


Curriculum Management for Character Education in a Non-Formal School: A SWOT-Based Case Study at Gajahwong School, Yogyakarta

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received: 06/01/2025 Revised: 07/20/2025 Accepted: 07/31/2025</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Character Education, Curriculum Management, Non-Formal Education</p>	<p>Purpose – This study investigates the curriculum management process for character education at Gajahwong School, a non-formal educational institution in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It aims to identify internal and external factors affecting curriculum implementation and to develop strategies for enhancing moral education through SWOT analysis.</p> <p>Design/methods – The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, drawing on observations, structured interviews, and document analysis to examine planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation processes. Three key informants were selected purposively: a school coordinator, a class educator, and a parent. The Internal and External Strategic Factors Analysis Summaries (IFAS and EFAS) were used to construct a SWOT matrix and formulate strategic responses.</p> <p>Findings – Curriculum management at Gajahwong School is participatory and value-driven, emphasizing socio-emotional learning, local cultural integration, and child-centered pedagogy. Key strengths include flexible curriculum design, structured planning, and volunteer commitment. However, challenges persist, such as lack of alignment with national standards, insufficient infrastructure, and limited continuity of educators. The SWOT matrix revealed a strategic position that favors opportunity-driven growth, suggesting the potential for expansion through digital branding, inclusive education, and community partnerships.</p> <p>Research implications/limitations – The contextual specificity and reliance on qualitative data may limit generalizability. Additionally, the absence of a standardized evaluation framework and dependence on informal volunteer systems present challenges for scalability. Future studies should include longitudinal and comparative research across non-formal settings and investigate hybrid curricular models.</p> <p>Practical implications – The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educational practitioners seeking to institutionalize character education in marginalized communities. They highlight the importance of integrating moral values, local wisdom, and emotional development into non-formal learning systems.</p> <p>Originality/value – This study contributes to the limited literature on curriculum management in informal educational contexts and introduces a SWOT-based framework for enhancing character education. It demonstrates how culturally rooted, community-led institutions like Gajahwong can offer innovative models of child development beyond conventional schooling paradigms.</p> <div>  <p>© 2025 by the authors. It was submitted for possible open-access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY NC) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> </div>

Introduction

This study aims to evaluate the Tahfidz class program at MTs Negeri 1 Yogyakarta, focusing on its effectiveness in improving students' Qur'an memorization. Using the CIPP evaluation model, the study will assess the program's context, input, process, and product components. By addressing gaps in previous research, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on Islamic education while providing practical recommendations for program enhancement. Ultimately, this research aims to support the development of high-quality, innovative educational programs that integrate spiritual and academic excellence.

Education serves as a pivotal instrument for fostering not only intellectual competence but also moral integrity and social adaptability, contributing to national development and social cohesion (Sayekti et al., 2018). It is widely recognized as a transformative tool for improving quality of life, alleviating poverty, and nurturing responsible citizenship aligned with prevailing legal and cultural norms (Sayekti et al., 2018). The character formation of students through education is instrumental in shaping a society rooted in ethical principles, justice, and empathy. Given these multidimensional impacts, education remains a cornerstone of sustainable societal advancement (Birhan et al., 2021). Therefore, cultivating character through educational processes is both a global imperative and a strategic necessity.

Prior scholarship has emphasized the indispensable role of early moral education, typically initiated within the family, in fostering foundational values such as honesty, respect, empathy, and responsibility, with formal and non-formal education compensating when family involvement is inadequate (Birhan et al., 2021). Pedagogical interventions that include ethical reasoning, behavioral modeling, and socio-emotional learning are essential to this character development (Birhan et al., 2021). Furthermore, non-formal education contexts such as community schools and vocational training have been shown to support holistic learning beyond cognitive outcomes (Dacholfany, 2018; Machali et al., 2023). These platforms provide structured yet flexible learning environments that reinforce moral and socio-emotional competencies (Panaoura & Nitsiou, 2023). Collectively, these contributions validate the importance of extending character education into non-formal domains.

Education policy in Indonesia explicitly recognizes formal, non-formal, and informal pathways as mutually complementary systems for promoting comprehensive societal learning (Dacholfany, 2018; Machali et al., 2023). Non-formal education curricula are mandated to include life skills, attitudes, professional personality, entrepreneurial spirit, and specific competencies (PP No. 32/2013, Article 77L ¶1). This policy framework places the curriculum at the centre of education delivery, not only as content but also as an embodiment of socio-moral values (Wahyudin, 2014). It thus requires curriculum management to align with broader socio-emotional and character objectives. In particular, non-formal education must integrate these elements to enhance relevance and responsiveness to learner needs (Panaoura & Nitsiou, 2023).

Gajahwong School offers a community-based non-formal education model that explicitly prioritizes character education through a progressive, rights-based curriculum tailored to urban marginalized children. The curriculum integrates themes of anti-violence, environmental stewardship, honesty, autonomy, care, equity, transparency, and solidarity, aligning with democratic and child-rights principles (Tentang Kami – Sekolah Gajahwong, n.d.; Fasilitasi Anak: Pengayaan Asisten Edukator Sekolah Gajahwong, 2024). Yet, curricular planning and instructional delivery mechanisms have not been systematically evaluated or optimized in relation to character development outcomes. Previous research on character education in formal and religious institutions has highlighted the importance of value integration, leadership, and contextual adaptation (Aziz et al., 2024; Lindgren et al., 2024; Londoño-Cañola et al., 2023; Williams & Park, 2025). However, these studies do not address

grassroots, non-formal community schools like Gajahwong that foster character through locally informed curriculum management.

A range of prior studies have examined curriculum innovation and character education in diverse contexts, including traditional pesantrens, international schools, and experimental pedagogical models. For instance, transformation of pesantren management that integrates religious and general education enhanced social responsibility (Basori et al., 2023), while digital and differentiated pedagogical methods supported character formation in laboratory schools (Maisyaroh et al., 2024). Studies on leadership-based curriculum reform in early childhood and international schools demonstrated the role of culturally responsive design (Blackmon, 2024; Yuni, 2025). Furthermore, the successful integration of local cultural values in Islamic education in Sulawesi significantly improved student commitment and leadership outcomes (Aziz et al., 2024). These findings collectively underscore the efficacy of contextually grounded curriculum management in promoting character development in formal educational settings.

Despite such insights, key gaps remain in the literature: there is limited research on curriculum management practices in non-formal community schools focusing explicitly on character education; SWOT analysis has seldom been employed to assess curriculum strengths and weaknesses in such settings; and a lack of empirical scrutiny of locally designed curricula within marginal urban contexts, such as riverbank communities. These deficiencies hinder understanding of how non-formal institutions can systematically manage curricula to foster moral and civic values. Addressing these gaps is critical to informing policy and practice in inclusive education.

This study focuses on Curriculum Management for Character Education at Gajahwong School by applying a SWOT analysis to explore internal and external factors influencing its curriculum implementation. The aim is to evaluate the management processes, identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and propose strategic recommendations to enhance character education within this non-formal context. The research contributes to the field by offering evidence-based insights into curriculum management strategies in community-based non-formal schooling. Furthermore, it provides a model for adapting rights-based, locally grounded curriculum principles to support moral development in marginalized educational settings.

Methods

The analytical framework emphasized the qualitative descriptive method's ability to capture intricate details and contextual nuances. By systematically evaluating the context, input, process, and product components, this study provides a thorough assessment of the program's effectiveness and offers actionable insights for improvement. This methodology aligns with prior evaluations of educational programs, ensuring robust and comprehensive findings (Eslek et al., 2022; González-Barea et al., 2021; Higgins et al., 2020; Lokollo et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2021).

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative methodology to examine curriculum management for character education within a non-formal educational setting. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to interpret human behavior and meaning construction through natural interaction with participants involved in the phenomena under investigation. Such design is particularly effective in capturing the complexity and contextual nuances of alternative educational practices (Sari et al., 2022; Surokim et al., 2016).

Table 1. Research Informant Data

No.	Informant	Position	Time	Place
1.	I1	School Coordinator & Grass Class Educator	3 December 2024	Kelas Akar
2.	I2	Root Class Educator	3 Desember 2024	Musola Kampung Ledhok Timoho
3.	I3	Guardian of Pupils	3 Desember 2024	Musola Kampung Ledhok Timoho

Data were collected using a combination of passive participant observation, structured interviews, and document analysis. Observational data were derived from direct participation in classroom and community activities to obtain firsthand insight into the curriculum implementation process. Interviews were conducted on December 3, 2024, at several school-associated venues including the Akar classroom and the village mosque, to accommodate both educators and parents. Furthermore, relevant documentation such as learning modules, internal reports, and educational plans was reviewed to support data triangulation and enhance contextual depth (Aini et al., 2024a; Sari et al., 2022).

Analytical procedures utilized the SWOT framework as a diagnostic tool to assess the internal and external conditions influencing curriculum management. The initial step involved constructing the Internal Strategic Factors Analysis Summary (IFAS) and the External Strategic Factors Analysis Summary (EFAS) matrices to classify organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These matrices were subsequently synthesized using the SWOT matrix and SWOT quadrant to formulate strategic recommendations for strengthening character education within the Gajahwong School's non-formal curriculum structure (Aini et al., 2024a; Sari et al., 2022).

The qualitative data analysis followed the three-step model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This sequence facilitated a structured reduction and interpretation of the data while preserving contextual relevance. To assure the reliability and validity of the findings, methodological rigor was maintained through source triangulation cross-referencing data from interviews, observations, and documents and method triangulation employing multiple data collection techniques for corroboration (Sari et al., 2022; Surokim et al., 2016). These combined strategies enhanced the internal credibility and analytical robustness of the study.

Results

1. Curriculum Management Process at Gajahwong School

Education must be planned through management in an effective and efficient manner to achieve appropriate standards and quality levels. Therefore, the educational curriculum at

Gajahwong School is managed by planning, organizing, implementing, and assessing all learning activities with the intention of achieving children's educational goals in accordance with their developmental stages.

a. Planning

Curriculum planning is the process of designing a learning curriculum so that students can achieve goals in accordance with the school's vision, mission, and goals. The planning of activities carried out includes daily, weekly, monthly, to semester or yearly program designs. In daily activities, class educators must plan and prepare before starting activities in class, such as pre-learning, opening, core activities according to predetermined themes, and closing activities. Likewise for weekly, monthly, and semester/yearly activities.

Sekolah Gajahwong conducts its curriculum planning process once a year before the new school year starts. Curriculum planning is carried out through a meeting of the school coordinator together with educators and class facilitators. The result of the planning is a learning plan that will be implemented one year in the future, by formulating a syllabus and lesson plan (Learning Implementation Plan). The lesson plan states the time of learning implementation, the type of activity, the details of the activities, the references used, the learning tools and materials, the achievement indicators, and the indicators of the child's social emotional development. The arrangement of activity plans that will be carried out in one semester is detailed and systematically assembled in the lesson plan, starting from parent meeting activities, class arrangement, pre-class, class mapping, making class agreements, determining and strengthening themes, learning implementation, projects, final webbing, to exit points & trips. In addition, there are also indicators of child development psychologically, including 4 (four) aspects of development, namely social-emotional, language, cognitive, and motor.

b. Organizing

Learning organization here is a way for educational units to manage the learning content of the curriculum in a span of time, namely regulating the learning load in the curriculum structure, subject content and learning areas, learning time management, and the classroom learning process. Therefore, the preparation of a curriculum structure is important in organizing learning in educational units (Windy Hastasasi et al., 2022)

Based on the documentation carried out on the data at Gajahwong School, the number of students currently registered is 20 people divided into 2 classes, Root Class and Grass Class. In general, the facilities and infrastructure available at Gajahwong School are quite adequate, starting from classrooms, learning tools and media, as well as several educational games, so that the appropriate learning process can run well. The grouping of duties of educators or educators includes Islamiatur Rohmah as the Root Class Educator, and Neneng Hanifah Maryam as the Grass Class Educator, along with several assistant educators and class volunteers who also assist in the learning process in the classroom. The time allocation for the Root Class and the Grass Class is the same, every Monday-Friday from 08.00-11.00 enter KBM for a time range of 750 minutes per day, with Theme Strengthening activities 1x meeting, Area 2x meeting, Environment 1x meeting, and Motor 1x meeting in one week. Then for the Trunk & Twig Class held in the afternoon on weekends.

c. Actuating

The implementation of the curriculum at Gajahwong School is realized through a children's facilitation program, which is carried out routinely according to the set schedule both in the classroom and outside the classroom. All learning activities are student-centered, educators only act as facilitators who help direct students when in difficulty or need direction.

Like other non-formal schools, Gajahwong School has advantages or characteristics in the implementation of learning programs. One of the things that is strengthened through

the curriculum at this school is the social-emotional strengthening of children. The age range of children from 0-6 years is a period of individual potential development such as physical, motor, language, social-emotional, moral, and religious development. Therefore, social-emotional strengthening is very important to be taught to individuals from an early age because it will have a very good impact on the development of children's character, especially the development of social psychology and self-emotional control in facing various problems in the future.

Education with the cultivation of social and emotional character values is very important for strengthening children's basic identity about who they are, who their families are, and how their family conditions are. So that children are able to be aware and accept all the current conditions of their families and encourage them to try to improve their quality of life in the future. If children are able to develop and can transcend their family background, then it is hoped that they can start to break the chain of poverty by improving the quality of human resources around them.

The application of children's character education at Gajahwong School is carried out through habituation in behaving with practices exemplified directly by the classroom educator, so there are no specifics regarding the learning of manners that are specifically discussed. One of the implementations is through the determination of class agreements in which it teaches mutual respect, appreciation, and responsibility. on the official website of Gajahwong School, there are principles of character values that are emphasized and applied to all school residents at Gajahwong School, including: anti-violence, environmentally insightful, freedom, diversity, honesty, care, people, equality, openness, and solidarity.\

d. Controlling

The curriculum review is carried out every year by paying attention to the relevance of the content to the current conditions of society and the needs of children's development. Meanwhile, evaluations for students are also routinely carried out through parent meetings every 2 weeks, and the receipt of student report cards at the end of the semester. The report card or report on student development is submitted and submitted directly to the student's parents in the form of a narrative. In addition, supervision of children by facilitators at Gajahwong School is carried out every day during the learning process which includes aspects of habituation, cognitive, physical, motor, art, language, and social emotions.

Mentoring through Sharing and Gathering activities by all facilitators and volunteers is carried out twice in one volunteer period (6 months). Through Sharing and Gathering activities, facilitators and volunteers can discuss strengthening values at Gajahwong School and children's facilitation techniques. All were discussed with volunteers related to their needs while volunteering at Gajahwong School.

2. Curriculum Management SWOT Analysis

Based on research conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation at the Gajahwong School, the researcher analyzed curriculum management with the following SWOT analysis.

a. Internal Factor Analysis

Strengths. Strengths or strengths are internal factors in the form of positive things or advantages that are already owned and can benefit the organization. The advantages of curriculum management at Sekolah Gajahwong include the following: First, A dynamic and progressive curriculum, so that it is more flexible to contextual renewable progress according to children's needs: 1) Review every time leading up to the new school year. 2) Accept children's aspirations and ideas as a proposed learning theme once a quarter, according to the child's interests and needs. Second, curriculum management is clear, structured, and systematic: 1) Preparation of lesson plans and Syllabus at the beginning of each new school

year. 2) Program procurement in accordance with the formulated RPP. 3) Evaluation of facilitators and volunteers at least 2 times in 1 semester.

Third, focus on life skills education that strengthens children's character education on social-emotional aspects in the learning process: 1) Educate children to know themselves and others around them (in Social Environment activities) so that they are able to build a good social spirit from an early age. 2) Directing children to manage emotions in every problem they face, both from themselves (self-awareness), having empathy with friends (social-awareness), and other older people by using kind words and not physical actions when resolving conflicts. 3) Teach and set an example to children on the application of moral values to establish positive relationship skills, such as greeting friends and facilitators politely, saying thank you and apologizing, playing in groups, and sharing toys and learning equipment.

Fourth, the application of aspects of child development, namely cognitive, motor, language, and social emotional aspects achieved in teaching and learning activities in the classroom and outside the classroom. Fifth, a comfortable and fun learning approach based on play and free expression: 1) Play before the core of learning, play while learning, and play freely at the end of the activity before the end of the learning. 2) Freedom of expression such as: telling news, displaying the creativity of singing or dancing, expressing opinions or proposals about themes that will be applied in class every 3 months, and so on.

Sixth, source of teaching materials from books, the internet, and presenting speakers directly. Seventh, the use of used goods is suitable for use as learning tools and materials, such as paper, cardboard, and bottles. Eighth, social concern and high commitment from the facilitators so as to encourage the development of curriculum innovation.

Weaknesses. Weakness is a shortcoming or weakness that needs to be corrected from the internal side of the organization. There are several weaknesses in the management of the Gajahwong School curriculum, including: First, the curriculum does not refer fully to the applicable national curriculum. Second, the curriculum is still under review every year so that it does not have a patent school curriculum standardization. Third, limited educators and education personnel that have an impact on the implementation of learning: 1) Facilitators who devote themselves to an indefinite period of time. 2) volunteers who contribute to helping facilitators are limited to a minimum of 6 months of contract time per period.

Fourth, the evaluation of child development has not been maximized because the submission of student development report cards has only begun to be implemented at the end of each semester. Fifth, limited facilities in the form of special places for children to play outside the classroom. Sixth, learning facilities and tools that do not meet the needs of the continuity of activities due to the limited school budget which still depends on donations and school funds.

b. External Factor Analysis

Opportunities. Opportunity is a potential area for the growth of an organization. The opportunities that exist in curriculum management at Gajahwong School are: First, an integrated curriculum of local moral values and culture: 1) The application of cultural values through games and Javanese words in the implementation of classroom learning. 2) Teaching arts such as dance at certain events. Second, implementing the value of inclusion in learning for children with special needs or mental retardation.

Third, increasing the awareness of the people of Ledhok Timoho Village towards the implementation of children's schools. Fourth, having an interesting and informative social media account and website page, so that it is able to attract many parties more widely to join in the empowerment of children's education or contribute through donations.

Threats. Threats are external challenges that need to be overcome and faced by organizations. Some of the external challenges that Gajahwong School has are: First, changes in education policies or regulations of school facilitators/managers so that they have an impact on changes in the format and content of the curriculum. Second, lack of donor interest

in curriculum development or learning content, donations tend to focus on the needs of learning equipment. Third, the stigma of free schools that are not of good quality compared to early childhood education schools that are already affiliated with the government. Fourth, the economy of the surrounding community, which is mostly middle to lower, so not all parents are able to contribute through school fees. Fifth, the possibility of losing the quality of competent educators, because there is no permanent educator system and is still a volunteer.

3. Results of SWOT Analysis to Improve Children's Character Education at Gajahwong School

a. SWOT Analysis Matrix Results

Tabel 2. SWOT Analysis Matrix Results

INTERNAL FACTOR ANALYSIS	Strength (Kekuatan)	Weakness (Kelemahan)
	Dynamic and progressive curriculum, so that it is more flexible to contextual renewable progress according to the needs of children	The curriculum does not refer fully to the applicable national curriculum
	Curriculum management is clear, structured, and systematic	The curriculum is still under review every year so that it does not have a patent school curriculum standardization
	Focus on life <i>skills education</i> that strengthens children's character education on social-emotional aspects in the learning process	Limited educators and education personnel that have an impact on the implementation of learning
	The application of aspects of child development, namely cognitive, motor, language, and social emotional aspects achieved in teaching and learning activities in the classroom and outside the classroom	The evaluation of child development has not been maximized because the submission of student development report cards has only begun to be implemented at the end of each semester
		Limited facilities in the form of special places for children to play outside the classroom

INTERNAL FACTOR ANALYSIS	<p>A comfortable and fun learning approach based on play and free expression</p> <p>Source of teaching materials from books, the internet, and presenting speakers directly</p> <p>The use of used goods is suitable for use as learning tools and materials, such as paper, cardboard, and bottles</p> <p>Social concern and high commitment from the facilitators so as to encourage the development of curriculum innovation</p>	<p>Learning facilities and tools that do not meet the needs of the continuity of activities due to the limited school budget which still depends on donations and school fund efforts.</p>
<i>Opportunity (Peluang)</i>	<i>Strategi Strength-Opportunity (SO)</i>	<i>Strategi Weakness-Opportunity (WO)</i>
<p>An integrated curriculum of local moral values and culture</p>	<p>MUse the power to take advantage of the opportunity:</p>	<p>Overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities:</p>
<p>Implementing the value of inclusion in learning for children with special needs or mental retardation</p>	<p>Strengthening learning approaches based on moral values and local values that apply in the community</p>	<p>Gradually integrate the national curriculum while maintaining the prevailing approach to moral and cultural values</p>
<p>Increasing the awareness of the people of Ledhok Timoho Village towards the implementation of children's schools.</p>	<p>Maintain good management in managing the school curriculum</p>	<p>Improving the quality and quantity of <i>volunteers</i> through the procurement of <i>open recruitment</i> regularly on social media and websites</p>
<p>Having an interesting and informative social media account and website page, so that it is able to attract many parties more widely to join in the empowerment of children's education or contribute through donations.</p>	<p>Offering a curriculum with <i>inclusion-based life skills</i> and character strengthening as a flagship program to reach a wider range of students</p> <p>Disseminating information about the dynamic and progressive curriculum of the Gajahwong School and emphasis on social-emotional character education through social media and websites to</p>	<p>Encourage existing curriculum documentation as promotional materials for donation programs or collaboration with various external parties.</p>

attract collaboration with the community or donors.		
<i>Threat (Tantangan)</i>	<i>Strategi Strength-Threat (ST)</i>	<i>Strategi Weakness-Threat (WT)</i>
Changes in education policies or regulations of school facilitators/managers so that they have an impact on changes in the format and content of the curriculum	Using power to face challenges/turn them into opportunities:	Minimizing weaknesses and avoiding challenges:
Lack of donor interest in curriculum development or learning content, donations tend to focus on the needs of learning equipment	Affirm information on the advantages of a dynamic, progressive curriculum system and transparent curriculum management on social media to reduce the stigma that free schools are of poor quality	Create a simple system of contracts and incentives for educators to reduce the risk of losing competent facilitators
The stigma of free schools that are not of good quality compared to early childhood education schools that are already affiliated with the government	Utilizing the commitment and dedication of facilitators and <i>volunteers</i> to adapt to policy changes that impact the curriculum	Improving the evaluation system for reporting child development through the submission of end-of-semester report cards and conducting periodic evaluations of children's character
The economy of the surrounding community, which is mostly middle to lower, so not all parents are able to contribute through school fees	Using a social-emotional character approach to improve school <i>branding</i> that has a unique attraction for the community and donors.	Building wider collaboration to reduce dependence on school business funds and donation funds only.
There is a possibility of losing the quality of competent educators, because there is no permanent educator system and it is still volunteer.		

b. Internal and External Strategy Factor Matrix

First, IFAS (Internal Strategic Factor Analysis Summary). An internal environmental analysis or IFAS is carried out to find out various possible strengths and weaknesses. The strategic issues to be monitored must be determined, as they are likely to affect customers in the future. The steps in compiling the IFAS table are as follows: 1) Arrange the strengths and weaknesses in the IFAS table in the first column. 2) Give the second column of each factor a weight on a scale of 0.0 (non-important) to 1.0 (very important). These factors are weighted based on the significance and influence of the strategic position.

3) Give a rating in the third column for each factor on a scale ranging from 1 (weak) to 4 (very strong) based on the influence of these factors on the condition of the organization in

question. Rating-ratings for positive power factors (all variables in the power category) were given a score from 1 to 4 by comparing them to the average of the main competitors. While the negative weakness factor is the opposite if the weakness is very large (compared to the average of similar competitors) the value is 1, while if the weakness value is small, the value is 4. 4) Multiply the weight in the second column by the rating in the third column to get the score in the fourth column. 5) Add the score in the fourth column to obtain a total value that shows how the organization reacts to its internal strategy factors (Aini et al., 2024b).

Tabel 3. IFAS Factors

	IFAS Factors	Weight	Rating	Shoes
Strengths	Dynamic-progressive curriculum	0,14	3	0,42
	Structured curriculum management	0,14	4	0,56
	Application of life skills and social-emotional character education	0,14	4	0,56
	Application of 4 aspects of child development	0,09	3	0,28
	Convenient and fun learning approach	0,14	4	0,56
	A credible source of teaching materials	0,09	3	0,28
	Utilization of used goods as materials and tools	0,12	3	0,35
	Facilitator's dedication and commitment	0,14	4	0,56
	TOTAL	1,00		3,56

Weaknesses	The curriculum does not refer to the national curriculum	0,17	2	0,33
	Curriculum in review	0,17	3	0,50
	Limitations of facilitator human resources	0,25	2	0,50
	Evaluation of child development has not been maximized	0,25	1	0,25
	There is no special place for children to play outside the classroom	0,17	3	0,50
TOTAL		1,00		2,08

Second, EFAS (Eksternal Strategic Factor Analysis Summary). External environmental analysis or EFAS is carried out to find out various opportunities and threats. The steps in compiling the EFAS table are as follows: 1) Enter the opportunity and threat factors in the first column EFAS table. 2) Give the second column of each factor a weight on a scale of 0.0 (non-important) to 1.0 (very important). These factors are weighted based on whether they can have an impact on strategic factors.

3) Give a rating in the third column for each factor on a scale ranging from 1 (weak) to 4 (very strong) based on the influence of these factors on the condition of the organization in question. The rating for the probability factor that is positive (all variables that fall into the opportunity category) is given a score from 1 to 4 by comparing it to the average of the main competitors. Meanwhile, the negative weakness factor is the opposite if the threat is very large (compared to the average of similar competitors) the value is 1, while if the threat value is small or small, the value is 4. 4) Multiply the weight in the second column by the rating in the third column to get the score in the fourth column. 5) Add up the scores in the fourth column to get a total score that shows how the organization is reacting to its external strategic factors (Aini et al., 2024b).

Tabel 4. EFAS Factors

	EFAS Factors	Weight	Rating	Shoes
Opportunities	An integrated curriculum of local moral values and culture	0,25	4	1,00
	Implementation of inclusion values	0,08	2	0,17
	Able to collaborate with external parties	0,25	4	1,00
	Increasing public awareness	0,17	3	0,50

Threats	Social media and an informative and engaging school website	0,25	4	1,00
	TOTAL	1,00		3,67
	Changes in facilitator policies and regulations	0,17	1	0,17
	Lack of donor interest in curriculum development	0,17	3	0,50
	The negative stigma of free schools	0,17	4	0,67
	Lower middle economy so that there is less cost contribution	0,25	3	0,75
	Possible loss of competent educator qualities	0,25	1	0,25
	TOTAL	1,00		2,33

c. Kuadran SWOT Matrix

Quadrant I: In this quadrant is a very favorable situation, since the organization has more dominant strengths and opportunities than its weaknesses. The strategy that must be applied in this condition is the S-O Strategy (Positive-Positive) which allows to support activities to increase growth and aggressive development (growth oriented strategy), or it can be called an aggressive strategy.

Quadrant II: In this quadrant, the organization, although facing threats, still has internal strengths so that it is expected to multiply strategies. The strategy applied is the S-T Strategy (Positive-Negative) or it can be called the Diversification Strategy.

Quadrant III: In this quadrant the organization has great opportunities, but it also has weaknesses so it is advisable to change the previous strategy. The strategy applied is the W-O Strategy (Negative-Positive) or it can be called the Defensive Strategy.

Quadrant IV: It is a very detrimental situation, because in this quadrant the organization faces various external threats as well as internal weaknesses, so the organizational growth rate is low. Therefore, in this quadrant, organizations need to carry out a Turn Around Strategy or W-T Strategy (Negative-Negative), namely by minimizing weaknesses and avoiding threats (Aini et al., 2024b).

d. SWOT Quadrant Matrix Results

Internal Analysis Coordinates

= (Total Strength Score – Total Weakness Score): 2

= (3,56-2,08):2= 0,74

External Analysis Coordinates

= (Total Opportunity Score – Total Threat Score): 2

= (3,67-2,33):2= 0,67

So, the coordinate point is located at:

Internal analysis coordinates; External analysis coordinates = (0,74;0,67)

Then the results of the coordinate points are presented in the following SWOT Matrix Quadrant diagram.

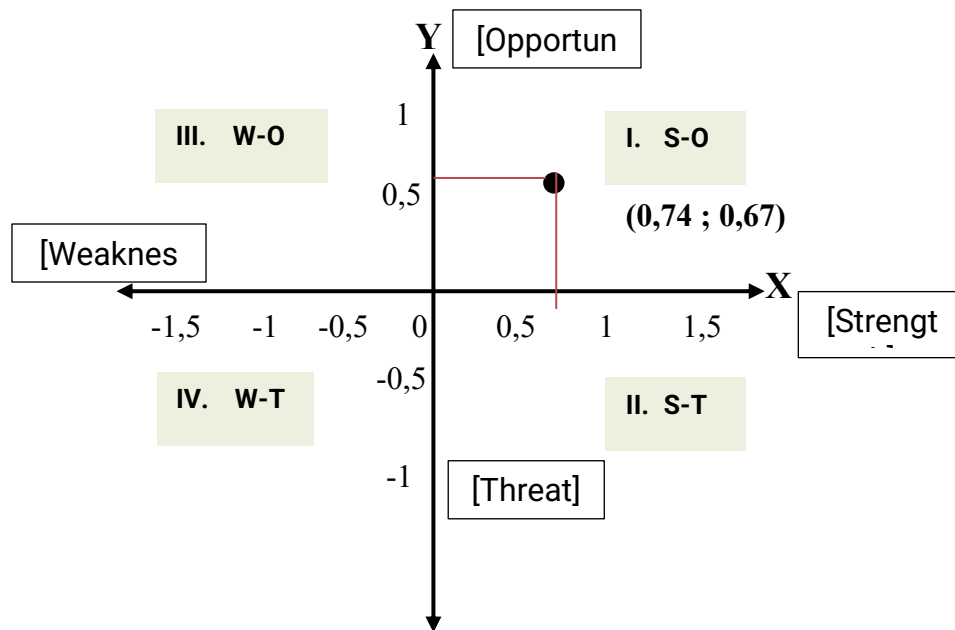


Figure 1. SWOT Matrix Quadrant Diagram

Discussion

This study addressed the curriculum management process at Gajahwong School and how it contributes to the development of children's character within a non-formal educational setting. The research was grounded in a SWOT analysis framework to assess internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. The topic responds to current calls for character education rooted in moral philosophy and socio-cultural realities, especially within under-resourced communities, aligning with transformative educational frameworks based on Aristotelian ethics and localized moral integration (Aziz et al., 2024; Lindgren et al., 2024; Williams & Park, 2025). The need for curriculum systems that are not only cognitive but also affective and behavioral has been stressed in numerous studies highlighting the failure of superficial religious moderation and the necessity of cultural embeddedness in curriculum design (Chotimah et al., 2025; Wahyuningrum et al., 2020). This study thus complements and extends global discourses on value-driven, holistic curriculum design for the Global South (Londoño-Cañola et al., 2023; Srivastava et al., 2022).

The study found that Gajahwong School's curriculum management is anchored in four pillars: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. The curriculum planning process is participatory and adaptive, ensuring alignment with students' developmental needs and community context. Noteworthy findings include the school's emphasis on socio-emotional learning, creative resource utilization, and democratic classroom agreements, which function as implicit moral education. The SWOT analysis highlighted the strengths of a progressive and flexible curriculum, coupled with clear managerial structure and strong educator commitment. At the same time, it exposed vulnerabilities such as misalignment with national standards, limited infrastructure, and unstable educator continuity.

These results are consistent with findings from multiple global studies. The integration of socio-emotional and moral education echoes approaches seen in Kurikulum Merdeka schools using differentiated learning and project-based initiatives for character formation (Maisyaroh et al., 2024; Noviadari & Haryanto, 2020). Similarly, Gontor and Bugis-based schools demonstrated effective inculcation of values by embedding local culture and religion

within their curriculum (Aziz et al., 2024; Lindgren et al., 2024). Like Gajahwong, API Tegalrejo's hybrid model combining religious and general education shows the power of institutional innovation in supporting character development (Basori et al., 2023). However, unlike structured national or pesantren-based models, Gajahwong's flexibility poses unique challenges, particularly concerning curriculum standardization and long-term educator retention, as also observed in informal Islamic education in England (Erdogan, 2020).

Gajahwong's strengths lie in its child-centered pedagogy and its ability to contextualize learning through local wisdom, as demonstrated by its use of Javanese arts and community rituals. This supports the notion that learning must extend beyond classrooms to be transformative, emotionally resonant, and socially conscious, aligning with the principles of human flourishing and intercultural leadership (Kiersch & Gullekson, 2021; Maurana et al., 2024). The commitment of volunteers and facilitators underscores the importance of social capital in sustaining education in marginal communities. However, given the dependence on donations and volunteer turnover, results should be interpreted with caution, especially when extrapolating the model to other contexts. Structural fragility makes the system innovative yet vulnerable (Chotimah et al., 2025; Omarov et al., 2023).

Moreover, the inclusion of life skills and emotional regulation in the curriculum offers practical strategies for early childhood education to address the psychological and social needs of underprivileged children. These efforts mirror the objectives of biblioguidance clubs, digital badges, and civic learning models proven effective in nurturing empathy, responsibility, and emotional intelligence (Banas et al., 2024; Borihantanachot et al., 2024). The school's evaluation model through narrative reporting and bi-weekly parental engagement also strengthens formative assessment, a feature commonly lacking in public or overly test-oriented systems (Khuriyah et al., 2020; Sawan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the absence of standardized national integration may hinder scalability and recognition. The internal IFAS score (3.56) versus the lower weakness score (2.08) suggests institutional readiness but highlights areas requiring targeted investment (Aini et al., 2024a).

The study also found that Gajahwong School's opportunity factors (EFAS score 3.67) far outweigh its threats (2.33), emphasizing its potential for growth through cultural branding, digital outreach, and inclusive practices. Strategic use of social media and localized storytelling aligns with findings on community collaboration and stakeholder engagement in curriculum reform (Guo, 2022; Nasrah, 2022). Yet, threats such as donor bias, policy inconsistency, and social stigma against free education could compromise program sustainability, as documented in contexts ranging from South Sulawesi to Kazakhstan (Omarov et al., 2023; Zhang, 2021). Therefore, while the school leverages its strengths to create strategic SO and ST responses, long-term resilience depends on mitigating weaknesses through formal partnerships and gradual curriculum accreditation. Establishing contractual stability for educators and expanding learning spaces are essential steps forward (Muzaki, 2025; Yuni, 2025).

The implications of this research extend to curriculum developers, non-formal educators, and policymakers seeking to institutionalize value-based, context-responsive character education. Gajahwong School exemplifies how alternative educational institutions can become laboratories for moral and social innovation when empowered with autonomy, cultural resources, and ethical vision. Its model challenges dominant paradigms of education that prioritize cognitive outcomes over holistic human development (Gördel & Huber, 2023; Purnomo et al., 2022). This study affirms the significance of place-based curriculum, participatory management, and emotional pedagogy as viable pathways to equitable education. Future directions may involve hybrid models, digital adaptation, and structured volunteer training to ensure sustainability and policy alignment.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the curriculum management process at Gajahwong School, identify its internal and external strategic factors through SWOT analysis, and formulate strategies to enhance character education in a non-formal educational setting. The findings revealed that curriculum management at Gajahwong School is implemented systematically through planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating stages, with a strong focus on socio-emotional development, participatory planning, and cultural contextualization. The SWOT analysis demonstrated that while the school benefits from a flexible, child-centered, and values-oriented curriculum, it faces challenges such as limited infrastructure, dependence on volunteer educators, and lack of national curriculum alignment. These findings underscore the potential of non-formal schools as innovative spaces for character education and call for formal recognition of such models within national educational policy frameworks. However, limitations include the study's contextual specificity, reliance on qualitative data, and the dynamic nature of curriculum development, which may affect generalizability.

The implications of this research highlight the need for policy support, resource allocation, and institutional partnerships to sustain and scale up non-formal educational innovations like Gajahwong. The integration of local wisdom, life skills, and moral education provides a replicable model for holistic child development, particularly in underserved communities. Future studies should explore comparative analyses across diverse non-formal institutions, assess longitudinal impacts of such curriculum models, and investigate hybrid approaches that combine formal and non-formal education strengths. Furthermore, developing standardized assessment tools for socio-emotional learning and character outcomes could enhance the legitimacy and evaluation of such educational models. Expanding research into teacher training, volunteer sustainability, and community engagement strategies will also be critical to reinforce the systemic viability of context-sensitive, character-based curriculum management.

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