

## The Role of the Principal in Educational Marketing Management at Public High Schools

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Received August, 2025 ■ Revised August, 2025 ■ Accepted September, 2025  
■ Published October, 2025

### Article Info

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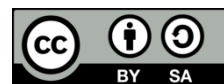
### Keywords:

Principal Leadership;  
Educational Marketing;  
School Management;  
Competitiveness.

### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the principal's role in implementing educational marketing management at SMA Negeri 1 Pare, Kediri. The research was motivated by the increasing competition among schools in Pare District and the continuous growth in student enrollment at SMA Negeri 1 Pare. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with data collected through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with the principal and vice principals for public relations and student affairs. Data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation techniques to ensure validity. The findings revealed that the principal played a central role in marketing management through five main functions: planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating marketing programs. Strategic steps included forming a marketing committee, involving teachers in promotional activities, utilizing social media, and maintaining partnerships with the community. These efforts successfully enhanced the school's image and competitiveness. This study contributes to the understanding of leadership roles in educational marketing and provides a practical model for other public schools to strengthen their market position.*

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### 1. Introduction

Education is no longer merely a complement; it is a fundamental and crucial need in the development of individuals and society. For individuals, education can enhance personal potential, open career opportunities, and improve quality of life. Education also has the potential to develop intelligent, innovative, and responsible citizens, as well as foster the creation of inclusive, just, and sustainable social environments. Education is an investment in elevating the dignity of the nation and creating personal and

social benefits to produce superior, innovative, and competitive human resources. Therefore, education is expected to improve the quality of life of its participants, thereby providing a positive impact in addressing continuously evolving societal problems (Shiroth & Citraningsih, 2023).

Various interesting phenomena occur in the implementation of education, both in public and private schools, especially during the admission of new students. Competition between schools is becoming increasingly competitive, further intensified by the emergence of flagship schools that implement an independent learning curriculum, as well as the establishment of new schools, both public and private, offering a variety of facility advantages. (Mustajib; Muna, 2021) There are even schools that provide free education to their students without any cost. Effective management of education becomes very important to face such competition. This includes improving the quality of education, student admission strategies, and innovations in the learning system. (Shobri, 2022).

Schools need to be more proactive in improving the quality of education they provide. If a school delays in addressing existing problems without finding solutions, it is possible that the school will be unable to compete with other schools and may even face the risk of closure. Therefore, creative and productive efforts from the school are needed to continually explore the unique qualities and strengths of each school to remain attractive to the community and ensure its continued relevance. (Asmawati, 2022).

Competition between schools is a natural occurrence; every school must have the ability to compete with other schools to maintain its existence so that it is not abandoned by the community. The public's demand for high-quality education has spurred increasingly intense competition among educational institutions. In addition, consistently updating their marketing management is one of the school's efforts to overcome this competition. To maintain this, schools must be able to provide information about themselves through marketing. No matter how good or excellent a school is, the public will not know about its existence or quality if it does not engage in promotion.

In this case, management is the main driving force in an organization/institution, and at the same time serves as one of the key factors in achieving the goals of an organization/institution. Good management is very important in organizing educational marketing within an institution. Therefore, managers are responsible for the implementation within their organization, both for the present and for the future. (Putri, 2023).

The principal is one of the most crucial components in education for improving the quality of education. To achieve this goal, the principal must have a vision and mission, as well as a comprehensive marketing strategy. This strategy will serve as a systematic effort to continuously improve and enhance the quality of educational services. As a result, all educational stakeholders, including students, parents, alumni, teachers, staff, the government, and the community, will feel satisfied and experience its benefits. (Fathorrozi & Muhith, 2021).

A school principal can be considered successful if the school they lead achieves success, and vice versa. A principal can be truly regarded as successful if they are able to guide their team to meet expectations that align with the needs of the community. As the primary leader in the school with authority in decision-making, the principal pays great attention to the needs and expectations desired by the stakeholders.

Keberhasilan seorang kepala sekolah dapat diukur dari seberapa unggul instansi yang dikelolanya. Seorang pemimpin yang sukses adalah mereka yang mampu mengarahkan sekolahnya untuk memenuhi harapan dan kebutuhan masyarakat. Sebagai pemimpin utama di sekolah yang memiliki otoritas dalam pengambilan keputusan, kepala sekolah harus benar-benar memperhatikan kebutuhan dan harapan yang diinginkan oleh para stakeholder sekolah, termasuk siswa, guru, staf, orang tua, dan masyarakat sekitar (Komarudin & Huda, 2021).

To maintain the existence and competitiveness of the school, the principal needs to design and implement effective marketing strategies. This is important so that the school can remain competitive and relevant in the community. The principal must be able to provide information about the school they manage through marketing methods. Without effective and adequate marketing efforts, the community will not know the potential and important information about the school, which will ultimately lead to a decrease in public interest in enrolling their children in the school. (Komarudin & Huda, 2021).

Marketing in the education sector involves building and maintaining good relationships through effective communication. Marketing encompasses several aspects, from attracting students' interest to

providing tutoring. It also involves managing relationships between educational service providers and their consumers, namely students and their parents. The goal is to create mutually beneficial relationships between educational institutions as service providers and students and parents as clients. However, the focus is not only on the philosophy of the educational service provider that must be considered but also on understanding and meeting market demands. It is the responsibility of the school principal to ensure that the educational marketing strategies implemented are aligned with the institution's objectives and relevant to the expectations of students and parents. (Kamtini & Lubis, 2024). Educational marketing management is a combination of science and art that involves analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring of all marketing activities in the field of education, with a focus on effectiveness and efficiency (Arifudin et al., 2020). In order to develop a plan, analysis plays a very crucial role so that the plan created becomes more detailed and accurate. Implementation is the process of realizing the plan. Meanwhile, the monitoring function aims to control all activities to prevent deviations from the established plan. (Suprpto & Azizi, 2020).

SMA Negeri 1 Pare has become known to the public, where many people are already aware of the activities and programs offered, even though the school's location is quite far from their residence, which is in different villages or sub-districts. In the Pare Sub-district, there are at least seven senior high schools or equivalent, making competition between schools unavoidable. Various efforts are made by these schools to attract the attention of the community in Pare and its surrounding areas. SMA Negeri 1 Pare, located approximately 25 km from the administrative center of Kediri Regency, precisely at Jalan Pahlawan Kusuma Bangsa No. 41 Pare, is one of the public schools chosen by the researcher as the research location. The researcher is interested in conducting research at SMA Negeri 1 Pare because of the observed increase in the number of students each year, even though this school is located in an area with many more advanced favorite schools. The above explanation shows that the existence of the principal's role in implementing marketing management is essential to maintain competitiveness and develop the school. With this interesting background problem, the author is encouraged to conduct research entitled "The Role of the Principal in Educational Marketing Management at SMA Negeri 1 Pare."

## 2. Method

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design aimed at understanding the principal's role in implementing educational marketing management at SMA Negeri 1 Pare, Kediri, Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore social phenomena in their natural context and interpret participants' perspectives in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive nature of this study enables the systematic depiction of behaviors, strategies, and managerial processes undertaken by the school principal in leading educational marketing activities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Pare, a public senior high school located in Kediri Regency, East Java. The site was selected purposively due to its competitive educational environment and consistent growth in student enrollment, which provides a rich context for studying educational marketing practices.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly involved in marketing management (Patton, 2015). The primary informants included:

1. The Principal, as the key decision-maker and leader of marketing activities.
2. The Vice Principal for Public Relations, responsible for external communication and community engagement.
3. The Vice Principal for Student Affairs, who oversees student recruitment and extracurricular programs.

This sampling approach was considered appropriate for qualitative research, where the goal is to gain deep insights rather than statistical generalization (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

### Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, applying triangulation to ensure credibility.

1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions, experiences, and strategies of participants regarding educational marketing. The interviews used open-ended questions and were recorded with consent. This method allows for flexibility and depth in understanding the phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

2. Observation

The researcher conducted non-participant observations to examine real-life practices of marketing management, such as teacher meetings, promotional events, and student recruitment activities. Observations help provide contextual understanding and validate verbal data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

3. Document Analysis

Documents such as the school's annual work plan, marketing program reports, student admission statistics, and public relations materials were analyzed to complement interview and observational data. Document analysis provides an unobtrusive means to verify and enrich qualitative findings (Bowen, 2009).

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of four interconnected components:

1. Data Collection - Gathering information through interviews, observations, and documents.
2. Data Reduction - Selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data related to the principal's marketing roles into relevant categories.
3. Data Display - Organizing data in narrative and tabular forms to identify emerging patterns and relationships.
4. Conclusion Drawing and Verification - Interpreting the meaning of data and verifying conclusions through constant comparison and discussion with participants.

This cyclical process ensures that data analysis is ongoing and iterative, enhancing the depth and accuracy of interpretations (Miles et al., 2014).

#### Trustworthiness and Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

1. Credibility was achieved through triangulation of sources, methods, and time (Denzin, 2012). Data from interviews were cross-checked with observations and documents collected at different times.
2. Transferability was ensured by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures, allowing readers to assess applicability in other settings.
3. Dependability was maintained by keeping an audit trail of data collection and analysis procedures to ensure consistency.
4. Confirmability was supported by reflexive documentation of researcher bias and continuous consultation with academic supervisors.

#### Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Education, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and **informed consent** was obtained prior to interviews. All data were anonymized to protect confidentiality, following ethical guidelines for qualitative research (BERA, 2018).

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 School Principal in Educational Marketing

a. As an Educator

The principal, in their role as an educator, has the primary responsibility to continuously improve the quality of learning carried out by teachers. In this regard, the principal's work experience, whether during their time as a teacher, as a member of community organizations, or through training and workshops they have attended, plays a significant role in influencing their professionalism and abilities.

b. As a Manager

To carry out their duties effectively, the school principal must be able to optimize the educational staff. This can be achieved through appropriate strategies, such as building solid teamwork, facilitating skill improvement, and involving them in various school program activities.

c. As an Administrator

The principal, in their role as an administrator, has several duties, namely recording, organizing, and documenting all institutional programs.

d. As a Supervisor

The principal, in their role as a supervisor, needs to have competence in designing, implementing, and utilizing the results of educational supervision programs. These skills include preparing class supervision programs, developing class supervision programs, developing supervision programs for extracurricular activities, as well as developing supervision programs for the library, laboratory, and examination implementation. After the supervision program is carried out, the principal must be able to utilize the results to improve the quality of education.

e. As a Leader

As a leader, the school principal is responsible for monitoring staff performance and providing proper guidance, motivating educational personnel to achieve their maximum potential, building honest channels of open dialogue, and delegating tasks effectively, possessing strong personality traits, competent managerial skills, extensive educational insight, as well as a deep understanding of supervisory administration.

f. As an Innovator

To fulfill its innovative role, the principal must proactively explore new ideas, integrate various school activities, serve as a good role model for the staff, and develop innovative learning models. An innovative principal demonstrates constructive, creative, disciplined, and adaptive work qualities, as well as the ability to identify, discover, and implement innovations in the school.

g. As a Motivator

The principal, in their role as a motivator, needs to design effective strategies to increase the motivation of educators and education staff in carrying out their various duties. These strategies can include arranging a comfortable physical environment, creating a positive working atmosphere, enforcing discipline, providing encouragement and recognition, as well as ensuring adequate access to various learning resources through the development of learning resource centers (Huda, 2021). The principal also plays an important role in motivating students to take pride in their school, to study more diligently, and ultimately to achieve commendable accomplishments. The statement above aligns with data found by researchers in the RKT RKAS data of SMA Negeri 1 Pare regarding the characteristics of principal professionalism, which are as follows:

- a. Honesty
- b. High competence
- c. High expectation
- d. High work quality standards
- e. Strong motivation to achieve goals
- f. High integrity
- g. Strong commitment
- h. Noble leadership ethics (leading by example)
- i. Love for one's profession
- j. The ability to think strategically (strategic thinking)
- k. Having a forward-looking vision (visionary).

Through interviews conducted with the principal, the vice principal of public relations, and the vice principal of student affairs, the researcher also found data indicating that the principal has been carrying out his duties, functions, and responsibilities in educational marketing at SMA Negeri 1 Pare. By comprehensively developing both the physical and non-physical aspects of the school, the principal can enhance the school's added value in the community, which will ultimately have a positive impact on prospective students' interest and community support.

In the context of marketing at SMA Negeri 1 Pare, the principal acts as a leader and manager by carrying out various important tasks. Here is an explanation of their role:

### *The Principal as an Educational Marketing Planner*

Planning is the process of determining the tasks that need to be carried out by an organization so that the previously set goals can be achieved (Kurniawati, 2021). In this case, the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare leads the marketing planning process by aligning the vision and mission, forming committees, and determining the budget and targets to be achieved. Joint meetings with the teaching staff and administrative staff are held to discuss these strategic steps. This aligns with management theory, which states that management is a collaborative process among individuals, groups, and other resources to achieve the goals of an organization. (Ma'sum, 2020). As stated in an interview with the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare: "Clearly, I do not work alone; I am assisted by the vice principals and the staff handling education at SMA 1 Pare" (Interview, 2025). The following are the plans carried out by the Principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare:

No.	Planning Agenda	What to do
1.	Holding a joint meeting with the teacher council, the vice principal of the public relations and student affairs department, and several related staff.	a. Forming a committee b. Setting the main targets and targets achieved, namely prospective students who excel in both academic and non-academic fields.
2.	Conducting market identification	Understand the needs of the majority of prospective students and parents of students related to education. One of them is by comparing with other schools, it is important to consider several key factors that can affect the attractiveness and interest of a school, both in terms of facilities and infrastructure, academic achievement, management and leadership, social and cultural environment, and accessibility.
3.	Market segmentation	Determine the characteristics of students, either in terms of interests and talents. Family background, special needs iswa, etc.
4.	Determine the Budget proportionately and transparently	Determine the source of the budget, namely from the central government, local government, institutional income, donors/sponsors, and contributions from parents/guardians of students.

SMA Negeri 1 Pare recognizes the importance of having an advanced educational institution, both intellectually and non-intellectually. Based on this understanding, the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare can design programs that are in accordance with the needs of prospective students, ensuring that the education offered is relevant and beneficial to the community.

### *The Principal as an Organizer of Educational Marketing*

In the context of management, organizing is a coordinated effort to arrange and align various necessary resources into a unified whole, enabling activities to be carried out according to a predetermined schedule to achieve previously set objectives. In other words, organizing is a managerial process aimed at forming an organization entrusted with the responsibility to implement a plan that has been prepared to achieve the organization's goals. (Subekti, 2022).

In this case, the results of the school principal's organization are in line with the theory, where the Principal assigns tasks to the teachers according to their respective fields. This includes scheduling time and locations for marketing activities carried out by each teacher. Organization at SMA Negeri 1 Pare is realized through a clear and effective division of tasks to achieve predetermined targets, with a focus on the learning process. In addition to regular meetings, the principal also monitors the outcomes of new student admissions. By comparing data from year to year, information about the marketing of SMA Negeri

1 Pare can be obtained, and this data can later be used to measure the success of the school's marketing efforts.

### ***The Principal as a Leader and Responsible for Educational Marketing***

The school principal plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education. As emphasized in Government Regulation Number 28 of 1990, Article 12, Paragraph 1, which states that "The school principal is responsible for the administration of education, school administration, the guidance of other educational personnel, and the utilization and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure." As a leader, the school principal has a significant responsibility to advance the school they lead. One effective way is by enhancing the marketing of education offered through an appropriate strategy. This explains how an organization can achieve excellent performance amidst competition. (Mahamis & Nurhikmah, 2022).

In line with that theory, as a person in charge, the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare is able to ensure that all marketing programs are implemented properly, which is not only carried out by the vice principal of public relations, but also by almost all teachers and educational staff. This was conveyed during an interview with the vice principal of public relations: "The spearhead in marketing is indeed the vice principal of public relations, but those involved in the planning and implementation are not only the public relations staff. There are several related staff whose entirety is the responsibility of the principal" (Interview, 2025). He bears a great responsibility for the success of marketing and must be able to manage the available resources to achieve the desired results. In the implementation of educational marketing, as a leader, he must be able to direct all elements within the institution to apply marketing strategies.

### ***Principal as Supervisor of Educational Marketing***

Supervision can be interpreted as a process that includes setting the objectives to be achieved, namely the established standards, monitoring the ongoing implementation, evaluating the process, and making improvements if necessary. Thus, the implementation can proceed according to plan and in line with the established standards. (Junaris & Haryanti, 2022)

The principal not only acts as a manager but also as a leader who functions to motivate and guide their team in achieving educational marketing success. Supervision by the principal also includes marketing management aimed at building and maintaining good relationships with various stakeholders (students, parents, alumni, and the surrounding community). Open and transparent communication is crucial to building trust and support for the school, which will ultimately facilitate the educational institution's marketing process to the public. (Fathurulloh, 2024).

The results of this study are in line with that theory, where the Principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare also acts as the supervisor of the marketing program, ensuring that all activities run according to plan and achieve the desired goals, which not only involves the educational staff within the institution but also engages all stakeholders of the institution. The principal also provides understanding to the staff that this educational institution is a place for doing good deeds. This is a valuable opportunity to collect and preserve acts of kindness.

### ***The Role of the Principal in Evaluating Educational Marketing***

To monitor the implementation of the marketing program, the Principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare is responsible for evaluating the results achieved and making adjustments if necessary to improve marketing effectiveness. This evaluation is conducted once every semester and annually. As stated in an interview with the principal: "For evaluations, it is clear that there is a semester evaluation and then an annual one, especially regarding how we first improve the institution's image, and then later see the results at the end of the year. I always coordinate with Mr. Margo (Vice Principal of Curriculum), Mr. Han (Vice Principal of Public Relations), and Mr. Eko (Vice Principal of Student Affairs) to identify any issues; if there is a problem, we solve it together." (Interview, 2025) From this, we can identify existing challenges and whether any achievements have been made. Often, the challenges arise from within the institution itself, where some parties support the program while others remain indifferent.

### ***The Principal's Strategy in Marketing Education at SMA Negeri 1***

The established segmentation, targeting, and positioning serve as a foundation for implementing other strategies. Hermawan Kartajaya refers to these strategies as tactics and values (Nurbawani, 2021).

Strategies in the field of education involve setting the goals of educational institutions as well as selecting and organizing methods to achieve those goals. In formulating strategies, a school principal must consider the situation, conditions, and resources available at the institution they lead (Nurbawani, 2024).

The theory is in line with the research findings on educational marketing at SMA Negeri 1 Pare, which state that there are several strategies implemented by the principal in educational marketing at this institution, including:

### ***School Community Involvement***

Involving all teachers, educational staff, and the entire school community to participate in promoting the school. One of the initiatives carried out by the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare to attract prospective new students is by organizing inter-institutional competitions, which are held in conjunction with the series of celebrations for the school's anniversary. As stated directly by the principal in an interview: "To recruit students, we can do it before the student admission period, we invite junior high school students to participate in competitions here, both academic and non-academic, which directly involves OSIS members" (Interview, 2025).

### ***Marketing Innovation***

Currently, the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare is taking an innovative approach to school marketing by emphasizing the field of technology (IT). This innovation is realized by appointing the deputy head of curriculum along with their team to manage and develop technology-based marketing strategies. The goal is to improve the quality of the school while also facilitating and expanding the reach of educational marketing.

### ***Promotion***

Carrying out various forms of promotion to attract the attention of prospective students. Marketing promotions conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Pare are divided into two categories:

No.	Direct Marketing		Indirect Marketing	
	Media	Technical Implementation	Media	Technical Implementation
1	Distribute brochures and billboards	The installation was carried out in a strategic location to attract the attention of the mastaraka. Such as at large intersections, at crowded points, in locations around junior high schools/MTs.	Social Media (Official website of the institution, instagram, facebook, etc.)	Loading photos of student activities that display activities in and out of class, so that they can be seen by the public.
2.	Socialization	Conducted in surrounding institutions to introduce schools	Souvenirs (certificates, trophies, etc.)	Awards for student achievements, where students who win the competition will get prizes from the school as a form of appreciation and also as a means of school promotion.

This method aims to enhance the school's excellence while attracting prospective students and the surrounding community to the institution. Based on the research conducted, the marketing carried out by SMA Negeri 1 Pare is quite effective in increasing the number of students. This is because the school uses various marketing methods, both direct and indirect..



#### 4. Conclusion

The study concludes that the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pare plays a central and strategic role in educational marketing management through five core functions: planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating. The principal's leadership successfully integrated these managerial functions to enhance the school's image, improve community trust, and increase student enrollment despite high regional competition.

This finding demonstrates that effective educational marketing in public schools depends not only on promotional activities but also on the principal's transformational leadership, collaborative teamwork, and strategic communication with stakeholders. The study contributes to the literature on educational leadership by providing an empirical model of how school principals can strengthen competitiveness through marketing-oriented management.

Practically, this study suggests that school principals should develop systematic marketing programs that involve all school elements teachers, students, and parents and utilize digital media for broader outreach. Further research could explore the integration of digital marketing strategies in educational institutions or comparative analyses between public and private schools to deepen understanding of leadership roles in marketing management.

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