

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE TANAH ABANG SUBDISTRICT, PALI REGENCY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of School Committees in improving the quality of educational services in public elementary schools across Tanah Abang District, Penukul Abab Lematang Ilir Regency. This qualitative research employed a multiple-case study design involving three public elementary schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, limited participant observation, and document analysis. The analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, enriched with pattern matching and cross-case analysis techniques. The findings reveal that the implementation of school committee roles remains largely administrative and symbolic. The advisory function is procedural rather than deliberative; supporting is incidental rather than strategic; controlling is constrained by limited capacity and transparency; and mediating lacks institutionalization. Drawing on public value governance and co-production perspectives, educational service quality requires institutional capacity building, transparency mechanisms, deliberative planning, and participatory evaluation forums. The study proposes an Integrative School Committee–Service Quality Model positioning the committee as a co-producer of educational service quality.

Keywords: school committee, educational service quality, co-production, public governance

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran Komite Sekolah dalam meningkatkan kualitas layanan pendidikan di sekolah dasar se-Kecamatan Tanah Abang Kabupaten Penukul Abab Lematang Ilir (PALI). Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus multipel pada tiga sekolah dasar negeri. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif terbatas, dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña, diperkaya dengan pendekatan pattern matching dan cross-case analysis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi peran komite sekolah masih bersifat administratif dan belum optimal dalam mendukung tata kelola partisipatif. Fungsi advisory cenderung simbolik, supporting bersifat insidental, controlling lemah akibat keterbatasan kapasitas dan transparansi, serta mediating belum terlembagakan secara sistematis. Dalam perspektif public value governance dan co-production, kualitas layanan pendidikan memerlukan penguatan kapasitas kelembagaan, transparansi akuntabilitas, deliberative planning, dan forum evaluasi partisipatif. Penelitian ini mengusulkan Model Integratif

Komite–Kualitas Layanan yang menempatkan komite sebagai co-producer mutu pendidikan. Abstrak dibuat dalam dua bahasa, yaitu Bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Indonesia.

Kata kunci: komite sekolah, kualitas layanan pendidikan, co-production, tata kelola pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

The quality of educational services constitutes a central indicator in evaluating the effectiveness and success of educational delivery, particularly at the level of basic education. In contemporary educational discourse, quality is no longer narrowly defined by students' academic outcomes alone, but rather by a broader set of indicators that encompass the fulfillment of stakeholder expectations, including those of students, parents, and the wider community (Sallis, 2014). Schools are expected to function not merely as institutions for knowledge transmission but as service organizations that deliver holistic educational experiences. These experiences involve cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, as well as the cultivation of character and social values. Consequently, the measurement of educational service quality must adopt a multidimensional perspective that integrates both internal institutional performance and external stakeholder satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Education as a public service possesses inherently complex characteristics because it involves multiple actors, including policymakers, school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and the broader community. This complexity necessitates an integrated governance approach that enables collaboration among stakeholders. Within this context, the paradigm of School-Based Management (SBM) emerges as a strategic framework aimed at decentralizing authority and empowering schools to manage their resources more effectively and responsively (Caldwell & Spinks, 2013). SBM emphasizes participatory decision-making, transparency, and accountability, wherein community involvement is not only encouraged but considered essential. Community participation, therefore, becomes a cornerstone in ensuring that educational services are aligned with local needs and expectations.

One of the key institutional mechanisms designed to facilitate community participation in schools is the School Committee. Normatively, the School Committee serves as a representative body of parents and the community, with clearly defined roles that include providing advisory input, offering support, conducting oversight, and mediating between the school and external stakeholders (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). These roles position the School Committee as a strategic partner in educational governance, particularly in enhancing the quality of educational services. The advisory function allows the committee to contribute to school planning processes, such as the development of the School Work Plan (RKS). The support function includes both material and non-material contributions, while the oversight function ensures accountability in resource utilization. The mediating function bridges communication between the school and the community, thereby fostering mutual understanding and trust.

Despite the strategic importance of School Committees, empirical evidence suggests that their role in practice often falls short of normative expectations. Many studies indicate that community participation in educational governance tends to be procedural rather than substantive (Epstein, 2011). Participation is frequently limited to formal activities such as attending meetings, approving documents, or contributing financially, without meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. This phenomenon reflects a broader gap between policy design and implementation, where the intended participatory governance model is not fully realized at the operational level. As a result, the potential of School Committees to contribute to educational quality improvement remains underutilized.

From the perspective of public value governance, this gap can be understood as a limitation in the ability of educational institutions to create public value through collaborative processes. Public value governance emphasizes that public services should be co-created through interactions among multiple actors, rather than being delivered unilaterally by institutions (Bryson et al., 2014). In this framework, the success of public services, including education, depends on the extent to which stakeholders are actively engaged in shaping policies and practices. Similarly, the concept of co-production highlights the role of citizens as active contributors to service delivery, rather than passive recipients (Osborne et al., 2016). In the educational context, this implies that parents and community members, through mechanisms such as School Committees, should be involved in the co-production of educational outcomes.

The relevance of co-production in education becomes particularly evident when examining the determinants of service quality. The SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), identifies five key dimensions of service quality: reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibles. These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for assessing the quality of educational services from the perspective of users. Reliability refers to the ability of schools to deliver consistent and dependable services, while assurance relates to the competence and credibility of educators and administrators. Responsiveness reflects the willingness of schools to address stakeholder needs, empathy involves personalized attention and care, and tangibles refer to physical facilities and learning resources.

Importantly, these dimensions are not solely influenced by internal school factors but are also shaped by governance practices and stakeholder engagement. For instance, transparent oversight by the School Committee can enhance reliability and assurance by ensuring that school programs are implemented as planned. Effective communication between the school and the committee can improve responsiveness and empathy by facilitating the identification and resolution of stakeholder concerns. Similarly, support from the committee can contribute to the improvement of tangible aspects, such as infrastructure and learning resources. Therefore, the role of the School Committee is intrinsically linked to the overall quality of educational services.

However, the empirical reality in many educational settings, including elementary schools in the Tanah Abang Subdistrict of Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir (PALI) Regency, indicates that these potentials have not been fully realized. Observations reveal that School Committees are often perceived primarily as fundraising bodies or administrative complements to the school. Their involvement in strategic processes, such as the formulation of the School Work Plan and the monitoring of financial management, remains limited. This perception is further reinforced by the limited capacity and understanding of committee members regarding their roles and responsibilities. As a result, the committee's contribution to improving educational service quality is constrained.

This situation reflects a misalignment between regulatory frameworks and practical implementation. While policies clearly define the strategic functions of School Committees, their operationalization is influenced by various factors, including institutional culture, leadership practices, and stakeholder capacity (Deal & Peterson, 2016). In many cases, school leaders may not fully involve the committee in decision-making processes, either due to concerns about efficiency or a lack of trust. Conversely, committee members may lack the knowledge, skills, or confidence to actively participate in governance processes. This dual limitation creates a cycle of minimal engagement, which ultimately affects the quality of educational services.

The implications of this gap are significant, particularly in terms of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Without effective oversight from the School Committee, schools may face challenges in ensuring the transparent use of resources. Similarly, limited community involvement can reduce the responsiveness of schools to stakeholder needs, as feedback mechanisms are not fully utilized. This, in turn, can affect stakeholder satisfaction and trust, which are critical components of educational quality (Epstein, 2011). Furthermore, the absence of substantive collaboration may hinder the development of innovative solutions to educational challenges, as diverse perspectives are not adequately incorporated.

Previous research on School Committees in Indonesia has largely focused on descriptive analyses of their roles and contributions. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often do not examine the relationship between committee functions and educational service quality within a comprehensive theoretical framework. In particular, there is a need to integrate perspectives from public value governance and co-production to better understand how participatory mechanisms can enhance educational outcomes. Additionally, the use of multiple-case study approaches remains limited, despite their potential to provide deeper insights into contextual variations and patterns across different schools (Yin, 2018).

Addressing these gaps requires a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the role of School Committees in educational governance. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining the implementation of the four main

functions of School Committees, identifying the obstacles encountered in their execution, and formulating a model for strengthening their role within a participatory governance framework. By adopting a multiple-case study approach, this research aims to capture the diversity of practices and experiences across different schools, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

The integration of public value governance, co-production, and service quality perspectives offers a robust analytical framework for this study. Public value governance provides a macro-level perspective on the importance of collaboration and stakeholder engagement in public service delivery. Co-production emphasizes the active role of citizens in shaping service outcomes, while the SERVQUAL model offers a practical tool for assessing service quality. Together, these perspectives enable a comprehensive analysis of how School Committees can contribute to the improvement of educational services.

In conclusion, the role of School Committees in enhancing the quality of educational services is both strategic and complex. While regulatory frameworks provide a clear mandate for their involvement, practical implementation often falls short due to various structural and cultural barriers. Bridging this gap requires not only strengthening the capacity of committee members but also fostering a culture of collaboration and trust between schools and the community. By leveraging participatory governance mechanisms, schools can create more responsive, accountable, and high-quality educational services that meet the evolving needs of stakeholders. This study is expected to provide both theoretical contributions to the development of participatory governance models in education and practical recommendations for improving the effectiveness of School Committees in supporting educational quality.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multiple case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of School Committee roles within real educational contexts. A qualitative method is appropriate because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena holistically and interpret meanings derived from participants' experiences (Moleong, 2017; Creswell, 2024). The multiple case study design allows for comparative analysis across different schools, facilitating the identification of patterns of similarities and differences in how School Committees function in practice (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted in three public elementary schools located in Tanah Abang Subdistrict, Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir (PALI) Regency, South Sumatra. The sites were selected purposively to reflect variations in school characteristics, such as student population, community socioeconomic background, and levels of committee participation. The informants consisted of 18 participants, including school principals, teachers, school committee chairs and members, as well as parent representatives, all of whom were selected based on their active involvement in school governance.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, limited participatory observations, and document analysis. Interviews focused on the four primary functions of School Committees—advisory, supporting, controlling, and mediating. Observations were conducted during meetings and school activities, while documents such as School Work Plans (RKS), financial reports, and meeting minutes were analyzed to support findings. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, supported by interview guides and observation protocols, which is consistent with qualitative research principles (Creswell, 2024). Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2024). To ensure validity, the study applied triangulation of sources and methods, as well as member checking. Cross-case analysis and pattern matching were also employed to strengthen the credibility and depth of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a significant gap between the normative framework of the School Committee's role and its empirical implementation at the elementary school level. Normatively, the School Committee is entrusted with four primary functions—advisory, supporting, controlling, and mediating—which are designed to strengthen participatory governance within the education system. These functions conceptually position the committee as a strategic partner in planning, implementing, monitoring, and communicating school programs with the wider community. However, the empirical findings demonstrate that these functions have not been optimally implemented and tend to remain administrative and symbolic in nature. This condition reflects a broader issue in participatory governance, where formal institutional structures exist but fail to translate into substantive engagement (Bryson et al., 2014).

In practice, the involvement of School Committees is often limited to procedural activities, such as approving documents, providing incidental support, or receiving reports without in-depth evaluation. This pattern indicates that participation has not yet evolved into deliberative participation, which involves shared decision-making and the redistribution of authority among stakeholders. As a result, the committee's presence is structurally recognized but substantively weak. From a public value governance perspective, this situation suggests that community participation has not been effectively integrated into the process of creating educational value. Public value is generated not only through institutional performance but also through collaborative interactions among stakeholders (Bryson et al., 2014). When participation remains formal, the resulting value is limited to administrative legitimacy rather than substantive improvements in service quality.

The concept of co-production further emphasizes the importance of meaningful participation throughout the entire policy cycle. Co-production involves active collaboration between service providers and users in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of services (Osborne et al., 2016). In the context of this study, the involvement of School Committees often occurs after decisions have been made, thereby limiting their

influence on policy direction. This delayed engagement reduces the effectiveness of the advisory function and weakens the integration of supporting and controlling roles. Consequently, participation is fragmented and lacks a systemic foundation within school governance.

The advisory function, as revealed in this study, is predominantly characterized by administrative approval rather than substantive deliberation. Committee members are typically involved after key planning documents, such as the School Work Plan (RKS) or School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS), have been finalized. This limits their ability to provide strategic input and reduces their role to that of an approving authority. Such a pattern indicates that deliberative mechanisms have not been fully institutionalized. Although formal meetings are conducted, the discussions tend to be one-directional, with schools presenting predetermined programs. This finding aligns with the argument that meaningful participation requires early involvement and equal opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to decision-making (Bovill et al., 2025).

The lack of deliberative engagement is further influenced by structural and cultural factors, including hierarchical organizational practices and limited analytical capacity among committee members. Without adequate access to data and policy literacy, committee members are unable to engage in evidence-based discussions. This condition undermines the reliability and assurance dimensions of educational service quality, as planning processes are not fully responsive to community needs (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Therefore, strengthening the advisory function requires institutional reforms that promote structured deliberation, transparency of information, and capacity building for committee members.

The supporting function of the School Committee is similarly constrained, as it is primarily manifested through material contributions and incidental activities. While such support reflects community commitment, it is often reactive and not integrated into the school's strategic planning framework. This lack of integration limits the impact of support on educational quality. Effective support should be aligned with clearly defined quality priorities and contribute to the improvement of learning processes (Silva & Mendes, 2024). However, findings indicate that support is frequently provided without prior collaborative planning, resulting in short-term and fragmented contributions.

From a co-production perspective, the supporting function should be understood as a collaborative effort to enhance educational outcomes. Community contributions should not be limited to financial or physical resources but should also include involvement in designing and implementing quality improvement initiatives (Osborne et al., 2016). When support is strategically aligned with school goals, it can strengthen multiple dimensions of service quality, including tangibles, reliability, and assurance. Therefore, the transformation of the supporting function requires a shift from ad hoc contributions to strategic, co-planned interventions.

The controlling function, which is essential for ensuring accountability, is also found to be weak in practice. Although schools provide reports on financial and program implementation, these reports are often presented in formats that do not facilitate critical analysis. Committee members tend to accept information as a form of formal transparency without engaging in evaluative processes. This condition reflects limited access to information, insufficient analytical capacity, and the absence of systematic oversight mechanisms. According to collaborative governance theory, transparency and accountability are fundamental prerequisites for effective participation (Bovaird & Löffler, 2023). Without these elements, the controlling function cannot operate as a meaningful mechanism of social oversight.

The weakness of the controlling function has direct implications for public trust. Transparent and accountable governance enhances the assurance dimension of service quality by demonstrating institutional integrity and professionalism (Toscano-Hernández et al., 2024). Conversely, limited oversight can reduce stakeholder confidence and weaken the legitimacy of school governance. To address this issue, schools need to adopt more accessible reporting systems, provide performance indicators, and enhance the capacity of committee members in monitoring and evaluation. Such measures can transform the controlling function into a substantive pillar of accountability.

The mediating function, which serves as a bridge between schools and the community, is also underdeveloped. Communication between schools and parents is often informal and situational, lacking structured mechanisms for dialogue and feedback. As a result, the committee's role as a communication facilitator is not fully realized. This condition limits the responsiveness and empathy dimensions of educational service quality, as schools may not adequately capture and respond to stakeholder needs (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Furthermore, the absence of structured communication channels increases the risk of misunderstandings and reduces stakeholder satisfaction.

From a participatory governance perspective, effective mediation requires the establishment of institutionalized communication forums that enable two-way dialogue. Such forums can enhance social capital by building trust, mutual understanding, and collaborative relationships (Syafebri et al., 2025). In this study, the lack of regular dialogue mechanisms indicates that participatory communication has not been fully embedded in school governance practices. Strengthening the mediating function, therefore, requires the development of systematic feedback mechanisms, regular evaluation forums, and the active involvement of committees in facilitating communication.

The synthesis of these findings reveals that the four functions of the School Committee are interdependent and form an integrated system of participatory governance. Weaknesses in one function affect the performance of others, resulting in a cycle of limited participation. For example, weak advisory functions lead to poorly aligned support, which in turn reduces the effectiveness of oversight and undermines

communication processes. This interconnectedness highlights the need for a holistic approach to strengthening the role of School Committees.

From the perspective of public value governance, the creation of educational value requires the integration of institutional capacity, transparency, participation, and service quality (Bryson et al., 2014). The findings of this study indicate that such integration has not yet been achieved, as participation remains largely procedural. To address this issue, this study proposes a conceptual model based on four key pillars: capacity building, transparency and accountability, deliberative planning, and participatory evaluation.

Capacity building serves as the foundation for enhancing the role of School Committees. By improving policy literacy, analytical skills, and understanding of governance processes, committee members can engage more effectively in decision-making and oversight. Transparency and accountability strengthen the controlling function by providing access to relevant information and enabling data-driven evaluation. Deliberative planning integrates advisory and supporting functions by involving committees in the early stages of policy formulation. Participatory evaluation enhances the mediating function by creating structured spaces for dialogue and feedback. This model repositions the School Committee as a co-producer of educational service quality rather than a passive participant. Through collaborative governance and co-production, the committee can contribute to the creation of public value in education. This transformation requires both structural and cultural changes, including the redistribution of decision-making authority, the development of participatory mechanisms, and the cultivation of trust between schools and the community.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the importance of transforming School Committees from symbolic entities into substantive actors within educational governance. By integrating their four primary functions within a participatory framework, schools can enhance the quality of educational services across multiple dimensions. Such transformation is essential for achieving sustainable improvements in education and ensuring that schools remain responsive to the needs of their stakeholders

Figure 1. An Integrative Model of the School Committee as a Co-Producer of Service Quality

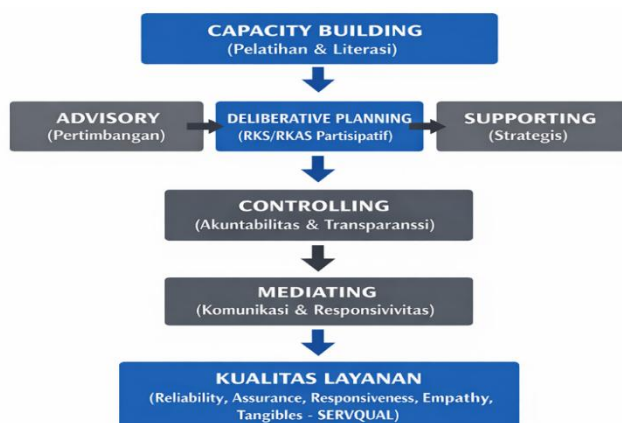


Figure 1 illustrates the structural and causal relationships among the functions of the School Committee within the framework of participatory governance. This model not only depicts procedural sequences but also demonstrates the transformational logic of progression from symbolic participation to substantive participation. Capacity building is positioned as the foundation because enhancing members' policy literacy, regulatory understanding, and analytical skills is a prerequisite for the redistribution of roles in the decision-making process. Without such capacity, the advisory function tends to remain limited to administrative approval and fails to evolve into deliberative planning grounded in argumentation and the school's actual needs.

Participatory deliberative planning then serves as an integrative link between advisory and supporting functions. At this stage, the committee's contributions are no longer incidental but are directed toward the school's mutually agreed-upon strategic priorities. This integration enables resource support—both material and non-material—to become part of a systemic quality strategy. In the context of educational governance, support based on collaborative planning has greater leverage in enhancing the reliability and assurance dimensions of service quality. Furthermore, the controlling function serves as a corrective mechanism and a guarantor of accountability. Transparency in the management of school programs and finances strengthens the legitimacy of the deliberative process while preventing policy deviations. In this model, controlling is not positioned as a repressive oversight function, but rather as an instrument of institutional learning that drives continuous improvement. Maintained accountability forms the basis of public trust and strengthens the collaborative relationship between the school and the community.

The mediating function serves as the stage that consolidates all these processes through responsive two-way communication. Effective mediation allows community aspirations to be channeled systematically, while also openly communicating the school's achievements and limitations. This interaction strengthens the dimensions of responsiveness and empathy in the quality of educational services, thereby building a perception of quality that is not solely based on academic outcomes but also on the quality of institutional relationships. Cumulatively, this model underscores that improvements in the quality of educational services are not the result of a single function, but rather the product of dynamic interactions among mutually reinforcing functions. The proposed Committee–Service Quality Integrative Model in this study demonstrates that when institutional capacity, deliberative planning, accountability, and responsive communication operate synergistically, school committees can transform into co-producers of educational quality that make tangible contributions to the dimensions of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibles, as outlined in the SERVQUAL framework.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the School Committee's role in improving the quality of educational services in elementary schools throughout the Tanah

Abang subdistrict and to formulate a model for strengthening it within the framework of participatory governance. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the four main functions of the School Committee—advisory, supporting, controlling, and mediating have not yet been fully realized in a substantive manner. The advisory role remains limited to administrative legitimacy; the supporting function has not been strategically integrated into quality planning; the controlling function is constrained by limitations in transparency and monitoring capacity; and the mediating function has not been systematically institutionalized within school–community communication mechanisms.

These findings indicate a gap between the normative design of community participation in education policy and its empirical implementation at the school level. From the perspective of public value governance and co-production, improving the quality of educational services requires strengthening the institutional capacity of the committee, institutionalizing deliberative planning, developing a transparent accountability system, and establishing sustainable participatory communication forums. This study produced an Integrative Committee–Service Quality Model that positions school committees as co-producers of educational quality through synergy between capacity building, deliberative planning, accountability-based control, and responsive mediation. This model provides a conceptual contribution to the development of participatory-based educational governance at the elementary school level. Moving forward, further research could focus on quantitatively testing this model to measure the impact of each function on dimensions of educational service quality, as well as examining the effectiveness of capacity-building interventions in improving school committee performance. Additionally, comparative studies across regions with different socioeconomic characteristics are needed to enrich our understanding of the dynamics of community participation in educational governance.

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