

A Systematic Evaluation and Implementation Review of Non-Formal Education: Sewing Training for Life Skills Development

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Abstract

Background – This study is motivated by the need to address the skills mismatch in Indonesia's workforce through non-formal education programs, such as the sewing training course at Sanggar Actividades Belajar (SKB) Semarang City.

Research Urgency – Despite the demand for vocational skills, the SKB Kota Semarang sewing program has experienced a gradual enrollment decline of 5–7% annually. A comprehensive evaluation is crucial to uncover the underlying causes such as inflexible scheduling, limited promotion, and insufficient equipment and to ensure the program's adaptability, relevance, and long-term sustainability.

Research Objectives – The purpose of the study is to evaluate how the program is designed in response to community needs (Context), assess the adequacy of program resources (Input), evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies (Process), and determine the program outcomes regarding skill acquisition and employability (Product).

Research Method – This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in the CIPP evaluation framework. Data collection techniques in this study include in-depth interviews, direct classroom observations, and document analysis. Participants involved in the study include sewing instructors, current and former learners, administrators, and a labor market representative. The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis.

Research Findings – The findings indicate that the program strongly aligns with participants' goals and is supported by competent instructors and a national competency standard (SKKNI) curriculum. However, the implementation is hindered by limited infrastructure, such as an insufficient number of sewing machines, a lack of entrepreneurial skills integration, and an absence of structured post-training support. While learners gained significant technical skills and self-confidence, long-term independent business outcomes were limited due to these constraints.

Conclusion - The program has been effectively implemented across the four CIPP dimensions, successfully producing meaningful technical learning outcomes and empowering participants. To overcome the declining enrollment trend and enhance market success, the program must improve equipment availability, adopt more flexible scheduling, and establish post-training business mentoring.

Research Novelty/Contribution – The novelty of this study lies in its holistic application of the CIPP model to a grassroots, publicly managed non-formal vocational program. It offers actionable, contextualized insights for policymakers and highlights the intersection of non-formal education, gender empowerment, and community development, an area frequently overlooked in formal academic evaluations.

Keywords: Non-formal Education, Sewing Training, CIPP Model, Life Skills, Vocational Program, Community Empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive global economy, nations are urged to develop a highly skilled and adaptable workforce to remain relevant and sustainable (Robertson, 2018; Andleeb et al., 2026). In Indonesia, one of the persistent challenges in achieving this goal is the low quality of human resources (HR), particularly in relation to employable skills and job readiness. Data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics indicates that the national open unemployment rate stood at 4.91% as of August 2024, a figure that reflects not only job scarcity but also a skills mismatch between educational outcomes and labor market needs (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). To address this issue, lifelong learning and skill enhancement programs particularly through non-formal education have emerged as strategic interventions (Endres et al., 2021).

Non-formal education operates outside the conventional school system and provides flexible, community-based, and needs-oriented learning opportunities (Chansanam et al., 2026). This type of education plays a key role in addressing the needs of various age groups, particularly adults and out-of-school youths. Among the non-formal education programs gaining traction in Indonesia are vocational training initiatives such as sewing, culinary, or beauty courses, which aim to equip learners with practical competencies that can lead directly to employment or entrepreneurship (Laila & Salahudin, 2022). These programs have proven effective in expanding economic opportunities, reducing poverty, and empowering local communities.

The Semarang City Learning Activity Studio (SKB), an official government-managed community learning center, represents a model of such non-formal education institutions (Lestari & Prihatin, 2025). SKB provides a wide range of learning services, including early childhood education, literacy education, and vocational training. One of its flagship programs is the sewing training course, designed to provide participants, primarily women from low-income groups, with basic to intermediate tailoring skills (Raharjo & Suminar, 2019). The program adheres to the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) and adopts a Competency-Based Training (CBT) approach, ensuring that learners not only acquire knowledge but also gain nationally recognized certification upon passing a competency assessment.

Despite these efforts and the potential social impact, internal reports from SKB Kota Semarang reveal a gradual decline in program enrollment over the past few years, with participant numbers decreasing by 5–7% annually (Susilowati, 2016). This trend is concerning, especially considering the persistent demand for vocational skills in the local and national labor markets. Several factors are suspected to contribute to this decline, including a lack of alignment between training content and market needs, outdated teaching methods, insufficient equipment and infrastructure, and limited feedback mechanisms to adapt the program to evolving community needs. These challenges underscore the need for a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the program's design, delivery, and outcomes.

Program evaluation is a critical process in ensuring that educational interventions achieve their intended goals and are responsive to stakeholder expectations (Bin Mubayrik, 2020). In the context of vocational training, effective evaluation enables institutions to make evidence-based decisions regarding program improvement, expansion, or restructuring (Siswanto, 2025). One of the most widely adopted models for evaluating educational and training programs is the CIPP evaluation model, developed by Daniel Stufflebeam. The CIPP model stands for Context, Input, Process, and Product, providing a holistic framework that examines a program's rationale, resources, implementation, and results (Stufflebeam, 1983). Rather than solely focusing on end outcomes, CIPP is designed to support decision-making and continuous improvement throughout a program's life cycle.

The Context evaluation component examines the needs, problems, and opportunities that justify the program, ensuring its objectives are relevant and community-driven (Stufflebeam, 2003). Input evaluation assesses the strategies, plans, resources, and feasibility of the program to meet its goals. Process evaluation monitors the actual implementation of the program, identifying deviations, challenges, and best practices (Meiklejohn et al., 2023). Lastly, Product evaluation determines the extent to which the program has achieved its intended outcomes, both in terms of immediate competencies and long-term impacts (Rocha et al., 2022).

Previous studies on vocational training evaluation in Indonesia have largely focused on privately managed training centers or Lembaga Kursus dan Latihan (LKP) (Hadi, 2012; Hildayanti et al., 2023). These studies, while informative, may not fully reflect the conditions and challenges faced by publicly managed institutions such as SKB, which operate under different regulatory, financial, and community engagement frameworks. Furthermore, many prior evaluations have emphasized the final product or output, often neglecting the formative aspects of program design and delivery that are equally crucial for program success.

The present study aims to fill this gap by conducting a CIPP-based evaluation of the sewing training program at SKB Kota Semarang. In addition to evaluating the implementation of the program, this study also examines how the sewing training was originally designed to align with the social and economic needs of the target participants. This research is significant for several reasons. First, it offers practical insights for program managers and policymakers at SKB and other public training centers to improve program quality and responsiveness. Second, it contributes to the theoretical discourse on the application of the CIPP model in non-formal education settings, particularly in government-managed institutions. Third, it addresses the broader challenge of aligning vocational training with dynamic labor market demands, especially in the post-pandemic context where skill agility and entrepreneurship are increasingly critical for resilience.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of evidence-informed decision-making in the design and management of non-formal education programs. Through the lens of the CIPP model, it highlights how structured evaluation can lead to more relevant, inclusive, and impactful vocational training initiatives that contribute to social equity and economic empowerment in Indonesian society.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, which is appropriate for exploring in-depth phenomena, especially within educational settings (Creswell et al., 2007). The goal of this approach is to provide a detailed and contextualized understanding of how the sewing training program at Sanggar Actividades Belajar (SKB) Kota Semarang is designed, implemented, and evaluated. The research is situated within a program evaluation framework, utilizing the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product) developed by Stufflebeam as its theoretical and analytical foundation.

The CIPP model enables researchers and decision-makers to evaluate not just outcomes but also the planning and implementation processes behind a program. This is particularly valuable for public, non-formal educational institutions like SKB, where program improvement, accountability, and relevance to community needs are essential.

Research Site and Context

The study was conducted at SKB Kota Semarang, a public non-formal education institution located in Central Java, Indonesia. This center serves diverse learners, including youth and adults, through programs such as early childhood education, equivalency education, and vocational training. The sewing training program, which is the focus of this research, is one of the flagship initiatives of the institution.

The program adopts a Competency-Based Training (CBT) approach aligned with Indonesia's National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI).

The sewing program runs for 260 instructional hours and includes both theoretical and practical components. Participants are expected to complete a competency assessment for national certification. The decline in participant numbers and concerns regarding alignment with market needs prompted the evaluation.

Participants

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, with the aim of including key stakeholders directly involved in the program. The research participants included: 2 sewing instructors responsible for delivering the training program, 3 current and former participants of the sewing training course, 2 program administrators from SKB Kota Semarang, 1 local labor market representative, such as a business owner or fashion entrepreneur who hires sewing graduates. This selection ensured triangulation and diversity of perspectives, thus enhancing the credibility of findings (Creswell, 2016).

Technical Data Collection

To ensure a rich and comprehensive understanding of the program, this study utilized multiple qualitative data collection methods. First, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants to gain insights into their experiences, perceptions, and recommendations. Interview protocols were developed based on the four dimensions of the CIPP model and tailored to each participant category. Second, direct observation was conducted during several training sessions to assess process methods, participant engagement, and the use of learning materials, guided by a checklist that followed the Process and Input elements of the CIPP model. Third, document analysis was applied by reviewing various program documents such as training curricula, syllabi, attendance records, competency test guidelines, and annual reports to gain a comprehensive understanding of program planning and implementation. To ensure data accuracy, all interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and securely stored for further analysis (Sugiyono, 2013).

Data Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis was used to process data collected from interviews, observations, and document analysis. This analysis process followed the six steps proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). These steps began with familiarizing oneself with the data through repeated readings, followed by the creation of initial codes based on CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) categories. Afterward, the researcher searched for relevant themes across the data corpus and reviewed them to ensure they aligned with the CIPP framework. The next step was to define and name the themes to align with the research questions. Finally, the researcher compiled a final report, complete with rich and illustrative quotes or data extracts.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of this qualitative study, several criteria based on were applied (Laumann, 2020). Credibility was achieved through triangulation of data sources including interviews, observations, and documents, as well as member checking with key participants and extended observation time in the field. Furthermore, transferability was supported by providing a thorough description of the research context and participant demographics, allowing readers to determine the relevance of this research to their own situations or environments. Dependability was ensured through careful documentation of the research process, including recording decisions made during the data collection and analysis phases. Finally, confirmability was maintained by maintaining an audit trail of all research materials, including interview transcripts, coding schemes, and reflective memos.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing them with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Data anonymity was maintained by assigning codes instead of names, and only aggregated data were reported in the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses their implications within the framework of the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation model. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis at the sewing training program implemented by SKB Kota Semarang. The discussion highlights key patterns and aligns them with existing literature on non-formal education and vocational training.

Sewing Training Design

The sewing training program at SKB Kota Semarang was designed based on community learning center principles and the national competency framework (SKKNI). The training structure follows a Competency-Based Training (CBT) model that integrates practical learning with standardized assessments. The program runs for 260 instructional hours and is divided into core learning modules covering both basic and intermediate garment production techniques.

Each training cycle begins with a community needs assessment to determine participant readiness and adapt instructional content to the relevant socio-economic context. The learning process is then structured into several continuous phases. The first phase begins with an orientation and motivation session, followed by an introduction to sewing tools and occupational safety standards. Participants then learn basic sewing techniques, including straight stitching, pattern cutting, and an introduction to fabric types. In the intermediate phase, the material moves on to garment assembly, such as making pockets, collars, sleeves, and zippers, before finally moving on to advanced garment design and modification. To provide practical experience, participants are also required to undertake hands-on practice by accepting real customer orders from the local community. In addition to technical skills, the program also equips participants with entrepreneurial preparation, including methods for calculating production costs, pricing, and client communication techniques. The entire learning process concludes with a final, competency-based assessment conducted directly by a certified assessor.

Instruction is delivered through a combination of demonstration, hands-on practice, peer learning, and discussions. The program emphasizes individualized mentoring, gender sensitivity, and flexibility to accommodate participants' domestic responsibilities. Facilities include industrial sewing machines, mannequins, and a workspace designed to mimic real production environments.

Assessment is both formative and summative. Formative evaluations occur through portfolio reviews and daily observation by instructors. Summative evaluation is conducted through a final project and an official competency test, granting nationally recognized certification for successful participants.

Context Evaluation: Relevance of the Program to Community Needs

The context evaluation focused on identifying whether the sewing training program meets the actual needs and aspirations of the target community. Interviews with participants revealed a consistent motivation to acquire sewing skills for self-employment or to support household income. Most of the learners were women from low- to middle-income households, often with prior exposure to informal sewing but lacking formal training or certification.

The program is perceived as relevant by participants, especially given the increasing demand for home-based businesses and tailoring services in the post-pandemic economy. Participants

expressed that the training aligns with their personal and economic goals, particularly in achieving financial independence.

From the institutional perspective, SKB Kota Semarang developed the program based on community needs assessment and coordination with stakeholders, including local government and microbusiness networks. However, the study found that systematic labor market analysis to map current trends and employer expectations was not consistently conducted. While the program's intent aligns with community needs, its long-term market adaptability requires more dynamic updating.

This finding is consistent with Clain (2016), who emphasized the necessity of regular needs analysis and market alignment in vocational program design. The lack of structured market intelligence may risk program stagnation, despite strong initial relevance.

Input Evaluation: Resources and Planning

Input evaluation covered several components: instructor quality, curriculum, facilities, materials, and support mechanisms. The results showed that SKB employs instructors with adequate qualifications, including formal education in fashion design and professional experience in tailoring. However, only one instructor had undergone recent training or upskilling in instructional methodology or current industry practices.

The curriculum follows SKKNI (Indonesian National Work Competency Standards), ensuring alignment with national competency standards. The modules are structured to progressively build skills, from basic sewing techniques to advanced garment production. Yet, learners and instructors indicated that the curriculum lacks integration of entrepreneurial skills, such as pricing, marketing, or digital promotion skills increasingly necessary for modern home-based tailors.

Infrastructure is another area of concern. Although the sewing room is functional and equipped with industrial sewing machines, the number of units is insufficient when participant numbers exceed 10 per batch. Observations showed learners had to take turns during practice sessions, reducing time-on-task and affecting engagement. Additionally, some equipment, such as thread trimmers and mannequins, were outdated or nonfunctional.

Instructional materials also varied in quality. Learners reported limited access to updated printed modules or video tutorials. The program relied heavily on verbal instruction and demonstrations, which may disadvantage visual and auditory learners.

Despite these limitations, support mechanisms such as transportation subsidies and flexible scheduling were praised by learners, especially those with domestic responsibilities. This support strengthened accessibility and learner retention.

Comparatively, studies by Greef et al. (2012) and Sim & Bierema (2025) similarly found that while curriculum design often meets national standards, it frequently lacks integration with entrepreneurship and digital literacy—an observation echoed in the present research.

Process Evaluation: Implementation of Training

The process evaluation examined how the program was delivered, monitored, and received by learners. Based on field observations and interviews, the training sessions were generally well-structured and interactive. Instructors began with brief theoretical explanations, followed by demonstrations and hands-on practice. The use of real-life garment orders from the community as practice projects was considered a strength, giving learners authentic exposure to client expectations, deadlines, and garment quality control.

Nonetheless, several process-related challenges emerged. First, class start times were often delayed due to participant lateness or tutor unavailability. Second, the learning atmosphere, while friendly, was not always conducive to discipline and focus—especially when sessions were extended beyond scheduled hours. Some learners suggested clearer time management and stricter session routines.

Monitoring and evaluation of learning progress relied primarily on informal assessment. Although there were competency checklists based on SKKNI, these were not consistently applied. Instructors largely used personal judgment rather than structured rubrics to assess skills.

Furthermore, documentation of learner progress was uneven. Some learners-maintained portfolios, while others had no record of their completed works. The final competency test, conducted by a certified assessor, was seen as the only formal checkpoint, leaving a gap in formative assessment opportunities that could guide improvement throughout the course.

These findings align with the work of Boyer et al. (2014), who argued that effective vocational training requires not only content mastery but also robust instructional management and formative assessment to sustain learner growth.

The learners appreciated the peer-learning aspect, which naturally occurred during practice sessions. Collaborative learning and informal mentoring among learners with different skill levels enhanced engagement. However, the lack of structured group projects or team-based tasks limited the potential for soft skills development such as communication, teamwork, and leadership.

Product Evaluation: Outcomes and Impact

Product evaluation addressed the achievements of the program, both in terms of skill acquisition and post-training outcomes. All learners demonstrated measurable improvement in sewing techniques, including stitching accuracy, finishing, pattern cutting, and basic garment construction. Observations and participant interviews confirmed that most learners gained the confidence to undertake paid sewing tasks or improve their household sewing practices.

Several learners began accepting tailoring orders from neighbors and relatives during or shortly after completing the course. However, only two participants had transitioned into fully independent tailors with stable income streams. Others faced challenges such as lack of capital, limited client base, or domestic constraints. This finding suggests that while the program builds technical competencies, it does not sufficiently support post-training business development or employment linkage.

Another noteworthy outcome was the reported increase in self-confidence and social mobility. Learners expressed pride in their ability to produce wearable garments and contribute to household income, even in small ways. This psychological empowerment was particularly significant for female learners who had previously seen themselves only as homemakers.

Nonetheless, without follow-up programs or alumni tracking systems, the long-term impact of the training remains anecdotal. The program lacks a formal tracer study mechanism to document employment rates, income improvements, or continued skill utilization. This limits the ability of SKB to showcase program effectiveness to stakeholders or adapt to new demands.

The product evaluation findings corroborate Nafukho et al. (2017) assertion that the value of vocational education lies not only in the acquisition of skills but also in the learner's ability to mobilize those skills in meaningful, sustainable ways.

Discussion Summary and Recommendations

The evaluation of the sewing training program using the CIPP model reveals a number of strengths and areas for improvement. The Context component indicates high relevance to community needs, supported by strong learner motivation and local opportunity structures. The Input component reflects adequate instructor quality and a standardized curriculum, though resource gaps and curriculum limitations remain. The Process component shows participatory learning and real-world engagement but lacks rigorous assessment and time management. The Product component highlights positive skill gains and psychological empowerment, yet limited business outcomes due to insufficient post-training support.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed to improve the program's quality. As a first step, regular labor market analysis is necessary to ensure the program's design

remains aligned with evolving industry needs. Furthermore, improvements to training equipment and infrastructure, particularly the procurement of sewing machines and more adequate learning media, are recommended. In terms of curriculum, entrepreneurship and digital marketing materials should be immediately integrated into the training program. Furthermore, it is crucial to implement structured formative assessments and the use of student portfolios to systematically track their skills development. A post-training support system should also be established immediately, which could include an alumni network, mentorship programs, and business-to-market linkage programs. Finally, tracer studies should be introduced and implemented to evaluate the program's long-term impact on employment and increased income for graduates.

Challenges and Participation Trends

One of the challenges faced in implementing the sewing training program at SKB Kota Semarang in recent years is the declining number of participants enrolling and completing the program. This phenomenon can be attributed to several interrelated factors. First, the increasing availability of similar training programs offered by private institutions and community-based organizations has expanded the range of options for the public. Many of these alternative programs offer more flexible schedules, shorter durations, or fast-track modules that some potential participants perceive as more practical. Second, SKB has been less than optimal in promoting and disseminating information about its training program. Many community members remain unaware that the training is fully funded by the national government (APBN) and that participants receive an official competency certificate, which can be used for employment or starting a small business.

In addition, the predetermined schedule of the program totaling 260 instructional hours requires a significant time commitment. For certain groups, particularly housewives, informal workers, and daily laborers, this rigid scheduling structure poses a barrier to full participation. This situation is further exacerbated by limited training facilities, especially the insufficient number of sewing machines and other essential tools. When class sizes exceed equipment availability, the hands-on learning experience is compromised, as participants must take turns using machines, leading to dissatisfaction and a reduced likelihood of re-enrollment or word-of-mouth recommendations.

Lastly, the absence of post-training follow-up programs, such as business mentoring, access to capital or tools, and market linkage initiatives, results in many alumni not experiencing sustained benefits from the training. Consequently, there is a lack of strong peer-to-peer promotion within the community and otherwise powerful mechanism for attracting new participants. To address this downward trend and ensure program sustainability, a more comprehensive strategy is needed, including intensified outreach, more flexible scheduling, expanded equipment availability, and empowering post-training support programs.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation concludes that the sewing training program at SKB Kota Semarang was effectively implemented across the context, input, process, and product dimensions of the CIPP model. The program addressed participants' vocational needs, was supported by qualified instructors, an SKKNI-based curriculum, adequate funding and facilities, and was delivered through structured theoretical and practical learning activities. It improved participants' sewing competencies, self-confidence, and opportunities to generate income through employment or home-based businesses. However, the declining number of participants indicates the need for improvements in program promotion, scheduling flexibility, training equipment, and post-training support. Therefore, the program should be continued by strengthening formative assessment, entrepreneurship mentoring, employment linkages, business incubation, and alumni tracking. The CIPP model also proved useful as a comprehensive

framework for supporting evidence-based improvements and ensuring the sustainability and broader social impact of non-formal vocational training.

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