



Journal of Educational Sciences

Journal homepage: <https://jes.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/JES>



P-ISSN
2581-1657

E-ISSN
2581-2203

The Role of Lecturer and Student Human Resource Management in Improving Educational Quality: A Case Study of an Early Childhood Education Program

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 28 Feb 2026

Revised: 07 April 2026

Accepted: 08 April 2026

Published online: 15 April 2026

Keywords:

Educational Quality,
Human Resource Management,
Lecturers,
Students,
Early Childhood Education

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Article Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.4.p.833-843>

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of human resource management (HRM) of lecturers and students in improving educational quality at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda. Educational quality in higher education is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of human resource management, particularly lecturers as key actors in learning and students as active participants in academic processes. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using semi-structured interviews with the head of the study program, lecturers, and students. Data were analyzed inductively through data reduction, coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation. The findings reveal that lecturer HRM plays a crucial role in maintaining instructional quality; however, challenges arise due to lecturers' limited time availability caused by professional commitments outside the institution. In addition, most students are working students who experience difficulties in managing study time, which affects academic performance and timely graduation. Flexible academic scheduling, structured seminar planning, and strengthened academic guidance were identified as effective strategies to enhance educational quality. This study concludes that adaptive and sustainable HRM practices for both lecturers and students are essential to support continuous improvement of educational quality in higher education.

1. Introduction

Education plays a strategic role in shaping human resources capable of competing in the global era, particularly in the context of rapid technological and societal transformation. Higher education institutions are required not only to produce graduates with academic competence but also individuals who possess adaptability,

professionalism, and strong character. In this context, the quality of education becomes a central issue that must be continuously improved through systematic and sustainable efforts. One of the most critical determinants of educational quality is the management of human resources, particularly lecturers and students as the main actors in the educational process.

Human resource management (HRM) in higher education encompasses planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the roles of lecturers and students to achieve institutional goals effectively. Lecturers play a strategic role in implementing the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which includes teaching, research, and community service. Their competence, commitment, and availability significantly influence the quality of the learning process. Meanwhile, students are active agents in the learning process whose engagement, motivation, and participation determine learning outcomes and academic success (Santoso, 2022). Students also play a crucial role as key stakeholders whose involvement contributes directly to improving educational quality and institutional performance (Agung, 2020). Furthermore, student satisfaction has been identified as an important indicator of educational quality, reflecting the effectiveness of academic services and learning experiences in higher education (Alves & Raposo, 2016). Therefore, effective HRM must integrate both lecturer performance and student engagement to create a conducive academic environment. The development of student competencies, particularly soft skills, is also an essential aspect of human resource management in higher education, as it contributes to students' readiness in facing professional challenges (Hadiyanto, 2022). Human resource management in higher education plays a strategic role in organizing and optimizing the performance of academic actors to achieve institutional goals effectively (Iskandar, 2020).

In the context of early childhood education (PAUD), the importance of educational quality becomes even more crucial because graduates will directly contribute to shaping the foundational development of young children. Early childhood education is recognized as a critical stage that influences cognitive, emotional, and social development (Dekawati & Suhendar, 2018). Therefore, the preparation of competent educators through higher education institutions must be supported by effective HRM practices. This includes ensuring that lecturers possess adequate pedagogical and professional competencies, as well as supporting students to develop both academic and professional readiness. Human resource management in early childhood education study programs requires strategic adaptation to address both academic and institutional challenges (Hasanah, 2023).

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of human resource management in improving the quality of educational institutions, particularly in early childhood education. The implementation of effective HRM has been proven to significantly influence the success of educational institution management, including aspects such as program effectiveness, educator performance, and institutional outcomes (Dekawati & Suhendar, 2018). In addition, human resource management practices such as planning, training, and development are essential in improving teachers' competencies and ensuring sustainable educational quality (Malik et al., 2022). These studies highlight that HRM is not only administrative in nature but also

strategic in enhancing institutional performance and educational outcomes. However, challenges in HRM implementation, such as workload imbalance and limited institutional support, often hinder optimal performance of both lecturers and students (Prasetyo, 2021).

In addition to managerial and academic factors, educational quality in higher education is also influenced by organizational culture and institutional image. Organizational culture shapes the behavior, values, and performance of academic actors, including lecturers and students, in carrying out their roles within the institution (Hofstede et al., 2010). A strong academic culture can support effective human resource management practices and foster a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, institutional image and stakeholder perceptions also contribute to the perceived quality of higher education. Students and lecturers tend to associate institutional quality with academic services, facilities, and professional interactions within the university (Cernicova et al., 2015).

In the context of higher education management, the implementation of HRM practices also requires alignment between institutional policies and academic needs. Effective HRM implementation has been shown to support institutional performance, particularly in managing lecturer workload, improving teaching effectiveness, and enhancing student outcomes (Widodo, 2022). In addition, collaboration between lecturers and students plays a significant role in improving educational quality, as interactive and supportive academic relationships contribute to better learning experiences and outcomes (Zuhdi, 2023). Furthermore, lecturers are recognized as key drivers of educational quality, as their roles extend beyond teaching to mentoring and facilitating student development (Rachmat et al., 2021).

In addition, psychological aspects of students, including motivation, preferences, and personal characteristics, also play a role in shaping learning engagement and academic outcomes (Brown, 2012). These factors become increasingly relevant in the context of working students, where psychological readiness and adaptability are required to balance academic and professional responsibilities. Therefore, understanding educational quality in higher education requires not only managerial perspectives but also cultural, perceptual, and psychological dimensions.

In addition, recent studies in higher education contexts also show that student engagement and academic services significantly affect educational quality. Research published in the *Journal of Educational Sciences* indicates that student engagement, learning effectiveness, and academic service quality are closely related to institutional performance and student satisfaction (Ishaq et al., 2026; Riansih et al., 2025). Furthermore, the implementation of quality management approaches in education has been proven to enhance institutional effectiveness and accountability (Christine & Raharja, 2025). These findings reinforce the importance of integrating HRM practices with quality assurance mechanisms in higher education.

However, despite the growing body of research on HRM in education, studies that specifically examine the integration of lecturer and student HRM in early childhood

teacher education programs remain limited. In many cases, lecturers often face challenges due to multiple professional roles outside the institution, which may affect their availability and performance. On the other hand, a significant number of students in such programs are working students who must balance academic responsibilities with employment, leading to challenges in time management and academic engagement.

These conditions create a complex dynamic that requires adaptive and flexible HRM strategies. Effective management must consider not only institutional demands but also the real conditions faced by lecturers and students. Without proper management, these challenges may negatively impact learning quality, academic achievement, and graduation rates. Therefore, there is a need for empirical research that explores how HRM practices involving both lecturers and students influence educational quality in higher education settings.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the role of lecturer and student human resource management in improving educational quality at the PAUD Study Program, Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda. This study also seeks to identify the challenges faced in implementing HRM and to explore strategic efforts that can be applied to enhance educational quality. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of effective HRM practices in higher education, particularly in early childhood teacher education programs.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the role of human resource management of lecturers and students in improving educational quality. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors in a natural setting, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Sugiyono, 2017).

Instrument

The primary research instrument in this study was the researcher, supported by semi-structured interview guidelines. The interview instrument was designed to explore key aspects of human resource management, including lecturer performance, student engagement, time management, and institutional strategies in improving educational quality. The interview questions were developed based on theoretical frameworks of HRM and previous research findings, ensuring that the data collected were relevant and aligned with the research objectives.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility in exploring participants' responses while maintaining a structured focus on the research questions. The participants consisted of one head of the study program,

one lecturer, and three active students selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance and experience. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face. In addition to interviews, documentation techniques were used to support the data, including academic schedules, institutional policies, and student academic records.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study followed qualitative data analysis procedures, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by Sugiyono (2017). This approach allows researchers to systematically interpret qualitative data and generate meaningful thematic findings. The analysis was conducted inductively through several stages, including data transcription, coding, categorization, and thematic analysis. The coding process involved identifying meaningful units from interview transcripts, which were then grouped into categories and further developed into broader themes. This process enabled the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among the data.

To ensure transparency and analytical rigor, the coding results were systematically organized to demonstrate how raw data were transformed into analytical themes. The results of this process are presented in Table 1, which illustrates the development of codes, categories, and themes derived from empirical data. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation and member checking to validate the findings and interpretations.

Table 1. Coding and Theme Development

Code	Category	Theme
Limited time	Lecturer workload	Lecturer HRM constraints
External job	Work conflict	Lecturer HRM constraints
Working student	Dual role	Student HRM challenges
Time difficulty	Learning barrier	Student HRM challenges
Flexible schedule	Institutional support	HRM strategy

As shown in Table 1, the coding process resulted in three major themes: lecturer HRM constraints, student HRM challenges, and HRM strategies. These themes indicate that lecturers experience limitations in managing academic responsibilities due to workload and external commitments, while students face difficulties in balancing dual roles as learners and workers, which affects their academic engagement. At the same time, the emergence of HRM strategies such as flexible scheduling reflects institutional efforts to respond to these challenges. Overall, these findings highlight that time management, workload distribution, and institutional support are critical factors in understanding the role of human resource management in improving educational quality. The themes generated from this analysis serve as the foundation for organizing the results and discussion, particularly in explaining lecturer HRM constraints, student HRM challenges, and institutional strategies in improving educational quality.

3. Results and Discussion

The Role of Lecturer HRM in Improving Educational Quality

The findings indicate that lecturers play a central role in maintaining and improving instructional quality within the PAUD Study Program. This is consistent with the thematic structure derived from the coding process (Table 1), where lecturer HRM constraints emerged from categories such as lecturer workload and work conflict. These findings demonstrate that lecturer performance is not only determined by competence but also by the effectiveness of workload management within the institution. This finding further reinforces previous studies which emphasize that lecturers are the main drivers of educational quality, not only through teaching but also through mentoring and academic guidance (Rachmat et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence from interview data strengthens this finding. One lecturer stated that “time allocation for teaching preparation is often limited due to external professional commitments,” indicating that competing responsibilities outside the institution reduce the time available for academic tasks. One lecturer explicitly stated, “I often have to divide my time between teaching responsibilities and external professional work, which makes it difficult to fully prepare learning materials” (Lecturer 1). In addition, the head of the study program emphasized that “lecturers are expected to maintain teaching quality, but institutional limitations sometimes make it challenging to manage workload effectively” (Head of Study Program). These statements reflect the coding results categorized as limited time and external job, which were grouped into the broader theme of lecturer HRM constraints. The presence of these constraints suggests that lecturers experience structural limitations that directly affect the quality of instructional preparation and delivery.

From an analytical perspective, this condition can be understood through the lens of human resource management, particularly in terms of workload planning and performance management. Ineffective workload distribution may lead to reduced teaching quality, limited student interaction, and less optimal academic supervision. This finding supports previous research emphasizing that effective HRM practices are essential in optimizing lecturer performance and ensuring educational quality (Nurhadi, 2021). Furthermore, HR planning and development play a crucial role in aligning institutional expectations with lecturers’ capacity to perform their duties effectively (Malik et al., 2022).

In addition, the findings highlight that lecturer performance is closely related to institutional quality assurance mechanisms. The inability to manage workload effectively may weaken the implementation of continuous improvement processes in education. This is consistent with the perspective of quality management in education, which emphasizes the importance of systematic monitoring and evaluation of lecturer performance to maintain academic standards (Christine & Raharja, 2025). Therefore, lecturer HRM should not only focus on administrative aspects but also on strategic interventions that ensure balanced workload distribution and sustainable performance. From a theoretical perspective, these

findings indicate that ineffective workload distribution reflects a gap in HRM planning and implementation, particularly in aligning institutional expectations with human resource capacity. This condition may reduce instructional effectiveness and limit the ability of lecturers to perform their roles optimally.

The Role of Students in Improving Educational Quality

The findings reveal that students play a significant role in determining educational quality through their engagement, participation, and academic commitment. Based on the thematic analysis presented in Table 1, the theme of student HRM challenges emerged from categories such as dual roles and learning barriers. This indicates that students are not merely passive recipients of knowledge but active actors whose conditions significantly influence the learning process.

Interview data provide clear empirical support for this finding. One student stated that “it is difficult to focus on academic tasks due to work commitments,” reflecting the challenges faced by working students in balancing academic and professional responsibilities. Another student expressed that “after work, I feel physically tired, so it is difficult to concentrate on assignments and academic tasks” (Student 2). Similarly, another participant stated that “sometimes I have to prioritize work over class attendance because of job responsibilities” (Student 3). These statements correspond to the coding categories of working student and time difficulty, which collectively form the theme of student HRM challenges. These findings suggest that time constraints and role conflicts are key factors affecting student engagement and academic performance.

From an HRM perspective, students can be conceptualized as human resources that require proper management and support systems. The presence of dual roles creates a need for adaptive academic policies that accommodate diverse student conditions. Without such support, students may experience reduced participation, delayed academic progress, and lower learning outcomes. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that student engagement is a critical determinant of academic success and learning effectiveness (Ishaq et al., 2026).

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of institutional support in enhancing student engagement. Academic services, flexible learning systems, and supportive learning environments are essential components of effective student HRM. Research shows that improved academic services contribute to higher levels of student satisfaction and institutional performance (Riansih et al., 2025). In addition, the implementation of innovative learning models has been proven to enhance student participation and learning outcomes (Hasanah et al., 2025). Therefore, managing students as human resources requires a holistic approach that integrates academic, psychological, and institutional dimensions. The utilization of digital technology has also been recognized as an important factor in improving learning quality and supporting effective academic processes in higher education (Hadiyanto & Sari, 2020). This finding suggests that student HRM in higher education should not only focus on academic performance but also consider

students' socio-economic conditions, particularly for working students who require flexible and adaptive learning systems.

Challenges and Strategic Efforts to Improve Educational Quality

The study identifies several major challenges in improving educational quality, including time constraints faced by both lecturers and students, limited academic interaction, and pressure for timely graduation. These challenges are not isolated phenomena but represent interconnected issues derived from the themes of lecturer HRM constraints and student HRM challenges identified through the coding process. This indicates that both lecturers and students operate within structural and managerial limitations that affect the overall quality of the learning process. These challenges were also reflected in interview findings, where participants highlighted that "time limitations are the main obstacle for both lecturers and students in maintaining academic performance" (Lecturer 1; Student 1).

The empirical findings also reveal that these challenges are closely related to time management issues and institutional flexibility. For instance, lecturers experience limited time due to external professional commitments, while students struggle to balance academic responsibilities with work. This dual constraint creates a complex learning environment where both teaching effectiveness and student engagement may be compromised if not properly managed. To address these challenges, several strategic efforts have been implemented, including flexible academic scheduling, structured seminar arrangements, and enhanced academic supervision. These strategies are directly linked to the theme of HRM strategy identified in Table 1, particularly under the category of institutional support. Flexible scheduling enables students to better manage their time while allowing lecturers to adjust their teaching responsibilities. Meanwhile, structured academic activities and strengthened supervision ensure that learning objectives are still achieved despite existing constraints.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of adaptive HRM practices in higher education. HRM is not merely concerned with resource allocation but also with creating systems that respond to dynamic academic conditions. The integration of HRM with quality assurance mechanisms allows institutions to maintain performance standards while accommodating the diverse needs of lecturers and students. This is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of adaptive HRM in improving institutional performance and educational quality (Suardi et al., 2025). These challenges are also in line with previous findings indicating that limitations in human resource management, such as workload imbalance and insufficient institutional support, can hinder the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes (Prasetyo, 2021). Therefore, the implementation of structured and adaptive HRM policies becomes essential in ensuring that institutional strategies align with the needs of lecturers and students (Widodo, 2022). In addition, strengthening collaboration between lecturers and students is crucial in creating a supportive academic environment that enhances learning effectiveness and educational quality (Zuhdi, 2023). These findings demonstrate that effective HRM in higher education must be adaptive and

responsive, integrating institutional flexibility with structured academic support to address the dynamic challenges faced by both lecturers and students.

Moreover, the findings suggest that institutional responsiveness and flexibility are critical in ensuring sustainable educational quality. By aligning HRM strategies with real conditions in the field, higher education institutions can create a more supportive academic environment that enhances both lecturer performance and student success. Therefore, strategic HRM practices serve as a key mechanism for addressing structural challenges and fostering continuous improvement in educational quality.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that human resource management of lecturers and students plays a significant role in improving educational quality at the PAUD Study Program. Lecturers' limited time availability due to external professional commitments and students' dual roles as workers and learners present major challenges to the learning process. Therefore, flexible, structured, and sustainable academic management policies are required to support lecturer performance and student success. Strengthening academic guidance and systematic academic planning are identified as strategic measures to enhance educational quality in higher education, particularly in early childhood teacher education programs.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Early Childhood Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda, for their support and cooperation in conducting this research.

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How to cite this article:

Mulawarman, W. G., Handayani, E. S., Apriliyani., Hamidah., & Wulandari, Y. (2026). The Role of Lecturer and Student Human Resource Management in Improving Educational Quality: A Case Study of an Early Childhood Education Program. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(4), 833-843.
