

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL PLAN AT STATE VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Edi Wardani¹, Rika Ariyani*², Hambali³, Habibah⁴, Dina Puspita⁵, Muhammad Said⁶

¹Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, IAI SMQ Bangko, Indonesia

²Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, INISMA, Indonesia

³Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, Tarbiyah, STIT YAPIMA, Muara Bungo, Indonesia

^{4,5,6}Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, IAI SMQ Bangko, Indonesia

Corresponden E-mail: rikaariyani857@gmail.com*²

ABSTRACT

This study examines the principal's management in fostering community participation at Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK) Negeri 1 Merangin, motivated by low parental involvement and limited community engagement in school planning. Despite the presence of school committees and stakeholder forums, participation remains minimal, raising concerns about transparency and accountability. Addressing a research gap in leadership strategies for mobilizing community support in vocational schools, the study employs a qualitative approach with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data validity was tested using source and method triangulation, followed by analysis through data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Findings show that effective community participation involves engaging diverse stakeholders, such as school committees, parents, alumni, religious and community leaders, youth leaders, village officials, and teachers, in planning and decision-making. Supporting factors include strong stakeholder collaboration, while the main barrier is a lack of parental awareness and interest in school programs. Strategies implemented include stakeholder meetings, majority-based decisions, and formalized decrees by the principal. Theoretically, the research contributes to the development of participatory management models in vocational education. Practically, it highlights the need for stronger communication and collaboration between schools and communities. It is recommended that school leaders enhance cooperation with key stakeholders, particularly the school committee and parents, to improve inclusive and effective school planning.

Keywords: Principal Management; Community Participation; School Planning

A. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping high-quality human resources, which is a key factor in the progress of a nation (Nwachukwu, 2024). In today's era of globalization and technological advancement, the field of education faces new challenges that require innovation, adaptation, and professional management in every educational institution. One important aspect of educational management is the development of a well-directed school plan that actively involves the participation of various stakeholders. A strong school plan forms the foundation for the successful implementation of quality educational programs (Manichander, 2016).

However, within the study of educational management, existing theories have limitations, especially in explaining in detail how community participation can be managed effectively and sustainably in the development of school plans. Many theories emphasize the importance of participation but do not thoroughly address the management mechanisms that can bridge the community's aspirations and the school's needs (Sterling, 2013). This gap represents a weakness that needs to be filled through empirical research.

Previous studies have found that community involvement can improve the quality and relevance of educational programs in schools (Bryson, 2018). Nevertheless, some issues remain unresolved, such as how obstacles in managing such participation can be overcome to prevent inefficiency or even conflicts between schools and communities. (Sanoff, 1999) cautions that without proper management, community participation may become ineffective and lead to programs that do not meet the actual needs of students and their environment.

At SMKN 1 Merangin, the current situation shows a relatively high level of community participation in school plan development. SMKN 1 Merangin is a public vocational high school located in Merangin Regency, Jambi. The school serves approximately 1,010 students across several specialized programs aligned with local industry demands, such as Automotive Engineering, Electronics Engineering, and Office Administration. Its competency-based vocational education focus is a strength in meeting the workforce needs of the region.

Moreover, SMKN 1 Merangin has established strong partnerships with various stakeholders, including local industries, the education department, and the surrounding community. The school committee, which includes community leaders and parents, actively contributes input and support for the development of school programs. This community involvement serves as social capital that strengthens the implementation of relevant and quality education. The strong community participation phenomenon at SMKN 1 Merangin highlights the importance of conducting an in-depth study on how this participation is managed. This is significant because, despite the high level of participation, little is known about the management processes that ensure the participation is effective, transparent, and accountable. This study is also relevant to provide best practice insights that can serve as a model for other schools with similar characteristics. This research is conducted to optimize the management of community participation so that the school planning process can be more participatory, effective, and aligned with the needs of both students and the local community. With proper management, community participation is not merely a formality but can also strengthen a harmonious partnership between the school and its community.

Based on this background, the study aims to describe and analyze how community participation management is carried out in the development of school plans at SMKN 1 Merangin, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors. The research employs a qualitative, descriptive approach using data collection techniques such as observations, in-depth interviews, and document studies. The findings are expected to provide recommendations for optimizing community participation in school planning management.

B. METHOD

The approach used in this study is qualitative research. This research aims to understand directly the object being studied in the field in a scientific manner in order to obtain data regarding the management of school principals in building community participation in developing the school plan at State Vocational High School (SMKN) 1 Merangin. The focus of this research is on the active involvement of the school principal, the vice-principal for public relations, and teachers in the participatory process of school planning.

The scope of this research includes the processes involved in community participation, the role of the school management in facilitating such participation, and the impact of this collaboration on the development of the school plan. The research will be conducted in SMKN 1 Merangin, a vocational high school located in Merangin Regency. The main data collection

techniques used in this study are observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observation will be used to gather data on the implementation of community participation in the school's planning process. Interviews will be conducted with the school principal, vice-principal, and selected teachers to gather insights into their roles and experiences in managing community involvement. Additionally, document analysis will be employed to review any relevant records, reports, and planning documents related to community participation.

Data analysis techniques consist of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction involves selecting, simplifying, and focusing on the relevant information from observations, interviews, and documents. The data will then be presented in a structured manner to facilitate analysis, and conclusions will be drawn based on the patterns and insights identified throughout the study.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Management of Community Participation in School Planning at SMKN 1 Merangin

Based on data analysis, the dominant role of the Principal of SMKN 1 Merangin is a critical factor in the success of the school planning process. The Principal not only demonstrates strong resource coordination skills but also actively engages various stakeholders, including parents, the school committee, district and provincial education offices, and community leaders. This indicates effective and inclusive management of community participation, aligning with the principles of participatory planning. The findings confirm that the Principal's leadership is essential in driving community involvement at every stage of the planning process. Acting as a facilitator, the Principal manages resources and creates an open environment for community input and dialogue. This approach is crucial in producing school plans that are responsive to the needs and expectations of the surrounding community, thus enhancing the relevance and quality of educational programs. Theoretically, these findings align with the Participatory Planning Theory (Chang & Huang, 2022), which emphasizes the necessity of involving all relevant stakeholders in educational planning. At SMKN 1 Merangin, community participation extends beyond parents to include the school committee, community leaders, and related agencies, significantly enriching decision-making processes to be more accurate and contextually relevant. Therefore, the management of community participation here goes beyond mere formality, contributing meaningfully to improved school planning quality.

Furthermore, the Principal's collaboration with district and provincial education offices and school supervisors in preparing the School Budget Plan (RAPBS) was identified as a key success factor. Data analysis shows that this cooperation ensures alignment between the budget and the previously developed annual school plan. This supports Resource Management Theory (Sallis, 2007), which highlights the importance of cross-sector collaboration in effectively managing educational resources to achieve sustainable outcomes. Practically, this study recommends that successful community participation management must be supported by inclusive leadership and open communication with all stakeholders. Additionally, continuous development of collaboration between formal and informal institutions is necessary to ensure that school planning remains adaptive to changing community needs and contemporary demands. Thus, this research not only enriches educational management literature by providing empirical evidence of the Principal's central role in managing community participation but also offers practical implications for other schools seeking to

optimize participatory planning. The success at SMKN 1 Merangin exemplifies how well-managed community involvement can enhance overall educational quality. In conclusion, the management of community participation at SMKN 1 Merangin demonstrates that inclusive leadership and collaboration with multiple stakeholders result in a more focused, effective, and relevant school planning process. This approach strongly resonates with strategic planning theories that stress the importance of involving diverse stakeholders to achieve educational goals sustainably.

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Community Participation at SMKN 1 Merangin

Supporting Factors

Based on the research findings, several factors were identified that support community participation at SMKN 1 Merangin, including:

a. Sense of Ownership and Responsibility

The findings of this study reveal that one of the key factors supporting effective community participation at SMKN 1 Merangin is the strong sense of ownership and responsibility demonstrated by local stakeholders, particularly parents. The school's strategic location in the heart of the community is not only a geographic advantage but also serves as a symbolic anchor that strengthens the emotional attachment between the school and the surrounding population. As a result, the school is not merely seen as a formal educational institution but as an extension of the community's identity and values.

This perspective fosters a strong commitment from the community to actively support and contribute to the school's development. Parents, in particular, do not delegate the responsibility for their children's education entirely to the school; instead, they view themselves as equal partners in the educational process. Their involvement is evident in their participation in school planning activities, development discussions, and contributions to school programs. These forms of involvement go beyond passive participation and reflect a deep sense of responsibility for the school's success. Theoretically, these findings align with the school-family-community partnership model developed by Epstein and Sanders (2018), which emphasizes that a sense of ownership within a community strengthens long-term engagement and enhances the sustainability of collaborative initiatives. In the context of SMKN 1 Merangin, community participation is not symbolic or ceremonial, but is reflected in moral support, material contributions, and ongoing oversight of school operations. This also supports the argument made by Sanders and Sheldon (2016) that schools rooted in communities where trust and shared responsibility are cultivated are more likely to develop strong and effective partnerships.

Practically, this highlights the importance for schools—particularly those situated in close-knit communities—to build emotional and social connections with local stakeholders. Schools that successfully establish such bonds are more likely to receive sustained and meaningful community support, which can ultimately lead to improved student outcomes, program effectiveness, and overall institutional performance. SMKN 1 Merangin stands as a clear example of how a well-nurtured sense of ownership can translate into active and sustained community participation that supports strategic educational management. The strong sense of ownership and responsibility among stakeholders at SMKN 1 Merangin serves as a foundational element in the success of its participatory planning model. These findings not only validate theoretical models of community engagement (Epstein, 2002), (Sanders &

Galindo, 2020) but also offer practical insights for other schools seeking to build strong and sustainable partnerships with their surrounding communities.

b. Active Involvement of the School

The findings at SMKN 1 Merangin indicate that active involvement from the school is a significant factor in promoting community participation in educational planning. The school consistently opens communication channels through various means, such as regular school committee meetings, open discussion forums, and special invitations to parents to provide feedback on proposed programs. This approach fosters an atmosphere of dialogue where community members feel valued and included in every strategic decision made by the school. The principal and management team at SMKN 1 Merangin practice transparency by sharing information on school progress, including program achievements and ongoing challenges. Parents are not only involved in administrative matters but are also engaged in substantial processes such as planning school activities, setting development priorities, and evaluating program implementation. This shows that the school does not merely invite community presence symbolically but genuinely integrates their input into critical decision-making processes that shape the school's direction. These findings align with the concept of collaborative governance in educational management, as proposed by (Bryson et al., 2014), which emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and transparency in managing public organizations, including schools. By promoting a collaborative approach, SMKN 1 Merangin has built trust with the community and strengthened the partnership between the school and parents. This active involvement not only increases community participation but also reinforces a shared sense of responsibility for the school's progress.

c. Awareness and Curiosity

Research at SMKN 1 Merangin revealed that community awareness and curiosity are crucial factors supporting their participation in school planning. Many parents and community members show a keen interest in how school decisions are made, ranging from program planning to educational activity execution. They perceive their involvement not just as a right but also as a duty to ensure that the educational direction of the school meets their children's needs and keeps pace with societal developments.

This phenomenon is consistent with (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) assertion that parental and community involvement has a positive impact on student learning outcomes and increases school accountability. At SMKN 1 Merangin, community curiosity manifests through active attendance at meetings, contributions of feedback on school policies, and a desire to monitor the progress of agreed-upon programs. This awareness helps foster a more dynamic and productive relationship between the school and the community, supporting the creation of a more transparent and participatory school governance system.

d. Openness and Leadership Commitment

The principal's openness to community support—whether moral or material—has been a major driver of the high level of participation at SMKN 1 Merangin. This leadership style is grounded in the principles of independence, partnership, transparency, and accountability, building mutual trust and shared responsibility between the school and the community.

Inhibiting Factors Several factors were identified that inhibit community participation at SMKN 1 Merangin, including:

a. Misconceptions About Responsibility

There is still a perception among some parents that public schools are entirely the government's responsibility, especially with the existence of the School Operational Assistance (BOS) program. This perception reduces the urgency for parents to engage more actively in school activities.

b. Parental Indifference

Some parents believe their duty is limited to simply sending their children to school, without feeling the need to participate in other aspects, such as program planning or evaluation. (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005) noted that low awareness and perception barriers are major factors contributing to minimal community participation.

c. Culture of Dependency

The tendency to depend on the school to initiate all programs has led to passive behavior among community members, who prefer to wait rather than take initiative. This weakens the dynamics of school-community interaction and hinders the development of more participatory decision-making processes.

3. Efforts in Managing Community Participation in the Planning Process at SMKN 1 Merangin

Efforts to manage community participation in the planning process at SMKN 1 Merangin are carried out by actively involving the community at every stage of school planning and decision-making. Community members, including parents, alumni, local leaders, and the school committee, are invited to attend regular meetings organized by the school. During these meetings, they are given the opportunity to share ideas, feedback, and suggestions for the school's development. This approach aligns with (Cotton, 2003) assertion that community involvement significantly enhances educational quality through active engagement in decision-making. The implementation of community participation at SMKN 1 Merangin occurs across three major stages: short-term, medium-term, and long-term planning. At each stage, community members are encouraged to contribute to the development of strategic school programs. The ideas and suggestions presented during meetings are documented by the meeting secretary and then filtered by the school management for inclusion in the school programs. This model supports (Epstein, 2002) theory that family and community involvement in school planning strengthens school-community relationships and fosters a greater sense of ownership over educational initiatives.

Decision-making at SMKN 1 Merangin is conducted through voting or mutual consensus. Once a decision is made, the results are communicated transparently to all meeting participants and formally recorded in the principal's official decree. This process upholds the principles of transparency and accountability, which (Sloan & Oliver, 2013) suggest are critical for building trust and commitment among all educational stakeholders.

Following the program development phase, the school introduced a new innovation: requiring meeting participants to sign a statement of commitment and responsibility. This step had not been implemented prior to the development phase. As emphasized by (Emerson et al., 2012), fostering mutual commitment is a key element of collaborative governance aimed at improving the effectiveness and accountability of program implementation. Community enthusiasm for attending and participating in the planning meetings has significantly increased. This growing engagement is largely attributed to the community's rising awareness

of the importance of their role in influencing educational direction and policy. According to (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) (Martin et al., 2013), community participation tends to increase when individuals recognize the meaningful impact their involvement has on educational outcomes. SMKN 1 Merangin's success in managing community participation is closely linked to effective communication between the school and the community. The school consistently works to establish strong partnerships, clarify the roles of all stakeholders in the planning process, and provide open forums for meaningful contributions. As a result, community participation goes beyond symbolic involvement and becomes an essential part of the school's strategic development.

In conclusion, the efforts to manage community participation in the planning process at SMKN 1 Merangin have been effective and show promising results. By engaging community members directly through official forums, promoting transparency, and building mutual commitments, the school has enhanced the quality of its planning and fostered a strong sense of ownership among stakeholders. Nonetheless, continued efforts are necessary to broaden and deepen community participation, ensuring that engagement remains meaningful and sustainable over time.

D. CONCLUSION

The management of community participation in school planning at State Vocational School 1 Merangin aims to optimize involvement from various community stakeholders to create a more participatory, effective, and needs-based planning process. The study found that active engagement from the school committee, parents, alumni, community leaders, religious figures, youth leaders, village heads, sub-village heads, and teachers plays a significant role in ensuring the success of this participatory approach. However, challenges remain, particularly the limited awareness among some parents who view education as the sole responsibility of the school, resulting in passive participation. To address this, the principal actively encourages greater community involvement by inviting parents and the school committee to participate in planning meetings. Decision-making processes are conducted through deliberation and majority voting, with outcomes formalized in official school documents. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of effective community participation management in school planning as a means to align educational programs with the needs of students and the local community, thus fostering stronger partnerships and enhancing educational outcomes..

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