Proceedings Series of Educational Studies

The 5th International Conference on Educational Management and Technology (ICEMT) 2026

Management of the Mini Cooperative Program at TK Shibyanul Mu'taalim Sukorejo District Ponorogo Regency

Muhammad Rafi Adriansyah Putra*, Bryan Beckham Wibisono Efendi, Maisyaroh, Agus Timan, Nurul Ulfatin

State University of Malang, Jl. Semarang No. 5 Malang, East Java, Indonesia

*Email: muhammad.rafi.2201316@students.um.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the management of the mini cooperative program in supporting early childhood character development at TK Dharma Wanita Shibyanul Mu'ataalim, Sukorejo District, Ponorogo Regency. This research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, parents, and students. The findings indicate that the management of the mini cooperative program was systematically implemented through planning, implementation, supervision, and program success. The program provided contextual learning experiences through simple buying and selling activities, which supported the development of honesty, discipline, responsibility, independence, communication skills, and cooperation among children. Therefore, the mini cooperative program serves as an effective learning strategy for supporting early childhood character development.

Keywords: management; special service; mini cooperative

1. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a strategic role in laying the foundation for children's cognitive, socio-emotional, language, moral, and character development. Early childhood is widely recognized as the golden age, a period during which brain development and fundamental abilities progress rapidly. At this stage, children require concrete, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences to build the competencies needed in everyday life. One of the essential competencies that should be developed from an early age is numeracy, as it encompasses the ability to recognize numbers, count, compare quantities, and solve simple problems. However, numeracy development cannot be effectively achieved through abstract instruction; instead, it should be integrated into enjoyable and contextual learning experiences (Mulyasa, 2019).

One form of contextual learning that can be implemented in ECE is the mini cooperative program. In Indonesia, cooperatives function not only as economic institutions based on the principles of mutual assistance and family-oriented cooperation but also as educational media that foster democratic values, responsibility, honesty, and collaboration among their members (Wibowo & Wahyudi, 2021). In the context of early childhood education, these principles can be introduced through mini cooperative activities that provide children with opportunities to recognize money, engage in simple buying and selling transactions, practice saving, and interact with peers in authentic learning situations (Rahmawati, 2020). Through these experiences, children not only acquire an understanding of basic economic concepts but also develop communication skills, responsibility, discipline, and social competence.

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The mini cooperative program is one of the special support services provided in schools to enhance the learning process. Such services should be managed systematically to contribute effectively to the achievement of educational objectives. According to Zulkarnain (2018), school support services include various programs such as libraries, guidance and counseling, school health units, cafeterias, cooperatives, and extracurricular activities, all of which are intended to support students' holistic development. Therefore, the mini cooperative should not merely be viewed as a place for simple transactions but also as a structured learning medium designed to foster children's cognitive, social, and character development.

Previous studies have demonstrated that school cooperatives positively contribute to the development of financial literacy, entrepreneurial spirit, managerial skills, and character formation among students. School cooperatives have been shown to promote saving habits, responsibility, and students' participation in simple economic activities (Suyatno, 2018). Furthermore, they contribute to the development of entrepreneurial characteristics such as discipline, creativity, independence, and responsibility (Pahlevi, 2022). Saptono and Yanto (2021) reported that entrepreneurship education delivered through direct experience enhances students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Similarly, Cárcamo-Solís et al. (2017) found that entrepreneurship education based on learning by doing improves creativity, teamwork, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities.

Despite these findings, most previous studies on school cooperatives have focused on primary and secondary education, emphasizing economic and organizational aspects. Research examining mini cooperative programs in early childhood education and kindergarten settings remains relatively limited (Suyatno, 2018). This gap is significant because early childhood represents a crucial stage for fostering financial literacy, saving habits, sharing behavior, responsibility, and cooperation through learning experiences that are appropriate for children's developmental characteristics (Mulyasa, 2019). Furthermore, limited research has explored how mini cooperative programs are systematically managed through the involvement of principals, teachers, parents, and children (Minarwati et al., 2020).

Another limitation of previous research is the lack of comprehensive management perspectives in analyzing the implementation of mini cooperative programs. Most studies have focused primarily on the benefits of school cooperatives without examining the overall management process. In fact, the success of an educational program is highly dependent on how it is planned, organized, implemented, and supervised. The Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) management framework proposed by Terry (1993) and further elaborated by Handoko (2012) provides a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the effectiveness of educational program management from the planning stage through supervision.

TK Dharma Wanita Shibyanul Mu'taalim, located in Sukorejo District, Ponorogo Regency, is one of the early childhood education institutions that has developed a mini cooperative program as an innovative learning strategy. The program is designed to integrate numeracy development, financial literacy, character education, and social skills through simple buying and selling activities involving children directly. Children are given opportunities to recognize the value of money, conduct simple transactions, practice saving, and interact with their peers in an enjoyable learning environment. This experiential learning approach is

consistent with the concept of contextual learning, which emphasizes the importance of authentic experiences as a means of constructing children's knowledge and skills (Nusarofah, 2022).

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine the management of the mini cooperative program at TK Dharma Wanita Shibyanul Mu'taalim, Sukorejo District, Ponorogo Regency, Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth understanding of the processes of planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision of the mini cooperative program in supporting early childhood character development. The research participants consisted of the principal, teachers, parents, and students, who were selected using the snowball sampling technique. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to obtain information regarding the management of the mini cooperative program, observations were used to examine the implementation of the program directly, and documentation was employed to complement the data through school records, activity photographs, and other supporting documents. The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña (2014) and Ulfatin, N & Triwiyanto, T. (2021), which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The trustworthiness of the data was established through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and time triangulation to ensure the credibility of the research findings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Planning of the Mini Cooperative Program

The findings revealed that the planning of the mini cooperative program at TK Dharma Wanita Shibyanul Mu'taalim was conducted systematically and collaboratively, involving the principal, teachers, the school committee, school supervisors, and parents. The program was designed as an innovative learning strategy to introduce basic economic concepts while fostering character development through hands-on learning experiences. The school developed a work plan, established learning objectives, determined the implementation schedule, prepared human resources, allocated the budget, provided the necessary facilities and infrastructure, and established implementation procedures and task distribution. The types of products sold were also selected according to the needs and developmental characteristics of the children. The planning process took into account the developmental characteristics of early childhood learners by incorporating play-based and experiential learning (learning by playing). Teachers prepared learning scenarios, the principal ensured the availability of all required resources, and parents were involved through continuous coordination regarding their support in providing products, pocket money for transaction practice, and reinforcement of character values at home.

3.1.2 Implementation of the Mini Cooperative Program

The findings indicated that the implementation of the mini cooperative program was carried out according to the established plan. The activities were organized as contextual

learning experiences based on the learning by doing approach. Children actively participated as both buyers and sellers under the guidance of their teachers. The children were introduced to activities such as selecting products, recognizing money, conducting simple buying and selling transactions, counting items, receiving change, and practicing saving. Teachers served as facilitators, mentors, and supervisors throughout the learning activities. Parents also supported the implementation by providing products for sale, giving pocket money, and reinforcing character values at home. This collaboration between the school and parents strengthened the successful implementation of the program.

3.1.3 Supervision of the Mini Cooperative Program

The findings showed that supervision was carried out by both the principal and teachers. The principal monitored the overall management of the program, while teachers directly supervised the children's participation during the activities. Teachers monitored children's transaction activities, provided assistance when difficulties arose, observed character development, and conducted simple evaluations of the learning process. The school also maintained transaction records, monitored inventory, documented activities, and prepared administrative reports. The evaluation results indicated that the program had been implemented successfully, although several challenges remained, including children's varying levels of understanding of the value of money and the absence of a regularly scheduled monitoring system by the principal.

3.1.4 Effectiveness of the Mini Cooperative Program

The findings demonstrated that the mini cooperative program positively contributed to children's cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and character development. The children showed improvements in their understanding of buying and selling concepts, the use of money, numeracy skills, communication skills, cooperation, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and independence. The program also increased children's enthusiasm for learning, helped regulate their snacking habits, received positive responses from parents, and enhanced the school's reputation as an institution implementing experiential learning.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Planning of the Mini Cooperative Program

The findings indicate that the planning function was effectively implemented as the foundation for managing the mini cooperative program. Collaborative planning provided clear direction for all stakeholders involved in implementing the program. These findings are consistent with Terry (1993), who defines planning as the process of establishing objectives and determining the actions required to achieve them. The results also support Lubis (2024), who argues that early childhood education management should integrate program planning with children's developmental needs so that educational programs promote not only administrative effectiveness but also character development. Therefore, comprehensive planning serves as a critical factor in creating synergy among the school, teachers, and parents, thereby ensuring the effective implementation of the mini cooperative program.

3.2.2 Implementation of the Mini Cooperative Program

The implementation of the program reflects the principles of experiential learning, in which direct experience serves as the primary source of learning. Through simple buying and selling activities, children gained a concrete understanding of basic economic concepts while simultaneously developing their thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills. These findings support the study by Sukidjo et al. (2020), which reported that school cooperatives effectively cultivate responsibility, cooperation, and independence among students. Furthermore, Lubis (2024) emphasized that educational programs in early childhood settings should be adapted to children's developmental characteristics to optimize learning outcomes and character formation. These results suggest that the mini cooperative functions as a contextual learning medium capable of promoting children's cognitive, social, and character development.

3.2.3 Supervision of the Mini Cooperative Program

The findings demonstrate that the controlling function was effectively implemented as an essential component of program management. Supervision functioned not only as a mechanism for control but also as a process of guidance aimed at improving program implementation. These findings are consistent with Fayol (1916), who argued that supervision ensures that organizational activities are carried out according to established plans. They also support Santya and Kustini (2025), who emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation, as well as Wati et al. (2024), who identified teacher guidance during learning activities as an effective form of supervision in early childhood education. Therefore, effective supervision contributes to the continuous improvement of program implementation and quality.

3.2.4 Effectiveness of the Mini Cooperative Program

The success of the mini cooperative program was demonstrated not only by the successful implementation of buying and selling activities but also by children's holistic development across cognitive, social, language, and character domains. These findings support Astuti and Triani (2024), who argue that early childhood education should promote balanced development across all developmental domains through meaningful learning experiences. The findings are also consistent with Nurjanah and Kurniawati (2022), who highlighted the importance of social interaction in enhancing children's communication skills, and Rahmawati (2021), who emphasized that socio-emotional and character development are equally important indicators of educational success in early childhood. Overall, the findings suggest that the effective implementation of management functions—including planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation—enables the mini cooperative program to serve as an effective contextual learning strategy that supports both cognitive development and character formation in early childhood education.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the management of the mini cooperative program at TK Dharma Wanita Shibyanul Mu'taalim, Sukorejo District, Ponorogo Regency, was implemented systematically through the application of management functions, including planning,

implementation, supervision, and program effectiveness. The planning process involved the principal, teachers, the school committee, school supervisors, and parents through the preparation of work plans, the formulation of program objectives, the allocation of resources, and the provision of facilities and infrastructure to support program implementation. The implementation phase was carried out through simple buying and selling activities that actively engaged children as part of a contextual learning experience aimed at introducing basic economic concepts while fostering positive character values. Supervision was conducted continuously by the principal and teachers through activity monitoring, guidance provided to children, and coordination with parents to ensure that the program was implemented in accordance with its intended objectives.

The findings indicate that the mini cooperative program was highly effective in supporting early childhood development. Its effectiveness was reflected in children's improved ability to recognize the value of money, understand basic buying and selling concepts, communicate effectively, cooperate with peers, and demonstrate positive character traits, including honesty, discipline, responsibility, and independence. In addition to benefiting children, the program strengthened collaboration between the school and parents in supporting the learning process and creating a contextual, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate learning environment.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the advancement of research on early childhood education management, particularly regarding the management of mini cooperative programs as an experiential and contextual learning strategy. The findings demonstrate that well-planned management, consistent implementation, continuous supervision, and successful program outcomes, as evidenced by improvements in children's character and developmental competencies, make the mini cooperative an effective alternative instructional strategy for promoting character education in early childhood. Therefore, this model of mini cooperative program management may serve as a reference for other early childhood education institutions seeking to develop innovative, sustainable, and child-centered learning programs that support children's holistic development.

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