
OPERATIONALIZING KEYES' FRAMEWORK: A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPORTANCE IN BUILDING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER AND PARENTS AT PLSM STANDARD ENGLISH COURSE MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the institutional perspective and practical implementation of parent–teacher partnerships at PLSM Standard English Course, a long-standing language institution in Medan. The primary objective is to analyze how the institution perceives and operationalizes collaboration to support student development. Data were gathered through a qualitative depth interview with the head of the institution, Mr. Gopal, serving as the key informant. The analysis follows a qualitative descriptive method, interpreting the informant's responses through the lens of institutional experience and established pedagogical frameworks. Based on the data, the findings reveal that the institution views parent-teacher relationships as a mandatory pillar of academic success, operationalized through three distinct "high-touch" mechanisms. First, the implementation of tripartite mediation involving the leader, parent, and student simultaneously to synchronize disciplinary and academic roles. Second, a strict face-to-face communication policy that deliberately rejects digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp) to preserve information integrity and prevent distorted narratives from students. Third, the use of administrative formalism, such as signed commitment letters and probationary periods, to solidify shared decision-making. The data further suggests that the institution's 57-year legacy serves as a foundational "trust loop," allowing for radical honesty in reporting student progress. This study implies that in non-formal educational settings, physical presence and formal documentation remain more effective than digital convenience in maintaining high-fidelity collaboration between institutions and families.

Keywords: Parent-Teacher Relationship, Institutional Perspective, Tripartite Mediation, Face-To-Face Communication, Student Development.

INTRODUCTION

Education is not only the responsibility of schools, or education institutions, but also a shared responsibility between families and educational institutions, as stated by Joyce L. Epstein (2011). A positive relationship between educators and parents is essential in supporting student success, both academically and behaviorally. Sabrina Pirchio et al. (2013) state that the quality of interaction between parents and educators has an impact on student behavior and well-being. This indicates that effective cooperation between both parties plays a significant role in supporting children's development.

In line with this, Aida Cullaj (2015) explains that a positive relationship between educational institutions and parents can increase parental involvement in children's education and provide stronger support for the learning process. Through effective communication and collaboration, information about students' learning progress can be conveyed more clearly, allowing both parties to work together in solving problems that may arise during the learning process.

To gain a deeper understanding of the interaction between teachers and parents, this study adopts the theoretical framework proposed by Susan J. Keyes (2002). Keyes explains that the relationship between parents and teachers is a collaborative process that is dynamic and continuously developing, which is built through communication, mutual understanding, and role adjustment based on students' needs. In this perspective, parents and teachers have equal responsibility in supporting student development, and the relationship must be based on trust, shared goals, and continuous interaction.

Furthermore, Keyes (2002) emphasizes that a successful partnership is influenced by five key dimensions: understanding and negotiating each other's roles, respecting cultural diversity and personal values, developing personal attributes and self-efficacy, prioritizing open and two-way communication, and considering social pressures and family circumstances. In this relationship, teachers are not positioned as dominant figures, but as professional partners who collaborate with families to support students' optimal development.

The concept of partnership described by Keyes is highly relevant to the context of non-formal educational institutions such as language courses. In this context, the relationship between the institution and parents also becomes an important factor that can influence students' learning success. Parents are responsible for providing motivation, support, and monitoring their children's learning progress, while the institution is responsible for ensuring that the learning process runs effectively.

Previous studies in the Indonesian context highlight the importance of collaboration between parents and educational institutions. For instance, E. Mulyasa (2013) explains that parental involvement plays an important role in strengthening students' motivation and discipline in learning. Similarly, Slameto (2010) states that students' learning success is influenced not only by internal factors, but also by external factors such as family environment and parental support. These studies indicate that communication and cooperation between parents and educators contribute positively to students' learning outcomes.

However, building a good relationship in practice faces significant challenges due to conflicting perspectives. Parents often act as emotional defenders of their children, while the institution must remain objective in evaluating academic progress. Furthermore, communication is frequently hindered by information asymmetry, where students may provide "spiced-up" or dishonest narratives to their parents to avoid accountability.

While Keyes (2002) outlines five key dimensions for successful partnerships there is a need to understand how these aspects are actually perceived and applied in a real-world

setting. Therefore, this study explicitly focuses on investigating the following main problem: How does the institution perceive the importance of building a good relationship between teachers and parents and how is this relationship implemented in practice at PLSM Standard English Course in Medan?.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the institutional perspective on the importance of building relationships between teachers and parents at PLSM Standard English Course in Medan. Qualitative research focuses on understanding individuals' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding a particular social phenomenon.

According to John W. Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Through this approach, researchers can obtain detailed information about participants' experiences and viewpoints. Similarly, Sharan B. Merriam (2009) explains that qualitative research aims to understand how individuals interpret their experiences and construct meaning from their social environment.

In addition, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2011) state that qualitative research studies phenomena in their natural setting and attempts to interpret them based on the perspectives of the participants. Therefore, this research approach was considered appropriate for exploring how the course institution perceives and manages relationships with parents.

Data Collection Technique

The data in this study were collected through a face-to-face interview with the owner of the tutoring institution. The interview aimed to obtain information about how the institution builds relationships with parents and how communication between the institution and parents supports students' learning development.

A face-to-face interview was chosen because it allows the researcher to obtain more detailed and in-depth information from the participant. During the interview, the participant shared experiences, perspectives, and strategies related to managing the tutoring institution and maintaining communication with parents.

The process of collecting the data involved several stages. First, the researchers prepared a list of interview questions related to the research topic. Second, the interview was conducted directly with the participant. Third, the interview was recorded and documented. Finally, the collected data were organized and prepared for analysis.

Research Participant and Instrument

The participant of this study was the head of PLSM Standard English Course in Medan. The participant was selected using purposive sampling because the informant has direct experience and knowledge related to managing the course institution and interacting with parents. The research was conducted at PLSM Standard English Course, and the interview took place on March 6, 2026.

In qualitative research, instruments are tools used to collect and document data during the research process. In this study, two main instruments were used to support the interview process. First, a smartphone was used as a recording tool during the interview. The device functioned as a voice recorder to capture the conversation clearly and accurately. In addition, the smartphone was also used to take photographs as documentation of the interview activity. Second, an interview guideline was prepared to guide the interview process. The interview guideline consisted of several open-ended questions designed to explore the participant's perspectives regarding the relationship between the institution and parents. The questions covered several themes, including the importance of building

relationships with parents, forms of communication used by the institution, cooperation between the institution and parents in handling student issues, challenges in maintaining communication, and the impact of these relationships on students' development. After the data were collected, the interview recordings were reviewed and organized to identify relevant information related to the research objectives. The data were then analyzed by interpreting the participant's responses and relating them to the theoretical framework of parent–teacher partnership proposed by Keyes (2002).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based on an interview with the head of PLSM Standard English Course in Medan. The data are presented through direct responses to preserve the authenticity of the informant's perspectives.

The table below highlights key aspects of the parent–institution relationship in practice, including the negotiation of roles, conflict management, respect for cultural diversity, promotion of students' development, and the use of direct communication and formal policies. These findings are then analyzed based on the parent–teacher partnership framework proposed by Keyes (2002).

Table 1. Interview Results from the Head of PLSM Standard English Course

Keyes (2002) Framework	Institutional Implementation
Understanding and Negotiating Each Other's Roles	<p>Tripartite Accountability: Implementation of a three-way meeting (Teacher-Parent-Student) to define disciplinary boundaries.</p> <p>Institutional SOP: The institution maintains authority over academic standards (level retention) while requiring parents to enforce behavioral compliance at home.</p>
Respecting Cultural Diversity and Personal Values	<p>Conflict De-escalation: Use of a "slow and clear" communication technique to manage diverse parental temperaments and ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p>Professional Firmness: Neutralizing high-conflict situations, including threats of legal/police action, through direct administrative consistency.</p>
Developing Personal Attributes and Self-Efficacy	<p>Legacy Validation: Leveraging a 57-year history (est. 1970) to establish community credibility.</p> <p>Academic Transparency: Reporting student weaknesses directly and refusing automatic promotion to higher levels to ensure genuine skill mastery.</p>
Prioritizing Open, Two-Way Communication	<p>High-Fidelity Policy: Strict adherence to face-to-face interaction.</p> <p>Information Integrity: Deliberate rejection of digital platforms (WhatsApp) to prevent "spiced-up" or distorted narratives relayed by students to their parents.</p>
Considering Social Pressures and Family Circumstances	<p>Contractual Formalism: Utilization of handwritten, signed, and officially stamped "Commitment Letters".</p> <p>Conditional Advancement: Implementation of a 3-month trial period for struggling students, agreed upon mutually by the leader and parents.</p>

Discussion

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the interview table data, it is evident that the leadership strategies employed by Mr. Gopal at PLSM Standard English Course serve as a practical manifestation that strongly supports the parent–teacher partnership framework proposed by Keyes (2002). The discussion analyzes how the empirical findings align with the theoretical pillars:

Keyes (2002) emphasizes that the effectiveness of a partnership is deeply rooted in a clear understanding of each other's roles. Based on the table data, Mr. Gopal validates this theory through his "tripartite meeting" protocol, which directly involves himself, the parents, and the student. This practice provides strong supporting evidence for Keyes' theory; by bringing the student into the heart of the discussion, he said "Parents naturally act as 'defenders' for their children, often blinded by emotion. Our role is to provide the 'objective' truth. We must agree that while they provide love, we provide the standard. If a child fails, we must be honest, and parents must respect that professional boundary." This aligns with Keyes' first dimension, where a successful partnership requires a shared understanding that different perspectives (emotional vs. rational) must complement, not conflict with, each other.

Based on the table data, this is supported by Mr. Gopal's highly adaptive interpersonal approach. When dealing with parents who have vocal or temperamental communication styles, Mr. Gopal avoids confrontation and instead utilizes a "slow and clear" explanatory technique. He said: "Every parent is different. Some are temperamental, others are highly demanding due to their social status. I choose my words carefully, speaking slowly and clearly to ensure there is no misinterpretation that could lead to unnecessary conflict." This demonstrates the second dimension, where teachers must be aware of unspoken values and communication patterns to prevent "mismatches" between school and home cultures. This finding reinforces Keyes' proposition that respecting the personal character of parents can de-escalate major conflicts, even in the face of legal threats ensuring the professional relationship remains intact.

Honesty and trust are vital elements in a partnership according to Keyes (2002). Based on the table data, this factor is heavily supported by the 57-year legacy of PLSM Standard English Course. Mr. Gopal's radical honesty in reporting student weaknesses, even to the point of refusing level promotion is well-received by parents because of a long-established foundation of trust. He said "We don't sell dreams; we sell progress. If a student isn't ready to move up, we tell the parents directly, even if they get angry. That honesty, maintained for over 50 years, is why they trust us." This fulfills Keyes' third dimension regarding personal attributes like dependability and openness, which are crucial for long-term partnership self-efficacy. The "Alumni Loop" phenomenon (where parents are former students themselves) proves that consistent institutional honesty creates a solid bedrock of trust, which in turn facilitates a smoother educational partnership.

Keyes (2002) underscores the importance of developing open and two-way communication. Based on the table data, Mr. Gopal supports this aspect through a very strict policy: prioritizing face-to-face interaction and deliberately rejecting digital platforms like WhatsApp. He said "We minimize WhatsApp because it's easy for messages to be distorted. When a student lies at home, saying 'the teacher didn't give homework,' the parent believes them. By requiring face-to-face meetings, we sit together with teacher, parent, and student to clear the air instantly." By prioritizing "High-Touch" over "High-Tech," the institution operationalizes Keyes' fourth dimension by ensuring communication remains transparent and undistorted. This practice directly supports Keyes' theory regarding the quality and honesty of information. By requiring physical presence, Mr. Gopal ensures that information

is not distorted or "spiced up" by the student, creating a pure and transparent two-way dialogue between the institution and the family.

The final element of Keyes' (2002) theory is the involvement of families in the decision-making process. Based on the table data, Mr. Gopal's practices strongly support this theory through administrative formalization. He said "When parents push for a promotion the child isn't ready for, we use a written commitment. "We say, 'Okay, we will try for 3 months, but you must sign this agreement to support them at home.' This shifts the pressure back into a shared responsibility." This manages the fifth dimension (Social Pressures) by using administrative formalism to turn external pressure into a collaborative commitment. The use of signed "Commitment Letters" and the "3-month probationary period" system serves as concrete evidence of shared decision-making. In this context, Mr. Gopal does not make unilateral decisions; he provides space for parents to agree to academic terms, ensuring that the responsibility for the student's progress is a collective, legally documented effort.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that PLSM Standard English Course in Medan perceives the relationship between teachers and parents as highly important for student success and institutional integrity. The partnership is not just a formality; it is a practical way to ensure that parents receive an honest and accurate report of their child's progress.

The findings show that the institution successfully implements Keyes' (2002) five dimensions through direct actions. The most effective strategy is the rejection of digital-only communication (WhatsApp) in favor of face-to-face meetings. This approach effectively solves the problem of students giving "spiced-up" or dishonest stories to their parents. Additionally, using written commitment letters ensures that both parents and the institution share the same responsibility.

In short, PLSM proves that radical honesty and direct communication are the best ways to build a solid partnership. By following Keyes' framework, the institution maintains high academic standards while keeping parents actively involved and accountable.

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