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**Leadership in Early Childhood Education:
Case Studies of Indonesian Public Kindergartens**

By

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, studies of leadership in early childhood education have increased worldwide. However, only limited research has been conducted in Southeast Asia. Therefore, this gap provides a warrant for my research into early childhood leadership in Indonesia, an area of knowledge that has been underexplored.

This current study focused on early childhood leadership at the kindergarten level. The research examines the nature of leadership in selected public kindergartens in Indonesia. It also examines the perceived purposes of kindergarten education, how leadership is implemented, kindergarten organisational structure, curriculum development, and the relationship between kindergarten leaders and parents. This study also considers how kindergarten leaders responded to the Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged as a theme during the data collection process.

This is an exploratory multiple case study, involving semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis from different contexts and regions in Indonesia. Due to the pandemic, study participants were interviewed online in four main regions: the capital (Jakarta), the central part (Bali), the western part (North Sumatra), and the eastern part (South Sulawesi). Participants in this study include kindergarten heads, teachers, teaching assistants, administrative assistants, parents, and local education offices. The study involved a total of 40 participants.

This study found that ECE leadership in Indonesia is problematic in several respects, starting with the principal selection process, where political interests dominate. Heads feel overburdened with administrative tasks and also lack training. This research found that public kindergartens follow a similar top-down hierarchy. Principals interpret the curriculum as a central government-given policy, with little autonomy in its implementation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, kindergarten leaders faced extreme pressure and it also disrupted teaching and learning.

The thesis outlines the implications for policymakers, principals, teachers, and for further research. It recommends that central government should reevaluate the selection process for public kindergarten principals. It also recommends that the government should improve leadership training for future principals and reduce their administrative burden.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

This thesis examines the leadership of early childhood education (ECE) in Indonesia. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of early childhood education for children's welfare and development (e.g. Moss, 2013; Penn, 2011; Parker, 2013). Moreover, research shows that ECE school success is linked to leadership (Aubrey et al, 2013; Bush, 2012a; Heikka, 2013; Bennett et al., 2003). However, there is only limited evidence of research and literature about early childhood leadership in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia (Gaol, 2021). This gap provides the warrant for research on early childhood leadership in Indonesia.

This chapter presents the study's context and aims. The first section provides the theoretical context for this thesis. This is followed by consideration of the national context. The chapter also describes the educational context, including how education is organised in Indonesia, from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the local education office and school principals. The chapter also discusses the different types of early childhood education in Indonesia, and provides an overview of the socio-economic conditions in each of the communities served by the four case studies. The next section discusses the theoretical context.

Theoretical Context

During the last few decades, ECE has become a global issue. Research and literature on early childhood have increased substantially (Moss, 2006, 2013; Penn, 2011). ECE provision is described variously as Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), while others use Early Childhood Development (OECD, 2017).

In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), target 4.2 states that "by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are prepared for primary education". Early childhood education refers to a series of

interventions provided to children aged birth through seven or eight to promote their physical, cognitive, and emotional development prior to entering primary school (UNESCO, 2016).

However, numerous studies from the United States, UK, Hong Kong, and Australia emphasise the tension between education and care. It is debated whether the purpose of early childhood education is to prepare children for primary education or to provide them with caring, valued, and enriching experiences (see Ang, 2019; Penn, 2008). Scholars also observed that preschool learning is becoming increasingly formalised. Ang (2014) argues that in Southeast Asia, there has been a growing focus on attainment tests and academic curricula for young children. Ebbeck (2003) argues that ECE should focus more on young children's well-being than academic achievement.

Preschool education has an important impact on academic outcomes and the well-being of children (Bush, 2012; Muijs et al., 2004; Fonsen and Soukainen, 2020). Parker (2013) argues that childhood provides the foundation for adulthood. Children who receive positive stimulation and develop both sides of their brains are more likely to succeed as adults. As she argues, ECE is essentially education that facilitates a child's overall growth and development by emphasising the development of all aspects of the child's personality. Moss and Pen (2003) assert that preschool children's development is a long continuous process that allows them to develop their cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical, and motor abilities.

There is a well-established consensus that leadership is key to the success of early childhood education. Moreover, leadership is very critical, since the head of an early childhood education programme serves a wide range of people, including teachers, children, and parents (Aubrey et al., 2013; Bush, 2013; Heikka, 2013; Bennett et al., 2003).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that effective educational leadership can improve the quality of schools. Student achievement can be significantly impacted by the principal's involvement and attention, especially when it comes to curriculum and learning processes (Bush and Glover, 2012). As

Aubrey (2011) points out, leadership resides in the ability to influence staff members in a desired direction so that organisational goals can be achieved.

Bass (2008) investigated how leaders gain status by participating actively and demonstrating their capabilities within a group. According to the British Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector (ELEYS) study (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet, 2014), successful early childhood education leaders are those who have a vision and focus on 'leading learning' and inspire everyone involved in education, including students, teachers, and parents. The last part plays an important role in the education of a child. Research has shown that parental involvement is positively associated with academic achievement, well-being, and social skills (Epstein, 2010; Lau et al., 2012; Wilder, 2014).

National Context

Indonesia is located in Southeast Asia. It occupies a strategic geographical position between two continents (Asia and Australia) as well as two oceans (Pacific and Indian). There are more than 17,000 islands in Indonesia, making it the largest archipelagic country in the world (Oxford Business Group, 2019; Gooszen, 2021). The country has a population of approximately 273 million people, representing more than 300 different ethnic groups, according to the last population census conducted in 2021. Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world after China, India, and the United States (World Population Review, 2020; Indonesian Statistics, 2021).

Indonesia is a republic headed by the president, who serves both as head of state and head of government. Indonesia's capital city is Jakarta and Bahasa Indonesia is the official language (Tegnan, 2018). Indonesia is a country with a wide range of cultures, arts, and languages. Lewis, Simons, and Fennig (2013) identified 706 languages spoken throughout the archipelago. Due to the intelligibility of most of these languages, the authors are referred to as "distinct languages" rather than dialects.

Indonesia has the largest Moslem population in the world. Approximately 85% of the population is Moslem, 10% Christian, 2% Hindu, 1.7% Buddhist, 0.7%

Catholic, 0.3% Confucian, and the rest are adherents of other religions (Indonesian Statistics, 2021). Even though Islam is the majority religion, Atmaja et al (2020) assert that Indonesians support freedom of religion. This is due to cultural factors and the Indonesian state motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or "Unity in Diversity".

Indonesia's economy is dominated by agriculture, fishing, mining, and industry. In 2021, Indonesia's GDP reached 1.19 trillion US dollars (IMF, 2022). PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts Indonesia as one of the top seven emerging economic powers, along with Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, and Turkey. The country is expected to become the fourth-largest economy by 2050 (PWC, 2017).

Natural resources play a significant role in supporting Indonesia's economy. More than 40% of the world's tin is produced by Indonesia. In addition, it has the second-largest gold reserves in Asia after China (IMF, 2022). The United States Geological Survey (USGS) reports that Indonesia is the second largest nickel producer in the world after Russia. It is used as a raw material for the production of electric vehicle batteries, which are currently being developed by various countries (McRae, 2022).

Neilson (2014) asserted that, although Indonesia has abundant natural resources, it faces many challenges and economic turbulence, so it needs international assistance. Thus, Indonesia is an active member of the G-20, comprising 19 countries and the European Union. Additionally, Indonesia has been a member of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) since 1989 and of the WTO (World Trade Organisation) since 1995. Furthermore, the World Bank (2018) suggests that Indonesia should improve its infrastructure, eradicate corruption, implement good governance, and invest in health and education in order to develop its economic potential.

Educational Context

It is essential to describe the educational context of this current research. This relates to the overall education system in a country, including regional and district levels (Hallinger, 2018a; Truong et al, 2017). Indonesia was colonised

by the Dutch from 1595 to 1945, a period of more than 350 years. This profoundly influenced the Indonesian educational system. During the colonial period, the Dutch government designed the school system. They employed a top-down and centralised approach, based on Dutch government bureaucratic procedures, without the participation of Indonesian citizens (Sirozi, 2004). Upon gaining independence in 1945, Indonesia began to establish a national education system. However, this could not be separated from the influence of the Dutch education system (Supardan, 2008).

Nishimura (1995) argued that, after the colonial period, Indonesian national education was based on *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. *Pancasila* is a Sanskrit expression that means "five pillars". It is Indonesia's official state philosophy, which consists of five principles: first, belief in one and only God. Second, a civilised human society. Third, the unity of Indonesia. Fourth, democracy is guided by the wisdom of the people's representatives. Fifth, social justice for all Indonesians. Sujana (2019) argued that Indonesian national education is about developing the nation's character, providing students with the opportunity to develop their potential to become human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty. They are expected to have a noble character and to be healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, and independent.

As defined by Law 20/2003 on the National Education System, Indonesia has three pathways for education: formal, nonformal, and informal. The formal educational system is structured and tier-based. It is divided into three levels: primary, secondary, and higher education. Non-formal education is an alternative, addition, or complement to formal education for individuals who require educational services in support of their lifelong learning. It offers several programmes, such as life skills, youth education, women's empowerment education, literacy education, and job skills education. Non-formal education occurs through community learning centres, training and course institutions, *majelis taklim* (Islamic study and reading groups), and other community organisations. Informal education is defined as family

education conducted independently, for example, home-schooling (Indonesian Government, 2003).

The Indonesian education system follows the 6-3-3 model, comprising six years basic education, three years junior secondary school, and three years senior secondary school. All children between 7 and 18 are required to attend full-time school (World Bank, 2014). Indonesia has one of the largest education systems in the world. Over 42 million students are enrolled in 399,376 schools ranging from kindergarten to high school in the 2022/2023 academic year (see table 1.1).

Level	Age	Population (students)
Kindergarten	4-6	3,353,086
Primary school	7-12	24,076,511
Junior secondary school	13-15	9,886,599
Senior secondary school	16-18	5,168,575

Table 1.1: Indonesia school-age population by education level
Source: Indonesian Statistics, 2023

As reported by the World Bank (2014), Indonesia amended its constitution in 2001 to extend the right to education to all citizens, with a minimum of 20 percent of the overall government budget dedicated to education. It shows Indonesia's commitment to education. However, recent data showed that the country only allocated 3.4% of its GDP to education in 2020. Compared to neighboring countries in the ASEAN region, Brunei Darussalam allocates 4.4 percent, Vietnam 4.1 percent, Malaysia 3, 9 percent, and the Philippines 3.7 percent (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2022).

The structure of Indonesian education

Indonesia had one of the most highly centralised education systems in Asia during the 20th century. In 2001, Indonesia decentralised education and gave more power to local governments (Bjork, 2006). The World Bank (2014) reported that education in Indonesia is administered by two different ministries, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), which oversees public and

private schools, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), which governs religious schools, such as Islamic and Christian schools. The MoEC is responsible for 84 percent of schools, and the MoRA is responsible for 16 percent. Sirozi (2004) describes the Indonesian educational system as a "secular-religious system". The roots of this debate can be traced back to Colonial times when the Dutch government separated the national youth organisation from the Islamic organisation in Indonesia.

Ministry of Education and Culture

The Ministry of Education and Culture is headed by a minister and reports directly to the President of the Republic of Indonesia. The constitution entrusts the Ministry with the responsibility of making laws and formulating education policies for the entire country. Moreover, the MoEC is responsible for coordinating with local education offices (LEOs) and providing guidance and facilitation (Presidential Regulation No. 62/2021).

According to Bjork (2006), the decentralisation of education in Indonesia has substantially reduced the role of the Ministry of Education and Culture and enlarged the function of local education authorities. There are only two responsibilities that remain fully performed by the Ministry. First, developing the national curriculum to be used by all Indonesian schools. Second, to administer higher education, including issuing permits to both public and private higher education institutions.

The Ministry of Education and Culture consists of the Secretariat General, the Directorate General of Teachers and Education Personnel, the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Education, the Directorate General of Culture, the Inspectorate General, the Agency for Language Development, the Curriculum Board, and a few ministerial special staff members (MoEC, 2021).

For teacher development, the Ministry is responsible for formulating policies as well as designing career development programs for educators. In regards to teacher salaries, this is entirely the responsibility of the LEO, not the Ministry. However, the constitution still allows the Ministry to provide

operational assistance to schools, both public and private. This assistance is provided to increase the allocation from the LEOs (MoEC, 2019).

The local education office

The LEO organisation is led by a head/director who is directly responsible to the Mayor and not to the Minister of Education and Culture. There is a hierarchical structure within the organisation. There are typically several managers or senior officials that oversee early childhood centres to secondary schools in their area of responsibility (Sutapa and Purwanto, 2012; Majewski, 2013). The LEO has the authority to organise all levels of education within their territory, except for matters related to higher education. LEOs are responsible for implementing policies regarding education and general administration. Moreover, they also establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), evaluate public school financial reports, and manage local education data and information systems.

According to Government Regulation (PP) Number 2 of 2018, the LEO is also liable for establishing public schools, as well as granting permits for private schools at all levels, including ECE, primary, and secondary schools. Additionally, they are authorised to recruit teachers, pay salaries, and evaluate performance. In general, the LEO is responsible for almost all education operations in local areas. For school principals' professional development, the LEO is responsible for forecasting school principal needs over a five-year period and preparing candidates for school principal positions.

The school principal

School principals in Indonesia are divided into two categories based on their employment status: public school principals and private school principals. Public school heads are civil servants recruited by LEO and reporting directly to the LEO and the mayor. The head of a private school is typically selected by the foundation board or the school's owner. A school principal is responsible for performing basic managerial tasks, developing entrepreneurship, and supervising teachers and school staff, according to Ministerial Regulation Number 40 of 2021. They also coordinate all academic and non-academic activities at the school. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that the staff

and educators in the school work effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's goals. Principals are appointed by the LEO for four years and are permitted to be re-appointed for a maximum of three terms. Public school principals are evaluated annually, and the LEO head is authorised to assign a score (MoEC, 2021).

Haris et al. (2018) argue that school principals in Indonesia must develop lesson plans compatible with students' needs. Moreover, the authors stress that the principal must establish relationships with the community, including parents and other stakeholders, in order to strengthen the relationship between the school and the community.

Indonesian ECE

In 1908, during the Dutch colonial period, the Froebel School in Jakarta established the beginnings of early childhood education in Indonesia. The school was founded by the Dutch government for the children of its citizens. Several years later, the Aisyiah movement founded *Bustanul Athfal* (Islamic kindergarten) in Yogyakarta Province to serve Indonesian children (Setiawan and Prabowo, 2022).

Saudah (2015) stated that the next stage of early childhood development occurred during the Japanese occupation in 1942. Kindergartens continued to operate in Jakarta, but Japanese songs were included in class activities. After Indonesia gained independence in 1945, the government and the private sector built kindergartens and established a National Kindergarten Teacher Education School (equivalent to a senior secondary school).

As Syamsuddin et al (2015) reported, international institutions began to play a role in kindergarten development in 1968, when UNICEF provided consultants and funding for kindergarten teacher training. In 1979, the Indonesian Institute of Education established a bachelor's degree programme in kindergarten education. After 2000, the government began to expand early childhood education to other ECE settings, including playgroups and daycare. With grant funding from the Dutch government, and financial support from the World Bank, this project is known as the Indonesian Early Childhood Development

Program. It is implemented in four provinces; West Java, Banten, Bali and South Sulawesi.

In 2001, the MoEC established the Directorate of Early Childhood Education, which is responsible for overseeing ECE schools. The establishment of this directorate is a significant milestone for ECE development in Indonesia since it has enabled the nation to expand ECE access throughout the country. As Denboba et al (2015) argue, after the establishment of the directorate, a crucial policy step was taken when ECE was included in the National Education System No. 20 in 2003. It is intended to provide comprehensive early childhood education services from birth to age six. In 2004, the President designated ECE as one of Indonesia's national development priorities.

Indonesia's ECE centres use the latest national curriculum, developed in 2013. In this curriculum, the objective is to promote the optimal development of pupils to prepare them to become Indonesian citizens who are faithful, productive, creative, innovative, and effective. The government intends to instil Indonesian character, culture, and hospitality values in the 2013 curriculum (MoEC, 2014). The ECE 2013 curriculum features the following characteristics:

1. Develop attitudes, knowledge, and skills in a balanced manner.
2. Incorporating a scientific approach into the teaching and learning process.
3. Making use of the community as a resource for learning.
4. Make sure that the children are given sufficient time to develop their potential in a variety of ways.

Types of early childhood education

According to MoEC (2014), Indonesia offers three stages of early childhood education, daycare for children aged 0-2 years, playgroups for children aged 2-4 years, and kindergarten for children aged 4-6 years. The kindergarten is the first formal educational stage, while daycare and playgroups are non-formal (see table 1.2).

ECE also can be divided into two categories: public and private. A public ECE program is run by local government (LEO), whereas a private ECE program is served by a community or philanthropic organisation. As of 2022, Indonesia

has a total of 187,565 ECE settings. Some 181,758 (96.9%) are privately owned ECE, while the remaining is public or government-run ECE (see table 1.3). Saudah (2015) argues that the existence of so many private ECEs can be traced back to 1919 when women's community organisations founded kindergartens. Moreover, the government has a limited budget for building public schools, so the private sector is also providing assistance. In addition, Syamsuddin (2015) pointed out that Indonesia's geography as an archipelagic country makes opening public preschools a challenge, even though many remote or urban areas have large populations of young children. As a last resort, the private sector or the local community establishes a centre for early childhood education.

Type of ECE	Level	Age	Minimum Hours/week
Formal	Kindergarten	4-6	15 hours
Non-formal	Playgroup	2-4	6 hours
	Daycare	birth - 2	2 hours

Table 1.2: Types of Early Childhood Education in Indonesia
Source: MoEC (2014)

Yulindrasari and Ujiti (2018) argue that quality is one of the most important issues in Indonesian early childhood education. According to Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 137 of 2014, ECE institutions must comply with four national education standards:

1. Standards for student achievement levels;
2. Standards for educators and education personnel;
3. Standards for content, process, and assessment; and
4. Standards for facilities, infrastructure, and financing

However, certain scholars point out that these standards are not followed in practice. For example, Fitri et al. (2017) reported that many early childhood education programmes are located in small rented homes or garages that do not meet the standards for infrastructure and facilities set by the Ministry. According to Denboba, (2015), it is challenging for ECE schools in Indonesia to meet all the standards set by the central government, as this would require a significant budget, while most schools have limited funding.

ECE Settings	Public	Private
Kindergarten	5,284	92,717
Playgroup	484	86,312
Day care	39	2,729
Total	5,807	181,758

*Table 1.3: Indonesian Early Childhood Education Database
Source: MoEC (2022)*

ECE's poor quality can be seen in the limited number of accredited A programs. Out of 181,758 ECE institutions, only 5,092 are Grade A accredited, while the remainder are Grades B or C. The A grade indicates excellent, the B grade means good, and the C grade is functional. Most ECE centres with A accreditation are government-owned kindergartens, and are located on Java. The data illustrate the quality gap between public and private kindergartens, as well as the differences between provinces (BANPNF, 2023).

Syamsuddin et al. (2015) stated that public ECE plays a vital role since, despite their small numbers, they tend to have better infrastructure and facilities than private ones. Public early childhood education is therefore positioned by the government as a model for private ECE in the local community.

Community Context

Hallinger (2018a) identified that the community context is important when researching leadership in schools. As Dimmock and Walker (2000) stated, effective leadership must be seen as a relationship between the context in which a community lives and the values that have underpinned schools as institutions.

All the kindergartens studied for my research are in urban areas, with one located in the capital city. However, the four kindergartens have different characteristics. Case study one, East Public Kindergarten is located in a province well known for its seaport, and its residents are primarily traders and sailors. Case study two, West Public Kindergarten has a more diverse

population, consisting of traders, civil servants, and private sector employees. This is because it is located in a regional hub for trade, industry, and business.

Case study three, Capital Public Kindergarten is located in Jakarta. It is a metropolitan city in which the region's economy is primarily driven by financial services, real estate, and creative industries. The fourth case study, Central Public Kindergarten, is located in Bali, one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. Most of the population is employed in the hotel, resort, and tourism industries.

Religion is also a factor that needs to be considered. These four kindergartens have communities of believers of different religions. In the regions served by case studies one and three, Islam is the predominant religion with respective percentages of 83.4 percent and 89.8 percent Moslems in the total population. In case study two, Moslems accounted for 66.43%, followed by 26% Christians. In contrast, a minority of adherents of Islam are found in case study four area. In Bali, most (86.8%) of the population is Hindu (Indonesian Statistics, 2021).

Aims and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to examine the nature of leadership in early childhood education, with a particular focus on selected kindergartens in Indonesia. The research examines the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in Indonesia and examines how leadership is understood and implemented in this sector. Moreover, it aims to examine the organisational structure of kindergartens and how the curriculum is interpreted and implemented by their heads. It also examines how kindergarten heads engage with parents and how they led during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As previously noted, research focusing on leadership in early childhood education is limited compared to primary and secondary education (Hujala, 2016; Rodd, 2013). There is no internationally published research on this topic in Indonesia, with domestic research also very limited. Gaol (2021) reviewed the literature on school leadership in Indonesia between 2004 and 2019 and found only sixteen articles addressing school leadership in Indonesia, none of

which focused on early childhood education or kindergarten leadership. This gap provides the warrant for this study, with the potential for significant contributions to knowledge about leadership in early childhood education. To address the study's aims, seven research questions have been identified:

1. What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?
2. What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?
3. How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?
4. How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?
5. How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?
6. What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?
7. How did kindergarten leaders respond to the Covid-19 pandemic?

The rationale for these questions is discussed below.

1. *What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?*

This question explores how leadership is implemented in selected public kindergartens in Indonesia. Considering how important early childhood education is for children, the literature also shows the importance of principal leadership in early childhood education institutions (Aubrey et al, 2013; Bush, 2013a). It examines how kindergarten leadership is structured, whether it is solo or distributed. Lee and Hallinger (2012) report that school principals in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, place a greater emphasis on administration than on leadership or school development. The research also examines what is required to become a public kindergarten head in Indonesia, and how school principals are selected.

2. *What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?*

The question addresses the balance between education and care in the Indonesian kindergarten context. Numerous studies have shown that vision plays an important role in enhancing school performance (e.g. Leithwood et al, 2004; Murphy and Torre, 2015). The question considers how principals develop kindergarten visions and goals, and how they manage school resources. Harris and Lambert (2003) argue that, in order to achieve its vision, a whole-school approach is required.

3. *How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?*

This question aims to examine how kindergarten staff interpret leadership and enact it in the classroom and beyond. It also refers to kindergarten heads' leadership practices. Asian literature indicates that leadership in ECE tends to be hierarchical (e.g. Chan, 2014). Bush and Ng's (2019) research in Malaysia, a neighbouring country to Indonesia, found that leadership practices are different from those in the West. Therefore, it is critical to ask whether kindergarten heads distribute leadership among teachers and staff or whether it is the sole responsibility of the kindergarten head. A linked issue is whether, and to what extent, kindergarten staff participate in leadership activities. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) argue that school leaders should involve all members of the school in the decision-making process rather than relying solely on individuals to make decisions.

4. *How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?*

This question explores kindergarten organisational structures in Indonesia, including relationships between heads, teachers, administrative staff, and stakeholders. Hofstede (2001) argues that Asian societies have a hierarchical structure, which he describes as high power distance. The question also addresses whether the selected case study kindergartens have similar or different organisational structures. According to Nehez et al. (2022), preschool teachers have a tradition of collegial cooperation. Therefore, the question also considers how

participants perceive their organisation, and whether they work collaboratively or individually.

5. *How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?*

This question relates to the implementation of the learning curriculum in the selected kindergartens. According to Denboba et al (2015), the curriculum is critical to the education and development of young children, and it requires a different approach from that used for adults. Parker (2013) argues that the curriculum is a fundamental component of early childhood education because it provides a guide for what children should learn and what outcomes they would like to achieve.

This question explore how the curriculum is developed in selected kindergartens, how it is enacted, and how it is interpreted by kindergarten teachers and leaders. In addition, it examines the curriculum emphasis and the expectations of parents.

The question also highlights the difficulties and challenges associated with the enactment of the 2013 Curriculum. It reports on how principals in selected kindergartens responded to these challenges. As reported by Muthim (2014), the Indonesian curriculum has changed nine times since 1945, almost every eight years. It is challenging for teachers because almost every Education Minister replaces the national curriculum when they take office.

6. *What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?*

This question examines how kindergarten heads build relationships with parents in the case study kindergartens. Literature indicates that parental involvement is important for preschool learners (Bornstein and Putnick, 2012; Sun et al., 2018). Moreover, the MoEC (2019) identifies parents as essential pillars of the Indonesian National Education System. The question also addresses the role of parents in all four case studies. Several studies show that parental involvement in Southeast Asia tends

to be low (e.g. Bartolome, Mamat, and Masnan, 2020; Frewen et al, 2015). The question also relates to kindergarten heads' strategies for engaging parents. It also includes how kindergarten heads relate to parents' role in school committees, linked to the role of the school committee in kindergarten leadership (Fitriah et al, 2013).

7. *How did kindergarten leaders respond to the Covid-19 pandemic?*

This question emerged through the fieldwork, which was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. It addresses how kindergarten leadership responded to this crisis. Previous literature found that principals worked in chaotic conditions during Covid-19 (Harris and Jones, 2020; Bush, 2021). In March 2020, the Indonesian Ministry of Education ordered all LEOs and principals to close preschools and schools (Yulianti and Mukminin, 2021). During the data collection period from May to December 2021, the school closure policy was still in effect. This question considers the challenges faced by kindergarten leaders during the pandemic.

Overview

This chapter outlines the research context, including theoretical, national, institutional, and community contexts. It also explains the organisational structure of Indonesian education, from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the local educational office and school principals. The chapter ends with discussion of the study's aims and research questions. The next chapter provides a review of international and Indonesian literature.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature, theory and research related to this study. It is divided into five sections, beginning with concepts on early childhood education (ECE) and leadership in ECE. Then, I review empirical literature on global leadership in early childhood education, with a particular focus on Asia and the Indonesian context.

Concepts of Early Childhood Education

There has been an increase in research on ECE over the past three decades and it is now carried out by multiple professionals and disciplines (Aubrey, 2011; Penn, 2011; BERA SIG, 2003). ECE literature has many strands; child development, economic contribution, policy, and the system of ECE. In order to define ECE, it is crucial to understand its history. Interest in ECE stems from Piaget's (1929) research, which was further advanced by Vygotsky (1978), who outlined cognitive development in children. Vygotsky and Piaget's legacies laid the groundwork for further developmental ECE research (Aubrey, 2011).

ECE has a significant impact on children's academic outcomes and well-being (Bush, 2012; Muijs et al., 2004; Fonsen and Soukainen, 2020). Parker (2013) argue that childhood prepares an individual for adulthood. ECE promotes the growth and development of the child by emphasising all aspects of the child's personality. Moss and Pen (2003) argue that the development of preschool children is a long, continuous process that is characterised by cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical, and motor development.

Sylva et al. (2004) argue that investing in early childhood is crucial. It can improve service quality and make a difference during the first five years of life and into adulthood. They conducted a long-term study in the United Kingdom to examine the impact of early childhood education on school readiness. The study claimed to be the first major European longitudinal study involving 3,000

children nationally between the ages of 3 and 7. They concluded that young children who receive high-quality ECE achieve better scores in English and Maths. Similarly, Sammons (2007) claimed that ECE services can help children to achieve positive outcomes in basic education. In a similar vein, the OECD (2015) claimed that 15-year-olds who did not participate in ECE as a child, or received ECE services for less than a year, are three times more likely to achieve below-average PISA scores.

Heckman (2011) analyses the economic impact of ECE and concludes that ECE is not just strategic for building human resources, but also has significant economic benefits. His study predicts that an investment of US\$1 in ECE will result in long-term savings for the state budget of US\$7. This is because ECE has the potential to prevent children from repeating school, committing crimes as adults, and facing other social problems.

Munoz-Chereau et al (2021) suggest that the quality of ECE has an impact on children's development, but it is hard to measure the quality of these services since they overlap with education, health, and psychology. The OECD (2017) also warned that ECE provision may not always result in long-term benefits. ECE pupils perform better academically than their non-ECE peers during primary school, but this effect could fade over time, known as the "fadeout effect" (OECD, 2017).

Researchers have not fully considered the impact of primary school quality factors on ECE. An analysis of 3,000 children aged three to eleven in England, conducted by the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project in 2004, found that children who attend less effective primary schools lose the positive effects of early childhood education (Sammons et al, 2007; Sylva et al, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2006). They found that ECE cannot be a stand-alone programme. ECE has a greater impact on children if they attend good elementary schools, and if their parents provide positive support at school (Farquhar, 2008). Parental involvement in ECE will be discussed in later subsections of this chapter.

ECE types

The terminology and definition of ECE vary significantly from country to country. Many countries use terms such as nursery, kindergarten, preschool, pre-kindergarten, or playgroup, with many regional-specific variations (EIU, 2012). The term ECE can be traced back to UNESCO's first World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education held in Moscow in September 2010. The meeting resulted in UNESCO defining early childhood as the period between birth and age eight when kids develop their brains the most (UNESCO, 2016). ECE is also defined by the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education as meaning between birth and eight years of age (Rao and Sun et al., 2014; Bredekamp and Copple, 1997).

However, each country's policies determine the ECE age in practice. In the United States, ECE refers to the developmental milestones of children from birth through kindergarten. The minimum kindergarten entrance age is four years, seven months, and the maximum is seven years old (WSIPP, 2014). The UK's Legal Framework for the Early Years defines early childhood as the period between birth and five when a child's development and upbringing begin (DfES, 2003). Penn (2011) identified ECE as a comprehensive, integrated, coherent service offering high-quality education and care to children from birth to six.

Aside from the different ECE age categories, there are also differences in designations. International organisations and countries refer to it by a variety of names, including early childhood education, early childhood development, or early years (OECD, 2001). There is a wide range of ECE definitions and policies based on geographical location, social culture, demographics, political systems, and government commitments (Penn, 2011; Rao and Sun et al., 2014; Aubrey et al., 2013).

An example of an early childhood education service is daycare. Typically, this service is for children under three years old. The issue of childcare is a hot topic in early childhood education and care because there is debate as to whether very young children should be cared for by their mothers or in

institutionalised daycare (Gillanders and Kantor, 2019). As Singer and Wong (2021) pointed out, before 1970, daycare services were scarce, and they were usually only available to poor families or children who were neglected or abused. They examined the history of daycare in Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, the UK, the USA, the Netherlands and concluded that daycare services expanded after the 1970s as the number of working mothers increased. This led to a requirement for institutionalised daycare to care for their children while they work.

There are also nursery services for older children. Campbell et al (2018) argue that nursery services are geared toward children between the ages of three and four. England divides this service into nursery schools and nursery classes. Nursery schools are standalone institutions with their own leadership and administrative systems, whereas nursery classes operate within primary or infant schools. As Hoskins et al (2021) reported, nurseries play a key role in the provision of early childhood education. Based on in-depth interviews with 17 nursery staff in England, they concluded that nursery services are a key frontline service, especially for children from marginalised, disadvantaged, and ethnic minority backgrounds. They refer to this service as the "jewel in the crown" of early childhood services. In contrast, the nursery is called "*vuggestue*" in Denmark and is for children aged 0-3 years. According to Gitz-Johansen (2022), Danish nurseries emphasise joyful learning, allowing children to play and be creative before starting school, to develop their potential.

Another important ECE service is kindergarten, a transition period between preschool and elementary school. As Whitebook et al (2022) pointed out, Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) founded the first kindergarten; Garden of Children in the 19th century. Kindergarten is derived from German. *The term "kinder" refers to children, while "garten" refers to gardens.* The authors believe that children need to be nurtured like flowers, and if nurtured in a garden or community, they will develop well. Friedman-Krauss et al (2021) notes that, in the US, kindergarten is commonly for children who are five years old and are prepared for the transition to first grade by building their social skills. However,

they add that, in some countries (e.g. New Zealand, China, Germany), kindergarten is for children aged 4-6.

Geitle et al (2021) found that kindergartens are regarded as essential in many countries. In Norway, for example, kindergarten plays an important role in the socioeconomic life of the community. These services not only contribute to the development of children, but also to the economy because it enables parents to work.

Brown and Barry (2021) reported that kindergarten has changed dramatically in the United States over the past few decades. The programme requires kindergarteners to learn more advanced academic content to prepare them for standardised testing in primary school, referred to as "the new first grade". They believe that kindergarten has a long-term impact on students' academic trajectory abilities, such as reading and Maths skills.

Early childhood education tensions

Preschool education plays an important role in a child's academic success and well-being, as documented in several studies (see Bush, 2013a; Muijs et al, 2004; Fonsen and Soukainen, 2020). However, governments and scholars in various countries continue to debate how preschool services should be provided, what type is best, and for what purpose.

There have been tensions regarding the role of early childhood education in school readiness in many countries over the last decade. Scholars have also observed that preschool education is becoming increasingly formal. For example, Ang (2019) notes that many articles in the UK, Hong Kong, Australia, and the US, discuss formalising preschool education. Similarly, Ebbeck (2003) argues that it has become common practice to emphasise young children's achievement tests and formal academic curricula. Ang (2014) suggests that kindergarten should provide children with experiences that are caring, valued, and enriching, not just to prepare them for primary school. She notes that there has been a growing focus in Southeast Asia on achievement testing and formalising academic learning for ECE children. For example, parents in

Singapore are enrolling their children between the ages of four and six in two different types of early childhood settings. There is increasing pressure on parents to prepare their children for the competitive primary school system. It is described by Ang (2019) as a "hot house" where the children live in an ECE system that is characterised by tensions influenced by high demands from society and parents.

Similarly, in the United States, many scholars critique the market-based model that results in an increase in achievement tests in the early childhood education sector. Among these are Hahn and Barnett (2023), who examined ECE from the perspectives of health, equity, and economics. They observed that, in many US states, ECE emphasises academic learning prior to formal education. They suggested that a greater focus should be put on health and care services since they have a direct impact on children's lives, especially those from disadvantaged families.

Moss (2013) describes the tension between education and care as a mode of economic capitalism in which parents are seen as consumers and ECE services as commodities they can buy. Also, preschool formalisation is a result of high academic standards and entrance tests for primary school. International organisations are also contributing to the increasing trend of formalising ECE. They seem to place a greater emphasis on education than on care. According to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 4.2, all girls and boys should have access to quality early childhood care, development, and pre-primary education by 2030, to be prepared for basic education. Early childhood education is defined as a series of interventions designed to promote children's physical, cognitive, and emotional development before entering primary school (UNESCO, 2016).

OECD (2017) identifies this as a global policy trend and refers to it as 'schoolification', a term that refers to a pressured formal education system in early childhood education. It expressed concern that this formalisation could have a detrimental effect on children's well-being and classroom practices.

Bassok et al (2016) confirm this phenomenon. They conducted a longitudinal study in 2,500 public kindergartens in the United States from 1998-2010. They found that kindergarten teachers spent more time focusing on academic skill instruction and standardised assessments than on play, art, or music. They identify two main reasons for this. First, it appears that teachers and policy makers tend to place high expectations on kindergarten students. Second, parents believe that it is important for children to master literacy and numeracy at the kindergarten level before entering primary school.

Research by Oeri and Roebbers (2022) suggests that ECE should devote greater attention to children's well-being than to academic attainment. Based on a longitudinal cohort study of 3,481 kindergarten children in 84 German municipalities, the authors concluded that excessive exposure to academic achievement in early childhood settings negatively impacts on children's school readiness skills. As they noted, children's education is not primarily about pursuing academic achievements, but rather about providing them with pleasure and happiness. Moreover, the authors advise that parents and principals should be aware of the purposes of early childhood education. The following subsections discuss the role of parents in early childhood education settings.

Parental engagement

Many studies have demonstrated the need for parents to participate actively in ECE (see Powell et al. 2012; Bornstein and Putnick, 2012; Sun et al., 2018). Parental involvement is positively related to academic achievement, well-being, and social skills (Epstein, 2010; Lau et al., 2012; Wilder, 2014).

As Epstein (2010) argues, parental involvement is a dynamic process. She identifies six types of parental involvement, parenting, communication, volunteering, involvement in children's learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. Similarly, Arnold et al. (2008) argue that parental involvement can take many forms, including voluntary work, parenting, decision-making, and fundraising.

Janssen and Vandebroek (2018) evaluated the involvement of parents from various countries, including Nordic (Sweden, Denmark), Europe (Belgium and the Netherlands), England and Ireland, Hong Kong, and Australia. From the parental perspective, they divide the ECE curriculum into five categories, creating a child-centred environment, monitoring developmental progress, negotiating pedagogical practices, ensuring smooth transitions, and providing parental support. They found that parents are increasingly interested in becoming involved in their children's early childhood education. The authors added that English, Irish, and Hong Kong policymakers and practitioners made great attempts to improve parent involvement in their education system. Similarly, the Nordic countries, Germany and Belgium emphasise parental involvement as a democratic right.

Several studies have examined parental involvement, and its impact on early childhood education, from a variety of perspectives. Research conducted in the United States, by Keengwe and Onchwari (2022), indicates that the role of parents is integral to early childhood services. Following a survey of 83 parents of children from birth to five, in the Midwest region, the authors concluded that parents of children between the ages of three and five were more likely to have close relationships with teachers than those of children between the ages of one and two.

Similarly, Durand (2011) conducted a longitudinal study of 2,051 kindergarten students who attended school between 1998 and 1999 in the United States. The author found that parental involvement was positively associated with student outcomes, such as reading proficiency. Children who report high achievement are more likely to have parents who are highly involved.

Powell et al. (2012) examined the impact of parental involvement on academic performance. The researchers interviewed 90 young children and their parents in an urban district school in the Midwest, United States. A significant correlation was found between parental involvement and improvements in literacy, Maths, and academic skills among students from prekindergarten through first grade. However, the authors pointed out that parental involvement

is a dynamic process. Their empirical study showed that parental involvement declined from kindergarten to first grade. This confirms previous research that found parental involvement decreases as children progress through primary and secondary education (see Cheung and Pomerantz, 2011; Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000).

Purola and Kuusisto (2021) conducted a survey of parents in Finland, a country known for its traditions and structures that encourage parental involvement in early childhood education. They sent an electronic questionnaire to 115 parents of ECE centres and received a response rate of 80 percent. They concluded that parental involvement is strongly influenced by feelings of connectedness between parents, children, and other members of the early childhood education programme. In order to achieve this, they recommend that ECE leaders encourage parents to participate in ECE activities that are held with the community, such as Christmas celebrations or other social events.

Several strategies can be employed to increase parental involvement in schools, including good communication, inviting parents to school events, and involving them in school governance (Bryk, 2010; Ni et al., 2018). Some literature, however, demonstrates the conflict between school leaders and parents. Principals may perceive that parents and families lack the competence to participate in school decision making (e.g. Shatkin and Gershberg, 2007; Powell et al., 2012).

Concepts of Leadership in Early Childhood Education

ECE leadership is rooted in the concept of school leadership in general (Heikkinen, et al, 2022). Thus, this sub-section begins by describing the concept of leadership. In the past four decades, the study of educational leadership has grown rapidly and become a hot issue. Studies have demonstrated that effective school leadership can improve school quality (Bush and Glover, 2012; Leithwood, 2007; OECD, 2017). However, leadership does not refer only to school principals but also to all those with decision-making responsibilities (Fullan, 2001; Bass, 2008; Ho and Ng, 2017).

Leadership involves influencing others to attain common goals (Pearce and Conger, 2003; Dimmock and Lam, 2012). Leadership has the ability to influence organisational members directly and indirectly, according to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008). Schools should have a clear vision in order to motivate and inspire their members to achieve common goals (e.g., Day et al, 2000; Leithwood et al, 2004; Murphy and Torre, 2015; Harris and Hargreaves, 2013).

Educational leadership models are another topic of debate. Several researchers have developed models of leadership over the past few decades, including transformational, instructional, and distributed models. Each of these models has its own advantages and disadvantages (Leithwood, 2007; Day and Sammons, 2014). Antonakis and House (2013) discuss the concept of transformational leadership as having a facilitative power, leading to change and results that are beyond what was expected, and achieving high engagement and motivation. As outlined by Leithwood and Sun (2012), a transformative school leader must strive to achieve three goals. First, a collaborative, professional culture needs to be developed and maintained at the school. The second goal is to foster the development and growth of teachers. Third, it is important to encourage and facilitate the problem-solving process in a practical and collaborative manner.

The instructional leadership model originated in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s as a practice-based model. By the 1980s, this concept reached its maturity stage as a global leadership model. It suggests that school leaders influence student learning through the shaping of school culture, the design of work structures, and the influence and motivation of teachers (Hallinger, 2019; Leithwood, 2007).

However, Bush (2019) asserts that the instructional leadership model suffers from two weaknesses. Firstly, it is concerned with teaching rather than learning. Secondly, it places too much emphasis on the principal as a source of expertise, power, and authority.

The distributed leadership model emphasises the importance of sharing leadership with other members of an organisation (Harris and Jones, 2019; Lumby, 2019), and it differs from the solo leadership model (Crawford, 2019). According to Bush (2019), distributed leadership has become the "model of choice" in the 21st century. Even though leadership models are often compared, researchers agree that leadership plays an important role in improving school outcomes (Leithwood, 2007).

Leadership also plays a critical role in early childhood education. The increasing volume of research and literature on early childhood leadership is an indication of the importance of ECE leadership (Moss, 2006, 2013; Penn, 2008). A consensus has emerged that leadership is the key to successful early childhood education (Aubrey et al., 2013; Bush, 2013a; Heikka et al., 2021; Bennett et al., 2003). However, there has been a lack of clarity about the nature of leadership in the early childhood education sector (Kirby et al, 2021). It is difficult to conceptualise and define leadership within the context of early childhood education, according to Waniganayake et al (2017).

Henderson et al, (2022) claims that ECE leadership is often viewed as a process of motivating and influencing other group members to work together for a common goal or to resolve a problem. According to the author, the ECE sector continues to search for a workable definition of leadership, since one of the key concepts in the ECE field is that leadership develops over time. Therefore, the definition of ECE leadership is still limited, and no scholars have provided a clear explanation of how ECE leadership can be effectively utilised at the local and global levels. Despite this shortcoming, Aubrey, et al (2013) propose a definition of ECE leadership, focusing on both education and care to enable young children to develop more effectively. There is a challenge in this regard since ECE professionals are expected to fulfil multiple roles, including pedagogy, health issues of young children, and secure communication and coordination with parents. In this sense, ECE leadership differs from primary, secondary and other school settings. However, Franzén and Hjalmarsson (2021) assert that leadership in the ECE sector can be defined and practiced in many ways. Leadership emerges from the interaction

between individuals within the school organisation in relation to the local context in which they operate.

In the last decade, the conceptual paradigm of ECE leadership has undergone rapid change. Douglass (2019) stated that research on early childhood leadership is now being developed more holistically, encompassing not only well-being and child outcomes but also the relationship between early childhood leaders and parents and other stakeholders in a wide variety of early childhood settings. Leaders of early childhood education programmes have an important role to play because they provide services to a wide range of people, including teachers, students, and parents (Aubrey et al., 2013; Bush, 2013; Heikka, 2013; Bennett et al., 2003).

Ranta et al (2023) claim that ECE leadership can significantly impact the quality of children's education. Due to the diversity of early childhood settings, it is challenging to serve as a leader in this field. As they pointed out, young children are better able to achieve their full potential when teachers, leaders, and parents have a strong relationship.

Rodd (2013) described the ECE sector as a "complex arena for leadership". This is due to a lack of training and being under-prepared to serve as an ECE leader. They often obtain their positions accidentally and with little training. She suggests that leaders should be equipped with five key skills. These include the ability to work in a team, provide motivation, support employees, setting goals, and clearly defining roles. Similarly, Kirby et al (2021) note that leaders in early childhood education centres are often expected to perform many and varied tasks. These tasks include covering classes, assisting with food preparation for pupils, and responding to children's health and behavioural problems.

According to Heikkinen et al (2022), the key to successful leadership in early childhood education is to remain focused and committed. Solly (2003) argued that, in order to unravel the complexity of early childhood leadership, leaders must be competent and possess a variety of traits. ECE leadership involves

many aspects, such as managing parental expectations, and increasing opportunities for professional development, as well as resolving conflicts within the staff. The author notes that an important characteristic of the early childhood education sector in England is that the workforce is dominated by young and inexperienced individuals, which affects the quality of leadership.

Douglas et al (2019) argue that, in the early childhood education setting, there is not always one person who serves as the official leader, and even if a designated leader exists, their ability to take leadership and make decisions is usually determined by the larger administrative body that regulates the structure and standard operating procedures. They argue that ECE leaders experience uncertainty about their leadership identity. There is often no specific job description, which contributes to this problem. They add that ECE leaders should have a clear vision and a written role that defines their identity as leaders. This supports numerous studies which demonstrate that the quality of early childhood education is directly related to the quality of leadership and vision of school principals (Pugh, 2010; Rodd, 2013; Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2008; Schulting et al, 2005).

Similarly, the British Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector (ELEYS) study across England (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet, 2014), defines successful early childhood education leaders as individuals who have a vision and focus on 'learning at the forefront', inspiring students, teachers, and parents alike. They conducted mixed methods research in 141 preschool and concluded that leaders play a significant role in early childhood settings. The authors note that effective preschools in England are characterised by a strong leader with a small staff turnover.

Distributed leadership in ECE

Heikka (2013) stated that one of the ECE leadership concepts developed over the past few decades is distributed leadership. In her view, ECE leadership is based on shared vision, emotions, and the relationship between leaders and staff. Her review of ECE leadership research in the UK, USA, and Canada suggested that distributed leadership benefits principals, teachers, and the

broader early childhood education system. She concluded that leadership must no longer be viewed as the work of one individual.

Nicholson et al. (2020) indicated that the ECE leadership literature that utilises the concept of distributed leadership has developed substantially since 2006. They conducted a review of 81 articles and found that many authors discussed ECE leadership using a top-down hierarchy, especially as it pertains to centralised decision-making. Approximately half of the sources linked ECE leadership to the hierarchy, while others discussed a distributed model. Heikka et al (2021) argue that distributed leadership has captured the attention of researchers in ECE leadership. They claim that this form of leadership can enhance ECE staff's professional development, promote curriculum reform, and enable organisational change. However, they also note that distributed leadership in ECE settings must be well-planned, have clear goals, and be assessed and developed regularly. Previously, Heikka et al (2013) documented a distributed perspective in Finland in which teachers act as mentors when they help peers or when they participate in school programmes outside the classroom. Wang and Ho (2020) also examine teachers' activities outside their formal roles, such as helping peers with professional development or participating in community activities.

Aubrey et al, (2013) found that distributed leadership practice can be applied in English ECE settings due to the need for school leaders to develop and involve staff. In order to improve ECE services in the future, leaders need to distribute work and foster a collaborative culture. ECE leadership also requires a distributed perspective because there is a need to establish partnerships with other institutions, families, and communities, as well as other professionals, where ECE leaders cannot always be present. Despite this, they note that the ECE sector is so diverse that it is not enough to have one leadership model. A flexible approach is needed in leading ECE institutions.

Angela (2019) offers a different perspective on distributed leadership by examining ECE leadership in a Hong Kong kindergarten. The author observed that distributed leadership is often viewed as a bureaucratic framework, where a leader is at the top, assigning roles to subordinates at different levels similar

to a ladder. In this way, the ECE leader oversees school affairs and ensures that all staff carry out their duties and achieve school objectives.

Several authors suggest that teachers and leaders must work together to improve schools, and that innovation will arise if a strong relationship exists between staff and leaders, regardless of their respective roles (see Dunlop 2008; Waniganayake 2015). According to Waniganayake (2015), distributed leadership allows teachers to maximise their expertise in order to make programmes in early childhood education settings productive.

Providing training for ECE leaders is crucial to creating effective leadership (Nicholson et al, 2020; Heikka et al, 2021). Aubrey et al. (2013) report that continuous training can play a positive role in enhancing the school performance of children, parents, and teachers. An experimental study conducted in Chilean public preschools found that continuous teacher training had a greater impact on the outcomes of children than one-time training (Arbour et al, 2016).

Although there is a large body of literature supporting the importance of early childhood education, there is contradictory evidence regarding preparation for leadership roles in ECE. Talan, Bloom and Kelton (2014) argue that ECE leadership's low profile is often attributed to the lack of training they receive. Their study in the US found that ECE leaders receive limited training and little support to enable them to lead effectively. Rodd (2013) reported the limited opportunities for ECE leaders in Australia to participate in leadership preparation and training. As a result, they are not able to develop the skills and knowledge they need to lead their teams effectively and are often left feeling overwhelmed and unsupported. This lack of training can lead to poor team performance and high staff turnover.

Early childhood leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of schools in various countries around the world, affecting more than 1.5 million students and 63 million teachers worldwide (UNESCO, 2020). Due to the pandemic, students studied

less during that time (see Shaked and Benoliel, 2022; Zhao, 2020; Hewett et al., 2022).

The conditions experienced in ECE settings during the Covid-19 pandemic were similar to those described in school contexts. According to Eadie (2021), leaders in the early childhood sector are adaptive and can work according to the context of their work environment and manage children's well-being. A multi-case study and four focus group discussions were conducted in Australia by Hewett et al (2022) to examine the impact of Covid-19 on the leadership of early childhood educators. Their research indicates that leader responsibilities have expanded to include mitigating the risk of exposure to the virus, preparing home learning, and developing online learning strategies for students and parents during a pandemic. This finding confirms previous research (Harris and Jones, 2020; Bush, 2021) that school principals worked under chaotic conditions during Covid-19. The school's leadership team is under enormous pressure, and they have limited options for dealing with it. Gurdasani et al. (2021) found that keeping schools open during a pandemic was a very difficult decision to make. These authors emphasise the need for school leaders to implement multi-layered mitigation measures.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, ECE leaders and teachers were forced to make rapid transitions to online instruction (Hewett et al., 2022; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Yulianti and Mukminin, 2021). As Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) argue, early years' leaders must be able to adapt and understand the context of the school and the environment if a crisis occurs. The term "flexible leadership" is used by Aubrey et al (2013) to describe situations in which leaders act incidentally or serendipitously.

However, the pandemic illustrates that making such a transition is not an easy task. During the pandemic, teachers' motivation decreased in some contexts due to unprecedented disruptions (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2020; Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020; Longmuir, 2021). Several studies indicate that teachers and school principals were unprepared and untrained to handle critical and precarious situations during the pandemic. In addition, they were not provided

with adequate mentoring, support, or training (e.g. Judd et al., 2020; Thornton, 2021; Hewett et al., 2022).

Global Research on Leadership in Early Childhood Education.

This section examines international research on leadership in early childhood. In recent decades, ECE has evolved into a global issue. Research and literature on early childhood have increased significantly (Moss, 2006, 2013; Penn, 2011). However, compared with primary and secondary education settings, there has been a limited amount of research on ECE leadership. In most cases, the literature is anecdotal and only provides "tips for leaders" (Aubrey, 2011, p13). In a similar vein, Kirby et al (2021) argue that there is a distinct lack of evidence regarding the approaches, features, and leadership practices within early childhood settings that are most effective at improving centre quality. They reviewed several sources on ECE leadership from a variety of countries and concluded that empirical research on effective ECE leadership is still scarce. Despite this, there are now helpful sources from the United States, England, Australia, Finland, and Russia (Hujala, 2004).

I identified several themes following literature searches on selected countries, with well-established research on leadership in early childhood education. This body of literatures shows differences in leadership models and practices, arising from specific contextual variables. In Europe, for example, most literature emphasises the relationship between early childhood education and children's well-being. In contrast, several Asian publications discuss the tension between education and care and the formalisation of early childhood education. The following main topics will be discussed: the development of ECE leadership, ECE quality, ECE reform, ECE staff professional development, and government or policy support for ECE. I will provide a more detailed explanation in the following paragraphs.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (2012) reported that most international publications on early childhood education focus on high-achieving countries. This organisation conducts benchmarking of early education throughout the world, and data-driven research indicates that Nordic countries, such as

Finland, Sweden, and Norway, perform the best in ECE. A number of European countries also dominate the rankings as a result of their investment in ECE development. In addition, the same list of countries appears in the OECD's (2015) ranking of the best-performing countries in early childhood education. These rankings inform the choice of countries featured in this section.

Rodd (2013) argues that, in many countries, the ECE service is provided separately from education and care services. However, current ECE reform trends are leading to a more integrated, coordinated, and multi-faceted approach to supporting children and their families, to eliminate the dichotomy between education and care. In Norway and Finland, for example, education and care are combined under the concept of "educare". In both these Nordic countries, early childhood education is recognised as a voluntary entry point into the educational system and includes children from birth to five years of age (Boe, et al, 2022). However, other countries separate education and care provision. Hujala et al. (2016) show that Japan, for example, has two types of preschool services. One is kindergarten, managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. The other is daycare, managed by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare.

England

In England, early years leadership plays an important role in improving the quality of education and care for young children and their families. There are a wide range of early childhood education settings available in England, including nursery schools, primary schools, private schools, as well as voluntary settings (Anderson and Cook, 2021).

Aubrey (2019) examines the development of ECE leadership over the past 30 years in the English early childhood context. She concludes that the early childhood education sector in England still exhibits low pay rates and low value. In addition, there is a lack of career ladders and limited capacity for training and development. ECE has not been given a higher priority on the

English Policy Agenda, and the government has not involved a range of ECE leaders to address this issue.

Similarly, Mistry and Sood (2012) conducted a study of experienced early childhood practitioners in England. Their qualitative research in the Midlands area revealed that ECE teachers were reluctant to take on school leaders' roles. Some of them are afraid of handling multiple tasks, while others feel a lack of training, for example in preparing the school budget and managing staff. They assert that the most challenging aspect of early years leadership is to create a sense of cohesion and shared vision among early childhood leaders and staff.

Robson and Martin (2019) describe the challenges faced by ECE leaders in England. In ECE marketed provision England, leaders face a dilemma when implementing a national policy within the mixed economy, as they work in the microsystem, namely in the context of children, families, and communities. To illustrate, the government asked ECE leaders to promote British values throughout ECE settings, despite that many children hail from various national backgrounds and come from different cultures. In their conclusion, the authors point out that ECE leaders in England are confronted with a problematic situation because they are responsible for locating nurseries as a business and maintaining a balance between national policy, the ECE market, the community, and parents' interests. Their research was conducted in an ethnically diverse city in England, based in six ECE settings that provide services for children aged two to five.

In contrast, previous research by Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2008) argues that effective early childhood education in England is marked by strong leadership, where staff members and leaders share a clear vision of pedagogy and curriculum, with relatively low turnover rates. They analysed 12 ECE settings using a qualitative methodology and provide empirical evidence about the importance of leadership in the ECE sector. The authors emphasised the value of professional development for ECE leaders. In their view, the ECE sector requires well-trained leaders who are capable of adapting to changes

based on context, are capable of communicating and of conveying their vision and mission.

Meanwhile, Ang (2012) conducted a national evaluation of early childhood leadership within different children's centres throughout England. She examined perceptions of leadership and their impact on professional qualifications. Through questionnaires from 359 graduates of the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership across England, she found that reflection on learning is one of the most significant factors influencing children's centre leaders, followed by professional status and pay. She added that leadership roles are seen as coordinating with various agencies, notably education authorities, social services, health care, families, schools, and communities.

Finland

In Finland, ECE experienced major reforms, including revisions to the national core curriculum and a new Act on ECE and Care. Heikka, Halttunen and Waniganayake (2018) indicate that ECE leadership is perceived as a pedagogical responsibility. ECE leaders in Finland oversee one to three separate centres with a total of 20-30 employees. They are assisted by teachers who possess three-year bachelor's degrees focused on pedagogy and educational science. Having investigated ECE centres in three municipalities, the authors conclude that ECE leadership in Finland emphasises short-term planning and providing support to team members on a daily basis.

Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki (2012) assert that Finland's ECE sectors face challenges in developing leadership skills. This is due to a lack of awareness among ECE practitioners regarding the its importance. Consequently, it is difficult for ECE practitioners to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to lead an early childhood education programmes. Similarly, Heikka (2013) notes that Finland has yet to recognise the official leadership role of early childhood educators and how they should be prepared to fulfil this role. She adds that Finnish ECE teachers appear to be in an unclear

leadership position, as a result of the lack of national guidelines relating to how ECE teacher leadership should be implemented.

This finding is contradicted by a newer study (Ahtiainen et al, 2021), which examined the role and responsibilities of Finnish public ECE centre leaders. The researchers interviewed 41 ECE leaders and found that the main obstacle to ECE in Finland was that ECE leaders were incapable of effectively distributing leadership. In light of this, the authors offer several recommendations. First, ECE leaders require support and additional training in leadership skills. Second, for teachers to become involved in school leadership, they must be supported by ECE leaders and other stakeholders. Ranta, Heiskanen, and Kahila (2023) indicate that the ability of ECE teachers in Finland to work together varies. They conducted large-scale survey research with 1,221 teachers at ECE centres in 66 Finnish municipalities. Teachers practice teamwork differently depending on the organisation and leadership. Centres with long-term leadership tend to be more capable of inviting teachers to work in teams than those who are newly appointed.

United States

The United States is perceived to lag behind other developed countries in terms of ECE leadership practices (Douglass, 2019). Movahedazarhouli et al (2022) reviewed literature and policy documents pertaining to early childhood education in the United States. According to them, despite the government's efforts to integrate ECE and family services throughout education, the US does not view ECE provision as a public good as elementary and secondary education. In the US, ECE services employ more educators than elementary and secondary education, or about 30 percent of the total workforce from birth to postsecondary education. However, there is a lack of evidence regarding policies that support professional ECEs, including those who serve as leaders. As the authors argue, the US has not given adequate attention to programmes to develop future leaders in the field of early childhood education. Further, they also notes that the ECE workforce in the United States is characterised by low salaries, with 67 percent of preschool teachers earning less than \$15 per hour.

This is in line with previous research by Talan, Bloom and Kelton (2014) that examined leadership development through the lens of ECE leaders. In a survey of 502 participants in Taking Charge of Change (TCC), a one-month leadership development programme in Illinois, USA, they found that ECE leaders lacked the capacity to respond to changes, develop communication, and build relationships with parents. Specifically, they suggest that professional development for ECE educators must be systematic and intensive.

Australia

Logan et al (2021) interviewed CEOs and senior managers in four large ECE organisations throughout Australia. Each organisation provides more than 25 early childhood education services and employs more than 1,500 early childhood educators. The authors report that educators often feel overwhelmed and tired, especially if they are required to introduce innovations or to handle new challenges. Waniganayake (2015) reviewed ECE programmes, from day care to preschool, over the past decades in Australia. She reports that ECE leaders are confident and enthusiastic about their roles and responsibilities. However, this requires continuous professional development, sufficient financial remuneration, recognition, and a well-positioned career ladder, to avoid ECE leaders feeling powerless. She recommends that educators should be recognised for their leadership to enhance their ability to support and mentor their colleagues.

Colmer et al. (2015) explain how leadership is closely related to educational reform. They interviewed twelve directors of ECE centres in Australia about how they develop their teachers. They highlight the necessity of new expectations for teachers and leaders to ensure that learning is implemented effectively in the classroom when curriculum changes are implemented. They argue that distributed leadership is an essential component of leadership in the early childhood sector.

Gibbs (2022) notes that leadership is influenced by a number of factors, including the social, economic, and political contexts. The author conducted a mini ethnographic case study in two Australia cities, focused on ECE leadership and organisational development. She interviewed 28 participants, including ECE leaders, teachers and administrators. She suggests that ECE organisations cultivate leadership based on the unique characteristics and traditions of their organisation.

Russia

Similarly, over the past two decades, there has been reform of ECE leadership in Russia. Vlasov and Hujala (2016) examined these changes between 1991 and 2014. They found that parents have higher expectations of ECE leaders and teachers. Leaders of early childhood education are now more focused on administrative tasks, with fewer personal contacts with parents than in the past. The authors conclude that teachers have been given a greater role in leadership and that leaders have become less involved with parents as a result.

Sweden

In Sweden, Nehez et al. (2022) explored how ECE middle leaders influence school development. They found that they perform a variety of tasks, including managing organisational operations, maintaining learning facilities, and fostering cooperation between schools, parents, and the community. They are also responsible for making decisions regarding internal organisation, and ensuring education quality. The authors interviewed principals, middle leaders, and teachers at two schools and two preschools. They conclude that preschool teachers have a tradition of collegial cooperation and joint decision-making.

Franzén and Hjalmarsson (2021) conducted a study at a Swedish preschool in order to examine daily work and leadership challenges from the perspective of a preschool manager. In Sweden, the preschool manager works for the local government as a civil servant. A total of 4,800 preschool managers are employed in Sweden, with each manager responsible for two preschools. Using a qualitative approach, they asked five managers to record their daily

activities for several weeks in a diary. Participants in the study had working experience ranging from 11 months to 15 years. The study found that preschool managers claim to strive to ensure staff, children and parents' satisfaction. Their responsibilities include assisting with staff recruitment, caring for children while managing administrative tasks at the office, engaging with parents, preparing parents' meetings, and purchasing refreshments. The authors add that preschool managers are expected to be accessible to parents via the internet, not only during the week, but on weekends and evenings as well, resulting in a blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure time. The authors add that local authorities in Sweden appear to be less concerned with preschool than they are with schools. This is claimed through limited resource allocation, administrative support, and little assistance provided to young children with disabilities.

Norway

In Norway, a revised early childhood education policy was introduced in 2018, involving the government employing more kindergarten teachers. Using group interviews with 24 participants, as well as participant observation, Lund (2021) studied four early childhood education centres, two urban and two rural. In order to examine leadership enactment, she spent a minimum of two weeks at each centre. She participated in all activities at the school and attended all meetings. Her findings indicate that leadership in ECE Norway is highly democratic, but hierarchical in structure, group-oriented and subject to varied enactment. She adds that there is complexity in the role of an ECE leader. There are some leaders who are more focused on administrative tasks, while others are more concerned with pedagogy. The author emphasised the need to develop contextual ECE leadership.

Lund et al's (2021) research resonates with the work of Boe et al (2022) who observed the activities of three experienced ECE teachers in the eastern part of Norway. The findings show that teachers are proactive in leading classroom activities, but innovation in learning is not apparent. They recommend that leadership development programmes for teachers should be tailored to the competencies and creativity that teachers need in order to lead effectively.

New Zealand

In New Zealand, there appear to be differences in leadership practices within ECE settings. All early childhood educators are required to lead (Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki, 2012). Dalgic et al (2015) claim that New Zealand education uses a holistic approach that emphasises well-being, exploration, communication, and participation. Their professional development programme, *Te Whariki*, focuses not only on knowledge, but also on the values and beliefs of prospective early childhood educators.

Although ECE centres have leadership positions, such as head teachers or managers, Denee and Thornton (2021) provide evidence that qualified teachers are expected to demonstrate leadership in the classroom. The authors note that ECE in New Zealand adheres to both hierarchical and distributed leadership principles. Their research consisted of group interviews with 478 leaders and 214 teachers. Their conclusion was that New Zealand's ECE teachers nurtured and promoted leadership skills. There were several specific findings. First, it is important for leaders to build trust with their stakeholders. Second, leaders should provide mentorship and coaching as a form of support. Third, teachers should be provided with equal opportunities to participate in leadership activities. The authors also suggest that ECE leaders should learn the most effective strategies for involving teachers in leadership, such as listening more and delivering non-judgmental feedback.

In summary, research conducted in several countries demonstrates that effective ECE leadership can improve the quality of provision for children and their families. The collective evidence indicates an urgent need to invest in leadership development in the ECE sector. However, each country has a different focus. While England and some Nordic countries seem to place a high priority on pedagogy, other countries emphasise the development of leadership capacity for early childhood educators.

Asian Research on Leadership in Early Childhood Education

This section discusses empirical research on leadership of ECE in Asia. The choice of Asia was made due to Indonesia's geographical location. There is also some similarity in approaches to ECE in many Asian countries.

Several previous studies conducted in Southeast Asia (Walker et al., 2012; Truong et al., 2017; Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000; Sui-chu, 2006) have shown that hierarchical structures are a common characteristic of leadership in Asian societies. There is a close relationship between leadership practices and the socio-cultural context. As stated by Hallinger and Kantamara (2000), school principals make decisions about the direction of their schools based on the local context, culture, and community norms. This is echoed by other researchers who also refer to the different contextual factors affecting schools (See Walker and Haiyan, 2019; Barnett and McCormick, 2012). In Asia, only a limited amount of research has been conducted on leadership in early childhood education. Most of the available literature is focused on China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

China

In mainland China, Wang and Ho (2020) claims that the government's strategy is to reform ECE through the development of teacher leadership. However, there is still a gap between policy initiatives and their implementation. ECE workers are perceived to be more like baby-sitters than teachers or educators, which contributes to a lack of leadership preparation and development. The low entry qualification for this profession makes it less appreciated by the general public.

A similar study, conducted by Ho (2012), revealed that ECE is highly centralised in China. The power of decision-making is vested in the principal, who has full control over the process. Teachers tends to be followers and are hesitant to take the initiative. This is consistent with a study by Yin et al (2014) in mainland China, which concludes that obedience to leaders is a 'fait accompli' in Chinese culture. All school employees must respond to their leader, an example of high power distance (Hofstede, 2001; Hallinger, 2018a).

Similarly, Hsieh et al (2022) conducted a study investigating kindergarten principal leadership in China following the relaxation of the three-decade one-child policy. The researchers received 2,743 responses from 498 kindergartens in 31 provinces (80.25 percent response rate). They conclude that the new universal three-child policy, which was implemented by the government in 2021, not only affects population structure, but also the quality of early childhood services, including leadership practices. There is an increase in demand for ECE services. As a result, there is a need to focus more on improving the performance of kindergarten heads and promoting their welfare. The authors, argue that principals should provide time and channels of communication to allow teachers to feel valued.

Hong Kong

Chan (2018) examines Hong Kong's strategic leadership practices based on a quantitative study in 18 districts with 135 private kindergartens. She found that leadership in kindergartens is highly centralised, with transactional and transformational leadership models being the most prevalent. The author also emphasised that ECE leaders in Hong Kong need to be capable of planning and managing programmes as well as being willing to enhance their professionalism and networking skills. Earlier, Rao and Li (2009) found that the Hong Kong government seems to view kindergarten as a lower priority than other academic levels, and pays little attention to improving kindergarten principal leadership.

Chan's (2014) study demonstrated that the relationship between the principal and the teacher is very hierarchical, and that principals are often referred to as 'little emperors with dictatorial powers' (p30). The researcher surveyed 72 kindergartens and found that ECE teachers were rarely involved in school decision-making, and they rarely took the initiative. In contrast, Li (2015) studied 706 kindergarten principals and vice-principals, and concluded that Hong Kong ECE exhibits a mix of transactional, transformational, and distributed leadership styles. She also claimed that ECE in Hong Kong is

beginning to show more aspects of distributed leadership, although these are limited.

Hang To et al (2021) assert that the Hong Kong government is implementing reforms in the early childhood education sector, characterised by a focus on improving the quality of learning and of teacher leadership. They note that all kindergartens in Hong Kong are operated by private organisations. These researchers examined the effects of kindergarten principal practices on teacher commitment. They conducted a large-scale quantitative study on 2,106 teachers in 153 kindergartens in Hong Kong. Their findings indicate that kindergarten heads facilitate teacher professional development, which has a significant impact on teacher commitment and enthusiasm. They add that kindergarten teachers are more motivated to teach if they have a principal who promotes collaboration and dialogue.

Chao et al (2023) claim to be the first to examine the influence of school leadership quality on the perceptions and psychological well-being of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. In a quantitative study, they surveyed 509 teachers and found that teachers who have good leaders are more likely to have positive attitudes and behaviours. They suggest that kindergarten management should pay careful attention to the reciprocal relationship between leaders and staff members.

Singapore

Yang and Lim (2023) indicate that the burden on ECE leaders in Singapore remains high. Singaporean childcare services are typically provided for 90-120 children, aged from 18 months to six years. Each centre is usually served by 12-20 teachers and one principal. The authors said that Singapore's education leaders and teachers are accustomed to working in competitive economic environments. Through observation, interviews, and focus group discussions, they engaged with one principal and eight childcare teachers. The researchers indicated that ECE in Singapore has a staff shortage and they rely on migrant teachers, for example, from the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and China. Kindergarten leadership was under constant pressure due to primary schools' high education standards. The authors suggest that principals and teachers

use distributed pedagogical leadership, and that the government assists ECE leaders in effectively distributing work for teachers.

A case study of private and public early childhood education, conducted by Vijayadevar, Thornton, and Cherrington (2019), indicates that the government encourages collaboration among ECE principals. One strategy links to a 10-month professional learning communities (PLC) programme, introduced in March 2015. However, the authors found that competition among principals is high because there is a market for ECE in Singapore that fosters competition and creates challenges for collaboration. One ECE principal cited by the authors expressed that leadership is a lonely endeavour and that she often feels alone and isolated.

Hujala et al. (2016) found similar results. Singaporean ECE leaders work in an extremely competitive environment, with almost all (99.7%) the ECE centres being private. To hold the position of principal, prospective candidates must possess a teaching diploma and a leadership diploma. The researchers examined 100 ECE leaders and found that teachers could easily resign and seek employment at other centres that paid higher salaries. As a result, leaders experience high levels of staff turnover, with limited government support.

Ang (2019) examined the impact of changes to Singaporean ECE policy, as well as what preschool principals and teachers can do to improve its effectiveness. She concluded that Singapore has significantly increased attention to ECE leadership practices, such as increasing funding for preschools and training teachers and prospective principals, and encouraging collaboration between them.

Japan

Inoue and Kawakita (2019) examined how ECE leadership in Japan responds to social change. Due to increased urbanisation, and the growth of women's participation in the labour force, Japan requires more ECE centres. Based on a pilot study of two nursery centre directors, the authors concluded that Japan

requires a greater emphasis on management, administration, and leadership training for middle leaders and young teachers, because there is a high turnover. According to the OECD (2017), 55 percent of ECE workers in Japan are under the age of 30, compared with only 9 percent who are over the age of 50, a higher ratio of young to older employees than other countries. In contrast, Hujala et al. (2016) argued that the most critical abilities for ECE leaders in Japan are not management and administration, but dialogue and communication skills with parents, staff and colleagues. They researched 100 ECE centres in Japan and concluded that harmony among staff is the most significant consideration. However, they added that leadership is also very relevant to improving ECE programmes in Japan.

Thailand

Sawaddemongkol et al. (2017) researched kindergarten management in Thailand. The authors argued that kindergarten is a critical stage in child development, making efficient school management essential. They used a random sampling method to collect data from 274 private kindergarten teachers in Samutprakan province. They linked kindergarten success to nine factors: teacher skills, principal leadership, school management, information systems, parental involvement, facility readiness, work environment, school location, and budget availability.

Philippines

Bartolome, Mamat, and Masnan (2020) examine the leadership of school principals relating to parental involvement in Philippines. They studied a purposive sample of 24 kindergarten teachers in Manila using a qualitative approach. The researchers found that school principals struggled to increase parents' role, and they were faced with excessive administrative burdens. This finding is similar to that of Banayat, Amurao, and Bautista (2019), who state that parental involvement is strongly influenced by the school principal.

Malaysia

Alias (2022) studied transformational leadership in three kindergartens in the Perak District of Malaysia. She conducted qualitative research by interviewing

ten teachers and leaders. The author argues that the teachers showed a high level of commitment. The kindergarten leaders claim to be inviting dialogue, providing encouragement and motivation, trusting their teachers, and often praising them. Teachers view the principal as a role model.

Bush and Ng (2019) argue that Malaysia intends to implement distributed leadership to achieve the Ministry's aims, as outlined in the Malaysia Education blueprint. However, the authors noted that school leaders are still hampered by high administrative burdens, and that administrative leadership is a norm in Malaysia's highly centralised educational system. This inhibits principals from implementing distributed leadership.

Comparative studies

In addition to researchers who examine one specific country, there are also scholars who evaluate ECE leadership across different countries in Asia or in comparison with developed countries. For example, Fonsen et al (2019) conducted a comparative study involving six countries (Germany, Finland, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, and the United States). In Asia, the authors stressed the importance of increasing access and affordability for the development of pre-schools.

Sun et al (2016) conducted a study on early childhood development in low- and middle-income countries in East Asia and the Pacific (Cambodia, China, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu). They concluded that effective leadership is strongly influenced by the relationship between school leaders and parents. They added that parents help cognitive development in children, especially those from disadvantaged families. Similarly, Cho and Tsai (2009) conducted a comparative study in Taiwanese and American pre-schools and found that effective leadership in ECE settings depends on a strong bond between leaders, teachers and parents. They concluded that schools are micro-communities and that kindergarten education creates a bond so that all work together to achieve goals.

Overall, ECE leaders in Asian countries have similar roles, within a clear hierarchy. They perform multiple functions, namely pedagogical and administrative tasks, including dealing with parents and staff. However, many claim that they do not receive enough support for leadership work. Leadership approaches in Western countries cannot be transferred easily to the Asian context because of different cultural values.

Indonesian Research on Early Childhood Education Leadership

There has been an increase in research on educational leadership in developed and some developing countries but, in Indonesia, it has remained underexplored. Gaol (2021) conducted a systematic review of the literature on school leadership in Indonesia, based on eight core international journals in educational leadership and management, as well as high-quality journals indexed in Scopus and in the Social Science Citation Index. The author was able to find only 16 articles about school leadership in Indonesia. Most of these articles focus on primary and secondary schools, and none relate to ECE. Hariri, Monypenny, and Prideaux (2014), for example, examine the relationship between principal leadership style and decision-making. They surveyed 475 teachers in six junior secondary schools in Lampung province, Sumatra Island. The researchers found that teachers believe that school principals apply transformational leadership more than transactional approaches. The principals are also perceived to adopt a rational decision-making style, and teachers generally feel satisfied with the principal's leadership.

Sofo, Fitzgerald and Jawas (2012) argued that Indonesia carried out educational reform through the implementation of the National Education System law number 20 in 2003. Significant changes included introducing school autonomy, where school principals were given greater authority to reform their schools and to improve student academic performance. However, the goals have not been fully achieved. Jawas (2017) also found that, although educational autonomy has been implemented for more than a decade in Indonesia, the influence of local government on school leadership remains very powerful. Principals also still depend on central government guidance and

policy, and they tend to be less willing to initiate or to be creative in executing leadership roles. The researcher recommends instructional leadership to address this issue.

Although there is no literature on ECE in international journals, there are several studies published in local journals. Nakajima et al. (2019) examined the influence of ECE on school readiness in Indonesia, as part of a research collaboration with the World Bank, South Korea, Australia and the Netherlands Government. They examined ECE pupils in 310 villages from 2008-2013. They found that children who enrolled in the playgroup programme at 3-4 years old, followed by kindergarten at 5-6 years old, had significantly higher maths and language scores in the primary school test compared to those who only enrolled in playgroup or kindergarten.

Malaysian scholars, Majzub and Salim (2011) examined parental participation in kindergartens in Curug district, Tangerang city, Indonesia. 294 parents from six private kindergartens were surveyed using stratified random sampling. The authors emphasised the importance of increasing parental involvement in the ECE sector. They also added that kindergartens in Indonesia face the challenge of limited financial resources, so the staff do not focus on improving learning quality but tend to focus on meeting learning infrastructure needs.

The World Bank Group's research (Denboba et al., 2015) appears to be one of the most comprehensive studies on ECE in Indonesia. The researchers examined the influence of ECE on health care, nutrition, social protection, and child protection, but did not focus on leadership aspects. However, they argued that ECE teachers and principals in Indonesia lack training.

There are some helpful articles in *Bahasa* (Indonesian language) journals, and Hallinger (2018b) demonstrates the importance of literature in local languages, which he refers to as 'hidden literature'. These sources provide helpful insights into ECE leadership in Indonesia. For example, Yelsi and Kurniah (2016) discuss the impact of kindergarten principals' leadership on teacher performance. They conducted a study of ten kindergartens in Muara

Bangkahulu, a small district in Bengkulu province, Sumatra. They found that principal leadership influenced teacher performance. .

Research on kindergarten leadership in Indonesia is generally carried out on a small scale in one area. Paramita and Pandia (2015), for example, examined the role of school management in a kindergarten in the Jakarta district. The authors examined planning, organising, leading, and controlling processes. The study revealed that the principal had not clearly communicated the school's vision and mission and had not acted as an example for teachers. This finding links to a study conducted by Formen (2020), which concluded that ECE teachers are not aware of the national ECE vision. Analysing the 2013 ECE Curriculum document, he studied how Indonesia regulates ECE practices. He comments that ECE principals and teachers do only what they believe is best for the children, without taking into account national objectives. In contrast, Setiyaningtiyas and Hartutik (2022) stated that teachers understand the school's vision and mission and that what the principal is doing is aimed at enhancing school success and student achievement. Through interviews, observations, and documentation, the authors conducted a qualitative case study in a private kindergarten in Surabaya. The authors concluded that school principals demonstrate transformational leadership in their daily activities and are open to communication with their teachers.

Yulindrasari and Ujiti (2018) studied the professionalism of kindergarten teachers in Buleleng, a small town in northern Bali. Their small-scale research focused on a limited aspect of leadership practice, namely the relationship between kindergarten principals and teachers in professional development. They interviewed four private kindergarten teachers and one public kindergarten teacher. They conclude that leaders do not know how to lead effectively, and that the government has failed to develop professional kindergarten teachers. They add that there is a lack of training for ECE leaders and teachers.

This is reinforced by Paramita and Pandia (2015), who indicate that ECE education is integral to Indonesia's vision to create a smarter nation. However,

the Indonesian ECE sector still suffers from low teacher quality, insufficient teacher training, and problematic headteacher selection. This is consistent with other literature, which shows that many public school principals do not have formal preparation because appointments of school principals tend to be based on political factors (see Bjork, 2003; Jalal and Mustafa, 2001; Sumintono et al., 2015; Sofo et al, 2012; Hao, 2013).

Adriany (2022) shows that many ECE centres in Indonesia have a limited number of staff. Most ECE centres do not have anyone to handle administrative tasks, so principals and teachers are often required to perform these duties. Due to a shortage of teachers, nearly all principals at rural ECE centres have to teach and also manage school finances and operations. As reported by Lee and Hallinger (2012), principals in Indonesia place much more emphasis on administration than leadership or school development.

Widiastuti et al (2023) compared the leadership practices of kindergarten principals in rural and urban areas of East Java province. The research was conducted using qualitative methods; interviews, observations, and documents, in two private kindergartens. They found that the principal of the urban kindergarten employs a transformational leadership style where the head motivates teachers to work towards school objectives. The rural kindergarten principal was more likely to use a transactional leadership style in which they promise incentives for good performance from teachers, avoid collective decision making, and use more of their authority as school heads. However, the authors pointed out that transformational leadership is not necessarily suitable for rural areas and vice versa. The authors stated that leadership practices should be adapted to social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors.

Similar findings were reported by Senny, Wijayaningsih and Kurniawan (2018), who examined two kindergartens in Sidoreja sub-district, Central Java. They concluded that these ECE schools have not yet implemented transformational leadership and tend to apply transactional leadership. The teachers are not creative and are not being challenging to develop their potential.

Overall, the literature review shows that ECE leadership is still under-researched in Indonesia, with no international publications on this theme, and only limited local studies. It appears that kindergarten principals in Indonesia are burdened with heavy administrative tasks and have little focus on developing leadership skills. There is a clear gap in the research, and this provides the warrant for my research.

Overview

This chapter discusses the literature and theory associated with this research. During the past three decades, research on ECE has increased. The provision of early childhood education has become a global issue, having a significant impact on children's academic performance and well-being.

ECE terminology and definitions vary significantly from country to country. Various ECE terms are used in many countries, including nursery, kindergarten, preschool, prekindergarten, and playgroup, with regional variations. There have also been tensions regarding the role of early childhood education in helping school readiness in many countries over the past decade. Preschool education has become more formalised, focusing more on academic achievement, especially in Asia.

The literature indicates a consensus that leadership plays a significant role in early childhood education. Various approaches can be taken to define and practice leadership in the ECE sector. The role of a leader in an early childhood education centre is complex, since they are often responsible for performing multiple tasks and serving several stakeholders, including teachers, staff, students, and parents.

There is a significant number of international publications on ECE leadership in high-achieving countries, such as Finland, Sweden, Norway, and some European countries. This is a result of their investment in ECE development. Only a limited amount of research has been conducted on leadership in early childhood education in Asia, mostly from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

ECE leaders in Asian countries typically have similar roles, within a clear hierarchy. Their responsibilities include pedagogical and administrative duties, as well as dealing with parents and staff. It appears that kindergarten principals in Indonesia are also burdened with heavy administrative tasks and place little emphasis on developing their leadership abilities. The literature review shows that ECE leadership is still under-researched in Indonesia, with no international publications on this theme, and only limited local studies. There is a clear gap in the research, and this provides the warrant for this research. The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods for this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the research design and methodology used for this study on early childhood leadership in Indonesia. Marx (2023) argues that qualitative researchers should choose an approach based on the objectives and attempt to answer the research questions. Similarly, Creswell (2013) defines methodology as a systematic approach to obtaining data in order to answer questions or identify problems in social research. Accordingly, the approach chosen relates to the research questions underpinning the study:

1. What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?
2. What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?
3. How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?
4. How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?
5. How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?
6. What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?
7. How did kindergarten leaders respond to the Covid-19 pandemic?

This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Education ordered all local education offices (LEOs) and principals to close schools from March 2020, in response to the pandemic. During the field study, conducted from May to December 2021, the school closure policy was still being implemented, and an unplanned theme emerged, namely leadership during a crisis, as reflected in research question 7.

The chapter first draws out the research paradigm, specifically looking at ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Then it outlines the research methods, including sampling, research instruments, and data collection. This is an exploratory multiple case study, involving semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis. Details will be provided on how the data

were analysed. The chapter ends by addressing ethical principles and the authenticity of this study.

Research Paradigm

All aspects of this research are informed by philosophical beliefs and paradigms. The concept of paradigm refers to a set of fundamental beliefs concerning the nature of knowledge and how reality may be discovered (Crotty, 2003), adding that research is inextricably linked to a particular scientific paradigm. In the context of a paradigm, research entails logical implications or consequences of values and assumptions. According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), the research paradigm is characterised by four major aspects, namely ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. These are discussed below:

Ontology

The essence of ontology is to discover or to obtain the essence of something that is being questioned, whether in material or non-material form (Creswell, 2014). Denscombe (2014) asserts that, without ontological studies, a wide and deep discussion of something would be impossible, as the roots of the discussion are unknown.

Blaikie (2007) indicates that ontology encompasses both what can be known and the nature of reality. It goes beyond the question of whether reality exists outside the realm of researchers. Crotty (2003) defines ontology as "the study of being" or the nature of existence. Cohen et al. (2007) provide a more detailed explanation, where they argue that research approaches may either be constructive/subjectivist, objective, or a combination of both. As defined by the constructive paradigm, social phenomena are formed by social interaction, whereas the objective paradigm argue that social phenomena exist independently of social actors. This research is based on a constructivist ontology approach. Yin (2013) asserts that knowledge is formed as a result of a social process, which then shapes social reality, and this paradigm strives to understand participants' views about a phenomenon and its context.

In constructive perspectives, multiple realities are derived from social and cultural interactions (Creswell, 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). According to this view, people's values, beliefs, and perceptions are influenced by their daily experiences. The current research is most suited to use the constructivist approach since it seeks to understand social reality through the perceptions of various participants, including school principals, teachers, assistant teachers, kindergarten staff, parents, and local education officers. Based on constructivist ontological assumptions, this study examines leadership in Indonesian early childhood education as a social phenomenon that is constructed through interpretation and interaction between the researcher and the participants.

Epistemology

The concept of epistemology is a theory of knowledge, it also can be viewed as a continuation of ontology. Creswell (2013) provides a more comprehensive explanation, referring to epistemology as a method for gaining true knowledge. In addition, he stated that, if the objective of the research has been revealed in the ontology stage, the epistemology is the following step, where the researcher searches for knowledge or theories related to the observed phenomena.

As defined by Lincoln and Guba (2013), epistemology encompasses the nature of the relationship between the knower and the knowable. It refers to the relationship between researchers and research objects. However, Creswell (2013) asserts that epistemology encompasses more than just the nature of the relationship between researchers and research objects; it is the science of how knowledge is gained. As Cohen et al (2007) contend, epistemology explains how science works and how it seeks truth on a systematic basis. Accordingly, they advise researchers to be as close as possible to the phenomena and participants to obtain accurate data.

Capper (2019) argues that interpretivism is one of the epistemological approaches commonly used in educational research. Furthermore, Creswell (2008) holds that knowledge is subjective and formed through social

interaction. He emphasises the importance of understanding human relationships.

Crotty (2003) states that the interpretive approach seeks to understand social reality by analysing life experiences and environmental phenomena. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) point out, interpretation is concerned with understanding human interaction in social contexts.

This research aims to understand human interactions that develop through social interaction, so an interpretive approach is a suitable epistemological approach. I examine phenomena that occur between individuals with different perceptions, values, and beliefs, and thus produce social phenomena.

According to Creswell (2013), research can be compared to knitting thread into cloth. In qualitative research, general assumptions and interpretive frameworks are woven together as strengths. Researchers using an interpretive paradigm explore not only how people interact, but also the context of the lives of the individuals they study in order to understand their cultural and historical contexts (Robson, 2011).

Similarly, current researchers are interested in the ways in which the participants in this study apply leadership at the kindergarten level. Using this approach allows me to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

The interpretive paradigm also stresses that the researcher must be aware that their own life context will affect how they interpret the meaning of the participants' lives (Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, researchers should be transparent and consider the possible influence of their life background on the interpretation of research results. As a result of this interpretive approach, I learned more about kindergarten leadership in Indonesia through four case studies that were grounded in the experiences of participants.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the process by which a researcher acquires knowledge. Lincoln and Guba (2013) emphasise that a research methodology is a technique for obtaining information and data sources to be used in the research. By determining the research methodology, researchers are able to better understand the workflow of the research process (Yin, 2013). As Creswell (2007) points out, by applying appropriate research methods, researchers are also more likely to find answers to the problems being researched, thereby enabling the research to be completed efficiently.

In social research, qualitative and quantitative methods are widely employed, according to Bryman, (2012). The former is a type of research methodology using data gathered from interviews or observations that represent the participants' perspectives. The latter is a method of research that deals with numerical data analysed through the use of statistics.

This study takes a qualitative approach, which requires a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the objects examined (Creswell, 2013). This method allows me to gain a deeper understanding of the social reality I am studying. My research, which focused on four kindergartens, involved a qualitative approach in order to explore the perspectives of participants regarding leadership in kindergartens.

In educational research, Ribbins and Gunter (2002) state that qualitative methods aim to describe educational activities. An important component of qualitative research in education is the analysis of processes and activities as well as the interaction between humans and their environment Creswell (2008). These may include, for example, the teaching process, class management, leadership, assessment processes, and relations between the school and the community.

According to Patton (2002), another advantage of the qualitative approach is that it focuses on identifying the value of participant research within the context of social reality. Even though this method requires more time, researchers are able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. It is

therefore appropriate to use this research method to explain the nature of leadership in the four school case studies.

Axiology

Axiology can also be defined as the theory of values. As a branch of philosophy, it attempts to understand the purpose and use of knowledge (Creswell, 2013). Similarly, Lawson (2015) argues that axiology is concerned with the exploration of knowledge and reality; its essence lies in the benefits of new knowledge. According to the author, science must be used in harmony with cultural and ethical values in order to be perceived as valuable by society.

Crotty (2003) argues that a researcher must express their position clearly and maintain consistency with the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions they make. Lincoln and Guba (2013) emphasise the importance of axiology for researchers' understanding of their values and roles in the research process. In this paradigm, issues of right and wrong are explored as well as addressing research biases.

Axiology, as defined by Creswell (2013), emphasises the importance of the research process, researcher values, and assisting researchers in considering questions, including:

1. How to ensure that all participants' rights are respected
2. How were ethical principles adhered to during the research process?
3. Does the research require consideration of any cultural issues?
4. How should researchers conduct studies in a respectful manner?
5. How to identify and reduce research risks

The purpose of this study is to construct social reality and knowledge about early childhood leadership in Indonesia. The study focuses on kindergarten leadership through the subjective values and interpretations of kindergarten heads, teachers, teacher assistants, administrators, parents, and local education officers. The research I conduct is not value-free, and I am unable to remain totally objective. However, I strive to conduct research in a respectful manner and to reduce bias by adhering to a code of ethics. This research was

conducted with full responsibility and accountability, and I did not personally know any of the participants prior to the enquiry. I endeavoured to treat all participants equally and to respect their values and perceptions.

Research Approach: Case Study

Scholars say there are five approaches commonly used in qualitative research; narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, case study and ethnography. However, many authors claim that case study is an approach that is increasingly well known and popular, unique, and often associated with qualitative research (Stake 2005, Creswell, 2013, Yin 2013).

Stake (2005) defines a case study as research that emphasises a deeper understanding of certain phenomena. The author adds that case studies are useful in exploring problems where little or nothing is known about certain phenomena. The aim of a case study is often to develop a deep understanding of a phenomenon. Moreover, Creswell (2014) argues that case study is a type of research that attempts to answer several issues or objects regarding a phenomenon or event in the real-world situation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that a case study is a detailed description and analysis of a bounded system.

Case study was chosen as the approach for this research because it seeks to examine a bounded phenomenon, in its natural context. The cases are the four public kindergartens in Indonesia, with insights from individuals (kindergarten heads, teachers, staff, parents, and LEOs). Each case is a bounded system. To examine the social phenomenon of kindergarten leadership practice, a case study approach was adopted, based on understanding human behaviour, reflected in similarities and differences in values and beliefs.

Yin (2009) outlines three main types of case study design; exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Descriptive case studies attempt to explain the phenomenon in detail. This type of approach is often used in sociological and anthropological research. Explanatory case studies attempt to explain why something happens. The method is ideally used to determine the causes, or

causal links, behind a phenomenon. The exploratory case study aims to examine a contemporary phenomenon with the intention of exploring its real-life context. It also provides rich information and offers researchers the opportunity to explore the world of human experience. This is mainly used to gain insight into complex issues or phenomena to generate ideas and develop hypotheses for further research (Stake, 2005). This approach is often used to find causal links.

For this study, an exploratory case study approach was chosen because little is known about ECE leadership in Indonesia. Given the lack of research on Indonesian kindergartens, I am interested in exploring this phenomenon to gain in-depth insights about kindergarten leadership practice, including from participants' perspectives.

Yin (2009) differentiates between single and multiple case studies. A single case study consists of research conducted using a singular case to illustrate an issue or concern. The researcher examines and pays attention to an issue that interests them, using a case in order to describe it in detail.

In contrast, multiple case studies involve several cases. This provides a more diverse perspective. It is possible to focus the research on just one topic and use many case studies to explain it. Creswell (2014) explains that multiple cases are used to obtain more detailed data so that the results can be described in more detail, and compared across cases.. It is also motivated by the aim to provide analytical generalisation of the concept or theory under review..

According to Yin (2009), logical replication research can be used to conduct multiple case studies. The same procedure is applied to each issue or case. The researcher then provides an overview of each case and compares them to develop an overarching view of the phenomenon.

This study employs a multiple case study design to investigate kindergarten leadership from four different regions, and to provide in-depth data from the real-life social context (Yin, 2009, Creswell, 2013). The rationale for choosing

this approach is that, by examining four case study schools, the researcher can gain a better understanding of kindergarten leadership in Indonesia based on participants' insights..

The purpose of this multiple case study is to examine how leadership is understood and implemented in four very different kindergarten settings (West, East, Capital, and Central regions of Indonesia). The four case studies were selected to generate findings about kindergarten leadership in different parts of Indonesia. For each case study, the researcher examines how kindergarten heads lead their schools, their relationships with teachers and staff, as well as their links with other stakeholders, including parents and the local education office.

Research Methods

Case study research generally includes interviews, observation, and documents reviews, both digital and conventional archives (Creswell, 2013). I planned to use all these methods, but these plans were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic (see below).

Interviews

An interview is a process of obtaining information for research purposes with questions and answers between the interviewer and the participant (Wellington, 2000). Creswell (2014) describes three types of interviews. First, structured interviews. This type of conversation is used when the researcher already knows about the information to be collected, and researchers have prepared alternative answers. Second, unstructured interviews where researchers do not use specific interview guidelines, only essential points to be explored from respondents. Third, the semi-structured interview, which is a conversation that allows respondents to provide additional information in addition to the main answers they have provided. This research adopted semi-structured interview (see appendix 4), to enable the participants to provide more in-depth information about kindergarten leadership in Indonesia. The interviewees are local education officers, kindergarten heads, teachers, teaching assistants administrative staff, and parents who were able to express

their opinions and ideas beyond the guiding questions. I provided an interview guide to the participants in advance, together with a brief explanation about the intentions of the research. I asked some predetermined questions, while allowing follow up questions through prompts and probes. I added questions, or changed the order of the questions, as appropriate for each interview.

Initially, to obtain more comprehensive data, I planned to conduct face-to-face interviews. Rowley (2009) believes that face-to-face discussions can help researchers build relationships with respondents, read non-verbal cues, and gain deeper insights. Since the Indonesian government implemented social distancing during the pandemic, and schools were also closed, data collection had to be adapted from field interviews to online video conferences. Creswell (2013) states that in-person interviews are traditionally used to generate qualitative research data. However, when researchers or participants cannot travel, or are separated geographically, video conferencing can be a viable alternative.

Gray et al, (2020) suggest that online interviews provide flexibility in scheduling suitable times for participants and researchers. They provide participants with a comfortable environment to share sensitive information and may result in shorter time and more substantive responses (Woodyatt et al., 2016). Some researchers claim that in-person interviews and online video conferencing interviews do not vary much in terms of quality. Samuk et al, (2022), for example, found that online participants were more open and expressive than in-person interviewees.

Sedgwick and Spiers (2009) say that online interviews can perform the same function as in-person interviews because the researcher can still see participants' faces and they most closely mimic in-person interviews. The use of online interviews has become more common during Covid-19, particularly when travel restrictions were in place (Dodds and Hess, 2021). Rodham and Gavin (2006) also argue that there is no fundamental difference between face-to-face and online interviews, since both require the same ethical procedures,

such as obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.

According to Gray et al (2020), there are various video-conferencing applications that can be used to support research. These include Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, GoToMeeting, Cisco Webex, Microsoft Teams, and High Five Meeting. Researchers should choose the one that is most suitable for their research, based on their needs, ease of use, and comfort of both participants and researchers, according to Hart (2023).

Researchers at the University of Nottingham are normally required to conduct online interviews using Microsoft Teams. In this study, however, I conducted virtual interviews with participants using the Zoom video conferencing platform because this is widely used in Indonesia, including in the four kindergartens. Bramastia (2021) reports that the majority of Indonesian schools use the Zoom application (57.2%), followed by Google Meet (18.5%), Cisco Webex (8.3%), and Microsoft Teams (2.0%).

Gray et al (2020) found that Zoom video conference participants experienced a positive response. They identify a number of advantages, such as being easy to use, convenient, and accessible from various devices, including computers, tablets, and phones. They add that it was time-saving because there is no travel time. It can be economically advantageous for research involving a large number of dispersed samples.

Lobe and Morgan (2021) claim that video-based formatted interviews are the closest to face-to-face interviews since the researchers can still do full-motion video imaging as well as record and transcribe the interview. However, they stressed that the most important issue in online interviews is that participants must have the proper equipment, software, and access to a reliable internet connection.

In a cautionary note, Lobe, Morgan, and Hoffman (2022) comment that some participants could be quite proficient with digital technology, while others did

not possess these skills, even though video-based technology is becoming increasingly well known to the public, particularly in the light of Covid 19's social isolation.

In this study, all participants were interviewed using their personal laptops. Most participants had already become familiar with Zoom when data collection took place, but one participant needed assistance from her son to access Zoom. It should be noted that her son only assisted in opening Zoom access on the laptop, and during the interview, the participant was in a private setting.

Although all research locations are in urban areas, the internet network is an obstacle when conducting research in the eastern part of Indonesia. I conducted two interviews with two teachers and three interviews with one teacher at East Public Kindergarten. The internet network was disrupted a few minutes into the interviews due to heavy rain in the area. Therefore, the researcher had to reschedule the interviews and arrange another appointment with the participants.

Observations

Creswell (2014) argues that observation is a data collection technique that allows the researcher to engage directly with the phenomenon. The process could be made directly or indirectly. Patton (2002) suggests that, in direct observation, the observer is present with the object being studied. An indirect observation involves the analysis of films, photographs, or other materials. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, I planned to conduct direct observations to triangulate interview data.

My initial plan was to use field notes to observe the physical conditions and circumstances of each kindergarten. It was also my intention to observe meetings, with the permission of participants, to note their behaviour and relationships. Observation allows the researcher to see participants' actions and behaviour, and to compare them with their responses during interviews. Observations also facilitate a better understanding of the relationships between the head and kindergarten teaching and administrative staff. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, schools were closed and social

restrictions existed, so I had to change my plans and omit the observation element.

Document review

Documentary techniques are ways to collect and explore written sources. Cohen et al. (2007) argue that analysis of documentation is a method used to obtain data from books, archives, documents, figures and pictures that can support research. The documents utilised in this study include school profiles, curricula, syllabi, timetables, and reports. Denscombe (2014) explains that documents can be divided into internal and external sources. Internal documents can be in the form of notes, such as memos, instructions, reports, and minutes of meetings. External documents may be produced for public purposes, such as magazines, newspapers, and policy statements.

The documents reviewed for this study comprise national documents relating to early childhood education, such as regulations of the Minister of Education, and ECE Director General technical instructions. I also reviewed specific documentation from the four kindergartens, relating to organisational profiles, charts, annual reports, curricula, and timetables. Methodological triangulation was achieved by comparing the documentary sources with the interview data.

Sampling

Sampling is a method of identifying participants in a research study (Patton, 2002). This study used stratified purposive sampling, an approach that relies on the researcher's judgement (Silverman, 2000). Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research, where the researcher selects 'information rich' samples, with appropriate knowledge to address the research questions. In this study, the sampled participants are those whose knowledge and experience are directly related to the research question.

The geographical diversity of Indonesia contributed to the use of stratified sampling. There are 38 provinces in Indonesia, which are divided into three time zones and regions (Kompas, 2023). Padgett (2008), states that stratified sampling refers to the process of dividing a population into two or more levels

and then taking samples from each level. Sampling of kindergartens in this study has regard to maximum variation sampling (Douglas, 2022).

Sampling kindergartens

Nugraha and Prayitno (2020) argue that regional inequality and development are particularly significant issues in Indonesia. Hill et al. (2009) also claim that Indonesia has great economic diversity across regions. Regional disparities are significant. Much economic activity is concentrated in Java or western Indonesia, while the central and eastern parts are less well developed. For these reasons, maximum variation sampling was used to select kindergartens from four regions of Indonesia: the western, central, capital, and eastern regions (see figure 3.1).

The west zone is represented by North Sumatra province. The central area case study was conducted in Bali, while the capital study took place in Jakarta, and the eastern case was in South Sulawesi. These settings were chosen because they are the most developed provinces within each region, with better Internet access than other areas, enabling online interviews to be conducted.

Douglas (2022) defines maximum variation sampling as a purposive sampling technique that captures views from various perspectives, for example people, places, locations, and cases. Haenssgen (2019) comments that the main aim of this technique is to gain greater insight into a phenomenon from various angles so that researchers can identify similar evidence from the selected samples.

Both public and private schools in Indonesia are categorised into three grades, namely A (well-performing), B (good), and C (functional). The assessment is conducted by the National Accreditation Board for Schools (NABS). The grade is determined by several factors, including learning and curriculum standards, teacher qualifications, and school facilities (NABS, 2023).

In this study, the west region has 198 public kindergartens, while the capital has 77, central 129, and east 257. Of this number, around 20 percent are

accredited A, the rest are B and C (BPS, 2021). From each of the four selected provinces, I chose a kindergarten from the Ministry of Education's Early Childhood Education Central Database based which can be accessed via the website www.dapo.kemdikbud.go.id. This website displays data on all public and private kindergartens from all provinces, including their accreditation grade. Then, I choose a kindergarten based on a number of predominant criteria. These include having an A grade, adequate teaching staff and facilities, and being located in an urban area for internet connection stability.

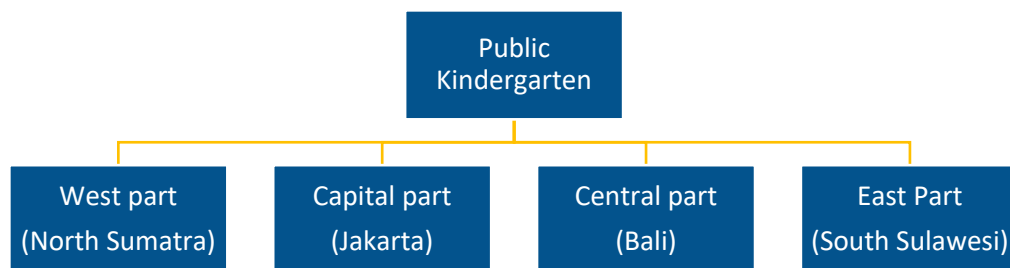


Figure 3.1 Stratified purposive sampling for kindergartens

Sampling participants

At each kindergarten, I conducted interviews with ten participants, a total of 40 participants across the four cases. The participants, each of whom were interviewed individually, were the kindergarten head, four teachers, one teaching assistant, one administrator, two parents, and a local education officer (see table 3.1).

Silverman (2000) notes that the sample should be drawn from people who have a strong connection to the research, to obtain comprehensive and valid information. In this study, the selected participants are adults who either work in kindergartens, or have a supervisory role for kindergartens.

In each kindergarten, the head was invited to participate, to gain insights into how they lead, what the kindergarten is perceived to be for, and how they execute their leadership. Several teachers and teaching assistants were sampled in order to gain their perceptions about how leadership is enacted and how the curriculum is interpreted and implemented. Each of the four kindergartens in the case study has up to eight teachers. Rather than relying

on nominations from the kindergarten head, the current researcher selected four teachers and teaching assistants using purposive sampling. This was done from the organisational profile book containing the list of teachers and teacher assistants. Following this, I contacted them via email based on the following criteria: First, they had extensive experience. In addition, they possess a bachelor's degree in kindergarten or early childhood education. The third factor was that they volunteered to participate in the interview process. As a result of these requirements, the four teachers in each case were identified.

By using these three criteria, I was confident that participants were capable of explaining the implementation of leadership in their school. Similarly, for administrative staff, I sampled those who had formal roles as head of administration or assistant administration officers. Typically, there is only one person who holds these positions in each public kindergarten. Their selection was based on their ability to explain public kindergarten organisational structure and administration.

In this study, parents who are actively involved in the development of kindergartens were also included. Parents who are extensively involved with the kindergarten were sampled. In each kindergarten, there are generally five parent representatives who serve as school committee officials, whose role is to represent parents. A selection of two parents was made based on two criteria. Firstly, they must hold formal positions, and have served for at least one year, for example, the chairman/woman of the school committee, the secretary, or the treasurer. Second, they agreed to participate in the interview. Parents' interviews reveal how kindergarten heads engage with them.

To gain a deeper understanding of how kindergarten leaders engage parents, I initially planned to conduct a focus group with five parents. However, the focus groups for parents were cancelled as a result of school closures and social restrictions. A Zoom video conference was used to conduct individual interviews with parents.

This study also includes local education officers who are responsible for the administrative oversight of public kindergartens. Due to Indonesia's regional autonomy, the LEO was selected in order to understand how school principals are selected and what their duties are. There will be a more specific explanation of the sampling technique in the findings chapters for each case (chapters four to seven).

Participant	Cases (Public Kindergarten)				Total
	West	Capital	Central	East	
Head	1	1	1	1	4
Teachers	4	4	4	4	16
Teaching assistants	1	1	1	1	4
Administrative staff	1	1	1	1	4
Parents	2	2	2	2	8
Local Education Officer	1	1	1	1	4
Total	10	10	10	10	40

Table 3.1 case study participants

Research Instruments

Research instruments are essential tools for obtaining and collecting data. Research instruments widely used in social research are interview guides and observational guides (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Interview guides were developed to use in this research but, as noted above, the planned observations could not be conducted, due to the pandemic. The interview guide is a list of questions that the researcher asks participants during the interview. Creating an interview guide is a vital step in the qualitative interview process (Silverman, 2000). In my research, the interview questions were linked to specific research questions about leadership in kindergartens. This helped to ensure that the data collected are valid and relevant to the enquiry. The interview guide consisted of pre-prepared questions, but with the use of prompts and probes, to enable the participants to co-construct the

conversations. Each interview guide comprises similar issues about leadership in kindergartens but were modified for each research participant (see appendices 3).

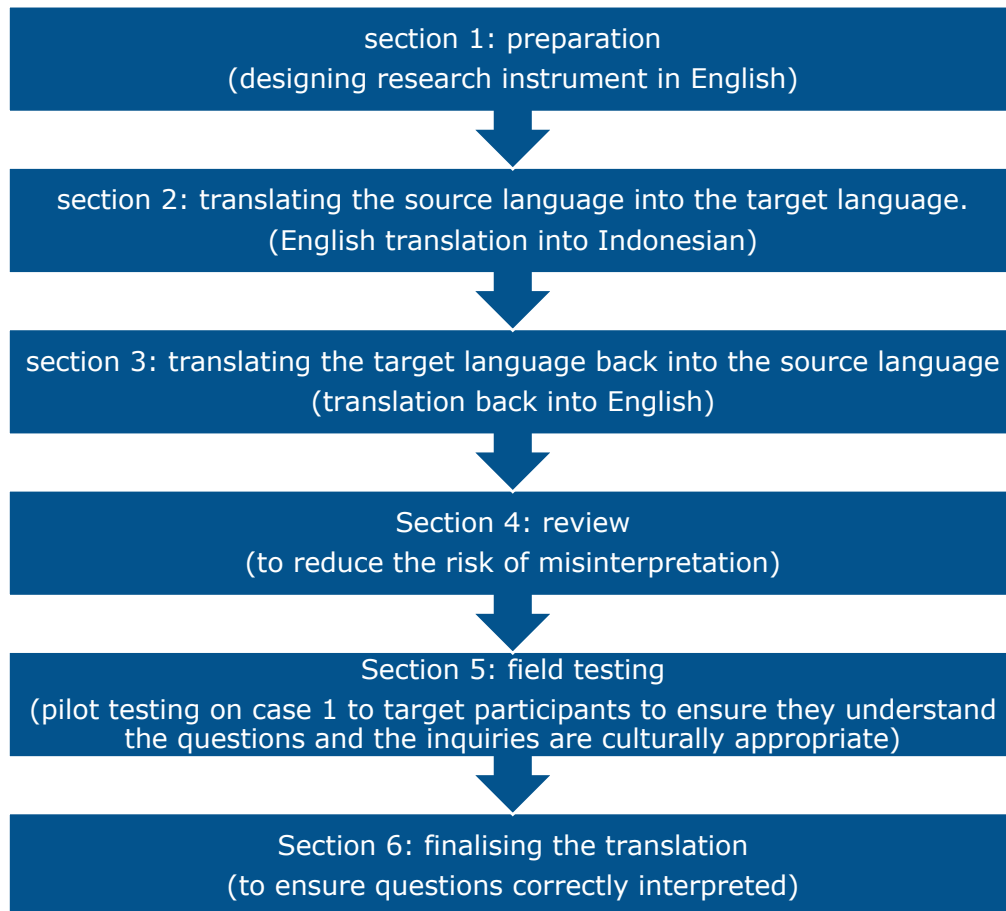


Figure 3.2 Translation and adaption stages, adapted from Hall et.al (2018)

The interview guide was prepared in English, but the interview was conducted in the Indonesian language (*Bahasa*). To maintain the validity of the instrument, the research adopted Hall's (2018) A Good Practice Guide for Translating for Different Languages and Cultures (see figure 3.2).

Hall et al. (2018) say that accuracy is required in translating interview instruments to be used across languages and cultures. Therefore, to maintain accuracy, the interviews were recorded, with participants' agreement, so that the researcher could re-listen to the conversation and minimise the risk of misinterpretation.

Data Collection

Data collection is a technique used by researchers to gather data. This stage is the most strategic step in social research. In qualitative research, data collection is carried out in natural settings and involves securing access as well as gathering and storing data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

A pilot study is often conducted as the first step in the data collection process. A 'de facto' pilot was carried out at East Public Kindergarten from May to June 2021. The process started with obtaining ethical approval from the University of Nottingham. The pilot study is designed to determine whether the participants have understood the questions as intended by the researcher. The questions were clear to the participants, but there was a recurring theme, namely leadership during the pandemic. Participants often asked, when I asked them questions, whether the context of the question was before or during the pandemic. I made minor changes to the instrument, by adding questions about the pandemic, in response to this emerging theme. Then the main data collection period for this study began in September 2021.

After receiving approval from the University of Nottingham, I applied to the Indonesian Ministry of Education for permission to conduct the research. Subsequently, the Ministry informed the Local Education Offices in North Sumatra, Jakarta, Bali, and South Sulawesi that I had been granted permission to conduct research on ECE leadership (see appendix 3).

After obtaining access from the LEO, I contacted the kindergarten heads to obtain their voluntary informed consent. LEO Senior Officers nominated some kindergartens. As a means of ensuring research independence, I chose a kindergarten from the Ministry of Education's kindergarten central database based on a number of predominant criteria (see above). These include having a top (A) grade and being located in an urban area for internet connection stability.

Lobe et al (2022) emphasise the importance of collecting informed consent as an ethical issue in video conferencing. In face-to-face research, this form is distributed and collected by the interviewer, however, in online research, it

becomes a considerable challenge. To overcome this challenge, the current researcher sent the consent form in PDF form via email a few days before the interview, and participants emailed back their consent forms.

I informed the participants about my research plan and explain that I had permission from the University of Nottingham and the Ministry of Education. The interviews were conducted by Zoom video conference at a time most convenient for participants. There are six hours difference between UK and west Indonesia, and seven hours difference from east Indonesia. The interview length for each participant varied from 40 minutes to one hour.

Samuk, Sahizer, and Burchi (2022) argue that video conferencing is an alternative data collection platform that can facilitate long-distance research and international communications, and significantly reduce travel costs. However, it may be subject to technical difficulties and requires an internet connection. Video conferencing does involve extra costs because you have to pay a monthly or yearly fee, but it is much cheaper than having to travel for a face-to-face interview (Nehls, Smith, and Schneider, 2014).

To address the weaknesses of online interviews, I took the following mitigation steps:

1. The interviews were conducted using Zoom premium subscriptions, rather than free membership, as a means of ensuring security. The interviews are not time limited and the premium option provides greater storage.
2. A Zoom test was conducted before each interview. I used a headset with a microphone to test the audio volume.
3. A personal email was sent to each participant with a direct link to the meeting several days before the interview. I sent the participants an invitation link and reminded them of the meeting schedule.
4. I reviewed the consent form and explained the purpose of the interview to the participant.
5. The conversation was recorded. Originating data records are transferred from Zoom cloud storage to One Drive University of Nottingham with a secure password only accessible to the researcher.

Documentary data

Documentary research is a systematic procedure for reviewing both electronic and printed documents. For a qualitative study, documents are desirable to examine and understand the topic under study (Bowen, 2009; Cohen et al., 2009).

A wide range of national documents were examined for this study, including policy papers, Ministry decrees, and relevant regulations. The researcher obtained data from the official websites of the Ministry of Education (www.kemdikbud.go.id) and the state secretariat (www.setneg.go.id). Both websites have a detailed section for regulations, including presidential regulations, ministerial regulations, and the director general's technical instructions.

The documents reviewed for this study also include those specific to the kindergartens, including school profiles, lesson plans, reports, and timetables. In each case, the administrative assistant sent the relevant documents to the researcher via email after the kindergarten head granted permission to examine the documents.

Denscombe (2014) emphasises the importance of comparing documents to primary data such as interviews and observations. Also, this method is useful for triangulating data and ensuring validity. Using these documents, comparisons could be made between the official policy statements and practice at the four kindergartens (Cohen et al, 2007; Bowen, 2009).

To cross-check the participants' interview responses, documentary data were collected. For example, when case study participants claimed that their kindergarten organisation is hierarchical, I reviewed school documents on the organisational structure and confirmed that their claims were substantiated. The data analysis process was carried out concurrently with the process of creating themes and coding. This validation process is an example of triangulation, allowing me to produce valid data from combining interview data and document reviews. Cohen et al (2007) argue that data triangulation is a

technique that enables researchers to combine data from different sources to obtain valid and reliable results.

Data Analysis

Cohen et al. (2007) argue that data analysis in qualitative research is a process of making sense from the research participants' perceptions. Patton (2002) adds that data analysis is a process of transforming data into findings. Watling and James (2012) note that data analysis begins with identification, data collection and storing, data reduction, structuring and coding, theory building, then writing up. Creswell (2013) suggests that analysing qualitative data requires the researcher to understand text and images so that they can answer the research questions.

The data analysis for this study utilised Creswell's (2013) six stages as follows: Step 1: Organizing and preparing. This involves transcribing interviews, scanning materials, and translating from *Bahasa*. In this step, the data were sorted and arranged according to the information source. The purpose of this stage is to prepare and familiarise current researchers with the data to be analysed.

Step 2: Read through all the data. This stage was used to gather general information from participants and reflect on their overall meaning. The process involved reflecting on the overall data, making sense of it, and connecting it with the research question and relevant literature. To make theme creation easier, this stage was developed using Microsoft Word.

Step 3: Coding the data. This stage involves manually coding and sorting the data to facilitate analysis. Coding is the process of identifying passages of text or phrases. It is the most fundamental part of qualitative data analysis. Coding could be a theme, observation, attitude, behaviour, or phrase that frequently appears during an interview (Bazeley, 2006). Using the answers of participants, I generated themes that emerged from the interview. Reading the interview transcriptions, I highlight the words that were most frequently used (see appendix 5)

Step 4: Generate a description and themes. This stage involved merging participants' answers based on similarities and differences, as well as links to research questions. For example, "Leadership Enactment", "Curricula" and "Parental Engagement". This study identified six a priori themes, and one theme emergent from data collection during Covid-19. In the findings and analysis chapters, these themes are used as headings and subheadings to describe significant findings.

Step 5: Creswell (2013) advises researchers to prepare a qualitative narrative at this stage. An important aspect of this stage is connecting the descriptions and themes that will be included in the report. The purpose of this stage was to discover what was meaningful, why it was significant, and what I had learned about kindergarten leadership in Indonesia. It involved choosing direct quotations from participants' responses and explaining what they mean (see chapters four to seven).

Step 6: Interpretation. The purpose of this step goes beyond the description of data to develop a sense of their meaning. Based on the data and literature review, I interpreted the findings. This stage provides a deeper understanding of the entire research and also helps to validate the accuracy of the research results.

Overall, in analysing the research data, this study focused on three main processes, namely: data set construction, case study reporting, and cross-case analysis. Data set construction refers to the process of compiling separate primary and secondary data sets. Case study reporting means presenting the integrated data from the various data sets, to construct four individual case study reports. Cross case analysis is the process of comparing the cases, to provide an overview of the findings across the four kindergartens, leading to analytical generalisation.

Ethics

Ethical approval is an essential factor in a study. All researchers must follow moral principles in social research. Firstly, informed consent, including giving all participants clear information about the study. Secondly, research must be honest and should not be forced. Third, they must maintain privacy and confidentiality. Fourth, researchers should ensure data accuracy (Clifford, 2003).

Before conducting my research, I sought and received the University of Nottingham's ethical approval (see appendix 1). The research followed the ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Also, in the Indonesian context, I adhered to the research code of ethics from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences number 08/E/2013, concerning Guidelines for Research Ethics and Scientific Publication. This regulation contains three main principles. First, all respondents must be given clear information about research. Second, respondents must be respected and treated well. Third, respondents must be free from pressure (LIPI, 2013).

Each participant was asked to read the information about the research, and to provide their informed consent, prior to the interview. All participant information and identity were kept confidential and anonymous. A pseudonym was suggested by Mourby et al (2018) as a means of maintaining participant confidentiality. In this way, there are appropriate safeguards for kindergarten participants.

Therefore, all case studies are given pseudonyms to enhance participant confidentiality: West, Capital, Central, and East Public Kindergarten. Participants were kept anonymous by stating only their profession or position: kindergarten (KG) head, teacher, teaching assistant, administrative assistant, school committee, and LEO (local education officer). In order to distinguish between one kindergarten case and another, the name is given after the pseudonym school. Examples include East, KG Head; West, Teacher; and Capital, School Committee.

There are also ethical issues associated with my positionality as a researcher, who is also a Ministry of Education employee. My professional role as a government senior officer at the Ministry of Education, within the Directorate General of Early Childhood and Community Education, has potential issues of power, especially between me and the kindergarten head and teachers. However, I stressed that all participants were free to participate voluntarily, or to decline to take part. I stressed that the information and insights they provide would be exclusively for research purposes and would not impact on their employment position. I highlighted that I was interviewing the participants in my capacity as a researcher and not as a representative of the Ministry.

I saved all the data in the cloud storage system at the University of Nottingham. Corti et al. (2019) noted that cloud computing services are becoming increasingly popular for the storage of research data, such as Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive, etc. Students and researchers can access this service from any location, and most universities and departments provide this service. Compared to physical storage of data, this cloud service provides greater security. My research data was stored on One Drive at the University of Nottingham with a secure password that only the researcher can access.

Authenticity

Wellington (2000) states that authenticity and trustworthiness are alternative terms for validity and reliability. Bush (2012) says that validity and reliability are two crucial factors in maintaining research authenticity. Silverman (2000) suggests that to maintain reliability and validity requires standardisation of methods. The researcher must design the interview guide properly and carry out the transcriptions correctly. To facilitate this, I kept the data systematically organised.

Denzin (2012) argues that every study has its challenges and weaknesses. Therefore, the researcher should conduct the study in transparent and honest ways, and minimise bias. Consideration of bias is vital to achieve trustworthiness. In this research, I am aware that I cannot be entirely objective.

However, I maintained integrity and adhered to the ethical principles of the University, BERA and the Indonesian Science Institute.

I also shared my work with friends and colleagues at the Post Graduate Research Conferences within the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, as well as at the BELMAS Conference. Silverman (2000) suggests that sharing with other colleagues, such as during seminars or conferences, can contribute to increasing the trustworthiness of research. Recognising the limitation of studies can also improve integrity.

Triangulation is also beneficial for increasing trustworthiness. Wellington (2000) says that triangulation is an approach to checking the truth of data or information obtained by researchers from various points of view. This can contribute to reducing bias that may have occurred during data collection and data analysis.

As discussed earlier, this research involved multiple interviews, and document review methods. To obtain valid and reliable information about kindergarten leadership, those data were triangulated. This research also addresses respondent triangulation, though asking different participants similar questions. Denzin (2012) argues that triangulation is very important in qualitative research, although it can be time-consuming. Triangulation can increase deep understanding of research issues, leading to more authentic, valid and reliable research findings.

This research also emphasises the importance of trustworthiness. I am aware that each study has its own set of challenges and weaknesses. To overcome this challenge, I maintained integrity by adhering to the ethical standards of the university, BERA, and the Indonesian Science Institute. As well as sharing data with several colleagues at international conferences, I also triangulated data to enhance the validity of the data.

I also paid attention to the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative data. The first step was to choose the most appropriate methods to address the

research questions. This step helped to ensure that the collected data are relevant and accurate (Yin, 2013). Secondly, I ensure that the data collection process was conducted carefully and accurately. Thirdly, I ensured that the data was processed appropriately and in a trustworthy manner. I also ensured transparency in reporting the research, including the data collection process, data analysis, and in reporting the results of the research.

It is also important for me to reflect systematically and critically. (Creswell, 2014) stated that reflection is essential for reviewing and evaluating research results. Research reflection can be improved in several ways. First, by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the research. During the research, I took into account what worked well and what could be improved. I also considered the implications of the research findings and how they can contribute to the field of ECE leadership. The third step was to examine the research process as a whole, including what has been learned from the experience, and what can be applied to future studies.

This thesis emphasises the importance of explaining positionality. The researcher is a senior official in the Ministry of Education, Directorate General of ECE. I encountered several dilemmas or challenges when interviewing participants. For example, when they complained about the complicated bureaucracy in the central government, I avoided commenting on the issue. I attempted to conduct this research professionally by being objective and making it clear to the participants that I was a researcher from the University of Nottingham, not a representative of the Ministry of Education.

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the study's research design and methodology. The researcher adopted a multiple case study method. Four cases were selected for this study: kindergartens in North Sumatra Province, the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, Bali Province, and South Sulawesi Province.

I planned to use in-person interviews, document reviews, and observation in this study. However, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted these plans. My face-to-face interviews were replaced by online interviews via Zoom, and my planned observations were cancelled due to social restrictions. A total of ten participants were interviewed at each kindergarten, the head, four teachers, one teaching assistant, one administrator, two parents, and a local education officer (LEO). There were 40 participants across the four cases.

In data analysis, focus was placed on the construction of data sets, reporting of case studies, and analysing cross-cases. In addition to enhancing validity, triangulation was also employed. A discussion of ethical issues was also included in this chapter. In the next chapter, findings from the first case study kindergarten will be presented.

Chapter Four

Case Study One – East Public Kindergarten

Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the findings for case study one – a public kindergarten in East Indonesia. The first section discusses the school profile and organisation. This is followed by the process of data collection for this research, namely interviews and document reviews. The next sections discuss seven themes from the study, including the nature of kindergarten leadership, the organisational structure, curriculum enactment, and parent engagement. This chapter also explores kindergarten leadership during a crisis since this research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The last section provides an overview of the findings in East Public Kindergarten.

School Profile

East public kindergarten is located in the capital city of South Sulawesi Province, with 5,009 private kindergartens and 257 public kindergartens. The kindergarten for this study positioned in the largest city in the province. The area is spread across 175.7 square km, and inhabited by 1.42 million people, based on Census 2020. The citizens mainly work as traders because the city is also known for its seaport. (MoE, 2020).

East public kindergarten is situated in the city area, serving several communities, including traders, civil servants, and private sector employees. The kindergarten was chosen because they have an 'A' accreditation status (outstanding). It also has a high-performance ranking from the National Accreditation Board, an independent non-ministerial agency, that ranks schools based on the Indonesian National Education Standard.

School organisation

East public kindergarten is a state-run school and is owned by the local government. This institution has one kindergarten head, four teachers, one teaching assistant, one administrative assistant and several supporting staff.

The staff members are women, except the administrative assistant and the cleaner, who are males.

The kindergarten head is a woman who has served for three years as head, and spent more than 30 years as a kindergarten teacher before her appointment. The teachers are primarily seniors, who have more than ten years' experience. The leadership structure is mainly hierarchical. School staff members comprise civil servants and honorary employees. Civil servants are government employees. They receive monthly salaries and incentives from the local government, and hold permanent positions. In contrast, honorary staff are temporary employees, do not receive a proper wage, and are paid from the school's operational budget. They work on contract, usually on an annual basis. Although East public kindergarten is a government institution, they only have two civil servants, namely the kindergarten head and one senior teacher, while the rest are honorary temporary staff.

The kindergarten served 92 pupils in the 2019/2020 academic year, but the number dropped to 47 in 2020/2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The institution comprises five classes. These comprise two classes of group A (for five year old pupils) and three classes of group B (for six year old pupils).

Data Collection

Semi structured interviews

I interviewed 10 participants, namely the kindergarten head, four teachers, one assistant teacher, one administration assistant, two kindergarten committee/parent-teacher association members, and one senior official from the East Local Education Office (LEO). Interviews were conducted during May and June 2021, via Zoom. Interviews were audio recorded with the consent of participants (see table 4.1).

Participants' position	Number of participants	Staff experience in this context
Kindergarten Head	1	3 years
Teachers	4	3-17 years
Teaching Assistant	1	3 years
Administrative Assistant	1	13 years
Kindergarten Committee Members	2	1-8 years
Local Education Office Official	1	26 years

Table 4.1: Research Participants from the East Public Kindergarten Case Study

Documents

The kindergarten head granted permission to examine related documents, comprising the school profile book/prospectus, lesson plans, and minutes of meetings. The study also drew on national documents; policy papers, Ministry of Education decrees, and relevant regulations, as noted in chapter three. The kindergarten administration assistants sent the copy of school related documents via email.

The main themes arising from this case study, linked to the research questions, were confirmed by the interviews and documents. An additional theme emerging from the interviews is leadership during a crisis because this research was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic. The seven themes, discussed in this chapter, are:

1. The nature of school leadership
2. The purpose of the kindergarten
3. Leadership enactment
4. Organisational structure
5. Curriculum enactment
6. Parental engagement
7. Leadership during the crisis

The Nature of School Leadership

All participants explained the nature of leadership in East public kindergarten, stressing that the kindergarten head is working within the hierarchy of a highly controlled system centred on the local government. The Local Education Officer noted that:

“East public kindergarten is a government-owned school. The head is a civil servant who is paid by the local government. She is an LEO staff member, our employee. So, her function is more like a line manager at the kindergarten. Her authority is very limited. She cannot make strategic decisions without approval from the LEO’s. She cannot do anything without coordinating and consulting with us. During my career, in practice, I see the kindergarten head’s main task was to administer the school budget and use it wisely for the school activities.” (East, LEO Senior Official)

The kindergarten head confirms this view, stating that her roles and responsibilities are mainly related to general administration with minimal scope to exercise power:

“I do not teach. My activity is more general administrative affairs. I am in charge of teacher performance monitoring, making sure classes are taught, monitoring pupils’ admissions, updating school primary data (*Dapodik*), attending meetings with the LEO, and conducting regular meetings with the teachers, parents and kindergarten staff members.” (East, KG Head)

Other kindergarten staff members agreed that their head has minimal authority and are more focused on administrative duties.

“I see her jobs mostly carrying out meetings outside the office rather than in school. She receives many meeting invitations that she needs to attend from the LEO, Mayor, and other stakeholders. She does not

have enough time to focus on school academics because her administrative workload is too much.” (East, Teacher 1).

The participants’ comments show that the head has limited power due to the controlling management characteristics of the local government. This may seem surprising because, since 2002, Indonesia shifted to decentralisation of education, with school autonomy having a greater role (National document reviews, 20 May 2021). However, this autonomy failed to be implemented. The LEO still has a very strong influence because the public kindergarten head is accountable to the local government, and must follow the traditional bureaucratic model. The school operates within regulations set down by the local government. In terms of staff administration, the kindergarten head is a civil servant, she is a subordinate to the LEO Head and the Mayor. The head is bound by the dominance of the bureaucratic hierarchy, so she has limited managerial authority. This shows that the decentralised education system fails to delegate more authority to public schools.

Criteria for headship appointments

Another insight into the nature of leadership at the East public kindergarten relates to the criteria to become the head. Teacher 2 indicates that the head is unprepared and that the requirements are political:

“If you want an honest answer, the criteria to be the head of East public kindergarten is your face has to be familiar with the Mayor (...smile). It would help if you had a political affiliation with him. Even though you are a civil servant, who should be free from political intervention, but without a strong political connection, you will fail.” (East, Teacher 2)

The LEO implies a similar answer. She added that, although there are guidelines from the central government, it is complicated to apply the criteria at the local level.

“When appointing a prospective kindergarten head, we normally choose senior teachers who are known well by us at the LEO. It is more

simple rather than following the criteria set by the Ministry; they are too rigid. Moreover, the Ministry requires that the aspiring kindergarten head enrol and pass the leadership training from the central government. Here, in East, lots of kindergarten teachers have not been trained through that special training. So, if we have to follow those criteria, our public kindergartens will not have kindergarten heads." (East, LEO Senior Official)

Teacher 4 expresses that the Ministry of Education has determined the criteria for preparing and developing heads of public kindergartens:

"Administratively, the kindergarten head candidate must be a senior teacher. She must have at least three years of experience serving as a kindergarten teacher and be not older than 56 years old. In terms of academic qualifications, she must be a bachelor degree graduate from an Early Childhood Education major or Psychology." (East, Teacher 4)

The kindergarten head confirms that she is not well-prepared for the role.

"I have not attended the leadership training for aspiring principals from the Ministry and do not yet have a certificate as a prospective kindergarten head. However, I have served as a kindergarten teacher for more than 30 years." (East, KG Head)

The interviews and documents show that the Mayor and the LEO gave little consideration to training among the criteria for selecting the kindergarten head. The head has never received training from the Agency for School Principal Empowerment and Development, Ministry of Education. In appointing new principals, the Mayor uses more political connections than training and skills requirements. Although the kindergarten head has 30 years of teaching experience, she has not acquired the training and leadership empowerment to sit in the principal's office. Kindergarten headship requires different skills and training from teaching. This can be nurtured from systemic leadership training,

but the head mainly relies upon her experience as a teacher and learned on the job.

Headship selection

Most of the participants agreed that the selection process for becoming a kindergarten head in East is political. The decentralisation of educational power to local government gives the Mayor a lot of power:

“In the past, the kindergarten head was usually promoted from the internal teachers of East public kindergartens. They were experienced and dedicated teachers from this school. But, in the last few years, the selection process has been dominated by political interests. Nowadays, the newly appointed head can be a teacher from any school, not necessarily from our kindergarten. The current designated kindergarten head is an “outsider”. She is a former teacher from another kindergarten. It seems our Major knows closely with her.” (East, Teacher 3)

The LEO affirmed this view about the selection process. She believes there will always be some political dilemmas in the selection process. She revealed that the appointment of all public schools in East, ranging from kindergarten, primary to secondary school, is the Mayor’s “prerogative”.

“I can tell you the truth that there is no selection process (...smile). Three years ago, when the head of the East public kindergarten retired, the LEO head prepared three senior kindergarten teachers and recommended those potential candidates to the Major. Surprisingly, none of the three names was chosen by the Major. He chose another successor, and we can do nothing. Because the Mayor has the power to do so, he is the one who signs the designated letter for the newly appointed kindergarten head, not the LEO head.” (East, LEO Senior Official)

Other research participants mentioned that the kindergarten head selection process is not only political but also not transparent.

“We never knew what the kindergarten head selection process was like. The LEO never announced the vacancy. We were suddenly informed that we will have a newly appointed kindergarten head. It’s just like having a windfall.” (East, Kindergarten Administrative Assistant)

The school committee chairman offered similar same views. He considers that the selection process for the kindergarten head was known only by the LEO Head and the Mayor:

“We never knew and never got involved in the kindergarten head selection process. I do not think that is our area of authority. It is a top-down process from the Mayor or the LEO head. As a school committee, and a parents’ representative, we simply accept the figure, whoever she is. Most importantly, she can work with us and serves our children well.” (East, School Committee Chairman)

The interviews with participants link to the document review. The Ministry of Education has set rules and standards for the selection process of the state-run kindergarten head. First, the LEO has to circulate the vacancy information to the schools. Teachers who want to take part in the selection process must apply with a cover letter and administrative requirements have been set. After that, the predecessor kindergarten head has to recommend the candidates to the head of the LEO.

Then, the head is required to form a committee to conduct administrative selection. The teachers who pass the administrative process at the local level must proceed to the next step, which is academic selection held by the Agency for School Principal Empowerment and Development, owned by the Ministry of Education. Candidates who pass the academic selection could enrol on the leadership training from the Ministry. Once those candidates finished the training, then he or she will get a certificate as a potential head of school. The

copy of this certificate then will be sent to the Mayor as a consideration for him or her to appointing the new public kindergarten head (National document review, 11 May 2021).

However, the East public kindergarten head gave a different view. She confirmed that the selection process did not follow the guidance from the Ministry, but followed the selection process by the local government.

“Before being appointed, I was invited by the Mayor to his office, and he interviewed me. We discuss about the kindergarten development issues. In my opinion, that is also a selection process.” (East, KG Head)

The insights reported above show that the local government only looks at teaching qualifications and experience in choosing the kindergarten head. The Mayor chooses school principals who have never received leadership training from the MoE, even though the regulations from the central government show that this is a mandatory requirement to become a public school principal. This means that the heads chosen may be inadequately trained. This untrained new kindergarten head will experience many challenges in dealing with various demands of leadership roles. Since Indonesia shifted from centralisation to decentralisation in 2001, most of the authority from the central government has moved to regional governments, including for the education sector. Since then, the local government has the authority to recruit school principals. In the decentralised education system, the appointment of school principals is a city or municipal responsibility. The selection process is full of political considerations and personal connections. As a result, the selected principals were untrained.

The Purpose of Kindergarten Education

All the research participants agreed that kindergarten education has fundamental purposes. This level of education is very crucial to equip children to enter elementary school. This goal is stated in the regulations of the MoE, which is to help children to have social skills that are later useful to live and socialise in the community. Kindergarten institutions teach students to play

with other children and shape social, character, and communication skills. This goal is then passed down to the local government and written in the vision and mission of the school (Document review, 21 May 2021).

The teaching assistant explains how the school formulates the aims of their kindergarten, linked to the national policy.

“The purpose of kindergarten is already stated in the regulations of the Minister of Education. Local governments and schools have to implementing these goals. Kindergarten’s goal is to make children develop optimally so that children could be more independent, promoting physical and spiritual growth and development so that all children equally can enrol in primary education. Kindergarten is an important foundation for children.” (East, Teaching Assistant)

The East Kindergarten administrative assistant confirmed this statement. He explained that the local government has set the purpose of kindergarten from the MoE and this becomes the direction to manage the schools.

“The goal is contained in the vision and mission of the school. It is printed with large font, framed and taped to the wall of the principal’s room adjacent to a photo of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.” (East, Administrative Assistant)

Another teacher provides information about the importance of kindergarten education.

“The purpose of kindergarten is to develop various potentials that children have, including moral aspects, values of religion, social, emotional and independence, language skills, cognitive, physical, motoric, and art.” (East, Teaching Assistant)

While supporting teachers’ views, the KG Head explained her own perception and linked it to the national education vision:

“Kindergarten aims to prepare children to enter elementary school and shape children’s character regardless of ethnicity, religion, social and economic status. The state must be present to provide quality and equal service to all children, boys and girls. This is following the MoE as well as Mayor’s vision and mission and local government targets.” (East, KG Head)

The participant views confirm that the kindergarten simply follows the purpose stated by the central and local government. They have no specific goals and vision. The kindergarten head attempts to include the Mayor’s vision within the school because she tries to be bureaucratically correct.

Kindergarten fees

One of the purposes stated by the participants is equality in kindergarten provision. However, in practice, there are contradictions. The parents are still required to pay the school fee each month to be able send their children to this state-run institution. The East public kindergarten is not free.

“Parents pay a school fee of Rp 300 thousand (GBP 15) per month. These costs cover school operations, electricity, telephone, internet, and the most significant component goes to pay honorary teachers. (East, Administrative Assistant)

In the East context, Rp 300 thousand per month is quite expensive compared to other kindergartens in the same area. The school committee confirmed this.

“Parents pay Rp 300 thousand per month and Rp 2 million (100 GBP) for uniforms during school enrollment. There are several kindergartens near East public kindergarten area. Their school fee per month is cheaper, an average of 100 thousand Rupiah (GBP 5) per month.” (East, school committee official)

Because of these “expensive” school fees per month, it seemed that only middle class parents could afford to send their children to East public kindergarten. The school committee chairman provides additional information about the background of the parents.

“The parents at the East public kindergarten mostly work as businessmen. Others are university lecturers, civil servants, and bankers. The majority of parents come from middle-income families.”
(East, School Committee Chairman)

The principal said she had to take school fees from her parents because there was no funding support from the LEO. They only rely on the budget from the Ministry. Based on the document review, the MoE provides operational budget assistance of Rp 600 thousand (GBP 30) per year per pupil. This figure is minimal, and it is only an incentive fund for local government. Therefore, the Ministry urges local governments to provide more funding support from the regional budget allocation (document review, May 2021).

The LEO confirmed there is a lack of funding support for the school. She addresses this problematic situation.

“It is hard to answer. The Mayor does not care, and he is not doing enough for this matter. He gives enormous attention to primary and secondary education and ignores kindergarten. There is no budget support for kindergarten from the local government. Zero budget. It is true they rely on the budget from the Ministry and parents. Every fiscal year, I always propose a budget allocation for the East public kindergarten, but the Mayor always rejects our proposal. He said the budget priority is to build more primary and secondary school buildings. I have tried my best.” (East, LEO Senior Official)

Drawing from participants’ narratives, kindergarten is a vital education to prepare children to enter elementary school. Schools help develop children’s potential to improve their way of thinking and creativity. Moreover, the service

is intended to shape the minds and character of the child. However, the kindergarten is failing to provide equal provision for children, both boys and girls. Because the school takes advantage of the school fee per month, which is quite an amount of money in the East context, parents have to pay to send their child to a state-owned school. This has led to this service being accessible only to middle-class parents and inaccessible to children from low-income families.

Leadership Enactment

The findings indicate that there may be an element of distributed leadership in this case, albeit allocative rather than emergent. The data show that many staff contribute to decision-making. The head of the kindergarten notes that:

“I cannot do all my tasks. There are many meeting invitations from stakeholders, and I cannot be present all over the place. I have to distribute leadership. I assigned a senior teacher to be the school’s treasurer, another in charge of the academic coordinator field, and one teacher is representing the school at meetings when I am not available.”
(East, KG Head)

Teacher 1, whose job roles included being a treasurer, said she was also responsible for managing the school’s finances in addition to teaching. The principal appoints the position based on seniority. She is the highest echelon teacher at the school and has taught for 17 years.

“Money is an important issue in this school. Therefore the principal appointed me as treasurer. In this kindergarten, only two people are civil servants; the principal and me. Some financial expenditures can only be signed by civil servants, not the honorary staff. We do have staff administration assistant, but the task of the administration office is responsible for updating basic data set, such as number of students, school assets, as well as word processing, creating spreadsheets, filing and providing office support.” (East, Teacher 1)

Similarly, another teacher shows that leadership is the practice of collective effort.

“The kindergarten head shares her job with the teachers and other employees at the school. She usually appoints directly based on trust. The head cannot work alone; she will fail if she does not involve all staff because of the challenges and many jobs. She depends on us, and we rely on her. With collaboration, we can overcome all problems.” (East, Teacher 3)

Other teachers support the kindergarten head’s opinion. Teacher 2 is often assigned to represent the head at meetings:

“I am usually assigned to attend meetings with LEO, parents, or community organisations. The job was shared with me. Sometimes I represent a meeting with the LEO head when the KG head cannot fulfil the invitation. The head must delegate her staff to represent the school because the job can be a burden if you bear it yourself.” (East, Teacher 2)

The data indicate that the kindergarten head is not the only leader, although the leadership distribution is allocative, from head to staff at the school. The head has the authority to allocate the work to her team, which arises because of the organisation’s hierarchy. The staff contributes to the leadership of the school because it is allocative. For example, in addition to being a teacher, one teacher is assigned to be the treasurer. This evidence shows that distribution is top-down rather than emergent.

Decision making

Decision-making is an important part of leadership enactment. All participants claimed that decisions are influenced by Indonesian culture, *musyawarah untuk mufakat* (deliberation for consensus). The KG head invites the staff for regular meetings every month.

“The decision process is top to bottom. When a problem arises, the kindergarten head passed the information to the senior teacher or administrative assistant, and she calls all of us to conduct a meeting. Everyone is invited, all teachers and staff members. We discuss the issues, when everyone agrees, then we carry out the decisions taken.”
(East, Teacher 4)

The school committee chairman also claimed that he always get an invitation to meet with the head and teachers. The meetings take place once a month, usually after parenting classes. If a particular problem appears, the KG head will be invited for a special or sudden meeting.

“Usually we conduct a meeting to discuss a particular issue, for example, school fee. We have a WhatsApp group with the head and all of the teachers. So, the head firstly will share what the problem was, then [we are] asked for an opinion.” (East, School committee chairman)

The kindergarten head claimed that she invites everyone to be involved and to speak up in meetings. Everyone has the same opportunity to make a contribution to the progress of the school.

“Anytime I made a decision, I always ask the teachers and another employee. Again, I cannot work alone. I always ask for their opinion. We always conduct a meeting to discuss any programmes, problems, or activities. Even though the final decision is for me, I do not want any decision to be a burden on me, nor on the teacher.” (East, KG Head)

However, a different view was expressed by the LEO. She explained that the kindergarten head is the LEO’s sub-ordinate. So the kindergarten head cannot make her own decisions, and the LEO can veto the decision taken by the principal even though the decision is the result of a meeting with all kindergarten staff and committees.

“The head of the kindergarten has to coordinate with me at the LEO. They cannot directly decide for themselves. They have to keep coordinating with me in terms of student admissions, school budgeting, teacher training, and school activities. So here’s the thing, for example, they want to organise a colouring competition at school. The head of the kindergarten has to get permission from me as a senior official at LEO. Firstly they have to write a permission letter to conduct the activity. Then, If the LEO agrees with it, we will issue a recommendation letter for the school to do the activity. Last year, the kindergarten and committee agreed to increase the school fee, but the LEO disagreed, and then we cancelled that plan.” (East, LEO Senior Official)

The participants’ views show that the kindergarten head has minimal scope for decision making. Her subordinate status provides limited authority and autonomy to lead the kindergarten, despite the apparent preference for school-level consensus. Moreover, as a civil servant, she also has to act in an administrative role. These constraints provide little opportunity for the head to improve the learning process and initiate policy.

Organisational Structure

All participants explained their perceptions of the structure of the kindergarten. This structure is formal and required by the LEO. Therefore the format is the same in all public kindergartens in East. Personnel may change, but the structure is fixed. According to the participants, the structure is primarily hierarchical. Teacher one said that this structure was nailed to the head teacher’s wall in the form of an organogram (see figure 4.1):

"We have the LEO Head at the top of the structure. Then under him, there is the KG Head, teacher, KG administration assistant, cleaner and school security officer. We work together to achieve the school's goals."
(East, Teacher 1)

All participants claimed that this structure helped the principal and teachers run the school. The teaching assistant corroborates the kindergarten structure

and notes that the system regulates the interactions and relations between all staff at the school. The structure seems hierarchical.

"The structure provides space for staff to participate. The kindergarten head divides the duties with her subordinates. She determines who becomes treasurer, academic coordinator, sports coordinator, etc. She gives space to speak up." (East, Teaching assistant)

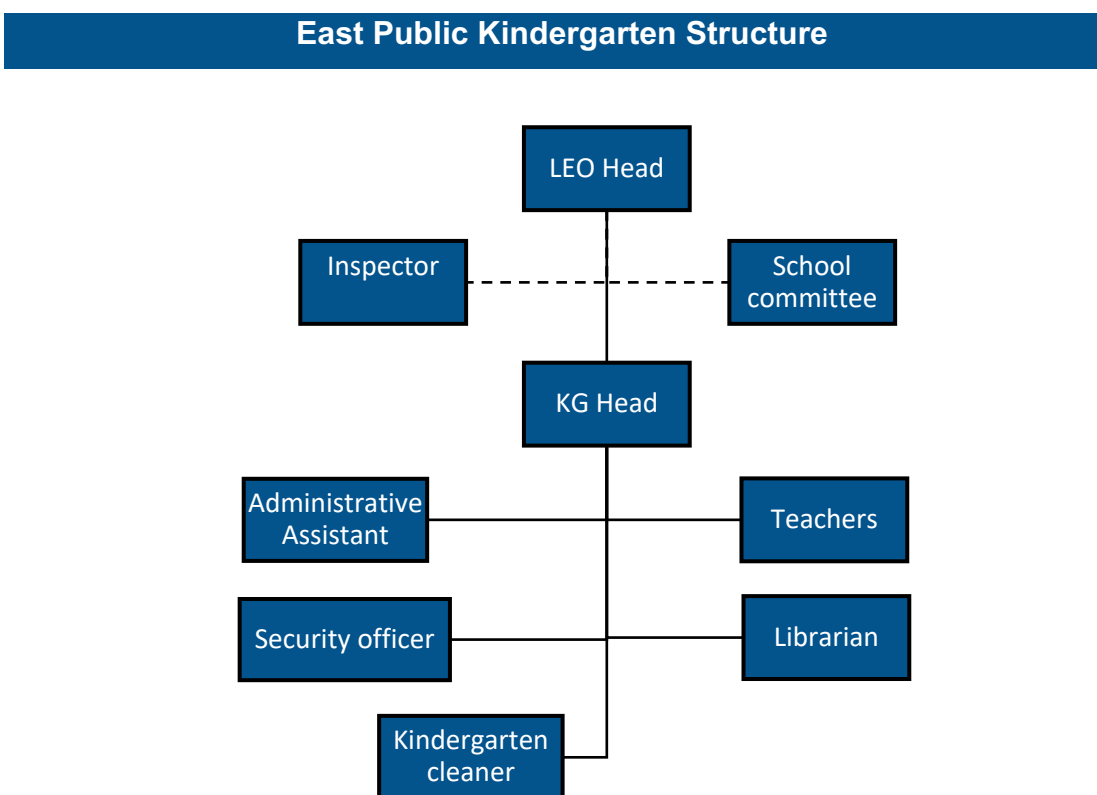


Figure 4.1: East public kindergarten organisational structure (source: School documentation, 2021)

This comment indicates that, although assignments are given hierarchically, the principal collaborates with teachers and staff members. The head confirmed the kindergarten's structure which she called the bureaucratic hierarchy. Leadership is top-down from the head, senior teacher to administrative assistant.

The kindergarten committee chair corroborated these findings.

"School structure is a hierarchy; the principal gets a mandate from the Mayor and implements policies following his vision and mission.

Usually, the Mayor gives orders to the head of LEO, or directly to the KG Head, then she passes it on to the teachers, staff and parents. At the school level, the KG head is the highest leader, but her leadership is greatly influenced by the power of City Major." (East, School Committee Chairman)

The other participants offer different views. There is another form of leadership in addition to the formal leader, namely the school committee chairman.

"Horizontally, there is a chairman of the school committee. His position is equal with the principal. He is a representative of the parents and the community. The school committee serves as an advisory agency to supervise the kindergarten programmes. It also serves as a supporting agency for the school." (East, LEO Senior Official)

Other participants commented that leadership in the school comprises the kindergarten head, the head of LEO, and the Mayor.

"I think our structure is bureaucratic. Because the principal is a civil servant, she is a sub-ordinate of LEO, although the Mayor appoints her. LEO is responsible for the continuity of the school, especially providing school budgets even though they have not provided funding in recent years (...smile)." (East, Administrative Assistant).

The evidence from interviews and documents confirms that the school structure is hierarchical. It uses a bureaucratic system that gives the kindergarten head little space to initiate policy. In this bureaucratic model, each individual holds a defined position within the school structure. Personnel could resign or retire, but the structure remains. The design aims to represent job relationships between school members. The structure is fixed; it does not derive from necessity or from bottom-up, but rather top-down.

Job descriptions

The organisational structure describes the chain of command and the job description of school members but school members also perform additional roles. Each person's responsibilities in practice differ from what is written in the formal structure.

"Apart from being a teacher, I am also the treasurer of the school. Other teachers also hold positions as academic coordinators and school representatives. The kindergarten head is the top leader of the structure at school, but she shares additional duties with teachers." (East, Teacher 1)

The above quote shows that the head gives essential assignments to the most senior teachers, for example, the treasurer position. The principal also allocates additional roles without official or formal titles. Comments from other participants corroborate this.

"In addition to being an administrative assistant, I am also a librarian and the school security officer. Every afternoon, before I go home, I need to make sure the doors and windows are locked. We have a financial shortage; we cannot recruit particular security personnel." (East, Administrative Assistant)

Job descriptions are designed in two-parts. The first part is generic and explains formal roles and responsibilities, listed in an organisational structure or anagram. The second part is informal. The functions listed in the organisational structure are different from reality. For example, the Mayor has enormous power over the school. He has the prerogative to appoint public kindergarten heads, as well as the primary and secondary public schools' heads. Surprisingly, however, the documents reviewed by the researcher do not show the Mayor as part of the kindergarten's organisational structure. This can lead to conflicts and dilemmas, because, politically, he influences the school's leadership, but when viewed from the structure of the school, he does not bear any legal responsibility.

Curriculum Enactment

Research participants said that the central government stipulates the curriculum adopted in schools. They received it as a policy from the Ministry of Education, which was passed down to the LEO, then delivered to the school to be applied.

“Our kindergartens use K-13 short for Curriculum or *Kurikulum* 2013. It is a national-wide curriculum reform developed by the Ministry of Education in 2013. Currently, the curriculum is widely implemented in all schools in Indonesia.” (East, LEO Senior Official)

This comment is supported by the document review. K-13 is the latest curriculum in the Indonesian education system. It is part of a reform of the curriculum in 2004 that involves the entire education system. It aims to prepare Indonesian students to be creative, productive, innovative, effective, and to cope within a community, national, and world civilisation (MoE, 2013). K-13 is an integrated curriculum that emphasises the balance between student attitudes, skills, and knowledge. At the kindergarten level, the K-2013 emphasises the process of play-based learning and has a Standard Level of Pupils Development that covers five aspects, namely religious and moral, physical, language, social-emotional, and art (Document review, 29 May 2021).

According to teacher two, although the MoE labelled the new curriculum as a “curriculum reform”, the new curriculum is worse than the previous one.

“This latest curriculum is not a policy that results from grass root level aspirations, not from teachers who carry out daily class activities. This is a top-down policy from the central government.” (East, Teacher 2)

The participants state that the new curriculum is something they must accept, because it is a national policy established by the highest regulator in education, the MoE. All school leaders, ranging from kindergarten to high school, have to use this curriculum:

“We are the people at the bottom level of the policy; whatever policies stated by the government, we must follow. Moreover, we are a state-run school. We cannot complain or reject it or prefer to choose the previous curriculum. We have to implement it.” (East, Teacher 4)

This comment confirms that kindergarten heads cannot say ‘no’ to the new curriculum reform policies. The choice is only one; they have to implement it. This is because of the organisational hierarchy that leads to a compliance culture. Although Indonesia has implemented decentralisation for more than two decades, the policy orientation is still very centralised in respect of curriculum implementation.

Some participants said that this was a dilemma because school leaders must implement curriculum 2013 even though the infrastructure and facilities are inadequate. The kindergarten head suffered in implementing the new curriculum because many teachers did not receive training from the centre or the LEO.

“We are experiencing obstacles in leading the reform of curriculum at the school level because this 2013 national curriculum requires significant changes in terms of learning. Teachers were asked to be more active, even though training from the centre is still very lacking”. (East, Teacher 1)

“When the 2013 curriculum was implemented, most of our teachers were old and about to retire. They no longer want to learn and adapt to the new curriculum, especially in the use of science and technology.” (East, Teacher 3).

This view was corroborated by other participants who confirmed the lack of training for teachers and other staff members.

“Only two people in this kindergarten have received K-2013 curriculum training, namely the principal and one senior teacher. Both are civil servants. Since 2014, no one has participated in training other than them. I know exactly because every single invitation letter went to my desk. We are very lacking in teacher training, not just training on the 2013 curriculum. This year there was only one training invitation letter from the local government, not from the LEO but from the local library about how teachers deliver storytelling to children.” (East, administrative assistant)

The evidence is clear that the curriculum is interpreted as a policy from the centre. It is a top-down approach. The kindergarten head could not refuse and has to implement it. This is the impact of the bureaucratic hierarchy and the result is a compliance culture in schools. This requirement is in contrast to the decentralised education mission that appears to give more authority to teachers and schools.

Inappropriate teacher training is also evident from participants' views. This means that the kindergarten head must balance between adopting the 2013 Curriculum, despite the lack of teacher training and facilities. She can only try her best to provide good education within limited resources.

Parental Engagement

All participants agreed that parent-school engagement is essential for kindergarten children to succeed. The research shows that parents recognise that leadership from the kindergarten head is critical in building cooperation and relationships. In general, parents are happy with the head, who is perceived to be friendly and communicative.

“Parents' involvement is very critical for school. Our kindergarten programme will not run smoothly without parents' support. Kindergarten children are far different from older students. They need parents to help them doing a project and any other task given by the teacher. Parental

engagement is one of the keys to a child's success in learning." (East, Teacher 4)

The quotes from other participants corroborate this. The head also addresses the impact of parental engagement on pupils' academic achievement.

"Parental involvement can increase the child's motivation in learning because they realise their parents are always there for them. Children are also proud to see their parents active in school, and they will feel comfortable. It will have a positive impact on academic development and its capabilities. Of course, this will help teachers and facilitate teaching and learning activities in schools. The school's success is when I could improve relationships with parents and the surrounding community." (East, KG Head).

One aspect of parent-school engagement is the existence of a school committee. The central government regulates the establishment of the school committee through MoE Decree Number 75 of 2016. The school committee's role is to monitor and supervise educational provision at the school level, advising on the school's programmes; budget plan, infrastructure, and facilities. This role includes following up on complaints, suggestions, criticisms, and aspirations from parents and the community.

The school committee chairman is elected through a parents' meeting. Its members come from parents/guardians of students who are still active in school, community leaders, and education experts. Teachers and school staff are prohibited from becoming [members of] school committees. This is to avoid conflict of interest. (Document review, 11 June 2021)

The participants' comments suggest that parental participation in East kindergarten is very high.

"I see the parents are active, very active. Parents are involved in children's sports, arts, and outdoor activities. Every year, the pupils

perform singing and dancing, broadcast on the local television station. Parents are involved there. They manage the event and organise it. Parents are involved in a lot of activities, such as a visit to the orphan and care house, and the religious day celebration.” (East, Teacher 3)

Other participants agreed that the contribution of parents is significant in supporting school activities. Usually, they help the school to manage the events, religious celebrations, study tours and school performances. However, this contribution is limited to children’s performance activities or outdoor activities. The school committee is less involved in school policy formulation. The school committee chairman recognises this. He has served for eight years, or two periods, and understands his limited authority.

“Usually, we help schools in terms of funding when the school needs [this]. For example, when children had a school visit to a tourism site, parents will cover all expenses; bus rent, lunch, ticket, everything. They organise it and fund it all. However, when it comes to school policy, curriculum, and lesson plans, it is not our area of authority.” (East, School Committee Chairman).

The other school committee administrator also agrees with his view. She has two children in East Public kindergarten and served as a school committee official for almost two years.

“We usually agree with whatever programme, curriculum and lesson plan made by the principal and teachers. Rarely do parents criticise, complain or give inputs on school policy. Most of the parents are career men or women, the school committee chairman is also a senior lecturer at the university, he is an extremely busy person. So we usually get involved only when there are children’s outdoor activities.” (East, School Committee Official)

The findings show that the role of the school committee is not optimal. Although parents are actively involved in kindergarten activities, that

involvement is limited to fundraising to support out-of-school activities. Parents have not demonstrated their role as supervisors, as mandated by the Ministry of Education. Although parents elect the school committee chairman, his letter of deployment is signed by the kindergarten head. This indicates that the chairman is subordinate to the principal.

In considering school policy, it is clear that the school committee is only a "rubber stamp". Although most parents assume that public schools are supposed to have funding support from the government, they always agree when schools ask for budget support from parents. It is because the school committee has limited power.

Leadership during a Crisis

Covid-19 has had a massive impact on our lives, including in the world of education. Schools are facing unprecedented challenges arising from the pandemic. Kindergarten heads and teachers, including parents, must cope with the devastating impact of Covid-19. The East public kindergarten head had to deal with school closure. She had to lead the move to teach online and this was difficult because most teachers are technology illiterate. In addition, she had to cope with parents' income being hit due to Covid-19 and with pupil mental health issues.

"The impact of Covid-19 is very significant for kindergarten children. Primary and secondary school children probably could cope with online learning, but not with kindergarten. Since the pandemic, we have turned to online learning an hour per day via Zoom, from 9 AM to 10 AM. It is not easy to get children to stick on the monitor. Normally, within 15 minutes, the children will no longer stay in front of the monitor (..smile)." (East, Teacher 3).

Other participants said that, before the pandemic, children would learn from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. but, during the pandemic, the head and teachers cut the learning hours to only three days a week, an hour each day, through Zoom.

"At the first time it was complicated to set the schedule with parents and children because most parents are working, although they do it from home, but still most parents are unable to accompany their children to study. In addition, kindergarten teachers have never been trained how to conduct online learning. Most of us will retire soon, and it is not the time for us to learn new things." (East, Teacher 1).

The head teacher acted quickly in this situation. She appointed the junior teacher to teach all teachers using Zoom for online learning. The kindergarten head showed empathy by cutting the school fees from Rp 300 thousand per month to Rp 150 thousand. This is because schools could not provide complete services, as in normal conditions, and because most parents were affected by the pandemic.

"We are really struggling. This is a tough situation. I have four honorary teachers, an administrative assistant, and a school cleaner. All of their salaries are paid by school fees from parents, and there is no budget support from the LEO. All I can do is speak to the school staff to be patient and pray to God." (East, KG Head)

The number of students also dropped dramatically due to the pandemic. The school served 92 pupils in the 2019/2020 school year, but the number dropped to 47 in 2020/2021. Some parents are reluctant to put their children in kindergarten if they are only learning online. Many parents chose to withdraw their children from kindergarten and keep their children at home. Moreover, in the Indonesian education system, kindergarten is not mandatory. The compulsory education is nine years, starting from primary school and continuing to the secondary school.

The head tried to overcome this problem by establishing regular communication with parents. She tried to convince them that kindergarten is crucial education provision. She does not want the pupils to withdraw from school. She stresses that online learning could also help children to prepare to enter elementary school.

The school committee official recognises this, confirming that the kindergarten head often contacts parents personally via phone calls:

"We have a WhatsApp group; the members are parents, teachers and the kindergarten head. Usually, before a pandemic, the head rarely contacts parents directly, [it is] classroom teachers who call us. But during the pandemic, she calls parents directly and speaks from heart to heart to the parents." (East, School Committee Official)

This view is corroborated by teacher four, who said that the head built closer communication with parents during the pandemic:

"She usually does not speak directly to the parents. However, during the pandemic, it changes. She lends the hand. She asks parents not to withdraw their children from school." (East, Teacher 4)

The crisis led to some creativity. For example a junior teacher demonstrated leadership practice and empathy. During the lockdown, in March 2020, she visited her pupils at home to provide face to face learning, although the government prohibits it. By riding her motorcycle, she visited up to three children every day for 30 minutes to an hour each for face-to-face learning. She taught children to sing, play, and conduct offline learning in front of the students' houses while the student was kept inside the house, standing behind the open door to maintain social distance.

"Please show me which kindergarten children are comfortable and enjoy online learning? Kindergarten children are different from primary and secondary school students. They could not last more than 30 minutes using Zoom. Parents also call me by phone said, please help us, please help us; we have difficulty teaching children at home." (East, Teacher 4)

This comment shows that teachers had an ethical dilemma during the pandemic. On the one hand, the teacher's heart led her to help the student's

learning. On the other hand, she broke the government rule that face-to-face learning should not take place during the COVID-19 crisis.

Pandemics also could create opportunities for schools: For example, technology illiterate teachers learned to conduct online learning using video conferences and Zoom.

"I do not know how to teach online, I have never used Zoom before, I do not know what application it is. I am technology illiterate. I use my mobile phones only to make phone calls and text messages, but now I learn how to teach by online." (East, Teacher 1)

Kindergarten head are dealing with this situation by assigning more competent junior teachers to train teachers who struggle with technology and are less capable. The junior teacher, who just three years ago graduated from the university, helps senior teachers to use technology to do online teaching via Zoom.

Overview

This chapter discusses leadership in East public kindergarten, covering the nature of leadership, participants' perceptions of the purpose of kindergarten education, leadership enactment, organisational structure, curriculum enactment, and parental involvement. It concludes with the emergent theme of crisis leadership, arising from the interviews. Leadership in East public kindergarten is hierarchical. The principal does more administrative work, and she serves more as a line manager than a leader.

Educational reform in Indonesia has developed since 2003. The educational authority that was initially centralised changed through decentralisation to the local government. In line with these education reforms, the government promotes school-based management and gives more autonomy to principals. However, this devolution of authority was not followed by human resource development at the local level. As a result, the person appointed as a kindergarten head is untrained and facing a challenging situation. Not only

does she lack experience, but also the teachers and kindergarten staff lack training from the central government and the LEO. Moreover, there is insufficient budget support from the government. In addition, the head is constrained by regulations and, at the same time, is required to perform well and strengthen kindergarten performance.

The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbates this situation. The kindergarten head was required to take quick decisions and move on to online learning. Most of the teachers are tech-illiterate. Most teachers are over the age of 50 and will soon be retired. In the Indonesian context, during a pandemic, those over the age of 50 were categorised as vulnerable people. Therefore, the head suffered from extremely limited resources at a difficult time. The next chapter presents the findings from the West public kindergarten.

Chapter Five

Case Study Two – West Public Kindergarten

Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the findings for case study two - a public kindergarten in West Indonesia. It starts with an overview of the school's profile, followed by the themes that linked to the research question and emerged from the research, namely the nature of kindergarten leadership, the organisational structure, the curriculum enacted, parent involvement, and kindergarten leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, it provides an overview of the findings.

School Profile

The kindergarten is situated in the North Sumatra province. There are 198 public kindergartens and 2,872 private ones in this province. The case study kindergarten is situated in a city. Located in Indonesia's western region, it is a hub for trade, industry, and business. It had a population of 2,435,252 as of 2020 (BPS, 2021), with 41 per cent of the population aged 0-19.

The kindergarten is based in a multi-ethnic area. People living in the kindergarten area come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, such as Malay, Chinese, Javanese, Batak, and Indian descent. In addition to being multi-ethnic, the area is also multi-religious. The Office of National Statistics classified the area as a peaceful and comfortable place to live (BPS, 2021). West Public Kindergarten is less than 2 miles from three private kindergartens and three community learning centres (school document review, October 2021).

School organisation

Since 1980, West Public Kindergarten has served the community as a public school. It is accredited by the National Accreditation Board as A-rated (outstanding). It is owned by the West City Local Government. There is one principal, six teachers, an assistant teacher, an administrative assistant, and a school cleaner. All staff are women, except for the cleaner.

The principal is a senior civil servant who has served for seven years or two terms. She previously taught kindergarten for 31 years. Teachers are also senior civil servants, and most of the current staff will retire within a couple of years. The assistant teacher is a non-tenured or honorary employee. The head has a master's degree, and all the teachers have a bachelor's degree.

The kindergarten offers half-day sessions for students between the ages of five and six. The school has six classes: three for children aged 5 to 6 (Classes A1 to A3) and three for children aged 6 (Classes B1 to B3). At the time of the research, there were 110 pupils in the school, 61 boys and 49 girls.

Data Collection

Semi structured interview

Ten individuals participated in this study; the principal, four teachers, the teaching assistant, the administration assistant, two members of the school committee, and a senior official from the Local Education Office (LEO). The interviews were conducted online via Zoom in October 2021. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio recorded (see table 5.1).

Teacher and school committee members were selected by purposive sampling by selecting participants from lists that were provided by the head of West Public Kindergarten. Four out of six teachers were chosen to participate for the following reasons: Firstly, teachers with many years of experience to describe leadership practices. Secondly, they have a bachelor's degree in kindergarten or early childhood education. Thirdly, they voluntarily agreed to be interviewed. At West Public Kindergarten, all teachers are experienced, and were willing to be interviewed, but of the teachers were not graduates from kindergarten or early childhood education, but rather held degrees in sociology. Therefore, only four teachers fulfilled the selection criteria.

The parents chosen were those who served as school committee officials and were willing to be interviewed. The West Public Kindergarten has three officials on its school committee, comprising the chairwoman, the secretary, and the treasurer. Both the chairwoman and the treasurer consent to be interviewed.

Participants' position	Number of participants	Staff experience
Head of kindergarten	1	7 years
Teachers	4	30-38 years
Teaching assistant	1	3
School administrative assistant	1	25 years
School committee	2	1-2 years
Local education office	1	32 years

Table 5.1: Research Participants from the West Public Kindergarten Case Study

Documents

The documents reviewed for this case are specific to the kindergarten: school profiles, lesson plans, reports, and timetables. The principal granted permission to examine the documents and the teaching assistant sent the relevant documents via the researcher's email. The documents enabled comparisons with interview data and between stated policies and their implementation.

The data led to the following seven themes, that are each discussed below:

1. The nature of school leadership
2. The purpose of the kindergarten
3. Leadership enactment
4. Organisational structure
5. Curriculum enactment
6. Parental engagement
7. Leadership during the crisis

The Nature of School Leadership

West Public Kindergarten's head has served two consecutive terms, of four years, beginning in 2014. In 2018, the Mayor reappointed her to the position for the second time. According to the participants, the head's role is associated with day-to-day school management. A teacher who has taught for decades explains this viewpoint.

“Her role involves controlling the school budget, ensuring the attendance of students and teachers, registering school assets, and looking after teacher and employment affairs.” (West, Teacher 2)

A second participant confirms this. Five years ago, she started working at West Public Kindergarten. Her previous position was head of a public kindergarten in Aceh province, but she was demoted to become a teacher. She has taught kindergarten for 30 years.

"I was a state kindergarten head in Aceh for three years. A principal has too many administrative responsibilities. Teachers and administrative staff may struggle to make a good school report, especially if the school receives funding from the central government or the local government." (West, Teacher 1)

Similarly, the head expresses this sentiment.

"My responsibilities are mostly administrative, with regular meetings with the local education office, greeting guests, responding to invitations, and completing teacher performance assessments on paper. In the last two years, my tasks have steadily increased since this kindergarten receives operational funding from the Ministry of Education and the Local Education Office. I have to report the funds at the end of the year, as they will be audited. A failure to provide good financial reports will harm my position as a civil servant." (West, KG Head)

That statement was echoed by another teacher, who says that the head's job is to make sure the school budget is handled properly. The kindergarten also employed one non-tenured teaching assistant who was paid from the school budget.

“Currently, we have one teaching assistant. The local government does not pay her. Schools and parents are responsible for her salary. In this case, the principal must set aside money from the school budget for the allowance.” (West, Teacher 4)

The research participants believe that the head has high administrative demands. As a kindergarten leader, she is tasked with improving school and student performance outcomes. However, she is also responsible for reporting administrative duties to her superiors in the Education Office, as a civil servant.

Criteria for headship appointments

Further insight into the nature of leadership at West Public Kindergarten can be seen in the criteria for becoming the head. The LEO noted that the criteria for being a public kindergarten head at the local level is not consistent with the formal requirement from the central government, that prospective school principals should receive training from the Ministry of Education.

"The Ministry's regulations are good. Nevertheless, not all requirements from the central government can be incorporated at the local level. To propose a prospective principal for training from the Ministry is a long process. The documents starts at the kindergarten, travels to the LEO, is processed at the Mayor's Office, and then to Jakarta (Minister of Education Office). The process is lengthy, but in most cases, a principal must be appointed at short notice." (West, LEO Senior Official)

The principal was aware of the situation:

"I attended the principal training after I served as a principal. There is almost a year between the time I applied and the training session. Fortunately, I was able to pass it, some of my colleagues failed and had to take it again the next year." (West, KG Head)

Another participant explained that public kindergarten principals are appointed differently from those in private kindergartens. This is because they must come from a civil service background and work for a local government office. The candidate must demonstrate loyalty in addition to administrative terms.

"The head of state kindergarten is a civil servant, and obedience to authority is priority one. It is expected that they follow the instructions of their superiors at the LEO, and the Mayor." (West, Teacher 3)

There was an acknowledgement of this from a school committee member. Her only knowledge of the criteria for becoming the public kindergarten leader was that prospective candidates need some experience as teachers.

"Our only knowledge is that principals normally come from teachers, and she must hold a civil servant position. During my time as a school committee, the head already occupied her position. Thus, I am not familiar with the criteria for being a kindergarten head." (West, School Committee 1).

The criteria for becoming a kindergarten principal at West Public Kindergarten do not all correspond to the central government's policies. Also, participants considered the process very lengthy and time-consuming. The Mayor and LEO then took a 'shortcut' by hiring a very experienced civil servant teacher who was not trained as a principal candidate.

Headship selection

The participants notes that being competent and experienced is not enough to become a principal. The candidate needs strong political connections. A participant believed herself as a "political victim". She had been the principal of a public kindergarten in Aceh, 260 miles from West Public Kindergarten, for three years. As a result of the new mayor's election, many principals and senior officials at LEO were fired, including her.

"Most public school principals in the city are the product of political processes. No one can deny it. Currently, the head of West Public Kindergarten is a kind and experienced individual. Moreover, she also chairs the city's teachers' union. Her position as a member of the union gives her access to the Mayor's Office and the Director of the Local Education Office. She can take advantage of those opportunities." (West, Teacher 1).

This statement is endorsed by a senior LEO, who says that the mayor has the final say on who will lead public schools. The selection process is partly determined by regulations from the Minister of Education. Selection starts with

administrative requirements, including minimum working experience, civil servant grade/echelon level, and minimum age requirements.

"Once the prospective principal has passed the initial process, the next step will be determined by the mayor. The LEO Director gives consideration and recommendations to the Mayor in advance. We usually choose candidates who not only have good performance records, but are also familiar with the mayor's mission and programmes." (West, LEO Senior Official)

The West Public Kindergarten head has a different opinion, discounting the importance of the political process:

"I ran for the principal selection process seven years ago. Back then, there were four candidates competing. I found the process extremely competitive. Only two people remained in the final stages, and I was chosen. However, I have no personal relationship with the Mayor. Perhaps I was chosen because I was the most senior candidate." (West, KG Head)

Some West Public Kindergarten teachers believe that the head selection process is not solely based on qualifications and competencies, but is also influenced by political considerations. Leadership practices at West Public Kindergarten appear to be influenced by partisan politics and personal ties to local elites.

The Purpose of Kindergarten Education

The purpose of the kindergarten is outlined in the school's vision and mission statement. The school members drafted it based on the goals of the Ministry of Education. These goals are then combined with the vision and mission of the mayor. Research participants all agreed that kindergarten education serves a fundamental purpose.

"Kindergarten plays a vital role in children's transition to primary school. Traditionally, many parents send their children directly to primary school

rather than kindergarten. Today, parents are increasingly realising the value of kindergarten.” (West, School Committee 2)

According to the study participants, the purpose of the kindergarten is linked to the vision and mission of the Mayor, as well as the requirements of central government. Those two elements were combined into the school's vision.

“As for preparing the school's vision, it cannot be separated from the Ministry of Education's guidelines. We then adjust to the mayor's vision. It is a mix and match process. As you know, our President carries the National Movement for Mental Revolution, so does our Mayor. Therefore, in order to meet the vision of the school's mission, we strive to shape students with stronger mental and character qualities, disciplined and well-behaved students.” (West, Teacher 2).

Along with accommodating the Ministry's and mayor's directives, a participant highlights how the school also takes account of parents' interests. The vast majority of parents are Muslims, and they want the kindergarten to portray Islamic values such as honesty, trust, and worshipping only God.

"As a result, we offer Quran Reading activities twice a week after school hours for Muslim students to satisfy their parents' needs. This is an extracurricular activity, not a subject." (West, Teaching Assistant)

In accordance with the Ministry of Education's Regulation number 18 (2018), regarding Early Childhood Education, the purpose of kindergarten is to prepare qualified Indonesian children for primary school, who grow and develop at their own pace. The mayor's stated vision is working toward creating social justice through corruption-free bureaucratic reform, accountability, and transparency within the community services (West City Government Profiles Book, 2021).

The school combines the kindergarten purposes expressed by the local and central governments, as well as the parents' goals, to create the following West Public Kindergarten statement:

Vision:

1. Assuring students are intelligent, healthy, cheerful, have a strong character, are honest, and live in obedience to God.
2. Encouraging children to be creative, independent, disciplined and responsible at a young age.

Mission:

1. Delivering excellent kindergarten programmes to the community.
2. Fostering an independent personality, and good manners.
3. Educating children about becoming creative, efficient, innovative based on their developmental stages.
4. Preparing children to attend primary school.

(West Public Kindergarten Profiles Book, Academic Year 2020/2021).

Research participants' statements indicate that the kindergarten's purpose is perceived as an instruction from the central government, accompanied by a vision from the local government and parents.

Kindergarten fees

Leadership practices at West Public Kindergarten are affected by school finances. Free kindergarten has been offered at West Public Kindergarten since the 2019-2020 school year. Prior to this, parents had to pay Rp 75 thousand (GBP 4) per month. Two years ago, the school began receiving subsidies from the city government, in addition to funding from the Ministry of Education. An employee who has worked for the school for over 25 years shared this opinion.

“The mayor has demonstrated a great deal of commitment to education in this city by providing adequate funding for all public schools. The students will no longer have to pay monthly tuition fees.” (West, Administrative assistant).

Other research participants agreed that free school fees caught the mayor's attention throughout his political campaign, and that free education was one of his promises.

"Our mayor represents political party members, he should not make a bad impression with his leadership. The Ministry already provides operational budget assistance to all local public schools, it is embarrassing for the Mayor if the local government does not fund our kindergarten, since health and education are his priorities. The mayor has restricted all public schools from collecting student fees from parents." (West, Teacher 4).

A different perspective, however, came from the school committee. The West Public Kindergarten has been free for the past two years, However, the parents paid the salary of a non-tenured teaching assistant because the local government allocation is inadequate.

"The parents agreed to provide a financial allowance to the teacher assistant, so she has a decent income. In general, parents are happy to help because they think of it as a kind deed, and the richer parents donate more while the poorer ones give less. Their belief is that God will return their money to them in their later life." (West, School Committee 2)

The principal was responsible for paying the teaching assistant's basic salary. However, she declined to disclose how she was financing her salary. According to the parents, the salary for the teaching assistant is below the city's minimum wage.

"We agree to provide financial assistance above the kindergarten's basic salary. It is our reward for her. She works very hard." (West, School Committee 1).

Overall, it is clear that the West Public Kindergarten does not charge tuition, as they receive funding from the central and local governments. However, these funds do not cover all operating expenses. A teacher assistant is not paid by the government but must be funded by the school and parents.

Leadership Enactment

The word 'teamwork' was repeatedly mentioned by most participants. The kindergarten head stated that they worked together, for instance in preparing learning activities. The teachers share their lesson plans with one another. As a leader, she fosters a work culture where all employees care about each other and dedicate themselves to their job.

"I always encourage teachers and all staff to treat pupils like their own children. I tell teachers and parents that we are a big family, so teamwork is important." (West, KG Head)

This is supported by other participants. Teacher one stated that teachers collaborate to improve student achievement. In order to ensure that all activities at school run smoothly, the head holds staff meetings every month. She often highlights the need for a work culture that supports school performance during these meetings. Many teachers indicate that they have a positive impression of their leader.

"Almost every year, the number of applicants for kindergarten increases. This year, registrations rose almost twofold. This is an indication that our efforts are having a positive effect. The community and parents have shown a greater appreciation for our kindergarten." (West, Teacher 1)

The head has prepared a description for each position. Staff were provided with explanations of their duties and responsibilities. Participants said they worked together in a cooperative setting.

"Working together as a team is essential for this school to run smoothly. The teachers help each other. For example, if a teacher were ill, the other teachers or the teaching assistant would be happy to fill her position. In addition, when it comes to making lesson plans, we develop them together and share them. When we see what other teachers have done from previous years, we make changes for the upcoming year." (West, Teacher 3)

The LEO also has a positive evaluation of the leadership of the head of West Public Kindergarten. She said that the kindergarten level has fewer teachers or staff who need to be monitored than primary and secondary schools, but parents are more demanding. The head must also administer the school budget, which is another significant challenge in leading a public kindergarten.

"The mayor was impressed with her performance, and she has successfully led the kindergarten. Each year, the number of students at the kindergarten increases. The number of kindergarten students accepted into public primary schools is also growing every year. Regarding administrative tasks, the kindergarten audited financial report was also acceptable. Therefore, she was reappointed for a second term." (West, LEO Senior Official)

Participants were generally positive about the leadership of the head of the West Public Kindergarten. She encourages teamwork amongst all staff members. Some teachers were also given additional duties, such as treasurer, hygiene coordinators or curriculum coordinators. However, leadership enactment appears autocratic because duties are allotted by the head.

Decision Making

Kindergarten decision-making is undertaken in hierarchical structures. The structure empowers the head to lead the kindergarten although in some cases she needs to consult with the LEO before making any decisions.

"For most activities of this kindergarten, such as assigning teacher assignments, determining the graduation schedule for students, or selecting which books will work for the kindergarten, I am able to make decisions straight away. However, in some circumstances I will have to report to LEO, usually if it is related to the school budget." (West, KG Head)

The participants said that the head is the school's highest leader. They are willing to obey her orders, since they fully understand it is the KG head's role and responsibility to do so. It is her duty to ensure everything is in order.

However, the head listens to teacher, staff, and parent opinions before making a final decision.

"She told us what she needed from us, she asked for our opinions and inputs. She invites us for regular meetings twice a month, but if there are urgent issues that have to be resolved, she will conduct a quick meeting. In my opinion, she is more concerned with school compared to her predecessor who held regular meetings only every semester or every six months." (West, Teacher 2).

Other participants shared the same opinion. If kindergarten is expected to decide what a child needs, the head invites parents and teachers to meet.

"The kindergarten is a small organisation compared to primary or secondary schools. However, the head never verbally invites the teachers and parents to meetings, rather she sends a printed invitation. We all feel appreciated." (West, Teaching Assistant)

The participants believe that the head of West Public Kindergarten values the input of her staff and accommodates their suggestions. She could set most of the leadership practices at the kindergarten; however, she has to consult and report to the LEO Director regarding financial matters.

Organisational Structure

The West Public Kindergarten has a hierarchical command structure. Six roles are involved in the school: the principal, the Director of the LEO, teachers, assistant teachers, administration staff, and school cleaners. The principal receives assistance from teachers and assistant teachers. On the bottom tier, there is an administrative assistant and a kindergarten cleaner. A teacher is superordinate to the teaching assistant, administrative assistant, and cleaner (see figure 5.1), meaning they can also issue orders.

The kindergarten head describes the school structure and her relationship with the education office.

"I rarely have direct orders from the Director, even though, if you look at the school structure, he is my boss. In daily practice, he is represented by a senior officer from the Early Childhood Management Division at the LEO office. I usually work closely with her. The LEO head is a very busy man. He is in charge of all educational affairs in this city." (West, KG Head).

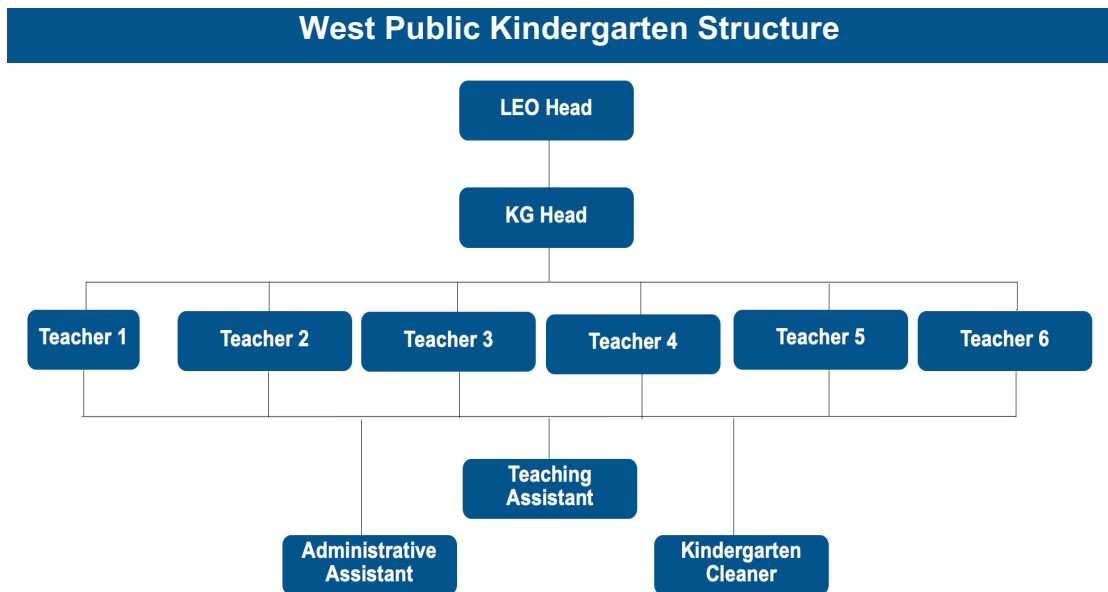


figure 5.1: West Public Kindergarten Organisational Structure
Source: (West Public Kindergarten Profiles Book, Academic Year 2020/2021)

Teacher four comments on the structure:

"The organisation chart not only depicts who is in charge, but it also provides information about how many people are working in this kindergarten. The position is written on every chart box along with their name and photo." (West, Teacher 4).

Other participants confirmed that the organisational structure is hierarchical, and that it is similar to other public kindergartens in the city. The one difference relates to the number of teachers and school members.

"Public schools in this city are all structured the same, except that secondary schools have a deputy principal. Since the structure has been provided by the LEO for many years, we only need to change the

full name and photo if we hire new members, and then nail the chart to the wall." (West, Teacher 3).

The participants state that school committees are not considered part of the school's organisation structure. Parents also said they were not involved in the formal structure:

"Organisational structure is just a formality. Even though we are not inside the structure, we work with the head and teachers. Additionally, we never ask to be included in the kindergarten structure. It would not affect us at all, it is absolutely fine." (West, school committee 2)

It is clear that the LEO developed the West Public Kindergarten organisational structure. Every public school in the city adheres to the same structure. It is simply a matter of adjusting the organisational structure to accommodate the number of existing teachers, and writing their full names and job descriptions. A hierarchical, top-down management structure governs the school.

Job Descriptions

Participants noted that the kindergarten employs a work role system. The roles define each staff member's formal responsibilities and duties. Each role is described in the job description document. A copy of the document is posted in the staff room and in the school book. Although the LEO Director is at the top of the school structure, his job description does not appear in any documents of West Public Kindergarten. The job description is only provided for the head, teachers and other school staff.

"I am responsible for coordinating lesson plan preparation, school budget arrangements, developing strategic programmes for the school, supervising teachers, and handling employee issues. I trust my staff, they know exactly what they are responsible for." (West, KG Head).

Teachers' roles involve developing lesson plans per semester, monthly, weekly, and daily, preparing learning resources, and teaching in class. However, teachers claim that there are other roles they consider "additional tasks", including school treasurer, curriculum coordinator, and hygiene

coordinator. The head assigns these additional tasks, which last for one-two years. A teacher, who is also the curriculum coordinator, supports this statement.

"To appoint the treasurer, the head is required to write and sign the designation letter, while for the curriculum coordinator and the hygiene coordinator, the head only verbally appoints them. All of them are based on personal trust." (West, Teacher 3)

The statement above shows the importance of administrative practices at the West Public Kindergarten. Although the head appointed her as treasurer out of trust, a teacher who has these additional duties feels burdened. She felt unqualified for the job, but she could not refuse it.

"A treasurer's job involves counting money, staying on top of the cash flow, and using Excel spreadsheets. I am a grandmother and I will retire soon, so I cannot handle the job any longer. It makes me dizzy." (West, Teacher 2)

The teacher feels incompetent to act as treasurer, so she orders the teaching assistant to perform her duties. An assistant teacher was a recent university graduate, very young, and computer literate.

This is something that the assistant teacher admits. A surprising finding was that she also worked as an administrative assistant. According to her, the school's structure was different in reality. The person listed as administrative assistant actually works as a cleaner.

"The administrative assistant is a civil servant. He has completed junior secondary school (equivalent to year 9) and does not know how to use a computer. The principal asked me to take over his duties as an administrative assistant on a daily basis in addition to my duties as a teacher's assistant." (West, Teaching assistant)

Even though she is an honorary staff member and gets many duties, she enjoys them and claims to be able to perform them well. She works from 7AM

to 4PM, beyond the teachers' scheduled working hours at West Public Kindergarten. Since she has experience working at a state kindergarten, she hopes the government prioritises her becoming a civil servant.

The administrative assistant listed in the school structure was not able to provide much information during his interview. The man admitted working daily as a cleaner and a guard at the school, not as an administrative assistant. The principal honoured him by putting his name on the school structure because he worked there for more than 25 years as a civil servant.

“In a way, the structure is simply a formality. Over a decade ago, I was an administrative assistant. It was still paper-based at the time, but then the Ministry and LEO developed a program called the National School Data Centre Program. Everything is becoming digital, so school administrative assistants have additional tasks to update school data; students' names, teachers, facilities, etc. These have to be uploaded into the Ministry Data System with a computer. I am not capable of doing this. Therefore, the principal assigns a non-tenured employee to do this work. That is fine with me.” (West, administrative assistant).

The head may also assign other teachers to perform tasks that are occasional. As an example, when the school prepares for a graduation ceremony, she will designate a teacher to coordinate the event in collaboration with the parents. Moreover, when the West Public Kindergarten wishes to participate in the schools' competitions at the provincial level, the principal assigns a teacher to handle the preparation.

The participants confirm that the West Public Kindergarten has an organisational structure and a written job description for each post, except for the Director of LEO. However, study participants regarded this as merely a formality. This is only for administrative purposes since specific tasks must be handled administratively by civil servants. In practice, when the civil servant is unable to perform a task, the honorary staff does so. Accordingly, the actual work performed by the West Public Kindergarten staff differs from what has been written in the school's organisational chart. There are some names that

appear in the structure of the school, but do not correspond with the stated purpose. An example is the Director of LEO delegating his work to an LEO senior officer, while the administrative assistant helps with cleaning, and the teaching assistant assists with the treasury jobs and administrative assistant work.

Curriculum Enactment

The West Public Kindergarten uses the Curriculum 2013 (K-13), which is a ready-to-use curriculum. The central government developed the curriculum and provided templates and examples for its implementation. This curriculum was developed by the Ministry of Education to replace the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) in 2006. Teachers express their satisfaction with the curriculum since it is ready to use.

“The curriculum is stipulated in the Minister of Education's regulations. The regulation outlines the core competencies and proceeds to list the basic competencies that must be mastered by children. The document also provides a syllabus, lesson plan format, as well as examples of student activities for each semester, month, and day. Therefore, we simply adopt it and make slight adjustments in line with what the children require.” (West, Teacher 1).

However, one participant said she was having difficulties applying the revised curriculum.

“In Indonesia, the curriculum is constantly being revised. The central government changes it too often. In almost all cases, when a Minister of Education reshuffles, a curriculum change is initiated. Since I am older, learning is becoming more difficult. Originally, the 2006 curriculum was implemented for a few years, but now it has been replaced by the new curriculum, and we have to re-learn everything from scratch. I am tired.” (West, Teacher 4).

The assistant teacher expresses a different opinion, claiming that the Curriculum 2013 is excellent because it emphasises a two-way process, rather

than just a teacher-driven approach. Furthermore, she was proud to be using a new curriculum, as the school seemed to be more advanced than other kindergartens still using the old one.

“Many private kindergartens in this city use the KTSP Curriculum 2006, while we are already using the most recent curriculum suggested by the government. I feel as though we are one step ahead.” (West, Teaching assistant)

However, parents expressed that they were unaware of the curriculum used by the school, and they were not concerned with it much either. For them, the most meaningful thing is that their children love coming to school.

"We are not familiar with the school's curriculum. As most of us are housewives, we are not aware of the issue; let the principal and the teacher handle it." (West, School Committee 2)

Even though Curriculum 2013 is ready-made, teachers can modify it at the classroom level if necessary. In the Curriculum 2013, for instance, there is a core complement number 2 that requires children to be independent and creative. The school has adapted this to reflect the local context of the city, one of the most prominent business hubs in the province.

“Children are taught entrepreneurship skills from an early age in the school garden. They learn to grow vegetables, tomatoes, and grapes there. In the harvest season, the children sell their harvest to parents and community members around the school.” (West, KG Head)

The kindergarten head stated that parents were not involved in making such curriculum adjustments. Rather, she develops lesson plans only with teachers. Once the lesson plan document is completed, the school disseminates it to parents.

The local government plays a very minimal role. The head of West Public Kindergarten said that only two parties were involved in developing the curriculum: the Ministry of Education (ECE Directorate General Office) and the

kindergarten. The LEO hardly pays attention to how the curriculum is implemented at schools and how teachers prepare lesson plans. The LEO Director generally concurs with her and never has any comments or inputs.

“The head of West Public Kindergarten and its teachers are both very experienced educators. Some of them were recruited as civil servants in the early 1990s. Their work can be completed without my assistance. I do have a great deal of work to do. I must manage all early childhood institutions within this city, from daycare to kindergarten, both public and private.” (West, LEO Senior official)

The teaching assistant confirmed that the LEO did not focus on curriculum implementation, but rather on improving school infrastructure, facilities and budgets.

"It appears that the LEO Director has focused more attention on the school's physical infrastructure, since it is visible to the mayor. They are pleased to see the kindergarten building is large, well-designed, and beautiful, and he does not attach too much emphasis on the curriculum." (West, Teaching assistant).

The senior LEO's claim that the teachers do not require assistance is in direct opposition to the views of some teachers. They stated that they needed assistance in implementing the upgraded curriculum in order to keep up with the latest issues. The head notes that she was trained by the central government in 2014, but no further curriculum training has taken place by the local government.

"I have taken some training from the LEO, but it is mainly public administration training, which is also acquired by civil servants in general, not in the context of school curriculum practice." (West, KG Head).

The Ministry of Education allows schools to modify the curriculum in the classroom. The teachers at West Public Kindergarten do so independently, without participation from the LEO or parents. The LEO regards curriculum as

less significant than school facilities and infrastructure. Parents are not involved in discussions because they lack the expertise. This has led to the school committee playing a limited role.

Parental Engagement

All participants discussed the importance of partnerships between schools and parents. The parents of the West Public Kindergarten come from a wide range of ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. According to the head, parents' educational levels range from primary school graduates to master's degree holders. As is to be expected, some children come from low-income families while others are from middle- to upper-class families.

Teacher 2 believes that teachers and parents should work together for the sake of the children.

"West Public Kindergarten students spend only 4-5 hours a day at school; most of their time is spent at home. Therefore, it is clear that the role of parents has a more substantial effect on children's learning, especially kindergarten children who require guidance." (West, Teacher 2).

Another teacher discusses the role of parents in supporting their children's learning.

"In my opinion, if we shared responsibility with parents, the children would be motivated to make remarkable educational achievements. When parents are actively involved, all of the programmes at the West Public Kindergarten will run smoothly" (West, Teacher 1).

At the West Public Kindergarten, all participants reported a high level of parent involvement.

"The parents are very active. I am pleased. Every time we invite parents to meetings or seminars, many of them attend. Their attendance rate is generally over 90%. Every time we invite parents to an event, we send an official letter and a few days before it, I send a message via a

Whatsapp group reminding parents of the importance of their presence." (West, KG Head)

This comment was supported by a committee member. The parents will typically be involved in children's performance activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips to the museum, and recreational activities.

"At the graduation ceremony, all parents participate. Teachers only assist students as they are performing, such as singing or dancing. The parents bear the entire cost of the ceremony. Wealthy parents provide subsidies for students from low-income families. Everyone is glad to help." (West, School Committee 1).

In addition, one of the participants noted that parents had helped to renovate the school gate in the past few years. As she explained, some sections of the south gate were damaged and almost collapsed. The staff members and parents were concerned about the children's safety. They met to discuss the issue.

"In reality, it is the LEO's responsibility to finance the gate renovation. However, the school must submit a proposal to LEO Director to do so. This process is time-consuming, so the parents chose to bear the cost so the renovation could occur more quickly." (West, Teacher 1).

Parents involved in the West Public Kindergarten program are viewed as fundamental. The Ministry of Education is expecting parents to be involved in curriculum development and policy-making. However, the findings indicate that parents play a very small role in both of these areas. It seems that school committee members are not aware of their roles and responsibilities.

"Members of school committees serve on a voluntary basis. They are not paid. They are housewives with spare time. It is already appreciated when they want to serve on school committees. However, we cannot expect too much. There is no way they will read the regulations from the Ministry and LEO about the role and function of school committees.

Those documents will make them dizzy (smile)." (West, LEO Senior Official)

The chairwoman of the school committee endorses this statement. She has been the leader of the committee for two years.

"Amongst the members of the school committee, I have a secretary and treasurer. However, they are just like me, housewives with limited skills and abilities. I do what I am able to do. We also trust the principal. She is a smart woman and has been in that seat for a long time. We trust her decisions must benefit both students and parents." (West, School Committee 1)

Similar views are expressed by the other school committee official. She noted that parents generally participate in extracurricular activities and graduation ceremonies, but are not involved in school policy, the selection of kindergarten heads, or curriculum development.

"We consider the West Public Kindergarten head to be our partner. We have never been involved in teacher recruitment, developing lesson plans, or other school policies. We do not understand it, and to be honest, we are not capable of it. Therefore, we leave it up to the principal and teachers. It is their responsibility." (West, School Committee 2)

The teachers indicate that parental involvement at West Public Kindergarten is very high. Their involvement is, however, limited to supporting extracurricular activities, field trips, monetary donations, and graduation ceremonies, rather than school policy-making.

Leadership during a Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted teaching and learning. The Indonesian government has implemented a restrictive policy, which prohibits non-essential activities since March 2020. This rule was followed by the Minister of Education and all regional heads (governors, mayors and regents) to issue

school closure notices, and prohibiting schools from conducting face-to-face learning.

All the research participants acknowledged the difficult circumstances and described them as "very complex". The "sudden" transition from classroom setting to online learning from home presented a number of challenges for teachers, students, and parents.

"We do not have any experience with distance learning. Our competency in the use of a digital learning platform is weak. Parents are also in the same boat; many of them do not know how to access the internet for online learning." (West, Teacher 3).

This was confirmed by another participant. Many parents encounter difficulties providing their children with a gadget for online learning.

"Our school is located in the city, but the socio-economic backgrounds of the parents are diverse. Some of the children do not own cell phones or laptops. Even if they use a cell phone, they must wait until their parents return from work. We all share the same problem of a poor online teaching infrastructure." (West, Teaching Assistant).

West Public Kindergarten's head stresses that the pandemic outbreak makes learning very hard. Despite government restrictions on in-person study, she decided to conduct face-to-face learning. The children continued to attend school. They entered the school, "sneaking" quietly through the rear door, walking in without their school uniforms.

"The teachers and parents have agreed to this. LEOs are unaware of it, we do not tell them. While I spent more than 30 years as a public teacher and seven years as a principal, this was the hardest thing I had to deal with. At the time, the situation was very difficult. I made that decision for the sake of the children and parents." (West, KG Head).

A teacher narrated what happened at that time. In response to the government's decision to close the school, parents and educators were confused and did not know what to do.

"Teachers do not understand how to teach online, and parents do not either. They are unfamiliar with how to utilise Zoom for learning activities. All of us are confused. Children in their homes often cry, saying they miss their school and want to see their friends. It is difficult to conduct virtual learning for kindergarten students. All parents want to keep face-to-face learning in place. Finally, we came to an agreement that the children could remain and go to school in secret." (West, Teacher 1).

The school committee member confirmed this position. She stated that all parents wished to continue learning face-to-face. The school conducted a parent survey using WhatsApp, and 100% of parents opted for in-person learning despite the pandemic.

"The parents were extremely stressed. As a result, we agreed that the kids should continue to attend school, but not every Monday-Friday as per normal. Each class is divided into two groups, and children attend kindergarten twice per week. Teachers arrange the class rota. It is my son's turn to go to school every Monday and Wednesday, while the other children may turn up on Tuesday and Thursday. Each session lasts only 1.5 hours and begins at 8.30 a.m." (West, School Committee 1).

Another participant explained that, on the first day when face-to-face learning was conducted secretly, kindergarten personnel and parents were terrified. The teacher heard a siren from the patrol car while the students were in their classroom. As the pandemic began, police and community protection officers patrolled the city every day. They instructed residents to enter their homes and avoid engaging in non-essential activities.

“When the car patrol passed by our kindergarten, the teachers asked the children to remain quiet in the classroom for some time. We understand that we need to adhere to government regulations, and this kindergarten is a government school, however the situation is extremely challenging.” (West, Teacher 4).

During her spare time, the principal asks the teaching assistant to help teachers to use Zoom and WhatsApp for online learning. After five months in a classroom setting, the kindergarten delivered online learning via Zoom in July 2020. They conduct it every Friday for an hour, whereas in-person learning continues from Monday through Thursday.

A participant who has worked for over 35 years says that setting up and conducting virtual meetings is difficult.

“I am two years away from retirement; it is not the most suitable time for me to learn digital things. Each time I have to deliver virtual learning, my son helps me to log in and operate Zoom.” (West, Teacher 2).

The teaching assistant notes these challenging circumstances. She recently graduated from a private university in 2018 and holds a bachelor’s degree in ECE. She secured this job straight after graduation as an honorary teacher at West Public Kindergarten.

“It is very difficult to teach them (senior teachers). Most of them do not know how to operate a laptop. Online learning is a new thing for them, they have never done distance learning during their lifetime.” (West, Teaching Assistant)

The participants describe the head of the West Public Kindergarten as facing extremely challenging circumstances during the pandemic. Teachers lack experience in facilitating online learning, while all parents want the school to conduct face-to-face education even though there are government restrictions. The kindergarten leader claimed it is to help students learn, especially those who have no internet access and do not have a laptop, computer or mobile phone. The interview data clearly indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic

disrupted kindergarten education. There is little choice for the head of West Public Kindergarten because the teaching and learning process is hindered by numerous obstacles, such as inequitable access to online learning and the limited competence of teachers. Teachers find it very challenging to conduct virtual classroom meetings with students.

Overview

This chapter presents leadership practices in West Public Kindergarten. It is clear that the head demonstrates hierarchical leadership. The principal is a civil servant with over 30 years of classroom experience, who has been assigned to the position by the mayor. Almost all participants reported that political favouritism was a significant factor in the appointment of the principal. However, the majority of participants at the interview demonstrated positive signs of working together.

According to all participants, the kindergarten plays an essential role in the growth and development of children. Additionally, they believe it is an essential phase that prepares children for primary school. The kindergarten mission and vision outline this goal, which is printed in the school's document. The vision is derived from the Ministry of Education, combined with the mayor's mission statement, and merged with the goals of parents.

In West Public Kindergarten, the head is the primary leader with the authority to make decisions. Nevertheless, she must consult the local education office about several aspects of the matter prior to making a decision, particularly regarding finances. All the participants indicated that the head always invites them to meetings, and listens to inputs from teachers, staff, and parents, when making decisions.

The kindergarten's organisation is hierarchical. It is the LEO who determines the structure, so all public kindergartens within the city share the same structure. The structure is adjusted according to the number of staff, the names are written down, and the photos are displayed.

The kindergarten uses Curriculum 2013. There are templates and examples of the lesson plan included in the curriculum, which is a ready-to-use module developed by the central government. Principals and teachers may modify the curriculum in the classroom, however. The curriculum was modified with limited parental participation and little involvement of the local education office.

West Public Kindergarten appears to have a high level of parental involvement. The parents provide financial support for a teacher assistant, who is not funded by the government, and to renovate school facilities. They also assist with extracurricular activities, field trips, museums, visits to orphanages, and graduation ceremonies. According to all interviewees, they were glad to do so since they regarded it as charity that God would reciprocate.

Finally, this chapter discusses leadership practices during the pandemic. It appears that the West Public Kindergarten head is facing a very difficult situation due to the pandemic. She has a very limited number of alternative choices. Even though the government dictated the school's closure, she continued to conduct in-person learning and the school remained open for students. She made this decision since both teachers and parents are unaware of how to conduct online learning. It is also difficult for kindergarten children to remain focused on online learning.

Chapter Six

Case Study Three - Capital Public Kindergarten

Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the findings from a public kindergarten in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. It presents the school profile, followed by themes that emerged from the research, including the nature of kindergarten leadership, organisational structure, curriculum enacted, parental involvement, and kindergarten leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic. It concludes with an overview of the findings.

School Profile

The kindergarten is located in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital city. Jakarta is Indonesia's largest city and the country's business and government centre. It is a city with a rapidly growing economy. The region's economy is mainly driven by trade and services, real estate, creative industries, and finance. As of 2020, the city's population is 10,562,088 people, and 893,762 of those are children aged 5-9 (BPS, 2021).

From kindergarten to university, Jakarta offers a wide range of educational facilities. These include public, private, and international schools. As of December 31, 2020, there are 77 public kindergartens in this province, and 1,917 private kindergartens (Jakarta LEO office, 2021).

Jakarta is governed by a governor, Anies Baswedan, who was appointed in 2017. Prior to his current position, he worked as the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia in 2014 and had performed duties as the chancellor of a prestigious private university. According to the Jakarta Development Plan 2017-2022, the governor has three priorities, namely education, health, and flood control.

School organisation

Capital Public Kindergarten was established in 1985. The school's profile book mentions that the kindergarten is located very strategically near shopping centres, government buildings, and offices.

The National Accreditation Board gave this kindergarten an A rating. The school is owned by the Jakarta Special Region Province and has an area of more than 4,000 square meters. It is located in a large building with 12 classrooms, one library, toilets, the principal's room, the teacher's room, a computer lab, a prayer room, and a public hall. Capital Public Kindergarten is located less than 2 miles from two private kindergartens and one community learning centre (Capital Public Kindergarten Profile, 2021).

The kindergarten is led by a senior civil servant who has served for two successive terms since 2014. Prior to that, she taught kindergarten for 28 years. Currently, there are eight teachers at the school. Six of these teachers are civil servants, and two are honorary or non-tenured. Additionally, there is a teacher assistant, an administrative assistant, a cleaner, and a school guard, who are all nontenured employees. The principal and all teachers are women, while the administrative assistant, cleaner, and school guard are men.

The principal is a master's graduate, while the teachers and assistant have undergraduate degrees in the field of early childhood education. These teachers have extensive classroom experience ranging from four to seventeen years.

Despite having 12 classrooms, the school only offers 8 classes due to a limited number of teachers. Eight teachers are responsible for eight classes. There are two kindergarten A classes (A1 and A2) for 5-year-olds, and six kindergarten B classes (B1-B6) for 6-year-olds. The school had 120 students at the time of the research, 62 boys and 58 girls.

Data Collection

Semi structured interviews

Ten individuals took part in this study; the principal, four teachers, the teaching assistant, the administration assistant, two members of the school committee, and a senior official from the Jakarta Local Education Office (LEO). The interviews were conducted via Zoom in November 2021, and audio recorded with the participants' consent (see table 6.1).

Purposive sampling was used in selecting teachers and members of school committees from lists provided by the Capital Public Kindergarten, rather than relying on nominations from the head of the kindergarten. Four out of eight teachers were chosen for the following reasons: First, they had many years of experience. Second, they hold a bachelor's degree in kindergarten or early childhood education. Third, they voluntarily agreed to be interviewed. Four teachers match these requirements.

Participants' position	Number of participants	Staff experience
Head of kindergarten	1	7 years
Teachers	4	4-17 years
Teaching assistant	1	3 years
School administrative assistant	1	9 years
School committee members	2	2 years
Local education office	1	10 years

table 6.1: Research Participants from the Capital Public Kindergarten Case Study

Interviews were conducted with parents who served as school committee members. There are four school committee members at Capital Public Kindergarten. The committee consists of the chairwoman, the vice chairwoman, the secretary, and the treasurer. The chairwoman and the secretary agreed to participate in the interview.

Documents

The documents reviewed in this case are specific to the kindergarten: school profiles, lesson plans, reports, and timetables. The administrative assistant sent the relevant documents via email to the researcher after the principal granted permission to examine the documents. These documents enabled comparisons to be made between interview responses and stated policies.

Seven themes were identified from the data, which are consistent with those discussed in chapters four and five:

1. The nature of school leadership
2. The purpose of the kindergarten
3. Leadership enactment
4. Organisational structure
5. Curriculum enactment
6. Parental engagement
7. Leadership during the crisis

The Nature of School Leadership

The Capital Public Kindergarten head has served the school since 2014. She was re-elected by the LEO for a second and final term until 2023. The LEO only allows principals to serve two terms.

“The school is very large; the land is over 4,000 metres. I have successfully built various facilities, such as classrooms and children’s play areas. Since the beginning of my tenure, I have made it a point to employ instructional leadership, foster teachers’ skills and focus on student achievement. I actively monitor the learning process in the classroom to ensure every child receives the highest quality service. This school has won many competitions at the national level, including drawing and colouring competitions. This kindergarten is also often regarded as a role model for other kindergartens in Jakarta and other regions,” (Capital, KG Head).

The teachers endorse this comment. They believe that their principal leads learning in the school. She constantly monitors learning and improves it.

"The principal does not engage in many administrative tasks, and works hard to improve learning. She regularly visits each class to ensure that it runs smoothly. She guides teachers when mistakes are made in instruction, and always advises us to teach with love and compassion," (Capital, Teacher 2).

Another teacher claims that their principal directs and creates a conducive learning and teaching environment. She is considered a role model for the entire staff.

"She always arrives at 6:30 a.m. before the teachers. She also returns home after the teachers. During the seven years I worked as a teacher at this school, I never saw her late. She is smart, very pedagogical, curriculum-driven, and dynamic. Often, she is invited to speak at national conferences and seminars" (Capital, Teacher 4).

The teaching assistant confirmed this. She said that the principal guides the teachers and develops the leadership skills of the teachers.

"She always guides the whole staff. As well as the teachers, I am also guided. From my very first day at this school, she accompanied me. She taught me how to deal with children who are crying. Furthermore, she encourages us to participate in various training programmes and to pursue further education (master's degree). She is preparing the next leadership candidates," (Capital, Teaching Assistant).

The administrative assistant added that he enjoyed working at the Capital Public Kindergarten. Despite being an honorary officer for nine years, he never considered resigning or seeking other employment. He regards the principal as a caring, nurturing and motherly figure.

"It is a very pleasant place to work since I live nearby the school, only a couple of hundred metres away. I am a high school graduate, but I love working with computers. The principal has always encouraged me to apply to university, so I could be a civil servant. Thank God I took a bachelor's degree at the Indonesian Open University, majoring in

computer science last year. The principal helped pay my university fees with her own money," (Capital, Administrative Assistant).

Parents were also impressed by the principal's leadership. The principal attempts to involve all stakeholders in school operations. She has a reputation for being humble, kind, and close to parents, teachers, and children.

"Our principal has taught kindergarten for decades. Parents enjoyed working with her, as she listened and respected us. She has already dedicated herself to Jakarta's Government office, and she hopes to leave a lasting legacy and a positive impression upon her retirement," (Capital, School Committee 1).

Teacher and parent comments are also endorsed by the LEO. Capital Public Kindergarten's head was seen as a committed, dedicated, and professional individual. However, a senior official from LEO stated that the policies and working conditions created by LEO also influenced her leadership.

"We understand that the principal has many administrative responsibilities. This is why we reduce her workload. It is not her role anymore to manage the school budget, as the LEO now does this. The Capital Public Kindergarten needs to concentrate on student learning and outcomes. She is surrounded by talented and innovative teachers as well. Public school teachers in Jakarta have the highest salaries in Indonesia, as you know. A large budget is allocated to recruit the most qualified teachers so that our principal has the dream team," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

The school principal claims she is implementing instructional leadership. She focuses more on student outcomes and coaching teachers than on administration. Parents and teachers believe that the principal recognises leadership enactment by actively monitoring classroom learning. Thus, pupils are perceived to receive a high quality of education.

Criteria for headship appointments

At the Capital Public Kindergartens, the criteria for being the head are different from those of other schools. According to the LEO, the principal must be a winner in the competition for the most outstanding teacher at the national level or at the Jakarta local level. This is in addition to the requirements from the Ministry of Education. Each year, the Ministry holds this national competition and each province's LEO hosts a local competition. Also, LEO notes that candidates should have at least eight years of teaching experience and a positive track record as a civil servant.

"I was part of the recruitment team when selecting the head of the Capital Public Kindergarten in 2014. In comparison to other provinces, our criteria were very competitive. Kindergarten principals must be civil servants who have good knowledge of pedagogy, management, and leadership. It is necessary that they are able to act as role models for teachers in other kindergartens," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

This is acknowledged by the head of the Capital Public Kindergarten. Her statement implies that the Jakarta government seeks innovative, creative, and hardworking principals. Additionally, the LEO prioritises teachers who have leadership experience, which can be identified by their experience in teacher unions or other social organisations.

"In 2012, I won the Best Kindergarten Teacher award at the national level. I then took part in the selection process for the principal at this school at the beginning of 2014. As the most outstanding teacher at the national level, my achievement became a gold ticket to this position," (Capital, KG Head).

This statement was corroborated by a teacher. She explained that the requirements to become a kindergarten principal in Jakarta exceed those set by the Ministry of Education. This is because the kindergarten in Jakarta is often used as a role model for other kindergartens in Indonesia. Thus, all administrative and competency requirements must be met by the kindergarten head candidate.

"I think it makes sense that the criteria for becoming the principal at this kindergarten are higher. Since she will have a broader role and responsibility, she is expected to serve as an example to other schools. Furthermore, the LEO provides a very lucrative salary to the Capital Public Kindergarten head. Her salary is five times higher than kindergarten principals in other provinces. So it is worth it" (Capital, Teacher 1).

A teacher explained that prospective principals must meet administrative criteria for the Capital Public Kindergarten.

"The candidate must be a civil servant at an echelon/grade IIIc [experienced official with eight years of work experience), and not be older than 55 years old. When these criteria have been met, the LEO will assess their competence, innovation, achievement, and integrity," (Capital, Teacher 3).

School committee members admitted they were unfamiliar with the criteria for choosing a principal. Their only knowledge of the kindergarten's principal is that she is a smart person and has achieved a lot as a teacher.

"Two years ago, when I was elected as chairwoman, the principal was already leading the school. While I am unaware of the process, I am certain she is the right one. In the way she communicates with parents, she seems like a trustworthy leader. She is smart, and she is very concerned about how our children learn. I am pleased with my son's progress at this kindergarten," (Capital, School Committee 1).

In the Capital Public Kindergartens, becoming a principal is very competitive. Jakarta is the Special Government Region of Indonesia, and as such, aside from the administrative requirements established by the Ministry, they are allowed to set additional requirements. The prospective principals must have won a national or a Jakarta level contest for the top teacher.

Headship selection

Several participants explained that selecting a principal at the Capital Public Kindergarten is a rigorous and transparent process.

"Becoming the head of this kindergarten is not easy for me. I took a multilayered test. There were psychometric tests, interviews with independent teams, presentation of my work plans to the LEO director, writing a paper, and finally, I was interviewed with the Jakarta Civil Servant Agency. When I joined the selection process, there were thirty people competing for this position," (Capital, KG Head).

The LEO said the principal was selected carefully. They hired an independent team from the university to conduct psychological tests and interviews.

"This independent team looks at the psychological results and interview results. They nominate the top five candidates for LEO. Those people will then be selected into the top three. The Jakarta Civil Servant Authority will then determine who is deemed a successful candidate. The LEO Office is unable to intervene," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

According to other participants, the Capital Public Kindergarten selection process was transparent. LEO posts a list of candidates who qualify at each stage on their website. The website allows teachers and Jakarta citizens to monitor the process.

"The LEO also requests public participation on their website, with people encouraged to submit reports if they see candidates with a bad reputation in the community. The public may report it to the LEO since it is somewhat of a whistle blowing system," (Capital, Administrative Assistant).

Other participants praised the selection process for its neutrality and honesty.

"Almost every year, the LEO announces the vacancy of the position of head of public kindergartens, for example when a head is about to retire. The LEO will notify the vacancy six months before the principal's

tenure ends in order to fill the vacancy. In a written letter, LEO will send the information to all public kindergartens in Jakarta. They keep the information available on their website as well so that everyone has access to it," (Capital, Teacher 1).

A senior teacher endorsed this statement. As part of the announcement, the LEO encourages all teachers with over eight years of experience to apply for the position of principal.

"If your grade level is appropriate, you can take part in the selection process. Everything is fair, everyone has the chance to compete," (Capital, Teacher 2).

Participants believe the selection process for the Capital Public Kindergarten head to be very strict and transparent. In order to maintain fairness during the selection process, the LEO creates a university team to conduct tests at an early stage. The Jakarta Civil Servant Agency determines the final result, and the LEO cannot interfere.

The Purpose of Kindergarten Education

The kindergarten is viewed by all participants as having a very meaningful purpose. According to a teacher who has been teaching for 17 years, Capital Public Kindergarten's purpose is more than just to shape smart students.

"At our school, we strive to shape children into independent individuals. Our students have been trained to use the toilet since Kindergarten A. Also, they are trained to wear their own shoes, to change their clothes, to help serve their food, and to tidy up their toys after they have finished playing," (Capital, Teacher 1).

Another participant stated that the school aims to become a pilot school for the province of Jakarta as well as for other areas.

"This kindergarten is very spacious, the facilities are perfect. We have a children's playground with more than 1,000 square meters. The school's teaching programme is also very effective. Parents are pleased

with the service we provide. We can be used as an example for other kindergartens," (Capital, KG Head).

A teacher who has worked at this school for ten years adds that she has seen it grow from year to year.

"The purpose of our kindergarten is to prepare children for elementary school and to educate them for their future. We have developed a specific vision for this school in the last three years. We envision this school to be a national role model for kindergartens in Indonesia. We plan this mission together with the parents and invite university professors as experts. The vision and mission are now posted in the staff room. All teachers should see it and work together to achieve it," (Capital, Teacher 2).

The LEO comments that the Capital Public kindergarten is not solely concerned with pedagogy or children's achievement. In addition, it is expected to work toward socio-economic goals.

"We want this school to provide quality kindergarten services to the community. We want poor children to benefit from the same service. This kindergarten uses catchment areas for recruiting and allots 10 percent of seats to the poor. Needy parents should be able to send their children to kindergarten without being worried about the cost," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

Parents also believe that the school successfully achieves its goals. As a result of attending the Capital Public Kindergarten, their children became more independent.

"My son can now dress himself and tie his shoes without my assistance after attending kindergarten. The school teaches children independence. Parents should only leave their children at the school gates and not wait for them inside the school building. In Jakarta, there are many kindergartens that allow parents to wait in the school while their children study," (Capital, School Committee 2).

One teacher said that the kindergarten head has a motto for advancing the school.

"In teaching children, she carries a motto that guides us. Our motto is BEST KIDS. BE stands for *Berkualitas* (Quality), ST represents for Sportive. K stands for *Kreatif* (Creative), I for Independent, and DS stands for *Demokrasi* (Democracy)," (Capital, Teacher 3).

The participants perceived the Capital Public Kindergarten to have a distinctive goal of forming strong and independent children. The school is aspiring to become a pilot school for Jakarta and other provinces in Indonesia.

Kindergarten fees

The participants agreed that the school has provided free education since 2017. There used to be school fees that varied depending on a parent's income.

"Our school used to collect money from parents to pay for nontenured employees, like honorary teachers. It is the principal's duty to manage the funds, but since 2017, LEO has listed all nontenured employees. Afterward, the LEO pays for all their salaries. All honorary employees are funded by the Jakarta government and receive very good pay. Consequently, the school can no longer collect funds from parents. In the same year, LEO also provided more operational funds. The number has doubled compared to last year. Parents do not need to paid a cent since then," (Capital, Administrative Assistant).

This was acknowledged by the principal. The Minister of Education and the LEO Director gave her operational funds so she could pay electricity, telephone service, and internet, as well as buy stationery and classroom supplies. Furthermore, since 2018, the school has had a healthy eating programme for children, and LEO provides additional funding for the programme.

"A separate budget for school meals is provided by the LEO. All students receive healthy food including rice, fruit, vegetables, and side dishes. Everything is free of charge," (Capital, KG Head).

A LEO Senior Official corroborates this. In order for school leadership practices to be successful, budget support is crucial. Children will not be able to receive quality education if the school does not have sufficient funds. Finance officers are also recruited by the LEO to manage and oversee the usage of the funds. Each officer manages the financial expenses of two public kindergartens in Jakarta from his seat in the LEO office. There is one finance officer designated to deal with the financial needs of the Capital Public Kindergarten.

"This finance officer is employed to alleviate the administrative burden on the principal of a Capital Public Kindergarten. Ideally, a principal should not be burdened with administrative duties and be able to focus on learning. Prior to being promoted at the LEO office, I was the principal of a public kindergarten for eight years in Jakarta. I was also responsible for handling financial reporting. Ultimately, the principal becomes more worried about administration and less concerned about instructional learning. Currently, It is not something that needs to happen at Capital Public Kindergarten," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

The school committee endorses this statement. Schools are free to attend. Every aspect of enrollment, stationery, and the graduation ceremony, is covered by the government.

"Parents do not pay for school fees; they just need to buy uniforms and book bag. If they are poor and cannot afford it, the school will provide it for free," (Capital, School Committee 2).

Participants reported that the Capital Public Kindergarten is free for children to attend. Parents do not have to pay tuition fees, stationery, or meal fees. The school receives funding from both the Ministry and the LEO Office.

Leadership Enactment

Teachers, staff, and parents all play a part in leadership enactment, according to the Capital Public Kindergarten head. They claim that they work together to improve the school.

"To improve student outcomes, we must work together. I will not be able to do everything on my own. I share my responsibility with the teachers. Teachers must learn to be leaders, because one day they will be principals like me. If I do not share my role, how will they learn?" (Capital, KG Head).

This view is corroborated by teachers. They point out that all school members contribute to the school's overall success. The principal allows the teacher to engage in leadership activities. Leadership in the Capital Public Kindergarten is a gradual learning process, as one teacher explained.

"We got the stage to perform because our principal does not want to be a one-woman show. This school often gets invited by the LEO, the MoE, and the Kindergarten Teachers Union to be a resource person in seminars or conferences. Our principal does not take advantage of all these opportunities, she delegates them to the teachers," (Capital, Teacher 2).

This is echoed by another teacher. Since 2004, she has been an honorary teacher at the Capital Public Kindergarten. In 2018, after fourteen years working as a nontenured employee, she succeeded in becoming a civil servant.

"One time the principal assigned me to be a host. A number of kindergarten teachers conducted comparative studies at our school. It was my responsibility to show them what we do, how we implement the curriculum, and to explain the school's facilities. At the time, I was still a nontenured employee. I felt much appreciated," (Capital, Teacher 1).

Another teacher described her view on leadership enactment.

"The principal is our role model, and we as teachers are also role models for students and other employees. We work together. I am passionate about teaching children, and this school adds to my passion, as it is a centre of knowledge. I am a first-class graduate of the ECE department at Jakarta State University, one of the most prestigious education faculties in Indonesia. However, when I started working in this kindergarten in 2007, I felt the knowledge I gained from the classroom at university was quite limited. I feel like I learn more from this school," (Capital, Teacher 3).

One teacher said the principal gave all teachers equal opportunities. To illustrate, each teacher has the same authority in the classroom to lead learning, and to interpret and modify lesson plans. Capital Public Kindergarten teachers consider it as a stepping stone to higher positions.

"Many of our teachers are promoted to the position of principal in other kindergartens in Jakarta. The principal always opens the door for teachers to learn from her. When the LEO opens the position of kindergarten principal, she will definitely encourage all teachers to submit applications and share with them tips on how to be successful," (Capital, Teacher 2).

The participants believe that the principal provides teachers with opportunities to engage in leadership practices. The teachers in the Capital Public Kindergarten see their work in the kindergarten as a gradual learning process and a stepping stone to becoming a principal.

Decision Making

According to the LEO Senior Official, she gives the kindergarten head extensive authority. This allows the school to implement school-based management.

"Almost all school affairs can be handled immediately by the principal. For example, when it comes to student admissions, the Capital Public Kindergarten head can decide directly without having to inform us

beforehand. Our aim is to make school leadership effective," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

The principal agrees that she has been given a great deal of authority to manage the school.

"I was given autonomy to design programmes, to implement innovations with my teacher. We can do many things together, without reporting to the LEO. We create our own lesson plans, create a school vision, and develop learning activities together," (Capital, KG Head)

Although their principal has substantial authority, all the teachers agreed that she always invites them to a meeting before making a decision.

"We have regular meetings once a month with the principal and all the teachers and employees. Everyone comes, everyone sits down, and we discuss the next programme plan. The principal said that she did not want to make any decisions without involving the teachers. Especially if the decision is in the interest of the teachers. After the meeting, the principal asks the administrative assistant to prepare the minutes, which are shared with all of us," (Capital, Teacher 3).

This view was corroborated by other teachers.

"We will meet in the meeting room to discuss the problem. The principal will sit down with us. All employees attended the meeting. All issues were discussed in a transparent manner. We use a school website, social media, and e-budgeting apps. This information is available to teachers, staff, and parents," (Capital, Teacher 2).

Parents endorse this. A member of the Capital Public Kindergarten's school committee described how decisions are made. When it comes to student issues, she said the principal will consult with parents. As an example, she said that if a school is planning to hold a school tour, then usually the principal meets with the teachers for their input. Her next step would be to ask the chairwoman of the school committee for their opinion.

"The school committee will discuss the issue with all parents. We have a WhatsApp group for parents in every class. The parents will discuss it among themselves, and then the principal will meet with the parents and teachers to make decision," (Capital, School Committee 1).

But the administrative assistant had a different opinion. He described the principal as having tremendous authority. Some matters, however, are beyond her control and must be decided by the LEO.

"It's true that the head of this school is the highest authority. She can make decisions. But there are some that must be reported to the LEO prior to making a decision, for example recruiting a full-time civil servant teacher is the LEO Director's responsibility. Similarly, if we want to hold a provincial level competition, we need to report to the LEO first," (Capital, Administrative Assistant).

Several interviewees noted that the head of Capital Public Kindergarten has significant authority to manage the school. She is empowered by the LEO to innovate and improve the school. Although the principal has a great deal of authority, teachers and parents agree that she always invites them to meetings before making decisions.

Organisational Structure

The Capital Public Kindergarten organisational structure comprises seven positions. These are the LEO, head, teachers, teaching assistant, administration, school committee, and school support staff. It can be seen that the structure is top-down and hierarchical (see figure 6.1).

While one participant perceived the principal as the most prominent leader at school, the structure clearly shows that she is subordinate to the LEO.

"The principal is the highest leader in the school. She makes most of the decisions. The LEO gives her broad authority to lead this school," (Capital, Teaching Assistant).

As part of the school structure, the Capital Public Kindergarten head recognises a school committee. Previously, it did not exist in the school anagrams.

"I was elected principal of the school in 2014, and I did not see the role of the school committee in the structure of the organisation. I then placed them in the structure of the organisation after talking with the school members. I said that I wanted parents to be more involved in the decision-making process at the school, and the staff members agreed. The LEO also approved the change in 2017," (Capital, KG Head).

The parents said they were pleased to see the school committee included in the structure. They felt officially acknowledged.

"The principal views us as equal partners. The organisational structure legitimates us in expressing our aspirations and overseeing the performance of staff members," (Capital, School Committee 1).

Furthermore, the organisational structure also changed in 2017. There used to be a teacher serving as the Capital Public Kindergarten's treasurer. This role was removed from the school structure by the principal because LEO had recruited a finance officer at the LEO office to handle kindergarten finances.

Another participant described this organisational structure as a guide to working relationships, that is pinned up in the teachers' room.

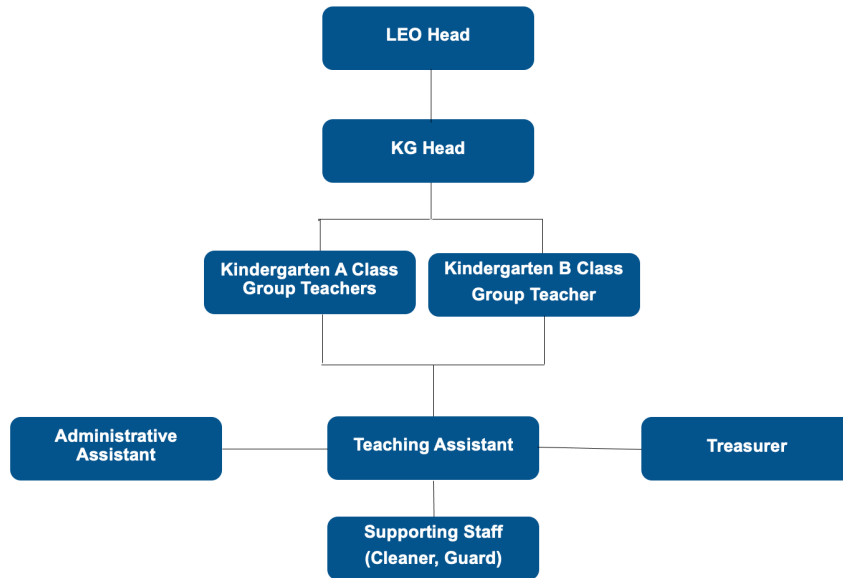
"Principals and school committees are equal, which indicates a coordination function. The chairman of the school committee is the principal's equal partner," (Capital, School Committee 2).

A teacher indicated that people work together according to the organisational structure.

"LEO provides the organisational structure, but if a school wishes to adapt it to their needs and conditions, they can do so. Though it is a

hierarchical structure, it happens to be very common. Most public schools are organised in this way," (Capital, Teacher 1).

Capital Public Kindergarten Structure (Before 2017)



Capital Public Kindergarten Structure (After 2017)

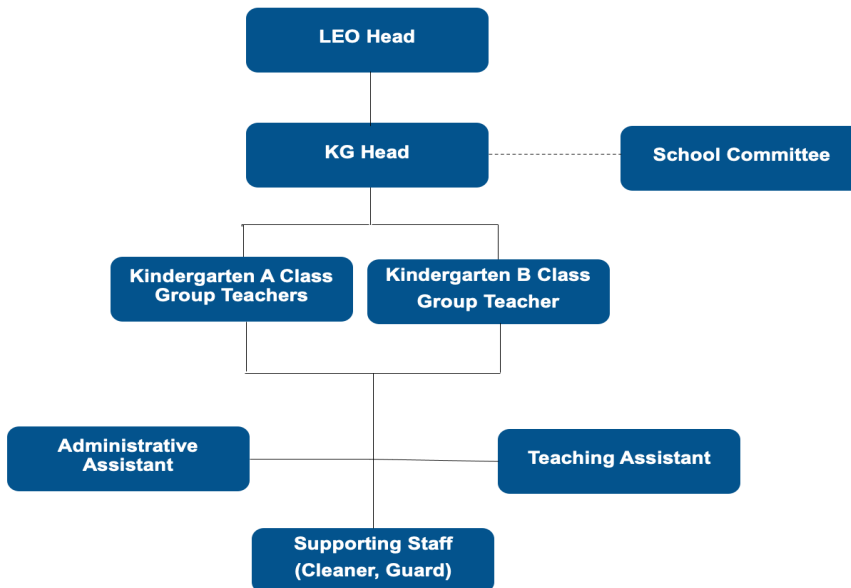


Figure 6.1: The organisational structure of Capital Public Kindergarten before and after 2017. Source: Capital Public Kindergarten Profile (2021)

The head said that she was changing the school's organisational structure to suit the needs of parents and to accommodate their role in the school. However, the Capital Public Kindergarten school profile clearly illustrates the top-down and hierarchical nature of its organisation.

Job Descriptions

Capital Public Kindergarten follows a system of work, and each role is formally defined by the principal. It is signed by the principal and the roles of each member of the school are evaluated annually.

"Every year there is a change to the job description based on the needs of the kindergarten, though it is not usually significant. For instance, I worked as a Kindergarten A class teacher in 2020, and this year I was a kindergarten B teacher. The tasks remain broadly the same; teaching children, preparing lesson plans, etc," (Capital, Teacher 4).

Each staff member's responsibilities were clearly defined by the principal, who communicated them to all school staff. She wrote them in a formal document and handed it to all school personnel.

"Everyone should know their own duties and functions. I am in charge of leading this school, which includes all aspects of school organisation, making decisions, coordinating and supervising the performance of staff members. I also provide careers guidance to each of them, and supervise the data operators (administrative assistant). It is very imperative for schools to keep up-to-date data because, in this era, it is extremely significant," (Capital, KG Head)

Curriculum Enactment

Participants stated that Capital Public Kindergarten uses the national 2013 curriculum for its entire programme. It is used both in kindergarten A and B classes. The principal said that her kindergarten was one of the pilot schools to implement the 2013 curriculum.

"In 2014, I replaced the principal who helped the Ministry of Education draft the 2013 curriculum. She served on the MoE curriculum revision

team at national level and she was assigned to develop the concept and to implement the revised kindergarten curriculum. When I replaced her, the 2013 curriculum design was done, the Ministry and the LEO instructed me to implement it in our school. I was also given the responsibility of being a pilot kindergarten,” (Capital, KG Head).

The teachers confirmed that the 2013 curriculum was developed by the Ministry. Every school from preschool to senior high school was ordered to adopt it. Although the central government initiated the curriculum, teachers are allowed to modify it at the school level.

"Our principal always encourages us to be creative when implementing the curriculum. She also stressed that children should enjoy learning and not be forced to master reading, writing, and mathematics. Many parents today expect teachers to push their children to read, write, and count. Many parents do so because they wish their children to attend a well-regarded private elementary school. High-quality elementary schools usually select prospective students based on a reading and writing test. However, the principal has always asserted that we should not place great emphasis on scholastic skills, but encourage the children to learn by playing,” (Capital, Teacher 1).

This statement is backed up by other teachers, who agreed that it was not only their job to satisfy the parents, but also to educate them.

“The principal does not insist on reading and writing instruction. She believes we need to provide a well-rounded education for pupils, tailor the curriculum to their needs, develop their potential, interact with each other, improve their social and communication skills, and so on. She often explains this to parents and teachers,” (Capital, Teacher 4).

Another teacher noted that the 2013 curriculum is not geared toward scholastic goals. It is intended to build a balance between classroom knowledge and social and character building.

"Our position as a public kindergarten has its own benefits because we are funded by the government, and parents have fewer demands than at private kindergartens where parents have to pay school fees. Furthermore, we are free to modify our curriculum to accommodate children's abilities. If this school were a private kindergarten, I am sure we would not have as many students because we are not focused on scholastic skills; reading, writing, and numeracy," (Capital, Teacher 2).

These opinions are shared by parents, many of whom prefer their children to focus on reading and writing. However, the principal assures that it does not constitute the essence of kindergarten education.

"Our principal is very intelligent. She said that the 2013 Curriculum implemented by the school has no focus on reading, writing, or calculating. Instead, it emphasises the development of the child in the process of learning. She prioritises the needs of children, not just pleasing parents and making her position as head secure. We have deep respect for her," (Capital, School Committee 2).

Some parents also claim that the school included them in the process of modifying the 2013 curriculum and developing the lesson plans. Every term holiday, when the children have a few weeks off, the teacher and the principal design a lesson plan, and they invite parents to participate.

"The school is very open and willing to listen to feedback. We can suggest to the teachers a subject or topics we would like our children to learn about," (Capital, School Committee 1).

The LEO advised the Capital Public Kindergarten to be more flexible and creative when implementing the 2013 Curriculum. In comparison to principals of primary and secondary schools, the LEO allows Capital Public Kindergarten to innovate more.

"Kindergartens need a flexible curriculum, unlike primary and secondary schools that tend to be more rigid. Capital Public Kindergarten has the authority to customise its curriculum according to

children's needs. We recommend they follow the latest curriculum recommended by the MoE, but are free to modify lesson plans for classroom use," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

Another teacher described the process of developing a lesson plan. There were numerous parties involved.

"The Capital Public Kindergarten formed a lesson plan development team, consisting of not only the principal and teachers, but also parents, education consultants, and curriculum experts from the university. The team received a designation letter from the Capital Public Kindergarten head, and was approved by the Director of the LEO," (Capital, Teacher 2).

All participants reported that the Capital Public Kindergarten has been using the 2013 curriculum for its entire programme. Teachers said that the principal encouraged creativity and innovation among them to modify the curriculum. Similarly, she emphasised that teachers must not focus solely on children's abilities to read, write, and calculate. Children should experience learning as fun and an enjoyable process.

Parental Engagement

The Capital Public Kindergarten's head believes that parents play an imperative role in the development of the school. Parents come from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, from the wealthy to the poor. It was noted by all participants that parents in Capital Public Kindergarten have a very active role. In particular, they contribute labour or energy.

"Parents have been actively involved in school events. One of the most obvious ways is by preparing school meals for their children. LEO runs a nutrition improvement programme for kindergarten students. The programme is funded through additional funding provided to the school. The school then gives the funds to the School Committee to manage. The School Committee then appoints parents to prepare meals for the children in the school's kitchen. Parents purchase groceries, fruit, and

cook and serve meals for the children. They take turns and organise their rota," (Capital, Teacher 3).

This view was endorsed by another teacher. Parents are also involved in classroom learning activities.

"The school has a programme called Inspiring Class from Parents. We run this programme every year. Parents are invited to come and exhibit their work. For example, there are parents who work as police officers. One came to school as a resource person to tell the pupils what a police officer's job was. My students adore this programme. We have invited parents who work as lawyers, lecturers, military soldiers, graphic designers, and entrepreneurs," (Capital, Teacher 2).

The parents corroborate this. In addition to learning programmes, parents prepare graduation ceremonies, organise parenting classes, and prepare food for children.

"Every month, the principal holds a parenting class programme. It is usually held on the first Saturday of each month and lasts about 1-2 hours. The committee invites speakers from various backgrounds: psychologists, doctors, nurses, or parenting experts. The topic is parenting, how to deal with children with gadgets, educating children in the digital age, and improving child nutrition. Parents organised the event in the school hall, and invited the speakers after consulting with the principal and teachers," (Capital, School Committee 1).

In addition to the parenting class, a parents' meeting is also held. Usually, the principal gives information about upcoming activities at the event. She shares various insights into parenting and encourages parents to have the same vision for their children's education.

"I really like how our principal shares her knowledge about child development and parenting issues. She loves attending seminars and conferences on education. After participating in a seminar, she shares

the knowledge gained from the seminar with parents," (Capital, School Committee 2).

The Capital Public Kindergarten head has committed to organising monthly parent meetings and parenting classes. She believes it is a helpful strategy for strengthening the relationship between the kindergarten and parents.

"Educating children is a shared responsibility between parents and school staff. I hope parents take the initiative to implement the same positive practices at home as we do at school. As an example, we teach students at the Capital Public Kindergarten to always say 'hello' and 'thank you' to others. Our goal is to ensure that parents do the same at home," (Capital, KG Head).

The LEO offers a slightly different perspective. In the past, she said the participation of parents in Capital Public Kindergarten had been extremely low. In order to find the cause, the LEO conducted research with The State University of Jakarta. As it turns out, parents feel that school involvement means extra expense, so they are reluctant to be involved. Participating in school activities implies that parents should donate funds to the school.

"Then four years ago, we started a programme called *Penguatan Peran Orangtua* (Strengthening Partnership with Parents). We gave money to schools to organise parent meetings and parenting classes. The funds can be used to pay for the speaker and to provide lunch for the parents. Thus, parents do not have to spend a penny, they just need to show up at the school hall. Since we started this programme, the involvement of parents in Capital Public Kindergarten has greatly increased," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

The administrative assistant endorses this view. Parent meetings and parenting classes are now free for all parents. Capital Public Kindergarten education is entirely free. The only cost to parents is purchasing a yearbook. However, the project is led by parents, and it is not mandatory.

"I can tell you the school does not encourage parents to make a year book for their children. It is initiated by the parents. They said they wanted their children to have an album of their memories. I can also tell you that there are no parent expenses at this school. The children who cannot afford the yearbook will receive it for free. Parents who are wealthy will contribute toward the poor children's yearbooks," (Capital, Administrative Assistant).

Interviews with participants indicated that parents are active in the Capital Public Kindergarten. Schools benefit from parents' assistance, especially in terms of their labour. Many parents also take part in classroom learning activities.

Leadership during a Crisis

The participants agreed that the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted learning and teaching. A participant admitted that a challenge in online learning is that parents cannot accompany their children while learning. She noted that the parents were from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

"Although there are some parents who are highly educated or university graduates, there are also those who have a low level of education. While parents with higher education do not experience many obstacles accompanying their children to learn at home, lower educated parents claim to have difficulties. So even though they have time, they are not always able to accompany their children to learn online," (Capital, Teaching Assistant).

The school committee endorses this. Parents frequently ask when the school will open. Many parents say it is stressful to watch their children learn at home.

"Learning at home is tiring for children. We are also tired of accompanying our children, but we cannot ignore the fact that the pandemic is still dangerous for our children. As you know, the largest number of Covid cases in Indonesia are reported in Jakarta. The kindergarten is surrounded by offices and shops, so the chance of the

virus spreading is very high. So we can only pray and wait,” (Capital, School Committee 1).

The principal agreed, stating that, in many cases, children have to wait for their parents to get home from work before they can complete their assignments. In times of pandemic, children are less likely to learn. However, she is optimistic that the pandemic will come to an end.

“I always remain in touch with children and parents. I encourage them to keep the spirit of learning at home. I contact them via WhatsApp video and tell my students that studying online can be fun. In addition, I say that it is critical to not stop learning, even if it is a pandemic, as it is essential for their future. Every Friday, I send my short speech video to parents. I ask them to keep motivating their children to study at home,” (Capital, KG Head).

As a result of the pandemic, teachers in Capital Public Kindergarten claim to face many challenges, but they also admit new opportunities have arisen, such as learning updated technologies. Before the pandemic, they never imagined conducting online classes.

“It was the first time I used Zoom, but now I can use it to teach. I also learned a lot from YouTube and use videos there to support learning. I record videos on my mobile phone, edit them, then send them via Whatsapp to parents. Children are happy even though they cannot meet with me face-to-face, they can still see my face through their phone,” (Capital, Teacher 3).

Another teacher noted that, during the pandemic, teachers mainly used WhatsApp and Zoom for online learning. The Capital Public Kindergarten uses WhatsApp to send instructions, assign learning materials, monitor attendance, and communicate with parents.

“We send material to children every Monday morning, such as links from YouTube, as well as instruction to parents. For instance, we give children tasks to learn to cut with scissors. On Friday afternoon, parents

will send photos of their children's cutting to us through WhatsApp. Once a week we hold a video meeting for 1.5 hours with the children using Zoom," (Capital, Teacher 1).

This statement is also echoed by the LEO. She believes that pandemics can also be a blessing as teachers become more creative.

"We immediately responded to the pandemic. We trained all teachers in Capital Public Kindergarten on how to conduct online learning. We trained them to make tutorial videos and record them with mobile phones, and make them available to parents via our website. Teachers are more creative now. They have their own Zoom accounts, and the LEO covers the cost of internet expenses and monthly subscriptions to Zoom," (Capital, LEO Senior Official).

Parents are also concerned about their children's welfare.

"I have two children, one of whom is in year one at primary school. Although each of them needs guidance from me in their learning, teachers and the principal are always willing to help. As a parent, I find that they are very supportive," (Capital, School Committee 2).

The participants show that the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to disruptions in teaching and learning. Many parents are unable to help their children to learn online. However, teachers perceive the pandemic as an opportunity to learn more advanced technologies. The pandemic enabled them to learn how to use Zoom, WhatsApp, and YouTube for educational purposes.

Overview

This chapter presents and discusses leadership practices in Capital Public Kindergarten in Jakarta. The head of the kindergarten is a teacher with 28 years' experience teaching in kindergartens. She served as a principal for two consecutive terms.

She claims to be implementing instructional leadership at the school. Her focus is more on student outcomes than administrative tasks. Teachers and parents

agree that the principal demonstrates leadership by actively monitoring the teaching and learning processes in the classroom, so that the children receive an excellent education.

Participants explained that the criteria for becoming a kindergarten principal in the Capital Public Kindergarten are very strict. In addition to meeting administrative requirements set by the Ministry, prospective principals must have won the most outstanding teacher competition at the national or provincial level.

Participants believe that the selection process for the head of a Capital Public Kindergarten is transparent. The LEO creates an independent team from the university to conduct the testing in order to maintain the fairness of the selection process. A final decision is made by the Jakarta Civil Service Agency and LEO cannot intervene.

Participants reported that the Capital Public Kindergarten offers free education. Parents do not need to pay for tuition, stationery, or school lunches. The school receives funding from the Ministry and additional funding from the Jakarta LEO.

Most participants believe that Capital Public Kindergarten aims to shape children's manners and character. The school staff members affirmed that the school aspires to be a pilot school for Jakarta and other areas.

Participants believe that principals give teachers the opportunity to engage in leadership activities. Teachers see their work in Capital Public Kindergarten as a stepping stone to becoming principals and a way to learn more.

The interviewees claim that the head of the Capital Public Kindergarten has extensive authority to manage the school. The LEO allows her to innovate and improve the school. Despite her authority, teachers and parents agree that the principal always asks for their opinions before making any decisions.

The participants all agreed that Capital Public Kindergarten uses the 2013 Curriculum throughout its entire programme. Teachers say that the principal

encourages their innovation and creativity in modifying the curriculum. The principal emphasises that teachers should not insist on pupils' abilities in reading, writing, and numeracy. Parental involvement is also valued. Schools benefit from parent involvement, as parents provide labour. Schools also take advantage of parent involvement in classroom learning.

All participants recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic caused disruption of learning and teaching. Many parents do not have the ability to accompany their children in online learning. However, teachers perceive the pandemic as an opportunity to also learn new technologies.

Chapter Seven

Case Study Four – Central Public Kindergarten

Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the fourth case study - a public kindergarten in Bali. The presentation starts with an overview of the school profile and then discusses themes emerging from the study, namely kindergarten leadership, organisational structure, curriculum enactment, parental involvement, and leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter concludes with an overview of the findings.

School Profile

The kindergarten is located in Bali, a province in the central part of Indonesia. It lies between Java and Lombok Island. Bali is known as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, and its economy is heavily dependent on tourism.

Balinese territory covers about 5,780.06 square kilometres, with 85 islands. Approximately 4.32 million people live in the province according to the 2020 population census. The number of children (1-14 years) in the population is 893,000, 20.8% of the entire population.

The coastline of Bali stretches for 633.35 kilometres. It is home to volcanoes, rivers, and lakes. Balinese are predominantly Hindu. Temples can be found almost everywhere on the island. Bali has 4,755 temples (BPS Bali, 2022), hence its nickname, "Island of the Gods". The Balinese adhere to the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy of life, which has three elements of social harmony between humans and God, between humans with each other, and between humans with their environment.

There are 5,815 schools in Bali. Of these, 2,462 are nursery schools or early-learning centres, 2,982 are primary schools, and 371 are secondary schools.

School organisation

The Central Public Kindergarten was founded in 1979. There are 129 public kindergartens in Bali. This kindergarten is situated near one of the most popular beach destinations, so it is very strategically located.

The National Accreditation Board accredited this kindergarten with an A rating in 2018. The kindergarten is managed by the local government and occupies an area of 1,690 square meters. It has a spacious building with six classrooms, a library, a principal's office, a teacher's office, a school committee office, and a temple. Air conditioners are installed in each room of this school. Within two miles of the school, there are two private kindergartens and one international kindergarten (Central Public Kindergarten Profile, 2021).

The head of this kindergarten has served in office since 2013, or for two consecutive terms. She holds a master's degree in early childhood education and has taught kindergarten since 1991. There are seven teachers at the school, all of whom have civil service status. Three of the seven teachers have master's degrees, while four have bachelor's degrees. They all have degrees in early childhood education. This kindergarten employs a teacher assistant, an administrative assistant, a cleaner, and a school guard with honorary status. The principal, teachers, assistant teacher, and administrative assistant are all female, whereas the cleaner and school guard are male.

The kindergarten offers a half-day session, Monday through Saturday. There are six classes at this kindergarten. There are three kindergarten A classes (A1-A3) for children who are five years old, and three kindergarten B classes (B1-B3) for children who are six years old. At the time of the study, 122 students were enrolled, 66 boys and 56 girls (Central Public Kindergarten Profile, 2021).

Data Collection

Semi structured interviews

There were ten participants in this study, the principal, four teachers, a teacher assistant, a school administration assistant, two school committee members, and a senior official from the Bali Local Education Office. Interviews were

conducted online via Zoom in December 2021, and audio recorded with the consent of the participants (see table 7.1).

Teachers and members of school committees were selected using purposive sampling, from lists provided by the Central Public Kindergarten, rather than using nominations from the kindergarten head. The following criteria were used in selecting the four teachers out of seven: First, they had extensive experience. Second, they have a bachelor's or master's degree in kindergarten or early childhood education. Third, they volunteered for this interview. These requirements served to identify the four teachers.

Participants' position	Number of participants	Staff experience
Head of kindergarten	1	8 years
Teachers	4	11-31 years
Teaching assistant	1	18 years
School administrative assistant	1	4 years
School committee members	2	1-2 years
Local education office	1	32 years

table 7.1: Research Participants from the Central Public Kindergarten Case Study

Interviews were conducted with parents who served on school committees. There are only three members of the Central Public Kindergarten Committee. The committee consists of a chairwoman, a secretary, and a treasurer. Both the chairwoman and the treasurer agreed to take part in the interview.

Documents

The documents reviewed in this case are specific to the kindergarten; school profiles, lesson plans, reports, and timetables. After the principal granted permission for the researcher to examine the documents, the administrative assistant sent the relevant documents via email to the researcher. The documents enabled the researcher to compare interview responses with

stated policies. Seven themes were identified from the data, which are all consistent with previous chapters:

1. The nature of school leadership
2. The purpose of the kindergarten
3. Leadership enactment
4. Organisational structure
5. Curriculum enactment
6. Parental engagement
7. Leadership during the crisis

The Nature of School Leadership

The head of the Central Public Kindergarten has served for eight years or two consecutive terms. During her leadership, participants reported that she tried to balance school administration tasks and overseeing the instructional programme.

"She has a great deal of responsibility at school. Like the captain of a ship, she determines whether the school will succeed or not. Her duties are a combination of managerial, class supervisory and teacher evaluation duties. Every morning, she welcomes the children at the school gate. Once teachers and students enter the classroom, she will usually go off to her office to complete paperwork. She also carries out academic supervision by observing activities in class every day." (Central, Teacher 2).

According to another teacher, the principal did not teach. Nevertheless, if there is a teacher who is unable to do so, she will fill in for the teacher in the classroom.

"The school is understaffed because there are not enough teachers. If someone is ill, the principal will replace her, assisted by a teaching assistant. She never complains when she has to replace a teacher who is not present." (Central, Teacher 3).

As a leader at the school, the principal acknowledged the task was challenging. She attempted to balance administrative duties with instructional.

"Teachers and principal have 40 hours of work a week, including 37.5 hours of productive work and 2.5 hours of breaktime, as already arranged by the Ministry of Education. There are many things I have to be able to do. For instance, I had to organise school programmes, conduct supervision and evaluation, manage school finances, and many other things. Being a principal in the Central Public Kindergarten is not going to make you rich. It has to come from the heart. Therefore, you must be sincere" (Central, KG Head).

Participants highlighted the administrative burden faced by the principal. She must improve student learning and achievement as a leader, but, on the other hand, she also needs to work on many administrative tasks.

"It is common for the principal to spend hours in her office at the end of each month, reporting learning in school, reporting finances, and providing teacher assessment reports to LEO. These reports are required for LEO to disburse the school's operating budget, so if the principal does not hand them over on time, the funds will also be delayed." (Central, Administrative Assistant).

The participants believes that the head of the Central Public Kindergarten has a heavy workload. Her responsibilities include leading and managing the school, creating programmes, monitoring learning, supervising teachers, and managing school finances. However, the principal claimed she did what she had been asked to do because it was her calling.

Criteria for headship appointments

A further insight into the nature of leadership can be seen in the criteria to become a head. According to a teacher, the conditions for becoming a head in the Central Public Kindergarten followed the regulations of the Ministry of Education.

"Applicants for the principalship of the Central Public Kindergarten must be public servants with a minimum of 8 years' experience in teaching. They must also hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and be under the age of 56. Applicants must also be fit mentally and physically, as well as drug free," (Central, Teacher 2).

A LEO senior official provides an additional view. Apart from meeting some administrative requirements, she said there are additional criteria not specifically written in the requirements to become a principal. These include having a pleasant personality and being loyal.

"Candidates for principal should be obedient to superiors, namely the LEO Director and Mayor, in addition to having a positive personality track record. This is because the Central Public Kindergarten principal must be a role model, not only for the school, but also for the local community." (Central, LEO Senior Official).

A teacher, however, gives a different perspective. As a matter of national regulations, candidates must attend the principal preparation training of the Ministry of Education before taking office as a principal. In Central Public Kindergarten, but the appointment of the current principal did not align with these requirements.

"Apparently, the training is helpful for preparing a teacher to be a leader in the school. Our current principal attended the training after she was sworn in as principal. However, the teachers and staff at the school did not mind. She is a senior teacher who has taught at this kindergarten for decades," (Central, Teacher 4).

The principal recognised this matter. Having been appointed as principal, she attended the training six months later.

"The LEO had proposed that I take the principal's training from the Ministry three months before I was sworn in. However, the submission process from LEO and the Bali Personnel Agency Office to the Ministry of Education in Jakarta is lengthy. I was finally called by the Ministry

after taking office to participate in the training. It was a lengthy process as there were many prospective principals from different regions waiting in line to attend the training." (Central, KG Head).

Parents admitted that they were unaware of the requirements to become a principal in the Central Public Kindergarten.

"I do not know what the criteria are; usually we are notified by the school when a new principal is appointed. The school will then invite parents to a meeting to introduce the new principal," (Central, School Committee 1).

The qualifications for becoming the principal of a Central Public Kindergarten do not exactly correspond with those of the Ministry of Education. The LEO Director recruits principals who have no formal training as principals but have extensive experience in teaching kindergarten.

Headship selection

The participants said that selection for the Central Public Kindergarten principal is a closed recruitment process. Also, candidates need a political connection because the final decision rests with the Mayor.

"The selection process is not open to the public. The principal and LEO Director are the only ones who know about it. Usually, the principal recommends a senior teacher to the LEO Director for the position of next principal in the Central Public Kindergarten, or for promotion to another public kindergarten in Bali. The position is for a very senior teacher. So not all teachers have the same chance," (Central, Teacher 3).

This statement is supported by another teacher. She said that the selection process was outdated.

"There have not been any open auditions since a long time ago. The LEO usually appoints candidates who were cadred by the previous principal. In most cases, selection is based on seniority and personal

connections to the LEO Director and the Mayor. As the decree on the appointment of the principal is signed by the Mayor, he will enthrone the person at city hall," (Central, Teacher 2).

The LEO Senior Official agrees with this. She believes closed selection is more efficient and less time-consuming.

"The principal of the Central Public Kindergarten was appointed from among senior teachers. She is a staff member of the kindergarten, not a teacher from another public kindergarten in Bali or elsewhere. I have worked at LEO for 32 years. During that time, I directed the division of ECE for 10 years. I therefore know exactly those senior teachers who are capable of becoming principals. I have prepared at least one future principal for every public kindergarten in Bali. I see their leadership potential clearly. We prioritise internal candidates. If we apply openly for the position, we can possibly receive many applicants from other kindergartens who may not be accepted by the school community, including children and parents." (Central, LEO Senior Official).

The principal acknowledged this as well. The Mayor appointed her based on the LEO Director's recommendation:

"Open selection is not a guarantee that we will find the right candidate. Someone could be proficient on paper, or have high scores on the test. However, she may not have understood the vision for this kindergarten. I was interviewed by the Mayor before being sworn in; he assessed my personality. It is his wish that the Central Public Kindergarten is led by a teacher with a warm personality. Since whatever happens at the school carries the Mayor's name," (Central, KG Head).

Another participant emphasised the importance of the LEO Director in determining candidates. Her main concern is seniority. She has taught kindergarten for 16 years. She previously taught at another public kindergarten in Bali. The Ministry has trained her to become a principal. However, in early 2019, she moved to the Central Public Kindergarten.

"I have received a letter of recommendation from the current principal to become a principal. There is a new public kindergarten built by LEO five miles from the Central Public Kindergarten. I was nominated by the principal for the position because I had already completed training from the Ministry of Education. Despite this, the LEO Director rejected the letter of recommendation and returned it to the principal. He believes that I am still too young and considers me a newcomer at the Central Public Kindergarten. In the end, LEO Director appointed another teacher from this kindergarten. She had never participated in principal preparation training, but was much more experienced than me," (Central, Teacher 1).

Also, the administrative assistant, who handles business correspondence, did not know how the principal was selected.

"I received all the mail, but I never received an announcement inviting teachers to participate in the principal selection. I think it is the LEO Director's and the current principal's prerogative to find a replacement," (Central, Administrative Assistant).

The participants acknowledged that the selection of the Central Public Kindergarten principal was a closed recruitment process. Only LEO Director, the incumbent principal, and the Mayor, are aware of the process. The participants believes that the selection was based on personal ties and seniority.

The Purpose of Kindergarten Education

All participants described Central Public Kindergarten as a culturally minded school. It focuses on developing children's characters based on Balinese culture.

"Our kindergarten follows the national goal. However, we have a particular feature. Our children learn based on the local Balinese culture. This city has many international schools and foreign tourists, but not all of their cultures are the same as our own. We want our

kindergarten to contribute to the preservation of Balinese culture. Therefore, we teach kids Balinese dances, play Balinese traditional games, and learn to play *Gamelan*, a Balinese ensemble music," (Central, Teacher 4).

Another teacher acknowledged this. Her concern was that Balinese culture would be eroded by foreign cultures.

"Because we live in a tourism area, I am fearful that local culture will be lost. Therefore, we teach children local Bali languages at an early age. Every Wednesday, we use Balinese as our language of instruction. Today, many parents in Bali do not teach Balinese to their children, but rather English. They are consequently unable to speak Balinese. In contrast, the Balinese language is taught in primary school as a compulsory subject. Therefore, children might have been confused when they entered primary school. So, we start teaching Balinese language to kindergarten children at an early age," (Central, Teacher 1).

The kindergarten also requires children to wear traditional Balinese clothing every Thursday.

"Most of the children in this kindergarten are Hindu. In addition to every Thursday, the children wear traditional clothing on *Purnama* and *Tilem* days. This means they wear traditional clothing three times a month," (Central, Teaching Assistant).

Purnama and *Tilem* are Hindu religious ceremonies that take place every month. The term "Purnama" refers to when the moon is full and shines brightly. *Tilem*, conversely, identifies a dimming moon as darkness. The philosophy of this lunar cycle teaches humans that life is filled with light and darkness, good and bad, life and death. People will always encounter these two things in life, so they should not be overly jubilant when they get pleasure, nor too depressed when they suffer (Central Public Kindergarten Profile, 2021).

This opinion was echoed by other participants. Central Public Kindergarten also promotes a sense of religion in addition to highlighting culture. This kindergarten is committed to helping children learn tolerance among religious groups.

"Here, most of the students are Hindus. The school celebrates many Hindu festivals. During these celebrations, most children wear Balinese traditional clothing. Christian and Muslim pupils, however, dress freely according to their religion. Therefore, children of different religions interact. There is no exclusivity. We provided a variety of worship facilities. There is a prayer room for Muslim children, as well as a multifaith prayer room for children of other faiths" (Central, KG Head).

LEO admires the Central Public Kindergarten Head because she is capable of harmonising education and the development of Balinese culture.

"The Central Public Kindergarten work is in line with the Mayor's programme to make this a creative and culturally oriented city. This was woven into the school's mission and vision. A mission of Central Public Kindergarten is to develop creative and cultured children, so the vision and mission of the Mayor are aligned with the school's vision and mission," (Central, LEO Senior Official).

A parent also expressed satisfaction with the Central Public Kindergarten for their children. Her child's development is greatly impacted by kindergarten.

"My son began attending school in kindergarten A class and now moves on to kindergarten B at the same school. Currently, he is not only able to read and write well, but he also possesses a courteous manner. Although he is not fluent in Balinese, he does speak it. It is critical to me that my son be able to speak Balinese. So, in the event that I and the older generation pass away, there is a young generation who will carry on, ensuring it does not become extinct," (Central, School Committee 2).

Participants said the Central Public Kindergarten serves a unique purpose. They described this kindergarten as being culturally minded. It aims to sculpt the character of students by teaching them Balinese values. In addition, participants reported that the kindergarten teaches religious values and tolerance from an early age.

Kindergarten fees

The Central Public Kindergarten has been offering free education for two decades. A teacher who has worked at the school for 29 years said it has been free since 2003. In the past, parents had to pay school fees based on their financial ability.

"We used to charge parents not only tuition but also uniform fees, books, and extracurricular fees. In 2003, the government passed a law on the National Education System. This law states that kindergarten education is a local government duty. We no longer charge parents for tuition. Funds are provided by LEO, including the salary of teachers" (Central, Teacher 3).

The administrative assistant also recognises this, adding that the local government and the Ministry of Education provide operational funds to the school.

"The funds are disbursed every three months for school expenses. The school uses them to cover operational costs such as electricity, gas, internet, and water." (Central, Administrative Assistant).

In contrast, parents say different things. A school committee official said there are no fees at the Central Public Kindergarten. However, there are some costs that cannot be financed by the school budget, such as the salaries of honorary employees.

"The school needs an assistant teacher, an administration assistant, a cleaner, and a school guard to support the teaching staff. They are all honorary employees and are not funded by the local government. We

recruit them and pay their salaries each month," (Central, School Committee 1).

The local government does not have enough funds to pay honorary employees, even though their position is vital to the school.

"Parents pay a minimum of IDR 50 thousand (equal to £3) per month. They give the money to me, and then I collect and distribute the money for the honorary staff's salary. This amount of money is voluntary. If some parents cannot afford it, they can pay less, or even not pay at all, since there are some parents who pay more. The parent is not forced to pay that exact amount," (Central, School Committee 2).

The principal corroborated this, adding that this was agreed between parents and the school.

"At the beginning of every school year, I conduct a meeting with all the parents. My explanations of school funding and how much we get from government are transparent. A gap exists between the government's budget and the amount we need to run the school smoothly. Afterward, the parents meet to determine the amount of the voluntary fee for the non-tenured staff. They hire the staff, manage the finances, and pay the salaries. Neither I nor any of the school members interfered," (Central, KG Head).

The honorary teaching assistant of the Central Public Kindergarten acknowledge this. She is paid every month by the school committee, not by the school.

"My salary is transferred every month by the treasurer of the school committee, not by the Central Public Kindergarten office. It is slightly less than the minimum wage in Bali. However, I feel well enough. What matters most is that I could feed my children and pay for their education." (Central, Teaching Assistant).

A majority of participants indicated that the Central Public Kindergarten provides free tuition. Local government and the Ministry of Education fund their operations. However, this amount does not cover the salaries of four honorary employees, so parents must pay for their salaries.

Leadership Enactment

Most participants commented that the principal leads by emphasizing teamwork. Additionally, she engages all school members in solving problems.

"As a principal, I am well aware that I must collaborate with others to accomplish the school's goals, and I cannot do so on my own. I cannot run the school without other people's help. Thus, I always ask all school members and the parents for their help in achieving the expected goals." (Central, KG Head).

This statement was endorsed by a teacher, who commented that the principal gave members of her team an opportunity to be involved in the school's leadership process.

"She always consulted with subordinates on many matters, soliciting their ideas. If there is a problem, she facilitates a discussion, then provides insights into the problem, and encourages school members to share their ideas. Then, she will sort out the suggestions and inform the team of the decisions she made" (Central, Teacher 4).

Other participants shared additional information. She described the principal as a role model leader at the school.

"Our principal is a highly disciplined, honest and hardworking individual. She does not simply speak about these things, but also demonstrates them. Teamwork is solid because she leads by example (Central, Teacher 2).

The assistant teacher, who has served as a nontenured teacher for 18 years, believes the principal is a person who is willing to listen and motivates others.

She has known her since the principal was a senior teacher in the Central Public Kindergarten.

"I graduated from a hotel and tourism college in 2000, and then I worked at a Hilton resort in Bali. Then there was the Bali bombing in 2002, which led to a steep decline in visitors. My parents were also concerned that there were bomb threats and terrorism in the hotel. They asked me to find another job. I was fortunate that my mother had a family relationship with the kindergarten principal. She was a senior teacher at the kindergarten at that time. I was then hired to work as an assistant teacher at a Central Public Kindergarten in 2003. She inspired me to pursue my bachelor's degree in early childhood education at the Open University since I have no background in teacher education. While I studied, I worked at the kindergarten and graduated in 2010. The principal taught me how to deal with students. I love what I do now," (Central, Teaching Assistant).

The other participants also support this. A teacher said that the principal invites the entire staff to a regular meeting.

"We meet once a month to discuss our activities from the previous month, and to plan our activities for the upcoming month. She has always stressed the importance of collaboration at work. She says we need one another. It is critical that all staff respect each other. In addition, she stressed that everyone has a right to express opinions, from teachers to the school guard." (Central, Teacher 3).

Most participants had a positive impression of the leadership of the kindergarten's head. She is perceived to be caring, highly disciplined, and hard working. Teamwork is also seen as an important part of her leadership. In addition, she invites all members of the school to participate in achieving the school's objectives.

Decision Making

The principal is regarded as the highest decision maker in the school, according to participants. Even so, she does have to consult or report to the LEO Senior Official before making some decisions.

"The principal is in charge of the daily operations of the school. For example, the principal can conduct study tours, plan parent-teacher meetings, supervise learning activities in class, without reporting to the LEO" (Central, Teacher 3).

Another teacher said that an employee matter is something that the head cannot decide for herself. She must wait for the LEO Director's approval.

"When recruiting civil servant teachers, or promoting teachers to serve as principal in other kindergartens, the LEO Director has 100 percent authority to do so. This is because the LEO will conduct a needs assessment analysis prior to taking any such action. The final decision is left to the Director or Mayor, not the principal." (Central, Teacher 4).

A teacher provided additional information. She said there was a decision that had to be discussed with the Mayor's wife. Every year, the Central Public Kindergarten has an annual programme, known as the Kindergarten Festival. It is a city-wide event, where teachers and students from kindergartens in the city perform: singing and dancing.

"The Mayor's wife is a kindergarten trustee in this city; she is known as *Bunda*, or big mother of kindergarten pupils in the city region. To prepare for this event, the principal must consult and report the activity plan to the LEO Director, then the director, together with the principal, must first report to the Mayor's wife," (Central, Teacher 1).

It is evident from the interviews that the principal is the senior leader in the school. It is her responsibility to make decisions about the school's day-to-day operations. However, she must consult and report some issues to the LEO Director, or even to the Mayor's wife, a person who is not part of the formal structure.

Organisational Structure

The organisational structure at the Central Public Kindergarten is clearly hierarchical. The school has eight roles: LEO Director, principal, school committee, teacher, teaching assistant, administrative assistant, school cleaner, and school guard (see figure 7.1).

"The top structure is occupied by the LEO Director. I do not receive direct orders from the director. He delegated his authority to the senior official of early childhood and primary education at the LEO." (Central, KG Head).

A teacher said that the hierarchical structure helped the principal lead the school effectively.

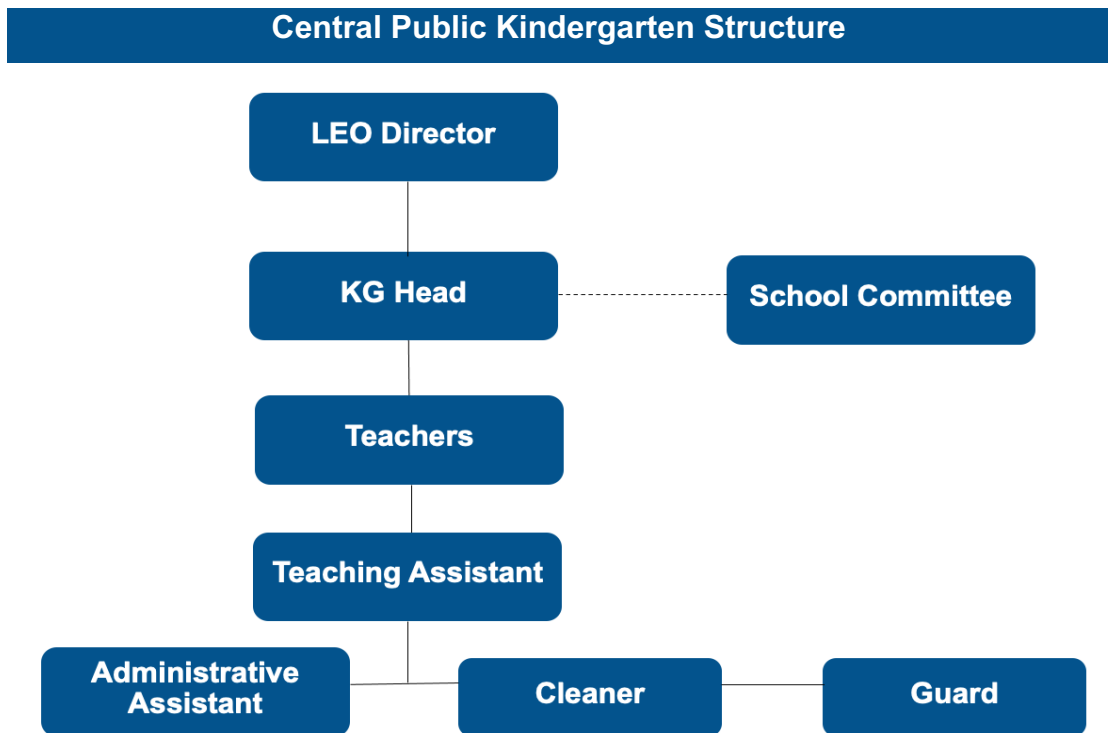
"When you look at the structure, it is obvious who is leading and who is being led. The structure also helps the principal oversee the staff by seeing their work commitment," (Central, Teacher 1).

Another teacher said the structure was clearly top-down, but the principal provided opportunities for discussion and input.

"This kindergarten is organised top-down, like a military base. This is not uncommon; other public schools in the province of Bali are organised almost the same way," (Central, Teacher 2).

The administrative assistant said that this organisational structure is displayed in the teachers' rooms. The LEO and principal value the school committee's position by placing it on an equal footing with the principal on the organisational chart.

"As part of the school's appreciation to the school committee, the principal provides office space for the school committee. The room is about 3x3 meters. We provide desks, chairs, computers, and a printer. Although the school committee does not use their office every day, it is exclusively for them. School staff members are not allowed to use the office," (Central, Administrative Assistant).



*Figure 7.1: The Organisational Structure of Central Public Kindergarten
Source: Central Public Kindergarten Profile (2021)*

Clearly, Central Public Kindergarten uses a top-down and hierarchical chain of command. As the principal claims, this type of structure helps her to lead the school.

Job descriptions

A work role system is used in the Central Public Kindergarten. The head is responsible for defining the duties and responsibilities of each school member. The roles are outlined in the school document. She also claims that she explains each role to everyone in the school.

"I provide every employee with a job description document. I produce it together with the LEO Senior Official. After the documents are completed, I present them to the employee. I also held a meeting to explain their respective roles," (Central, KG Head).

A senior teacher said that all teachers' job descriptions are the same, whether they are senior or junior.

"All teachers in the school do the same thing: teach, prepare lesson plans, and prepare learning resources. Other roles will be specific to their position, for example, the school guard is responsible for maintaining the safety of the school. The administrative assistant is responsible for managing business correspondence. While the principal oversees all school operations, supervises teachers, develops school programmes, and attends meetings with stakeholders." (Central, Teacher 3).

Another teacher reported that, although the teachers have the same tasks written down, they receive additional unwritten tasks.

"The most senior teacher is usually the school treasurer as well. I was also assigned the task of being the curriculum coordinator. Moreover, some teachers can be assigned short-term assignments from the principal, for example, competition preparation coordinators and graduation coordinators. Teachers who get additional roles, such as treasurer, will receive a written letter of assignment and incentives from the LEO office, but others will only be appointed verbally by the principal," (Central, Teacher 4).

Another teacher explained that a few additional tasks are not mentioned in official documents. For example, the school provides meals three times a week. A teacher coordinates this activity as an extra role.

"Additionally, a teacher is assigned to manage school data. The task involves updating student, teacher, and other school data and uploading them to the LEO and Ministry websites. It is an arduous task. I became a data operator two years ago at the school. Now the principal appointed another teacher to replace my position, and I am very happy," (Central, Teacher 1).

This quotation shows that formal the job description is not exactly the same in reality. Many teachers receive additional assignments that are not part of their job descriptions.

Curriculum Enactment

All members of the Central Public Kindergarten agree that the curriculum is an effective tool to achieve the school's goals. One teacher expressed her view.

"Curricula are extremely beneficial since they serve as an instrument to teach children, and they provide guidance on how to conduct learning activities in the Central Public Kindergarten. It helps shape the character of children to be what we want them to be" (Central, Teacher 4).

This is also supported by other participants. The Central Public Kindergarten uses the latest curriculum designed by the central government. She believes that this is crucial for the school.

"We use the 2013 curriculum to guide the way we teach children. We believe that, if this approach is consistently applied, then Central Public Kindergarten children will grow up to be smart, healthy, independent learners and have a positive attitude." (Central, Teacher 1).

A teacher said the principal was trying to balance preparatory scholastic skills with children's development. They provide homework practices to enhance instruction. Children are taught to read, write, and count. Despite this, she maintains that activities are not overloaded.

"Children receive homework once a week. This is still in the normal course of things. We understand that too much homework will limit children's activities and harm their development. To ensure that children have positive habits and character, we continue to emphasise the physical and mental development of children. They learn by playing." (Central, Teacher 2).

As the school considers curriculum to be very critical, the principal claims that she and the teachers review and evaluate lesson plans before beginning a new school year. During the review, they consider what they had taught over the past year, and what they could improve for the following year.

"I have a master's degree in curriculum design, so I am very concerned about this. I always adjust my lesson plans according to the school's vision and mission, parents' expectations, and the primary school's curriculum. Moreover, I find out every year if there are any updated requirements for entering primary school. We wish to integrate what we teach in this kindergarten with the primary school curriculum, to ensure smooth transitions between the two," (Central, KG Head).

Participants explained how to implement the 2013 curriculum into a lesson plan at the classroom level.

"Before a new school year begins, the principal and teachers develop a lesson plan for the school, based on the latest policies of the Mayor. They send this to me, and I usually review it with colleagues from the ECE Department at LEO. After the LEO Director signs the lesson plan, the Central Public Kindergarten can implement it in the classroom." (Central, LEO Senior Official).

The school committee chairperson stated that the lesson plan was not drafted with input from the parents. However, she claims that they are actively involved in its execution, which includes accompanying children to learn.

"We leave the creation of lesson plans entirely to the principal and teachers, since they are the experts, and we parents do not have any experience in that area. It is our belief that teachers and the principal will create the most effective lesson plans for our children. We know they are evaluating it, because they modify the children's activities every year. There will always be various activities developed by the school each year." (Central, School Committee 1).

The principal also discussed some of the challenges associated with implementing the 2013 curriculum. Some of her teachers had not taken the latest training on the 2013 curriculum. Their training was limited to the basics. It is not enough to prepare them to link the 2013 curriculum with the goal of effective child development. Furthermore, some teachers will retire within the

next one or two years. She added that some teachers no longer seemed enthusiastic and motivated to teach:

"I try to lift the spirits of teachers, students and parents. I understand some teachers are already exhausted, and some might not have the time to improve their skills and enrich their knowledge. Being a principal and a senior teacher in the city for decades gave me very convenient access to the LEO and teacher union organisations. Therefore, whenever there is a change in the curriculum, I receive the information immediately and share it with the teachers. It is my job to inform teachers about the changes and explain how we have to adjust the curriculum every time a revised policy is implemented" (Central, KG Head).

The participants said that Central Public Kindergarten is using curriculum 2013, the latest curriculum designed by the central government. The school's head believes that the curriculum is an essential tool to teach and shape children's character. Therefore, she always rewrites a lesson plan together with the teacher before the start of a new school year, but parents are not involved in this process.

Parental Engagement

Almost all participants agreed that the Central Public Kindergarten has a high level of parental involvement. Parents are usually involved in their children's performances and recreational activities.

One teacher mentioned that one of the obvious ways parents are involved is at the *Ogoh-ogoh* Parade. It is a festival held in celebration of the Saka New Year. *Ogoh-ogoh* is a giant doll that represents evil spirits that should be kept away from humans. This is constructed of light materials, including bamboo, paper, and styrofoam, making it easy to move and lift (Central Public Kindergarten Profile, 2021).

"At every *Ogoh-ogoh*, we take children on a parade around the school. The parents help the school by preparing dolls with their children,

preparing parade uniforms, supervising and guiding children during parade routes, and preparing meals for the children" (Central, Teacher 4).

This is supported by the parents. The school committee official, who has served as chairwoman for two years, said parents are also active in kids' camp activities. This is one of the school's main programmes each year. It takes place from morning to afternoon. The kids do outdoor activities in the foothills, about 10 miles from school.

"I am confident in saying that this activity was organised by parents. Teachers supervised the children only. Parents provide everything from the coach, tent, and food. "This is parents' favourite activity since it can teach their children about wild nature while fostering their independence. This event is also a great opportunity for parents to meet each other," (Central, School Committee 1).

A teacher expresses similar views. Other common activities parents are involved in include cooking competitions. Annually, this activity is held towards the end of the school year. During the event, parents and children compete to cook the best dish. Typically, the food that is made is traditional Balinese food, such as *Ayam Betutu*, a Balinese spiced roasted chicken.

"The cooking class activity with parents teaches children many skills. It develops their motor skills, and they learn skills such as cutting, chopping, counting, and measuring. The parents are heavily involved in the process. They prepare groceries and utensils. It's also an opportunity to strengthen children's bonds with their parents" (Central, Teacher 2).

Participants noted that parents not only help with labour, but also with money. Every month, parents raise money to pay honorary employees at the Central Public Kindergarten. They are employed by the school committee.

"Parents donate money every month to pay the salaries of honorary employees. This is a significant contribution from parents," (Central, School Committee 2).

In addition, the principal said she significantly needs parental support for the child's education. She believes that children in the Central Public Kindergarten will be more enthusiastic about learning if their parents are active in school.

"Children still need help from their parents to complete all projects and tasks assigned by their teacher. Thus, I try a participatory approach with parents. I always communicate with parents, exchanging information, and inviting their participation in school," (Central, KG Head).

Participants claimed that parental participation in Central Public Kindergarten was very high, however, it was limited to extracurricular activities. In school policy development, curriculum development, and principal selection, parents are not involved.

"When it comes to curriculum planning or school policies, parents are typically not involved because they are reluctant to do so. We believe that the principal and teachers should handle this entirely. However, we are always ready to assist with children's activities in the classroom or outdoors," (Central, School Committee 1).

Parental involvement in the Central Public Kindergarten is high, according to all participants. Besides helping the labour force, they also contribute greatly financially, such as by paying all the honorary workers in the school. However, their involvement with the school is limited to children's performances and recreational activities. They are not involved in school policy-making.

Leadership during a Crisis

All participants said they felt exhausted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many teachers have to work beyond their normal working hours, even until midnight, without being paid for overtime.

According to one teacher, Zoom and WhatsApp Video are the most commonly used online platforms. Teachers use those platforms to teach, while WhatsApp chat is used for sending learning materials and for collecting assignments.

A teacher explained that, during normal times before the pandemic, they worked from 7:15AM to 12:15PM, Monday through Saturday. During the pandemic, learning is conducted online and outside of normal working hours.

"Learning in the morning is definitely impossible because most parents are at work. So, before we begin studying, we need to ask parents what time they can accompany their children to study online. Therefore, we need to adjust to the parents' schedules. Therefore, if parents can accompany their children to learn online at night, then yes, we do so," (Central, Teacher 3).

During the pandemic, other teachers say they feel that their tasks are more demanding. One adds that she felt fatigued. As well as teaching children online, she must contact parents every day.

"I have to call parents if their children do not collect their assignments. I am just reminding them. Many parents send their children's assignments after 9PM. During the pandemic, it seems there is no time limit for teaching," (Central, Teacher 2).

This issue was also reported by other teachers. Due to the pandemic, there are challenges not only in serving the children, but also the parents. She admits she chats with parents until midnight.

"Last night I chatted with parents over Whatsapp. One parent got off work at 8PM and was only able to help their children complete their homework. She just sent her son's homework to me at 10 PM, then the parent talked to me about her son until 11 PM. Her son refused to learn, did not want to do assignments. As a teacher, I am required to listen to parents' stories, no matter how tired and sleepy I may be," (Central, Teacher 1).

The school committee chairperson confirms this. Her daughter attends kindergarten A. She works as a banker about 10 miles away from home. She comes home every evening at 6 PM. While she works, her son was cared for by a nanny, who only had a junior high school degree and could not accompany her child to online classes.

"The teacher gives assignments straight for one week, but the child is asked to do one every day. It is usually done by my son in the evenings. She waited for me to go home to help. In online teaching, the teacher usually asks me what time is convenient for me. Once that has been agreed upon, she will create a Zoom link or use WhatsApp video call. It is more complicated because most parents are unable to assist their children due to their work," (Central, School Committee 1).

A teacher's assistant added that she assists teachers with online learning. During the pandemic, the learning schedule should be divided into several sessions. Every week, the teacher will teach all students online via Zoom for an hour. The lesson takes place on Monday afternoon. In addition, the teacher provides additional learning each week via a WhatsApp video call with a smaller group. There can be a maximum of three students in each group.

"We usually schedule video calls via WhatsApp into three sessions during afternoon and night times so we can accommodate parents' schedules. The quality of gadgets is also an obstacle because many teachers' cellphones are glitchy because they receive too many photos and videos from parents as a children's homework submission." (Central, Teaching Assistant).

The principal noted that many parents had trouble motivating their children during the pandemic. Children often need to be contacted by their teachers to motivate them to do their tasks. As a leader, the principal wanted the teachers to understand the parents' situation.

"Consequently, I encouraged teachers not to give any deadline for parents to turn in their children's homework. This is because many

parents work and cannot accompany them in the morning or afternoon. So, parents and children can turn in homework any time they wish," (Central, KG Head).

Participants also brought up the financial burden that parents bear as a result of the pandemic. Some parents had lost their jobs due to it. Some cannot pay the voluntary fee every month.

"There are four honorary workers who need to be paid each month. This issue was discussed with parents during the pandemic. We worked together to find a solution. Initially, the school wanted to temporarily lay off the nontenured staff. Parents, however, say they intend to hire them regardless of what happens during the pandemic. Though the honorary workers received lower salaries than they did before the pandemic, parents paid them with sincerity," (Central, School Committee 2).

All teachers said they were burdened more during the pandemic. Teaching online classes seemed to lead to unlimited hours of work. They felt drained. Parents expressed a similar concern, that they had difficulty motivating their children to learn. Additionally, some parents were laid off as a result of the pandemic.

Overview

The chapter discusses leadership practices at Central Public Kindergarten. The principal is an experienced teacher at the school who has been teaching for more than 30 years. She has served two consecutive terms as principal since 2013. According to the participants, the head of a Central Public Kindergarten has many responsibilities, including administrative duties and academic supervision.

A participant remarked that the criteria for becoming the principal of a Central Public Kindergarten may not entirely correspond with government regulations. Principals recruited by LEO Director are not trained as principals but already have significant experience teaching kindergarten.

The participants said that Central Public Kindergarten uses a closed recruitment system to select their principals. There are only three people who know of the process: the LEO Director, the incumbent principal, and the Mayor. Principal candidates are chosen based on seniority and personal preference.

All participants claimed that Central Public Kindergarten is a culturally minded kindergarten. In contrast to other kindergartens, this kindergarten aims to form children's characters based on Balinese culture. The kindergarten also stresses tolerance from the very beginning.

The participants clearly indicated that the Central Public Kindergarten offers free tuition. Local government and the Ministry of Education provide operational funding for the kindergarten. Parents, however, voluntarily collect money to pay honorary workers, such as assistant teacher, who are not funded by the government.

The participants were generally satisfied with the leadership of the kindergarten's head. She is regarded as hard working. Participants said they worked together as a team. To achieve the school's goals, the head of kindergarten invited all school members to participate.

It's clear from the Central Public Kindergarten profile that they use a top-down, hierarchical chain of command. The school has eight roles: a LEO Director, a principal, a school committee, a teacher, a teacher assistant, an administrative assistant, a school cleaner, and a school guard. In reality, job descriptions differ from what they appear on paper. Many teachers receive additional tasks not outlined in their job descriptions.

The head of the Central Public Kindergarten makes decisions regarding its daily operations. However, there are certain matters that must be discussed and reported to the LEO Director first, for example, in regards to the appointment of civil servant teachers, or the promotion of teachers to principal positions. Additionally, the principal had to consult the Mayor's wife, a person outside the school structure, in order to organise a certain school event.

The Central Public Kindergarten uses the 2013 curriculum, created by the central government. Lesson plans may only be modified with LEO approval. The head claimed she was deeply concerned about the development of the lesson plans.

Almost all participants agreed that the Central Public Kindergarten has a very high level of parental involvement. They help with labour, and also contribute a significant amount of funds, in particular by paying all honorary employees in the school. Yet, their involvement is limited to children's performances and recreational activities. Parents are not involved in school policy development.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers primarily used Zoom and WhatsApp. The pandemic left them fatigued. Teachers often worked past normal working hours, even until midnight, without being reimbursed for overtime. The next chapter provides a cross-case analysis linked to the literature.

Chapter Eight

Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents a cross-case analysis of the data from the four public kindergartens in the previous chapters. The findings discussed in this chapter are linked to the literature on kindergarten leadership. The analysis and discussion are based on the themes that emerged from the data and are consistent with those discussed in the findings' chapters. The themes are:

1. The nature of school leadership
2. The purpose of the kindergarten
3. Leadership enactment
4. Organisational structure
5. Curriculum enactment
6. Parental engagement
7. Leadership during a crisis

The Nature of School Leadership

This section examines and discusses the nature of school leadership in four Indonesian public kindergartens, linked to previous literature. It begins with an explanation of the principal's administrative tensions, followed by a discussion of the lack of preparation before taking on the role. Finally, it discusses the political considerations influencing the appointment of principals.

The administrative burden

Heads of public kindergartens have significant administrative pressure. In addition to improving school performance and student outcomes, they deal with heavy paperwork. In three of the four cases, the principal is responsible for day-to-day school administration, which includes managing school budgets, updating primary data, and managing school assets. Their administrative responsibilities increase when they receive government funding for certain projects. As a result, they are less able to focus on their leadership roles and student performance. For example, West Public Kindergarten's principal is required to produce school finance reports because their funds are

audited. The Capital Public Kindergarten is an exception, as the principal claimed to implement instructional leadership. Since administrative tasks are handled entirely by the Local Education Office (LEO), she focuses primarily on addressing student outcomes.

These findings concur with previous research on the use and allocation of principals' time (Lee and Hallinger, 2012), which confirms that, in Indonesia, principals emphasise administration rather than leadership or school development. This is because the Ministry of Education expects the principal to have eight roles; supervising, leading, managing, entrepreneurship, innovating, developing curriculum, acting as role models, and completing administrative tasks (MoEC Regulation Number 6, 2018). The principals also report that regional government plays only a small role in reducing their administrative burden. The Capital Public Kindergarten principal was the only one who said that she received assistance from the LEO Director to ease her administrative burden. In this case, the LEO provided a treasurer to assist with preparing financial reports.

Inadequate preparation

Preparation for becoming a principal is increasingly regarded as critical (Bush and Montecinos, 2019; Bell, 2019). However, the findings reveal that three of the four kindergarten principals had no formal training before being appointed. They attended training from the MoE only after being appointed. The head of the Capital Public Kindergarten is the only one who attended the training before taking up the position.

The procedures for appointment to principalships in public kindergartens do not correspond to the central government's policies. According to Ministry of Education regulations, prospective principals are required to attend training before taking office (MoEC Regulation number 6, 2018). In the West, East, and Central Public Kindergartens, however, the local education office shows less concern for the principal's leadership development; and selects principals from experienced teachers without leadership training. Participants described taking part in training at the Ministry as a lengthy and time-consuming process.

Research by Sumintono et al. (2015) is consistent with this finding. Despite principal training being standardised in Indonesia, and a mandatory part of the selection process, many public principals lack formal preparation. The case study principals appear to have been selected because they have a personal relationship with the district officer.

Leadership and development training are fundamental for principals, and the position of the principal requires special skills that go beyond teaching. This can be achieved through systemic leadership training, but three of the case studies show that public kindergarten heads are not trained before taking office. The regional regulations also differ from those at the central level. The LEO selects principals based on personal considerations, and the principal relies solely on their experience as a teacher. As a result, they learn about leadership 'on the job'.

A recent study in China (Wang and Ho, 2020) showed a lack of leadership development and preparation among early years' principals. The authors argued that early childhood school staff roles are viewed by the government and the community as 'babysitters' rather than teachers. Consequently, they received less training. A similar study conducted in Japan, by Inoue and Kawakita (2019), concluded that early childhood principals lack training, particularly in school management and administration. Kaufman and Pianta (2000) stated that training is imperative for principals and teachers in kindergartens, because of the challenging transition process to primary school, where higher literacy and numeracy standards are expected. There is further discussion of this subject in the curriculum training subsection.

Political considerations

In 2001, Indonesia shifted its approach from centralisation to decentralisation. Most of the authority in education moved from the central Ministry to local government, including the appointment of school principals. Most participants seemed to understand that the principals were selected based on political considerations and personal ties. However, the participants in the Capital public kindergarten claim that the process is transparent. It involves the

participation of an independent academic team from a university, and the selection process is announced to all public kindergartens in the region, and on the LEO's website. In contrast, participants in the other kindergartens allege that partisan politics influenced the selection process. For example, East Public Kindergarten's head is known by teachers to have a close relationship with the Mayor.

The appointment of principals based on political factors has been documented in several studies on decentralisation and teacher autonomy policies in Indonesia. Bjork, (2003), Jalal and Mustafa, (2001), Sumintono et al., (2015), and Sofo et al. (2012), all argue that the selection of principals in the regions remains problematic because candidates are not elected based on qualifications and competencies, but on political favours, because the mayor, a political figure, makes the final decision. This finding demonstrates the presence of political connections among principal candidates. This is ironic since the public kindergarten principal is a civil servant and Law number 5 of 2014 stipulates that civil servants must be appointed and promoted based on merit, not political interests.

In general, East, West, and Central Public Kindergarten principal have high administrative workloads. They are not only responsible for improving student outcomes and school performance, but also for managing the day-to-day paperwork. Furthermore, they admitted that they were not trained to perform their duties. The selection criteria are not in line with central government regulations, and the selection process is dominated by political interests. A study by Hao (2013) found that principal induction training in Vietnam consisted of only a one- or two-day programme at the start of the academic year. Candidates are faced with political complexities when it comes to principal appointments since they must have favourable relations with senior district officers. Similarly, research in three Asian societies, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong, by Sui-chu (2006), indicated that political factors affect school leadership and principal promotion.

The Purpose of Kindergarten Education

This section examines and discusses the purposes of kindergarten education in four public kindergartens in Indonesia, linked to the previous literature. It begins with an explanation of the kindergartens' vision and mission. The section is followed by a discussion on the importance of financial resources. Limited finance inhibits the kindergarten from fulfilling its vision, and most case-study kindergartens rely on parental funding due to limited government funding. Vision was discussed at the national, local, and school levels.

Vision and mission

Vision is a very important aspect of leadership in many organisations. It is based on goals and values that serve as guidelines for an organisation's success (Hargreaves, 1995). Having a clear vision for the future of a school is essential for motivating and inspiring its members to achieve their goals. It is particularly important to have vision in times of transition or difficulty (Day et al, 2000). Numerous studies have shown that vision plays a critical role in enhancing school performance (e.g. Leithwood et al, 2004; Murphy and Torre, 2015).

Vision can be found at the national, local and school levels in Indonesia. It is evident from the four cases that kindergartens have a centrally-required vision at the national level. According to the Ministry of Education, kindergartens are expected to prepare children for primary school as well as to form good character, including moral values, religious values, social and emotional dimensions, independent, language skills, cognitive, physical and motor skills, plus culture, and art (Minister of Education Regulation 18/2018). According to Paramita and Pandia (2015), kindergarten education plays an integral role in the nation's education vision of building a smarter nation and developing Indonesians physically and spiritually.

In all four cases, participants expressed a connection between kindergarten practices and the national vision. As an example, the teaching assistant at East Public Kindergarten viewed kindergarten education as preparation for primary school. As a result, they provide pupils with basic writing and reading skills that

they will need once they enter primary school. In a similar vein, a teacher at West Public Kindergarten reported that the school adopted the vision of the national kindergarten through the local education office. She considers that it is impossible to separate school vision from Ministry of Education guidelines. Through the national vision, students developed strong minds, good manners, and good behaviour. This finding contrasts with a study conducted by Formen (2020) in Indonesia, which concluded that kindergarten teachers were unaware of the national kindergarten vision. According to him, kindergarten principals and teachers only do what they know is good for the children, without considering the national vision.

Across the four cases, kindergarten vision was also identified at the local level. The vision was shaped by the national vision set by the ministry and by the vision of the city mayor. Following the decentralisation of kindergarten education, the mayor has the authority to manage education on a local level, which includes setting the vision for kindergartens (Minister Regulation 18/2018).

Kindergartens in the capital, for example, are not only designed to shape character and prepare children for school, but also to overcome social inequalities. There is a desire to provide free kindergarten services to poor children as well. In the East Public Kindergarten, the local government sets the purpose of the kindergarten in accordance with the Minister of Education. On the wall of the principal's room, it is printed, framed, and taped next to a photo of the mayor and deputy mayor.

West Public Kindergarten's principal said that the mayor's vision is to create social justice through a corrupt-free bureaucracy, accountability, and transparency. As part of this vision, West Public Kindergarten focuses on developing students' character, honesty, discipline, and obedience to God. The Balinese LEO said that the mayor's vision is to create a creative and culturally oriented city. A kindergarten child in Central Public Kindergarten is therefore expected to be creative, cultured, and have a character influenced by Balinese culture.

At the school level, visions are outlined in kindergarten mission and vision statements. A common feature of all four cases is the kindergarten's official profile, which states the kindergarten's vision. All four kindergartens seem to be re-stating the vision and mission at national and local levels, and putting it into practice in class. West Public Kindergarten, for example, teaches Islamic values in accordance with mayor's vision, which emphasises honesty, discipline, and obedience to God. Due to the large number of Muslim parents, they offer Quran reading activities twice a week after school.

All participants described Central Public Kindergarten as focusing on developing children's character and creativity based on Balinese culture. It aims to shape the character of students by teaching them Hindu and Balinese values. Children are taught Balinese dances, traditional games, *Gamelan*, a Balinese ensemble music, and Balinese language. Moreover, since most children in this kindergarten are Hindus, the school celebrates many Hindu festivals. The students in this kindergarten wear traditional clothing on Hindu religious ceremonies every month called *Purnama* and *Tilem*. In addition, the Capital Public Kindergarten is expected to work towards socio-economic goals by allocating ten percent of school places to the poor.

Earlier research in South East Asia (Walker et al., 2012; Truong et al., 2017) shows that socio-cultural context affects leadership practices. They conclude that principals, as community members, internalise their communities' cultural values. By doing so, they act according to the context, culture, and norms of the local community when determining the direction of the school.

As evident in the four case studies, the kindergarten's purpose is derived from a central government directive alongside a vision from the local government, and local contexts. The four principals all claimed that government rules determined their schools' purposes. Each kindergarten writes its objectives in a vision statement and lists them in its profile and organogram.

Limited Financial Support

In order to implement kindergarten vision, sufficient resources are required, so that learning can be accomplished well and goals can be achieved. Harris and Lambert (2003) suggest that a school needs to take a whole-school approach to implement its vision. In a study conducted in Thailand, Sawaddemongkol et al. (2017) identified financial issues as one of the barriers to kindergartens meeting their visions. They attributed a kindergarten's success to nine factors: teacher skills, principal leadership, school management, information systems, parental involvement, facility readiness, work environment, school location, and availability of budgets.

In three of the four cases, West, East and Central, the LEO failed to provide adequate funding for public kindergartens. Even utilities, such as electricity, gas, telephone, and internet, have to be paid by parents for the East Public Kindergarten, which receives no funding from the local government. The participants believe that this should be the responsibility of the LEO. The principal of West Public Kindergarten reported receiving government support, but the funds failed to cover all operating expenses, including the salaries of the teaching assistant. Additionally, the Central Public Kindergarten principal said that the local government covers the operational costs associated with paying utility bills, but it does not cover the salaries of the support staff (assistant teacher, administration assistant, cleaner, and school guard). Therefore, the principal has to mobilise funds from parents.

In contrast, the Capital Public Kindergarten was adequately funded by its LEO. Local government has been providing more operational funding since 2017, which has doubled from previous years. As a consequence, the principal was able to pay for utility bills, purchase classroom supplies, and hold a free graduation ceremony for the children. Also, the LEO provides an extra budget for a child health programme. Pupils were provided with a variety of healthy food, including rice, fruit, vegetables, and side dishes, without having to pay for it.

These findings confirm Oplatka's (2004) view that the government is responsible for funding and supporting educational activities in many developing countries (China, Thailand, Singapore, Malta, Nigeria and Pakistan). However, many countries are not able to fulfil these obligations due to economic difficulties. Similarly, Rao and Li (2009) found that the government plays only a limited role in kindergarten education because it is regarded as less important than other academic levels.

The findings of this study contradict the expectations of central government. Public schools are expected to be free of charge and all children should receive good and equal kindergarten services, regardless of their socio-economic status (Law number 20, 2003). The present study's findings support those of Malaysian scholars, Majzub and Salim (2011), who conducted research in Tangerang, Indonesia. They concluded that finance has a significant impact on parental involvement and on the learning process in Indonesian kindergartens. Those kindergartens with limited financial resources tend not to focus on parental involvement programmes, but rather on meeting the needs of learning and teaching infrastructure. In contrast, kindergartens with more finance can implement learning programmes and achieve their vision more easily.

Fonsen et al's (2019) study in six countries (Germany, Finland, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, and United States) also makes links between resources and vision. These authors emphasised the importance of increasing access and affordability for pre-school development in Asia. To accomplish this goal, they added that effective leadership is crucial.

This sub-section indicates that most LEOs do not provide funding for public kindergartens, which hinders the principal's ability to lead. In the east region, the case-study kindergarten found difficulty because the LEO does not allocate a budget for them. Although West and Central public kindergartens offer operational cost support, these funds are not sufficient to cover all kindergarten expenses, including salary support for staff. In contrast, public kindergartens in the capital receive very adequate funding, so parents do not have to pay

anything. In terms of funding public kindergartens, there is a clear discrepancy between regions. The capital province in Indonesia, with larger funds, appears to be able to provide a satisfactory kindergarten budget more easily than the other regions.

Reliance on funding from parents

In order to implement the vision, parental support is required due to uneven funding from the local government. As Arnold et al. (2008) noted, parental involvement in the education of their children may take many forms, including volunteer work, parenting, making decisions, and raising funds. Oplatka (2004) suggested that principals in developing countries have a fund-raising function as one of their administrative characteristics. Due to economic difficulties, most African governments struggle to fund schools. Thus, the principal has no choice, they must ask parents to fund construction of buildings, physical facilities, and basic school needs.

Participants at three of the four case studies clearly indicated that the school relies on parental support for funding. Even though public kindergartens are supposed to be tuition-free, parents must pay a monthly fee to support the school. The East Public Kindergarten, for example, charges parents a monthly fee higher than private schools in the area. Therefore, only children from the middle class can attend that kindergarten. The West Public Kindergarten school committee participant also explained that parents should provide financial support for the school. Those funds are used to pay non-tenured staff who are not funded by the local government. A similar motive exists in the Central Public Kindergarten, where the principal said there is a gap between the government budget and what the school needs. To cover the salaries of four honorary employees, they need money from parents. Only Capital Public Kindergarten participants reported that they do not depend on parental support because there is a sufficient budget allocation from the local government.

Overall, the purposes of kindergartens can be seen in their vision and mission. To accomplish these goals, schools require adequate financial support from local government. However, only the local government in the capital province

meets all the kindergarten's needs. The other three local governments have not provided sufficient funds for their kindergartens. The funding is inadequate, especially in the eastern regions of Indonesia. It is evident that school finances affect the enactment of leadership vision in three of the case-study public kindergartens.

Leadership Enactment

This section examines and discusses how leadership is enacted in the four public kindergartens in Indonesia, linked to previous literature and theory. It begins with delegation and distributed leadership, followed by a discussion of team leadership and concludes by discussing the principal as a role model.

Delegation and distributed leadership

A distributed leadership model emphasises the importance of sharing leadership with other members of an organisation. This contrasts with a solo leadership model (Crawford, 2019). Distributed leadership has a broad nature that makes it relevant and applicable in a wide range of school settings, according to Bolden et al. (2009). As a result, this model is regarded as a model of choice in the 21st century (Bush 2013).

A distributed leadership element appears to be present in all four case studies. Although the principal is regarded as a kindergarten's highest leader, participants said that they distributed leadership to others. It is the belief of all kindergarten heads that each member of the school plays a crucial role in the practice of leadership. For example, the principal of East Public Kindergarten said she must distribute leadership due to the number of meeting invitations she receives from stakeholders. However, leadership is not emergent in the four case studies, as assumed in the literature (Gronn,2000; Bolden,2011; Bennett et al.,2003). Participants perceived delegation as distributed leadership, although a clear distinction exists between the two. According to Harris and Spillane (2008), delegation refers to assigning jobs and roles, while distributed leadership refers to empowering and interacting among school staff and the principal.

There is a notion of delegation, rather than distributed leadership, in all kindergartens. East Public Kindergarten's principal, for example, sends a teacher to represent her at meetings with the local education office. In the Capital Public Kindergarten, a teacher was assigned to represent the principal during comparative studies with other kindergartens. At Central Public Kindergarten, the principal appointed a senior teacher as the school treasurer, and another as the curriculum coordinator, rather than empowering them to work independently.

The finding supports research in Malaysia, by Bush and Ng (2019), who concluded that distributed leadership in Malaysia differs from Western concepts. The concept of distributed leadership, defined as sharing duties between the principal and senior staff, is difficult to differentiate from delegation. According to Hallinger (2018), and Pittinsky and Zhu (2005), distributed leadership in East Asia is also understood to mean that several senior teachers are appointed as vice principals or assistant principals. These authors added that distributed leadership may be practiced in various ways according to the school context.

In the current study, leadership appears to be delegated in public kindergartens. A principal's authority is transferred when she is absent or unable to lead. Bolden et al. (2009), and Harris (2014), argue that delegation is not distribution, although it is possible to delegate leadership in a formal structure. The present study suggests that leadership appears to be distributed by job allocation. In all four cases, the principal has the authority to assign work to their team, which arises from the organisation's hierarchy. Staff members contribute to kindergarten leadership through an allocative system. Whether school members can participate in leadership depends on their assigned tasks, not on their initiative.

Bolden et al's discussion of allocative distribution suggests that leadership entails more than just leading members; it involves interactions between members, groups, and the development of the organisation as a whole. As Hall and Southworth (1997) explain, allocative leadership occurs when school

leaders create a structure that promotes staff participation, integration, and collaboration.

Enactment of team leadership

Day et al. (2004) argue that organisational members are expected to work effectively in a team. According to Salas et al. (2005), team leadership consists of two or more people who interact and work together adaptively, interdependently, and dynamically toward the same goal. Barnett and McCormick (2012) noted that team leadership is dependent upon the context and size of a school. They emphasised that, in order to form a leadership team, organisational members need to have four pillars: cohesion, collective, coordinating, and motivating.

Teamwork was repeatedly mentioned as an aspect of leadership enactment in all four cases. All the principals agreed that they could not work alone and needed staff assistance. A distinctive finding showed that teamwork persists despite hierarchies. A teacher at West Public Kindergarten, for example, said that they help each other out. Together, they develop lesson plans. Teachers share what other teachers have done in previous years to make changes for the coming year. Similarly, the Capital Public Kindergarten formed a lesson plan development team, which included the principal, teachers, parents, education consultants, and curriculum experts from the university. In order to develop lesson plans, they work collaboratively. The Central Public Kindergarten works in a similar way, where the principal and school staff members collaborate to develop classroom activities.

Numerous studies on leadership have documented the importance of teamwork. In Finland, kindergarten leadership is characterised by collegiality and empowerment, according to Heikka et al. (2013). Similarly, Nehez et al.'s (2022) Swedish study indicated that preschool teachers cooperate collegially and make decisions together. This topic will be discussed further in the subsection on meeting leadership and participation.

Two main factors may contribute to team leadership flourishing in the four cases. First, because Indonesian society strongly values cooperation, they refer to it as *gotong royong* or mutual cooperation. Second, most kindergarten teachers hold civil servant status and remain at their schools for many years, resulting in a very low turn-over rate. These factors contribute to a greater degree of bonding between kindergarten staff and the heads. Team bonding may be viewed as a prerequisite for effective teamwork.

Cho and Tsai (2009) found that kindergarten education creates a sense of bonding in schools, in their comparative study of American and Taiwanese pre-school teachers. They added that school is a micro-community; and if bonding is created, all can work together towards achieving goals. As Bush and Glover (2012) point out, team leadership takes time to develop. The process requires cohesion and active participation from its members.

The principal as a role model

In all four cases, the principal was regarded as an inspiration or role model. Most participants had a positive impression of the leadership of the kindergarten's head. The kindergarten staff perceived the principal as a leader because of their behaviour and willingness to listen to others. For example, the administrative assistant at the Capital Public Kindergarten portrays the principal as a role model for the entire staff. She is smart and always arrives at 6:30 a.m., before the teachers. She also returns home after the teachers. Her perspective is similar to that of an assistant teacher at a Central Public Kindergarten, who said that the principal motivated the staff to achieve the school's goals. The principal encouraged her to pursue an early childhood education degree to become a better teacher. In addition, the principal noted that becoming a public kindergarten head has to come from the heart and should be sincere. A similar opinion was also expressed by participants in all four cases.

Harris and Hargreaves (2013) noted that school leaders must be able to influence, motivate, and set an example for teachers and school members to achieve school goals together. Strongly influential principals can increase the

enthusiasm of the members of the organisation and improve school performance. Pearce and Conger (2003), and Dimmock and Lam (2012), argued that leadership is a dynamic process of influencing individuals in order to accomplish a common goal. According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), leadership influence affects organisational members directly and indirectly. Bush (2012) adds that preschool experiences have a huge impact on educational outcomes and later life for children. Effective leadership is therefore essential in this field.

Overall, the findings show that distributed leadership may occur in some situations. However, leadership is not emergent; it is allocative. Delegation seems more appropriate to describe leadership enactment in the four cases than distributed leadership. A network of interactions between kindergarten staff members and principals is also evident in this study. Most participants reported working as a team. The strong culture of cooperation in the country, and the bonding between principals and teachers due to their long-term collaborative relationship, may explain this. The principal was also referred to by participants as a figure who is a role model and has a significant influence in the school.

Organisational Structure

This section examines and discusses organisational structures in the four public kindergartens in Indonesia, linked to previous literature and theory. It begins with a discussion of the hierarchical command structure, followed by an overview of informal roles in the four kindergartens. The section concludes with a discussion on participation and meeting leadership.

Hierarchical command structure

All public kindergartens follow the same hierarchical command structure and there was a clear top-down structure in the four case-study kindergartens. The hierarchy starts with the LEO director, passes through the principal, and then to other school members. Case study participants confirmed that all public schools have similar structures.

The principal was perceived to have a significant role in all four kindergartens. Participants claimed that the principal oversees the day-to-day operations of the school. Kindergarten documents, however, clearly indicate that the LEO Director is placed at the top of the school's organisational structure, not the principal. Three kindergartens include school committees in their formal structure, but West Public Kindergarten does not do so. However, the West School Committee participants said that they work with the principal and teachers.

The hierarchical command structure adopted by the four kindergartens is considered normal by participants. The authority to run the kindergarten is vested in the principal. According to participants, this structure makes kindergarten operations more efficient and effective since it is clear who is in charge and who they should follow. A hierarchical structure is common in Asian societies, including Indonesia. It shows that an individual who holds a high position has more power. Hofstede (2001) refers to this as high power distance. However, the principal's contribution to school leadership may be limited as she is subject to the LEO director's authority. In addition, the school committees shown in the organisational structure of kindergartens confirm Ho and Ng's (2017) finding that the school's leadership includes more than just the principal and staff, but also other members who work together to achieve school goals. Despite public kindergartens being bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations, with top-down administrative structures, they attempt to incorporate parents into their formal structure. This issue will be discussed further in the section about parental engagement.

Informal roles

The organisational structure and roles of kindergarten staff members are similar in all four cases. The roles include the principal, the LEO director, the teachers, the teaching assistant, the administrative staff, the school cleaner, and the school guard. According to the Ministry of Education and the LEO, a public kindergarten needs at least four sections, the principal, teachers, education administration, and support staff; cleaner, guard (MoEC, 2014). However, there is evidence that formal job descriptions do not reflect reality.

Kindergarten principals assign additional informal roles not outlined in the structure or job description. In the West Public Kindergarten, for example, the teaching assistant also works as an administrative assistant, while the person listed as an administrative assistant in the school is a cleaner. The findings of this study are consistent with those in Hong Kong early childhood settings (Li, 2015; Ho, 2012), which show that ECE staff perform functions that go beyond their formal duties, such as engaging with the community.

In the East Public Kindergarten, a participant said she was also the school treasurer in addition to being a teacher. An administrative assistant at the same school said he also served as a librarian and school guard. Similarly, a teacher in Central Public Kindergarten reported additional responsibilities. The principal assigned her to be a school data operator, whose task is to update student, teacher, and school data then upload it to the LEO's and Ministry of Education website. Only the participants in Capital Public Kindergarten reported that they worked based on their formal job description without any additional responsibilities.

This sub-section indicates that non-formal leaders are involved in three of the four kindergartens. For example, the principal of East Public Kindergarten said the mayor plays an important role in leadership practice. His prerogative is to appoint the principal of a public kindergarten. However, from a review of the documents, the present author did not see the mayor listed within the kindergarten structure. Similarly, Central Public Kindergarten's principal explained that the mayor's wife plays a significant role in the kindergarten despite not being a member of the official structure. Certain kindergarten events had to be approved by the mayor's wife before they could be conducted.

The present study shows that participants assumed multiple responsibilities beyond their formal roles. The job description is divided into two. In the first part, the roles and responsibilities of kindergarten staff members are defined generically. Second, there are informal roles that are not outlined in the organisation's structure. Furthermore, there are also non-formal leaders who

play a role in kindergarten leadership practices. They have an involvement in school practice even though they are not listed in the organisation's formal structure. Conflicts and dilemmas can arise because of the possibility of the intervention of non-formal leaders.

This finding indicates that may be non-formal leaders involved in the organisation (Liljenberg, 2015). It also supports previous research on kindergarten settings in Indonesia (Widiastuti et al., 2023; Paramita and Pandia, 2015), which shows that stakeholders in kindergarten include both formal and non-formal leaders, who may have a significant impact on the school's operations.

Meeting leadership and participation

Despite the hierarchical command structures established in all four cases, all participants said that the principal involved staff in decision-making. All principals claim to provide opportunities for staff to provide input and to engage in leadership activities. Kindergarten employees have the opportunity to voice their opinions. In most cases, decisions are made by groups rather than individuals. For example, teachers at the Central Public Kindergarten said the principal always consulted and sought input from everyone before any staff meeting was held. As Leithwood and Mascall (2008) stated, school members' involvement in decision-making should result in better decisions than those made by individuals alone.

All four schools regularly hold staff meetings, which is an indication of participation in leadership. The principals organise regular meetings to which all school members are invited. Kindergarten documents and interviews show that all schools had similar meeting activities. Each kindergarten holds staff meetings at least once a month, as documented in the school minutes' books. Meetings were held after school hours, and all school members, including teachers, attended.

Along with engaging teachers and staff, the principals held meetings with parents to solicit their input. Central Public Kindergarten has the most frequent

meetings with parents, among the four kindergartens. As they have a regular parenting class programme every month, the principal usually meets with parents before the class. The importance of meetings in leadership is demonstrated by Bush and Glover (2012), who showed that team meetings can enhance participation in the leadership process. Meeting frequency can also indicate all stakeholders' commitment to the school. This implies that more meetings equal greater commitment.

In all four cases, the principal considered the input of her staff during a meeting. This contradicts expectations of hierarchical bureaucracies. Lumby (2019) argued that bureaucracies usually impose rigid control. With little evidence of consensus on their authority, they are viewed as a set of rules and written documents. Similarly, Grey and Garsten (2001) noted that there is a command-obedience relationship in bureaucracy. There is a hierarchy of power that flows top-down, and command authority is invested in superiors.

As teachers in East Public Kindergarten have indicated, this paradox occurs because Indonesian society prioritises consensus, called *musyawarah untuk mufakat*, or deliberation for consensus. In Indonesia, decisions are usually made together by community members. Additionally, Indonesian society has a strong culture of joint work, referred to as *gotong royong* (Simarmata et al., 2020; Suwignyo, 2019). The findings are consistent with a recent case study by Nehez et al. (2022), which concluded that preschool teachers have a tradition of collegial cooperation. The climate of joint work is developing, and all teachers are increasingly involved in the decision-making process.

Overall, the four cases showed that the principals and teachers follow the same hierarchical command structure. The participants considered this normal since other public kindergartens also adopted the same structure. However, there is a discrepancy between the formal job descriptions and the actual tasks performed. School leadership is influenced by informal actors invisible in the organisational structure. In addition, the findings show that, although principals and teachers work in command structures within the hierarchy, they involve school staff in decision-making processes.

Curriculum Enactment

This section examines and discusses curriculum implementation in the four Indonesian public kindergartens, linked to previous literature. It begins by discussing the national policy curriculum, followed by an overview of curriculum training.

National policy curricula

All four kindergartens used Curriculum 2013. Known as a reform curriculum, Curriculum 2013 is the most recent curriculum designed by the central government. It emphasises a balance between student attitudes, skills, and knowledge. The curriculum emphasises play-based learning at the kindergarten level, covering five aspects: religious and moral, physical, social-emotional, language, and art (Minister Regulation Number 18, 2018). The Ministry of Education developed this curriculum to replace the previous School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) 2006.

All four case-study principals said they were required to implement this curriculum by the central government, which then passed it down to LEOs. Because they are a state-run school, they must comply with the policy determined by the Ministry. There was no option for them, as they are required to implement Curriculum 2013. One East Public Kindergarten teacher says that curriculum 2013 is not a grassroots initiative. It does not come from the teachers who carry out daily class activities but from the government. According to Hallinger and Kantamara (2000), school leaders in societal cultures with high power distance, such as those in East Asia, often face dilemmas when implementing school curriculum reforms. Since they have a “compliance culture”, they must implement a revised curriculum because it is a policy issued by the Ministry of Education.

These findings are corroborated by Yin et al. (2014) in mainland China. They conclude that school leaders are in a dilemma regarding curriculum changes: they cannot make choices but must merely obey. Compliance culture is a fait accompli. All school leaders and staff need to mobilise their colleagues and teachers to implement it.

The case-study evidence indicates that the curriculum is perceived as a central government policy. This is a top-down approach that kindergarten leaders cannot resist. As a state school, they must follow the government's requirements. The teachers and principals are mostly civil servants who seem bound by a compliance culture. This contradicts Indonesia's decentralisation of the education system since 2003, which aims to give more authority to teachers and principals. The case-study evidence shows the limited impact of decentralisation in kindergarten education.

Curriculum training

Participants in all four cases complained that they had no training to implement curriculum reform, although the central government requires them to implement it. Teachers said that the central government is not providing them with training. According to the administrative assistant at East Public Kindergarten, only two people at the kindergarten received training on the 2013 Curriculum, the principal and a senior teacher. Similarly, the principal of the West Public Kindergarten reported receiving curriculum training in 2014, but she has not received any further training to keep up with the latest developments. She feels that LEO Directors are more concerned about the appearance of the school's physical infrastructure than the curriculum.

Capital Public Kindergarten appears to be an exception, as the Jakarta LEO Director gave support to the principal while implementing the 2013 curriculum. Kindergarten principals are provided with financial support to hire curriculum experts from universities. As a result, they can implement the revised curriculum in classrooms in a more creative and innovative manner.

The importance of training and teacher readiness has been emphasised in previous studies. According to Kaufman and Pianta (2000), and Earley et al. (2007), kindergarten teachers need to be trained to cope with the transition process of kindergarten children to elementary school. This transition is very challenging due to the different nature of the classroom and an increase in academic demands for literacy and numeracy. Correspondingly, Yulindrasari

and Ujiti (2018) reported that Indonesian kindergarten children are expected to possess basic school readiness, both physically and socially. However, the training of teachers in this area is very limited.

Principals and teachers at three of the four case-study kindergartens claimed they experienced difficulties in implementing the reform curriculum. Capital Public Kindergarten teachers are the only ones to report positive views on Curriculum 2013. For example, a teacher at West Public Kindergarten expressed that, due to the redesigned curriculum, she had to adapt and learn new approaches in her classroom, which made her 'dizzy'. The teachers at East Public Kindergarten also complained that the frequent curriculum changes from the central government caused confusion, with little training provided by the government.

The finding relates to a study by Muthim (2014), who stated that the country had changed its curriculum nine times since independence in 1945, or almost every eight years. The 2013 curriculum was developed in response to the poor PISA scores of 2009 and 2012. However, the curriculum changes were not accompanied by a robust teacher training programme.

In general, the national curriculum is used in all four public kindergartens. Teachers and principals consider this curriculum a given policy of the government, with no option for teachers to choose between the reformed or the old curriculum. This shows that the spirit of decentralisation of education, which was supposed to give schools more autonomy, has not been implemented in respect of curriculum. Participants also expressed concern that a lack of training was an obstacle to implementing the 2013 curriculum. Some participants reported confusion and difficulty in implementing it. The frequent changes in the curriculum caused by the central government also have a negative impact. Moreover, the lack of training shows that regions have different financial capabilities. While other regions struggled to implement the 2013 curriculum, the LEO at Capital Province could support principals and teachers by providing curriculum experts from universities to assist schools.

Parental Engagement

This section examines and discusses parental engagement in the four public kindergartens in Indonesia, linked to previous literature and theory. This begins with a discussion of the relationship between parents and schools. The next sub-section describes the contributions of parents in the four kindergartens. Finally, the section discusses the limited role of school committees representing parents at schools.

Parent-school relationship

The involvement of parents is similar across all four kindergartens. The principals perceived that parents play an essential role in leadership, and they regard parents as equal partners. Except for West Public Kindergarten, all three principals acknowledge the school committee as part of the school structure, as noted earlier. The principal of East Public Kindergarten argues that her programmes would not run smoothly without parental support. Furthermore, Capital Public Kindergarten's principal attempts to ensure parental participation in the school through parenting class programmes. In the other two case studies, the principals agreed that education should be a collaborative effort between the school and the parents.

In their study of early child development in low- and middle-income countries of East Asia and the Pacific (Cambodia, China, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu), Sun et al. (2016) concluded that parental involvement is extremely important to cognitive development in children, especially those from disadvantaged families. Previous studies (e.g., Bornstein and Putnick, 2012; Sun et al., 2018) showed that parental involvement is important for pre-school learners. In the United States, Powell et al. (2012) found that parental involvement significantly correlated with academic skill, literacy, and maths improvement in pre-kindergarten to first grade students. However, they stressed that this is a dynamic process. Their three-year empirical study indicated that parental involvement would decrease from kindergarten to first grade.

Another common feature of the present research is that participants regard principals' communication as crucial for promoting parental involvement. The principal of West Public Kindergarten, for example, invites parents to a school event via an official letter. A few days before the event, she sends a WhatsApp message to remind parents. The other kindergarten principals also contact parents directly by phone, or through teachers.

The results of this study are similar to the longitudinal study of Latino early years children in the United States (Durand, 2011), which showed that increasing teacher contact and communication with parents may increase parents' knowledge and involvement at school. The author found that parental involvement has a positive impact on pupil outcomes, such as reading ability. Parents who are highly involved are more likely to have children who report high achievement.

Parental contributions

There are many indications of parental contributions in all four case studies. Contributions from parents in kindergartens vary. Some help with labour, money, and food. Support depends on each individual's economic situation. In the Capital Public Kindergarten, parents help to prepare and serve meals to children. The parents of East and Central Public Kindergartens organise and fund school trips to tourism sites. Meanwhile, parents raise money to fund the renovation of the school fence at West Public Kindergarten.

The findings contrast with Bartolome, Mamat and Masnan (2020), and Banayat, Amurao and Bautista's (2019), research in Philippines, which indicated that parental involvement in kindergarten tends to be low. Most parents, especially those from low-income families, are reluctant to get involved. It is common for them to complain, but they rarely attend parents' meetings or respond to written or verbal communications sent to them from teachers. Furthermore, public kindergarten teachers are burdened with paperwork, which keeps them away from increasing parental involvement. However, the authors noted that parental engagement depends on the social culture context where the school is located. Similar to Frewen et al (2015) who conducted a study at Singapore's state-run kindergartens, Chinese parents

tend to be less involved than other Asian background parents. Specifically, they rarely participate in their children's home-based activities.

Limited role of the school committee

Among the measures taken by the central government to increase parent involvement is the establishment of school committees. The Ministry of Education required all schools from kindergarten to secondary school to form a school committee (Minister of Education Regulation Number 75, 2016). The regulation stated that the school committees have five roles at a minimum: first, monitoring and supervising school educational services; second, assisting with school programmes by providing advice; third, overseeing the school budget; fourth, supervising the school's infrastructure and facilities, and finally, following up on parents' complaints, criticism, advice, and aspirations.

In contrast, the role of the school committee is very minimal in all four cases, which is not what the central government expected. For example, the West Public Kindergarten school committee left school policy and curriculum decisions to the principal because they did not understand them. Their involvement in schools is limited to funding assistance and supporting the pupils' recreational activities. Meanwhile, the school committee chairman in the East Public Kindergarten does not consider lesson plans, school policy, and curriculum development as their responsibilities. Similarly, the Central Public Kindergarten committee considers the formulation of school policies to be the sole responsibility of the principal. This all shows that parents are less involved in school policymaking and supervision than was expected by the government. It is evident from this study that their contributions are limited to financial assistance and out-of-school activities.

My study's results confirm Fitriah et al's. (2013) findings that Indonesian parents rarely participate in school policy-making and agree on whatever is decided, especially regarding budget allocations. The school committee was perceived merely as a rubber stamp that confirms the principal's policy without review.

Overall, all four principals believe that parents play a crucial role in leadership, and that their programmes would not run smoothly without parental involvement. There are different ways in which parents contribute to kindergartens. Some help with labour, money, and food depending on an individual's economic situation.

However, the results clearly showed that parents are only involved in public kindergartens in terms of funding assistance and supporting their children's recreational activities. Compared to what was expected by the government, parents are less involved in school policymaking and supervision.

Leadership during a Crisis

This section examines and discusses leadership practices in the four kindergartens during the Covid-19 crisis, linked to previous literature and theory. It starts with the impact of school closures due to the pandemic, followed by online learning practices adopted by the kindergartens, including limited access to ICT infrastructure and insufficient preparation of teachers. Finally, the section discusses reduced learning time and the paradox of teacher fatigue.

School closures

There has been significant disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Most schools in the world, including those in Indonesia, have closed to prevent the spread of the virus. The Ministry of Education ordered all LEOs and principals to close schools, from preschool to university, when the pandemic broke out in March 2020 (Yulianti and Mukminin, 2021). The school closure policy was still being implemented during the data collection period from September to December 2021.

A similar response to the school closure policy was seen in three of the four cases. In accordance with the Ministry of Education's directive, the kindergartens were closed, and teachers, students, and parents were not permitted to attend school. The students were expected to learn online, and the teachers to work from home. However, West Public Kindergarten was an

exception, where the principal showed initiative in responding to the pandemic. The school continued to offer in-person learning despite government restrictions. Children came into classrooms without uniforms, and through the back door. The class began at 8.30 a.m. and lasted 1.5 hours from Monday to Thursday. The principal said that they were confused and unsure of what to do but they responded to parents' request to keep the school open.

Gurdasani et al. (2021) argued that it is a very difficult decision to keep the school open during the pandemic. These authors emphasised that school leaders need multilayered mitigation measures. Schools would be at greater risk of infection if they remained open without a robust Covid-19 mitigation plan. The findings also confirm previous research (Harris and Jones, 2020; Bush, 2021) that principals worked in chaotic conditions during Covid-19. There are a lot of pressures on school leadership teams, and their options to deal with them are limited.

Clearly, there is a difference between the Ministry of Education's expectations and how one kindergarten responded to them. Despite the government's orders, the principal disobeyed and put children and school staff at risk by keeping schools open. This finding is surprising in a highly hierarchical system. It seems that the principal of the West Public Kindergarten acted in this way due to parental pressure and the limited options she faced.

Online learning

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education required kindergartens in Indonesia to move to online learning. To prevent the spread of viruses, students were asked to study from home. In response to this policy, three of the kindergarten leaders straight-up offered online learning as a substitute for classroom instruction, the exception being West Public Kindergarten. Their online learning program began in July 2020, five months after the government instructed them to close their school. They were held only once a week, on Fridays, while from Monday through Thursday they continued the face-to-face learning.

The data from all four cases indicate a lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure. One common feature in all four kindergartens is that laptops and mobile phones are owned by parents, not by these very young children. Although ICT is very important to support the smooth running of online learning, some parents do not have laptops and good mobile phones to support their children's online learning. For example, at the Capital Public Kindergarten, some parents do not own laptops since they come from poor backgrounds.

Teachers also experienced constraints due to a lack of ICT, as many did not have a device suitable for online teaching. For example, teachers' cellphones at Central Public Kindergarten are 'glitchy' when parents send photos and videos as homework submissions for their children, as described in chapter seven. This is because their mobile phones are not sufficiently compatible to receive those files. The four cases matched previous studies on online learning (Rasmitadila et al, 2020; Yulianti and Mukminin, 2021), confirming that Indonesian children may not have access to computers or smartphones, making it difficult for them to engage in online learning. The four cases also illustrate a lack of preparation for kindergarten leaders and teachers. Kindergarten leaders reported that their staff lacked a basic understanding of online learning. Almost all teachers at East Public Kindergarten, for example, have never been involved in online learning.

The case study participants also reported a lack of support from the local education office (LEO) for implementing online learning. The Capital Public Kindergarten principal was the only one who reported that staff received training from the LEO to conduct distance learning, for example, by creating videos on mobile phones. The other three public kindergarten leaders said they were not adequately supported, a finding consistent with the study by Judd et al. (2020) at America's public schools. They concluded that, during the pandemic, teachers did not receive adequate mentoring, support, or training from the authorities. Similarly, Thornton (2021) found that teachers and principals were unprepared and untrained to handle Covid-19.

The four cases showed that teachers and parents are constrained by the lack of ICT infrastructure to do online learning well. Moreover, the local government mostly did not offer appropriate support to teachers. The crisis also shows a lack of clarity about who is responsible for improving teacher competence for online learning, the LEO, the principal, or the teachers.

Reduced learning time

All four cases show substantial reductions in learning time during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, all kindergartens held 'in-person' half-day sessions, most of which were from 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. However, the pandemic forced school leaders to cut the length of these sessions significantly and to provide them through online learning. East, West, and Central Public Kindergarten offered online learning each week for an hour, while Capital Public Kindergarten delivered it every Friday afternoon for 1.5 hours via Zoom. In contrast, the Ministry recommended that students keep learning online every day (MoEC Regulation Number 15, 2020).

For the rest of the week, teachers only sent homework via WhatsApp to students. A similar pattern was reported across the cases: on a weekly basis, the teachers posted homework in the form of documents, photos, or videos via WhatsApp. In the Capital Public Kindergarten for instance, children received homework about cutting activities and were asked to take photos of the activities as they worked on them. There was one exception to this, West Public Kindergarten, which still conducted most of its lessons face-to-face at school.

During the pandemic, pupils in the four cases may have experienced learning loss because course durations were reduced. It is consistent with previous research that the pandemic shortened learning time and that students learned less during that time (Shaked and Benliel, 2022; Zhao, 2020; Hewett et al., 2022).

Despite the reduced learning time, all four cases indicated fatigue among teachers. There is a paradox here since less learning for students might have

led to a decrease in teachers' workloads. Several factors contributed to teachers' claims that they were more tired during the pandemic than under normal circumstances. First, teachers were expected to work outside normal working hours to serve parents and students. The typical working day for teachers is from 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. but the teachers at all four kindergartens worked overtime during the pandemic, because they were expected to interact with parents via WhatsApp. During the pandemic, parents were handed the responsibility of being teachers at home every day, and a lot of them did not know how to do it. Hence, they asked teachers via WhatsApp about how to teach their children at home or how to do their homework. In the Central Public Kindergarten, for example, a teacher admitted to responding to parents' messages until 11 p.m. Second, teachers were expected to adapt to online learning in a short time and learn the latest technology. Across all four cases, teachers expressed difficulty adjusting to remote learning because they had never encountered it before.

The findings indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic affected the professional roles of teachers. Due to sudden changes from classroom settings to online learning, many teachers felt exhausted. Other studies on teachers' work during the pandemic concluded that teaching online was far from easy, and the pandemic caused unprecedented disruptions that weakened teachers' motivation. (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2020; Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020; Longmuir, 2021).

Overall, the pandemic disrupted teaching and learning since changes occurred rapidly. Kindergartens were closed, with one case as an exception. The kindergarten leaders, teachers, and parents lacked ICT infrastructure and preparation in all four cases. Additionally, the cases suggest that the change from face-to-face to online learning reduced learning time substantially at all kindergartens. It appears that teacher fatigue was also a problem, despite the reduction in learning time.

Overview

The chapter presents a cross-case analysis of kindergarten leadership practice in four cases, linked to literature and theory. Besides analysing the leadership practices of kindergarten leaders, this study also investigates the experiences of teachers, teaching assistants, administrative assistants, parents, and LEO officials. The findings show that three of the four public kindergarten principals have a heavy administrative workload. They are responsible for improving school performance as well as completing a lot of paperwork. The selection process is dominated by political interests, and most principals are not trained for their leadership responsibilities.

Visions for kindergartens can be found at national, local, and school levels. In order to fulfill their vision and mission, schools need adequate funding from their local governments. The majority of LEOs, however, have failed to fund kindergartens adequately. Therefore, they rely on parental financial support. Leadership is evidently affected by school finances. It appears that distributed leadership may occur in some situations but this is allocative, not emergent. Leadership enactment in the four cases seems more appropriately described as delegation than distributed leadership.

Teachers and principals follow the same hierarchical command structure in all four cases. Tasks performed are inconsistent with the job descriptions. Principal leadership is influenced by non-formal actors who are invisible to the organisation. The national curriculum 2013 is used in all four public kindergartens. The curriculum has been implemented across the country. The reformed curriculum is perceived by teachers and principals as a given policy of the government. This means that teachers cannot choose between the old or the reformed curriculum. This indicates that kindergartens lack autonomy in implementing curriculum. Lack of training was also identified as a barrier to implementing the 2013 curriculum by participants. The next and final chapter discusses how the research questions were addressed and considers the significance of the study.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the research questions were addressed. The chapter also considers the significance and implications of the study.

Answering the Research Questions

In this study, there are seven research questions:

1. What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?
2. What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in the case study schools?
3. How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?
4. How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?
5. How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?
6. What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?
7. How did kindergarten leaders respond to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Research question one: What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?

Three of the four case-study principals prioritised administration over leadership. They are tasked by the Ministry of Education and the local education office (LEO) with improving kindergarten performance and student achievement, as well as handling day-to-day paperwork. The latter involves managing school budgets, recording school assets, updating teacher and student data, and managing staff matters. The participants believe that principals have a heavy administrative burden. It is more complicated for principals to handle administrative tasks when their kindergarten receives funds from the Ministry or the LEO, because the school is required to submit a report on how these funds were used. Such administrative tasks are perceived

to inhibit principals from focusing on leadership responsibilities and improving student performance.

Capital Public Kindergarten appears to have the least administrative burden, as such tasks were entirely taken over by the LEO. The LEO Director asked the principal to focus on meeting student learning outcomes, and his staff assisted the principal to handle administrative tasks.

Kindergarten principals faced a heavy administrative burden as a result of expectations from the Education Ministry. They are assigned tasks that they perceive to be too heavy for them. School principals are expected to perform eight tasks under the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 6/2018. These are supervising, leading, managing, entrepreneurship, innovating, developing curriculum, acting as role models, and completing administrative duties. The regulation depicts the principal as the leader, manager, and administrator. In addition, most local government offices play a minimal role in alleviating the administrative burden borne by kindergarten principals. The Capital Public Kindergarten principal was the only one to acknowledge receiving assistance from the LEO, as noted above.

However, despite having a heavy workload, three of the four case-study principals lack formal training, with the Capital Public Kindergarten principal being the only one to undergo training prior before being appointed. The other three kindergarten principals were only trained, by the Ministry of Education and Culture, after their appointment.

In three cases, the procedure for appointing kindergarten principals did not follow Ministry regulations. In Indonesia, principal training has been standardised by the government. As per Ministry of Education Regulation number 6/2018, principal training is mandatory. However, the data show that mayors, who appoint public kindergarten principals, select candidates through personal relationships rather than those with formal preparation.

Participants in three of four cases said that the mayor is the final decision maker regarding the selection process for public kindergarten principals. Due to the decentralisation of educational affairs, the mayors have been given the authority to manage education in their areas. Mayors are politicians who are elected through local elections.

Three out of four cases showed the magnitude of the mayor's power. Participants from East, West, and Central Public Kindergarten stated that the selection of public kindergarten principals is problematic since candidates are not selected based on their qualifications and competencies. In contrast, central government regulations stipulated that civil servants should be appointed and promoted on the basis of merit rather than political considerations (Law number 5 of 2014). However, the Capital Public Kindergarten showed a difference. There was no political influence on the selection process for the kindergarten, according to the participants. A rigorous selection process is used to select the principal, which is conducted by an independent team composed of university academics.

Research question two: What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in the case study schools?

The purpose and vision of kindergarten are articulated at three levels: national, local, and school. The central government stipulates that the purpose of national kindergartens is to prepare children for elementary school. Pupils are taught moral values, religious values, social and emotional dimensions, independence, language skills, cognitive, physical, and motor skills, as well as culture and the arts. The participants stated that the Ministry of Education has a national kindergarten vision of building more intelligent and healthier children on both a physical and spiritual level. Participants at the four case studies indicated that the purpose of kindergarten education at the national level is directed by the central government.

The purposes of kindergarten were also identified at the local level. In three of four cases, the mayor determined the kindergarten's purposes based on the local context. Capital Public Kindergartens, for example, are designed not only

to prepare children for primary school but also to address social inequalities. The local government wishes to provide kindergarten services to poor children in order to ensure that they can experience free and quality education services.

In Sumatra, where West Public Kindergarten is located, the local government defines the kindergarten's purpose as character development, honesty, discipline, and student obedience to God. It is taken from the vision of the mayor, who aims for social justice through the creation of a free from corruption bureaucracy, accountability, transparency, and belief in God.

Meanwhile, the Central Public Kindergarten is regarded by the mayor as an educational institution that prepares children to be creative, cultured, and have characters that are influenced by Balinese culture. This is consistent with the vision of the mayor, who seeks to make the city more creative and culturally oriented.

However, the local government at East Public Kindergarten does not have specific kindergarten goals geared toward the local context. The principal said they merely copied and pasted the goals of the national kindergarten established by the Ministry of Education.

Kindergarten vision and purpose are also established at the school level. All kindergarten principals sought to modify national and local visions for classroom implementation. For example, West Public Kindergarten interpreted the purpose of kindergarten at the local level by offering Muslim students a Quran class twice a week after school. It is the kindergarten's intention to teach Islamic values in accordance with the mayor's vision, which emphasises honesty, discipline, and obedience to God.

At the Central Public Kindergarten, students are taught Balinese dance, traditional games, *Gamelan*-a Balinese music ensemble, and the Balinese language. Additionally, they celebrate many Hindu festivals. Every month, Hindu students wear traditional clothing at the religious ceremonies known as Purnama and Tilem. This is an interpretation of the mayor's vision to create a city that has authentic Balinese culture and creativity.

Meanwhile, ten percent of the places in the Capital Public Kindergarten are reserved for poor students living in the surrounding area. Besides providing free tuition, school meals, uniforms, and a free yearbook for needy students, the kindergarten also covers graduation ceremony costs for them. In this way, parents do not have to pay for their child's education. In this case, the school is interpreting the concept of socioeconomic equality in order to achieve the vision of the local government.

Funding the vision

In three out of four kindergartens, the local government provides limited financial support, making it difficult for the vision to be realised without support from parents. These public kindergartens were not adequately funded. For example, East Public Kindergarten does not receive local government funding to pay for utilities such as electricity, gas, and the internet. Similarly, both the principal of West Public Kindergarten and the Central Public Kindergarten said the government provided scant financial assistance. It is not possible to cover all operational costs, including teacher assistants and support staff's salaries.

It is the government's responsibility to fund and support kindergarten education. Due to economic difficulties, local government could not fulfil this obligation. There are clearly gaps in the way education is financed between regions. The "rich" regions can afford to provide kindergarten education entirely free of charge. In contrast, regions with fewer financial resources face difficulties in meeting all their needs.

In the absence of government funding, schools rely on parents' contributions to realise their vision. Participants in three of four case studies indicate that parents had to pay a monthly fee. Parents pay higher monthly fees at East Public Kindergarten than at private schools in the area. Thus, only middle-class children have access.

Research question three: How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?

The kindergarten principal is regarded as the most senior leader by all participants. Principals are also seen to distribute leadership to others. However, leadership enactment in the four cases appears to be based on delegation rather than distributed leadership. The concept of distributed leadership refers to the empowerment of school staff and the interaction between them and the principal. Participants in all cases indicated that the principal shared leadership by delegating tasks and responsibilities.

Participants said that principals share leadership with others because they perceive each school member to play an important role in leadership practice. For example, the East Public Kindergarten principal claims that she has to distribute leadership because of the large number of meeting invitations received from stakeholders. In this case, leadership is delegated when the principal is absent or unable to lead. In the Central Public Kindergarten, the principal appoints one senior teacher to be the school treasurer, and another as the curriculum coordinator. This is delegated leadership rather than empowerment to work independently. These findings suggest that participants perceive distributed leadership differently from Western concepts and are practiced in various ways according to the school context. In contrast, Harris and Spillane (2008) argue that delegation refers to the assignment of jobs and roles, as in the Indonesian cases, while distributed leadership refers to empowerment and interaction between school staff and principals.

The four cases indicate that leadership is distributed based on job allocation. Principals have the authority to assign work to their teams, due to the organisational hierarchy. Staff members contribute to the kindergarten's leadership through the allocation system. Kindergarten staff members participate in leadership depending on the tasks assigned to them, not on their own initiative.

Although leadership is seen as delegation, there is meaningful interaction between kindergarten staff and principals. Most participants report that they engaged in team work. This seems to be due to the strong culture of collaboration in Indonesia, calling it *gotong royong*, and the bond between principal and teachers due to long-term collaborative relationships.

All principals agreed that they could not work alone and needed staff assistance. A teacher at the West Public Kindergarten, for example, said that, although there is a hierarchy, they help each other. Teachers share what other teachers have done in previous years to plan next year's lessons. Similarly, Capital Public Kindergarten formed a lesson plan development team, consisting of principals, teachers, parents, education consultants, and curriculum experts from universities. They work collaboratively to develop lesson plans.

The four cases show that, although leadership appears to be allocative, the principal is considered as an inspiration or role model. Most of the participants had a positive impression of the principal's leadership. The principal is considered a leader because she is willing to listen to her subordinates. For example, an administrative assistant at the Capital Public Kindergarten described the principal as a smart figure, who always arrived at 6:30 am, before the teachers. The principal at Central Public Kindergarten said that being the principal of a public kindergarten must come from the heart and be sincere. The data from all four case studies indicate that kindergarten leaders are able to influence, motivate, and set an example for teachers and school members, to achieve common goals.

Research question four: How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?

All four cases demonstrated that principals and stakeholders followed the same top-down hierarchical command structure. As other public kindergartens adopt the same structure, participants considered this to be normal. The

kindergarten's hierarchy begins with the LEO director, then the principal, the teachers and the rest of the staff.

While the principal is considered to be the school's top leader, the LEO Director is placed at the top of the organisational structure, not the principal. The principals appear to have a limited leadership role, as they are subject to the LEO director's authority. The kindergarten's organisational structure illustrates how school leadership extends beyond just the principal and staff, but also includes other stakeholders. For example, three out of four kindergartens include school committees in their formal structure. The body represents parents and the community as a whole.

There are also external leaders who play an influential role in kindergarten leadership, even though they are not formally part of the organisation. The mayor in three cases, for instance, plays a significant role in the practice of leadership due to his prerogative to appoint a school principal. The Central Public Kindergarten principal must also seek approval from the mayor's wife before holding major activities at her school, even though she does not appear in the formal kindergarten organisation. This has the potential to create conflicts and dilemmas in school leadership.

Participants in this study have other responsibilities outside their formal roles. This means that their job descriptions do not reflect their actual role. Kindergarten principals often assign informal duties in addition to the formal responsibilities outlined in the job description. The teaching assistant at West Public Kindergarten, for example, is also an administrative assistant, while their school cleaner is registered as an administrative assistant.

An East Public Kindergarten teacher was also the school treasurer. An administrative assistant at the same school also served as librarian and school guard. Similarly, a teacher at the Central Public Kindergarten reported that she was given the responsibility of being the school's data operator. Only Capital Public Kindergarten participants reported working according to their formal job description without any additional responsibilities. This indicates that there are two job descriptions. First, the roles and responsibilities of kindergarten staff

members are defined in general terms. Second, there are informal roles that are not included in the organisational structure.

The findings also show that principals involve school staff in the decision-making process. Despite implementing a hierarchical command structure, all four principals claimed to provide an opportunity for staff to voice their opinions. The principals provide space to be involved in leadership activities by always consulting and asking for inputs from everyone. The four kindergartens regularly hold staff meetings, which is an indication of participation in leadership, and the data show that all principals conduct regular meetings with staff and parents. Each kindergarten holds a meeting at least once a month, as documented in the school minutes. The frequency of meetings can also show how committed all stakeholders are to the school. This implies that more meetings may mean greater commitment.

Research question five: How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?

The case-study principals interpreted the curriculum as a government-given policy, with no option for them to choose between the reformed curriculum or the old one. The four kindergartens use the 2013 Curriculum, otherwise known as the reform curriculum, designed by the central government. This curriculum emphasises play-based learning at the kindergarten level, covering five aspects: religion and morals, physical, socio-emotional, language, and art (Ministerial of Education Regulation Number 18/2018). This curriculum replaced the previous 2006 School-Based Curriculum (KTSP).

The principals are required to implement this curriculum by the central government, which then passes it on to LEO. Since they are state-run schools, they have to comply with the policies set by the Ministry. Hence, they are required to apply the 2013 Curriculum, and they have no choice. The data indicate that there is a "culture of obedience" among the four principals, who must implement the revised curriculum because it is a policy mandated by the Ministry of Education. Teachers and principals are mostly civil servants who seem bound by this culture of obedience. This contradicts the decentralisation

of Indonesia's education system since 2003, which aimed to give teachers and principals more autonomy.

Participants admit that they experienced difficulties when implementing the 2013 curriculum, partly because of frequent changes made by the central government. Muthim (2014) stated that Indonesia has changed its curriculum nine times since its independence in 1945, or almost every eight years. This means that almost every Minister of Education replaces the national curriculum when they take office.

A lack of training is one of the main obstacles to implementing the 2013 Curriculum. Teachers said that central and local government did not provide them with adequate training. The administrative assistant at East Public Kindergarten said that only two people attended the training for the 2013 Curriculum; the principal and a senior teacher. The Capital Public Kindergarten is an exception because the Director of LEO provides support to kindergarten principals to implement the 2013 Curriculum. They bring in curriculum experts from universities to assist principals to be more creative and innovative.

As noted earlier, regions have different financial capacities for 2013 curriculum training. The LEO in the capital province can support principals and teachers by providing curriculum experts from universities to assist schools, while other regions are struggling to implement the 2013 curriculum.

Research question six: What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?

All four principals believe that parents play an important role in leadership. Their priority in engaging with parents links to their belief that their programmes would not run smoothly without parental involvement. They consider parents as equal partners. This can be seen from the principals' acknowledgment of the position of the school committee, where parents are represented. Three kindergartens include school committees as part of the formal structure.

Building communication with parents is one of the main reasons for principals to promote parent engagement. All principals agree that close communication is essential to strengthen parental involvement. They communicate with parents in a variety of ways, including official letters, WhatsApp messages, and telephone.

The contributions of kindergarten parents are diverse. Some help with money, and others with labour or food. Their support depends on their economic circumstances. For example, parents at West Public Kindergarten raised money to renovate the school fence, which is supposed to be the responsibility of the LEO. Parents also indicate that they are willing to help the school.

Although parents are involved in school by providing financial, labour, and food assistance, they are less involved in policy making and school supervision. This contrasts with the expectations of central government. Based on Minister of Education Regulation Number 75/2016, all schools from kindergarten to high school are required to form a school committee. The regulation states that school committees have a minimum of five roles: first, monitoring and supervising school education services; second, assisting school programmes by providing advice; third, overseeing school budgets; fourth, supervising school infrastructure and facilities, and last, following up on complaints, criticisms, suggestions, and aspirations of parents.

However, the role of the school committee in the four cases is seen only as a 'rubber stamp'. For example, school committees are little involved in curriculum development. They regard lesson plans, school policies, and curriculum development as the sole responsibility of the principal.

Research question seven: How did kindergarten leaders respond to the Covid-19 pandemic?

During the field work, an unplanned theme emerged, namely leadership during a crisis. This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Education ordered all LEOs and principals to close preschools and schools when the pandemic broke out in March 2020. The school closure

policy was still being implemented during the data collection period from September to December 2021.

The principals in three cases closed their kindergarten according to the instructions of the Ministry of Education. Pupils switched to online learning, and teachers worked from home. Only West Public Kindergarten continued to hold face-to-face learning. The children entered the classroom without uniforms, and through the back door. The principal said she was breaking the rules because she was confused and did not know what to do. Additionally, the principal decided to continue face-to-face learning in response to parents' requests. This finding is surprising in this hierarchical system because the principal of West Public Kindergarten is a civil servant and subordinate to the LEO. However, she broke the rules because she was responding to parental requests.

The participants all agreed that information and communication technologies (ICT) are critical to the success of online learning. However, this study indicates that there is a lack of ICT infrastructure in all four cases. As an example, parents at West Public Kindergarten have difficulty providing their children with a device for online learning. Although the school is located in a city, the socioeconomic background of the parents is diverse. Also, there was a similar issue in the Capital Public Kindergarten, where some parents did not have laptops or cell phones that could be used to support their children's home learning. Students of the Central Public Kindergarten had to wait until their parents returned home from work to complete their homework on their phones. The children in the East Public Kindergarten experienced a poor internet connection, which is less robust than broadband infrastructure in the West, Central, and Capital Regions.

Teachers also lacked the tools for online teaching. For example, teachers' phones at Central Public Kindergarten were "glitchy" when parents sent photos and videos of their children's homework. The four cases illustrated the lack of preparation for kindergarten leaders and teachers in dealing with a crisis.

Support from the LEO was perceived to be limited. Only the Capital Public Kindergarten principal reported that her staff received training from LEO to conduct distance learning. The three other public kindergarten leaders said they were not supported adequately. Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic clearly disrupted teaching and learning in the case study kindergartens.

Significance of the Study

This section discusses the contributions of this study, which can be viewed in three dimensions, namely contextual, empirical, and theoretical. This study contributes to existing knowledge about kindergarten leadership in Indonesia by providing new data and insights. It provides significant findings that may be useful for principals, teachers, policymakers, parents, and researchers, particularly in Indonesia. The next sub-section examines contextual significance.

Contextual significance

Education leadership research is growing rapidly in many developed and developing countries but it remains underexplored in Indonesia. It is rare to find research that discusses leadership at the kindergarten level. Consequently, the discussion about kindergarten leadership in Indonesia is contextually significant. This is because it is one of the few studies that examines the nature of leadership in public kindergartens in Indonesia. The study also contributes to the broader literature on this topic in South-East Asia.

Gaol (2021) conducted a systematic review of the literature on school leadership in Indonesia between 2004 and 2019. He used eight core international journals in educational leadership and management, as well as high-quality journals that are indexed in Scopus and social science citation indexes. The author found 16 articles that examined the topic of school leadership in Indonesia. However, there were no articles on leadership in kindergartens. The papers focus mainly on leadership practices in secondary and Islamic schools.

In Indonesia, research on kindergarten leadership is generally conducted on a small scale in a single district. Paramita and Pandia (2015), for example,

explored school management functions in one kindergarten in a Jakarta district. The authors examined the planning, organising, leading, and controlling processes. They found that the principal had not defined a clear vision and mission for the school and had not been an example for the teachers. This is in contrast to the present study, where vision was defined at three levels in the four case-studies.

Yulindrasari and Ujiti (2018) investigated kindergarten teacher professionalism in Buleleng, a small town in northern Bali. A focus group discussion was conducted with four private kindergarten teachers and one public kindergarten teacher. Their conclusion was that the government failed to create professional kindergarten teachers. It was a small-scale study focused on a limited aspect of leadership practice, namely the relationship between kindergarten principals and teachers in professional development and is not as comprehensive as the current research. Formen (2020) studied how Indonesia governs ECE practice by analysing the Curriculum 2013 document. Through critical policy analysis, he examined the relationship between the curriculum and the development of kindergarten vision. This is a much narrower focus than the present study.

Majzub and Salim (2011) examined parental participation in kindergartens in Tangerang city's Curug district. 294 parents from six private kindergartens were surveyed using stratified random sampling. They recommended that kindergarten principals should increase parental involvement programmes, and support teacher training, in order to be effective leaders. However, their research focused exclusively on how kindergarten principals can increase parental involvement, in contrast to the much broader approach of the current research.

As noted earlier, the present research also contributes to the limited literature on kindergarten leadership in South-East Asia. In Thailand, Sawaddemongkol et al. (2017) examined the topic of kindergarten management. The authors argue that kindergarten is a critical level in a child's development, making efficient school management essential. Their study ranged widely across several themes, including teacher skills, management, information systems, parental involvement, facility readiness, work atmosphere, school location,

and budgetary constraints. However, there was little attention to principal selection and curriculum, unlike the present study.

Bartolome, Mamat, and Masnan (2020), and Banayat, Amurao, and Bautista (2019), examined principals' efforts to increase parental involvement in Philippines' kindergartens. The researchers found that there was a low level of parental involvement. Most parents, particularly those from low-income families, were reluctant to participate in their children's education. These findings contrast with those from the current research. In both Philippines studies, only Bartolome, Mamat, and Masnan (2020) highlighted that the principals of public kindergartens were burdened with excessive paperwork. This finding is similar to that of the current study.

Fonsen et al. (2019) provide a helpful overview of literature on kindergarten leadership in five continents, including Singapore. However, the brief (two pages) review of ECE in Singapore focuses more on policy and regulation than leadership practice. In addition, it does not focus specifically on kindergartens, but more widely on early childhood in general. The authors also argue that ECE leadership research in Singapore is limited to independent reports, small-scale journals, and a few unpublished theses. One example is a recent independent review of Singapore's preschool sector commissioned by the Lien Foundation (Ang, 2019). The author examines the effects of recent policy changes, and what preschool principals and teachers can do to increase their effectiveness. This report is an update on a similar review conducted in 2012. It concludes that the Singapore government has substantially increased spending on preschools and training.

Walker and Haiyan (2019) argue that there are different contextual factors in each country that affect each school. This present study contributes significantly to the limited research on kindergarten leadership in Indonesia and, more widely, in south-East Asia.

Methodological Significance

This research utilises multiple case study approaches to analyse kindergarten leadership practice in four different contexts and regions. This approach was chosen to provide in-depth understanding and rich evidence from four cases in Indonesia, covering the west, capital, central, and eastern parts of the country. This facilitated the examination of leadership practice in public kindergartens in different local contexts. Stake (2005) and Yin (2013) noted that multiple case studies may produce several similar findings that offer a wider potential for generalisation than single case studies. According to Bassegy (2002), the use of multiple case studies, as in this study, allows for cross-case analysis, with strong potential for analytical generalisation. A consistent approach was adopted across all four cases, to provide multiple insights into kindergarten leadership in Indonesia.

This is the only research adopting a multiple case-study design to examine kindergarten leadership from different contexts and regions in Indonesia. A few previous studies have examined this topic, but they were based on single case studies. For example, Paramita and Pandia (2015) provide valuable insights into kindergarten leadership in Indonesia, but their research was limited to Jakarta. Similarly, Yulindrasari and Ujiti (2018) conducted research on kindergarten teacher professionalism in a small district in northern Bali. While they help to illuminate kindergarten leadership, they could not provide generalisable data, in contrast to the present study.

In addition, this is the first empirical study of kindergarten leadership in Indonesia to include both methodological and respondent triangulation. The enquiry included both interviews and documentary reviews. It also incorporated multiple perspectives from different respondent groups, notably principals, teachers, other staff and parents. An external perspective was also sought, from local education officers. This comprehensive approach produced in-depth data and rich understanding of the practice of kindergarten leadership in Indonesia.

In contrast, previous research on kindergarten leadership in Indonesia has a more limited empirical focus and not based on a case study. For example,

Gaol (2021) produced a systematic literature review for his study of school leadership in Indonesia while Formen (2020) adopted policy analysis for a review of early childhood quality in Indonesia.

Previous empirical studies adopted a more limited enquiry focus. Paramita and Pandia (2015) interviewed only the principal and three teachers in their study of kindergarten functions in one of Jakarta's districts. Similarly, Yulindrasari and Ujiti (2018) interviewed four private kindergarten teachers and one public kindergarten teacher. In contrast, the present study provides a broader and more comprehensive view of kindergarten leadership, with perspectives from principals, teachers, teaching assistants, administrative assistants, parents, and local education officials across the four regions of Indonesia. Majzub and Salim (2011) also collected data through a survey of 294 parents from six private kindergartens in Tangerang City but they did not seek insights from the other stakeholders featured in the present study.

The present research also builds on previous research on kindergarten leadership in the wider south-east Asian region. In Thailand, Sawaddemongkol et al. (2017) used a random sampling method to collect data from 274 private kindergarten teachers in the Samutprakan province. This survey produced generalisable data from these teachers but they did not include any other stakeholders in their research. In contrast, the present research includes a wider range of participants, including parents, who were all interviewed. Similarly, Bartolome, Mamat, and Masnan (2020) purposively sampled 24 kindergarten teachers in Manila, Philippines. The authors examine principals' efforts to increase parental involvement using a qualitative approach. Their survey produced helpful but limited data from only one city, in contrast to the current study, which has a broader range of participants from four regions across the country.

Bush (2012) claims that the involvement of a wide range of participants from different levels and stakeholders, as adopted in this study of four public kindergartens, provides dual triangulation. In the present study, the use of multiple case studies, in conjunction with interview methods, document reviews, and the views of many stakeholders from different regions, have

produced richer data to enhance understanding of kindergarten leadership in Indonesia.

Theoretical significance

This sub-section discusses the theoretical significance of this study, which has four dimensions, children's welfare, distributed leadership, school-parent partnerships, and principal selection and politics.

Children's welfare

There is very limited literature on kindergarten leadership in Indonesia, underlining the importance of this study. The research has theoretical significance since it focuses on the practice of educational leadership in public kindergartens in Indonesia, where the context differs from that typically informing western literature.

Preschool education has a significant impact on academic outcomes and the welfare of young children (Bush, 2013; Muijs et al, 2004; Fonsen and Soukainen, 2020). In the past two decades, there has been a substantial increase in the volume of research and literature on early childhood leadership (Moss, 2006, 2013; Penn, 2008).

The focus of the literature in the UK, Hong Kong, Australia, and the United States, for example, includes debates regarding the increasing formalisation of preschool learning. There has been a growing emphasis on young children's attainment tests and formal academic curricula (see Ang, 2014; Ebbeck, 2003).

This thesis contributes to a growing body of literature that suggests there is tension between kindergartens' goal of preparing children for primary school or providing them with caring, valued, and enriching experiences (see Ang, 2019; Penn, 2008). The present research contributes additional evidence about the formalisation of kindergarten learning in the four case studies, as well as the tendency for preschool leaders to emphasise school readiness, even in government-run schools. Most kindergarten leaders participating in the present study emphasised preparing students for the primary school system.

Their focus appears to be on achieving academic goals so pupils can be accepted into primary schools with good accreditation.

My study also contributes to a better understanding of how kindergarten vision is influenced by social and cultural contexts. Previous literature indicates that the quality of early childhood education is directly related to the quality of leadership and vision of principals (e.g. Pugh, 2010; Rodd, 2013; Ang, 2012; Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2008). However, most literature (e.g. Moss, 2006; Schulting et al, 2005) has largely associated vision with pedagogy and the curriculum. In the current research, it is also evident that clear vision is influenced by socio-cultural contexts and by the welfare needs of young children.

Distributed leadership

This thesis also contributes to emerging research on leadership. There is a well-established consensus that leadership is key to the success of early childhood education (Aubrey et al, 2013; Bush, 2013; Heikka et al, 2021; Bennett et al., 2003). However, much literature from western countries advocates distributed leadership. A significant contribution of this thesis is the examination of the nature of kindergarten leadership in the hierarchical education system in Indonesia, that also has a distinctive national culture.

The current study shows that public kindergartens in Indonesia are very hierarchical. In all four cases, the principal has the authority to assign work to their team, which arises from the organisation's hierarchy. Leadership appears to be distributed by job allocation, for example, principals must distribute leadership due to the number of meeting invitations they receives from stakeholders. Staff members contribute to kindergarten leadership through an allocative system, not on their own initiative.

This current study is significant from a theoretical perspective since it provides additional evidence that distributed leadership in the four kindergartens is not enacted in the ways commonly assumed in the international literature (Gronn, 2000; Bolden, 2011; Bennett et al., 2003). Participants perceive delegation as a form of allocative distributed leadership (Bush and Ng, 2019). In all

kindergartens, the principal assigns duties and provides informal tasks. The study concludes that leadership in Indonesia differs from western concepts. Thus, this thesis contributes to a growing body of literature that suggests distributed leadership can be practiced in a variety of ways based on the context of the school (Bush and Ng; 2019, Hallinger, 2018).

The theoretical significance of this study lies in its suggestion of a new perspective on how distributed leadership is perceived and practiced in Indonesian public kindergartens. Distributed leadership can be observed in the implementation of teamwork and collaboration. However, there are certain circumstances in which distributed leadership cannot be practiced. An example would be the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, which was dictated by the central government. It is not possible for kindergarten leaders and teachers to choose between the old curriculum and the reformed curriculum.

In addition, my study provides additional knowledge by demonstrating that distributed leadership is an extension of the partnership between parents and school personnel. Research has shown that early childhood leadership is distributed among parents, communities, children, professionals, and agencies involved in schools (see Aubrey et al, 2013; Ebbeck and Waniganayake, 2002; Denee and Thornton, 2021). This is the focus of the next sub-section.

School-parent partnerships

The study's findings are also useful in expanding understanding of how parental engagement affects kindergarten leadership. During the pandemic, the principal of West Public Kindergarten continued to open her school despite the government's mandate to close them. This was attributed to pressure from parents as well as the limitations of devices and information technology facilities.

This study has provided a deeper insight that leadership is often seen as contingent on the situation and that the leadership approach must match the situation (Vroom and Sternberg, 2002; Hujala and Puroila, 1998). Aubrey et al

(2013) refer to this as "flexible leadership" in which leaders often act incidentally and serendipitously. Due to the complexity of preschool settings, they argue that multiple leadership approaches are required.

In addition, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the topic of parent involvement. Family and parental involvement play a significant role in a child's educational success. Studies have concluded that parent involvement is positively associated with academic achievement, well-being, and social skills (Epstein, 2010; Lau et al., 2012; Wilder, 2014).

The expectation of parental roles is increasingly significant at the kindergarten level. Much literature indicates that parental involvement is crucial for the education of young children (see Powell et al. 2012; Bornstein and Putnick, 2012; Sun et al., 2018). However, parental involvement tends to decline as children progress through elementary and secondary school (Cheung and Pomerantz, 2011; Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000).

Theoretical support for parental involvement has been extensive. However, most research has focused on parental involvement in home-based activities, such as home-school supervision and parenting (e.g., Fan and Chen, 2001; Wilder, 2014; Arnold et al, 2008), whereas parental involvement is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon (Epstein, 2010).

Thus, this thesis offers an additional perspective on how kindergarten principals involve parents in school activities and include them on school committees. This study contributes to the growing literature on educational leadership and school effectiveness, which states that parental involvement is a key component. As part of principals' efforts to increase parental involvement, they involve parents in school governance (see Bryk, 2010; Ni et al., 2018).

Most literature on parental involvement adopts a Western perspective that places schools and parents as equal partners (e.g. Shatkin and Gershberg, 2007; Lareau and Munoz, 2012). This current study provides further evidence that equal partnerships can be questioned in the South East Asian context. It

shows that in practice, kindergarten principals and school committees do not have equal power. This study sheds new light on the unequal power relations between parents and school leaders.

Some literature also reports contestation between school leaders and parents. Principals often consider that families and parents lack the competence to participate in school decision-making (e.g. Shatkin and Gershberg, 2007; Powell et al., 2012). However, my research indicates an alternative perspective, that parents feel ill-equipped to be involved in school policy.

Principal selection and politics

My study also emphasises the importance of school leader development and training. There is a growing body of literature that argues that principal preparation is critical to effective leadership (e.g. Bush and Montecinos, 2019; Daresh and Male, 2000). It is well understood that principals and teachers also require ongoing training because it has a major impact on student learning (Fischer et al., 2018; Mahdy et al., 2021).

Training may be particularly important for kindergarten leaders. The transition of children to primary school is a major life event for them and their parents. Children are increasingly expected to develop their numeracy, literacy, and academic skills (Cheung and Pomerantz, 2011; Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000; Schulting et al, 2005).

My research shows that formal expectations about principal selection are not always followed. Although the Indonesian government requires principals to complete training before taking office, this did not occur in three of the four case study kindergartens. As a result, this study has contributed to emerging research on the lack of kindergarten principal training (e.g. Wang and Ho, 2020; Fonsen et al., 2019).

The study also provides additional evidence of the connection between principal selection and politics. The kindergarten principals are appointed by mayors and the process is dominated by political interests. The current research adds significantly to the literature on political factors that affect school

leadership and principal promotion (Bjork, 2003; Jalal and Mustafa, 2001; Sumintono et al., 2015; Sofo et al., 2012; Hao, 2013; Sui-chu, 2006).

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations associated with this study that inhibited my ability to draw strong conclusions from the findings. First, there is a lack of observational data. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, I was unable to carry out the observations planned in each of the four kindergarten case studies. Second, the sample size is relatively small, with only four kindergartens included in the study. Therefore, the results cannot be extended to describe the whole population of Indonesian kindergartens. The study is intended to be illustrative and not definitive. A related limitation arises from the maximum sample variation, drawing case studies from four dissimilar provinces. Yin (2013) points out that every study has different limitations. However, it is important for researchers to identify them, so that readers can understand the limitations, as well as the strengths, of the study.

Implications of the Study

There are several implications of this research for kindergarten leadership policy and practice in Indonesia. These are discussed in the next two subsections.

Implications for policy

Kindergarten plays a vital role in the education of young children, and leadership is important in providing a positive experience for these young learners. Several implications for policy can be drawn from my research:

1. The selection process for principals of public kindergartens should be reviewed. The findings show that political interests dominate the selection process. A transparent and independent selection process may be helpful to address this problem. The LEO in Jakarta engaged university academics, educational consultants, and community leaders in its selection processes. This approach to selecting school principals could be replicated in other regions.

2. The central government should accelerate the registration process for prospective school principals who meet the eligibility criteria. All participants reported that the process was lengthy and time-consuming. Building training centres in each province may enable the training process to run faster and closer to candidates, especially outside Jakarta Capital province, where training facilities are scarce.
3. It is important for the government to provide leadership training for future principals. The findings show that only the principal at Capital Kindergarten attended leadership training before taking the position; while the other three learned 'on the job'.
4. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, all participants reported confused feelings because they were unprepared and untrained to deal with crises. Therefore, the government should provide principal candidates with special leadership training in times of crisis. It would provide kindergarten principals with the tools they need to lead in unprecedented circumstances.
5. The findings show that the national curriculum is a policy set by the central government. However, the four case studies each serve different communities.. Therefore, the central government needs to provide more opportunities for kindergarten teachers and leaders to interpret the national curriculum, not simply to implement it, to allow lessons to be contextualised.
6. The government should reduce the administrative burden on school principals so that they can devote more time to leadership and school development. The study found that three of the four kindergarten principals are burdened with day-to-day administrative duties. As an example, West Public Kindergarten's principal is required to submit a school finance report because it will be audited. Capital Public Kindergarten is the only exception, as administrative tasks are handled by the LEO. It would be helpful to replicate the LEO Capital Province policy in other kindergartens to reduce kindergarten principals' administrative burdens.
7. Government should provide training for members of school committees so they are aware of their responsibilities, particularly regarding their supervisory function. The findings of this study indicate that the school committee only functions as a rubber stamp and is minimally involved in the formulation of school policies.

8. The government should address the gaps between policy and practice. For example, the selection process for school principals shows that there are significant differences between the regulations established by the central government and the practices that are followed at the local level. As an example, the Ministry of Education requires that all principal candidates undergo leadership preparation training before taking on the role of a principal. However, three of the case studies show that public kindergarten heads were not trained before taking office.

Implications for practice

The current research provides significant implications that can be used to inform leadership practice and assist principals and other stakeholders in improving the quality of kindergarten education. There is evidence of successful team leadership in this research, which implies that teamwork should be emphasised more than solo leadership. Kindergarten principals should encourage shared decision-making and foster a collaborative learning environment.

My research has highlighted the importance of parental involvement. Kindergarten leaders should encourage parents to become more engaged with their children's kindergarten, as they play an important role in improving children's learning outcomes and contributing to their academic success.

the findings also indicate that training is essential for both principals and teachers. Thus, school leaders can use the results of this study to support teachers' professional development opportunities, for example through coaching. Principals also need to foster a positive school culture that encourages learning and collaboration among students, teachers, and parents

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study indicate that kindergarten heads require leadership skills to provide the best possible service for young children and their parents. It contributes to a greater understanding of kindergarten leadership that is still under-researched, especially in Indonesia. However, it must be acknowledged

that this study was conducted only in four kindergartens within four Indonesian regions. While this study was conducted on a variety of samples, including kindergarten principals, teachers, assistant teachers, administrative staff, parents, and LEO, it does not provide generalisable data. Further research is needed on a wider scale, using different research methods, and in other provinces. A principal survey, for example, would be useful to generate generalisable findings about kindergarten leadership.

This study focuses on government-run kindergartens with high-performance ratings. It is also important to conduct research on public kindergartens with lower ratings as well as with private kindergartens. It would also be beneficial to conduct a study on other early childhood settings in Indonesia, for example, day care centres and playgroups, to gain a wider understanding of how leadership is practiced in early childhood education..

This study portrays leadership at kindergarten level, with participants comprising principals, school members, parents, and local education offices. It would be useful to conduct further research on the perceptions of policy stakeholders at the national level in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of kindergarten leadership in Indonesia.

Overview

This chapter discusses how the study addressed the research questions while also explaining the contextual, methodological, and theoretical significance of the research. It also offers implications for policy and practice, and suggestions for future research.

The purpose and vision of kindergartens are articulated at three levels: national, local, and school. However, the local government generally provides only limited financial assistance and kindergartens are dependent on contributions from parents to realise their visions.

This study indicates that leadership enactment in the four cases is based on delegation rather than distributed leadership. Participants reported that principals followed a top-down hierarchical command structure. Furthermore,

the case-study principals interpreted the curriculum as a government-given policy. As they are state-run kindergartens, they feel that they must abide by the policies of the Ministry of Education.

It is evident from the present study that parents make a variety of contributions to the kindergartens, although the level of support depends upon their economic circumstances. However, they are less involved in policy making and school supervision. It appears that the school committee, which is intended to represent parents, serves only as a rubber stamp for school policy.

The research shows that the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted teaching and learning. In three cases, principals closed their kindergartens during the pandemic, with only one kindergarten continuing face-to-face learning.

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Appendix 1: Research ethical approval



University of
Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

School of Education

University of Nottingham
The Dearing Building
Jubilee Campus
Wollaton Road
Nottingham
NG8 1BB

educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

01/12/2020

Our Ref: 2020/36

Dear Yohan Rubiyantoro

Thank you for your research ethics application for your project:

Leadership in Early Childhood Education: Case Studies of Indonesian Public Kindergartens

Our Ethics Committee has looked at your submission and has the following comments.

- Ethical concerns were appropriately addressed in the well-prepared documentation.

Based on the above assessment, it is deemed your research is:

- **Approved**

We wish you well with your research.

This research is approved provided it is completed by Dec 2023

If your research overruns this date, please contact the Ethics Team to arrange an extension and update on any additions/changes to your work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Holford'.

Prof John Holford
Ethics Committee

Appendix 2: Notice of minor amendment of research ethical

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (REC)

NOTICE OF MINOR AMENDMENT

Please complete this form electronically and submit by email to the Chair of the Ethics Committee Kay.Fuller@nottingham.ac.uk and copied to the research ethics administrator TT-ResearchEthics@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk
Please make sure you complete this form in language that is comprehensive to a lay person.

1. Details of Principal Investigator (PI)/ Supervisor

Name:	Professor Tony Bush
Email:	Tony.Bush@nottingham.ac.uk

2. Details of Student Investigator (if applicable)

Name:	Yohan Rubiyantoro
Email:	Yohan.Rubiyantoro@nottingham.ac.uk

3. Details of Research Project

Full Title (short title in brackets):	Leadership in Early Childhood Education: Case Studies of Indonesian Public Kindergartens
Date of Ethics Committee Approval:	1 December 2020
Date Study Started:	1 October 2019
Date Study Ends/ended:	30 September 2023

4. Type of Amendment(s)

A) Is this an amendment to information supplied in the original ethical approval application form (i.e., extension to end date of the study, number of participants)?

YES NO (please highlight)

If yes, please clearly state which sections in the Summary box below.

B) Is this an amendment to the participant information sheet, consent form or any other supporting document supplied in the original FMHS REC application?

YES NO (please highlight)

If yes, please submit these documents with all changes highlighted when you submit this form.

C) Is this an amendment to the research project due to the COVID-19 outbreak?

YES NO (please highlight)

If yes, please provide details of the amendments i.e. participants, locations, methods, instruments and any other changes that may influence the ethical conduct of your research.

5. Summary of Amendment(s)

Please summarise in language comprehensible to a lay person, including what measurements have been put in place for any additional ethical issues that may arise as a result of the amendment(s).

I want to request using Zoom to conduct meetings and conversations with my research participants. There are some reasons as follows:

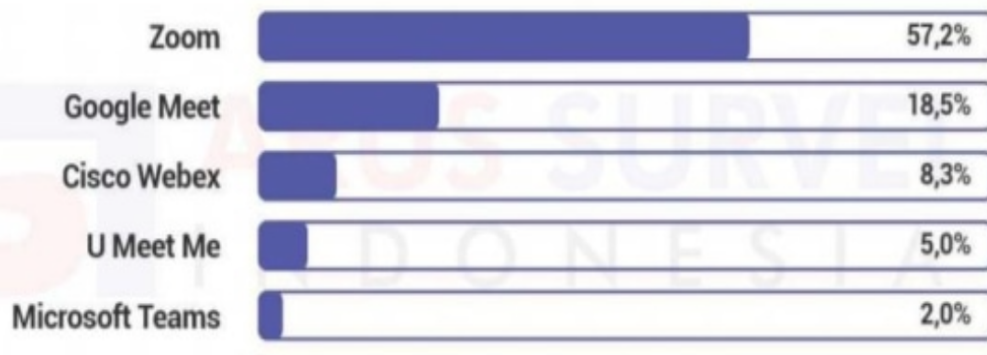
1. Zoom is widely used in Indonesia. My participants, who are teachers and parents, will be more convenient using Zoom. (Enclosed the survey on online learning platform in Indonesia)
2. My research location is Jakarta (capital city), Bali, Medan, and Makassar. MS Teams require constant Internet connectivity, while

not all of my research locations have an excellent internet connection, especially Medan and Makasar.

3. To safeguarding the security and privacy issue that appears on Zoom, I will subscribe to a Zoom Pro that provides an unlimited time limit and better security services.
4. I will record the conversation, transfer and save all of the data at the One Drive University of Nottingham with a secure password, which the researcher can only access. I will promptly delete the origin data record on Zoom.

6. List of Enclosed Documents

Video conference platform for online learning in indonesia.



Source: Arus Survey Indonesia, October 2020

7. Declaration – The knowledge provided in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

PI/ Supervisor Signature:	<i>Tony Bush</i>
Student Signature (if applicable):	<i>Yohan Rubiyantoro</i>
Date:	16 March 2021

**Appendix 3: Letter of recommendation
from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia**



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION
Jalan Jenderal Sudirman, Building E, 3rd Floor, Senayan, Jakarta 10270
Phone (+62 21) 5725061, Facsimile (+62 21) 5725484
Homepage: www.paud-dikmas.kemdikbud.go.id

Letter of Recommendation

Number : 0300/C2/PG/2021

Ref: University of Nottingham-PhD Student-ECE

To whom it may concern

This recommendation is made at the request of Yohan Rubiyantoro, a Ph.D. student at the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. Yohan will research Early Childhood Education Leadership in Indonesia. His research is fully funded by the Indonesian Endowment Fund (LPDP) of the Ministry of Finance.

The study will be conducted in North Sumatra, Jakarta, Bali, and South Sulawesi. As part of his research, he will conduct interviews with representatives of the local education office, kindergarten heads, teachers, staff members, and parents. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews will be conducted by Zoom from the UK.

Yohan has explained the objectives of his research and demonstrated potential benefits for Indonesia. This research will not only support the development of ECE in a local area but also for national development.

As the Director of Early Childhood Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture, I am pleased to recommend Yohan Rubiyantoro's research and fully support him. I am confident that his research will benefit ECE development in our country.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

30 March 2021



Dr. H. Muhammad Hasbi
NIP 197306231993031001

Appendix 4: Interview guides

Interview Guide for Heads of Kindergartens

Research Question:

What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?

1. What is your present position?
2. How long have you been in your current post?
3. Please state your previous post held, if any?
4. How long have you worked in the kindergarten field?
5. What was your academic background?
6. Have you had training for working as a kindergarten leader? If yes, what was this training?
7. What are your roles and responsibilities as a leader?

What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?

1. What is the purpose of kindergarten education?
2. What are the goals for the pupils in your kindergarten?
3. What activities are provided in the kindergarten?
4. How do children learn in your kindergarten?
5. How does kindergarten education differ from other early childhood education settings?

How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?

1. What are your main activities?
2. What is your leadership role?
3. How are decisions made in your kindergarten?
4. What is your role in decision making?
5. What parts of your role do other team members contribute to?
6. Do you see leadership in kindergartens as different from other educational settings? If so, what are the differences?

How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?

1. How would you describe the management structure of your organisation?
2. Who develops the structure?
3. How, if at all, does this relate to decision making?
4. Do you equally valued and respected all staff members? If so, how?

How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?

1. What curricula do you teach in this kindergarten?
2. How do you choose school curricula?
3. Who develops the curriculum?
4. What is taught in your kindergarten?
5. Do parent involved in developing the curriculum? If so, how?
6. Does the local education authority have a role in designing the curriculum?

What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?

1. Do you think parental involvement is important in your kindergarten? If so, why?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in the kindergarten, for example in respect of decision-making?
3. How should parents have a say in their children schooling?
4. How did you relate to parents, including communication?
5. What do your parents contribute to the school?
6. How do you encourage parents to support their children's education?

Research Question:

What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?

1. What is your present position?
2. How long have you been in your current post?
3. Please state your previous post held, if any?
4. How long have you worked in the kindergarten field?
5. What was your academic background? [probe: Is this specific to kindergartens?]
6. Have you had training for your work as a kindergarten teacher? If yes, what was this training?
7. What are your roles and responsibilities as a teacher?
8. How are kindergarten head selected in your school?

What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?

1. What is the purpose of kindergarten education?
2. What are the goals for the pupils in your kindergarten?
3. What activities are provided in the kindergarten?
4. How do children learn in your kindergarten?
5. How does kindergarten education differ from other early childhood education settings?

How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?

1. What are your main activities? [probe: teaching, administration?]
2. What are your roles? [probe: children, staff, parents, etc]
3. How are decisions made in your kindergarten?
4. How is the head of kindergarten dividing work among the team members?
5. Do you see staff in kindergarten team, like yourselves, taking any responsibility for the leadership in the setting?
6. Do you see leadership in kindergartens as different from other educational settings? If so, what are the differences?

How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?

1. How would you describe the management structure of your organisation?
2. Who develops the structure?
3. How, if at all, does this relate to decision making?
4. Is there any leaders, other than the head of kindergarten in this school?
(probe: if yes, what are his/her roles?)
5. Do you feel equally valued and respected by the head of kindergarten? If so, how?

How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?

1. What curricula do you teach in this kindergarten?
2. How do you choose school curricula?
3. Who develops the curriculum?
4. What is taught in your kindergarten?
5. Are parents involved in developing the curriculum? If so, how?
6. Does the local education authority have a role in designing the curriculum?

What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?

1. Do you think parental involvement is important in your kindergarten? If so, why?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in the kindergarten, for example in respect of decision-making?
3. Should parents have a say in their children's schooling? If so, how?
4. How did you relate to parents, including communication?
5. What do your parents contribute to the school?
6. How do you encourage parents to support their children's education?

Research Question:

What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?

1. What is your present position?
2. How long have you been in your current post?
3. Please state your previous post held, if any?
4. How long have you worked in the kindergarten field?
5. What was your academic background? [probe: Is this specific to kindergartens?]
6. Have you had training for your work as a teaching assistants? If yes, what was this training?
7. What are your roles and responsibilities as a teaching assistants?
8. How are kindergarten head selected in your school?

What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?

1. What is the purpose of kindergarten education?
2. What are the goals for the pupils in your kindergarten?
3. What activities are provided in the kindergarten?
4. How do children learn in your kindergarten?
5. How does kindergarten education differ from other early childhood education settings?

How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?

1. What are your main activities? [probe: teaching, administration?]
2. What are your roles? [probe: children, staff, parents, etc]
3. How are decisions made in your kindergarten?
4. How is the head of kindergarten dividing work among the team members?
5. Do you see staff in kindergarten team, like yourselves, taking any responsibility for the leadership in the setting?
6. Do you see leadership in kindergartens as different from other educational settings? If so, what are the differences?

How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?

1. How would you describe the management structure of your organisation?
2. Who develops the structure?
3. How, if at all, does this relate to decision making?
4. Is there any leaders, other than the head of kindergarten in this school?
(probe: if yes, what are his/her roles?)
5. Do you feel equally valued and respected by the head of kindergarten? If so, how?

How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?

1. What curricula do you teach in this kindergarten?
2. How do you choose school curricula?
3. Who develops the curriculum?
4. What is taught in your kindergarten?
5. Are parents involved in developing the curriculum? If so, how?
6. Does the local education authority have a role in designing the curriculum?

What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?

1. Do you think parental involvement is important in your kindergarten? If so, why?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in the kindergarten, for example in respect of decision-making?
3. Should parents have a say in their children's schooling? If so, how?
4. How did you relate to parents, including communication?
5. What do your parents contribute to the school?
6. How do you encourage parents to support their children's education?

Research Question:

What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?

1. What is your present position?
2. How long have you been in your current post?
3. Please state your previous post held, if any?
4. How long have you worked in the kindergarten field?
5. What was your academic background? [probe: Is this specific to administration?]
6. Have you had training for your work as an administrative staff? If yes, what was this training?
7. What are your roles and responsibilities as an administrative staff?
8. How are kindergarten head selected in your school?

What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?

1. What is the purpose of kindergarten education?
2. What are the goals for the pupils in your kindergarten?
3. What activities are provided in the kindergarten?
4. How does kindergarten education differ from other early childhood education settings?

How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?

1. What are your main activities? [probe: administration, staff, finance?]
2. How does your kindergarten generate source of income? (probe: is it only from the government, or any other sources?)
3. How are decisions made in your kindergarten?
4. How is the head of kindergarten dividing work among the team members?
5. How, if at all, do other team members contribute to kindergarten leadership?

How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?

1. How would you describe the management structure of your organisation?
2. Who develops the structure?
3. How, if at all, does this relate to decision making?
4. Is there any leaders, other than the head of kindergarten in this school?
(probe: if yes, what are his/her roles?)
5. Do you feel equally valued and respected by the head of kindergarten? If so, how?

How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?

1. What curricula do you teach in this kindergarten?
2. Who develops the curriculum?
3. Do you have a role in designing the curriculum?
4. Are parents involved in developing the curriculum? If so, how?
5. Does the local education authority have a role in designing the curriculum?

What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?

1. Do you think parental involvement is important in your kindergarten? If so, why?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in the kindergarten, for example in respect of decision-making?
3. Do you relate to parents, including communication?
4. What do your parents contribute to the school?

Research Question:

What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?

1. What is your present position in the parents' committee?
2. How long have you been in your current post?
3. Do you know the head of kindergarten profiles?
4. What are your roles and responsibilities?
5. Do you know how kindergarten head selected in your child's school are?
(probe: do you have roles to choose the head?)

What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?

1. What is the purpose of kindergarten education?
2. Do you know the goals for the pupils in this kindergarten?
3. What activities are provided in the kindergarten?
4. How does kindergarten education differ from other early childhood education settings?

How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?

1. Do you know the activities of the head of the kindergarten and other team members? [probe: administration, staff, finance?]
2. Do you know how decisions are made in this kindergarten?
3. Do you know how the head of kindergarten dividing work among the team members is?

How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?

1. Do you know the management structure of this kindergarten?
2. Do you know who develops the structure?
3. How, if at all, does this relate to decision making?
4. Are there any leaders other than the head of the kindergarten in this school? (probe: if yes, do you know their roles?)

5. Do you feel equally valued and respected by the head of the kindergarten?
If so, how?

How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?

1. Do you know what curriculum teaches in this kindergarten?
2. Do you know who chooses/develops the curriculum?
3. Do you have a role in designing the curriculum as a parents committee?
4. Are all parents involved in developing the curriculum? If so, how?
5. Does the local education authority have a role in designing the curriculum?

What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?

1. Do you think parental involvement is important in this kindergarten? If so, why?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in the kindergarten, for example, in respect of decision-making?
3. What do parents contribute to the school?
4. When usually parents contribute to the school? (probe: is there any special occasion when parents usually support kindergarten?)
5. How do parents contribute to the school?

Research Question:

What is the nature of kindergarten leadership in the case study schools?

1. What is your present position?
2. How long have you been in your current post?
3. Please state your previous post held, if any?
4. What are your roles and responsibilities?
5. How is the kindergarten head selected in your area?
6. What are the criteria to be a kindergarten head in your area?

What is the perceived purpose of kindergarten education in case study schools?

1. What is the policy in your area to improve the quality of kindergarten education?
2. What is the purpose of kindergarten education?
3. Do you have any specific goals for the kindergarten pupils in your area?
4. What activities are provided in the kindergarten in your area?
5. How does kindergarten education differ from other early childhood education settings?
6. How does kindergarten education policy in your authority different from other areas? (if any)

How is leadership enacted in the case study kindergartens?

1. Do you know the activities of the head of the kindergarten and other team members? [probe: administration, staff, finance?]
2. Do you know how decisions are made in the kindergarten?
3. Do you know how the head of kindergarten dividing work among the team members is?

How is the organisational structure of the case study kindergartens understood by heads and other stakeholders?

1. Do you know the management structure of the kindergarten?
2. Do you know who develops the structure?

3. Do you have roles in develops the structure?
4. How, if at all, does this relate to decision making?
5. Are there any leaders other than the head of the kindergarten? (probe: if yes, do you know their roles?)

How is the curriculum interpreted and implemented by heads of kindergartens in the case study schools?

1. Does the local education authority have a role in designing the curriculum?
2. If yes, what are your roles?
3. How do school chooses curricula?
4. Who develops the curriculum?
5. What is taught in kindergarten?

What are the priorities of kindergarten heads in engaging with parents?

1. Do you think parental involvement is important in kindergarten school? If so, why?
2. Do you have any specific policy to engage parental involvement?
3. How do you empower parents to contribute to the school?
4. How do you empower the head of the kindergarten to engage with parents?

Appendix 5: Example of sub-themes generated from transcribed interviews from East Public Kindergarten Case Study

Theme	Sub-theme	Answers
The Nature of School Leadership	Headship selection	<p>If you want an honest answer, the criteria to be the head of East public kindergarten is your face has to be familiar with the Mayor (...smile). It would help if you had a political affiliation with him. Even though you are a civil servant, who should be free from political intervention, but without a strong political connection, you will fail</p>
		<p>In the past, the kindergarten head was usually promoted from the internal teachers of East public kindergartens. They were experienced and dedicated teachers from this school. But, in the last few years, the selection process has been dominated by political interests. Nowadays, the newly appointed head can be a teacher from any school, not necessarily from our kindergarten. The current designated kindergarten head is an “outsider”. She is a former teacher from another kindergarten. It seems our Major knows closely with her.</p>
Organisational Structure	Job descriptions	<p>Apart from being a teacher, I am also the treasurer of the school. Other teachers also hold positions as academic coordinators and school representatives. The kindergarten head is the top leader of the structure at school, but she shares additional duties with teachers</p>
		<p>In addition to being an administrative assistant, I am also a librarian and the school security officer. Every afternoon, before I go home, I need to make sure the doors and windows are locked. We have a financial shortage; we cannot recruit particular security personnel.</p>