

The Management of the School Principal at the Early Childhood Education Institution of TK GMIM Pniel Bahu, Manado City

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Abstract.

This study aims to describe and analyze the school principal's management at an early childhood education institution, TK GMIM Pniel Bahu in Manado City, focusing on the four main management functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. A qualitative approach with a case study method was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation review, and analyzed descriptively. The findings indicate that the principal manages the school effectively by integrating Christian values, a familial culture, and a participatory approach into all managerial functions. Planning is conducted collaboratively with teachers and parents; organizing involves proportional task distribution and cross-sector partnerships; program implementation reflects participatory and holistic leadership; while supervision is carried out in a reflective, transparent manner, oriented toward quality improvement. These results show that the school management not only aligns with classical management principles (POAC) but also reflects transformational, participatory, and community-based leadership. This study reinforces the crucial role of the school principal as an instructional leader who inspires and serves within a contextual and value-driven early childhood education environment.

Keywords: School Management; Early Childhood Education; POAC and TK GMIM Pniel Bahu.

I. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) represents a critical foundation in shaping children's character, personality, and social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual abilities. The age range of 0 to 6 years, known as the golden age, is a period of rapid brain development and high sensitivity to stimulation. Therefore, ECE is not only the first formal stage of education but also a strategic platform to instill core values such as discipline, responsibility, and independence from an early age (Khadijah et al., 2020; Usuh et al., 2024).

The role of ECE institutions is vital in promoting holistic child development. These institutions are designed to provide learning stimulation that supports both physical and mental growth. According to Article 1 Paragraph 14 of Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, ECE is defined as educational development aimed at children from birth to six years of age through educational stimulation to prepare them for further education. The Indonesian government has also introduced the Holistic-Integrative Early Childhood Education (PAUD-HI) program, which emphasizes integrated services covering education, nutrition, health, parenting, and child protection. Despite various programs and policies, challenges in managing ECE institutions in Indonesia remain significant. In many regions, especially those managed by private foundations or religious organizations, disparities are still evident in terms of service quality, infrastructure, educator competency, and the effective implementation of play- and exploration-based learning approaches—core characteristics of early childhood education (Anggriani et al., 2022). Based on data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), over 30% of ECE units in the country remain unaccredited, with many facing difficulties in establishing professional and sustainable institutional management.

In this context, the role of the school principal as a manager becomes highly strategic. The principal is not only an administrative leader but also a key actor in ensuring the quality of early childhood education services. Effective school principal management fosters a safe, joyful, and developmentally supportive learning environment. Conversely, weak managerial capabilities can hinder various institutional aspects—from financial management and human resources to curriculum implementation and partnerships with parents and communities. Therefore, the managerial competence of ECE principals is a key factor in delivering high-quality and sustainable education services.

From the perspective of management science, education management involves a systematic process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources to achieve organizational goals. This approach emphasizes the importance of data-driven decision-making, efficient resource use, and continuous institutional performance monitoring. A principal who applies these principles is better equipped to design programs aligned with children's needs, ensure learning quality, and establish harmonious collaboration with stakeholders (Yusuf et al., 2023). In today's era of educational transformation, principals are expected to be adaptive leaders who base their decisions on data, understand children's developmental needs, and respond to the dynamics of the surrounding environment.

A relevant case is TK GMIM Pniel Bahu in Manado City, which serves as the focus of this study. This ECE institution has made considerable efforts to provide quality services for young learners. However, it still faces managerial challenges, particularly in resource management, program planning, and communication effectiveness among the principal, educators, and relevant stakeholders. Initial observations indicate a need for strategic improvements in areas such as maximizing teachers' roles in the learning process, strengthening parental engagement, and enhancing supervision systems for children's development.

Moreover, strengthening early childhood education is aligned with Indonesia's national agenda for human resource development, as outlined in the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). Enhancing the quality of ECE management directly supports the government's priority of building a Golden Generation by 2045, where investment in early years is seen as a long-term, irreplaceable strategic investment.

This study aims to examine the school principal's management at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu in Manado City in depth. The analysis focuses on the application of the four core management functions as proposed by Henri Fayol—planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. These four pillars serve as the analytical framework for assessing the effectiveness of school principal management in ECE institutions, from program formulation and task delegation to the implementation of learning activities and evaluation processes. This approach is expected to offer a comprehensive picture of how principals systematically carry out their roles to optimally achieve the goals of early childhood education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a critical role in supporting children's holistic development—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—particularly during the golden age (0–6 years old) (Khadijah et al., 2020; Samsinar et al., 2022). It aims to nurture children's potential through meaningful stimulation tailored to their developmental stage. ECE includes various service models such as formal (kindergarten), non-formal (playgroups, daycare centers), and informal education provided at home (Anggriani et al., 2022).

Activities in ECE are designed primarily through play, which is essential for cognitive,

emotional, and social development. Play-based learning in kindergartens serves both as an educational tool and as a means of expression and exploration for children (Sofyan, 2018).

2. School Principal Management

School management involves planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling resources to achieve institutional goals (Yusuf et al., 2023). The principal's role is central, not only as an administrator but also as a transformational leader and innovator (Rouf et al., 2024). Key aspects of principal management include curriculum development, human resources, infrastructure, financial management, and external relations (Monigir et al., 2024; Valentina et al., 2024). Principals are expected to apply strategic planning and ensure accountability through evaluation and transparent financial practices (Aisah et al., 2023). Effective leadership directly influences school quality, teacher performance, and student outcomes (Pontoh et al., 2025).

3. Principal Management in ECE Institutions

In the ECE context, principal management requires alignment with POAC functions—Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling. Studies show that applying POAC in kindergartens improves organizational performance (Rupnidah & Delfi, 2022). Moreover, transformational leadership enhances teacher motivation and professional commitment (Alifia et al., 2025; Anwar et al., 2022).

Collaborative management is also crucial, as principals must build partnerships with parents, health institutions, and community stakeholders (Suhardi et al., 2024). A successful ECE principal not only manages resources but also fosters a child-friendly, safe, and stimulating environment.

4. Management Functions in the Context of ECE

- **Planning** involves designing annual work programs and curricula aligned with children's developmental needs (Sukardi, 2021).
- **Organizing** entails structuring tasks among teachers, staff, and parents to create a cooperative and effective learning environment (Fitriani & Maulana, 2022).
- **Actuating (Implementation)** emphasizes active leadership in executing programs through experiential, play-based learning activities (Yusuf et al., 2023).
- **Controlling (Supervision)** is carried out through monitoring, feedback, and program evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process (Suhardi et al., 2024).
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III. METHODS

The research employed a qualitative method aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of school management practices in early childhood education. Conducted at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu, Manado, from January to June 2025, the study explored the roles and strategies of the school principal using interviews, observations, and document analysis. Primary data were collected from five informants: the principal, two teachers, and two parents. Meanwhile, secondary data included relevant school documents and reports.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and literature/document review. The analysis followed an inductive approach, emphasizing meaning-making from real field findings rather than theory testing. Instruments used were interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation checklists, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how the principal manages the PAUD institution effectively.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Principal's Planning

The planning process at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu is conducted systematically and collaboratively. The principal initiates annual planning through work meetings with teachers and

foundation representatives, aligning educational goals with children's developmental needs and Christian values. Teachers actively contribute to program design and classroom planning, while parents are invited to share ideas and participate in decision-making processes. Supporting documents such as the Annual Work Plan, the Operational Curriculum (KOSP), and Task Assignment Decrees reflect structured and needs-based planning. This practice aligns with national PAUD standards and management theory that emphasizes setting clear objectives and participatory strategies.

2. Organizing Functions

Organizing at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu involves clear division of labor based on teacher competencies and interests. The principal forms functional teams for religious, administrative, and thematic programs. Organizational roles are formally documented in the 2024/2025 assignment decree. Beyond internal structure, the school actively builds external partnerships with institutions such as Puskesmas, IAKN, BNPB, and local universities to support child development, health, disaster preparedness, and environmental education. This reflects a flexible and collaborative organizational model, consistent with both PAUD-HI principles and modern educational management theories.

3. Program Implementation

Program implementation demonstrates the principal's active and participative leadership. The principal is directly involved in classroom activities, religious events, and collaborative school projects. Teachers and parents report a strong sense of shared ownership, as seen in their joint participation in outdoor activities, community worship, and school celebrations. Learning is enriched through play-based, context-driven experiences that build children's confidence and social-emotional skills. The school also partners with external agencies to deliver programs on health, faith, and emergency readiness, reinforcing holistic child development.

4. Supervision and Evaluation

The principal leads supervision and evaluation through structured reflection meetings, documentation reviews, and inclusive feedback from teachers and parents. Monitoring includes reviewing student development, teacher performance, and financial transparency—particularly in the use of BOP PAUD funds. Evaluations are used not only for assessment but also for continuous improvement, reflecting the school's commitment to quality assurance. Challenges such as limited facilities and documentation burdens are addressed by simplifying reporting formats and forming small evaluation teams. This demonstrates adaptive leadership and a strong culture of collaborative learning.

Specific Findings and Interpretation

The school principal's management at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu reflects the integrated implementation of the four main management functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, it is evident that the principal not only performs administrative duties but also leads through participatory and collaborative approaches. In terms of planning, the principal demonstrates the ability to design an annual work program, an academic calendar, and involve both teachers and parents in the planning process. This reflects a commitment to inclusivity and transparency in determining the institution's developmental direction. The principal's strength in identifying the needs of the early childhood education unit (PAUD) and integrating them into planning documents such as the Operational Curriculum (KOSP) signifies a strategic and responsive character aligned with the local context.

Regarding the organizing function, the principal is able to establish a clear work structure and assign tasks according to each teacher's competence. Engagement in forming external collaborations—such as MoUs with IAKN, local health centers (Puskesmas), the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), and the Faculty of Agriculture—shows the principal's initiative in

expanding support networks to enhance holistic learning. The Decree of Task Distribution serves as administrative evidence of a systematic organizational structure.

In the implementation of programs, the principal shows direct involvement in classroom activities, religious services, mutual cooperation, and outdoor learning. This participatory leadership approach positions the principal not only as a supervisor but as a role model who inspires teachers and parents to take active roles in early childhood education activities.

The supervision function is carried out through evaluation meetings, periodic reflections, and financial audits. Evaluations are conducted collaboratively and used as a foundation for improvement. Transparency and openness to feedback are key strengths in maintaining the quality of services provided.

The main strengths of the principal's management at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu lie in open, inclusive, and participative leadership. The principal is capable of creating a harmonious working atmosphere, bridging communication between teachers and parents, and fostering a collaborative school culture. Complete documentation and active involvement in various external partnerships also indicate professionalism in managing the PAUD institution.

However, some weaknesses remain as challenges, including limited learning facilities and insufficient play equipment. Several teachers have also indicated that time constraints and limited resources hinder the optimal implementation of programs. Nevertheless, the spirit of cooperation and the involvement of all stakeholders serve as strong pillars in overcoming these obstacles.

With a communicative, enthusiastic, and visionary leadership character, TK GMIM Pniel Bahu holds great potential to continue developing as a high-quality and adaptive early childhood education institution, while upholding faith-based values and togetherness in nurturing young children.

Discussion of Theoretical and Previous Research Linkages

The findings of this study reveal that the principal of TK GMIM Pniel Bahu has implemented management functions quite effectively, based on the four core functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. This aligns with the classical management theory of POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling), which emphasizes that the success of an organization, including early childhood education institutions, depends on managerial capacity in setting policy direction (planning), establishing work structure (organizing), mobilizing resources (implementing), and ensuring quality through evaluation (controlling).

In terms of planning, the principal has demonstrated the ability to develop a comprehensive annual work program, design an academic calendar tailored to the needs of young children, and integrate spiritual values into every activity. The principal acts not only as a planner of administrative tasks but also as an effective facilitator and communicator by involving teachers and parents from the planning stage. This supports the view of Bahera and Nurlina (2024), who argue that effective management in early childhood education stems from a principal's ability to foster a collaborative work environment and encourage the involvement of all school stakeholders. The principal begins by preparing the annual work plan, organizing the distribution of teacher duties, evaluating activities, and maintaining open lines of communication with parents.

In the organizing function, the principal has succeeded in establishing an internal organizational structure through proportional task distribution, as reflected in the Assignment Decree for the 2024/2025 academic year. Additionally, the principal initiated external collaborations with various institutions, including IAKN, Bahu Public Health Center (Puskesmas), BNPB, and the Faculty of Agriculture at UNSRAT. These strategic steps show that the principal is not confined within the school but actively expands support through partnership networks to enrich children's learning experiences. This finding reinforces the research of Abubakar and Sahriana (2022), which concluded that principals with strong managerial competence are capable of optimizing internal resources while

simultaneously building synergistic external relationships. A teacher confirmed this by explaining their involvement in class program development and joint activities with parents.

Regarding implementation, the principal acts not only as a manager but also as a leader directly involved in both instructional and non-instructional activities, such as communal worship, outdoor learning, and mutual cooperation. This participatory and inclusive leadership style indicates that the principal does not position herself as the sole authority but becomes part of the team, working alongside teachers and parents to create a joyful and meaningful learning environment. This approach is highly relevant to the theory of participatory leadership and the philosophy of early childhood education, which emphasizes learning through play, emotional engagement, and context-based approaches. Parents expressed that they felt involved and appreciated, as they participated in activities with the children, promoted the school to neighbors, and helped with school events such as communal cleanups. One parent mentioned assisting with technical needs like the sound system during school events, emphasizing that their role went beyond enrolling their child—they felt like a part of the school community.

The supervision and evaluation function is conducted through an open and reflective model. Evaluation is not merely administrative or formal, but also takes the form of shared reflection with both teachers and parents. This indicates the principal's understanding that supervision is not solely a control mechanism but also a means to improve service quality and support professional development. One teacher noted that evaluations take place at the end of each semester or after major programs, during which the team gathers for collective reflection and future planning. Parents also felt that their voices were heard and appreciated in the evaluation process. One parent shared that they were free to give suggestions or critiques and felt their feedback was genuinely considered. Supporting documents, such as audit reports, demonstrate transparency in financial management, while activity evaluation reports serve as the basis for program improvements in subsequent semesters. This concept aligns with quality management principles in education, in which evaluation serves as a tool for continuous improvement.

On a broader level, this study contributes to the literature on early childhood education management by showing how management principles can be adaptively implemented in institutions with limited resources but strong collaborative spirit and familial values. This serves as a distinguishing strength compared to many previous studies. Moreover, the integration of spiritual values into managerial leadership is a unique feature of faith-based institutions like TK GMIM Pniel Bahu, a topic that has been underexplored in early childhood management research.

Therefore, the findings of this study not only reinforce established management theories and previous research but also enrich the understanding of early childhood principal practices in distinctive cultural and spiritual contexts. The principal of TK GMIM Pniel Bahu exemplifies a learning leader who not only manages but also serves and inspires the learning community around her. Furthermore, the implementation of school management at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu reflects the principles of transformational leadership, where the leader functions not merely as an administrative manager but as a change agent who inspires, motivates, and cultivates a positive school culture. This is evident in how the principal fosters active involvement among teachers and parents and directs the school to innovate despite limited resources. Burns (1978) and Bass (1990) emphasize that transformational leaders are capable of awakening collective awareness toward shared goals, which is clearly manifested in the collaborative spirit among the school's stakeholders.

Aligned with the distributed leadership approach, the principal demonstrates that leadership is not monopolized by a single individual but shared among all school members according to their capacities. This is evident in the formation of work teams, teacher involvement in evaluations, and the provision of space for parents to contribute ideas and efforts. This concept is supported by Harris

(2004), who argues that distributed leadership strengthens participation and fosters a sense of collective ownership of the institution.

These findings also expand upon Rahmah's (2021) research, which highlighted the importance of parental involvement in the success of early childhood programs. At TK GMIM Pniel Bahu, such participation is not merely incidental but part of a consistently developed school culture initiated by the principal. In practice, parents are involved in program decision-making, evaluations, and even in conducting activities—demonstrating that participatory management is not merely a slogan but a lived reality.

Additionally, the principal's strategy in building cross-sector partnerships enriches the discourse on the importance of adaptive school-based management (SBM). According to Mulyasa (2013), effective SBM is characterized by school autonomy in decision-making, community involvement, and public accountability. The principal's initiatives in partnering with IAKN, Puskesmas, BNPB, and the Faculty of Agriculture at UNSRAT reflect a well-functioning and contextually responsive SBM model.

From the perspective of early childhood education, the principal's approach in supporting play-based learning, strengthening spiritual values, and providing spaces for children's exploration aligns with the principles of holistic education. This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) child development theory, which emphasizes the importance of the microsystem—family, school, and community—in shaping a child's overall growth. TK GMIM Pniel Bahu illustrates how schools can serve as positive interaction hubs involving the entire ecosystem surrounding the child.

More specifically, the planning function carried out by the principal shows that her strategic role goes beyond merely drafting annual programs. It touches on essential elements of early childhood education, such as integrating spiritual, social, and developmental values. In this context, planning is not only administrative or curricular but also serves as a tool for cultural transformation within the school. This aligns with the concept of visionary leadership by Sergiovanni (2007), which states that educational leaders must be able to shape a shared vision and mobilize the entire school community toward a more meaningful and holistic direction.

In the organizing function, the principal does not merely handle structural tasks like scheduling and assigning duties but also distributes responsibilities democratically. This reflects a strong culture of collaboration and an organizational system that fosters a healthy school climate. A dynamic internal organization lays the foundation for a supportive, open, and productive work atmosphere. External support networks—such as faith-based, health, and environmental institutions—further strengthen the school's overall organizational structure. Thus, the principle of interdependence between systems, as understood in open systems theory, demonstrates how early childhood institutions can grow when they open themselves to their surrounding environment.

In terms of implementation, the principal's participatory leadership style is particularly prominent. Rather than managing from behind a desk, she is actively involved in children's activities, leads religious events, and interacts warmly with parents. This reflects a servant leadership approach, where a leader prioritizes serving others before directing them. Greenleaf (1977) argues that effective leaders are those who are present in the community, meet others' needs, and facilitate the growth of people around them. This approach is clearly reflected in the principal's efforts to build collective participation in both learning and social activities within the school.

For the supervision function, the principal's reflective approach demonstrates a deep understanding of the importance of the evaluation cycle as a component of quality improvement. Supervision is not conducted in a bureaucratic or formalistic manner but involves teachers and parents as active participants. This reflects formative supervision, as explained by Glickman (2009), where supervision aims to enhance teacher capacity through reflective dialogue and professional empowerment. The practices of joint reflection, consensus-building, and stakeholder involvement also

indicate transparency and accountability, which are crucial indicators of democratic educational governance.

From the perspective of previous research, the principal's practices reinforce recent studies that emphasize the importance of collaboration and collective leadership in early childhood education. As Rahmah (2021) found, parental participation is a key determinant of program success. At TK GMIM Pniel Bahu, this participation is not a token gesture but part of an intentionally cultivated school culture. Parents contribute their time, ideas, and even materials to support activities, reinforcing the importance of community-based education.

Finally, the principal's cross-sector collaboration demonstrates the concrete application of school-based management principles. She not only manages internal resources but also creatively seeks external solutions through partnerships. This aligns with Mulyasa's (2013) view that successful SBM is marked by responsible autonomy, broad participation, and functional, harmonious relations between school and community.

The school's educational approach also aligns with the holistic-integrative PAUD model, which emphasizes not only cognitive development but also spiritual, social, and emotional growth. Activities like communal worship, nature exploration, and family involvement exemplify the application of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem principle, which holds that a child's development is deeply influenced by interactions within their immediate environment.

In conclusion, the management practices of the principal at TK GMIM Pniel Bahu show that effective educational management is not defined solely by formal documents or organizational structures, but by how values such as trust, participation, and service are manifested in daily actions. The principal emerges as a leader who not only plans and supervises but also listens, serves, and grows alongside the school community.

V. CONCLUSION

This study finds that the principal of TK GMIM Pniel Bahu effectively applies the four key management functions—planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising—through a participatory and holistic leadership approach. Strategic planning involves collaboration with teachers and parents, while organizing ensures clear task distribution and strong external partnerships. Implementation is marked by the principal's active presence in educational and community activities, reflecting servant and participatory leadership. Supervision is conducted through reflective evaluations involving all stakeholders, promoting transparency and continuous improvement. Overall, the principal demonstrates effective school-based management grounded in Christian values, local wisdom, and inclusive practices. These findings strengthen existing leadership theories and highlight the importance of cultural and spiritual integration in early childhood education leadership.

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