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Strategic Management of Impact-Oriented Education Programs for Remote Indigenous Communities: A Case Study of Parigi Moutong Regency

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines how strategic management is implemented in an impact-oriented education program to improve educational equity among remote Indigenous communities in Parigi Moutong Regency, Indonesia. **Method:** A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis involving policymakers, program implementers, and beneficiaries. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of planning, implementation, and program impact. **Results:** The findings indicate that effective program implementation relies on context-based planning, cross-sector collaboration, and culturally responsive communication strategies. These approaches contributed to increased educational participation, the development of local educators, and improved socio-economic resilience among Indigenous communities. The integration of life-skills training and community-based engagement also reduced social resistance and strengthened trust in formal education. **Novelty:** This study proposes a culturally responsive strategic management framework that integrates participatory governance, local capacity development, and adaptive implementation, offering a practical model for sustainable education reform in remote Indigenous contexts.

28 INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in promoting human development, social mobility, and community empowerment. However, disparities in access to quality education remain a persistent challenge, particularly between urban populations and remote Indigenous communities. In Indonesia, these inequalities are evident in geographically isolated regions where limited infrastructure, shortages of qualified teachers, and socio-cultural barriers restrict participation in formal education, thereby reinforcing cycles of marginalization and socio-economic vulnerability.

This issue is particularly pronounced in Central Sulawesi, especially in Parigi Moutong Regency, where remote Indigenous communities experience low literacy rates and limited access to formal education. Many communities maintain semi-nomadic livelihoods and have minimal engagement with formal schooling systems, resulting in long-standing educational exclusion. These conditions highlight the need for context-sensitive educational interventions that address both structural constraints and cultural realities.

However, access-oriented interventions have shown limited effectiveness in decentralized governance contexts such as Indonesia. While policies aimed at expanding infrastructure and school availability have increased nominal access, they often fail to address coordination gaps between local agencies, uneven resource distribution, and the lack of culturally responsive implementation at the community level. In decentralized systems, local governments play a crucial role in translating national policies into practice; however, variations in institutional capacity and socio-cultural understanding frequently result in fragmented and inconsistent implementation. As a result, access expansion



alone does not necessarily translate into meaningful educational participation or long-term community engagement, particularly in remote Indigenous settings.

In response to these challenges, the local government of Parigi Moutong initiated the Impact-Oriented Education Program for Remote Indigenous Communities (Komunitas Adat Terpencil/KAT) in 2020. The program aims to expand access to higher education while simultaneously fostering community empowerment and cultural adaptation. Unlike conventional initiatives that focus primarily on access, this program integrates strategic planning, cross-sector collaboration, and community-based engagement to support long-term social transformation.

Recent studies have increasingly emphasized that Indigenous and rural populations remain among the most educationally marginalized groups globally, particularly in terms of access, quality, and cultural relevance (UNESCO, 2022; McCarty & Lee, 2023; Brayboy & Maughan, 2022). Contemporary research also highlights that effective educational interventions in such contexts require culturally responsive approaches that integrate local knowledge systems and participatory community engagement (Guenther et al., 2021; Tikly, 2020). In addition, recent discussions in educational leadership and management stress the importance of adaptive, context-sensitive strategies in addressing complex social inequalities, especially within decentralized governance systems (Harris & Jones, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). These developments indicate a growing scientific interest in integrating strategic management with culturally grounded educational practices to achieve sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

Despite this growing body of research, limited attention has been given to how strategic management processes—such as planning, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation—are operationalized within local government systems in Indigenous education contexts. Existing studies tend to focus on access, curriculum adaptation, or community participation, with less emphasis on how these elements are systematically integrated into sustainable program management. This gap constrains understanding of how education policies can simultaneously promote equity, empowerment, and long-term community transformation.

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws on strategic management theory and the empowerment paradigm. Strategic management provides a framework for aligning vision, resources, and implementation processes, while the empowerment perspective emphasizes participatory engagement and community capacity-building. Integrating these perspectives enables a more comprehensive analysis of how education programs can function as instruments of both policy implementation and social transformation in Indigenous contexts (20).

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) analyze the strategic planning and management processes of the Impact-Oriented Education Program; (2) examine how cultural values and community participation are integrated into program implementation; (3) evaluate the program's impact on educational access and community empowerment; and (4) develop a conceptual model of culturally responsive strategic management applicable to remote Indigenous contexts.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Impact-Oriented Education Program for Remote Indigenous

Communities in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi. A qualitative approach was selected to explore participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations within their natural social context, rather than to establish causal relationships. The study focused on understanding complex social processes related to educational equity, empowerment, and culturally responsive program implementation.

The researcher functioned as the primary research instrument, engaging directly with participants and the research setting through prolonged field interaction. Specifically, field engagement was conducted over a three-month period (June–August 2022), involving approximately 12 site visits to both government offices and remote Indigenous communities. Each visit lasted between 4–8 hours, resulting in an estimated total of 60–80 hours of direct field interaction.

Data collection continued until analytical saturation was reached, indicated by the recurrence of similar themes across interviews and observations, with no substantially new information emerging in the final stages of data collection. This prolonged engagement allowed the researcher to build trust with participants and gain a deeper contextual understanding of the program implementation.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, a region characterized by coastal and mountainous geographic conditions. The research focused on remote Indigenous communities located in the districts of Tomini, Palasa, Tinombo, and Sidoan, which are identified as priority areas for the Impact-Oriented Education Program.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of information-rich cases with direct involvement in the program. Four key informants participated in this study: (1) the Head of the Social Welfare Division at the Social Affairs Office, (2) the Head of the Civil Servant Competency Development Division at the Regional Human Resource Agency, and (3–4) Indigenous community members who were program beneficiaries. These participants were chosen based on their strategic roles and their knowledge of both policy-level and community-level program implementation.

Data Collection Techniques

To ensure comprehensive and credible findings, this study employed multiple qualitative data collection methods, including in-depth interviews, document analysis, and field observations.

In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method. The interview protocol was organized into four main thematic areas: (1) strategic planning and policy formulation, (2) program implementation and coordination, (3) community engagement and cultural adaptation, and (4) perceived impacts and challenges of the program.

Guiding questions included: "How was the program initially designed?", "What challenges were encountered during implementation?", and "How did Indigenous communities respond to the program?" Follow-up probing questions were used to explore participants' responses in greater depth and to clarify emerging themes. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian. Local dialect expressions were preserved to maintain cultural authenticity. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.



Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted to complement and triangulate interview data. Official documents such as government decrees, program proposals, monitoring reports, and meeting minutes were examined to understand policy frameworks, implementation processes, and institutional coordination mechanisms. These documents also provided historical context and supported verification of participant statements.

Field Observations

Non-participant observations were carried out during program-related activities, including community meetings, training sessions, and informal learning interactions within Indigenous communities. Observations focused on participation patterns, leadership dynamics, and interactions between program facilitators and community members. Field notes were systematically recorded to support data triangulation.

Research Procedures

Data collection and analysis were conducted iteratively through four interconnected stages:

1. Preparation and Planning

Formal permissions were obtained from local authorities and community leaders. Preliminary field visits were conducted to establish rapport and contextual familiarity. Interview protocols and observation guidelines were developed based on research objectives and relevant literature.

2. Data Collection and Engagement

Fieldwork was conducted over a three-month period through repeated visits to government offices and Indigenous communities. Interviews were conducted sequentially, starting with policymakers, followed by program implementers, and finally community beneficiaries to capture multiple perspectives.

3. Data Reduction and Preliminary Analysis

Transcripts and field notes were reviewed after each data collection session. Initial coding and categorization were conducted to identify emerging patterns and guide subsequent data collection.

4. Verification and Reflection

Preliminary findings were validated through member checking with key informants. Feedback was incorporated to refine interpretations and ensure the credibility of the findings.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts were coded inductively to identify meaningful units of analysis related to program management, community empowerment, and cultural adaptation.

Codes were grouped into broader thematic categories, including strategic planning, implementation mechanisms, communication strategies, and program impacts. Data displays in the form of matrices and thematic summaries were used to identify patterns, relationships, and emerging insights before drawing verified conclusions.

Trustworthiness

To ensure methodological rigor, this study applied four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through

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triangulation⁵ of data sources and methods, as well as member checking and peer debriefing. Transferability was supported by providing detailed contextual descriptions. Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of research procedures, while confirmability was maintained through audit trails and researcher reflexivity.

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Ethical Considerations

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Ethical approval was obtained from relevant local authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms, and all data were securely stored. Cultural protocols were respected by seeking permission from community leaders and adhering to local customs during fieldwork.

Analytical Saturation⁴ and Success Indicators

Data collection continued until analytical saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of new themes emerging from additional interviews and observations. Research success was evaluated based on the depth of understanding of program implementation, identification of transformative impacts, and insights into institutional learning processes within local government.

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Limitations

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This study is limited by its focus on a single regional context, which may restrict the generalizability of findings. The small number of participants and the qualitative design also limit the ability to quantify long-term impacts. Additionally, the researcher's proximity to the research context may introduce interpretive bias, although reflexive strategies were employed to minimize this influence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Participants and Context

This study examined an impact-oriented education program targeting geographically isolated Remote Indigenous Communities (Komunitas Adat Terpencil/KAT) in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi. Data were generated primarily from in-depth interviews with four key informants representing both policy and beneficiary perspectives: (1) the Head of Social Welfare Division at the local Social Affairs Office, (2) the Head of Civil Servant Competency Development Division at the Regional Human Resource Agency, and two program beneficiaries who are members of remote indigenous communities and have progressed into professional roles (teachers and livelihood-based workers). The program operated in nine priority KAT areas and, during its initial cycle, selected 56 students to pursue higher education at partner universities while maintaining ties with their communities through teaching activities and life-skills engagement.

Thematic Structure of Findings

Findings are presented in eight interrelated thematic clusters consistently identified across informants and supporting documents: (1) goal setting and targeting, (2) tactical planning, (3) organizing and resources, (4) strategic communication, (5) implementation, (6) monitoring and control, (7) evaluation and reinforcement, and (8) program effects on



KAT communities. Illustrative excerpts are embedded to preserve participants' voices and strengthen auditability of theme development.

Theme 1: Goal Setting and Targeting

The program emerged as a strategic response by the local government to persistent educational inequities between mountainous indigenous communities and more accessible urban populations. Informants emphasized that without a deliberate strategic intervention, KAT communities would remain increasingly excluded from development processes. The program's overarching goal was therefore framed as providing equitable, impactful learning opportunities for citizens living in remote indigenous settings.

A senior government official described the extreme vulnerabilities faced by KAT communities: semi-nomadic livelihoods, overcrowded living conditions, early marriage, and stigmatization by outsiders. One account noted that efforts to impose "hard" approaches often failed because communities withdrew when they felt disrespected, requiring a patient, humanistic strategy to build trust. Geographic isolation further amplified exclusion; reaching certain villages required hours of travel by trail motorbikes, crossing rivers and steep terrain, and access could become completely cut off during the rainy season. These conditions shaped not only policy urgency but also the program's moral framing as an intervention grounded in dignity and humanitarian responsibility.

Goal targeting was informed by government classification and field data that identified nine KAT priority areas. As one informant stated, "The local government set nine priority regions based on data from the Ministry of Social Affairs. The goal is that indigenous children can attend university, then return to develop their villages." The intended outcomes extended beyond enrollment figures to include shifts in community mindset toward education, confidence-building among indigenous youth, and long-term socio-economic empowerment. In this sense, the program's targeting logic combined equity (access), empowerment (agency), and sustainability (return and contribution).

Theme 2: Tactical Planning

Tactical planning was framed by informants as the foundation of program viability given complex social and geographic challenges. Planning was organized collaboratively across multiple local government agencies, including the Social Affairs Office, Education Office, the regional development planning agency (Bappeda), and the local information/communication agency (Kominfo). This cross-sector planning enabled integration of social needs mapping, educational placement, budgeting, and communication infrastructure into one strategic framework.

Needs assessment was positioned as the starting point. Informants described mapping potential participants, household socio-economic profiles, education levels, and local human resource potential in each indigenous area. Following this, an annual action plan was developed in alignment with regional fiscal capacity. The local government reportedly allocated around IDR 4.5 billion per year to cover tuition, living costs, and life-skills training, sourced from regional funding and support linked to empowerment schemes. Tactical choices also included selecting fields of study aligned with local needs and regional potential—education, health, agriculture, and fisheries—so graduates could return and contribute directly.

Partnerships with higher education institutions were developed as a deliberate planning strategy, including collaboration with institutions such as Universitas Indonesia Timur, Politeknik Pembangunan Pertanian Gowa, and Politeknik Kelautan



dan Perikanan Bone, alongside teacher education programs in Sulawesi. These partnerships were selected based on capacity and relative accessibility to support coordination and supervision. Importantly, informants highlighted cultural preparation as part of tactical planning: engagement with customary leaders and village authorities to secure legitimacy and prevent the program from being perceived as a threat to local norms.

Theme 3: Organizing and Resources

Program management was organized through inter-agency coordination across local government units. The Social Affairs Office led community empowerment functions, beneficiary mapping, participant selection, and assistance distribution. The Education Office managed academic coordination with partner universities and guidance mechanisms. Bappeda ensured the program was embedded in regional development priorities and budgeting cycles, while Kominfo supported communication infrastructure, enabling online coordination and monitoring—particularly relevant during pandemic constraints.

Human resources emerged as a central organizing challenge. Informants reported that externally assigned teachers often could not remain in mountainous areas due to harsh conditions and transport costs, sometimes leaving after only a short period. This constraint motivated a strategic shift toward developing local indigenous youth as future educators. A notable adaptive policy allowed program participants to “study while teaching,” enabling them to serve as teachers in their home areas while completing higher education. This locally grounded workforce strategy was described not only as pragmatic but also as empowerment-oriented, positioning communities as agents rather than passive beneficiaries.

Resource organization extended beyond staffing to financial and technological systems. Informants described cross-agency funding mechanisms designed to ensure program continuity each year, with the local government allocating approximately IDR 4.5 billion annually to support scholarships, living allowances, life-skills training, and coordination activities. This allocation functioned not merely as a financial provision but as a structural enabler of program sustainability, as it was integrated within inter-agency planning and budgeting processes coordinated by Bappeda. By embedding financial resources within a coordinated governance framework, the program reduced reliance on fragmented funding schemes and ensured continuity of implementation across institutional units. In addition, communication systems were strengthened to reduce coordination barriers between communities, students, government agencies, and universities. Organizing strategies also explicitly incorporated socio-cultural governance: customary leaders, village heads, and local religious actors were positioned as key partners to facilitate acceptance and sustained participation.

Theme 4: Strategic Communication

Strategic communication was identified as a decisive factor in overcoming initial resistance. Informants emphasized that some communities feared formal schooling would weaken traditions, undermine customary authority, and lead youth to abandon their villages. Early community engagement required a culturally responsive, dialogical approach rather than top-down messaging. One government informant described a tense moment during field outreach when the team faced hostility and was nearly attacked;



trust was eventually secured through the involvement of local youth who could speak the community's language and mediate interaction.

Communication strategies relied on (a) the use of local language and culturally familiar narratives, (b) an emotional-humanistic approach positioning communities as partners rather than objects, and (c) sustained face-to-face engagement. Informants highlighted the symbolic and practical role of local leadership in this process, including direct, door-to-door engagement by the regional head, which was said to strengthen community trust and legitimacy. At an organizational level, communication was also institutionalized across agencies and university partners through digital platforms facilitated by Kominfo, combining vertical coordination (government-university) and horizontal coordination (community-students-local agencies).

Theme 5: Implementation

Implementation began with recruitment of participants from nine remote indigenous areas through coordination with village authorities and customary leaders to ensure eligibility and commitment to return and serve their communities. The initial cohort comprised 56 selected participants. They were placed in partner universities and provided full scholarships covering tuition, accommodation, and living expenses.

A key implementation feature was the integration of higher education with community-based service: participants were engaged in "study while teaching" arrangements in local primary schools, enabling them to build leadership and social skills while serving as visible role models. Implementation also included life-skills training aligned with local economic conditions, such as sewing, driving, organic farming, and local product management. Informants framed this as an intentional strategy to avoid producing graduates dependent on public employment and to promote economic self-reliance upon return.

Cultural protocol was embedded throughout implementation, including community-based customary meetings and symbolic rituals that acknowledged indigenous values. Implementation was supported by coordinated roles across government agencies, aiming to prevent functional overlap and ensure integrated delivery.

Theme 6: Monitoring and Control

Monitoring was conceptualized not merely as administrative supervision but as an ongoing learning and coaching mechanism. Two primary monitoring mechanisms were described: (1) academic reporting from partner universities and (2) field-based reviews by government teams. Monitoring was conducted periodically, including semester-based online reporting and, when necessary, direct follow-up on academic issues.

Monitoring also addressed social and psychological adaptation challenges, as many indigenous students initially struggled with city environments and felt inferior relative to peers. Government agencies provided supportive mentoring and motivational guidance through both online communication and occasional direct visits. Additionally, accountability in financial management was a recurrent issue. Informants noted that some participants were unfamiliar with public accountability norms and struggled with reporting requirements. In response, the government implemented basic administrative training to introduce accountability practices and strengthen transparency.



Importantly, monitoring extended to community-level impacts, assessing whether returning participants contributed to teaching, community initiatives, and broader social change—indicating that “control” was defined in terms of social transformation, not only academic metrics.

Theme 7: Evaluation and Reinforcement

Evaluation processes focused on sustainability and continuous improvement. Informants reported that many first-cohort participants completed their studies and returned to their communities, contributing to the emergence of local educators. Evaluation findings also suggested broader community transformations: increasing aspirations among children, greater parental support for education, and shifts from nomadic patterns toward more settled living arrangements to support schooling continuity.

Reinforcement strategies included efforts to expand road and communication infrastructure, increase scholarship quotas, and broaden partnerships with additional universities to diversify study fields. Informants also emphasized institutional continuity across leadership transitions, suggesting that the program evolved from a time-bound project into a sustained humanitarian movement oriented toward long-term human development in remote indigenous regions.

Theme 8: Program Effects on Remote Indigenous Communities

The program generated multi-level impacts on KAT communities, particularly in shifting collective attitudes toward education and strengthening community pride. Informants described emerging identities of possibility—children once considered unlikely to attend school increasingly aspired to become teachers, nurses, or health workers, and parents expressed pride in seeing indigenous youth become university graduates.

Beneficiary narratives illustrated micro-level transformation. One participant reported substantial changes in confidence, openness, and leadership orientation after university exposure and life-skills training, describing a renewed commitment to contribute to education and socio-economic improvement in the home community. Others described combining professional work (teaching) with local livelihoods (farming or small trading), signaling both socio-economic flexibility and the practical application of life-skills training. These accounts demonstrate that program outcomes were not limited to educational credentials but included expanded opportunity structures, strengthened local role models, and greater economic self-reliance.

Collectively, the findings indicate that the program’s impacts extended beyond individuals to community-level change: improved school participation, the emergence of local educators, increasing community engagement in monitoring children’s education, more permanent settlement patterns, and a strengthened belief that education can function as a pathway out of marginalization while remaining compatible with indigenous identity.

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Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that the impact-oriented education program in Parigi Moutong Regency functions as a context-specific strategic management model for addressing educational inequality in remote Indigenous communities. As shown in the results, the program integrates higher education access with community-based roles, such as teaching and local engagement, indicating that its design extends beyond conventional access-oriented policies. Informants consistently



reported that participants were required not only to study at university but also to remain connected to their communities, suggesting a dual-function model of education and community development.

This finding extends previous research on Indigenous education, which has largely emphasized access, curriculum adaptation, or cultural inclusion (Tikly, 2020; Brayboy & Maughan, 2022). While existing studies highlight the importance of culturally responsive approaches, the present study demonstrates that integrating strategic management processes—such as coordinated planning, cross-sector governance, and continuous monitoring—can operationalize these principles more systematically. In this case, cultural responsiveness was not limited to pedagogy but embedded across all stages of program management.

The planning process observed in this study further illustrates a deviation from generalized policy models. Informants described how local government agencies conducted detailed mapping of socio-economic conditions, geographic barriers, and human resource potential prior to implementation. This indicates that decision-making was grounded in localized data rather than standardized frameworks. While previous studies have emphasized the importance of contextualization (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2019), the present findings suggest that such contextualization becomes more effective when integrated into formal strategic planning structures rather than treated as an external consideration³

Organizationally, the findings highlight the role of cross-sector collaboration and locally embedded human resource strategies. Informants reported persistent challenges in retaining external teachers in remote mountainous areas, which led to the adoption of a “study while teaching” model. This approach differs from dominant models in Indigenous education, where teacher shortages are often addressed through external deployment or short-term incentives. In contrast, this study shows that positioning Indigenous youth as both learners and educators creates a locally sustainable solution that simultaneously addresses access, trust, and workforce continuity.

Strategic communication practices identified in this study also expand existing literature on participatory communication. While prior research emphasizes dialogue and community engagement (Servaes, 2020), the findings reveal that communication strategies in this program were not only participatory but also adaptive to local power structures. Informants described the involvement of customary leaders, local youth, and even direct engagement by regional authorities as key mechanisms for building trust. This suggests that effective communication in Indigenous contexts requires not only cultural sensitivity but also strategic alignment with existing social hierarchies and authority systems.

The implementation model further demonstrates an expansion of the concept of community-engaged learning. Participants reported engaging in teaching activities and life-skills training while pursuing higher education, indicating a hybrid model that integrates academic learning with immediate community contribution. While previous studies have linked community engagement with student development (Bringle et al., 2017), the present findings show that such integration can also function as a structural component of policy design rather than an auxiliary activity.

Monitoring and evaluation processes observed in this study also differ from conventional accountability models. Informants described monitoring as a supportive and developmental process, including mentoring, academic guidance, and



administrative training. This contrasts with performance-based monitoring systems commonly discussed in the literature (Datnow & Park, 2018). The findings suggest that in marginalized contexts, monitoring systems that prioritize adaptation and capacity-building may be more effective than those focused solely on compliance.

At the community level, the findings indicate observable socio-cultural changes, including increased educational aspirations, stronger parental support, and the emergence of local role models. Participants described shifts in confidence and identity, suggesting that education in this program was experienced not only as skill acquisition but also as so²⁵ repositioning. While previous studies have reported similar outcomes (Kanu, 2019), the present study provides evidence that these changes are closely linked to the program's integrated design, particularly the requirement for participants to return and contribute to their communities.

The findings also reveal economic adaptations among program participants, who combined professional roles with local livelihood activities. This pattern suggests a form of hybrid economic participation that differs from dominant narratives of education leading to urban migration. While education is often associated with labor mobility, the present study indicates that when programs are designed with community reintegration in mind, education can support local economic resilience without necessitating cultural displacement.

This pattern of hybrid economic participation also resonates with findings from Indigenous education contexts in other parts of the world. For instance, studies in rural Australia and Sub-Saharan Africa have shown that education does not necessarily lead to urban migration but can instead support localized livelihood strategies when aligned with community needs (Guenther et al., 2021; King & Palmer, 2020). However, the present study differs in that hybrid economic participation is not an incidental outcome but an intentionally designed component of the program through the integration of life-skills training and community-based engagement.

This distinction suggests that, while hybrid livelihood patterns are globally observable, their sustainability and impact are significantly enhanced when embedded within a structured strategic management framework. In this case, the program actively bridges formal education with local economic systems, thereby reducing the risk of cultural dislocation and strengthening community-based economic resilience.

Despite these contributions, the findings also identify ongoing challenges. Informants reported tensions between formal education practices and customary norms, as well as limitations in administrative and financial capacity among participants. Additionally, program sustainability remains dependent on consistent funding and institutional support. These findings suggest that while the program has introduced significant innovations, long-term impact requires further institutionalization and policy integration.¹

Overall, this study contributes to the field of Indigenous education by demonstrating that culturally responsive approaches can be strengthened through structured strategic management processes. Rather than treating culture, participation, and empowerment as isolated components, the findings show that integrating these elements within a coordinated governance framework enables more sustainable and contextually relevant educational transformation.



CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings

This study provides strong empirical evidence that the impact-oriented education program for Remote Indigenous Communities in Parigi Moutong Regency constitutes a context-sensitive strategic management model that integrates educational access, community empowerment, and cultural responsiveness. The findings confirm that effective educational transformation in marginalized Indigenous contexts is achieved not merely through expanding access, but through the alignment of strategic planning, participatory governance, and locally grounded implementation. In this study, such alignment was evidenced by data-driven targeting, cross-sector coordination, and the active involvement of Indigenous youth as both learners and community contributors.

Importantly, the study highlights that culturally responsive strategic management can function as a scalable framework when it is grounded in three key principles: (1) context-based planning informed by local socio-cultural realities, (2) integration of education with community roles and economic activities, and (3) sustained participatory communication with local stakeholders. While the program is context-specific, these structural principles provide a transferable model that can inform the design of education policies in other remote and marginalized settings with similar characteristics.

The findings also indicate that the program generated multidimensional outcomes, including increased educational participation, the emergence of local educators, improved community perceptions of education, and the development of hybrid economic practices among participants. These outcomes suggest that education, when strategically managed and culturally aligned, can extend beyond individual advancement to support broader community transformation and long-term resilience.

Implications

This study provides practical implications for policymakers, education planners, and higher education institutions. First, it underscores the importance of integrating strategic management with culturally responsive approaches in designing education programs for marginalized communities. Second, it highlights the role of cross-sector collaboration and decentralized human resource development in ensuring program sustainability. Third, it suggests that aligning educational pathways with local socio-economic contexts can enhance both relevance and long-term impact. For universities, the findings demonstrate the potential of community-engaged partnerships in supporting transformative education initiatives.

Limitations

This study is limited by its focus on a single regional case, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to other contexts with different socio-cultural, political, or geographic characteristics. The relatively small number of participants and the qualitative design also limit the ability to quantify long-term program outcomes. Additionally, the program's sustainability remains dependent on regional government funding, which may be affected by future policy or fiscal changes.

Future Research

Future studies should explore comparative analyses across multiple regions implementing similar Indigenous education programs to identify both transferable and context-specific factors. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine the long-term



socio-economic and intergenerational impacts of such initiatives. Furthermore, future research could investigate sustainable funding models and institutionalization strategies to ensure program continuity beyond individual leadership and short-term policy cycles.

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