, motivation). Teachers' teaching quality is generally good in professional and social competencies, but still weak in time discipline and the use of learning media. (2) The strategies used by the principal include: internal and external training, classroom visits and reflective discussions, providing appreciation and support, involving related parties (parents, committees, other teachers), giving trust in lesson planning, and collaborative decision-making. The main supporting factor is teacher cohesiveness, while the biggest inhibiting factors are limited funds and lack of local government support.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a crucial initial stage in developing a child's potential, as this period experiences rapid development in the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects of children (Fadli Ilah, 2020). The quality of PAUD education is highly dependent on the quality of teacher teaching, which in turn is influenced by the role of the principal as an instructional and managerial leader in the institution. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that the principal has the responsibility to manage and improve the quality of education in the educational unit they lead. In the context of modern education, the role of the principal is no longer limited to that of an administrator, but also as a learning leader responsible for fostering teacher professionalism (Davin, 2025).

According to Mulyasa (2019), the principal, as an educational supervisor, has the authority and responsibility to guide teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities. Effective supervision will provide constructive feedback, reflection, and continuous improvement in teaching practices. Recent studies show that an optimal principal role is significantly correlated with improved teacher performance in the learning process (Madi & Yulian Tina, 2024). The Teaching Quality Theory developed by Linda Darling-Hammond (2017) also focuses on the understanding that teacher teaching quality is closely related to the teacher's ability to apply in-depth pedagogical knowledge, as well as skills in designing and implementing effective learning. Teaching quality is strongly influenced by a deep understanding of lesson content and pedagogical skills.

Based on Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, the quality of teachers' teaching is measured based on four main competencies: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies (Sriyanti, 2025). Pedagogical competencies encompass teachers' abilities to plan learning, use methods and media appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood, and conduct appropriate assessments. Personality competencies require teachers to be role models who are disciplined and have good morals. However, in implementing the principal's role in improving these competencies, various challenges often arise. Common obstacles include high administrative burdens, limited time, and limited financial resources (Kharismawati, 2025).

Empirical conditions in the field indicate a gap between expectations and reality. Based on initial observations at RA Nurul Qur'an, it was found that the quality of teaching at the institution remains ineffective. The main problems identified include inconsistencies in teacher arrival times with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the limited learning media available at the school. As a result of these two issues, children become less interested and have difficulty focusing during the learning process. Therefore, the active role of the principal is essential to manage and develop teachers so they can carry out their duties and functions effectively.

Several previous studies have examined similar issues but at different levels and with different focuses. Mahmud As Saqofi's (2021) study examined the role of principals at the high school level (MAN 1 Semarang City) and found that training was the primary solution. Habib As Shiddiqi's (2022) study focused on the quality of education at Muhammadiyah 5 Junior High School in Surakarta, emphasizing managerial functions. Faisal Antoni (2020) examined teacher performance at a high school using a quantitative approach, while Aswandi (2022) examined teacher performance during the Covid-19 pandemic at a junior high school (SMPN). The novelty of this study lies in its specific object and focus, which has not been widely studied in depth: the role of principals in improving the teaching quality of teachers at the Raudhatul Athfal (RA) level, particularly at RA Nurul Qur'an, which faces specific problems such as discipline and a lack of learning media.

Kholidah et al.'s (2025) research found that when managerial competencies, organizational culture, and innovative behavior were managed simultaneously, their contribution to teacher performance was significant. This means that the problems of teacher time discipline and the lack of learning media at RA Nurul Qur'an cannot be resolved partially, but must be addressed through a holistic management system. Based on this explanation, the researcher deemed it necessary to conduct an in-depth study through a study entitled 'The Role of the RA Nurul Qur'an Principal in Improving the Quality of Teacher Teaching at RA Nurul Qur'an in the 2025/2026 Academic Year'. This study aims to describe the role of the principal and identify the strategies he uses to address these teaching quality problems.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. According to Sugiyono (2022), qualitative research is a research process to understand human or social phenomena by creating a comprehensive and complex picture that can be presented verbally, reporting detailed insights obtained from informant sources, and conducted in a natural setting. This approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to provide an in-depth description and explanation of the role of the RA Nurul Qur'an principal in improving the quality of teacher teaching.

This research was conducted at RA Nurul Qur'an located on Jl. Raya Pemenang-Senggigi, Dusun Teluk Kombal, Pemenang District, North Lombok Regency. The research took place in the even semester of the 2025/2026 Academic Year, precisely from May 25 to June 12, 2026. The main subjects in this study were determined purposively, namely the Principal of RA Nurul Qur'an (Bq. Refli Zarni, S.Pd) and one of the class B teachers (Hasarani Zaemi, S.Pd).

The selection of the principal and one class B teacher as the primary informants was based on purposive sampling, guided by their information-rich and central positions within the institution: the principal is the primary actor responsible for managerial, leadership, educational, and supervisory decisions, while the class B teacher was the direct object of the principal's coaching and had the most frequent and sustained interaction with the principal's supervisory activities. Given the small scale of RA Nurul Qur'an, which employs a limited number of teaching staff, these two informants functioned as key informants capable of providing in-depth and mutually verifiable accounts of the principal's role and its impact on teaching quality. The credibility of the data obtained from this limited number of informants was further strengthened through source and technique triangulation, in which the principal's statements were cross-checked against the teacher's accounts, direct observation records, and institutional documentation. This approach is consistent with the qualitative case-study principle that the depth, richness, and verifiability of information take precedence over the number of participants, so that the small number of informants did not compromise the trustworthiness of the findings (Arikunto, 2023).

The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through interviews and observations with the principal and teachers. Secondary data were obtained from literature studies and institutional documentation in the form of school profiles, vision and mission, RPPH, and educational calendars. Data collection techniques were carried out in three ways: (1) Passive participant observation, where researchers directly observed the activities of the principal and teachers during the learning process; (2) Semi-structured interviews, to obtain in-depth information regarding managerial strategies and roles; and (3) Documentation (Sugiyono, 2020).

To ensure data validity, researchers used triangulation techniques. The triangulation techniques used included source triangulation (comparing data from the principal with data from teachers) and technical triangulation (cross-checking interview results, observations, and documentation) (Arikunto, 2023). The collected data were then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction (summarizing and focusing on important data), data presentation (composing a descriptive narrative), and drawing conclusions or verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Results

Based on data collection conducted from May 25 to June 12, 2026 at RA Nurul Qur'an, comprehensive findings were obtained regarding the role of the principal, an overview of the quality of teacher teaching, strategies implemented, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors.

3.1.1 The Role of the Principal of RA Nurul Qur'an

The principal's role is described in four dimensions: manager, leader, educator, and supervisor. First, as a manager, the principal of RA Nurul Qur'an has proven capable of systematically organizing supervision and coaching schedules. Based on observations on May 25, 2026, the principal coordinated regular meetings. This is supported by the principal's statement: "I provide opportunities for teachers to participate in training, implement classroom visit programs, and provide appreciation" (Interview, June 2, 2026). The teacher also confirmed that an evaluation briefing is held after each theme is completed (Interview, May 25, 2026).

Second, as a leader, the principal actively motivates teachers, both before and after teaching. The principal also serves as a role model for discipline. Most prominently, the principal is willing to take over a class if a teacher is absent. "This is evident in the support shown when a teacher is absent, and the principal replaces them," said Hasarani Zaemi (Interview, May 25, 2026). This demonstrates servant and supportive leadership.

Third, as an educator, the principal provides direct guidance on teaching methods and the development of Daily Learning Implementation Plans (RPPH). Teachers stated that guidance is provided through internal training from the principal to teachers. However, observations on June 5, 2026, indicated that the principal was not optimal in recommending reference learning materials or resources for teachers.

Fourth, as a supervisor, the principal regularly visits classes without disrupting the learning process. After observations, the principal provides verbal reprimands or suggestions and directly exemplifies good teaching practices. "The quality of teachers' teaching is highly valued. My job is not just to assess, but to support and create an atmosphere where they feel valued," explained the principal (Interview, June 2, 2026).

3.1.2 Conditions of Teacher Teaching Quality

The impact of the principal's role ultimately impacts the quality of teacher teaching. Evaluation of four teacher competencies showed mixed results. In pedagogical competency, most aspects (such as opening lessons, play methods, and age adjustments) have been implemented. However, teachers have not yet used a variety of teaching aids/media. In personality competency, teachers are patient and polite, but weak in discipline regarding arrival times, which do not comply with SOPs. On the other hand, professional competency (material mastery, classroom management) and social competency (interaction with children and parents) have been implemented very well.

3.1.3 Strategies, Supporting Factors, and Inhibitors

To overcome existing weaknesses, the principal implemented several main strategies: (1) Organizing internal training and financing external training; (2) Carrying out class visits followed by reflective discussions; (3) Providing appreciation and support for facilities; (4) Involving parents and the school committee; (5) Giving full trust to teachers in preparing the RPPH; and (6) Implementing joint decision-making.

In implementing this strategy, the most important supporting factor is teacher cohesion. This social capital creates a harmonious work climate and facilitates coordination. Conversely, the biggest inhibiting factor is limited funding and minimal support from local governments. School principals complained that free government training, particularly for RAs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is very limited, so schools often have to fund the training themselves (Interview, June 4, 2026).

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study empirically confirm the theory of educational leadership and management proposed by Mulyasa (2007). The RA Nurul Qur'an principal's managerial role,

which emphasizes planning, supervision, and routine evaluation, aligns with the concept of empowering educational staff. Unlike Habib As Shiddiqi's (2022) study at the more bureaucratic junior high school level, the RA's managerial function is more familial and hands-on, given the institution's smaller scale.

In terms of leadership, the implementation of consultative and delegative styles has been shown to build teachers' intrinsic motivation. The principal's willingness to substitute for absent teachers is a concrete manifestation of transformational leadership focused on collaborative problem-solving (Amba Wani et al., 2024). This also supports the findings of Fitri et al. (2024) that varying leadership styles is crucial for improving teaching performance.

Regarding the role of educator and supervisor, although the principal has conducted classroom visits and provided teaching examples (modeling), the lack of recommendations for additional learning resources is a gap that needs to be addressed. This is relevant to the findings of Maulana et al. (2023), who highlighted the importance of providing facilities and literacy references for PAUD teachers to support their pedagogical competence. The quality of supervision at RA Nurul Qur'an has generally succeeded in avoiding the stigma of "fearful supervision" and moving towards "empowering coaching," a good practice recommended by Darling-Hammond (2017).

Analysis of teacher teaching quality shows that personal competency (especially discipline) and pedagogical competency (media availability) remain weak points. Based on Law No. 14 of 2005, discipline is a key pillar of teacher personality. Indiscipline, over time, has a direct impact on children's loss of focus at the beginning of learning. Similarly, the lack of learning media significantly hinders the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. The solution implemented at KB-TK Bethany School through the creation of media from local materials (Widyastuti et al., 2025) can be replicated by RA Nurul Qur'an to overcome the cost constraints of procuring APE (Educational Game Tools).

Limited funding and minimal support from local governments (especially for institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs) are structural constraints identified in this study. These findings support the arguments of Suryaman & Mulyono (2025) and Kharismawati (2025) that school management cannot rely solely on internal competencies but also requires the support of external resources. However, RA Nurul Qur'an demonstrated that by optimizing supporting factors such as "teacher cohesiveness," these limitations can be minimized through collaborative strategies and participatory decision-making (Kholidah et al., 2025).

While the discussion above highlights points of convergence with previous studies, several notable differences also warrant closer critical examination. Unlike Mahmud As Saqofi (2021) and Habib As Shiddiqi (2022), whose research at the senior and junior high school levels found that formal, structured training programs were the principal's dominant strategy, the present study found that the principal of RA Nurul Qur'an relied more heavily on informal, relational mechanisms—such as classroom substitution, reflective post-observation discussion, and appreciation—rather than structured professional development. This divergence appears to be shaped by the RA's institutional position under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which structurally receives fewer formal training allocations than schools under the Ministry of Education, effectively compelling the principal to compensate for limited access to institutional training with interpersonal and relational leadership strategies. This finding suggests that Mulyasa's (2019) managerial-supervisory framework, largely developed within better-resourced formal education contexts, may require contextual adaptation when applied to small, faith-based early childhood institutions operating under resource constraints. Furthermore, whereas Kholidah et al. (2025) argued that managerial competence, organizational culture, and innovative behavior must be managed simultaneously to produce a significant effect on teacher performance, the

present findings indicate that even in the absence of systematic innovation—particularly in the pedagogical domain of learning media—teacher cohesiveness alone was sufficient to sustain institutional stability, though not necessarily to resolve underlying quality gaps such as media limitations and time discipline. This suggests that social cohesion functions as a buffering rather than a substitutive factor: it can mitigate the effects of structural and pedagogical shortcomings but cannot, by itself, resolve them. These distinctions indicate that the applicability of principal-role theories developed in general education settings to RA-level institutions is not automatic and depends heavily on the resource context and institutional structure within which the principal operates.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions described, it can be concluded that the role of the principal of RA Nurul Qur'an in improving the quality of teacher teaching has been implemented quite effectively through four main role dimensions. As a manager, the principal actively prepares schedules, coordinates, and evaluates programs. As a leader, the principal appears supportive, sets an example, and motivates teachers. As an educator, the principal provides guidance on RPPH and teaching methods, although still lacking in recommending literature. As a supervisor, the principal conducts constructive classroom observations on a regular basis.

The teaching quality of teachers at RA Nurul Qur'an has demonstrated good performance in the realm of professional and social competencies. However, serious intervention is still needed in personal competency (enforcing SOPs for time discipline) and pedagogical competency (innovative use of learning media). To improve this quality, the principal has implemented a tiered training strategy, post-observation reflection, appreciation, and parental involvement. Teacher cohesiveness is the main asset that maintains school stability amidst structural obstacles such as minimal operational funds and a lack of training attention from the ministry/local government.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study carries several practical implications for early childhood education policy and management. At the institutional level, the findings suggest that school-based management in small, resource-constrained RA institutions can be strengthened by formalizing informal practices that have proven effective, such as structured post-observation reflection and peer-based mentoring, into standard operating procedures so that their benefits do not depend solely on the individual initiative of the current principal. At the policy level, the finding that limited funding and minimal government support constitute the principal inhibiting factors suggests that regional governments and the Ministry of Religious Affairs should consider affirmative, needs-based allocation schemes—such as targeted operational grants for instructional media and subsidized access to professional training—specifically designed for private RA institutions, which currently receive comparatively less structural support than schools under the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the pivotal role of teacher cohesiveness identified in this study implies that principal training and certification programs for RA-level leaders should explicitly incorporate relational and collaborative leadership competencies, rather than focusing solely on administrative and managerial skills, given that such competencies proved decisive in sustaining teaching quality under conditions of structural constraint. Collectively, these implications indicate that improving teaching quality in small faith-based early childhood institutions requires policy interventions that address both structural resource gaps and the cultivation of relational leadership capacity at the school level.

The suggestions that can be given are: (1) For school principals, it is necessary to hold in-house training (IHT) specifically for making educational props from used goods to overcome limited funds; (2) For teachers, they are required to increase self-awareness regarding time discipline because it has a big impact on the psychology of early childhood learning; and (3) For regional governments and the Ministry of Religion, it is hoped that there will be affirmative policies in the form of allocation

of assistance funds and equal distribution of ongoing professional training programs for private RA teachers.

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