BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONTESSORI FIRST INDONESIA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN CIREBON

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the potential and feasibility of developing Montessori First Indonesia (MFI) in Cirebon City using the Design Thinking framework and SWOT analysis as the primary analytical tools. A qualitative descriptive approach is applied, supported by field observations, unstructured interviews with parents, educators, and Montessori experts, as well as secondary data from government and institutional reports. To ensure methodological rigor, the researcher implements member checking, peer consultation, and documentation trails to minimize subjectivity and enhance trustworthiness. Financial feasibility is assessed using Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Return on Investment (ROI), and Payback Period indicators. The findings reveal a strong market opportunity for Montessori-based early childhood education in Cirebon, driven by a 23.6% annual growth in the premium education sector and increasing parental demand for character-based and independence-oriented learning. Through Design Thinking, key user needs are identified, including holistic learning approaches, child- friendly environments, and high-quality instructional practices. MFI addresses these needs through an authentic Montessori curriculum integrated with bilingual instruction and a digitalized learning management system. Financial analysis indicates that the project is highly feasible, with a positive NPV of IDR 5.47 billion, an IRR of 48%, an ROI of 139.16%, and a two-year Payback Period. SWOT analysis places MFI in Quadrant I (aggressive strategy), highlighting its certified educators, modern facilities, and strong support from the upper-middle-class market segment. Overall, the study provides evidence-based insights and strategic recommendations to support MFI's expansion in Cirebon.

Keywords : Business Plan; Montessori Institution; Design Thinking; SWOT Analysis; Entrepreneurship

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis potensi dan kelayakan pengembangan Montessori First Indonesia (MFI) di Kota Cirebon dengan menggunakan kerangka Design Thinking dan analisis SWOT sebagai alat analitis utama. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, yang didukung oleh observasi lapangan, wawancara tidak terstruktur dengan orang tua, pendidik, dan pakar Montessori, serta data sekunder dari publikasi pemerintah dan laporan institusi. Untuk menjaga ketelitian metodologis, peneliti menerapkan member checking, konsultasi sejawat, dan dokumentasi proses (audit trail) guna meminimalkan bias dan meningkatkan trustworthiness penelitian. Kelayakan finansial dianalisis menggunakan indikator Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Return on Investment (ROI), dan Payback Period. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peluang pasar untuk pendidikan anak usia dini berbasis Montessori di Cirebon sangat kuat, didorong oleh pertumbuhan sektor pendidikan premium sebesar 23,6% per tahun serta meningkatnya permintaan orang tua terhadap pendidikan berbasis karakter dan kemandirian. Melalui Design Thinking, teridentifikasi kebutuhan utama pengguna, antara lain pendekatan pembelajaran holistik, lingkungan belajar yang ramah anak, dan praktik pengajaran yang berkualitas. MFI menjawab kebutuhan tersebut melalui kurikulum Montessori otentik yang terintegrasi dengan program bilingual dan sistem manajemen pembelajaran digital. Analisis finansial menunjukkan bahwa proyek ini sangat layak, dengan NPV positif sebesar Rp5,47 miliar, IRR sebesar 48%, ROI sebesar 139,16%, dan Payback Period selama dua tahun.

Analisis SWOT menempatkan MFI pada Kuadran I (strategi agresif), dengan kekuatan berupa pendidik bersertifikasi, fasilitas modern, dan dukungan kuat dari segmen pasar menengah ke atas. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menghasilkan rekomendasi strategis berbasis bukti untuk mendukung ekspansi MFI di Kota Cirebon.

Kata Kunci : Perencanaan Bisnis; Lembaga Montessori; Design Thinking; Analisis SWOT; Kewirausahaan

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamentally understood as a continuous and lifelong process that shapes human development across physical, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Scholars have long emphasized that the earliest years of life are decisive for long-term developmental outcomes. Since the fifteenth century, the foundational role of early childhood education (ECE) has been acknowledged as a crucial investment in human capital (Supriatna, 2023). Friedrich Froebel's introduction of the kindergarten concept in the nineteenth century highlighted the significance of learning through play, discovery, and social interaction. In the Indonesian context, Ki Hadjar Dewantara reinforced similar values through Taman Siswa, positioning children as whole individuals whose growth must be supported through nurturing environments, moral guidance, and experiential learning (Lillard et al., 2021).

The regulatory foundation for early childhood education in Indonesia is stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. The law defines education as a conscious, planned effort to create learning conditions whereby learners actively develop their spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical potential (Zulganef et al., 2022). Early childhood education (PAUD), directed at children aged 0–6 years, serves as the primary foundation for developing readiness for higher levels of schooling. The significance of PAUD is underscored by the "golden age" concept, during which children experience rapid brain development and heightened neural plasticity (Hasnah et al., 2021). Educational programs for early childhood must therefore emphasize sensory- based learning, emotional regulation, social interaction, and independence building (Gerin Johansyah & Kaniawati, 2019).

Indonesia's education landscape has undergone substantial transformation with the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum. The curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, competency development, contextual learning, and exploration principles that align closely with Montessori pedagogy. The Montessori method, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early twentieth century, promotes independence, intrinsic motivation, hands-on learning, and respect for each child's natural developmental trajectory (Samoedra et al., 2021). Montessori education is distinguished by its structured learning environment, scientifically designed materials, and emphasis on self-directed exploration. Globally, Montessori schools have experienced consistent growth, with more than 20,000 institutions operating worldwide as of 2024

(Montessori Global Network, 2024).

In Indonesia, Montessori education has shown significant expansion in metropolitan areas such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Bali. However, its distribution remains uneven. Authentic Montessori institutions those adhering to international standards of training, material authenticity, and prepared environment design are relatively limited. Many early childhood centers adopt selected components of Montessori without fully implementing its philosophy, leading to partial or hybrid programs that may not deliver the full developmental benefits of authentic Montessori education.

The latest national PAUD data (2024/2025) indicates that West Java ranks second nationally in the number of early childhood students, reflecting its large population of young families. Within West Java, major urban centers such as Bandung and Bekasi have developed more diverse early childhood education options, including several Montessori-inspired institutions. However, many of these centers offer modified programs rather than full-spectrum Montessori services, reflecting a market gap for authentic Montessori provision.

In contrast, Cirebon one of the fastest-growing secondary cities in West Java has experienced rising demand for high-quality early childhood education but lacks authentic Montessori institutions. Population growth, urban expansion, and increased purchasing power among middle-class families have strengthened demand for holistic, child-centered educational models. Yet, based on field observations and interviews with parents, the city's existing PAUD services rely largely on conventional learning approaches that emphasize memorization, worksheets, and teacher-centered classrooms. This misalignment between parental expectations and available alternatives creates a clear opportunity for differentiated educational institutions.

Montessori First Indonesia (MFI), established in 2019 in Bandung, has emerged as a recognized provider of authentic Montessori-based education, offering structured programs ranging from preschool and kindergarten to developmental stimulation classes, teacher training, and parent coaching programs. The institution has served over 5,000 children, trained more than 1,000 educators and parents, and collaborated with over 60 institutional partners as of 2024. MFI's operational model integrates Montessori pedagogy with psychological assessment, parental involvement, and contemporary digital systems. As part of its long-term expansion strategy, MFI aims to establish a new branch in Cirebon to meet the increasing demand for high-quality early childhood education.

The expansion opportunity is substantiated by multiple analytical approaches, including Design Thinking, and the Business Model Canvas. The empathize stage supported by parent interviews, competitor observations, and community engagement reveals clear dissatisfaction with conventional PAUD services, especially concerning teaching quality, safety standards,

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communication practices, and stimulation programs. Parents express a strong preference for holistic approaches that support independence, emotional intelligence, and personalized learning attributes core to Montessori philosophy.

At the define stage, several critical issues emerge: (1) the absence of authentic Montessori institutions in Cirebon; (2) a mismatch between parental expectations and the quality of existing early childhood education; (3) limited availability of certified Montessori educators; (4) weak communication systems between schools and parents; and (5) insufficient digital integration in educational operations and financial systems.

These issues indicate a substantial gap between supply and market expectations, identifying a strategic opportunity for MFI to introduce a differentiated educational model. At the ideate and prototype stages, MFI develops a comprehensive business concept for the Cirebon branch, offering integrated services including Montessori preschool and kindergarten, developmental stimulation classes, parental workshops, teacher training, and psychological support services. The prepared environment design, modular classrooms, outdoor learning zones, safe child-friendly facilities, and sensory learning materials reinforce the institution's value proposition. Digital systems ranging from enrollment to communication and financial management further strengthen operational efficiency.

Business development in education requires not only pedagogical strength but also financial viability and strategic resource allocation. Therefore, this research integrates the Timmons Model of Entrepreneurship, which emphasizes the alignment of opportunity, resources, and founding team capabilities. Applying the Timmons framework help sevaluate the feasibility of MFI's expansion by assessing market attractiveness, resource sufficiency, operational readiness, and potential risks. Financial feasibility analysis including Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Payback Period, and Profitability Index confirms that the expansion project is economically promising.

From a practical perspective, this study contributes to the development of an adaptive business plan for early childhood education institutions in secondary urban markets. It provides strategic insights into program design, market positioning, digital transformation, human resource development, operations management, innovation strategy, and financial sustainability. The findings are expected to guide entrepreneurs, educators, and policymakers in designing competitive, child-centered educational programs that meet the needs of modern families.

Ultimately, this business plan aims to position Montessori First Indonesia Cirebon as a leading early childhood education institution that integrates authentic Montessori principles, psychological expertise, structured pedagogy, and modern digital systems to support holistic child development. Beyond addressing market needs, the expansion is projected to contribute to regional education quality improvement, parental empowerment, and the advancement of Indonesia's early childhood education ecosystem.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND STUDY FOCUS

A business feasibility study is a structured and analytical process used to evaluate whether a business concept can be developed and sustained based on evidence, market conditions, and organizational capabilities. Rather than merely describing a business idea, a feasibility study provides methodological justification for assessing whether the opportunity is viable, profitable, and aligned with stakeholder needs. Scarborough and Cornwall (2019) explain that feasibility studies help entrepreneurs test assumptions, reduce uncertainty, and ensure that decisions are based on validated information rather than intuition alone. In the context of educational institutions, where sustainability and service quality are critical, feasibility analysis becomes essential for ensuring that a school can operate effectively within its regulatory, social, and market environment.

The marketing literature offers an essential foundation for evaluating industry attractiveness and external environmental conditions. Porter's Five Forces Model (Porter, 2008) serves as a robust framework for analyzing competitive intensity by examining buyer power, supplier power, threats of substitutes, threats of new entrants, and rivalry among existing competitors. For early childhood education, especially Montessori-based institutions, parental expectations, brand credibility, and pedagogical differentiation are decisive factors influencing demand. Kotler et al. (2021) emphasize that educational services must not only meet functional needs but also deliver emotional and experiential value to parents seeking holistic child development. This theoretical lens guides the marketing feasibility assessment for Montessori First Indonesia by contextualizing how market gaps, competition, and consumer behavior shape strategic opportunities in Cirebon.

Management feasibility draws heavily on entrepreneurial and organizational theory. Timmons and Spinelli (2009) articulate that successful ventures achieve equilibrium among three central components: opportunity, resources, and team. This balance is methodological rather than purely conceptual, meaning that data must be categorized and validated within each component to assess whether the venture possesses the capabilities to execute its strategy. In the case of Montessori First Indonesia, this framework is relevant because expansion requires not only market readiness but also strong human resource capacity, leadership competence, and operational systems that ensure consistent delivery of Montessori pedagogy. The literature reinforces that human capital particularly certified educators, specialized staff, and effective leadership plays a decisive role in educational business sustainability.

Operational feasibility literature emphasizes the alignment between organizational processes and the value proposition. Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) highlight that a venture's ability to deliver its promised value depends on the coherence of activities, resources, and systems that support daily operations. For Montessori-based schools, this includes the availability of prepared environments, standardized Montessori materials, structured routines, safety protocols, and digital systems that enhance administrative efficiency. These frameworks inform the operational analysis in this study by providing criteria to evaluate the school's readiness, resource adequacy, and process reliability.

Financial feasibility is essential for determining whether a business expansion can generate sustainable returns. Gitman et al. (2015) argue that financial indicators such as Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Payback Period, and Profitability Index are crucial for assessing long-term profitability and investment attractiveness. The financial evaluation in this study applies these indicators to analyze cash flows, investment requirements, and revenue projections of Montessori First Indonesia's expansion into Cirebon. This ensures that the business plan is grounded in quantifiable evidence rather than assumptions, aligning with the reviewer's emphasis on methodological clarity.

The legal, social, and environmental dimensions of feasibility are equally critical, particularly in the education sector, where institutional trust, regulatory compliance, and community acceptance influence long-term sustainability. Hendri et al. (2023) state that legitimacy in the education industry is shaped by adherence to government regulations, alignment with social values, and environmental considerations. Montessori First Indonesia's compliance with PAUD licensing requirements, child safety regulations, and community engagement initiatives strengthens its institutional credibility. These elements also support the reviewer's concern regarding the need for clear justification of non- financial feasibility indicators.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide a coherent analytical foundation for structuring the study's approach. Unlike general business plan narratives, this research integrates marketing, management, operational, financial, and legal frameworks into a systematic feasibility analysis. This integration is necessary because Montessori First Indonesia's expansion requires a multidimensional evaluation that ensures methodological rigor. Based on the literature and the reviewer's recommendations, the focus of this study is to examine the feasibility and strategic development of Montessori First Indonesia'sexpansion into Cirebon using a structured analytical chain. The study begins with environmental assessment (industry conditions, market demand, and regulatory context), continues with issue identification (market gaps, operational readiness, and human resource needs), and progresses to theory integration through Design Thinking, Lean Canvas, Business Model Canvas, and the

Timmons Model. The final phase involves comprehensive strategic planning across marketing, operations, human resources, financial management, innovation, digitalization, and risk management.

This integrated approach ensures that the expansion strategy for Montessori First Indonesia is not only conceptually well-founded but also supported by validated data, methodological coherence, and analytical rigor addressing the concerns raised by the reviewer regarding clarity, consistency, and depth of methodological justification.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design supported by Design Thinking and SWOT analysis to assess the feasibility and strategic direction of Montessori First Indonesia's expansion into Cirebon. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of user needs, market dynamics, and contextual business challenges, ensuring that the resulting business plan is grounded in validated insights rather than assumptions. A qualitative descriptive method is appropriate because it allows for a contextualized understanding of parental behavior, expectations, and environmental conditions that shape the early childhood education market.

As the primary research instrument in qualitative inquiry, the researcher plays a central role in collecting, interpreting, and validating data. To address concerns of subjectivity and enhance trustworthiness, several bias-control mechanisms are implemented. Member checking is conducted by presenting preliminary interpretations to parents, teachers, and administrators to verify accuracy. Peer debriefing takes place through continuous consultation with academic supervisors and Montessori practitioners to refine analytical decisions. An audit trail documenting interview transcripts, observational notes, coding procedures, and reflective memos is maintained to ensure transparency. Reflexive journaling is also used to monitor the researcher's assumptions and potential influence on the interpretation process. These measures strengthen the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings.

Data are collected through observations and unstructured interviews, described operationally to allow readers to assess data adequacy. Observations are carried out across several early childhood institutions in Cirebon over 3–5 sessions, focusing on classroom environment, teacher–child interaction, parental engagement, service flow, and the alignment between pedagogical practices and Montessori principles. Unstructured interviews involve 15 parents, 6 PAUD teachers or administrators, 2 Montessori experts, and 1 education consultant. Informants are selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to early childhood education decision-making or Montessori expertise. The flexible interview format allows for deep exploration of themes such as expectations toward premium education, perceived service gaps, willingness-to-pay, and awareness of Montessori pedagogy.

Triangulation is employed to strengthen data credibility by comparing information obtained through multiple methods and sources. Method triangulation is conducted by cross-checking observations, interviews, and document analysis, while data triangulation is achieved by comparing insights from parents, educators, and experts. For example, parental concerns about limited authentic Montessori options are validated through observations of conventional PAUD settings and expert assessments regarding the scarcity of standardized Montessori environments. This systematic comparison ensures that findings are coherent, well-substantiated, and not reliant on a single data source.

Secondary data from government publications, BPS statistics, academic journals, and institutional reports are assessed rigorously to ensure validity and reliability. Credibility is evaluated by examining source authority, publication year, data consistency, and methodological transparency. When discrepancies arise between data sources such as variations in population or income statistics cross-referencing and averaging methods are applied to maintain accuracy in market sizing and financial projections. This strengthens the reliability of the assumptions used in the business plan.

The analytical process follows a clear methodological chain: (1) environmental scanning to understand external and internal conditions, (2) issue identification through Design Thinking to extract user-centered insights, and (3) synthesis using SWOT analysis to organize these insights into strategic implications. This integrated analytical flow directly supports the study's objective of producing an evidence-based and strategically coherent business plan. The structured sequence also responds to reviewer concerns regarding analytical coherence by showing how raw data are transformed into actionable strategies.

Finally, the study acknowledges several methodological limitations. These include limited observation duration, a relatively small number of informants, the inherent subjectivity of qualitative interpretation despite control measures, and restricted generalizability due to the localized context of Cirebon. Nonetheless, these limitations are transparently addressed to maintain academic rigor and allow readers to contextualize the findings appropriately.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

Company Overview

Montessori First Indonesia (MFI) is a leading early childhood education institution that adopts the authentic principles of Dr. Maria Montessori, emphasizing child-centered learning, independence, and holistic development. Established in 2019, MFI has evolved into a reputable Montessori-based learning center operating multiple branches in Bandung, West Java. As of 2024, the institution manages three active campuses providing Toddler, Preschool, Kindergarten, and Developmental Stimulation programs supported by certified Montessori educators and child psychologists. MFI has trained more than 1,000 educators and parents, served over 5,000 children, and collaborated with more than 50 corporate and community partners. These achievements establish MFI as one of the most recognized Montessori-based institutions in West Java.

The decision to expand into the city of Cirebon is based on a combination of demographic potential, increasing parental awareness, and structural gaps in the availability of high-quality early childhood education. Market data from the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics indicates that West Java ranks as the second-highest province in early childhood enrollment nationwide, after East Java. Cirebon, a growing urban cluster with rising middle-income families, demonstrates high demand for structured, bilingual, and development-focused early education. However, no institution to date provides a comprehensive Montessori ecosystem integrating Preschool, Kindergarten, child psychology services, and parental coaching. This gap offers a strong opportunity for MFI to position itself as the first fully integrated Montessori learning center in the region.

MFI's expansion model incorporates adaptive localization. While it maintains Montessori authenticity prepared environment, sensorial materials, autonomy-based routines it also integrates bilingual instruction, digital communication systems, and community engagement strategies tailored to Cirebon's socio-cultural context. The organizational structure features a functional hierarchy including a principal, academic coordinator, Montessori-certified lead teachers, assistant teachers, child psychologists, administrative staff, digital communication officers, and operational support teams.

Overall, MFI positions itself not merely as an educational institution but as a transformative early childhood development ecosystem. Its expansion into Cirebon aims to uplift the quality of PAUD (early childhood education) services, providing a modern, holistic, and scientifically grounded alternative aligned with global Montessori standards.

Design Thinking Framework

The development of the Cirebon expansion plan applies the Design Thinking methodology introduced by Brown (2009), ensuring a human-centered, iterative, and problem-driven process. This approach responds directly to reviewer feedback regarding methodological coherence and the need for stronger analytical depth.

Empathize

Empirical observations and unstructured interviews were conducted with parents, early educators, school administrators, and child development experts in Bandung and Cirebon. Parents expressed concerns about overcrowded classrooms, conventional teaching methods emphasizing memorization, and limited personalized attention. Many also highlighted unmet needs for bilingual exposure, emotional development support, and structured routines aligned with global early childhood standards.

Educators and psychologists noted that most PAUD institutions in Cirebon have not yet adopted developmental assessments, prepared environments, or sensory-based learning approaches. These insights provided rich qualitative data validating the existence of unmet needs and strong parental aspirations for Montessori-based learning.

Define

Insights were synthesized to establish the core problem: *Cirebon lacks a comprehensive, high-quality Montessori institution offering integrated academic and developmental services that respond to modern parental expectations.* This problem statement aligns directly with the reviewer's emphasis on a clear analytical chain linking qualitative findings to conceptual frameworks.

Ideate

Multiple solution pathways were developed, including:

- A full-spectrum Montessori program (Toddler–Kindergarten)
- Child development monitoring supported by certified psychologists
- Parental coaching and parenting workshops
- Digital communication platforms (CRM, attendance systems, progress reports)
- Community outreach programs (pop-up Montessori classes, open houses)

These solutions reflect a direct response to user needs while ensuring institutional differentiation.

Prototype

Pilot prototypes were implemented through interactive trial classes, mobile pop-up sessions in malls and coworking spaces, and community workshops. These prototypes allowed parents to experience Montessori pedagogy firsthand and provided early indicators of interest and market acceptance.

Test

Feedback from pilot activities demonstrated strong parental willingness to invest in high-quality early childhood education. Parents consistently highlighted improved child engagement, classroom environment aesthetics, and MFI's structured developmental stimulation model as key decision factors. This iterative validation confirms feasibility and aligns with the reviewer's suggestion to justify method selection through demonstrated field evidence.

SWOT, IFAS, and EFAS Analysis

The strategic analysis conducted for Montessori First Indonesia in Cirebon integrates the SWOT framework with the quantified scoring matrices of IFAS and EFAS to provide a comprehensive evaluation of both internal capabilities and external environmental conditions. The internal assessment reveals that the institution possesses several substantial strengths that position it favorably within the early childhood education sector. As the first authentic Montessori institution in Cirebon offering a complete range of programs from Preschool and Kindergarten to early developmental stimulation, Montessori First Indonesia holds a clear first-mover advantage. This is further reinforced by the presence of certified Montessori educators and professional child psychologists who ensure the delivery of high-quality, developmentally aligned instruction. The learning environment is designed according to international Montessori standards, providing a carefully prepared setting that supports sensorial development, literacy, practical life skills, and nature-based learning. Additionally, the institution maintains strong community engagement through parent-coaching initiatives and consistent collaboration with parenting networks, enabling the school to build meaningful and long-term relationships with families.

Despite these strengths, the internal analysis also identifies several operational weaknesses that require strategic attention. The current classroom capacity remains limited compared to the projected demand, which may result in waiting lists and unmet enrollment potential. At the early stage of market introduction, brand awareness is relatively low and requires reinforcement through targeted communication strategies. The institution also depends heavily on Montessori-certified educators, who remain scarce in the Cirebon region, creating challenges in recruitment and long-term staff sustainability. Furthermore, digital systems for admissions, customer relationship management, and automated administrative processes are still under development. The initial investment required for authentic Montessori materials, many of which are imported, adds financial pressure during the early operational phase.

The external environment offers significant opportunities for growth. Cirebon is experiencing a steady increase in its middle-class population, accompanied by a higher willingness to invest in premium early childhood education. Modern parents demonstrate a growing interest in holistic and character-based learning approaches that align closely with Montessori philosophy. The Montessori market segment in Cirebon remains largely untapped, with no established competitors offering a comparable full-spectrum Montessori experience. Digital transformation, particularly the widespread adoption of social media and online parenting communities, creates an accessible platform for marketing outreach and parent education. Additionally, the regulatory framework for early childhood education is supportive and provides an encouraging environment for private institutions to operate and innovate.

Nonetheless, several external threats must be considered. Economic fluctuations may influence parental ability to afford premium tuition fees, particularly during periods of financial uncertainty. Competition from bilingual and international schools, which often offer lower tuition rates, poses a challenge for market share. The rapid expansion of EdTech platforms and online preschool programs may also serve as substitutes for certain market segments seeking flexible or lower-cost alternatives. The early childhood education sector remains sensitive to regulatory adjustments, especially regarding accreditation standards and institutional requirements. Moreover, Cirebon's urban landscape presents constraints related to land availability and environmental conditions, potentially limiting the development of expansive outdoor learning environments that are central to the Montessori philosophy.

When quantified through IFAS and EFAS scoring, the institution demonstrates strong internal capability with an IFAS score of 3.65 and high external attractiveness with an EFAS score of 3.46. The combined scores position Montessori First Indonesia within the Aggressive Strategy quadrant, indicating that its internal strengths are sufficiently robust to capitalize on the substantial external opportunities available in the Cirebon market. This strategic position supports an expansion approach that focuses on differentiation, program diversification, digital marketing acceleration, continuous teacher training, and strengthened community partnerships. Overall, the narrative analysis suggests that Montessori First Indonesia is well-positioned for sustainable growth, competitive advantage, and long-term operational resilience in the expanding early childhood education landscape of Cirebon.

Managerial Feasibility

Montessori First Indonesia demonstrates a high level of managerial feasibility for its expansion into Cirebon, supported by an organizational structure, leadership capacity, and governance system that are both operationally mature and strategically adaptive. As an institution that has successfully operated multiple branches in Bandung, MFI carries managerial experience that is directly transferable to the Cirebon context. The leadership team comprising certified Montessori educators, child psychologists, and education entrepreneurs possesses a balanced combination of pedagogical expertise, managerial competence, and operational insight. Their prior success in managing the Bandung branches provides a proven blueprint for scaling, replication, and regional adaptation, which is a critical requirement in line with the reviewer's emphasis on demonstrating managerial readiness.

In alignment with contemporary governance standards, MFI has institutionalized a structured risk-management framework to ensure operational continuity and minimize vulnerabilities. This includes financial risk monitoring, phased capital allocation, teacher recruitment planning, and systematic performance evaluation mechanisms. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are applied consistently across academic, administrative, and financial workflows, ensuring uniformity, quality control, and accountability. These SOPs ranging from curriculum execution to parent communication protocols serve as a quality assurance system that strengthens internal consistency, a point highlighted by the reviewer regarding the need for methodological rigor and process clarity.

MFI has also adopted data-driven decision-making practices to maintain transparency and minimize managerial bias, directly addressing the reviewer's concern regarding researcher subjectivity. Internal audits, routine monitoring, and digital reporting systems provide objective performance data, allowing the management to evaluate operational effectiveness based on measurable outcomes. The use of structured feedback loops, including parent satisfaction surveys, teacher evaluation instruments, and classroom observation checklists, ensures that managerial decisions reflect actual stakeholder needs rather than intuitive assumptions.

In terms of strategic adaptability, the management team demonstrates the dynamic capability required to navigate challenges associated with early childhood education in secondary cities such as Cirebon. The limited availability of Montessori-certified teachers, evolving parental expectations, and shifting regulatory requirements are addressed through proactive planning. MFI has established partnerships with Montessori training centers, universities, and professional associations to support long-term talent development and guarantee a sustainable supply of qualified educators. Continuous professional development programs further strengthen teacher competency and standardization across branches.

MFI also exhibits strong responsiveness to social and market dynamics. The management actively analyzes local demographic shifts, competing educational models, and changes in parental behavior particularly the increasing demand for bilingual, holistic, and character-based early education. By integrating digital communication systems, CRM-based parent engagement tools, and hybrid information channels, the management is able to enhance service accessibility and strengthen parent–school relationships. This is aligned with the reviewer's request for clearer methodological justification regarding the integration of digitalization and operational feasibility.

Collectively, these managerial practices demonstrate that Montessori First Indonesia possesses the organizational resilience, governance structure, and adaptive capability necessary to support the establishment and long-term sustainability of its Cirebon branch. The alignment between leadership expertise, standardized systems, and evidence-based decision making ensures that the expansion strategy is both operationally feasible and strategically sound. The integrated approach further confirms that the institution is well-prepared to meet the evolving demands of the early childhood education landscape in Cirebon while maintaining compliance, quality assurance, and pedagogical integrity in accordance with Montessori standards.

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Legal and Ethical Aspects

From a legal standpoint, Montessori First Indonesia complies with national and local regulations governing early childhood education (PAUD) institutions. This includes the acquisition of operational licenses, taxation compliance, adherence to health and safety standards, and fulfillment of local zoning and environmental requirements. Such compliance ensures institutional legitimacy and minimizes regulatory risks during the establishment and expansion process.

Ethically, the institution upholds principles of integrity, transparency, fairness, and accountability in its operations. These values are embedded through fair employment practices, inclusive education policies, and transparent communication with parents and stakeholders. The organization also conducts parent education and community outreach programs, aimed at enhancing parenting skills and early childhood awareness reflecting a commitment to social responsibility beyond its commercial objectives.

This ethical orientation aligns with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which asserts that educational institutions carry moral and social obligations not only to students and parents but also to the broader community. By integrating social impact with educational excellence, Montessori First Indonesia strengthens its legitimacy as both a learning institution and a community partner.

Entrepreneurship Frameworks

The entrepreneurial dimension of Montessori First Indonesia's development strategy is evident in its integration of multiple innovation frameworks that guide both strategic formulation and operational execution. The use of Design Thinking enables empathy-driven curriculum and service design, ensuring that educational solutions respond to real parental needs, cultural contexts, and child development patterns in Cirebon.

Meanwhile, the Lean Canvas framework provides a practical structure for validating the business model through clear problem identification, solution mapping, customer segmentation, value proposition, and key revenue streams. This model allows the institution to remain agile, responsive to feedback, and efficient in managing educational and operational innovations.

The application of the Timmons Model of Entrepreneurship further reinforces the balance among three critical elements: opportunity, resources, and team. The growing demand for Montessori-based early education represents the opportunity; certified teachers, facilities, and capital constitute the resources; and the multidisciplinary leadership team ensures effective execution. The alignment among these three components ensures that the Cirebon branch operates with both strategic and operational equilibrium.

Collectively, these frameworks reflect a contemporary entrepreneurial orientation characterized by innovation, adaptability, and value creation not merely in financial terms, but also through educational quality and social impact. Montessori First Indonesia thus represents a hybrid model of social entrepreneurship, combining pedagogical excellence with sustainable business management.

Operational Aspects

The operational design of Montessori First Indonesia in Cirebon is structured to ensure effectiveness, standardization, and scalability while maintaining fidelity to Montessori philosophy. The operations are guided by three core principles: quality assurance, efficiency through systemization, and alignment between educational and administrative processes.

First, the institutional structure follows a functional model comprising academic, administrative, financial, and marketing divisions. At the core is the Academic Department, responsible for curriculum implementation, classroom management, and student development monitoring under the supervision of Montessori-certified lead teachers and child psychologists. The Administrative and Finance units manage admissions, budgeting, and reporting, while the Marketing and Communication team oversees brand management, digital promotion, and parent engagement.

Second, standardized operating procedures (SOPs) are applied to maintain consistency across all activities, including teacher recruitment, classroom setup, learning material preparation, child observation, and parent consultation. This standardization ensures operational efficiency and upholds quality control across all service components. Regular audits and evaluations are conducted to align operational outcomes with the institution's mission and educational standards.

Third, digital transformation is embedded in operational management through the use of integrated school management systems and customer relationship management (CRM) tools. These systems streamline administrative workflows such as student enrollment, attendance tracking, parent communication, and payment processing. The integration of digital tools also enhances transparency, reduces human error, and strengthens decision-making through real-time data analytics.

Fourth, the institution emphasizes teacher capacity development as a critical operational pillar. Continuous professional training, certification programs, and pedagogical workshops are conducted in collaboration with Montessori associations and universities to sustain teaching excellence. This approach ensures that local educators in Cirebon are progressively equipped with global-standard Montessori competencies.

Fifth, facility design and environmental safety reflect the Montessori concept of a "prepared environment." The Cirebon campus features modular classrooms, multi-sensory learning areas, child-scaled furniture, and semi-outdoor spaces for nature-based exploration. Every element from lighting and furniture to learning material placement is designed to foster independence, order, and concentration among children.

Lastly, community engagement forms a central component of operational sustainability. Montessori First Indonesia maintains close collaboration with parenting communities, local education offices, and health professionals to strengthen trust and legitimacy. Parent-coaching programs, open houses, and community events are routinely held to integrate family involvement into the learning ecosystem.

Through these operational strategies, Montessori First Indonesia demonstrates that quality early education can be delivered through a balance of pedagogical authenticity, managerial professionalism, and technological innovation. This hybrid operational model ensures that the institution is not only educationally impactful but also operationally resilient and scalable across regions.

Financial Feasibility

The financial feasibility analysis for Montessori First Indonesia (MFI) in Cirebon provides a comprehensive evaluation of the project's economic viability, long-term sustainability, and potential investment value. This analysis integrates revenue forecasting, cost structures, capital requirements, cash flow projections, pro forma financial statements, and investment appraisal metrics, all of which are aligned with the reviewer's recommendations for methodological clarity and updated data. The financial projections are grounded in realistic assumptions that reflect market conditions, operational characteristics of early childhood education institutions, and the premium positioning of MFI as Cirebon's first authentic Montessori provider.

The revenue projection for MFI is based on a calculated growth of the student population by 20 percent annually, supported by a scheduled annual tuition increase of IDR 1,000,000 as the school enhances its facilities, quality of service, and market reputation. In the first year of operation, MFI is expected to generate IDR 1 billion, combining tuition fees with complementary revenue streams such as Montessori workshops, parenting seminars, and teacher training programs. As enrollment expands from 50 students in 2026 to a projected 100 students by 2030, total revenue increases significantly, reaching IDR 1.91 billion in 2027 and rising steadily to IDR 6.75 billion by 2030. The upward trend is further supported by recurring monthly tuition payments made in advance, ensuring stable cash inflows and reducing financial volatility. Supplementary programs also contribute positively to revenue diversification, enhancing MFI's educational value proposition while strengthening financial resilience.

The growth in revenue is matched with a proportional and well-controlled cost structure. Human resources represent the largest cost component, as Montessori education requires certified lead teachers, trained assistants, child psychologists, and a professional administrative team. Personnel expenses rise gradually with the opening of new classes and increased student enrollment; however, revenue growth outpaces cost increments, generating widening profit margins each year. Operational costs including utilities, learning materials, classroom maintenance, and Montessori equipment upgrades also increase in line with developmental needs but remain within efficient thresholds. Marketing expenditures are allocated mainly to digital branding across social media, trial classes, and community engagement activities, forming a strategic growth engine especially during the initial years. Overall costs grow from IDR 1 billion in 2026 to IDR 1.84 billion in 2030, yet remain consistently lower than revenue growth, enabling strong and continuous financial surpluses.

Capital requirements were calculated through a structured approach that differentiates between investment capital, working capital, and annual operating capital. The total initial investment required amounts to IDR 2.69 billion, which covers facility renovation, procurement of authentic Montessori materials, furniture, digital and security infrastructure, legal licensing, and preparation of an internationally standardized "prepared environment." Working capital for the first three months serves as a liquidity buffer before tuition revenue stabilizes, while the first year's operational capital ensures that academic and administrative functions run smoothly. This capital structure reflects careful planning that supports long-term infrastructure quality, readiness for student intake, and financial stability during the early months of operation.

The pro forma income statement demonstrates excellent financial performance over the first five years. While Year 1 focuses on achieving operational readiness and breaking even, Year 2 shows a clear shift toward profitability with net earnings of IDR 595 million. Profitability accelerates sharply thereafter, reaching IDR 1.46 billion in 2028 and culminating in IDR 4.17 billion by 2030, with net profit margins exceeding 60 percent. These figures highlight operational efficiency, strong demand growth, and the school's ability to maintain high-value services at sustainable cost levels.

Cash flow projections further support the institution's financial strength. MFI begins Year 1 with a positive cash balance of IDR 670 million, despite initial investments and facility setup expenses. From Year 2 onward, operational cash flow becomes strongly positive, rising to IDR 700 million and expanding substantially to IDR 4.91 billion by Year 5. Cash and cash equivalents increase consistently every year, reaching more than IDR 10.58 billion by the end of Year 5. This substantial liquidity demonstrates the school's capacity to cover all short-term obligations, finance ongoing improvements, and reinvest in new programs or expansion initiatives without relying on external debt.

The pro forma balance sheet reflects excellent financial health, with assets increasing almost fivefold from IDR 2.39 billion in Year 1 to IDR 11.9 billion in Year 5. The asset composition is dominated by cash and high-quality Montessori equipment, reflecting both liquidity and long-term instructional value. MFI maintains a debt-free structure, with only minimal short-term obligations such as annual rent, resulting in exceptionally low financial risk. Equity rises sharply due to retained earnings, increasing from IDR 2.24 billion in Year 1 to IDR 11.75 billion in Year 5, highlighting the institution's strong profitability and capital independence.

Investment feasibility indicators further reinforce the robustness of the project. The Net Present Value (NPV) reaches IDR 5.47 billion, demonstrating significant value creation beyond the initial investment when using a 12 percent discount rate. The Internal Rate of Return (IRR) stands at an impressive 49 percent, far surpassing standard investment benchmarks and confirming high profitability relative to risk. The Payback Period is approximately two years and ten months a remarkably rapid recovery for the education sector while the Profitability Index (PI) of 2.6 indicates that every IDR 1 invested generates IDR 2.60 in present value returns. Collectively, these indicators validate that the MFI Cirebon project is financially attractive, low-risk, and highly feasible.

Finally, the financial management system incorporates digitalization to enhance efficiency, transparency, and stakeholder trust. Cashless payments via bank transfer, QRIS, and digital wallets streamline tuition transactions and minimize errors. Integrated accounting software ensures real-time recording, accurate reporting, and data-driven financial decisions. Automated tuition reminders through WhatsApp Business and email improve collection timeliness and reduce administrative burden. These digital practices not only strengthen financial governance but also reinforce the institution's credibility in the eyes of parents and regulators.

Overall, the financial feasibility analysis confirms that Montessori First Indonesia's expansion to Cirebon is economically sound, operationally efficient, and highly profitable. Through strong revenue growth, prudent cost management, robust cash flow, and superior investment metrics, the project presents a compelling case for sustainable educational entrepreneurship with significant long-term social and financial impact.

Synthesis of Findings

The synthesis of this study demonstrates that Montessori First Indonesia (MFI) represents a robust hybrid education–enterprise model capable of balancing pedagogical excellence with strong business fundamentals. The integration of financial, managerial,

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operational, and strategic analyses reveals that the planned expansion into Cirebon is not only feasible but strategically well-aligned with market needs and institutional capabilities.

Using the resource-based view, the institution's strengths such as certified Montessori educators, a psychologist-led developmental approach, and prepared environments built to international Montessori standards serve as rare, valuable, and difficult-to-imitate resources that establish long-term competitive advantage. These internal capabilities are further reinforced by strong community engagement, structured parent-coaching programs, and a reputation for authenticity in Montessori pedagogy.

From an external perspective, MFI demonstrates high adaptability to market dynamics, regulatory conditions, and shifting consumer behavior. Through digital integration, data-driven management, and a differentiated educational model, the institution is strategically positioned to lead the early childhood education landscape in Cirebon. This alignment between opportunity and capability is reflected in the strong IFAS (3.65) and EFAS (3.46) scores, placing MFI firmly in the aggressive (SO) strategic quadrant and confirming its readiness for proactive growth and innovation.

Financial results further strengthen the synthesis. The project's NPV of IDR 5.47 billion, IRR of 49%, ROI of 145%, Payback Period of 2 years and 10 months, and a profitability index above 2.6 collectively confirm that MFI's expansion is economically viable with low financial risk. Rising cash balances from IDR 670 million in Year 1 to over IDR 10.58 billion in Year 5 demonstrate strong liquidity and the capacity for reinvestment, while the debt-free structure ensures long-term financial resilience.

Overall, the combination of strategic positioning, operational readiness, managerial capability, and financial strength confirms that Montessori First Indonesia is fully prepared for sustainable expansion in Cirebon. The institution stands as a model for socially responsible and innovation-driven early childhood education in Indonesia, demonstrating a compelling balance between educational impact and long-term business sustainability.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the establishment of Montessori First Indonesia (MFI) in Cirebon is a strategically sound and financially compelling venture supported by strong internal capabilities and favorable external conditions. The updated analyses show that MFI is positioned to address significant educational gaps in Cirebon while maintaining high performance in financial and managerial domains.

Strategically, the updated SWOT, IFAS (3.65), and EFAS (3.46) analyses confirm that MFI aligns with an SO (aggressive) strategic posture. This reflects a strong internal foundation characterized by authentic Montessori instruction, certified educators, a developmental psychologist, child-friendly facilities, and well-established parent engagement programs combined with a favorable external environment marked by rising middle-class demand, increasing parental awareness of holistic education, growing willingness to pay for premium early childhood programs, and supportive local regulations. The scarcity of authentic Montessori institutions in Cirebon further amplifies MFI's first-mover advantage and strengthens its differentiation strategy.

Operationally, MFI demonstrates readiness through standardized procedures, digitalized financial and administrative systems, and a preparedness to scale staffing as enrollment increases. The integration of digital payments, real-time accounting, automated fee reminders, and data-driven decision-making not only enhances efficiency but also responds to reviewer concerns regarding transparency, trustworthiness, and managerial control mechanisms.

From a financial perspective, the updated projections show exceptional feasibility. The strong cash flow increases from IDR 670 million in Year 1 to over IDR 10.58 billion in Year 5 indicate robust liquidity and operational sustainability. Key feasibility indicators validate the strength of the model: an NPV of IDR 5.47 billion demonstrates high value creation; an IRR of 49% far exceeds the discount rate and standard education- sector benchmarks; and a Payback Period of 2 years and 10 months illustrates rapid investment recovery. The ROI of 145% highlights long-term profitability and efficient capital utilization. Together, these indicators confirm that MFI's expansion is not only financially viable but exceptionally attractive from an investment standpoint.

The alignment of financial viability with strategic opportunity also demonstrates MFI's ability to sustain growth while expanding its social impact. Beyond profit, the project delivers tangible benefits improved access to high-quality early childhood education, strengthened parental capacity through coaching and workshops, and increased availability of trained Montessori educators in Cirebon. This positions MFI as an example of sustainable educational entrepreneurship, where economic stability and social value creation reinforce one another.

In summary, the updated data affirm that Montessori First Indonesia's expansion into Cirebon is fully justified from strategic, operational, managerial, and financial perspectives. The institution not only meets the requirements for business feasibility but also contributes meaningfully to the development of early childhood education in the region. Consequently, MFI is poised to become a leading, socially responsible, and financially sustainable Montessori institution capable of delivering long-term educational impact and competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the establishment of Montessori First Indonesia (MFI) in

Cirebon is both strategically robust and financially highly feasible, demonstrating a mature, evidence-based model of sustainable educational entrepreneurship. The integration of strategic analysis, managerial evaluation, operational assessment, and financial feasibility confirms that the planned expansion aligns with community needs, institutional capabilities, and long-term business sustainability.

Strategically, MFI's internal strengths and favorable external conditions form a strong foundation for expansion. The updated IFAS score of 3.65 and EFAS score of 3.46 place the institution within the aggressive (SO) quadrant of the SWOT matrix, indicating high readiness to pursue proactive growth, differentiation, and program innovation. MFI's authentic Montessori approach, certified educators, psychologist-led developmental support, and prepared environment aligned with international standards provide a clear competitive advantage in Cirebon's still-underserved premium PAUD market.

Financial analysis reinforces this feasibility. The expansion project demonstrates exceptional viability, with a Net Present Value (NPV) of IDR 5.47 billion, an Internal Rate of Return (IRR) of 49%, a Return on Investment (ROI) of 145%, and a Payback Period of approximately 2 years and 10 months. These indicators significantly exceed typical thresholds for educational investments and confirm strong liquidity, rapid capital recovery, and long-term profitability. The consistent growth in projected cash flows and the debt-free capital structure further strengthen financial resilience and reduce risk exposure.

Managerially and operationally, MFI shows solid institutional readiness. The presence of structured governance mechanisms, transparent digital financial systems, standardized teaching and administrative SOPs, and continuous professional training ensures efficient daily operations and compliance with regulatory standards. These practices also address reviewer feedback on objectivity, trustworthiness, and methodological coherence by demonstrating clear mechanisms for quality control, data validation, and internal accountability.

The entrepreneurial frameworks applied particularly the integration of Design Thinking with structured environmental analysis demonstrate that the business model is grounded in real user needs, validated market assumptions, and contextually relevant strategies. Although multiple analytical tools were used, the revised methodological structure ensures coherence and avoids redundancy, with Design Thinking guiding problem definition and solution development, while SWOT–IFAS–EFAS and financial analysis provide structured decision support.

In conclusion, the expansion of Montessori First Indonesia in Cirebon is not merely a profitable business initiative but a socially meaningful educational intervention. It fulfills a clear gap in high-quality early childhood education, supports parental needs for holistic, child-centered learning, and contributes to improving educational standards in the region. The combination of strategic opportunity, operational readiness, entrepreneurial innovation, and strong financial performance positions MFI as a replicable model for sustainable early childhood education development in Indonesia balancing academic quality, community empowerment, and long-term financial sustainability.

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FIGURES, CHARTS AND TABLES

Table SWOT Summary of Cirebon Montessori First Indonesia

SWOT Category	Description
Strengths	- First authentic Montessori institution in Cirebon -Certified Montessori teachers & child psychologists -Complete prepared-environment facilities (international standard) -Strong parent-engagement, parenting programs & community network
Weaknesses	-Limited classroom capacity -Low digital brand awareness- High dependence on Montessori-certified teachers (scarce locally) -High initial investment for authentic Montessori materials
Opportunities	-Growing middle-class population in Cirebon -Strong modern-parenting trends demanding holistic education -Supportive PAUD regulations & government encouragement -Rapid digitalization in education & marketing channels
Threats	-Competition from bilingual & international schools -Economic fluctuations impacting affordability -Growth of EduTech & online preschool alternatives -Regulatory changes in PAUD accreditation & licensing

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Tabel Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS)

Description	Score / Interpretation
Total IFAS	3.65 Internal strengths dominate

Source: Processed data (2025)

Table External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS)

Factor	Significance	Weight	Rating	Score
Local government support for early education	3	0.10	4	0.40
Middle-class growth and purchasing power	3	0.12	5	0.60
Modern parenting and holistic trends	3	0.11	4	0.44
Digitalization in education	2	0.09	4	0.36
Eco-friendly and outdoor learning demand	1	0.05	3	0.15
Regulatory changes in PAUD accreditation	3	0.08	3	0.24
Economic fluctuations	3	0.12	4	0.48
Competition from international schools	3	0.10	4	0.40
EduTech and online learning	2	0.08	3	0.24
Land limitation and pollution	1	0.05	3	0.15
Total	-	1.00	-	3.46

Source: Processed data (2025)

Table Financial Feasibility Summary of Montessori First Indonesia

Indicator	Value	Interpretation
Net Present Value (NPV)	IDR 5,472,000,000	The positive NPV indicates that the project is highly feasible and generates substantial added value.
Internal Rate of Return (IRR)	48%	The IRR is remarkably high and significantly exceeds the 6% discount rate, suggesting the project is highly attractive for investment.
Payback Period	2 Years	The capital recovery period is very rapid, reflecting investment efficiency.
Return on Investment (ROI)	139.16%	The rate of return is exceptionally high, providing strong yields within the five years of operation.
Revenue Growth (Year 1 – 5)	IDR 950 million → IDR 6.67 billion	Revenue growth is strong and consistent, supported by an increase in participant numbers and the pricing strategy.

Source: Processed data (2025)