

Partnership Management in Early Childhood Education Institutions

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A B S T R A C T

Partnership management is one of the key aspects in the administration of Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions to improve the quality of educational services. This article aims to examine the strategies and implementation of partnership management between ECE institutions and various stakeholders, including parents, the community, government, and the private sector. Using a qualitative approach through literature review and field observation, the study finds that effective partnerships are built on open communication, active participation from all parties, and a shared vision in supporting children's development. Furthermore, well-planned and sustainable partnership management has proven to strengthen institutional resources, expand program reach, and enhance community engagement. The findings of this study recommend the need for training ECE managers in designing and managing strategic partnerships in a professional and ethical manner.

Keywords: *Partnership Management, Early Childhood Education, Collaboration*

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INTRODUCTION

National education has an important role in the development of superior and competitive human resources. As an organized and planned process, education aims to create a learning atmosphere that allows students to develop their spiritual, intellectual, and skill potentials optimally. In the context of nation building, education is the main foundation because it contributes directly to improving the quality of human resources which is the key to the progress of a country. However, the achievement of quality education cannot be done instantly, but rather requires a continuous process that begins from an early age.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial stage in creating the foundation for holistic child development. Early childhood is a golden age that determines the growth and development of children in the future. Therefore, education at this level not only emphasizes the cognitive aspect, but also includes the emotional, social, and moral development of children. Quality early childhood education as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, requires comprehensive coaching efforts to prepare children for the next level of education.

Schools as formal educational institutions have a great responsibility in providing quality education. However, in carrying out this function, schools cannot stand alone. It requires support from various parties, especially the community and parents. The relationship between schools and the community is one of the important factors in realizing optimal quality of education. In this context, partnerships are a very relevant concept to create synergistic relationships between educational institutions and the surrounding environment.

In line with what is explained that, schools are a system of educational institutions that are open to their supporting environment, namely the community environment. As an open

system, schools must receive various kinds of inputs, ideas and opinions issued by the community, on the contrary, the community must also accept and participate in programs carried out by the school. With good cooperation between the school and the surrounding community, the educational goals will be realized in accordance with the planned goals. (Umar, 2016)

School and society are inseparable environments. School is a place of learning while the community environment is a place of implications of the educational and teaching process in schools. The relationship between the school and the community is very important, the school and the community are very closely related. School-community relations are a communication process between schools and the community to try to instill actions in creating a harmonious relationship between an educational institution and its community, both internally and externally, so that the goals that have been set can be achieved according to what has been planned. In line with those who say that the relationship between school and the community is interpreted as a communication process with the aim of increasing the understanding of the community about the needs and practices of education and striving to improve schools. The benefits of school-community relations are to increase community sympathy that can increase the school's self-esteem, as well as community support for the school spiritually and materially/financially. (Umar, 2016)(Sunaengsih, 2017)

Partnerships are one way to carry out good cooperation between schools and the community. The community can provide, implement, and utilize the results of education. From the lowest participation rate to the highest participation rate, i.e. from simply using the services provided by the school to participating in decision-making. Since education is a shared property, it is the duty of the family, the state, and society to help children grow up through the educational process. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, who is considered the "Father of Indonesian Education", there are three education implementers called the "tri education centers" who work together in the implementation of children's education in the school, family, and community environment where they live.

In line with mentioning that how well a curriculum is designed and delivered by a teacher to students, the absence of involvement of other parties (such as family, school, and community) will hinder the achievement of maximum goals. Etymologically, the term partnership has the root word partner which means friend, best friend, and co-worker. Partnership is a relationship established between individuals or groups based on the principles of equality, mutual trust, strengthening, and complementarity to share roles and responsibilities to achieve mutually agreed goals. Partnerships between the community and schools are activities that aim to gain trust and are very important in management to achieve the specific goals of educational institutions. One way is to provide as much information and explanation as possible to the public about most of the institution's programs and activities. The goal of school partnerships is to encourage greater community ownership, engagement, care, and support, especially financial and moral aid. The pattern of relationships between schools and communities must always be encouraged and improved. (Suriansyah, 2014)(Yuniati & Rondo, 2021)(Nahdliyah, 2022)

Partnerships in the world of education are increasingly becoming a necessity in the midst of the complexity faced. Partnerships are increasingly urgent with the development of the times and the demands of society that continue to change, various parties must work together to find the right solution. The government can no longer act alone and is expected to be able to work with the private sector, the community, and all stakeholders to create a better education system. In line with (Arimurti, et all, 2021) in partnership is a formal business cooperation that is mutually beneficial to achieve a common goal based on agreed on common principles. In line with , Partnership is a solution in overcoming the problem of scarcity and distribution of resources in all parties. This partnership allows for synergy in achieving common goals. (Hidayaturrahman & Harsono, 2023) (Robingatin, 2019)

These partnerships can include various forms of collaboration, such as joint training programs, curriculum development relevant to industry needs, and community service activities involving academics and practitioners. In addition, parental and community

involvement in the educational process is also crucial to creating a supportive environment. Through partnerships, learning can be enriched with real-world experience from the world of work, so that graduates are not only academically prepared, but also competent to face challenges in the field. Thus, partnerships are not only about sharing resources, but also supporting each other to achieve more inclusive and sustainable educational goals.

Partnerships in early childhood education aim to create a conducive learning environment and support the holistic development of children. Through effective collaboration, various resources can be optimally utilized to improve the quality of education. The resources in question include human, material, and financial resources, all of which play an important role in supporting the learning process. In line with , Partnership is a solution in overcoming the problem of scarcity and distribution of resources in all parties. This partnership allows for synergy in achieving common goals. The demands of excellent quality education can be met if there is a reciprocal relationship between school, family, and community in the context of empowerment. In carrying out partnerships with the community, it is necessary to have good management so that the partnership programs that have been prepared can be realized properly. (Robingatin, 2019)

Management in a broad sense is the planning, organizing, directing and controlling (P4) of organizational resources to achieve goals actively and efficiently. Management is the act of controlling, managing and directing various existing resources to achieve the expected goals. Education management is a process of planning, coordinating, supervising, and evaluating various educational resources, such as educators and education personnel, curriculum, facilities and infrastructure, costs or finances, environment or community, all school residents and active participation from parents and so on in order to achieve educational goals. (Yuliantini, 2022)(Aulia, 2020)

The stages in partnership management are planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. (1) Planning activities as part of management are the initial stage before the activities are carried out. Planning is carried out by considering all the facilities and resources that will be used to support activities and predict the obstacles that will be encountered and how to overcome them; (2) Execution or commonly referred to as actuating is defined as an action to initiate and direct workers to perform their duties to achieve predetermined goals; (3) Monitoring and evaluation of the work program, this stage is part of the controlling function in management. Information on organizational performance conditions can be known by carrying out a controlling function that contains monitoring and evaluation activities in the work program. Evaluation is a stage that is carried out with the aim of determining how far the goals of the activity have been achieved. Relationship management between schools and communities is an important aspect in improving the quality of education. (Ahmad, 2021)

The quality of education can be defined as a measure of the good and bad of an educational process that involves various elements, including curriculum, teaching, human resources, and learning environment. In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, "quality" means the size or degree of something, including intelligence and intelligence. The quality of education refers to the quality and effectiveness of the education system offered. This includes various aspects such as a relevant and up-to-date curriculum, quality teaching, educator competence, adequate resource availability, and a conducive learning environment. Improving the quality of education requires cooperation between the government, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and the community to create a quality and sustainable education system.

One of the criteria for quality ECE is to provide services based on quality programs, as expressed by Wortham (2013: 47) that quality ECE has the following characteristics: 1) Principled in child development. 2) Have a balanced curriculum. 3) Pay attention to the relationship between parents, teachers and children. 4) Provide assessment and accountability. 5) Respect the differences between children and families. 6) Pay attention to ethics and relationships between teachers. The above opinion reveals that quality early childhood

education has a good relationship between parents, children and teachers or in other words include parental participation in school programs. (Jamilah, 2019)

Preliminary studies conducted at the Pembina Tengah State Kindergarten and East Banjarmasin Pembina State Kindergarten as the destination of the research were obtained. Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Tengah is a kindergarten educational institution located in Central Banjarmasin District, Banjarmasin City. This kindergarten is located at Jl. Batu Damar No 10 Mulawarman, Central Banjarmasin District, Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan. East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten has a principal named Yennie Astutie, S.Pd AUD. TK Negeri Pembina Inti Banjarmasin Tengah was established in 1981 and operated in 1982 with a land area of 3422 M² and a building area of 1327 M². The physical condition of the school building at Kindergarten Pembina Inti Banjarmasin Tengah is made of concrete construction with good enough conditions so that it can ensure the safety and order of the school in carrying out learning activities. The school environment of the Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Inti Banjarmasin Central consists of a school building in the form of a school coconut room, classroom, hall room, teacher's room as well as a TU room, UKS, toilet, kitchen, gazebo room, school yard, garden and several other school facilities. This kindergarten already has A accreditation and runs partnership programs with the community in various fields such as curriculum, provision of facilities, and various educational programs. Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Inti Banjarmasin Tengah runs partnerships with several Universities, Banks, Kesdam, Central Banjarmasin Police and Puskesmas which is very beneficial for schools in improving the quality of education at Kindergarten Pembina Inti Banjarmasin Tengah.

East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten is a public kindergarten school institution located at Jl Pangeran Hidayatullah North Inner Circle No.47.rt.05.rw.01. Baru Continent, Banjarmasin City. East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten is located adjacent to one of the schools, namely Junior High School (SMP) 14 Banjarmasin. East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten was established on March 27, 1997 and obtained an operational license in 2007. This school is under the auspices of the Education Office and is now chaired by a principal named Mrs. Aminah, S.Pd. AUD, M.Pd. East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten has the status of a State school and is accredited A. East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten also runs partnership programs with several institutions such as Universities, Parents, Health Centers, and several other institutions.

Based on a preliminary study conducted at the Central Banjarmasin State Kindergarten and East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten, information was obtained that the two kindergartens run school partnership programs with parents or the community through activities that have been programmed at school. The two kindergartens both have A accreditation and have partnership programs known from several MoUs that have been carried out by the institution with various parties, especially in the implementation of the activity program the two institutions involve parents as inseparable partners. This partnership program was implemented because the kindergarten understands that parents or the community are the main partners in supporting the success of children's education in the ECE institution.

Parental involvement in schools promotes a healthy and consistent learning environment because schools and homes share the same goals. The implementation of partnership programs always involves parents both in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating partnership programs. The programs created can optimize children's education and development. From the preliminary study, it is known that the two kindergartens (1) have a program that has been prepared, (2) there are supporting resources and facilities, (3) there is program implementation, and (4) there is a forum for communication between parents and/or ECE units in the form of a school committee that functions effectively. Based on the preliminary study conducted, it was found that the implementation of the partnership program between ECE units and the community has been running well, so it is necessary to know the partnership management so that it continues to run well.

Some of the research relevant to the problems presented include: The research conducted with the title "The Strategy of the Head of Raudhatul Athfal in Increasing Committee

Participation in RA DDI Amparita, Kec. Tellu Limpoe, Sidenreng Rappang Regency" where the results of the research have the main objective of finding out the strategy of the head of Raudhatul Athfal in increasing committee participation in RA DDI Amparita, Kec. S.S. Rapping. This research is qualitative, with data collection using observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. Data analysis is carried out through data reduction, data exposure, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study showed that the strategy of the head of raudhatul athfal includes several approaches such as regular meetings with the committee, effective communication, training for the committee and parents, and involving the committee in program planning and evaluation. The participation of the committee is very important in supporting the development of schools and improving the quality of education.(Sakati, 2024)

The research was conducted with the title "School Principal's Strategy in Realizing Superior Educational Institutions in Al-Munawaroh Pamekasan Early Childhood Education". This study uses a case study design with a qualitative approach. The results of the study show that the principal's strategy in realizing superior ECE is that a principal must have a clear vision and mission, and a principal must be friendly to teachers, parents, and students. In addition, a school principal must provide a good service to his guests. Institutions must have social capital by establishing a good relationship with the community around the institution or the outside community and collaborating with several agencies, as well as providing a good service to guests. The inhibiting factor is the head who must know the character of all teachers and also have to keep up with the parents of the students well, and the parents of the students do not agree with the school program.(Norhayati, 2021)

The research entitled "Building School and Family Partnerships in Early Childhood Learning During the Pandemic", conducted by . Where it is mentioned that one of the important strategies to improve early childhood learning during the pandemic is to build partnerships between schools and families. This partnership is based on mutual trust, mutual strengthening, and complementing each other. The purpose of this study is to describe the management of partnership processes in early childhood education. The type of research uses a literature review and data is analyzed qualitatively. The results of the study show that the partnership process begins during planning, implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation. (Yuniati, 2021)

Partnership management in early childhood education (Early Childhood Education) institutions is very important because it provides a variety of significant benefits in improving the quality of education and supporting child development. A good partnership between schools and the community can improve the quality of education through collaboration in curriculum development, provision of facilities, and educational programs that will certainly contribute to optimal early childhood development. So it is necessary to know how to manage partnerships so that they continue to run well.

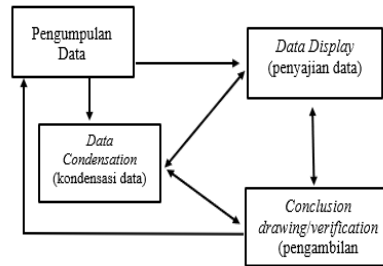
METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study type. The qualitative approach was chosen because it was able to provide an in-depth picture of a phenomenon that occurs in the natural environment, namely partnership management in early childhood education institutions. Qualitative research allows researchers to comprehensively understand participants' meanings, processes, and perspectives and explore experiences and insights that cannot be quantitatively measured.

The design of this study is a multisite case study, which is research conducted in more than one location with subjects who have similar characteristics. In this case, research was conducted in two ECE institutions that have A accreditation and actively implement partnership programs, namely Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Tengah and Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Timur. Multisite studies are used to expand the understanding of the phenomenon being studied and allow the results of the study to have higher transferability (Nurdiana, 2023).

This study aims to describe in depth partnership management which includes: (1) partnership program planning, (2) partnership program implementation, and (3) monitoring and evaluation of partnership programs in the two Pembina State Kindergartens.

The main instrument of this research is that the researcher himself is assisted by interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and documentation guidelines. The informants in this study are school principals, teachers, parents of students, school committees, and external partners. Data collection techniques are using in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis techniques are by data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity analysis was carried out by triangulating sources and techniques. The following is the flow of the data analysis technique used:



Picture 1 Data Analysis Techniques

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Partnership Program Planning

The results of the study showed that the planning of partnership programs at the Central Banjarmasin Pembina State Kindergarten and East Banjarmasin Pembina State Kindergarten was carried out through regular meetings involving school principals, teachers, and school committees. The partnership program is designed based on the needs of the educational unit and the potential of the surrounding environment. At the Central Banjarmasin Pembina State Kindergarten, planning is carried out with a participatory approach, where parents and community leaders are given space to provide input.

The partnerships designed include parenting activities, skills training for parents, and cooperation with health centers and religious institutions. Meanwhile, at the East Banjarmasin Pembina State Kindergarten, the emphasis of the program is more on empowering the surrounding community as partners in educational and non-educational activities. The planning process involving various parties is a manifestation of the implementation of participatory management in the context of early childhood education.

Partnership Program Implementation

The implementation of the partnership program in the two kindergartens is running according to the annual plan that has been prepared. At the Central Banjarmasin Kindergarten, routine parenting activities are carried out every month. In addition, the institution collaborates with external parties such as the Health Office, universities, parents and other ECE institutions in the form of training and joint activities.

East Banjarmasin State Kindergarten also develops cooperation with external parties such as the Health Office, universities, parents and other ECE institutions in the form of training and joint activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Partnership Programs

Monitoring and evaluation in both institutions are carried out periodically. Central Banjarmasin State Kindergarten implements a monthly evaluation of all partnership programs through the school's internal forum. The principal acts as an evaluation coordinator who identifies the strengths and weaknesses of program implementation. The results of this evaluation are used for continuous improvement.

Meanwhile, at the East Banjarmasin Pembina State Kindergarten, the evaluation is carried out on a semi-monthly basis by presenting external parties such as ECE supervisors. The evaluation is reflective and directed at improving the quality of partnership-based education services.

Overall, the results of the study show that partnership management in both kindergartens has been carried out systematically with participatory and collaborative principles. The multisite study design allowed researchers to see the similarities and peculiarities of each school's approach.

The study also confirms that the success of partnership management in early childhood education is strongly influenced by the leadership of principals, active involvement of teachers, and the support of parents and the community.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research and discussion on partnership management at Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Tengah and Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin, it can be concluded that: (1) Planning of partnership programs in both kindergartens is carried out in a participatory manner, involving principals, teachers, school committees, and the community. This process pays attention to the needs of the institution and the potential of the surrounding environment in order to realize quality early childhood education. (2) The implementation of partnership programs is carried out through varied and contextual activities, such as parenting, training, and cooperation with external parties. Each institution has its own characteristics in establishing partnerships, both with individuals, community groups, and other institutions. (3) Monitoring and evaluation of partnerships are carried out routinely with internal and external evaluation mechanisms. The results of the evaluation are the basis for increasing the effectiveness of the implementation of partnership programs in a sustainable manner. This study shows that structured partnership management that involves all elements of education support is able to strengthen the success of the implementation of holistic, integrative, and quality early childhood education. Based on the findings in this study, the author provides the following suggestions: (1) For school principals, it is expected to continue to improve collaborative strategies in designing and implementing partnership programs, by expanding networks and strengthening communication between stakeholders. (2) For teachers and educators, it is recommended to actively participate in partnership activities and increase understanding of the importance of synergy between schools and communities in supporting children's learning processes. (3) For the government and the education office, it is expected to provide assistance and policy support that encourages the strengthening of partnership management in all ECE institutions, especially in terms of training and facilitation of cross-sector cooperation. (4) For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of the study to more ECE institutions in various regions in order to gain a more comprehensive and comparable understanding across cultural contexts and local policies..

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