

## Non-formal Education Management Strategies in Improving Community Skills in the Digital Era

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### Abstract

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*The development of digital technology has had a significant impact on people's lifestyles, including the need for new skills relevant to the digital era. Non-formal education, as an educational pathway outside of formal education, plays a crucial role in improving community skills through flexible, adaptive, and needs-based programs. This article aims to examine non-formal education management strategies for improving community skills in the digital era, with an emphasis on planning, organization, implementation, and program evaluation. Theoretical studies indicate that the use of digital technology can strengthen the effectiveness of non-formal education management, particularly in the development of digital literacy, job skills, and technology-based entrepreneurship. The developed conceptual model illustrates the relationship between non-formal education management strategies, the use of digital technology, and community skill improvement, with supporting factors such as community participation and policy support. The analysis shows that management strategies integrated with the use of digital technology can accelerate community empowerment, reduce skills gaps, and encourage the creation of an adaptive, independent, and productive community in the digital era. This article is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of non-formal education literature, as well as practical recommendations for non-formal education institutions and program makers.*

**Keywords:** *Non-formal education; educational management; community skills; digital era; empowerment*

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## INTRODUCTION

The digital era has brought about significant changes in various aspects of life, including education. Advances in information and communication technology are encouraging people to acquire new skills relevant to the needs of the times. In this context, non-formal education plays a strategic role as an alternative to and complement to formal education. Non-formal education focuses on community empowerment through training, courses, and flexible learning programs tailored to real-world needs.

Non-formal education management is key to increasing the effectiveness and relevance of the programs offered. The right management strategy will ensure that every non-formal learning activity aligns with the goals, objectives, and demands of society in the digital age. Examples include utilizing digital technology in the learning process, planning programs based on local needs, and improving the competency of non-formal educators.

Furthermore, the digital skills gap between community groups demands more innovative and adaptive non-formal education management strategies. If managed well, non-formal education can improve digital literacy, job skills, and entrepreneurship, while empowering communities to face global challenges.

Thus, the goal of non-formal education management strategies can be used to improve community skills in the digital age. This research is also expected to contribute to enriching the academic literature and provide practical recommendations for non-formal education institution managers and relevant policymakers.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research used a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design. This design was chosen because the research aimed to deeply understand the role and strategies of non-formal education management in improving skills in the digital age. 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 Program Planning.**

Non-formal educational institutions have identified community needs, particularly regarding basic digital skills and technology-based entrepreneurship. Planning involves the community in determining the types of training, such as digital literacy, office application usage, graphic design, digital marketing, and online entrepreneurship skills.

**Program Organization.** The institution's organizational structure is simple yet effective. The program manager appoints a training coordinator, facilitator, and a technical team responsible for the use of digital tools and online learning platforms. Collaboration with local communities and industry partners contributes to program sustainability. **Program Implementation.** The learning process is conducted using a blended learning method, combining face-to-face and online learning. The use of digital media, such as e-learning platforms, WhatsApp groups, and social media, has proven effective in reaching participants who are limited by time and distance. Participants demonstrated improved skills in operating digital tools and utilizing technology to increase work productivity and self-employment. **Evaluation and Monitoring.** Evaluation was conducted through participant performance assessments, satisfaction surveys, and community feedback. The evaluation results showed that the majority of participants felt that the digital-based non-formal education program helped improve their competencies, particularly in terms of digital literacy and job skills. The main challenges identified were limited internet infrastructure in certain areas and low learning motivation among some participants.

Non-formal education is an educational pathway outside of formal education designed to provide learning services to communities tailored to their needs and potential, as defined by Law Number 20 of 2003.

Regarding the National Education System, non-formal education functions as a substitute, supplement, and complement to formal education in order to support lifelong learning. Non-formal education programs include courses, training, functional literacy, and community empowerment activities (Sudjana, 2010).

Non-formal education is more flexible than formal education, both in terms of time, methods, and curriculum. This flexibility allows non-formal education to be an effective means of responding to social, cultural, and technological changes in the digital age (Rogers, 2014).

**Non-formal Education Management Theory.** Non-formal education management is the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating learning activities in non-formal settings to achieve specific goals. This management focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness of program implementation, as well as adapting to student needs (Terry, 2017).

According to Hasibuan (2019), there are four main functions of management, namely: 1) Planning: identifying community learning needs and formulating learning objectives; 2) Organizing: compiling organizational structures and dividing tasks.; 3) Actuating : running programs according to plan and motivating participants; 4) Controlling : conducting evaluations to ensure goals are achieved.

In the context of non-formal education, management strategies emphasize empowerment, active community participation, and adaptation to developments in information technology (Suprijanto, 2012).

### **Community Skills in the Digital Age**

The digital era is marked by the rapid development of information technology, which demands new skills. According to the World Economic Forum (2020), key skills needed in the digital age include digital literacy, problem-solving, effective communication, critical thinking, and creativity.

For the community, digital skills encompass more than just the ability to use technological devices, but also encompass an understanding of digital ethics, cybersecurity, and the use of technology for entrepreneurship and productivity (Prensky, 2010). Therefore, non-formal education plays a crucial role in providing digital skills training, particularly for groups outside the reach of formal education.

The research results indicate the role of management in improving skills. The research findings indicate that a systematic non-formal education management strategy, from planning to evaluation, contributes significantly to program success. This aligns with Hasibuan's (2019) opinion, which emphasizes the management function as the primary driver of organizational effectiveness. In the context of non-formal education, needs-based planning has proven effective in producing programs relevant to the demands of the digital era.

Utilizing Digital Technology as an Innovation in Non-Formal Education Research confirms that digital technology plays a reinforcing role in improving the quality of non-formal learning. The use of digital media allows participants to experience learning that is more flexible, interactive, and tailored to their needs. These findings support the World Economic Forum's (2020) statement on the importance of digital literacy and technological skills as 21st-century competencies.

### **The Relevance of Non-Formal Education to Community Empowerment**

Non-formal education is an instrument of community empowerment because it provides access to knowledge and skills relevant to local needs. According to Freire (2005), education must be able to free communities from underdevelopment through a process of conscientization.

In the digital era, non-formal education plays a crucial role in reducing the digital divide and strengthening communities' capacity to face global challenges. Through appropriate management strategies, non-formal education can foster an independent, productive, and competitive society (Tilaar, 2012).

Conceptual Model Based on the theoretical study presented, a conceptual model can be developed regarding non-formal education management strategies for improving community skills in the digital era. This model places educational management at the center of attention. Non-formal education is the main variable that influences the improvement of community skills, with an intermediary role in the form of the use of digital technology and supporting factors in the form of community participation and policy support. 1) Non-formal Education Management Strategy: Community-based planning; Organization of institutions and programs; Implementation of innovative learning (digital learning, blended learning, online courses); Continuous evaluation and monitoring. 2) Utilization of Digital Technology

Online learning platforms; Social media as a means of education; Application of digital skills and technological literacy. 3) Improving Community Skills: Basic digital literacy; Workforce skills; Digital-based entrepreneurship; Community empowerment; 4) Supporting Factors : Active community participation in non-formal programs; Government policies that encourage the digitalization of education; Collaboration between non-formal institutions, industry, and communities.

Community Empowerment through Non-Formal Education. Non-formal education has been proven to not only improve individual skills but also foster

community empowerment. Training participants who master digital skills can develop technology-based micro-enterprises and increase access to information. This aligns with Paulo Freire's (2005) empowerment theory, which emphasizes that education must foster critical awareness and encourage community self-reliance.

### **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 plays an important role, there are a number of challenges that must be faced: Limited funding and facilities: Many non-formal educational institutions still face limited learning resources. *The solution is to strengthen collaboration with the government, the business world, and civil society organizations.* The quality of educators/tutors varies. Not all non-formal educators have adequate pedagogical competencies. The solution is continuous training and certification of non-formal educators. Lack of community participation: Some residents still view non-formal education as less prestigious than formal education. The solution is to socialize the benefits and strengthen the branding of non-formal education as a strategic path for lifelong learning. Challenges of the digital era: The digital literacy gap makes it difficult for some residents to participate in technology-based learning. The solution is to provide basic digital literacy training and develop a hybrid learning model (blended learning).

With the right problem-solving strategies, non-formal education can continue to play a key role as a key instrument in community empowerment and the development of lifelong learning. Relationship between Concepts. 1) Non-formal education management strategies influence the improvement of community skills; 2) The use of digital technology acts to strengthen these relationships; 3) Supporting factors in the form of policies and community participation act to strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of the strategy.

While digital-based non-formal education programs have shown positive results, the study also identified several challenges, such as limited internet access, a lack of digital devices for participants, and differing levels of learning motivation. These challenges indicate the need for more adaptive management strategies, such as providing supporting facilities, subsidizing digital devices, and a more personalized motivational approach.

From a theoretical perspective, this research strengthens the literature on the importance of non-formal education management in the context of digital transformation. Practically, the results provide recommendations for non-formal education institution managers to further maximize digital technology, build cross-

sector collaboration, and enhance the capacity of facilitators to address the challenges of learning in the digital age.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that non-formal education management strategies play a crucial role in improving community skills in the digital era. Management processes that encompass needs-based planning, flexible program organization, innovative learning implementation, and continuous evaluation have been proven to significantly impact community competency. The use of digital technology is a strengthening factor that enables non-formal education to be more adaptive, inclusive, and relevant to current demands. Furthermore, community skills are not limited to technological proficiency but also encompass digital literacy, job skills, and digital-based entrepreneurship. However, several challenges remain, such as limited access to digital infrastructure, differences in learning motivation, and limited institutional resources. Therefore, more adaptive and collaborative management strategies are needed, along with policy support that encourages the digitalization of non-formal education.

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