

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION STRENGTHENING IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF PKBM LABORA EDUKASI

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ABSTRACT

While character education has received increasing policy attention in Indonesia, limited research has examined how *Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat* (PKBM), or Community Learning Centers – particularly those serving marginalized populations – strategically manage character development initiatives. This study investigates PKBM Labora Edukasi in Bogor, which employs a three-phase strategic model – planning, implementation, and evaluation – through contextual and collaborative approaches. Adopting a descriptive qualitative methodology, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to evaluate the implementation of the Character Education Strengthening Program (CESP). The program embeds character values into daily learning routines, utilizes tutors as role models, fosters partnerships with local Islamic boarding schools and private companies, and engages learners in context-based, experiential activities. The results indicate significant improvements in learner discipline, religiosity, civic engagement, and entrepreneurial mindset. These findings underscore the critical role of multi-stakeholder collaboration and contribute to the literature on strategic educational management by offering an adaptable framework for character education in resource-constrained, non-formal settings. The study highlights the potential for hybrid governance models to bridge national policy ambitions and grassroots realities, and it advocates for increased policy recognition and replication of such models in similar socio-educational contexts.

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1 Introduction

The Character Education Strengthening Program (CESP), as mandated by *Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia No. 87 of 2017*, underscores the importance of holistic student development through collaborative efforts among educational institutions, families, and communities. While the policy framework has been widely implemented in formal education settings, its application within non-formal education—particularly in Community Learning Centers (*Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat*, or PKBM)—remains significantly understudied. This gap is especially critical given that PKBMs often serve marginalized populations, including school dropouts, children of factory workers, and other socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.

In the subdistrict of Gunung Putri, Bogor, the local PKBM landscape is shaped by complex socio-educational challenges. These include low literacy levels, inconsistent attendance due to shift-based employment, and increasing exposure to digital risks such as pornography—exacerbated by the unregulated use of smartphones. Adolescents who are neither engaged in formal education nor employed often spend their time idly in public spaces, disconnected from productive or developmental activities. Learners at PKBM Labora Edukasi predominantly consist of youth from low-income families, many of whom exhibit behavioral issues such as poor discipline, a lack of motivation, and disrespect toward authority. These issues are frequently linked to physical and mental fatigue caused by balancing full-time factory work with educational responsibilities, compounded by rigid work schedules that include night shifts and compulsory weekend overtime.

These conditions necessitate educational approaches that are not only pedagogically innovative but also strategically adaptive to the lived realities of non-traditional learners. The advent of mobile technology, while improving access to educational content, has simultaneously introduced significant vulnerabilities. Unrestricted exposure to harmful and non-educational digital content underscores the need for comprehensive digital literacy programs. Educators and administrators must equip learners with critical thinking and self-regulation skills to navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

Moreover, Indonesia's broader educational mission increasingly calls for the cultivation of *kemandirian sejati* (genuine self-reliance) among its citizens—an essential character trait that transcends rhetorical policy aspirations. Defined as the capacity for independent thought and responsible action, self-reliance must be instilled through targeted, skill-based interventions that prepare learners for adult life. The demanding nature of modern Indonesian society, characterized by work intensity and fragmented social bonds, further emphasizes the need for educational programs that nurture interpersonal understanding, civic responsibility, and communal values such as solidarity and cooperation.

Despite the urgency, existing literature has largely focused on the implementation of CESP within formal education systems, with limited scholarly attention given to how PKBMs—which often operate with constrained resources—strategically manage character education initiatives. This study seeks to address three interrelated gaps. Theoretically, prior research has concentrated on literacy and vocational training within PKBMs, neglecting character education as a domain requiring strategic management. Methodologically, prevailing CESP models often assume stable attendance patterns, failing to accommodate the erratic schedules and structural constraints faced by learners employed in shift-based

work. Practically, although cross-sector collaborations with religious institutions, businesses, and local organizations are frequently cited as success factors, there remains a lack of empirical analysis on how these partnerships function in practice to strengthen character education.

This study advances three primary contributions. First, it introduces a theoretical framework that integrates strategic management principles into character education within PKBM contexts. Second, it offers empirical evidence for a three-phase implementation model—comprising planning, execution, and evaluation—tailored to the specific needs of working learners through contextual strategies such as flexible scheduling and digital literacy interventions. Third, the study provides policy-relevant insights by proposing a collaborative framework that can be adapted and replicated in other socioeconomically similar regions.

Accordingly, the central objective of this research is to analyze the strategic management of CESP at PKBM Labora Edukasi in Bogor, with a particular focus on its innovative responses to resource limitations and its context-sensitive strategies for serving marginalized learner populations.

2 Literature Review

The Indonesian National Education System Law (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia No. 20/2003) formally acknowledges equivalency education (*Pendidikan Kesetaraan*) as a legitimate and strategic pathway to address educational disparities among marginalized populations. This legislation grants equivalency status to Paket A, B, and C programs—corresponding to primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary education respectively—delivered through non-formal learning centers such as Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM). While Filiana and Zainal (2022) offer a comprehensive structural overview of these programs' administrative frameworks, their analysis exhibits two notable limitations. First, it adopts a predominantly descriptive lens, failing to interrogate the strategic leadership required for effective implementation. Second, it overlooks the pedagogical and managerial complexities involved in integrating character education into non-formal learning environments. These omissions are particularly significant given the dual institutional identity of PKBMs—as both educational service providers and agents of community transformation (Zaifullah et al., 2023). Consequently, the absence of a strategic management perspective in the current body of literature presents a critical gap in understanding how PKBMs can fulfill their multifaceted mandates effectively.

A closer examination of prevailing PKBM governance models further illustrates these limitations. Ummah and Yulianingsih's (2024) widely referenced five-phase operational framework—comprising planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and evaluation—emphasizes grassroots participation and decentralized decision-making. While this model contributes to the discourse on participatory educational governance, it lacks theoretical robustness in key areas that are essential for character education delivery. First, it does not sufficiently address resource allocation challenges, especially in programs that require specialized training, context-sensitive materials, and ongoing facilitator capacity-building. Second, the model fails to offer a mechanism for reconciling tensions between

standardized national curricula and the need for localized adaptation, which is crucial for character education to resonate with learners' lived experiences. Third, the evaluation component remains narrowly focused on cognitive achievements, neglecting valid and reliable instruments for assessing affective and psychomotor learning outcomes—dimensions central to character development.

Despite these gaps, few studies have engaged with established organizational and strategic management theories that could offer solutions. Mintzberg's configuration theory, for instance, provides valuable insights into how institutional structures should align with organizational missions, especially when balancing educational and social development goals. Likewise, Kaplan and Norton's Balanced Scorecard framework offers a multidimensional approach to performance measurement, which is particularly relevant for PKBMs aiming to integrate character education into broader institutional strategies. The current literature's failure to incorporate such frameworks limits the theoretical depth and practical applicability of existing governance models.

A systematic review of scholarship on character education implementation within equivalency programs reveals three recurring disjunctions. First, there is a *pedagogical-contextual disconnect*. While Suherman et al. (2024) highlight the importance of facilitators as moral exemplars, their analysis neglects structural challenges such as shift-based employment, digital media exposure, and household instability—all of which constrain learners' capacity to engage meaningfully with character-building content. This oversight contributes to a theoretical blind spot concerning how pedagogical models should adapt to non-traditional learning environments.

Second, *assessment paradigms remain underdeveloped*. Rahman et al. (2024), for example, focus primarily on entrepreneurship training as a proxy for character formation, thus reinforcing a field-wide bias toward economically measurable outputs. Such an approach neglects intrinsic character traits—such as integrity, empathy, and civic responsibility—that require more nuanced, often qualitative, methods of evaluation.

Third, there is a persistent *fragmentation between character education theory and institutional management studies*. While Indah Sari (2023) addresses operational planning in PKBM settings, and Hidayah and Prayogo (2022) discuss the theoretical underpinnings of character education, few studies attempt to synthesize these domains. This compartmentalization impedes the development of integrated models capable of aligning pedagogical intent with institutional execution.

To address these gaps, this study proposes a comprehensive conceptual integration framework that synthesizes three theoretical strands:

1. **Adapted Strategic Alignment Model:** Building on the strategic planning cycle of Ibrahim et al. (2018), this model introduces a PKBM-specific strategy framework that accounts for limited resources while maintaining a strong focus on character education outcomes. It emphasizes iterative environmental scanning and the cultivation of dynamic institutional capabilities suited for non-formal learning contexts.
2. **Integrated Character Education Matrix:** Expanding on the tripartite model proposed by Saefullah et al. (2022)—encompassing cognitive understanding, affective internalization, and behavioral manifestation—this framework operationalizes each domain within core management functions. The result is a measurable and traceable alignment between instructional practices and organizational strategy.

3. **Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement Framework:** Drawing from Kamilah et al. (2023), this component incorporates multi-sectoral collaboration by identifying strategic roles for religious institutions, private enterprises, and government agencies in character education delivery. It maps specific points of intervention and synergy, offering a dynamic model of community-based engagement.

Together, these interrelated frameworks form a multidimensional model that balances theoretical rigor with practical utility. By bridging the divide between strategic management and character education, this study contributes a novel and actionable lens for analyzing and improving PKBM governance. It provides a foundation for institutional models that are not only educationally effective but also contextually grounded, socially responsive, and strategically sustainable.

3 Research Methods

This section outlines the methodological framework employed in this study to investigate strategic management practices in character education within a non-formal educational setting. Guided by a constructivist epistemology, the research design emphasizes qualitative, context-sensitive inquiry to capture the nuanced experiences and perspectives of diverse stakeholders at PKBM Labora Edukasi. The methods detailed below encompass research design, participant selection, data collection and analysis procedures, as well as strategies to ensure methodological rigor and ethical integrity. Each component is carefully aligned with the study's aim to generate a rich, in-depth understanding of institutional dynamics and character education processes in a real-world educational environment.

3.1. Research Design and Epistemological Foundation

This study employs a descriptive-analytic qualitative approach grounded in constructivist epistemology, recognizing that knowledge about strategic management in character education is socially constructed through participants' lived experiences. We adopt an emic perspective (Hardani et al., 2020) to capture authentic understandings of management processes as perceived by PKBM stakeholders, ensuring the research remains contextually embedded in the unique socio-educational environment of Labora Edukasi.

3.2. Research Participants and Sampling Strategy

This study involved 23 participants selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of relevant and diverse perspectives related to strategic management and character education at PKBM Labora Edukasi. The participants comprised five administrators, including the founder, program coordinator, financial officer, and two management staff; eight educators teaching across the Paket A, B, and C programs; seven learners representing different program levels and study shifts; and three external stakeholders from partner institutions. A maximum variation sampling strategy was employed to capture diversity across management levels (strategic and operational), program types, work/study schedules, and partnership roles. This approach was chosen to ensure a holistic understanding of the institutional dynamics and character education implementation processes.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected over a six-month period from January to June 2023 using triangulated qualitative methods. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 respondents, each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The interview protocol included 15 core questions that explored strategic planning, challenges in character education implementation, and stakeholder collaboration mechanisms. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Second, participant observation was carried out over 120 hours, which included attending eight management meetings, 15 classroom sessions, and five community engagement activities. Field notes were taken following (Saady, 2020) descriptive-narrative framework. Third, document analysis was conducted on 42 institutional documents, including strategic plans (2019–2023), program evaluation reports, partnership agreements, and learner progress records. These data sources provided contextual depth and allowed for triangulation of findings.

3.4. Data Analysis Process

Data analysis followed (Raco, 2010) thematic analysis framework. The process began with familiarization, involving repeated reading of transcripts and field notes to immerse in the data. Initial coding was conducted using open coding techniques with NVivo 12 software, allowing for the identification of emerging categories. These codes were then grouped and refined through axial coding to develop broader themes. To enhance validity, key themes were reviewed through member checking with selected informants. The final analytical framework was defined based on the coherence and relevance of themes to the research objectives.

3.5. Ensuring Methodological Rigor

To ensure methodological rigor, the study employed several strategies across four dimensions of trustworthiness. For credibility, prolonged engagement in the field over six months was combined with peer debriefing involving qualitative research experts and member checking with five key participants. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a detailed audit trail that documented all analytical decisions, along with inter-coder reliability checks which yielded an agreement rate of 85%. Confirmability was ensured through the use of reflexivity journals to acknowledge researcher bias, and triangulation across multiple data sources and collection methods. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context and clearly outlining the sampling criteria and rationale.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to established ethical research standards. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of [University Name]. All participants provided informed consent, and all personal identifiers were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Data were securely stored following research data management protocols, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

3.7. Justification for Qualitative Approach

A qualitative research design was deemed appropriate due to the nature of the research questions, which sought to explore complex and context-bound processes of strategic management and character education. These processes are inherently interpretive and subjective, involving multiple stakeholders with differing perspectives. Rather than aiming for generalizability, the study prioritized an in-depth understanding of the lived

experiences and practices within the PKBM context. Qualitative methods also allowed for emergent insights to surface organically from the field, enriching the theoretical and practical contributions of the study.

In summary, this methodological framework ensures a rigorous and comprehensive exploration of strategic management practices in non-formal education, offering rich, contextualized insights into the implementation of character education at PKBM Labora Edukasi.

4 Results and Discussion

Our research findings present a comprehensive three-stage strategic management approach—planning, implementation, and evaluation—that effectively operationalizes Indonesia’s Character Education Strengthening Policy (*Peraturan Presiden* No. 87 of 2017). While building upon Sanjaya’s (2014) foundational strategic planning framework, this model introduces critical adaptations tailored specifically for non-formal education settings such as *Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat* (PKBM).

Although prior research (e.g., Kamilah et al., 2023) has documented similar management phases in PKBM contexts, our study offers several key contributions that advance the field:

4.1. Context-Sensitive Curriculum Integration

PKBM Labora Edukasi has adopted a uniquely context-driven approach to embedding character education into its curriculum, markedly different from the standardized, subject-centered methods commonly used in formal schools (Mulyanto et al., 2023). Rather than isolating character education as a separate subject, the center integrates values into the daily lived experiences of learners, making character formation a continuous, immersive process.

One of the core strategies involves the use of structured daily routines that cultivate discipline, responsibility, and a shared sense of identity. Activities such as communal prayers at the start of each day not only reinforce religious values but also create a spiritual foundation for mutual respect and reflection. Similarly, recitations of the national anthem and discussions on civic themes foster national pride and social cohesion, particularly important for learners who may have been marginalized from formal systems.

Equally significant are hands-on, experiential learning activities, including facility maintenance (e.g., cleaning learning spaces, organizing study materials) and upcycling projects (e.g., repurposing used goods into usable items). These activities instill a sense of ownership, resourcefulness, and environmental responsibility, while also nurturing practical life skills that are directly relevant to the learners’ socio-economic realities.

These pedagogical practices are in strong alignment with Sun et al.’s (2020) three-dimensional character education model, which emphasizes a comprehensive approach to moral development. Specifically:

- a. Cognitive development (moral knowing) is cultivated through guided reflection sessions, discussions on ethical dilemmas, and value clarification exercises embedded within academic and vocational subjects.

- b. Emotional engagement (moral feeling) is nurtured through relational activities, such as group collaboration, peer mentoring, and empathy-building storytelling, allowing learners to internalize values through affective experiences.
- c. Behavioral expression (moral action) is reinforced through structured opportunities to practice moral choices in real-world contexts—e.g., taking initiative in group tasks, resolving interpersonal conflicts, or leading community service efforts.

By embedding character values organically into everyday learning and routines, PKBM Labora Edukasi not only adapts character education to suit the lived context of its learners but also ensures that these values are not abstract ideals, but lived realities. This approach demonstrates how non-formal education settings can offer innovative, holistic character formation that is deeply rooted in the community's cultural and spiritual fabric.

4.2. Innovative Multi-Sector Partnerships

PKBM Labora Edukasi has developed and implemented a dynamic collaboration model that significantly expands the conventional notion of community engagement within non-formal education. Departing from typical parent–teacher or neighborhood-based support structures, the center actively cultivates multi-sector partnerships involving private enterprises and religious institutions. This network of reciprocal relationships not only supports learners directly but also reinforces the broader ecosystem in which they live and work (Saefullah et al., 2024).

A prominent example is the financial partnership with PT Elang Tyre, a local manufacturing company. Through an innovative payroll deduction scheme, employees voluntarily allocate a small portion of their monthly salary to support educational programs at PKBM Labora Edukasi. This initiative establishes a sustainable funding stream that minimizes dependence on uncertain government subsidies or short-term donor contributions. Furthermore, the engagement of local industry fosters a sense of collective ownership and accountability, aligning educational objectives with broader goals of community-based economic development.

Another noteworthy innovation is the educational exchange with local *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), which provides spiritual and moral enrichment to the learning process. These collaborations enable cross-institutional learning: PKBM students participate in selected *pesantren* activities—such as Qur'anic memorization, ethical discussions, and social service—while *pesantren* students benefit from PKBM's vocational and entrepreneurial training modules. This reciprocal model not only reinforces character education but also bridges formal and informal educational traditions, promoting a more holistic approach to human development.

Such multifaceted collaboration provides empirical support for Mintzberg's configuration theory, which suggests that effective organizations adapt their structural configurations to respond to dynamic and complex environments. PKBM Labora Edukasi operates as an *adhocracy*, characterized by its flexibility, decentralization, and innovation—qualities that enable it to simultaneously fulfill diverse institutional missions, including education, character development, community empowerment, and local economic integration.

Moreover, these partnerships exemplify the practical realization of shared value creation. Companies enhance their social legitimacy and develop a stronger local talent pool; religious institutions advance their *dakwah* and community service missions; and learners gain access to rich, relevant, and sustainable learning experiences. Unlike top-down or siloed policy models, the PKBM approach highlights how sectoral interdependence can foster greater institutional resilience, adaptability, and educational impact.

This model thus serves as a compelling illustration of how education, when framed as a community-centered, multi-actor endeavor, can produce structural and cultural transformations that extend far beyond the confines of the classroom.

This study contributes several novel insights that set it apart from existing literature on strategic management in non-formal education, particularly in the context of character education:

a. Demonstrates clear linkages between management phases and character development outcomes:

Unlike previous studies that often treat planning, implementation, and evaluation as discrete administrative tasks, this research presents an integrated framework that maps each phase to specific character formation outcomes. For instance, planning activities embed moral objectives into program goals; implementation strategies translate those goals into experiential learning; and evaluation processes monitor tangible behavioral changes among learners. This holistic approach enables a more transparent and accountable process for character development.

b. Provides empirical validation of policy implementation in non-formal education settings:

Although *Peraturan Presiden No. 87 of 2017* articulates national objectives for character education, there is limited empirical evidence on how such policies are realized in non-formal learning environments. This study addresses that gap through a data-driven analysis of policy enactment at PKBM Labora Edukasi. Findings derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis demonstrate that non-formal institutions can effectively operationalize national mandates when guided by strategic management and contextual innovation.

c. Highlights innovative and reciprocal cross-sector partnerships:

While conventional studies on community involvement often describe one-way support (e.g., financial donations or volunteerism), this research reveals multi-sector partnerships that are both innovative and mutually reinforcing. Through mechanisms such as sustainable funding arrangements, knowledge sharing, and joint program delivery, these collaborations foster long-term resilience, enrich learning experiences, and strengthen local ownership.

d. Offers practical models of organizational adaptation in community-based education:

Many educational reforms falter due to institutional rigidity and lack of contextual sensitivity. This study illustrates how PKBM Labora Edukasi employs adaptive organizational practices—including task-sharing, decentralized leadership, and multi-functional educator roles—to address community-specific challenges. These structural

innovations provide practical templates for other non-formal institutions seeking to implement effective character education under resource constraints.

Collectively, these contributions represent a significant advancement in the discourse on strategic management and character education. The study not only enhances theoretical understanding but also presents a replicable framework for alternative education providers such as PKBM operating in resource-limited, high-need environments. It demonstrates that through strategic planning, contextual responsiveness, and collaborative engagement, even small-scale, community-based learning centers can achieve measurable and policy-relevant outcomes in character education. By bridging the persistent gap between national policy goals and local realities, this research serves as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and scholars alike.

4.3. Implementation Outcomes and Theoretical Implications

This study identifies eighteen measurable character values that substantiate the successful implementation of the character education framework proposed by Saefullah et al. (2025). The findings contribute critical insights that both reinforce and extend the current body of literature on strategic management in non-formal education, particularly in relation to character development. Notably, a shift was observed in learner motivation—from the pursuit of formal certification as an instrumental goal to the intrinsic internalization of character values. This transformation contrasts with prior studies (e.g., Roca-Puig et al., 2021) that emphasize economic and employability outcomes, and instead aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory by highlighting the role of modeling, reinforcement, and situated practice in fostering sustainable behavioral change. Furthermore, the evidence supports and expands the findings of Muljono and Hanafi (2017) by demonstrating that, when combined with real-world applications such as entrepreneurship and community service, non-formal education settings can achieve deeper internalization of character values than traditional school-based approaches.

Beyond individual outcomes, the study documents broader community-level impacts. A significant reduction in street loitering among youth indicates the spillover effects of the Character Education Strengthening Program (CESP) into the learners' socio-cultural environment. This outcome addresses critiques such as those posed by Suherman et al. (2024), who argue that character education in Indonesia remains predominantly confined to school settings. The findings also validate Rahmat et al.'s (2025) ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the reinforcing effect of school–family–community linkages. Moreover, they challenge the assumption—articulated by Kamilah et al. (2023)—that non-formal education has minimal societal reach, by illustrating how multi-sector partnerships, particularly with Islamic boarding schools and corporate actors, can significantly amplify program outcomes. In this way, the study also affirms Nind's (2017) concept of *praxis*, in which learning is connected to real-world action and engagement.

The comparative positioning of this study against existing literature reveals important distinctions. While previous research has largely focused on either classroom-limited interventions or economic outputs, this study presents a holistic and multi-systemic model of intervention encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions across home, school, and workplace environments. Theoretically, it integrates the insights of

Lickona, Bandura, and Bronfenbrenner, thus bridging the divide between moral education, behavioral psychology, and systemic educational change.

In responding to common implementation challenges—namely, resource limitations and inconsistent learner engagement—the study affirms the relevance of Kaplan and Norton’s balanced scorecard, which emphasizes multidimensional performance assessment. At the same time, the findings contradict assumptions such as those made by Santoso et al. (2024) regarding the sufficiency of local resources. In response, the study showcases a hybrid governance model that combines spiritual development initiatives via partnerships with Islamic boarding schools and sustainable financial strategies through collaboration with corporate actors. This approach represents a departure from the public-sector-dependent models criticized by Febrianti et al. (2024), offering a more resilient and adaptable institutional design.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research offers three principal contributions. First, it proposes an *Integrated Character–Stakeholder Framework* that conceptually links strategic management with character education outcomes, thereby addressing a critical gap in the existing literature. Second, it introduces a *Non-Formal Education Strategic Typology*—a contextual adaptation of Bryson’s strategic planning cycle—which accounts for the operational realities of PKBM-type institutions. Third, it puts forward *Contextualized Assessment Metrics* as alternatives to standardized evaluation tools, responding to the concerns raised by Rahman et al. (2024) regarding the inadequacy of conventional assessment methods for measuring affective and moral dimensions in alternative education.

On a practical level, the study outlines a development agenda focused on capacity building, infrastructure enhancement, and experiential learning. These priorities are consistent with Senge’s learning organization framework, particularly his emphasis on systems thinking, continuous learning, and personal mastery. Capacity-building efforts aim to strengthen facilitators’ competencies in delivering value-based instruction, while infrastructure improvements ensure a conducive environment for moral and civic learning. Meanwhile, experiential learning activities enable learners to apply ethical decision-making and social responsibility in authentic contexts, reinforcing national policy goals in character education.

Overall, this study advances four major contributions to the literature: (1) it extends the application of strategic management theory to the domain of non-formal education; (2) it reconfigures the operationalization of character education through context-sensitive implementation models; (3) it validates cross-sectoral, hybrid governance mechanisms; and (4) it challenges the overreliance on standardized assessments by promoting locally responsive evaluation strategies. A particularly salient finding is the long-term behavioral impact observed among learners—providing empirical support for Bandura’s theory of social learning and demonstrating the role of community-based institutions as transformative agents. In sum, this study positions PKBM Labora Edukasi not merely as an alternative provider of education, but as a strategic platform for civic empowerment, personal development, and systemic innovation. These insights hold relevance for policymakers, educational practitioners, and researchers seeking scalable and contextually grounded models for character education in under-resourced environments.

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that the Character Education Strengthening Program (CESP) implemented at PKBM Labora Edukasi has been carried out in a gradual, consistent, and sustainable manner, leading to several key outcomes. The program is executed holistically, integrating strategic planning, inclusive stakeholder participation, and adaptive pedagogical practices within a non-formal educational setting. Its success lies in the synergistic collaboration among educators, administrators, learners, and community partners, which has resulted in observable behavioral changes among participants, including the application of core character values—such as discipline, empathy, and responsibility—in their everyday lives.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the advancement of knowledge by bridging strategic management theory with character education frameworks, particularly in the underexplored context of non-formal education institutions. It introduces a contextualized model that demonstrates how resource-limited learning centers can align strategic governance with character-building outcomes. The proposed framework offers a replicable model for other PKBMs or similar institutions operating under comparable socio-educational constraints.

From a practical standpoint, the findings present actionable recommendations. PKBMs are encouraged to adopt strategic planning approaches that are sensitive to local conditions, invest in ongoing facilitator capacity development, and embed project-based experiential learning as a foundational element of their curricula. These strategies not only enhance instructional relevance but also promote character formation through lived, meaningful experiences.

At the policy level, the study calls for greater institutional recognition of PKBMs as strategic actors in national character development. Ministries and local governments are urged to provide structured financial support, regulatory flexibility, and targeted capacity-building programs to strengthen the institutional resilience and impact of PKBMs nationwide.

Nonetheless, this study is not without limitations. The use of a single-case design may restrict the generalizability of its findings across different institutional or regional contexts. Future research should pursue comparative and longitudinal studies involving multiple PKBMs to examine variations in strategic implementation, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, further development and validation of assessment instruments are needed to capture long-term behavioral and civic impacts of character education, particularly in non-formal settings where conventional evaluation tools may fall short.

In sum, this research not only enriches the academic discourse on character education and educational management but also offers a grounded and adaptable model for policy and practice in community-based learning institutions.

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