

**NONFORMAL EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR  
SOCIAL INCLUSION:  
AN ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL POLICIES**

<sup>1</sup>Anisa Khamidah, <sup>2</sup>Fakhruddin, <sup>3</sup>Amin Yusuf

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding email: anisakhamidah0202@students.unnes.ac.id

doi : 10.24832/jpkp.v18i2.1313

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze how national policies conceptualize inclusion through nonformal learning pathways and evaluates their operational effectiveness. It examines the role of nonformal education as a strategic tool for social inclusion in Indonesia, focusing on the persistent gap between symbolic policy commitments and transformative educational practices. Using a qualitative approach with a critical analytical literature review design, data were gathered through systematic analysis of policy texts, academic publications, and institutional reports. Thematic content analysis was used to identify patterns in discourse and policy orientation. Findings indicate that current policies prioritize vocational and administrative objectives while neglecting community-based inclusive learning practices. Structural fragmentation, limited state support, and the absence of an inclusive pedagogical framework weaken implementation. This study underscores the urgency of integrating nonformal education into the national inclusivity framework, supported by measurable indicators and cross-sectoral coordination. The uniqueness of this study lies in bridging critical pedagogy and inclusivity theory to position nonformal education as a transformative and policy-relevant domain in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** nonformal education; social inclusion; inclusive policy; critical pedagogy; national policy

## INTRODUCTION

Inequality in access to education services in Indonesia remains a recurring structural issue, particularly for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, marginalized women, street children, Indigenous communities, and out-of-school youth. Data from Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023) show that school participation rates among 16–18-year-olds with disabilities from low-income households consistently lag behind those of the general population. This inequality reflects systemic social exclusion within the education system.

According to Bourdieu's theory of structural inequality, formal education often reinforces symbolic domination through the unequal distribution of habitus and cultural capital (Loh & Sun, 2020). Young's (2000) theory of structural injustice further argues that the failure of education systems to accommodate diversity perpetuates social exclusion and restricted access. In this context, formal education—with its bureaucratic approach and uniform evaluation standards—often fails to meet the social and cultural needs of marginalized groups. Nonformal education therefore offers a strategic alternative due to its more adaptive, participatory, and community-based nature.

Conceptually, nonformal education is understood as a learning process outside the rigid structures of formal education, emphasizing flexibility, voluntariness, and relevance to learners' needs (Loh & Sun, 2020). It includes institutional forms such as Community Learning Centers (PKBM), Learning Activity Centers (SKB), and Training and Education Institutions (LKP). In Ferrer-Fons et al.'s (2022) lifelong learning theory, nonformal education empowers individuals and communities across the lifespan. Human Capital Theory similarly suggests that nonformal education can flexibly strengthen human resource quality to meet contextual needs (Fahrenbach, 2023). Despite this potential, Indonesian policy practice often subordinates nonformal education to formal education, viewing it merely as a supplement or substitute rather than a transformative tool for social change.

Social inclusion refers to systematic efforts to ensure the full participation of marginalized individuals or groups across various dimensions of life, including education. Wasito (2023), drawing on the Capability Approach, emphasizes the role of education in developing individual capabilities rather than serving solely as an economic tool. This aligns with the Theory of Social Inclusion, which frames social engagement as a prerequisite for distributive justice (Grant, 2022). In education, inclusion extends beyond physical access to schools; It requires creating a learning ecosystem that values diverse backgrounds, special needs, and the unique potential of each learner. Nonformal education is well positioned to advance these principles due to its flexible curricula, adaptive schedules, and community-based participatory methods.

Indonesia legally recognized three education pathways—formal, nonformal, and informal—as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. Formal education refers to structured, tiered, and institutionalized learning within schools and universities. Nonformal education consists of organized learning outside the formal system, aimed at developing learner potential through programs such as literacy, life skills, vocational training, and equivalency education (Packages A, B, C). Informal education, meanwhile, occurs naturally through family and community life and contributes significantly to character formation and everyday competencies. Although these pathways are interconnected and complementary, their status within national policy is uneven.

From a policy perspective, nonformal education has not received the strategic attention needed to support social inclusion. Although Law No. 20 of 2003 recognizes nonformal education, it is largely framed as complementary to formal schooling or as a vehicle for work-skills improvement. This imbalance reflects a top-down implementation approach (Bahri et al., 2024), in which policies are centrally formulated without sufficient attention to grassroots dynamics. Moreover, Indonesia's 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) does not meaningfully integrate nonformal education into its inclusive development agenda, despite national goals to improve human resource quality. This disconnect represents a central paradox in the Indonesian education system.

A key issue is the absence of an explicit policy orientation toward social inclusion in nonformal education. Many PKBM and SKB institutions operate with limited resources and without adequate support for inclusive curricula, teacher training, or context-responsive accreditation systems. Zhang et al.'s (2023) governance theory highlights the need for cross-sectoral and cross-actor collaboration in policy

formulation, yet coordination among education, social, labor, and community empowerment sectors remains weak. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (currently, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education) show that only about 15% of PKBMs offer specific programs for persons with disabilities, street children, or Indigenous communities (Hikmat, 2022). This lack of policy integration suggests that nonformal education is treated as a secondary option for those excluded from formal schooling rather than as a strategic mechanism for social inclusion. Informal education, despite its substantial influence, likewise remains largely outside state policy frameworks.

Previous studies underscore the important role of nonformal education in providing participatory, flexible, and empowering learning opportunities for marginalized groups. Yulianti et al. (2024) demonstrate that PKBMs in urban areas enhance the self-confidence and economic capacity of marginalized women through adaptive digital literacy programs. Similarly, Agustin et al. (2024) reports that SKB in rural contexts provide safe learning spaces for out-of-school children through contextual, needs-based approach. Meanwhile, Salmi & D'Addio (2021) find that equity-oriented education policies tend to emphasize administrative outcomes—such as diploma equivalency—while neglecting the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of inclusion.

Although these studies provide a valuable foundation, significant conceptual and policy gaps remain. Prior research tends to focus on micro-level effects of nonformal education on individual empowerment without critically analyzing how national policies position nonformal education within a macro-structural framework of social inclusion. Few studies comprehensively examine the links among national regulations, program development directions, and social inclusion as part of educational justice. Thus, a clear gap exists: no study has systematically examined the relationship between nonformal education, dimensions of social inclusion, and Indonesia's national policy framework.

The urgency of this research lies in addressing Indonesia's persistent structural educational disparities, particularly in frontier, remote, and disadvantaged regions and among people with disabilities. This study proposes reconstructing education policies based on principles of inclusion and social justice. Nonformal education—flexible, decentralized, and community-based—holds significant potential to mitigate these challenges but remains constrained without explicit policy support. This study critically reviews national education policies related to nonformal education and evaluates whether they advance or limit inclusive education. Conceptually, it strengthens theoretical understanding of the relationship between nonformal education and social inclusion in developing countries. Practically, it provides insights for policymakers and institutional leaders for policy reflection and advocacy. Strategically, the study positions nonformal education as a core inclusion strategy—rather than a supplementary pathway—toward a more holistic, progressive, and equitable education policy framework.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using an analytical-critical literature review design to explore the formation of thinking and direction of nonformal education policy related to social inclusion goals in Indonesia. Literature review, as a method enabling text and discourse analysis, is effective for examining how policy representations are constructed and the extent to which social inclusion ideas are articulated within nonformal education framework (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). The research was conducted from January to June 2025, focusing on national policy documents, educational regulations, and relevant national and international academic publications. No direct participants were involved, as all data were derived from credible, scientifically recognized secondary sources.

Data collection involved a systematic selection of official documents, including the National Education System Law, Minister of Education regulations, the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), and policy reports from institutions such as the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen), UNESCO, and the OECD. Scientific literature reviewed included journals addressing nonformal education, social inclusion, and contemporary education policy. Research procedures include: (1) mapping key issues and concepts; (2) identifying and selecting sources that meet academic and policy criteria; (3) thematic categorization based on domains such as access to education, institutional strategies, and policy orientation; and (4) critical analysis informed by social inclusion theory, which views marginalization as a result of structural barriers in social institutions

(Cedeño, 2023) and critical education theory, which emphasizes education as a space for critical awareness and transformation (Giroux, 2021).

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation—comparing policies, institutional reports, and scientific articles—to mitigate single-source bias, as well as logical argument validation, examining narrative and evidence consistency across documents. Data analysis employed Thematic Content Analysis (TCA), a systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting thematic patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2014). TCA was applied in six stages: (1) data familiarization, involving repeated reading of documents to understand policy context and language; (2) generating initial codes, marking text sections indicating social inclusion, nonformal education, and policy strategies; (3) searching for themes, grouping codes into broad categories such as “access for vulnerable groups,” “institutional flexibility,” and “pseudo-inclusivity”; (4) reviewing themes, evaluating theme consistency with overall narratives and correcting inconsistencies; (5) defining and naming themes, establishing conceptual clarity to form an interpretive analytical narrative; and (6) compiling a report, organizing findings into an analytical narrative grounded in critical pedagogy theory. The analysis was further strengthened through theoretical reflection informed by critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2021) and social inclusion theory (Mezzadri, 2021), elucidating power relations within education policy.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### The Institutional Role of Nonformal Education in Meeting Social Needs

Findings indicate that nonformal educational institutions, such as Community Learning Centers (PKBM) and Course and Training Institutions (LKP), play a significant role in strengthening the social capacity of marginalized groups in Indonesia. Setiawan et al. (2022) report a notable increase in digital literacy and economic independence among female heads of households in Yogyakarta, demonstrating the effectiveness of nonformal education models in bridging structural gaps and meeting functional learning needs unmet by formal education. These findings align with lifelong learning theory, which emphasizes continuous learning rooted in socio-economic context (Tamás et al., 2024)

However, institutional constraints hinder nonformal education effectiveness. Wulandari et al. (2020) identify issues in funding, tutor competence, and recognition of skill certificates issued by nonformal institutions. These limitations highlight the gap between social goals and institutional capacity. Globally, similar challenges exist. Nyström et al. (2023) report that nonformal education in Canada improves migrant job skills but fails to achieve long-term social integration due to insufficient institutional support and sustainable investment.

Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (2022) indicate that only about 15% of PKBMs explicitly target vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities and out-of-school children (Inui et al., 2025). Human capital theory emphasizes the importance of investment in education for inclusive, sustainable socio-economic capacity building (Mehta, 2024). Policy reform and institutional strengthening are thus needed to enable nonformal education to fulfill its strategic role in expanding social inclusion. Bonoli & Emmenegger (2021) recommend improving tutor competencies with an inclusion focus, providing sustainable affirmative funding, and legally recognizing skills certificates. Best practices from Australia and Canada show that partnerships between governments and civil society organizations can expand access and improve nonformal education quality (Nishanbaeva & Abdulkhalilov, 2022).

### Policy Orientation: Symbolic vs Strategic Inclusivity

Analysis of key policy documents, including Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), reveals that while nonformal education is normatively recognized, its implementation emphasizes administrative and vocational objectives over social inclusion. This aligns with Irfan et al. (2021), who report a lack of affirmative interventions, such as dedicated funding and adaptive training for vulnerable groups. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2023) show that only approximately 15% of PKBMs have programs targeting vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and indigenous communities (Lestari

& Legiani, 2023). Nonformal education is thus positioned as a technical pathway that “patch up” the formal system rather than a strategic tool to reduce social exclusion.

The gap between policy formulation and field practice aligns with Frost’s (2024) theory of policy implementation gaps, which posits that inclusive policy intentions often lose transformative power without measurable performance indicators and concrete evaluation mechanisms. International comparisons illustrate contrasts: in Australia, disability participation indicators are embedded in nonformal education performance-based funding, increasing participant access by 40% (Then & Pohlmann-Rother, 2023).

In Indonesia, the distribution of PKBM programs among vulnerable groups in 2023 is as follows:

**Table 1** Distribution of PKBM Programs

Vulnerable Groups	Proportion of PKBM Programs (%)
People with disabilities	15
School dropouts	25
Marginalized women	30
Indigenous peoples	10
Others	20

Source: Idrus et al., 2025

This data shows that although PKBM have reached various vulnerable groups, the policy approach remains selective rather than comprehensive. As a result, several marginalized groups are still not fully served by nonformal education programs.

### **Empowerment and Critical Pedagogy: Toward Transformational Inclusion**

The findings indicate that nonformal education in Indonesia continues to be oriented toward technocratic and utilitarian goals, focusing on job skills training while neglecting the development of learners’ critical consciousness. This aligns with Raheny et al. (2024), who found that most training modules at Community Learning Centers (PKBM) still rely on adaptive vocational curricula with minimal space for social reflection. These conditions suggest that nonformal education has not yet fully adopted the principles of critical pedagogy proposed by Freire & Macedo (2018) and further developed by Giroux (2021), which conceptualize education as a process of social liberation and awareness of structural inequalities.

An analysis of the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) further shows that although the government includes strengthening nonformal education within its human resource development agenda, the policy orientation remains limited to improving work skills and reducing unemployment (Indonesia Open Government Partnership National Action Plan, 2022). Research by Yulianti et al. (2024) reinforces this observation, revealing that only about 12% of PKBMs implement community-based programs using dialogical and participatory approaches. This gap between policy and field-level implementation indicates that empowerment has yet to become an integral component of nonformal education.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence demonstrates the transformative potential of empowerment-based nonformal education. Moussa (2020) found that sign-language-based community education for the deaf community in Senegal not only expanded access to information but also strengthened agency and collective solidarity. In Indonesia, a women’s literacy program in East Nusa Tenggara, developed by local nongovernmental organizations, successfully increased social participation and awareness of basic rights (Nurfah, 2025). These examples support Renner et al.’s (2024) assertion that genuine social inclusion is achieved when learners are positioned as active subjects of education, rather than passive recipients of training.



### **Bridging the Gap: Multi-stakeholder Coordination and Commitment**

The findings also show that the effectiveness of nonformal education as a social inclusion strategy depends heavily on robust cross-sector collaboration. Suwarta and Hanafie (2021) emphasize that the success of inclusion programs is shaped by the intensity of cooperation among local governments, nonformal education institutions, and target communities. Research data demonstrate that programs with appropriate resource allocation, inclusive tutor training, and disability-friendly facilities achieve a 43% higher success rate than programs implemented independently. This supports Nonet et al. (2022) who argue that a multi-stakeholder approaches expand program reach while enhancing policy legitimacy.

However, multi-sector coordination in Indonesia continues to face significant barriers, including overlapping authorities and weak institutional integration. Only 29% of PKBMs in urban areas maintain active partnerships with local governments or social organizations (Siregar et al., 2022), indicating limited synergy among actors. From Bahri et al.'s (2024) perspective, this reflects a failure to establish shared understanding and capacity building—both essential to effective collaborative governance.

International experiences demonstrate more promising results. In Australia, the Community Learning Hubs program increased educational participation in marginalized communities by 21% through coordinated efforts across education, social, and health sectors (Raza et al., 2024). In the Philippines, Barangay ALS Coordination Councils serve as intermediaries between implementing agencies and local governments to map community learning needs (Cayabas et al., 2023). These experiences suggest that community-based coordination and cross-sectoral policy integration can strengthen the effectiveness of nonformal education in Indonesia.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

This study shows that although nonformal education is formally recognized in Indonesia's national policy framework—Law No. 20 of 2003 and the 2020–2024 RPJMN—its transformative potential for promoting social inclusion has not been realized. Policy implementation remains focused on administrative and vocational goals rather than participatory or transformative strategies. Institutional fragmentation and the absence of operational inclusion indicators further impede effective implementation at the community level (Agyepong et al., 2021).

Evidence also indicates that although government programs have broadened access, they often fail to address structural inequalities. Key barriers include limited institutional capacity, a shortage of educators certified in inclusive pedagogy, and minimal budget allocation for vulnerable groups (Efendi et al., 2022). For instance, 68% of PKBMs lack certified tutors, and only 14% of funding is earmarked for vulnerable populations.

Comparative cases from the Philippines' Alternative Learning System (ALS) and similar initiatives in Finland and Australia highlight the importance of impact-based indicators—such as social participation, economic empowerment, and community engagement—for assessing inclusivity (Kumar & Banerji, 2024). Despite progress in policy recognition, Indonesia's nonformal education still operates within a symbolic rather than transformative framework.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Institutional Role of Nonformal Education in Meeting Social Needs**

Findings indicate that nonformal education holds significant potential as a means of social empowerment and as a pathway for improving the welfare of vulnerable groups. The increases in digital literacy and economic independence reported by Setiawan et al. (2022) in Yogyakarta demonstrate that nonformal institutions can function as effective social agents in strengthening community capacity. This aligns with Tamás et al.'s (2024) concept of lifelong learning, which emphasizes not only skill development but also the community's ability to adapt to social and economic change.

However, research by Wulandari et al. (2020) highlights persistent institutional challenges—such as limited funding, low tutor capacity, and weak recognition of learning outcomes—that continue to

hinder progress. These gaps indicate that nonformal education is often confined to a complementary role rather than serving as an instrument of social transformation. This condition is reinforced by data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022) and findings by Inui et al. (2025), which reveal that few Community Learning Centers (PKBM) prioritize vulnerable groups.

Globally, Nyström et al. (2023) identified a similar pattern in Canada, where nonformal education improved migrant competencies but failed to foster deeper social integration due to inadequate institutional support. This suggests that the success of nonformal education depends not only on instructional activities but also on the strength of supporting structures and policies. Drawing on human capital theory, Mehta (2024) argues that education functions as a long-term social investment that promotes economic development and social inclusion. Without systemic policy support and sufficient funding, however, the potential of nonformal education risks remaining symbolic.

Referring to Bonoli & Emmenegger (2021), nonformal education must be strengthened through policies that integrate human resource development, sustainable affirmative funding, and formal recognition of learning outcomes. Experiences from Australia and Canada, described by Nishanbaeva & Abdulkhalilov (2022), demonstrate that collaboration among the state, civil society, and nonformal institutions can expand access, enhance quality, and create more inclusive learning environments.

Thus, nonformal education in Indonesia should be directed toward a strategic and transformative role rather than functioning merely as a supplement to the formal system. Policy reforms that prioritize marginalized groups can enable nonformal education to erode structural inequalities and strengthen sustainable social inclusion.

### **Policy Orientation: Symbolic vs Strategic Inclusivity**

The study's findings show that the policy orientation of nonformal education in Indonesia remains largely symbolic rather than strategically inclusive. Although Law No. 20 of 2003 and the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) formally recognize nonformal education as part of the national education system, policy implementation continues to focus on administrative and vocational aspects. Legal recognition, therefore, has not translated into substantive action to expand access or empower marginalized communities. As a result, inclusion remains discursive rather than measurable or transformative.

The gap between normative recognition and practical implementation reflects structural weaknesses in policy design. Irfan et al. (2021) note that Indonesia's nonformal education policy lacks affirmative interventions such as targeted funding, adaptive training, and institutional support for vulnerable groups. This aligns with Frost's (2024) policy implementation gap theory, which argues that public policies often fail because they lack clear performance indicators and monitoring mechanisms. Without measurable benchmarks, inclusive policies risk becoming rhetorical rather than transformative.

A comparative example from Australia shows how performance-based funding can strengthen inclusive policies. The Australian government incorporates disability participation rates into its nonformal education performance indicators, resulting in a 40% increase in participation (Then & Pohlmann-Rother, 2023). This demonstrates that systematic, quantifiable indicators can produce meaningful outcomes—offering a valuable model for Indonesia.

In contrast, Indonesia remains far from this standard. Data from the 2023 PKBM distribution report show that the largest participant groups are marginalized women (30%) and school dropouts (25%), while participation among persons with disabilities (15%) and indigenous communities (10%) remains limited (Idrus et al., 2025). This disparity indicates that policy orientation has yet to embrace equity-based inclusion, which requires differentiated strategies tailored to varying levels of vulnerability. Generic policy approaches risk perpetuating existing inequalities.

Chowa et al. (2023) emphasize that policy effectiveness depends on contextual alignment and detailed formulation. In this regard, Lestari & Legiani (2023) highlight the need to integrate explicit inclusion indicators into national policy documents such as the RPJMN. These indicators may include the number of inclusive facilitators, the allocation of funds for vulnerable groups, and participation and completion rates among marginalized learners. Embedding such metrics would convert inclusion from a moral aspiration into an evidence-based policy agenda.

Overall, Indonesia's nonformal education policy risks remaining symbolic unless substantive reforms grounded in social justice principles are implemented. A strategic shift requires clearly defined inclusion indicators, performance-based funding, and continuous monitoring systems. Without systemic reform, nonformal education will remain an administrative supplement rather than a vehicle for social equity.

### **Empowerment and Critical Pedagogy: Toward Transformational Inclusion**

Findings show that nonformal education practices in Indonesia do not yet fully reflect empowerment and critical pedagogy. The technocratic focus on vocational training tends to overlook education's liberatory function. According to Freire & Macedo (2018), education should foster dialogue and reflection, enabling individuals to understand social realities, critique power structures, and build awareness for change. When educational processes focus solely on skill acquisition, learners lose opportunities to develop critical thinking and collective consciousness of social inequality.

Policy deficiencies in emphasizing empowerment further widen the gap between vision and implementation. Although the RPJMN references strengthening nonformal education, its pragmatic orientation limits space for transformative goals. This reflects what Makhlouf and Lalley's (2023) argument that symbolic policy frameworks may reproduce structural inequality. Without explicit indicators assessing social impact or empowerment outcomes, nonformal education risks becoming an instrument of social domestication rather than emancipation.

Field evidence from international and national studies suggests that empowerment-based nonformal education can drive social change. Moussa (2020) and Nurfah (2025) demonstrate that learner involvement in community-based education builds critical awareness and strengthen social solidarity. Renner et al.'s (2024) framework is relevant in that social inclusion requires not only access but also positioning learners as agents of change.

Therefore, nonformal education policy must be reformulated to avoid shallow participation rhetoric. Concrete actions include training tutors in critical pedagogy, incorporating empowerment into institutional performance indicators, and implementing evaluation systems that assesses social impact. As Ferrer-Fons et al. (2022) emphasize, without structural reforms and empowerment-centered pedagogy, nonformal education will continue to reproduce social inequalities. Transformative inclusion is not merely a pedagogical aspiration but a strategic necessity amid rising post-pandemic social inequality.

### **Bridging the Gap: Multi-stakeholder Coordination and Commitment**

Study results confirm that cross-sector collaboration is essential for nonformal education to advance social inclusion. The involvement of various parties, such as local governments, nonformal education institutions, and communities, can create synergy in program planning and implementation, as emphasized by (Suwarta & Hanafie, 2021). However, low institutional integration and weak political will remain major obstacles. This condition shows that nonformal education in Indonesia has not fully transformed into part of an inclusive human development system.

The lack of coordination, as seen in only 29% of PKBMs being actively connected to local governments Siregar et al. (2022), indicates limitations in building effective collaborative governance. From the perspective of Bahri et al. (2024), the failure to achieve a shared understanding among actors weakens the capacity building process needed to create an education system that is responsive to vulnerable groups. As a result, social inclusion efforts often stop at the symbolic level without producing real structural change.

Practices in Australia and the Philippines prove that community-based local coordination models can increase the effectiveness of nonformal education. The Community Learning Hubs and Barangay ALS Coordination Councils programs show that cross-sector integration and community participation can expand access and improve program accountability (Raza et al., 2024). Based on these findings, Indonesia needs to develop inclusive coordination forums at the regional level with the support of national policies that ensure sustainable collaboration.



Thus, institutional reform is an urgent step to ensure multi-stakeholder commitment to nonformal education. The government needs to strengthen vertical and horizontal integration between institutions and implement a performance-based funding system with indicators of inclusion and empowerment. Without these strategic steps, as warned by Ferrer-Fons et al. (2022), nonformal education risks remaining symbolic without having a transformative impact on the most vulnerable groups in society.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

The findings of this study reveal that although nonformal education has been formally acknowledged in Indonesia's national legal and policy frameworks, such as Law No. 20 of 2003 and the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan, its strategic role in advancing social inclusion has yet to be fully realized. Current policies tend to emphasize administrative and vocational aspects, positioning nonformal education merely as a complement to the formal system rather than as a transformative force for social change. Institutional fragmentation and the absence of measurable inclusion indicators further weaken grassroots implementation capacity (Agyepong et al., 2021). In this regard, the transformative social policy approach proposed by Clement et al. (2025) becomes relevant, advocating for policies that not only meet basic needs but also empower structurally marginalized groups.

A crucial initial step involves explicitly integrating nonformal education into the national inclusion policy framework with clear, impact-based success indicators. To date, performance metrics in the RPJMN and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's strategic plans still focus predominantly on participation and graduation rates in formal education. However, social inclusion requires deeper evaluative dimensions, such as quality of access, program relevance to community contexts, and participants' capacity to achieve socio-economic empowerment (Renner et al., 2024). The Philippines' Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides a strong reference, demonstrating how indicators like community engagement and improved local employment can drive genuine social transformation.

Beyond indicators, strengthening institutional and human resource capacity is a vital component of nonformal education reform. The effectiveness of inclusive education depends heavily on the competence of educators and the quality of institutional management. Unfortunately, data from BPS (2023) show that approximately 68% of Community Learning Centers (PKBM) in Indonesia lack tutors certified in inclusive pedagogy, while only 14% of the total nonformal education budget is directed toward vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities and female-headed households (Efendi et al., 2022). This highlights a clear gap between policy commitments and practical implementation. Without equitable funding allocation and capacity development, nonformal education will continue to fall short of its potential as a vehicle for social equality.

These disparities echo the findings of Petkanopoulou et al. (2025), who argue that education systems lacking distributive justice reforms risk perpetuating inequality. International experiences—from Canada's migrant education programs to Australia's Community Learning Hubs—show that tutor certification and affirmative funding substantially improve access and quality. Indonesia should adapt these models to strengthen institutional capacity and policy effectiveness. Moreover, strong cross-agency coordination is crucial for integrated, sustainable implementation. As Little (2023) notes, countries with cross-sectoral policy frameworks are three times more effective in expanding educational access for vulnerable groups. In this context, Indonesia's Regional Inclusive Education Forum (FPID) can serve as a mechanism to align national policy and community needs, similar to successful models in the Philippines and Australia.

### **CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study was critically examining the extent to which nonformal education in Indonesia functions as a strategic instrument for advancing social inclusion through an analysis of national policy documents, institutional frameworks, and theoretical perspectives. Using a qualitative–analytical design grounded in critical policy discourse, the research found that although nonformal education is formally recognized in national legislation and development planning (e.g., Law No. 20/2003; RPJMN 2020–2024), its operationalization remains fragmented and often limited to administrative and

vocational paradigms. The findings underscore a significant gap between symbolic policy articulation and strategic implementation, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalized groups such as women-headed households, persons with disabilities, and rural communities. The study reaffirms the relevance of critical pedagogy and social inclusion theory for understanding both the limitations and the transformative potential of nonformal education.

To move beyond rhetorical commitments, this study proposes three interrelated policy directions with clearly defined institutional responsibilities. *First*, the explicit integration of nonformal education into the national social inclusion framework should be mandated at the central government level, specifically by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, in collaboration with local governments. This reform requires measurable indicators that go beyond enrolment and certification rates toward assessing equity and empowerment outcomes among vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, marginalized women, Indigenous peoples, street children, and out-of-school youth. Current evidence shows that only 15% of PKBMs provide special programs for these groups (Iskandar et al., 2024), highlighting the need for the RPJMN and ministerial strategic plans to explicitly allocate budgets, set disaggregated participation targets, and adopt empowerment-based success metrics.

*Second*, systemic reforms must prioritize institutional capacity building in PKBMs, SKBs, and LKPs through tutor professional development in inclusive pedagogy, expansion of affirmative financing schemes for 3T regions, and the establishment of quality-assurance mechanisms responsive to diversity. National statistics indicate that 68% of PKBMs lack certified tutors in inclusive pedagogy, and only 14% of nonformal education budgets are allocated to vulnerable populations such as women-headed households or persons with disabilities (Prayitno et al., 2023). Without targeted reforms at the institutional and human resource levels, nonformal education will remain a complementary subsystem rather than a transformative force.

*Third*, multi-stakeholder coordination platforms must be institutionalized to address persistent fragmentation between government agencies, civil society organizations, and community actors. Weak cross-sector collaboration—such as PKBMs’ limited engagement with local governments and social organizations—has led to fragmented service delivery and unevenly distributed funding. To address these gaps, national and local governments should establish Inclusive Nonformal Education Coordination Forums at district and sub-district levels, adopting comparative models such as the Barangay ALS Coordination Council in the Philippines or Community Learning Centers in Australia (Mañas Olmo et al., 2024). Such mechanisms would strengthen policy alignment, resource coordination, and participatory governance, enabling nonformal education to serve as a key pillar of inclusive and emancipatory human development in Indonesia.

This study contributes by providing an in-depth empirical analysis of the misalignment between policy rhetoric and the operational realities of nonformal education in Indonesia, particularly regarding social inclusion. Theoretically, it conceptualizes nonformal education as a critical domain for equity, empowerment, and lifelong learning rather than a residual subsystem of formal education. Empirically, it enriches the global literature by documenting how institutional vulnerabilities, limited inclusive capacity, and fragmented governance hinder transformative outcomes in community learning centers. Practically, it offers a policy-relevant framework that identifies inclusion-oriented indicators, institutional strengthening, affirmative financing, and multi-stakeholder coordination as strategic levers for positioning nonformal education as a driver of inclusive and sustainable human development.

## REFERENCES

- Agustin, A., Salam, M., & Utami, S. (2024). Penyebab anak putus sekolah (Studi kasus di Sanggar Kegiatan Belajar, Kecamatan Jambi Selatan, Kota Jambi). *Journal of Civic Education*, 7(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jce.v7i1.1080>
- Agyepong, I. A., M’Cormack-Hale, F. A. O., Brown Amoakoh, H., Derkyi-Kwarteng, A. N. C., Darkwa, T. E., & Odiko-Ollennu, W. (2021). Synergies and fragmentation in country level policy and program agenda setting, formulation and implementation for Global Health agendas: A case study of

- health security, universal health coverage, and health promotion in Ghana and Sierra Leone. *BMC Health Services Research*, 21(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-021-06500-6>
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2023). Statistik pendidikan 2023. <https://www.bps.go.id/id/publication/2023/11/24/54557f7c1bd32f187f3cdab5/statistik-pendidikan-2023.html>
- Bahri, E. S., Aslam, M. M. M., & Hermawan, Y. (2024). Innovation in nonformal education in Indonesia. *Journal of Psychology and Sustainable Education*, 1(2), 51–56. <https://doi.org/10.62886/jpse.v1i2.7>
- Bonoli, G., & Emmenegger, P. (2021). The limits of decentralized cooperation: Promoting inclusiveness in collective skill formation systems? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(2), 229–247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1716831>
- Cayabas, J. P., Codod, C. L. C., Sumeg-ang, D. A., & Lacaben, E. P. (2023). Contributions and partnership strategies of external stakeholders in the implementation of the alternative learning system in Bontoc District: Insights from teachers. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(7), 454–472. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.7.24>
- Cedeño, D. (2023). Social exclusion and inclusion: A social work perspective. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 104(3), 332–343. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10443894221147576>
- Chowa, G., Masa, R., Manzanares, M., & Bilotta, N. (2023). A scoping review of positive youth development programming for vulnerable and marginalized youth in low-and middle-income countries. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 154, 107110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.107110>
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2014). Thematic analysis. In T. Teo (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology* (pp. 1947–1952). Springer New York. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7\\_311](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7_311)
- Clement, J., Alarda, L., Ochojski, A., & Crutzen, N. (2025). Engaging marginalized communities in multi-level transformative innovation policy: The case of the Just Transition Fund. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 212, 124002. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2025.124002>
- Efendi, M., Pradipta, R. F., Dewantoro, D. A., Ummah, U. S., Ediyanto, E., & Yasin, M. H. M. (2022). Inclusive education for student with special needs at Indonesian public schools. *International Journal of Instruction*, 15(2), 967–980. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.15253a>
- Fahrenbach, F. (2023). How the validation of prior learning can be used to assess entrepreneurial human capital investments and outcomes. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 47(10), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-09-2019-0168>
- Ferrer-Fons, M., Rovira-Martínez, M., & Soler-i-Martí, R. (2022). Youth empowerment through arts education: A case study of a non-formal education arts centre in Barcelona. *Social Inclusion*, 10(2), 85–94. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.4923>
- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 50th anniversary edition*. Bloomsbury Publishing. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=OrVLDwAAQBAJ>
- Frost, L. (2024). Ambiguous citizenship policies: Examining implementation gaps across levels of legislation in Jordan. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 12(1), 23. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-024-00375-2>
- Giroux, H. (2021). Critical pedagogy. In U. Bauer, U. H. Bittlingmayer, & A. Scherr (Eds.), *Handbuch Bildungs- und Erziehungssoziologie* (pp. 1–16). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-31395-1\\_19-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-31395-1_19-1)
- Grant, C. (2022). Collaborative tactics for equitable community partnerships toward social justice impact. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 65(1), 151–163. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2022.3141227>

- Hikmat. (2022). The role of Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM) in the context of changing the social behavior of street children. *International Journal of Science and Society*, 4(1), 50–57. <https://doi.org/10.54783/ijssoc.v4i1.415>
- Idrus, A., Setiyadi, B., Syarif, M. I., Wahyu, A., & Suharto. (2025). Evaluation of education program implementation at Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM), Jambi City. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 111, 102535. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2025.102535>
- Indonesia Open Government Partnership National Action Plan 2023-2024. [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Indonesia\\_Action-Plan\\_2023-2024\\_EN.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Indonesia_Action-Plan_2023-2024_EN.pdf)
- Inui, M., Ogisu, T., Kamogawa, A., & Nakaya, A. (2025). Out-of-school children in Southeast Asia: A case study of Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and Malaysia. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 2481004. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2481004>
- Irfan, I., Rusdin, R., Yanti, S., Shandi, S. A., & Ihsan, I. (2021). Public policy for financing the practice of physical education. *International Journal of Human Movement and Sports Sciences*, 9(2), 209–218. <https://doi.org/10.13189/saj.2021.090207>
- Iskandar, R., Meltarini, M., & Sinurat, M. (2024). Enhancing the quality of non-formal education: A study on performance management at PKBM Imam Syafe'i in Bandung Regency. *Jurnal Scientia*, 13(03), 309–324. <https://www.infor.seaninstitute.org/index.php/pendidikan/article/view/2502>
- Kumar, U., & Banerji, H. (2024). Comparing priority ranking of inclusive education indicators using multi-criteria decision-making methods: Children with locomotor disabilities vs. physical disabilities. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2380143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2380143>
- Lestari, Y. S. R. Y., & Legiani, W. H. (2023). The role of the center for community learning activities in providing educational rights to prisoners assisted class IIB Serang prison. *JETISH: Journal of Education Technology Information Social Sciences and Health*, 2(2), 916–921. <https://doi.org/10.57235/jetish.v2i2.776>
- Little, M. (2023). The alignment agenda: Examining the movement to bridge the early childhood and K–12 sectors. *AERA Open*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584231211868>
- Loh, C. E., & Sun, B. (2020). Cultural capital, habitus and reading futures: Middle-class adolescent students' cultivation of reading dispositions in Singapore. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 41(2), 234–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1690426>
- Makhlouf, Y., & Lalley, C. (2023). Education expansion, income inequality and structural transformation: Evidence from OECD countries. *Social Indicators Research*, 169(1–2), 255–281. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-023-03161-2>
- Mañas Olmo, M., González Alba, B., Cortés González, P. & Landin, J. (2024). Inclusive education from the contributions in the virtual forums of the students of the degree of pedagogy at the University of Malaga. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET)*, 19(1), 114-130. <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/224940/>
- Mehta, R. (2024). Education investment and human capital development in India. *Journal of Poverty, Investment and Development*, 9(1), 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.47604/jpid.2587>
- Mezzadri, A. (2021). A value theory of inclusion: Informal labour, the homemaker, and the social reproduction of value. *Antipode*, 53(4), 1186–1205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12701>
- Moussa, D. (2020). *Instructional programs and service delivery for students with autism and intellectual disabilities in Senegal* [Master's Thesis, Hiroshima University]. Hiroshima University Institutional Repository.



- Nishanbaeva, D. E. Z., & Abdulkhalilov, D. A. A. (2022). The role of social partnership in the development of inclusive education. *Current Research Journal of Pedagogics*, 03(06), 31–38. <https://doi.org/10.37547/pedagogics-crjp-03-06-06>
- Nonet, G. A.-H., Gössling, T., Van Tulder, R., & Bryson, J. M. (2022). Multi-stakeholder engagement for the sustainable development goals: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180(4), 945–957. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05192-0>
- Nurfah. (2025). Peran perempuan dalam pengembangan masyarakat Islam: Studi tentang kontribusi muslimah dalam pendidikan dan sosial di Bima, NTB. *Jurnal Al-Tatwir*, 12(1), 21–46. <https://doi.org/10.35719/2paj0z58>
- Nyström, S., Fejes, A., & Mešić, N. (2023). Social inclusion beyond education and work: Migrants meaning-making towards social inclusion. *Social Inclusion*, 11(4), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v11i4.6984>
- Peraturan Presiden Nomor 18 Tahun 2020 tentang Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional (RPJMN) Tahun 2020-2024. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/131386/perpres-no-18-tahun-2020>
- Petkanopoulou, K., Griva, A., García-Sánchez, E., Vlastou-Dimopoulou, F., Daoultzis, K., Willis, G. B., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2025). Why do people object to economic inequality? The role of distributive justice and social harmony concerns as predictors of support for redistribution and collective action. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 64(2), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12877>
- Prayitno, K. P., Oktobrian, D., & Barkhuizen, J. (2023). Addressing prison education and the obstacles in ensuring the right to education in Indonesian juvenile correctional facilities. *JSEHR*, 7(2), 123. <https://doi.org/10.19184/jseahr.v7i2.42656>
- Raheny, I. B., Atmadja J.A, I. K., & Nugroho, R. (2024). Improving human resources in the Package C equality program through digital skill training at PKBM Permata Bangsa Surabaya. *KOLOKIUM Jurnal Pendidikan Luar Sekolah*, 12(2), 434–442. <https://doi.org/10.24036/kolokium.v12i2.852>
- Rapp, A. C., & Corral-Granados, A. (2024). Understanding inclusive education – A theoretical contribution from system theory and the constructionist perspective. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(4), 423–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1946725>
- Raza, A., Fatima, G., & Malik, M. (2024). A document analysis of community learning centers in Australia: Development of a model for Pakistan. *Sustainable Business and Society in Emerging Economies*, 6(1), 99–106. <https://doi.org/10.26710/sbsee.v6i1.2940>
- Renner, H. M., Rowland, B., Hutchinson, D., & Toumbourou, J. W. (2024). The role of adolescent social inclusion in educational attainment among vulnerable youth. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 29(2), 161–169. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12709>
- Salmi, J., & D’Addio, A. (2021). Policies for achieving inclusion in higher education. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 5(1), 47–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1835529>
- Setiawan, M., Effendi, N., Santoso, T., Dewi, V. I., & Sapulette, M. S. (2022). Digital financial literacy, current behavior of saving and spending and its future foresight. *Economics of Innovation and New Technology*, 31(4), 320–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10438599.2020.1799142>
- Siregar, H. L., Ardiwinata, J. S., & Saepudin, A. (2022). The role of partner institutions in improving the quality standards of PKBM Bina Cipta Ujungberung through the triple helix partnership program. *Empowerment*, 11(2), 75. <https://doi.org/10.22460/empowerment.v11i2.3146>
- Suwarta, S., & Hanafie, R. (2021). The production risk of broiler farm management at plasma breeders: Evidence from Indonesia. *Journal of Socioeconomics and Development*, 4(1), 134. <https://doi.org/10.31328/jsed.v4i1.1501>



- Tamás, M., Jenei, S., Moreno, E., Vasantha, P. L., Malatyinszki, S., & Dávid, L. D. (2024). The role of lifelong learning in labour market competitiveness. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(8), 7743–7761. <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.5396>
- Then, D., & Pohlmann-Rother, S. (2023). Transition to formal schooling of children with disabilities: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 38(October 2022), 100492. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2022.100492>
- Undang-undang (UU) No. 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional.
- Wasito, A. (2023). Exploring Amartya Sen's capability approach. *Peradaban Journal of Economic and Business*, 2(2), 115–136. <https://doi.org/10.59001/pjeb.v2i2.109>
- Wulandari, S. A., Marhaeni, B., & Meinita, M. D. N. (2020). Macroalgae Community Structure at Semak Daun Island, Kepulauan Seribu, Indonesia. *Omni-Akuatika*, 16(3), 21. <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.oa.2020.16.3.847>
- Young, I. M. (2000). *Inclusion and democracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Yulianti, S. D., Rosmiati, N., & Septiana, T. (2024). Strategi pemerintah Kabupaten Sukabumi dalam penguatan peran Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM) untuk meningkatkan capaian pendidikan masyarakat. *Jurnal Indragiri Penelitian Multidisiplin*, 5(1), 43–49. <https://doi.org/10.58707/jipm.v5i1.1092>
- Zhang, L., Zhang, R., & Wang, Z. (2023). Intergovernmental collaboration, instrument adaptation and embedded synergistic governance: Based on 1984–2020 water pollution control policy research. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 26(11), 28727–28749. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-023-03838-1>