

The Role of Non-Formal Education Management in Community Empowerment and Lifelong Learning Development

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Abstract

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Non-formal education plays a strategic role in improving the quality of human resources, particularly in community empowerment and the development of lifelong learning. This article aims to analyze the contribution of non-formal education management in managing relevant, adaptive, and sustainable community empowerment programs. Through a literature review and a conceptual approach, this study describes how the planning, implementation, and evaluation of non-formal education contribute to improving community skills, independence, and competitiveness. The analysis shows that non-formal education management plays a crucial role in facilitating inclusive, flexible, and contextual access to learning tailored to community needs. Furthermore, non-formal education contributes significantly to realizing lifelong learning by providing individuals with opportunities to continuously develop competencies throughout their lives. Thus, non-formal education management is a crucial instrument in building an independent, productive, and adaptive society to social dynamics and technological developments.

Keywords: *Non-formal Education Management, Community Empowerment, Lifelong Learning, Lifelong Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic tool for improving the quality of human resources and realizing sustainable development. In the current context of globalization and the digital era, learning is no longer limited to formal institutions but has expanded to include non-formal education. Non-formal education exists to address the diverse, flexible, and contextual needs of society, adapting to the challenges of the times.

Non-formal education management plays a crucial role in managing community empowerment programs, from identifying learning needs through planning, implementation, and evaluation. Through effective management, non-formal education can improve the competence, skills, and competitiveness of individuals and groups, thereby making communities more independent, productive, and adaptive to socioeconomic changes.

Furthermore, non-formal education contributes to realizing *lifelong learning*, a fundamental principle in building a knowledge-based society. Lifelong learning enables individuals to continuously update their knowledge and skills to stay relevant to technological, economic, and social developments. Therefore, it is

important to examine the role of non-formal education management in supporting community empowerment and the development of lifelong learning.

Non-formal education is an educational pathway outside the formal education system that is structured, flexible, and designed to meet the learning needs of the community. This education exists as an alternative and complement for those who lack access to formal education or who require additional skills tailored to their life context.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, non-formal education serves as a supplement, replacement, or complement to formal education in order to support lifelong learning. Non-formal education encompasses various programs such as skills courses, job training, equivalency education, and community-based learning activities (Sudjana, 2010).

The main characteristic of non-formal education is flexibility in curriculum, methods, and learning time, making it accessible to all levels of society without restrictions on age or educational background (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). Thus, non-formal education serves as a means of community empowerment to increase personal capacity, skills, and independence.

Non-formal education management is the process of systematically planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating non-formal education programs to achieve community learning goals. Good management enables non-formal programs to run effectively, efficiently, and meet the needs of students. Rohman (2009) emphasizes that non-formal education management extends beyond administrative processes to include innovation, coordination between stakeholders, and adaptation to social dynamics and technological developments. In this context, the role of educators and administrators is to facilitate, empower, and encourage active community participation.

Important components of non-formal education management include identifying learning needs, developing a community-based curriculum, implementing participatory learning, and ongoing evaluation (Fattah, 2012). With this approach, non-formal education can have a real impact on improving community competence and independence.

Community empowerment is an effort to increase people's ability to identify potential, address problems, and make decisions to improve their quality of life. Non-formal education serves as a strategic instrument to strengthen community capacity by providing knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to local needs. According to Ife (2013), community empowerment is achieved by strengthening access to resources, increasing participation, and building social solidarity. Non-formal education contributes directly to this process by providing skills courses, entrepreneurship training, and equivalency education that promote economic independence and social empowerment.

Furthermore, empowerment through non-formal education enables communities to develop critical awareness, enabling them to navigate social, economic, and political change (Freire, 2005). Thus, non-formal education becomes a collective learning space that supports communities in developing independently, empowered, and adaptively.

Lifelong learning is an educational paradigm that emphasizes the importance of continuous learning throughout an individual's life. This concept emphasizes that

education takes place not only in formal schools but also in everyday life through experiences, social interactions, and non-formal and informal education.

According to UNESCO (2015), lifelong learning is the right of every individual to continuously acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to face global change. Non-formal education is a key pillar in realizing this principle because it is flexible, accessible, and relevant to community needs.

Jarvis (2009) emphasized that lifelong learning not only enhances intellectual abilities but also shapes attitudes, values, and social skills that support individuals' survival in society. Therefore, non-formal education management must be able to design programs that encourage people to continue learning, innovating, and developing throughout their lives.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design . This design was chosen because the research aims to deeply understand the role of non-formal education management in community empowerment and the development of lifelong learning. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore meanings, experiences, and practices occurring in the field through comprehensive interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research subjects were managers, tutors, and participants of non-formal education programs, as well as community leaders involved in community empowerment. The research objects included non-formal education management activities, from planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs oriented toward empowerment and lifelong learning. The research focused on course institutions, community learning centers (PKBM), and local community-based communities. To obtain valid and in-depth data, this study utilized several data collection techniques, namely: in-depth interviews with institutional managers, tutors, and students to understand the management process and its impact on empowerment. Participatory observation of learning activities, training, and community activities to see the dynamics of non-formal education management. Documentation in the form of program archives, activity reports, and learning modules as supplementary data. Triangulation of sources and techniques was used to increase the validity of the data (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis Techniques. Data analysis was conducted through an interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), including, data reduction, sorting data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation: arranging data in narrative form, tables, or thematic matrices. Conclusion drawing/verification, formulating research findings based on patterns, themes, and relationships between data. Analysis is carried out simultaneously from data collection to the final stage of the research.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Non-formal Education Management Strategy

The research results show that non-formal education management has strategic benefits for communities, both individually and collectively. The main strategies address: Improving practical skills : through courses and training programs designed to meet community needs, proven to help residents acquire new

job skills, for example in the digital sector, entrepreneurship, and local crafts. Strengthening social capital, through non-formal education, serves as a community meeting space, strengthening solidarity, participation, and cooperation between residents (Ife, 2013). Economic empowerment, through skills education and financial literacy, provides opportunities for communities to become economically independent. The realization of lifelong learning, through non-formal education, encourages a culture of lifelong learning, so that people are accustomed to increasing their knowledge according to changing times (UNESCO, 2015). With this strategy, it can be used as a basis for strengthening policies and empowerment programs based on non-formal education.

Implementation of Lifelong Learning Development Techniques

Non-formal education has implemented various techniques to support lifelong learning, including needs-based learning, where the curriculum is developed based on an analysis of community needs. Participatory methods can encourage citizens to actively participate in the learning process, making it more relevant to everyday life (Freire, 2005).

By utilizing digital technologies, such as online courses, educational social media, and self-learning apps, we are expanding access and flexibility in learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Meanwhile, through a community-centered approach, we are empowered to act as learning centers, through community-based learning centers (PKBM) and study groups that serve as centers for local innovation. The implementation of these techniques demonstrates that non-formal education serves not only as a *second chance education* for those who have dropped out of school, but also as a space for the actualization of lifelong learning.

Impact on Residents and Challenges and Solutions

Non-formal education management programs have had a significant impact on residents, both individually and socially, including increased self-confidence, adaptability, job skills, and motivation to continue learning (Jarvis, 2009). From a social perspective, these include the development of community networks, increased community participation in local activities, and the creation of a learning society. From an economic perspective, these include the emergence of micro-enterprises, increased productivity, and increased income sources. From a cultural perspective, these include a growing awareness of the importance of lifelong education and the value of mutual cooperation in community development. Thus, these impacts demonstrate that non-formal education is not merely an alternative educational pathway, but rather a driver of transformative social change.

Although non-formal education has an important role, there are a number of challenges that must be faced:

- a) Limited funding and facilities: Many non-formal educational institutions still face limited learning resources. *The solution is* to strengthen collaboration with the government, business, and civil society organizations.
- b) The quality of educators/tutors varies. Not all non-formal educators possess adequate pedagogical competency. The solution is ongoing training and certification of non-formal educators.
- c) Lack of community participation: Some residents still view non-formal education as less prestigious than formal education. The solution is to promote

the benefits and strengthen the branding of non-formal education as a strategic pathway to lifelong learning.

- d) Challenges of the digital era: The digital literacy gap makes it difficult for some citizens to participate in technology-based learning. The solution is to provide basic digital literacy training and develop blended learning models.

With the right problem-solving strategies, non-formal education can continue to play a key role in community empowerment and the development of lifelong learning.

CONCLUSION

Non-formal education management plays a significant role in community empowerment by providing practical skills, increasing participation, and strengthening community independence. Furthermore, non-formal education is a strategic pathway in developing lifelong learning due to its inclusive, flexible, and needs-oriented nature. Strengthening the management capacity of non-formal educational institutions to be more responsive to community needs. Optimal utilization of digital technology to expand access and effectiveness of learning. Developing an adaptive curriculum that is relevant to current developments. Increasing collaboration between the government, the business world, and local communities. Strengthening impact-based evaluation systems to ensure non-formal programs truly benefit the community.

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Compete to Want

Saing Mahu, as a non-permanent lecturer in the Islamic Education Management Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Abdul Mutalib Sangadji Islamic State University, Ambon, completed his studies at the start 2 and doctoral level in the Broad Education Study Program, Postgraduate School, Indonesian Education University, Bandung, in the field of non-formal education management.

