

The Strategic Role of Tutors in Increasing Learning Participation of Package B Learners

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of tutors in improving the learning participation of students in the Package B equivalency program at the Kendal Regency SKB. The background of this study is the high dropout rate influenced by economic and social factors and low learning motivation. The method used was a descriptive qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and documentation with seven informants consisting of the head of the SKB, tutors, and learners. Tutors not only play a role in delivering material, but also in building interpersonal relationships, creating an inclusive learning atmosphere, and helping to overcome the emotional and social obstacles of participants. Supporting factors for participation include environmental support and positive interpersonal relationships, while inhibiting factors include workloads, economic conditions, and low self-confidence among participants. To increase learning participation, tutors need to function as facilitators, motivators, mediators, mentors, and evaluators, as these roles have been proven to have a significant effect on increasing the motivation, attendance, and independence of learners.

Keywords: Tutor Role, Learning Participation, Non-Formal Education, Learning Motivation, Package B



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Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping a superior generation capable of facing future challenges, but in developing countries such as Indonesia, school dropouts remain a major obstacle to achieving this goal. The dropout rate in Indonesia is relatively high, especially among children from low-income families, with data showing that around 2.5 million school-age children drop out of school each year (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). The main factors causing school dropouts include unstable family economic conditions, parents' lack of understanding of the importance of education, and environmental issues such as parental divorce, which often forces children to work to ease the financial burden on the household (S & Mawarni, 2025). In addition, the definition of school dropouts includes children aged 7-21 who discontinue formal education due to economic constraints, most of whom become street children or child laborers without access to further education (Madaniah, 2023). This condition not only hinders human resource development but also exacerbates the cycle of poverty, requiring alternative educational interventions to address the problem.

The economic condition of a family greatly affects the continuity of their children's education. Families with stable incomes are usually better able to cover education costs such as school fees, books, extra lessons, and technological facilities that support the learning process. Conversely, families with limited incomes often struggle to meet these needs, putting their children at risk of dropping out of school or receiving inadequate education. These financial difficulties make children

feel like a burden to their parents, leading them to choose to drop out of school and help earn a living (Khasa Aulia Kholidah, 2025). Often, the decision to drop out of school is made in an effort to ease the family's economic burden, as parents do not have sufficient funds to pay for their children's education. As a result, these children have to discontinue or terminate their formal education.

In response to high dropout rates, non-formal education emerged as a strategic pathway that was theoretically designed to provide flexible learning access for those marginalized from the formal system, with a focus on developing life skills, character, and basic knowledge tailored to the needs of learners (Devi, 2025). Legally, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 1 Paragraph 10 defines non-formal education units as services that provide education through informal, formal, and non-formal channels at various levels, including institutions such as Learning Activity Centers (SKB) that serve as alternative spaces to reduce school dropout rates (Undang - Undang Republik Indonesia, 2017). This non-formal education, particularly equivalency programs such as Package B equivalent to junior high school, plays an important role in facilitating community participation, although challenges such as low community awareness often hinder its success (Khasa Aulia Kholidah, 2025). Thus, non-formal education not only complements the formal system but also serves as an inclusive solution to improve access to education for vulnerable groups, ultimately supporting national development.

Nationally, the number of school dropouts in Indonesia remains a serious problem in the field of education. According to the Central Statistics Agency in its 2024 Education Statistics publication, around 2.8% of children aged 7–18 years, or more than 1.2 million children in Indonesia, do not continue their formal education due to various factors, such as family economic conditions, limited access to education, and low motivation to learn (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). At the provincial level, Central Java is one of the regions with a relatively high dropout rate on the island of Java, reaching 0.93% of the total school-age children, or around 84,000 children in 2024. Meanwhile, in Kendal Regency, Central Java, the condition of the Learning Activity Center (SKB) reflects the real challenges in dealing with school dropouts and children with problems. Based on data in the 2023 Work Plan document, more than 500 children aged 13-18 have dropped out of school due to economic and social factors, with most coming from poor families in urban and rural areas (Kendal, 2023). This data shows that despite efforts to promote educational equality through PKBM and SKB, social and economic inequality remains a major obstacle to equal access to education in the region.

SKB Kendal, as the main non-formal institution, provides Package B programs for learners consisting of school dropouts, child laborers, and troubled youth such as victims of domestic violence or economic refugees, but their participation remains low due to a lack of community support and limited facilities (Madaniah, 2023). These children often face social stigma and trauma that make them reluctant to continue their education, so SKB Kendal strives to integrate a holistic approach to address these issues, including collaboration with local governments to improve program accessibility (Lini et al., 2021). This situation emphasizes the need for educators at the local level to play an active role in encouraging participation, given that SKB Kendal is the main hope for educational rehabilitation for this group.

To overcome the low participation of Package B students at SKB Kendal, the role of tutors as key facilitators is crucial in increasing student motivation and engagement through personalized approaches such as individual counseling and social skills development tailored to the backgrounds of school dropouts. Tutors not only act as teachers but also as mentors who build trust and overcome emotional barriers, thereby increasing learning participation by up to 30% based on similar case studies in non-formal institutions (Fatimah, 2024). At SKB Kendal, tutors are expected to play a strategic role in integrating theoretical elements of non-formal education with local needs, such as anti-stigma programs for troubled children, which ultimately contribute to the sustainable reduction of school dropouts. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of tutors in the learning participation of Package B students at SKB Kendal, as an effort to strengthen the inclusive education system.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method because qualitative research emphasizes the process and meaning of social phenomena that occur naturally (Sugiyono, 2020). The qualitative approach allows researchers to interact directly with research subjects and observe behavior in its actual context. This method is considered relevant because the role of tutors in non-formal education requires a contextual understanding of the motivation and dynamics of learners (Sudjana, 2021).

The research was conducted at SPNF SKB Kendal, located at Jalan Raya Cepiring–Gemuh KM.1 No.01, Cepiring, Kendal, Central Java. This location was chosen because it is a non-formal educational institution that actively organizes Package B equivalency programs for out-of-school communities. Based on the initial observation results, a close personal relationship was found between tutors and learners, which had a positive impact on increasing learning participation. Interpersonal relationships between educators and learners can be the key to success in participatory learning (Ambariyah et al., 2025).

This study aims to describe the role of tutors in learning participation, which consists of the roles of tutors as facilitators, motivators, mediators, mentors, evaluators, as well as factors that support and hinder learning participation. The subjects of this study involved seven people who were directly involved in learning activities at SKB Kendal, consisting of one SKB head, three tutors of the Package B equivalency program, and three Package B learners (Sudjana, 2021).

The research data included two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct observation of learning activities and interactions between tutors and learners, in-depth open interviews with the head of SKB, tutors, and learners, and the collection of documentation related to learning activities (Weston et al., 2021). Meanwhile, secondary data came from various written sources such as institutional documents, activity reports, scientific publications, and literature relevant to the theme of the role of tutors and learning participation (Chukanova, 2021). These two types of data complemented each other to strengthen the validity of the research results through source triangulation (Kamenska, 2021).

In the data collection process, researchers used three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to directly understand how the learning process took place in the classroom, including how tutors interacted with and facilitated learners. Interviews were used to explore the views, experiences, and reflections of each informant, both tutors and learners (Weston et al., 2022). Meanwhile, documentation served as supplementary evidence to verify the findings obtained through observation and interviews.

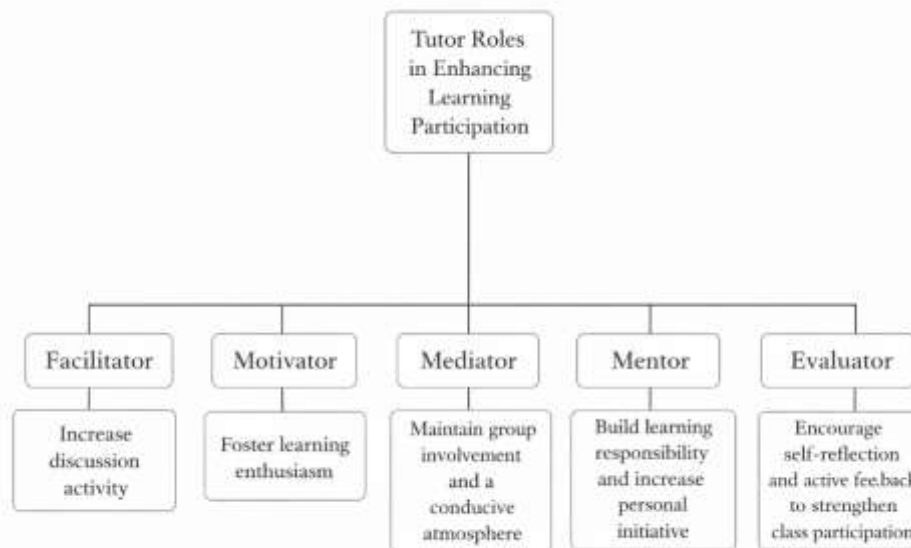
To ensure data validity, this study applied technique triangulation and source triangulation, namely by comparing the results obtained from various methods and different informants. This approach ensures that the data obtained is truly accurate, consistent, and reliable (Sugiyono, 2020). In this way, the research results become stronger and have a solid empirical basis (Fatimah, 2024).

Results and Discussions

1. Results

The Kendal Learning Activity Center (SKB) is a non-formal educational institution that functions as a community learning center and provides equivalency education services for those who have not completed their formal education. As an institution oriented towards community empowerment, SKB Kendal not only organizes Package A, B, and C programs, but also skills training relevant to the socio-economic needs of residents (Kendal, 2023). The learners participating in the Package B program come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, such as informal sector workers, housewives, and school dropouts. Their main motivation is to obtain a diploma to continue their education to a higher level or to increase their employment opportunities (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024).

The socioeconomic conditions of learners often affect their attendance and participation in learning activities. Many participants have to divide their time between work, family responsibilities, and learning activities, requiring support and flexibility from tutors (Faizal et al., 2021). In the context of equity education, tutors play an important role not only as teachers, but also as facilitators, motivators, mediators, and mentors who are able to create a participatory learning atmosphere and help learners overcome obstacles (Rinaldi & Susilo, 2022). A personal and empathetic approach is key to building learners' confidence, fostering intrinsic motivation, and creating a conducive and sustainable learning climate (Amalia et al., 2024).



Picture 1. Chart of The Role of Tutors in Increasing Learning Participation

a. Tutors as Facilitators

Tutors at SKB Kendal play an active role in creating a dialogical, participatory, and equitable learning environment in accordance with the principles of adult education. Through activities such as discussions, group presentations, and question and answer sessions, learners are encouraged to exchange ideas and solve problems collaboratively. Tutors not only deliver material, but also foster two-way interaction that allows learners to learn through reflection on their own experiences (Setyoningrum & Hasanah, 2023). The theory of dialogic education emphasizes an egalitarian relationship between educators and learners, recognizing that learners' life experiences are valuable sources of learning (Freire, 2020). By relating the material to real-life contexts, learning becomes more relevant, meaningful, and fosters active engagement.

b. Tutors as Motivators

Learning motivation is a key factor in the success of non-formal education. Tutors at SKB Kendal continuously provide encouragement by explaining the benefits of education, the importance of graduation, and job opportunities after obtaining a diploma. This support is informational as well as emotional because it fosters participants' self-confidence and learning resilience. Intrinsic motivation grows when participants are emotionally supported and their efforts are appreciated (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In addition, positive feedback and verbal praise from tutors can consistently increase learners' participation in learning (Ananda & Shofwan, 2023).

c. Tutors as Mediators

Tutors also act as mediators who maintain harmonious classroom dynamics. When differences of opinion or potential conflicts arise, tutors become mediators who help participants understand various perspectives and reach a mutual understanding. This approach fosters

learners' ability to resolve problems through open dialogue and mutual respect, so that classroom interactions remain constructive (Brookfield, 2017). In the context of adult education, tutors need to create a safe space for expression so that participants can learn without pressure and feel valued (Knowles et al., 2020). With the ability to defuse tension, manage emotions, and direct discussions proportionally, tutors play an important role in creating a conducive, collaborative, and productive learning atmosphere (Sunarya, 2024).

d. Tutors as Mentors

As mentors, tutors guide learners in developing their potential and independence through setting goals, planning strategies, and reflecting on learning progress. This assistance helps participants recognize their strengths and limitations in order to build internal motivation and commitment to learning (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Tutors also play an important role in helping participants critically interpret life experiences to broaden their horizons and self-awareness (Brookfield, 2017). In addition, tutoring contributes to the development of learners' self-confidence and independence in learning through an empathetic and supportive approach (Knowles et al., 2020). Thus, the role of tutors encompasses not only academic aspects but also the personal and emotional development of learners.

e. Tutors as Evaluators

Tutors routinely provide feedback through discussions, task assessments, and individual guidance. This feedback helps participants assess their progress, recognize their strengths, and improve their weaknesses. This principle is in line with formative evaluation, which emphasizes continuous assessment to gradually improve participants' abilities (Brookfield, 2017). Constructive feedback from tutors is an important part of the learning process because it provides direction and encouragement to continue developing (Amalia et al., 2024).

f. Supporting and Hindering Factors for Participation

The participation of Package B learners at SKB Kendal is influenced by various factors. Supporting factors include positive emotional relationships between tutors and participants, a conducive learning atmosphere, and the application of dialogical and participatory approaches (Freire, 2020). Warm and respectful relationships create a sense of security and increase motivation to learn (Prasetya, 2025). In addition, tutors also give appreciation for the participants' achievement (Ambariyah et al., 2025). Conversely, inhibiting factors include the psychological condition of participants who carry trauma or family problems, time constraints for those who work, and a lack of adequate learning facilities (Lini et al., 2021). The low motivation of some learners also poses a challenge. Therefore, increasing learning participation requires a comprehensive approach that includes psychosocial support, provision of learning facilities, and continuous motivation building.

2. Discussions

Tutors play a central role in increasing the learning participation of Package B students at SKB Kendal. As facilitators, tutors not only deliver lesson material, but also create an active, interactive, and enjoyable learning atmosphere through a participatory approach. The principle of learning by doing allows participants to learn through direct experience, making the material easier to understand and relevant to their daily lives (Sudjana, 2021). In addition, tutors act as motivators who provide positive encouragement through praise, rewards, and opportunities to participate in activities such as outing classes for participants who show progress in their learning. The motivational role of tutors increases the enthusiasm and activity of learners in equivalency education (Rinaldi & Susilo, 2022).

As mediators and mentors, tutors help resolve differences of opinion among participants and instill values of responsibility and discipline through exemplary behavior, creating strong interpersonal relationships and a conducive classroom atmosphere (Rinaldi & Susilo, 2022). Learner participation is influenced by various interacting factors, such as the availability of learning facilities, family support, and social environment (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). However,

learning motivation is often hampered by workloads, family responsibilities, and time and economic constraints (S & Mawarni, 2025). To overcome this, tutors implement flexible strategies such as online learning and schedule adjustments (Faizal et al., 2021).

The impact of the tutor's role is evident in the increase in independence and sustainability of learning. The humanistic and communicative approach makes participants feel valued, motivated, and confident (Amalia et al., 2024). Tutors also guide participants to reflect and evaluate themselves regularly, encouraging responsibility for learning progress (Illeris, 2018). Furthermore, the role of tutors fosters awareness of the importance of education, as reflected in the increased interest in continuing to Package C (Sudrajat & Pertiwi, 2020). Thus, tutors not only increase learning participation but also foster independence and long-term educational awareness.

However, tutors also face challenges, such as low self-confidence among some participants, workloads, distance from their homes, and limited facilities, which result in attendance rates of only 50– 60% per meeting (Rahayu, 2022). Some participants also experience emotional barriers due to negative experiences in formal education. Therefore, tutors are required to have high counseling and empathy skills to help overcome psychological barriers (Khasa Aulia Kholidah, 2025). Through a personal approach and emotional support, tutors not only act as teachers but also as social companions who rebuild the enthusiasm and confidence of learners (Rinaldi & Susilo, 2022).

Conclusion

This study concludes that tutors play an important role in increasing the learning participation of Package B students at the Kendal Regency SKB. Tutors are not only conveyors of material, but also function as facilitators, motivators, mediators, mentors, and evaluators who create a participatory, inclusive, and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Through a dialogical and empathetic approach, tutors are able to foster motivation, self-confidence, and independent learning. Supporting factors include good interpersonal relationships and flexibility in learning methods, while the main obstacles are economic conditions and time constraints. This study contributes to strengthening the understanding of the importance of the multidimensional role of tutors in non-formal education and provides a practical basis for humanistic approach-based learning strategies. Further research is recommended to expand the context to other equivalency programs and use quantitative or mixed methods to measure the long- term impact of the tutor's role on participation and learning outcomes.

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