



PKBM'S CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN CIANJUR

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ABSTRACT

Non-formal education is a strategic solution to bridge the gap in education in areas with limited access, including Cianjur Regency. Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM) as non-formal educational institutions have a central role in providing equal education services, literacy, life skills, and community empowerment. This study aims to analyze the contribution of PKBM to improving the quality of non-formal education in Cianjur, as well as identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. The research method used is a qualitative approach with case studies on several PKBM in the Cianjur area. The results of the study indicate that PKBM plays a role in reducing school dropout rates, improving the skills of students, and expanding access to education. However, challenges such as limited funds, educators, and community participation are still major obstacles. This study recommends strengthening synergy between stakeholders and increasing the institutional capacity of PKBM for the sustainability of non-formal education programs.

Keywords: *PKBM, non-formal education, community empowerment, literacy, Cianjur.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a basic right guaranteed by the state as stated in Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and reinforced in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. In this context, education is understood not only as teaching and learning activities in formal institutions such as schools and universities, but also includes non-formal and informal pathways that have an important role in improving the life of the nation. Non-formal education, in particular, is an important bridge for community groups that are not covered by the formal education system due to age, socio-economic conditions, limited geographic access, and other social problems.

Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) is one form of non-formal educational institution organized by the community, from the community, and for the community. PKBM is designed as a flexible, adaptive, and local needs-based lifelong learning forum. Educational services provided by PKBM include Equivalency Education programs (Packages A, B, and C), Literacy Education, Life Skills Education, job skills training, and activities that are empowering and developing community potential. This function makes PKBM an institution that has a strategic role in overcoming educational gaps, expanding access to learning, and supporting sustainable human resource development.

Cianjur Regency, as one of the areas in West Java Province that is large and has a challenging geographical contour, still faces various educational problems. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Cianjur Regency in 2023 showed that the school participation rate (APS) decreased significantly in the 16-24 year age group. This phenomenon indicates that many teenagers and young adults in this area do not continue their formal education to secondary or higher levels. In addition, the adult literacy rate in several inland sub-districts is still below the provincial average, showing that the problem of illiteracy is still a real problem. On the other hand, the relatively high poverty rate, especially in rural areas, also contributes to the low educational attainment of the community.

The role of PKBM in this context is very important and relevant. The existence of PKBM in Cianjur Regency is an inclusive educational alternative, especially for those who have dropped out of school, illiterate people, informal workers, and adult women who do not have the opportunity to pursue formal education. Through various contextual and applicable programs, PKBM not only provides a second chance for students, but also equips them with productive life and economic skills. In several villages, PKBM programs have even become community learning centers that support social empowerment and strengthening local capacity.

From a theoretical perspective, the contribution of PKBM can be analyzed through a human capital approach that emphasizes the importance of education in improving the quality of human resources. According to Schultz (1961), education is a productive investment that can improve individual competence, productivity, and welfare in the long term. In addition, the community-based education approach also emphasizes the importance of community participation in a participatory and sustainable learning process. PKBM is a real reflection of this approach because it directly involves the community as implementers, participants, and program managers.

Despite its significant contribution, the implementation of PKBM programs in Cianjur still faces various challenges. Some of these include limited operational funds, lack of qualified educators, limited infrastructure, and low levels of community participation in certain programs. In addition, the absence of in-depth studies that systematically document the impact and effectiveness of PKBM programs often makes PKBM contributions unnoticed by education policy makers.

Therefore, this study is important to be conducted in order to fill the gap in scientific studies on the contribution of PKBM to improving the quality of non-formal education, especially in Cianjur Regency. This study aims to explore and analyze the forms of PKBM contributions, identify the successes and challenges faced, and provide strategic recommendations for the development of PKBM institutions in the future. With a more comprehensive understanding of the role of PKBM, it is hoped that non-formal education policies can be formulated that are more inclusive, adaptive, and relevant to the needs of local communities, and support the achievement of sustainable development goals (Sustainable Development Goals/SDGs), especially the fourth goal: quality education for all.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Non-formal Education

Non-formal education is an educational path outside of formal education that can be implemented in a structured and tiered manner. According to Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, non-formal education functions as a complement, addition, and/or replacement for formal education in supporting lifelong learning. Non-formal education includes various forms, such as courses, job training, equivalency education, and life skills education. Hasan (2016) stated that non-formal education plays a very important role in reaching people who do not have access to formal education, especially in rural and marginal areas. Therefore, the existence of non-formal educational institutions such as PKBM (Community Learning Activity Centers) is very important in improving the quality of human resources.

Non-formal education plays a role as a complement or substitute for formal education in supporting lifelong learning. PKBM contributes strategically in expanding access to education, especially for rural and marginalized communities, and improving the quality of human resources.

B. PKBM

PKBM is one of the non-formal education institutions based on the community. PKBM functions as a flexible learning forum that is tailored to the needs of the local community. According to the Director General of PAUD and Dikmas (2019), PKBM organizes various educational services such as Packages A, B, and C, skills courses, literacy education, and community empowerment activities. Research by Suryadi (2018) shows that PKBM that is managed in a participatory manner by involving the local community tends to have a significant positive impact on increasing learning participation and education quality. In addition, the success of PKBM is greatly influenced by the quality of tutors, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, and support from the local government.

PKBM as a community-based non-formal educational institution plays

an important role in providing flexible learning services that are in accordance with local needs, such as equivalency and skills education. PKBM management that involves active community participation has been proven to increase learning participation and education quality. The success of PKBM is highly dependent on the quality of tutors, supporting facilities, and support from local governments, so that collaboration between various parties is the main key in strengthening the role of PKBM.

C. Quality of Non-formal Education

The quality of non-formal education can be measured by various indicators, such as increasing student competency, program relevance to local needs, and community involvement. According to Tilaar (2009), the quality of non-formal education is highly dependent on a contextual and participatory approach. A successful program is one that is able to increase individual capacity while empowering the community.

In the context of Cianjur, non-formal education is a strategic solution considering the disparity in access to formal education in rural areas. Data from the Cianjur Regency Education Office (2022) shows an increase in the number of participants in equivalency programs and skills training through PKBM as an indication of increasing public trust in non-formal education services.

The quality of non-formal education is determined by the program's ability to improve participant competency, relevance to local needs, and active community involvement. Contextual and participatory approaches are the keys to success that not only strengthen individuals but also empower communities. In Cianjur, non-formal education through PKBM is an important solution to address the inequality of access to formal education, as evidenced by the increase in participants in the equivalency and skills training programs that reflect community trust in these services.

D. PKBM's Contribution to Education in the Region

PKBM contributes to equalizing education by reaching community groups that are not served by formal education, such as school dropouts, illiterate people, and other vulnerable groups. According to Yuliana (2020), the existence of PKBM in the regions plays a role in increasing the Human Development Index (HDI) through non-formal education.

In Cianjur, a number of PKBM have succeeded in organizing equivalency education programs that have an impact on increasing the rate of education participation and community work skills. A study by Ramdhan (2021) shows that students from PKBM in Cianjur showed a significant increase in academic ability and vocational skills, which had a direct impact on their economic welfare.

PKBM plays an important role in equalizing education by reaching groups that are not served by formal education, such as school dropouts and illiterate communities. The existence of PKBM also increases the Human Development Index (HDI) through non-formal education. In Cianjur, the equivalency program organized by PKBM has succeeded in increasing educational participation and community work skills, which has a positive impact on the economic welfare of students.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Types

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Ramdhan (2022: 45), qualitative research is a research method that emphasizes an in-depth and holistic understanding of social phenomena in a natural context. Qualitative research aims to describe and interpret social reality based on the perspective of actors in actual situations, without manipulating variables.

Meanwhile, the descriptive approach, as explained by Ramdhan (2022: 47), aims to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of the facts, nature, and relationships between the phenomena being studied. This approach is suitable for use when researchers want to know the condition of a phenomenon as a whole without intervening.

In the context of research on the contribution of PKBM to improving the quality of non-formal education in Cianjur, a descriptive qualitative approach was chosen to deeply understand the process, role, and impacts generated by PKBM from the perspective of the actors and the surrounding community.

B. Research Time and Location

The research was conducted in several active PKBM in Cianjur Regency, especially those that have equivalency education and skills training programs. The research period lasted for 3 months, namely from January to May 2025.

C. Informant and Sampling Techniques

Informants in this study were selected based on their roles and direct involvement in the implementation of the PKBM program and its influence on the quality of non-formal education. Key informants include:

1. PKBM managers who are responsible for the planning and implementation of education programs.
2. Tutors or teachers who directly provide learning services to students.
3. Students who participate in equivalency education programs and skills training at PKBM.
4. Community leaders and officials from the Education Office or related agencies who are aware of the development of non-formal education in Cianjur.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling (purposeful sampling). This technique was chosen to obtain informants who were considered to have the most relevant knowledge, experience, and involvement with the focus of the research. According to Sugiyono (2017), purposive sampling is a sampling technique with certain considerations, so that the samples taken represent the information needed to support the research objectives. The number of informants is adjusted to the data needs until it reaches the saturation point, which is when the data obtained is sufficient and no significant new information is found.

D. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis techniques. The stages of analysis include data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and inductive conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on aspects of PKBM's contribution to the quality of non-formal education, including learning quality, increasing participant competence, and community participation.

IV. RESEARCH RESULT

A. The Role of PKBM in Increasing Access to Non-Formal Education

PKBM (Community Learning Activity Center) is a non-formal PKBM (Community Learning Activity Center) is a non-formal educational institution that has a strategic role in expanding access to education, especially for community groups that have been difficult to reach by the formal education system. This institution is designed to answer the community's need for flexible, contextual, and local-characteristic-based education services. As an institution rooted in the community, PKBM has advantages in establishing social closeness, understanding the real needs of the community, and developing relevant and applicable programs.

In areas such as Cianjur Regency, which still face the challenge of inequality in access to education especially in rural, remote, and low-income areas, the existence of PKBM is very crucial. Through a participatory and flexible approach, PKBM has succeeded in reaching students from various backgrounds, including school dropouts, adolescents who do not continue formal education, adults who have not completed primary and secondary education, and other vulnerable groups such as marginalized women and people with disabilities.

The programs organized by PKBM include equivalency education, namely Package A (equivalent to elementary school), Package B (equivalent to junior high school), and Package C (equivalent to high school), which are designed to provide learning opportunities that are equal to formal education. Unlike formal schools that are bound by a rigid time and place structure, learning in PKBM is more flexible in terms of schedule, methods, and teaching approaches, allowing students to adjust learning activities to their living conditions, such as work, family, and other social obligations.

In addition, PKBM also organizes skills courses and literacy education designed to improve students' practical competencies according to local economic potential. For example, sewing, agriculture, culinary arts, appropriate technology, and digital literacy training are increasingly needed in today's era. By providing these skills, PKBM not only provides academic education, but also empowers students economically, so that they have the opportunity to improve their standard of living through work or entrepreneurship.

Not only functioning as an educational institution, PKBM also plays a role as a center for community empowerment. Active participation of residents in the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the program makes PKBM a shared asset built on trust and community needs. This collaboration creates a high sense of belonging, strengthens the sustainability of the program, and makes non-formal education an integral part of community life.

With all its roles, PKBM makes a real contribution to reducing the educational gap that still occurs in many regions of Indonesia, including Cianjur. The existence of PKBM not only opens up more inclusive access to learning, but also strengthens the capacity of individuals and communities in facing social and economic challenges. Therefore, PKBM must continue to be supported in terms of policy, funding, strengthening institutional capacity, and program integration with regional development so that its contribution to

creating an educated and independent society can continue and develop.

B. PKBM's Contribution to Improving Student Competence

Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM) make a significant contribution to improving student competency, both in terms of academics and vocational skills. The existence of PKBM as a community-based non-formal educational institution allows for the implementation of flexible, contextual, and real-needs-based educational programs for students. This is very important, especially in areas such as Cianjur Regency, which still face various challenges in terms of access to formal education, especially in rural areas and marginalized communities.

One of PKBM's flagship programs is equivalency education, which consists of Package A (equivalent to elementary school), Package B (equivalent to junior high school), and Package C (equivalent to high school). This program provides a second chance for children and adults who have not had the opportunity to complete formal education to obtain a diploma that is legally and functionally equivalent. The approach used in equivalency education at PKBM is very adaptive to the conditions of the participants. Flexible learning schedules, materials that are adjusted to the context of everyday life, and a more informal learning atmosphere allow students who are already working, raising children, or have limited time to still be able to access education properly.

In addition, life skills education is an important element of PKBM's contribution to developing participant competencies. This training includes various practical skills that are relevant to local economic potential, such as sewing, batik, organic farming, agricultural product management, food processing, handicrafts, and simple technological skills. The goal is not only to improve technical skills, but also to instill values of independence, creativity, and entrepreneurship. With these skills, students are not only able to improve their standard of living economically, but also contribute to the wider economic development of the local community.

Research conducted in several PKBM in Cianjur Regency showed that program participants experienced significant improvements in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. The results of learning evaluations and equivalent education exams showed that the majority of participants successfully met the graduation standards. In addition, interviews with participants revealed that after participating in the PKBM program, they felt more confident, were able to communicate better, and had new skills that could be directly applied in productive activities, both in the family environment and in economic activities, such as micro businesses or informal work.

This success is inseparable from the role of tutors or PKBM educators who are not only tasked with teaching, but also guiding, motivating, and becoming learning facilitators. PKBM tutors generally come from local communities and understand the characteristics of students personally. They are able to develop interactive, dialogic, and experience-based learning methods, so that the learning process becomes more lively and meaningful. This approach is very effective in reaching adult learners, who have different learning backgrounds than children in formal education.

In addition, the success of the program is also supported by a contextual and problem-based learning approach, which makes learning materials more relevant and applicable in real life. PKBM encourages participants to learn not only from books, but also from everyday experiences, group discussions, and collaborative projects that reflect the challenges in their own environment.

Thus, PKBM's contribution to improving student competence is holistic and sustainable. Not only does it help participants catch up on academics, but it also equips them with relevant life and work skills. This strengthens the position of PKBM as an empowerment institution that is oriented towards developing adaptive, independent human resources that are ready to face socio-economic challenges, especially in the current era of globalization and technological disruption..

C. Supporting Factors for PKBM Success

The success of PKBM in improving the quality of non-formal education cannot be separated from a number of supporting factors that are interrelated and form an effective learning ecosystem. Research and various field studies show that the effectiveness and sustainability of programs in PKBM are greatly influenced by four main factors: the quality of tutors, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, support from local governments, and active community participation. Each of these factors contributes significantly to the creation of a conducive, sustainable, and relevant learning environment for students.

1. Tutor Quality

The quality of tutors is a key component in the success of education in PKBM. Tutors are not only tasked with delivering material, but also act as facilitators, guides, and motivators who build emotional closeness with students. In a non-formal education environment, tutors are required to be more flexible and creative in developing learning approaches that are appropriate to the social background, age, and academic abilities of participants. The tutor's ability to master teaching materials, manage classes, and apply active learning methods greatly determines the extent to which participants can understand and apply the knowledge provided. Moreover, the tutor's dedication, empathy, and openness to the diversity of students are added values that strengthen the success of the learning process.

2. Facilities and Infrastructure

The availability of adequate learning facilities is also an important aspect that supports the success of PKBM. Facilities and infrastructure such as decent learning spaces, educational props, supporting books, and information technology devices are elements that greatly determine the quality of program implementation. In many cases, limited facilities are the main obstacle in creating an effective learning atmosphere. On the other hand, when PKBM is able to provide a comfortable and complete learning environment, students will be more motivated to actively participate in the learning process. Especially in the current digital era, the existence of facilities such as computers, internet, and projectors can also improve the quality of learning and open up opportunities for technology

integration in non-formal education.

3. Local Government Support

The role of local government is very vital in encouraging the existence and development of PKBM. This form of support can be in the form of providing operational funds, providing training and increasing capacity for tutors, procuring teaching materials, and implementing periodic monitoring and evaluation. Regional policies that support strengthening non-formal education will have a positive impact on the sustainability of the PKBM program. In addition, synergy between local governments and PKBM can expand the scope of non-formal education services, reach communities in remote areas, and increase public trust in the existence of PKBM as a quality and accountable educational institution.

4. Active Community Participation

Community participation in the management and implementation of the PKBM program is an invaluable social force. PKBM that is managed in a participatory manner tends to have a higher level of sustainability because it feels shared by the surrounding community. The community can contribute in the form of manpower, ideas, materials, and decision-making. They also play an important role in identifying local needs and designing programs that are in accordance with the local social and economic context. High community involvement creates a sense of collective responsibility that encourages the smooth operation of PKBM and ensures that the programs run truly meet the needs and expectations of participants.

The synergy between these four supporting factors creates a resilient and sustainable non-formal education ecosystem. The quality of professional tutors, adequate facilities, supportive government policies, and active community participation are not stand-alone elements, but rather complement and strengthen each other. When these four components can run harmoniously, PKBM is able to carry out its function optimally as an institution that bridges the educational gap, encourages community empowerment, and improves the quality of human resources in various social strata.

Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of non-formal education through PKBM are not enough to be carried out only at the institutional level, but need to be supported by a joint commitment from all stakeholders, including the government, community, private sector, and donor institutions, in order to create an inclusive, relevant, and sustainable education system.

D. Challenges Faced by PKBM

Although PKBM has a strategic role in improving the quality of non-formal education, this institution is not free from various challenges that affect the effectiveness and sustainability of the programs being run. Some of the main challenges faced by PKBM in Cianjur include:

1. Limited Operational Budget

PKBM often experiences limited funds for daily operations, procurement of teaching materials, and improvement of learning facilities. This budget limitation limits PKBM's ability to develop programs and

maintain the quality of education services. Uneven or limited government assistance sometimes makes it difficult to meet the increasing need for funds.

2. Limited Learning Facilities and Technology

The development of educational technology is a challenge for PKBM, especially in facing situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic which requires online learning. Many PKBM do not yet have adequate information technology facilities, such as stable internet access, computer devices, or tutor training in the use of technology, so that distance learning is less than optimal.

3. Difficulty Reaching Remote Areas

PKBM in rural or remote areas face geographical and infrastructure constraints that make access difficult for students and tutors. Long distances and limited transportation conditions lead to low learning participation and program supervision.

4. Time Limitations of Students

Most PKBM students are workers or residents who have economic activities so that they have difficulty aligning learning time with their work schedules. This requires PKBM to provide more flexible learning methods, but this cannot always be implemented optimally due to limited resources.

5. Community Motivation and Awareness

There are still some people who do not understand the importance of non-formal education or consider non-formal education as a second alternative that is less of a priority. This low motivation to learn and awareness affects the level of attendance and success of students in completing the program.

By recognizing these challenges, PKBM together with stakeholders can formulate more appropriate strategies to improve the quality and reach of non-formal education in the Cianjur area.

V. CLOSURE

This study shows that PKBM plays an important role in improving the quality of non-formal education in Cianjur Regency, especially in reaching community groups that are not served by formal education, such as school dropouts, illiterate people, and productive age groups who have not completed their basic education.

PKBM provides real contributions through equivalency education programs (Packages A, B, and C), skills training, and community empowerment based on local needs. As a result, students experience an increase in academic competence and vocational skills that have a positive impact on their educational participation and economic welfare.

The success of PKBM is greatly influenced by four main factors, namely the quality of tutors, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, local government support, and active community participation. However, this institution still faces various challenges, such as budget constraints, minimal technological facilities, geographical difficulties, and low learning motivation of some participants.

Overall, PKBM in Cianjur has proven its contribution in expanding access

to education, improving the quality of human resources, and encouraging the distribution of non-formal education. To maintain and increase its impact, ongoing collaboration is needed between the government, the community, and PKBM itself.

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