



Collaborative Participation Strategy to Improve the Quality of Music Ministry in the Church

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Abstract

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The music ministry in church worship is a crucial element that supports the solemnity and spiritual depth of the congregation. This study aims to examine the implementation of a collaborative participation strategy to improve the quality of church music ministry. Employing a qualitative method with a case study design at GKJ Salatiga Selatan, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the collaborative participation strategy, which includes ongoing training, reflective evaluation, and open communication forums, significantly enhances the technical and spiritual quality of the church's music service. Active involvement of all ministry members produces cooperation that strengthens team cohesion and fosters a shared ownership of the ministry. Consequently, this strategy can be regarded as a practical and contextual framework for developing music ministry within the church.

INTRODUCTION

Music in church worship functions as a liturgical element and a medium for spiritual expression and community formation. As articulated by Hiebert (2008), church music deepens religious experience, strengthens social cohesion, and shapes the collective identity of the faith community (Hiebert, 2008). In alignment with this view, Wong and Purmanasari (2024) highlight that liturgical music in charismatic churches effectively evokes congregational emotions and enhances active participation in worship. Within non-formal education, music ministry in churches has evolved into a vehicle for personal capacity building, encompassing musical competence, leadership, teamwork, and spiritual responsibility (Barker, 2011). Similarly, Utomo (2023), in the journal *Shift Key*, asserts that professional management of church music significantly improves the quality of service.

However, practical realities reveal significant challenges in developing church music ministry, including the lack of systematic training, weak coordination among ministry members, and low congregational participation in music ministry development (Tanujaya, 2021). Ariawan (2022), in a study conducted in Yogyakarta, found that non-material appreciation (such as education and recognition) exerts a more positive influence on music ministry quality than material rewards. Therefore, a strategic approach is necessary – one that goes beyond performative aspects and emphasizes learning processes, empowerment, and active involvement of all ministry elements.

In response to these challenges, a collaborative participation strategy emerges as an approach that fosters an open, reflective, and transformative learning environment. Julio Unas and Setiawan (2024) emphasize that music

ministry planning and organization need to be developed through systematic administration and structured evaluation in church planting contexts. A core principle involves building communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), where musicians and worship leaders actively participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating services. This approach also underlines the role of senior musicians as mentors in social learning practices (scaffolding), as outlined by Vygotsky (1978). Hence, church music ministry transcends mere expression of faith and becomes a space for character formation, skill development, and intergenerational collaboration within a living faith community.

This study aims to examine the collaborative participation strategy in enhancing the quality of church music ministry through a qualitative case study approach. The research primarily focuses on the learning process and its contribution to improving musical and spiritual quality in community-based education. The outcomes of this research are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to developing community-based music education models in religious settings.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design (Creswell, 2014), aimed at thoroughly understanding the dynamics involved in implementing a collaborative participation strategy in church music ministry. This approach was selected because of its capability to explore phenomena within the context of strong social and religious values present at GKJ Salatiga Selatan. Sunarto, Irfanda Rizki, (2024) explained that qualitative methods based on literature review and field observation are highly effective in revealing the role of music within worship rituals and its impact on congregational spirituality.

The research was conducted at GKJ Salatiga Selatan, a purposively chosen site reflecting the complex collaborative practices in church music ministry. The subjects include music ministry personnel (musicians, worship leaders, singers), liturgy leaders, pastors, church administrators, and congregants. The Liturgical and Arts Commission serves as a primary institutional partner. This design aligns with the "field-based qualitative method" used by Irfanda Rizki in church service studies, combining in-depth interviews, observation, and systematic documentation reviews.

Data was collected through three primary techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies (Miles, 2014). The researcher engaged in participatory observation by directly participating in music ministry activities such as weekly rehearsals, worship implementation, and post-worship evaluation forums. This observation was systematically conducted to identify patterns of interaction, forms of collaboration, and learning dynamics among music ministry personnel. Field notes were the primary instrument used to document phenomena occurring in the natural context. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, namely worship leaders, principal musicians, vocal team members, pastors, and Liturgical and Arts Commission representatives. Several active congregants were also interviewed to gather recipient perspectives. These interviews aimed to explore subjective experiences, perceptions, and reflections on the collaborative strategy applied. Documentation studies involved reviewing official church documents, including service meeting minutes, training modules, rehearsal schedules, and worship recording archives. These provided important information about policy traces, organizational patterns, and routine practices supporting music ministry implementation.

The data were then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively through four stages: data reduction, thematic categorization, narrative presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity of the findings, source triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation), member checks, and peer discussions were applied. This approach corresponds with qualitative church research methodology recommended by Irfanda Rizki, where data credibility is reinforced through inter-subjective validation and peer debriefing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study is grounded in the theory of collaborative participation in community-based education and organizational development, which posits that participatory collaboration among community members enhances capacity, productivity, and service quality (Wenger, 1998). In the church as a learning community, collaborative principles such as cooperation, collective responsibility, shared reflection, and open communication are crucial for fostering a dynamic and sustainable music ministry culture.

Wenger's (1998) communities of practice framework highlights that effective learning occurs through social interaction where members share experiences and construct knowledge together. This principle is manifested in the church music ministry at GKJ Salatiga Selatan, where active collaboration among musicians, worship leaders, and congregants collectively develops the quality of the musical service.

Field data reveal that the music ministry team implements a collaborative participation strategy through regular weekly rehearsals,

monthly workshops, and reflective evaluation sessions after services. Internal documentation and communication forums such as WhatsApp facilitate open feedback among members. Continuous training accelerates instrumental and vocal skill improvement, while joint evaluations help identify areas for development, aligned with social learning concepts emphasizing guidance from more experienced members (Lai, 2022; Jorgensen, 2021).

Moreover, the music team utilizes formal and informal training, from internal resources and credible external coaches, to holistically enhance vocal and musical skills. Interview data confirm that direct learning and social interaction broaden individual developmental zones through active collaborative practice, supporting Wenger's theory that social participation shapes member identity and skills (Wenger, 1998).

Open reflective evaluations post-service cultivate a culture of collective introspection, reinforcing a shared sense of responsibility and ownership over musical service quality. Open communication through digital media and formal meetings strengthens dialogue, minimizes hierarchical knowledge barriers, and encourages innovation and initiative within the music ministry.

The GKJ Salatiga Selatan music team can be regarded as an effective community of practice, whose members share a common interest and purpose in ministry, and regularly engage in joint learning to build musical capacity through rehearsal and service. The process experienced by new members reflects legitimate peripheral

participation, where they transition from newcomers to core members through guidance and intensive collaboration (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Vygotsky's (1978) social learning principle of scaffolding is evident in the team's practice, with senior musicians supporting and mentoring novices to develop according to their abilities, creating a supportive social learning environment that nurtures ongoing member capacity growth

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that collaborative participation strategies effectively enhance the quality of church music ministry, both technically and spiritually. Implementing these strategies through ongoing training, reflective evaluation, and open communication forums at GKJ Salatiga Selatan has fostered a dynamic community of practice where intensive social learning occurs. Active engagement from all music team members promotes the growth of musical competencies, deepens the spirituality of service, cultivates a strong sense of ownership, and reinforces team cohesion.

The findings confirm that a collaborative approach can address common challenges in church music ministry, such as the lack of systematic training and weak coordination. Through community-based learning mechanisms, team members improve their technical skills and internalize the values of service as an expression of collective faith. Therefore, the collaborative participation strategy is recommended as a viable framework

for developing music ministry in other churches facing similar challenges.

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