

From Access to Participation: Inclusive Practices for Learners with Disabilities in Non-Formal Education

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Abstract:

Inclusive education requires more than providing access to learning opportunities; it requires meaningful participation for learners with disabilities. This study examines inclusive practices that support learners with disabilities in non-formal education settings. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study explores accessibility, pedagogical adaptation, communication, social interaction, learner agency, and institutional support. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of inclusive practices and barriers to participation. The findings indicate that meaningful inclusion develops through an interconnected process of educational access, accessibility, pedagogical adaptation, active participation, social participation, learner agency, and belonging. Key practices include flexible learning arrangements, accessible environments and communication, adapted teaching methods and materials, individualized support, peer interaction, family and community involvement, and institutional flexibility. The study highlights that access alone does not guarantee inclusion when environmental, pedagogical, communicative, social, and institutional barriers persist. The findings contribute to a participation-oriented understanding of inclusive education in non-formal settings.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental right that should be accessible to all individuals regardless of disability, social background, or individual differences. For learners with disabilities, however, the realization of this right involves more than simply providing opportunities to enroll in educational programs. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes that persons with disabilities have the right to education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, including access to lifelong learning, vocational education, and other educational opportunities. Inclusive education therefore requires educational systems to remove barriers and provide appropriate support so that learners with

disabilities can participate effectively in learning and community life (United Nations, 2006; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016).

Despite the growing international commitment to inclusive education, learners with disabilities continue to encounter substantial barriers to educational access and participation. UNICEF estimates that approximately 240 million children worldwide live with disabilities, and children with disabilities remain among those most likely to be excluded from education. Barriers include discrimination, stigma, inaccessible environments, inadequate support services, and limited institutional capacity to respond to diverse learning needs (UNICEF, 2025). These barriers demonstrate that educational exclusion cannot be understood merely as a problem of school enrollment. Rather, exclusion may continue within learning environments when learners are physically present but unable to participate meaningfully, interact with peers, access learning materials, or demonstrate their abilities on an equal basis.

This situation highlights the importance of distinguishing between **access** and **participation** in inclusive education. Access refers to the opportunity to enter or attend an educational setting, whereas participation concerns the extent to which learners are actively involved in learning activities, social interactions, decision-making, and the broader educational community. Inclusive education consequently requires more than opening the doors of educational institutions to learners with disabilities. It requires educational practices that enable learners to engage meaningfully and experience a sense of belonging. Research on participation has similarly emphasized that physical presence alone does not necessarily constitute inclusion, because learners may remain socially or pedagogically marginalized despite being enrolled in an educational setting (Garrote et al., 2017).

The shift from access to participation also requires a broader understanding of disability. Rather than locating educational difficulties exclusively within individual impairments, an inclusive perspective considers the environmental, pedagogical, social, and institutional barriers that may restrict participation. From this perspective, disability-inclusive education involves adapting learning environments, communication, materials, instructional strategies, and support systems to accommodate learner diversity. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes that inclusive education requires transformation in educational culture, policy, and practice, together with the removal of barriers that prevent full and effective participation (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016).

Although inclusive education is frequently discussed in relation to formal schools, educational opportunities extend beyond formal schooling. Non-formal education encompasses organized learning activities outside the formal education system, including courses, training programs, community learning groups, religious learning activities, and other structured educational initiatives. These settings are particularly important because they can provide flexible opportunities for individuals who may experience barriers within conventional educational institutions. The flexibility of non-formal learning environments may allow educators to adjust learning activities according to learners' interests, abilities, developmental conditions, and individual needs. Recent research has consequently identified non-formal education spaces as potentially important contexts for advancing inclusion and participation among learners with disabilities.

The potential of non-formal education for inclusion, however, should not be assumed automatically. Flexibility can facilitate inclusion, but it does not guarantee equitable participation. Non-formal education providers may also encounter challenges involving limited resources, insufficient knowledge of disability-inclusive pedagogy, inaccessible facilities, inadequate learning materials, and uncertainty about appropriate support strategies. Research on children with sensory loss in non-formal education, for example, has identified tensions between aspirations for inclusion and the practical conditions required to make participation genuinely accessible (Selkirk & Selkirk, 2025). This suggests that the quality of inclusion depends not simply

on whether learners with disabilities are admitted but on how educational providers respond to their individual and social needs.

Inclusive practices in non-formal education therefore need to address multiple dimensions of participation. At the pedagogical level, educators may need to adapt instructional methods, communication patterns, learning materials, assessment activities, and learning rhythms. At the social level, inclusive practice involves creating opportunities for interaction, peer support, collaboration, and meaningful participation in group activities. At the organizational level, institutions need policies and procedures that recognize disability, prevent discrimination, and provide reasonable accommodation. Such practices reflect the principle that inclusive education should respond to differences rather than require learners with disabilities to conform to a predetermined educational model. The international framework on inclusive education explicitly emphasizes accessibility, individualized support, reasonable accommodation, and effective participation as interconnected dimensions of educational inclusion (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016).

The role of educators and learning facilitators is particularly important in translating inclusive principles into everyday practice. In non-formal education, educators may have diverse professional backgrounds and may not always receive specialized preparation in special or inclusive education. Consequently, their understanding of disability and their ability to adapt learning activities can significantly shape learners' experiences of inclusion. Inclusive practice requires educators to recognize individual strengths, communicate in accessible ways, use flexible instructional strategies, and create learning environments in which learners with disabilities are treated as active participants rather than passive recipients of assistance. The need for educator capacity is also reflected in international guidance emphasizing appropriate skills, individualized instruction, accessible materials, and adequate support for learners with disabilities.

Participation also has an important social and relational dimension. Learners with disabilities may encounter stigma, stereotyping, social isolation, or negative expectations from peers and educators, all of which can restrict meaningful participation even when formal access has been achieved. Recent research in non-formal schooling has shown how disability can intersect with other forms of marginalization, including gender, displacement, and behavioral labeling. Such findings demonstrate that inclusion should be understood through the actual experiences and voices of learners rather than solely through institutional policies or enrollment figures (Chowdhury et al., 2024). Meaningful participation therefore requires learning environments in which learners with disabilities can express their perspectives, establish social relationships, contribute to activities, and exercise agency in their learning experiences.

An important implication of this perspective is that inclusive education should be evaluated not only by institutional provision but also by learners' lived experiences. Policies may formally recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education, while everyday practices may continue to produce exclusion through inaccessible communication, inflexible activities, insufficient support, or limited opportunities for social participation. UNICEF has similarly emphasized that inclusive education requires attention to both access and participation, particularly for marginalized learners who remain vulnerable to exclusion (UNICEF, 2024). Consequently, examining inclusive practice requires attention to what educational providers actually do, how learners experience those practices, and which institutional conditions facilitate or constrain participation.

Nevertheless, existing research on inclusive education has predominantly focused on formal schooling, while comparatively less attention has been directed toward the everyday implementation of inclusion in non-formal educational settings. Recent studies have begun to address this gap by examining disability inclusion in specific non-formal contexts, including sensory-loss education and community-based learning spaces. However, further research is needed to understand how non-formal education providers move beyond providing access

toward creating meaningful participation for learners with disabilities. In particular, there remains a need to examine the practical strategies used by educators, the barriers they encounter, and the forms of institutional and social support that enable inclusive participation.

Against this background, the present study focuses on inclusive practices for learners with disabilities in non-formal education. Rather than viewing inclusion primarily as a matter of enrollment or physical access, this study conceptualizes inclusion as a process through which learners are enabled to participate meaningfully in learning, social interaction, and educational activities. The study explores how non-formal education providers facilitate participation, how learning practices are adapted to diverse needs and abilities, and what challenges influence the implementation of inclusive practices. By shifting the analytical focus **from access to participation**, this study seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how non-formal education can function as an equitable learning environment for persons with disabilities and to provide practical insights for strengthening inclusive educational practices beyond the formal school system.

Method (منهج)

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how inclusive practices are implemented to support learners with disabilities in non-formal education. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on understanding experiences, practices, interactions, and contextual conditions rather than measuring the effectiveness of an intervention quantitatively. The case study design enabled the researchers to examine inclusion as a situated phenomenon within its natural educational context, particularly the ways in which educational providers facilitate learners' transition from basic access to meaningful participation in learning activities. Case study research is appropriate when a phenomenon needs to be examined in depth within its real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

The case was bounded by the specific non-formal educational setting in which learners with disabilities participate in organized learning activities. Non-formal education in this study refers to structured educational activities conducted outside the formal school system, including courses, training institutions, community learning groups, religious learning activities, and other organized forms of community-based education. The case was examined through three interconnected dimensions: access to educational opportunities, participation in learning activities, and institutional and pedagogical practices supporting inclusion. This bounded approach allowed the study to investigate not only whether learners with disabilities were able to enter a learning environment but also how they participated once access had been established.

Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the provision or experience of inclusive non-formal education. The participants may include educators, tutors, learning facilitators, program coordinators, administrators, learners with disabilities, and, where relevant, parents or caregivers. Selection was based on participants' ability to provide information about learning practices, accessibility, participation, support mechanisms, and barriers experienced within the educational setting. Purposive sampling was used because qualitative research requires information-rich participants who have relevant knowledge or experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. The use of multiple sources was intended to obtain a comprehensive understanding of inclusive practices and to enable comparison between participants' accounts, observed practices, and institutional documentation. Interviews provided access to participants' perceptions and experiences, observations captured actual interactions and learning practices, while documents provided information about the formal policies, programs, procedures, and

expectations governing inclusion. The combination of these sources strengthened the contextual depth of the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews focused on participants' experiences of inclusion and participation in non-formal education. Questions addressed several areas, including accessibility of learning environments, adaptation of instructional activities, communication with learners with disabilities, participation in individual and group activities, peer interaction, learning support, barriers to participation, and strategies used by educators to accommodate diverse needs. Learners with disabilities, where included as participants, were encouraged to describe their own experiences of participation, belonging, interaction, and challenges. Interviews with educators and administrators focused additionally on their understanding of inclusive education, institutional support, and the practical challenges of implementing inclusive practices.

Observations were conducted to examine how inclusion was enacted in everyday learning activities. Particular attention was given to the physical accessibility of learning spaces, communication between educators and learners, learner engagement, opportunities for interaction, peer support, adaptation of learning materials, flexibility of instructional strategies, and participation in individual and collaborative activities. Observation also considered whether learners with disabilities were positioned as active participants or primarily as recipients of assistance. Field notes were used to document relevant interactions, contextual conditions, and emerging patterns without disrupting the natural learning process.

Document analysis was used to examine the institutional dimensions of inclusion. Relevant documents may include program guidelines, learning schedules, curriculum or instructional materials, institutional policies, accessibility procedures, learner support records, training materials, and other documents related to the provision of non-formal education. These documents were analyzed to identify how inclusion and disability support were formally conceptualized and how institutional expectations corresponded with practices observed in the field. Document analysis also provided contextual evidence for understanding the relationship between formal institutional arrangements and the actual participation of learners with disabilities.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's approach, the analysis involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, development of potential themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and production of the final analytical account (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). The analysis was conducted iteratively, allowing themes to develop from repeated patterns across interviews, observations, and documents. Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for identifying meaningful patterns across qualitative data while retaining attention to the contextual and interpretive dimensions of participants' experiences.

The analysis focused specifically on the movement from access to participation. Initial codes related to accessibility, admission, physical environment, learning materials, communication, instructional adaptation, peer interaction, educator support, learner agency, and institutional barriers were compared and grouped into broader themes. The resulting themes were then interpreted in relation to three analytical questions: how learners with disabilities gain access to non-formal education, how they participate in learning and social activities, and what practices or conditions facilitate or constrain such participation. This analytical framework enabled the study to distinguish between formal inclusion, represented by access to educational opportunities, and substantive inclusion, represented by meaningful participation in educational and social processes.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed data triangulation, reflexive documentation, and comparison across participant perspectives and data sources.

Interview accounts were compared with observational evidence and relevant institutional documents to identify convergence, complementarity, or differences in the data. The researchers also maintained an analytical record of coding decisions and thematic development to support transparency throughout the research process. Where feasible, member checking was used to clarify participants' interpretations and reduce the possibility of misunderstanding their accounts. Ethical principles were maintained throughout the study, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, protection of participants' identities, and careful handling of information concerning disability and personal educational experiences.

Result (نتائج)

The thematic analysis identified twelve interconnected findings concerning the implementation of inclusive practices for learners with disabilities in non-formal education. The findings demonstrate that inclusion was understood not simply as providing opportunities for learners with disabilities to enter educational programs, but as creating conditions that enabled them to participate actively and meaningfully. Across interviews, observations, and relevant documents, the findings were organized around accessibility, pedagogical adaptation, communication, social participation, learner agency, support systems, and institutional conditions. The overall pattern indicates a gradual movement from providing access toward facilitating meaningful participation in learning and social activities.

The first finding concerns the availability of educational access. Non-formal education provided opportunities for learners with disabilities to participate in structured learning activities outside the formal school system. Access was facilitated through flexible enrollment arrangements, community-based learning opportunities, and learning programs that were less rigid than conventional formal education. However, access varied according to the characteristics of the learning environment, available resources, and the capacity of providers to respond to diverse needs. This finding indicates that non-formal education can function as an alternative or complementary pathway for learners who encounter barriers within conventional educational settings.

The second finding relates to physical and environmental accessibility. Meaningful participation was influenced by whether learning spaces, facilities, and learning arrangements could be accessed comfortably and safely by learners with different disabilities. The analysis indicated that physical access alone was insufficient when learners continued to encounter barriers in navigating learning spaces or accessing learning resources. Accessible seating arrangements, movement within the learning environment, appropriate positioning during activities, and availability of suitable learning materials were therefore important components of inclusive practice. These findings are consistent with recent research showing that accessibility and adequate resources remain important conditions for participation in non-formal education settings.

The third finding concerns the adaptation of teaching and learning practices. Educators and learning facilitators demonstrated the need to adjust instructional strategies according to learners' abilities, communication needs, learning pace, and modes of engagement. Adaptations included modifying explanations, providing additional demonstrations, allowing alternative forms of participation, and adjusting the complexity or duration of activities. Rather than applying identical instructional procedures to all learners, inclusive practice involved providing different pathways through which learners could achieve meaningful involvement in the same learning environment.

The fourth finding highlights accessible communication as a central component of inclusion. Learners with disabilities required communication practices that enabled them to

understand instructions, express their needs, ask questions, and interact with educators and peers. The findings indicate that communication barriers could directly reduce participation even when learners were physically present. Educators therefore needed to employ clear language, appropriate visual or non-verbal communication, repetition when necessary, and other accessible communication strategies according to individual learner needs. Communication was consequently identified as a bridge between physical access and active participation.

The fifth finding concerns active participation in learning activities. Inclusion became more visible when learners with disabilities were given opportunities to contribute to individual and group learning activities rather than simply observe or receive assistance. Participation involved responding to questions, completing learning tasks, contributing ideas, collaborating with peers, and taking part in practical activities. The findings suggest that educators played an important role in creating opportunities for participation by adjusting activities and avoiding practices that unintentionally positioned learners with disabilities as passive recipients of support.

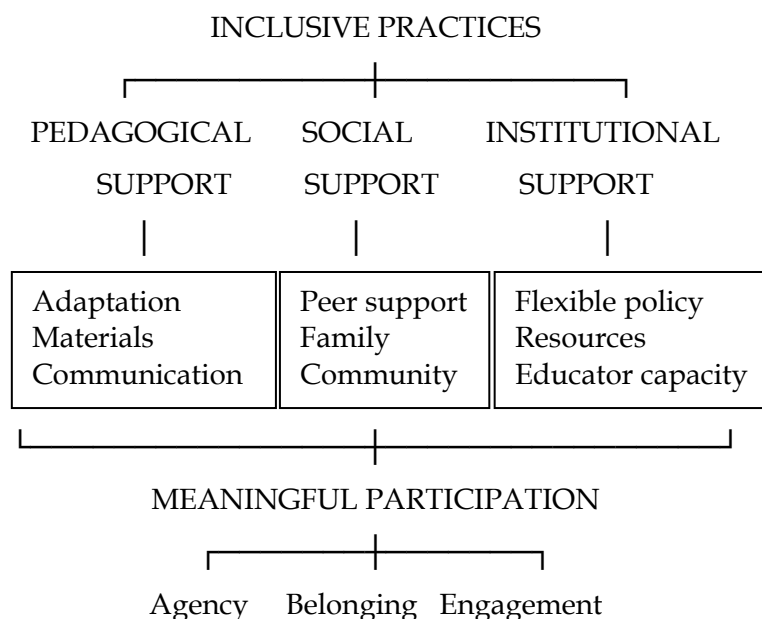
The sixth finding relates to peer interaction and social participation. The analysis indicated that inclusion involved not only the relationship between educators and learners but also relationships among learners themselves. Opportunities to interact, collaborate, communicate, and develop friendships contributed to a stronger sense of belonging. At the same time, differences in ability, communication, or social confidence could create barriers to interaction. Consequently, educators needed to facilitate peer understanding and collaborative activities so that learners with disabilities could participate as members of the learning community rather than as separate participants. Similar concerns have been reported in recent research on non-formal education, where peer awareness and opportunities for social interaction were identified as important dimensions of inclusion.

The seventh finding concerns learner agency and voice. Inclusive practice was stronger when learners with disabilities were given opportunities to express their preferences, identify difficulties, make choices, and contribute to decisions concerning their learning activities. Participation was therefore not understood solely in terms of observable involvement but also in terms of learners' ability to exercise choice and influence their learning experiences. This finding suggests that asking learners what activities they prefer and how they wish to participate can help educational providers develop more responsive forms of non-formal learning. Recent research in non-formal settings similarly emphasizes the importance of consulting learners with disabilities regarding activities in which they wish to participate.

The eighth finding concerns individualized support. Learners with disabilities did not necessarily require identical forms or levels of assistance. Some required additional explanation or guidance, while others benefited from peer support, adapted materials, additional time, or direct assistance from educators and caregivers. The findings indicate that inclusive practice was more effective when support was individualized rather than based on assumptions about disability. At the same time, individualized support needed to maintain learners' independence and avoid creating unnecessary dependence on adults.

The ninth finding concerns the role of families, caregivers, and community networks. Family and community support contributed to learners' ability to access and remain engaged in non-formal education. Caregivers could facilitate participation by providing transportation, communicating learners' needs, supporting learning activities, and coordinating with educators. Community organizations could also expand opportunities for participation by providing resources, volunteers, accessible activities, or specialized support. However, dependence on family availability and community resources could also create unequal opportunities among learners, particularly when inclusive services were geographically limited or insufficiently resourced. Such barriers have also been identified in recent research on non-formal education for learners with disabilities.

Figure 1. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors



The tenth finding concerns institutional flexibility. Non-formal education offered potential advantages because learning activities could be organized more flexibly in terms of schedules, instructional approaches, activities, and learner engagement. This flexibility enabled educators to respond to individual circumstances more readily than highly standardized educational arrangements. Nevertheless, flexibility was not automatically equivalent to inclusion. The analysis indicated that flexible practices required organizational commitment, clear procedures, adequate resources, and educators who understood how to translate flexibility into meaningful accommodation. Recent Indonesian research similarly identifies curriculum flexibility, teaching adaptation, institutional resources, and community support as important factors in non-formal education for marginalized learners, including persons with disabilities.

The eleventh finding concerns persistent barriers to participation. Despite the potential of non-formal education to provide flexible learning opportunities, several barriers could restrict meaningful participation, including inadequate facilities, limited educator preparation, insufficient learning resources, social stigma, communication difficulties, transportation challenges, and limited institutional capacity. The findings demonstrate that exclusion can occur even after learners have gained formal access to a program. In this sense, the major challenge is not simply enabling learners with disabilities to enter non-formal education but ensuring that they can remain engaged, interact with others, contribute to activities, and benefit from the learning experience.

The twelfth finding integrates the preceding themes into a transition from access to meaningful participation. The findings suggest that inclusive non-formal education can be understood as a process consisting of interconnected stages: access, accessibility, pedagogical adaptation, active participation, social interaction, learner agency, belonging. Access provides the initial opportunity to enter the learning environment, while accessible facilities and communication remove practical barriers. Pedagogical adaptation enables learners to engage with learning activities, while peer interaction and social support strengthen participation and belonging. Learner agency represents a further dimension in which learners with disabilities become active contributors to their own educational experiences. Thus, the central result of the study is that inclusion becomes substantive when educational providers move beyond admission and physical presence toward meaningful participation, agency, and belonging within the non-

formal learning community.

Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings demonstrate that inclusive education in non-formal settings should be understood as a process that extends beyond providing educational access. The central finding of this study is the transition from access to meaningful participation, in which learners with disabilities are not merely admitted into learning programs but are enabled to engage in learning activities, social interaction, decision-making, and community life. This interpretation is consistent with the broader international framework of inclusive education, which emphasizes the removal of barriers and the provision of reasonable accommodation to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in education (United Nations, 2006; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016). Inclusive education therefore needs to be evaluated not only through enrollment or physical presence but also through learners' opportunities to participate meaningfully in educational processes.

The findings concerning educational access indicate that non-formal education can provide valuable alternative and complementary pathways for learners with disabilities. The flexibility of courses, community learning groups, training programs, and other non-formal learning environments can create opportunities for individuals who may encounter barriers in more standardized educational systems. However, access represents only the first stage of inclusion. Recent research on non-formal education in Indonesia demonstrates that flexible curriculum arrangements, life-skills development, and social and character development can support more inclusive learning experiences in community-based education settings (Prasetyo et al., 2025). Similarly, research on non-formal education involving marginalized learners indicates that the flexibility of such settings can create opportunities for learners whose educational participation may be constrained in formal institutions (Chowdhury et al., 2024). Thus, the potential of non-formal education lies not simply in its capacity to enroll diverse learners but in its ability to adapt educational processes to their circumstances.

The second important finding concerns accessibility of the physical and learning environment. The study indicates that learners cannot participate fully when learning spaces, materials, communication systems, or learning activities remain inaccessible. Accessibility should therefore be understood as a structural condition for participation rather than an additional service provided after learners enter a program. The right to inclusive education requires educational environments to be accessible and to provide appropriate support according to individual needs (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016). Recent research involving deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in non-formal education similarly indicates that inaccessible environments and communication barriers can constrain educational participation (Selkirk & Selkirk, 2025). Accordingly, physical, technological, and communicative accessibility should be integrated into the design of non-formal learning environments.

Pedagogical adaptation represents another central mechanism through which access can be transformed into participation. The findings show that educators need to adjust teaching methods, learning materials, activity complexity, communication, and learning pace according to individual needs. Such adaptation challenges the assumption that equality means providing exactly the same learning experience to every learner. Instead, equitable education requires appropriate responses to learner differences so that individuals have meaningful opportunities to participate and demonstrate their abilities. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016) emphasizes that inclusive education requires individualized support and reasonable accommodation rather than expecting learners with disabilities to adapt themselves to inflexible educational structures. This perspective is also reflected in research on non-formal

education, which highlights the importance of flexible curriculum and instructional adaptation in responding to diverse learner needs (Prasetyo et al., 2025).

Accessible communication emerged as particularly important because participation depends on learners' ability to understand instructions, express ideas, ask questions, and interact with others. Physical presence without accessible communication can therefore produce a form of partial inclusion in which learners are present but remain marginalized from meaningful learning interactions. Research involving learners with sensory loss in non-formal education demonstrates that communication practices and the availability of appropriate support can significantly influence participation (Selkirk & Selkirk, 2025). Similarly, inclusive education frameworks emphasize the importance of accessible communication and learning materials as part of the obligation to provide effective participation for learners with disabilities (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016). The present findings consequently suggest that communication should be treated as a fundamental component of inclusive pedagogy rather than as a supplementary intervention.

The findings concerning active learning and peer interaction further demonstrate that participation has both pedagogical and social dimensions. Learners with disabilities become more meaningfully included when they are able to contribute to learning activities, collaborate with peers, develop relationships, and experience a sense of belonging. Research on social participation among learners with special educational needs has demonstrated the importance of peer interaction and opportunities for social engagement in inclusive educational environments (Garrote et al., 2017). In non-formal education, similar concerns have been identified in relation to learners with sensory loss, for whom peer awareness, social interaction, and opportunities to participate alongside other learners can influence their experience of inclusion (Selkirk & Selkirk, 2025). Therefore, inclusive practice should not isolate learners with disabilities through excessive individualized assistance; rather, support should enable them to participate as members of the wider learning community.

Learner agency represents a further development of the concept of participation identified in this study. The findings indicate that inclusion becomes more substantive when learners with disabilities can express preferences, communicate their needs, make choices, and influence aspects of their learning experiences. This finding shifts the understanding of inclusion from something that educators *do for* learners toward a process in which learners actively contribute to shaping their educational experiences. The importance of learner voice is particularly relevant in non-formal education because these settings often have greater flexibility to respond to individual interests and preferences. Research on inclusion in non-formal education has similarly emphasized the importance of considering the perspectives and preferences of learners with disabilities when designing activities and support (Selkirk & Selkirk, 2025). Learner agency can therefore be considered an important indicator of meaningful participation.

The findings also reveal that inclusive participation depends on support beyond the educator-learner relationship. Families, caregivers, peers, community members, and institutional actors can contribute to accessibility and sustained participation. This broader support system is particularly important in non-formal education because many programs operate through community networks and may have fewer specialized resources than formal educational institutions. Research on non-formal education has highlighted the importance of collaboration and community-based support in creating educational opportunities for marginalized learners (Chowdhury et al., 2024). At the same time, reliance on informal support can create inequalities when families and communities possess different levels of resources and capacity. Consequently, inclusive practice requires coordination between educators, families, communities, and institutions rather than placing responsibility for inclusion on individual educators alone.

Institutional flexibility was another important finding, but the study demonstrates that

flexibility alone does not guarantee inclusion. Flexible schedules, learning activities, curriculum arrangements, and instructional approaches can facilitate participation, but they need to be supported by educator competence, adequate resources, institutional commitment, and clear inclusive procedures. Inclusive education requires systematic transformation of educational culture, policy, and practice rather than isolated accommodations for individual learners (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016). In the context of non-formal education, research has also identified institutional capacity, resources, curriculum flexibility, and educator preparedness as important conditions for implementing inclusive practices (Prasetyo et al., 2025; Selkirk & Selkirk, 2025). Consequently, inclusive education requires a combination of flexible practices and systematic institutional support rather than relying solely on the goodwill or individual initiative of educators.

The findings contribute to the conceptual understanding of inclusion by proposing that meaningful participation develops through a sequence of interconnected conditions: access, accessibility, pedagogical adaptation, active participation, social interaction, learner agency, and belonging. This framework extends the conventional understanding of inclusion by emphasizing what happens after access has been achieved. The distinction is important because educational inclusion can remain incomplete when learners are physically present but experience barriers to participation, interaction, or learning (Garrote et al., 2017). At the same time, the emerging literature on disability inclusion in non-formal education indicates that these settings deserve greater attention because they represent important spaces for lifelong learning, community participation, and educational opportunity (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Selkirk & Selkirk, 2025). The study therefore positions non-formal education not merely as an alternative route for providing educational access but as a potentially important space in which equitable participation can be constructed through accessible environments, responsive pedagogy, social relationships, and learner agency.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that inclusive education in non-formal settings should be understood as a process that extends beyond providing educational access toward enabling meaningful participation. The findings demonstrate that access becomes more substantive when it is supported by environmental accessibility, pedagogical adaptation, accessible communication, active learning opportunities, peer interaction, individualized support, learner agency, and institutional flexibility. These dimensions are interconnected rather than isolated practices: accessible environments create opportunities for engagement, adapted pedagogy enables learners to participate according to their needs, supportive communication facilitates interaction, and social and institutional support strengthens learners' sense of belonging and agency. This understanding is consistent with the human-rights-based conception of inclusive education, which emphasizes accessibility, reasonable accommodation, support, and the active involvement of persons with disabilities in educational processes.

The study therefore proposes a conceptual shift from access to meaningful participation, represented through the progression of access, accessibility, pedagogical adaptation, active participation, social participation, learner agency, belonging. This perspective highlights that the presence of learners with disabilities in non-formal education does not, by itself, constitute inclusion; inclusion is achieved when learners are able to engage, interact, express their preferences, exercise agency, and experience equitable opportunities for learning and social participation. For non-formal education providers, this implies the need to develop flexible learning arrangements, strengthen educator capacity, provide accessible materials and communication, facilitate peer and community support, and involve learners with disabilities in

decisions concerning their learning. Future research can further examine this framework across different types of non-formal education institutions and disability contexts to understand how inclusive practices can be sustained and adapted to diverse learner needs.

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