

Principals' Leadership in Partnership Development in Early Childhood Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The leadership of school principals plays a crucial role in fostering effective school partnerships. This article aims to discuss the importance of school principals' leadership in building collaborative relationships with various stakeholders, including parents, the community, and government institutions, to support the improvement of education quality. In addition, the article also explores the strategies implemented by school principals to strengthen partnerships, such as the development of joint programs, stakeholder involvement in decision-making, and transparent resource management. The research method used in this article is a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings indicate that the principal plays a key role in building relationships among the school, teachers, and the community to enhance the quality of education at TK Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Utara 2. With strong partnerships, schools are not only able to improve the quality of education but also strengthen their connections with the social environment. This article provides practical insights for school principals in optimizing their role as leaders who are focused on developing effective school partnerships.

Keywords: *School Principal Leadership, Partnership, Early Childhood Education*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the world of education today requires school leadership that not only focuses on administrative aspects, but also on the ability to establish strategic partnerships with various parties. The principal is the main key in directing and determining the success of educational institutions. As leaders, the principal is responsible for creating a conducive learning environment, motivating teachers and students, and ensuring that the educational process runs in accordance with the school's vision and mission. The leadership role of the principal is not only limited to the administrative aspect, but also involves strategic decision-making oriented towards improving the quality of education as a whole (Bunbababan et al., 2022).

Indonesia needs to improve the quality of education because it has a direct impact on the quality of existing human resources. Schools act as a bridge between parents and the government in improving the quality of human resources, which plays an important role in improving the quality of education and human resource development. One way to ensure schools are actively fulfilling their responsibilities is through educational partnerships or collaborations with external stakeholders. In line with the research, it is stated that parents of students who are members of the community and users of education services have a large portion to participate in improving the quality of education carried out by schools, so that there will be complementary partnerships and become an important part of improving the quality of education in educational units. Education partners include not only teachers and students but also parents and the community. Schools that can foster a sense of community in their environment tend to achieve significant success in developing strong relationships with

students' communities and families outside of school. also states that the school's capacity to collaborate is an indicator of the professionalism of principals and educators in school management, making community involvement and increased involvement as a normal aspect and not a burden or interference with school activities. Ki Hajar Dewantara stated that education is a shared responsibility known as the Tri Education Center, which includes the family, school, and community. Regardless of how well a curriculum is designed and delivered by an educator to students, the absence of involvement from other parties – such as the family, school, and community – will hinder the full achievement of educational goals. School principals are expected to carry out various strategic roles, including serving as agents of change, partnership builders, and innovators in learning. Collaboration with the community, the business sector, and the government is an important part of the principal's strategy to improve the quality of education and enhance competitiveness at both national and international levels (Qurtubi et al., 2023; Suriansyah, 2014; Asri, 2021).

Qualified leaders are those who demonstrate professionalism in the field of leadership, so that they are able to influence individuals in organizing, managing, and developing their competencies comprehensively. Leaders who are able to improve the quality of education are leaders who implement various strategies and demonstrate high academic performance to achieve the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Quality education requires professionals. School principals are very important educational leaders because they are directly involved in the implementation of educational programs in schools. The achievement of educational goals is highly dependent on the competence and wisdom of school leaders. The principal, as an educational leader, is the individual most responsible for the success of education in their institution. The principal's role involves leadership in the execution of duties and in managing interpersonal relationships. In the context of school leadership, this includes the process of mobilizing, influencing, motivating, and directing individuals within educational organizations to achieve predetermined goals. The transformational leadership approach applied by the principal can encourage innovation and create an adaptive learning environment. This type of leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire, motivate, and empower teachers and students to reach their best potential (Manora, 2019; Bunbababan et al., 2022). There are four elements that underlie transformational leadership, namely: Charisma: The charisma of a transformational leader can be seen from the perspective of followers and their impact; Charismatic leaders have great influence who can motivate and inspire their subordinates with a vision that can be achieved through persistent effort; Inspiration: Leaders who provide inspiration can develop a shared purpose and gain a better understanding of what they consider important and true. This allows leaders to grow meaningfully and raise positive expectations about what needs to be done; Intellectual Stimulation: Leaders encourage their subordinates to look at old problems in a new way; Individual considerations: Managers must be able to treat subordinates differently but still adhere to the principle of fairness; not only paying attention to subordinates, but also recognizing needs and ways to broaden perspectives. Leaders also strengthen the infrastructure in achieving goals. It can be used to achieve goals efficiently and deliver work that presents new challenges (Harefa et al., 2021). It can be concluded that an educational leader, in this case a school principal, is expected to have the ability to guide, mobilize, and encourage and direct individuals within educational institutions to achieve pre-set educational goals.

School principals have a very important role in running partnerships. The principal is the liaison between the school, students, parents, and the community. 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. Its purpose and function itself is to create public opinion that is beneficial for schools and community institutions. This partnership involves collaboration between schools, parents, and the community. Partnerships between schools and the community help create a better learning environment and can also provide mutual benefits for the parties involved. Successful partnerships positively impact students' progress in

learning. Well-established collaborations contribute to improving the quality of education through various programs based on local and global needs (Yuniati & Rondo, 2021; Asri, 2021).

According to the school, forms of partnership with the community include involving teachers and students in community activities such as community service, holiday celebrations, and cleaning activities. The participation of teachers and students in community activities can be in the form of social services for the underprivileged or those affected by disasters and the organization of school bazaars. Schools can provide their facilities for use by the surrounding community and involve community leaders or experts in school activities. Schools can also utilize community resources for learning activities, including utilizing the potential of students' parents in education. Collaboration with the business world can improve students' skills and support school-specific events (Ramadani et al., 2021).

According to, the benefits of school-family partnerships include clarifying goals, facilitating harmony between the education system at home and school, fostering a friendly and conducive atmosphere, creating opportunities for schools and families to collaboratively overcome learning challenges, building networks, increasing mutual understanding between teachers and parents, and building trust and appreciation from parents for school administration. In addition, partnerships between schools and families also provide significant assistance for teachers to understand the child's developmental level, recognize the child's characteristics, and determine the appropriate methods for effective learning (Farida, 2020).

The challenge in managing the relationship between the school and the community is the lack of active participation from the community in school activities. Lack of effective coordination and communication between schools and the community, this leads to a lack of understanding about school activities and the needs of their children. Limited funds are also a challenge to expand social activities, which can reduce the school's ability to communicate effectively with parents and the surrounding community. In the absence of adequate support, initiatives to foster good relationships with the community become difficult to implement. Differences in perceptions between schools and communities regarding their respective roles in education can create tensions and hinder efforts to build harmonious relationships. However, these challenges can be faced by school principals with strategies or special approaches to the community, so that the community wants to be involved in building partnerships.

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 primary purpose and responsibility of public relations with schools includes developing plans for obtaining community assistance in educational activities. This can be done through individual actions, such as providing opportunities for consultation between the student's parents and school teachers, school committees, organizations, or alumni. Developing school partnerships requires a structured and goal-oriented strategy between the school, parents, community, and other related parties. School partnerships are one of the key factors in ensuring superior and future-oriented quality of education.

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, information was obtained that the partnership between the school and the community carried out at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten has been very well established to date. The principal succeeded in encouraging community involvement in cooperating in accordance with the school program. The principal plays an important role in building relationships between schools, teachers, and the community for the development of higher quality education at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten. The partnership that has been established has greatly benefited schools, both in terms of infrastructure facilities and funds that can improve the quality of schools. This article aims to further discuss the leadership role of school principals in building partnerships, the strategies implemented, and their impact on the quality of education in Indonesia.

METHOD

The method in this study is qualitative. The qualitative approach used focuses on an in-depth exploration of social phenomena, including the leadership of principals in the development of school partnerships. Qualitative research is research that processes data and presents results in the form of narratives, not numerical. This research uses a case study approach. The focus is on understanding in depth how principals implement leadership models to build and maintain school partnerships. The location of this research is at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten. 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:

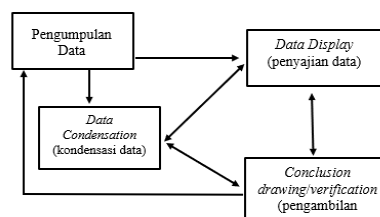


Figure 1. Data Analysis Techniques

This research is expected to provide insight and contribution in the form of strategies implemented by school principals to strengthen school partnerships.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the interviews, the results found in the research related to the Principal's Leadership Model in School Partnership Development were obtained that:

Leadership Style

The leadership style of the principal at the State Kindergarten Pembina Banjarmasin Utara 2 tends to use a transformational leadership style to encourage the collaboration of parents, the community, or government institutions to work together with the goal of achieving goals in accordance with the vision, mission and goals that have been set. In line with (Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019) transformational leadership is leadership that has a high awareness of emotions, self-management, and social awareness in managing work relationships. The pattern of transformational leadership behavior is expected to have a positive influence on its members in shaping the values and beliefs of achieving organizational goals.

The principal at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten is able to encourage parents and the community to contribute to the progress of the school, especially for the benefit of children. With this effort, the principal can maintain a balance and harmony in the relationship between teachers, education staff, students and parents. High awareness will maintain high moral standards, so that it is able to transform and influence better attitudes, actions, and values in its members.

Transformational leadership in early childhood education institutions is essential, as it can create a positive environment and support student development. The principal at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten is able to inspire and motivate teachers, parents and the community so that they can awaken a high sense of belonging to the school institution. By building emotional and supportive relationships, parents and the community will be more encouraged to actively contribute to the educational process. In this context, school principals strongly prioritize the values of collaboration, effective communication, and professional development to improve the quality of education. Transformational leadership can encourage innovation and creativity within the institution, creating a more meaningful learning

experience for children. Thus, educational institutions can grow and develop into places that not only focus on academics, but also on character development and socialization of children. In line with (Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019) Improving the quality of education will certainly involve various factors involved in it. The transformational leadership model is one way to support the improvement of the quality of education in the development of an increasingly advanced era. Transformational leadership is one of the solutions in an effort to improve the quality of early childhood education to produce a generation that excels in optimizing the golden age of the nation's children. The efforts made by the principal of the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten by mobilizing parents to play an active role are part of the way to improve the quality of education.

The Role of the Principal as a Leader

School principals have a very important role in improving the quality of education. As the main person in charge, the principal is in charge not only in the aspect of education and administration, but also in the development of educators and the maintenance of infrastructure facilities (Ginanjar & Herman, 2019). The ability of the principal to coordinate various elements in the school is the key to success in achieving educational goals. In the era of regional autonomy, this role has become increasingly strategic, considering that school principals must be able to adapt to changes in education policies that are constantly evolving. The success of a school depends heavily on how a principal carries out his or her role as an effective leader and is responsive to the challenges at hand. The principal at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten has a very important role in managing and leading the institution. In addition to being responsible for the school's internal operations, the principal also serves as a liaison between the school and various external parties, such as students' parents, government agencies, the community, and other education-related organizations. In carrying out this role, the principal needs to communicate effectively to ensure that information and needs from both parties can be understood by each other. For example, involving parents in school activities and explaining the vision and mission of the institution to the surrounding community. This can strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation and support the development of students. In addition, the principal also plays a role in the development of human resources in schools, including teacher training and improving the quality of learning. By establishing good relationships with external parties, school principals can get the support and resources needed to improve the quality of education at Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Utara 2. In line with (Manora, 2019) which states that school principals are one of the components of education that play the most role in improving the quality of education. For this reason, the principal must know the tasks that must be carried out, including: being a communication channel in the school environment, being responsible for the actions of teachers, students, staff, and parents of students.

Partnership Strategy

Partnerships between schools and parents are essential to support a child's learning process. The party that must take the initiative in establishing partnerships is the school. Schools as educational institutions have a responsibility to create an environment that encourages parental involvement in the child's learning process. Building partnerships must be gradual, with the awareness and willingness of the school and parents. Partnership strategies in developing relationships between schools and external parties are an important step to support the sustainability of educational programs.

Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Utara 2 always involves parents in educational programs, because the school realizes that partnerships between schools and parents are an important aspect in improving the quality of education. Involving parents in educational programs can create a stronger relationship between parents and schools.

In the context of partnerships between early childhood education institutions (PAUD) and parents, proper planning is essential to ensure programs run effectively and achieve their goals. The first step to take is a needs analysis. This needs analysis includes identifying what needs are needed by children and parents at Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Utara 2, as well as how schools can contribute to meeting these needs. By conducting this analysis,

schools can determine areas that need improvement or programs that need to be developed according to the context and needs. The school prepares activity programs first, then the school conveys these activity programs to parents through parent meetings. In the meeting, the school gave parents the opportunity to give feedback on the programs that had been prepared. If parents agree to these activity programs, then the program will be implemented. Schools always involve parents in decision-making, so parents feel valued and involved in school programs.

After conducting a needs analysis, the next step is to prepare an action plan for the partnership program. This plan should include clear goals, strategies for achieving those goals, and concrete steps to be taken. The plan also needs to determine who is involved, the resources needed, and the success indicators that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. With a systematic approach in this planning, North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten can build strong relationships with parents and the community, thereby creating a more supportive environment for children's development. A good partnership between schools and parents not only supports children's learning in the classroom, but also strengthens the role of parents in education and parenting.

One effective way to build partnerships is to implement effective communication between principals and parents, so that parents are encouraged to always be actively involved in school programs. At the beginning of accepting new students, the school conveys the vision, mission, goals and programs of the school to parents so that parents know the school programs that will be implemented.

School programs implemented at Kindergarten Negeri Pembina Banjarmasin Utara 2 are examples such as parenting. The meeting can be a forum for parents to discuss their children's development, provide input, and get information from teachers about the progress and challenges faced by children at school. This is also an opportunity for schools to listen to parents' perspectives in supporting children's development. The main goal of this partnership is to create conditions that support children's development holistically, covering social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual aspects. When parents and teachers can exchange information, the challenges faced in the educational process can be overcome more effectively. The common purpose and responsibility between the school and parents will create a more conducive environment for children to grow and learn. In addition, parents are also involved in activities to celebrate national holidays, religious day celebrations and activities related to children's learning such as outbound or outing classes.

At the North Banjarmasin 2 Pembina State Kindergarten there is also a school committee. The school committee also has a great influence on the progress of the school. The school committee voluntarily contributes to providing the lack of infrastructure facilities in schools so that the learning process can be carried out in a conducive manner. In addition, the school committee also contributes voluntarily to provide contributions for the salaries of teachers in the Play Group. This not only improves communication but also strengthens the relationship between the school and parents. The school committee and the principal at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten always coordinate on matters related to the progress of the school, so that the problems that exist in the school can be solved together. Parental involvement in various school activities can strengthen a sense of community and create a supportive community. It is important for schools to approach gradually, so that parents feel valued and included in their child's educational process. Thus, the partnership established will be stronger and have a positive impact on children's development.

In addition to establishing partnerships with parents, schools also establish partnerships with government agencies such as local health centers and city education offices to support school infrastructure, training and programmed school activities. The partnership carried out with the Sekitas Health Center is very helpful in providing health services for children. The importance of effective communication between schools and partners to ensure the success of the designed program and also for the sustainability of cooperation between schools and partners.

In programs run by schools, parents are always involved in monitoring and evaluating activities. The evaluation is carried out in the form of a discussion between the school and parents who discuss the activities that have been carried out. Evaluation of school partnership programs with parents is essential to measure the effectiveness of program implementation and partnerships implemented. Monitoring and evaluation are carried out transparently, so that it will build good communication, and parents can better understand their child's development at school. With information disclosure, trust between schools and parents can be created, which will ultimately encourage collaboration in supporting the learning process and children's growth.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the interviews, research on the Principal Leadership Model in School Partnership Development found some information, namely, the leadership style of the principal at the North Banjarmasin 2 State Kindergarten tends to be transformational. This style encourages collaboration between parents, the community, and government agencies to achieve predetermined goals. The principal motivates parents and the community to contribute to the interests of the child, fostering a positive educational environment. Effective communication, professional development, and collaboration are essential for improving the quality of education. The role of the principal as a leader is very important in improving the quality of education. The principal is responsible for the organization of education, administration, teacher development, and infrastructure maintenance. Coordinating school elements is essential to achieve educational goals, especially with changes in education policies. Partnerships between schools and parents support children's learning. Schools should create an environment that encourages parent involvement through a step-by-step partnership strategy, including needs analysis, program development, and parent involvement in decision-making.

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