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THE MEANING OF LEARNING FOR STUDENTS IN THE INDEPENDENT PACKAGE C PROGRAM IN HOMESCHOOLING (A Phenomenological Study of Homeschooling in Bandung)

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Abstract: Education is a process of interpreting experience that plays an essential role in developing individuals' potential, skills, and character. The Independent Paket C Program at Homeschooling Focus serves as a non-formal education alternative that emphasizes flexibility, personalized learning, and a learner-centered approach. This study aims to explore the meaning of learning as experienced by learners in the Independent Paket C Program using a phenomenological approach. This research addresses a gap in phenomenological studies on the independent Paket C program, which has been less explored compared to homeschooling in general. The findings contribute to improving the management of non-formal education and encourage flexibility-oriented policies in homeschooling. This study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design involving active learners, alumni, tutors, and the school principal as participants. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis followed phenomenological stages, including horizontalization, thematic clustering, the development of textual and structural descriptions, and the formulation of the essence of learning experiences. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trails. The findings indicate that learners perceive learning as a process of self-development, goal attainment, character formation, and a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience. Flexibility in learning time, methods, and objectives, supported by supportive tutor-learner relationships and a psychologically safe learning environment, plays a significant role in shaping learners' perceptions of learning. Furthermore, the study reveals positive attitudinal changes among learners, who developed from passive and less confident individuals into more independent, responsible, and intrinsically motivated learners. In conclusion, the Independent Paket C Program facilitates a humanistic, holistic, and adaptive learning process.

Keywords: Homeschooling, Independent Program, Paket C Program, Phenomenology, The Meaning of Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main foundations in human development, because through the learning process every individual can develop abilities, acquire knowledge, and form the character needed to face challenges in life. Philosophically, the learning process is viewed as a process of making meaning from experiences that takes place throughout one's lifetime. Knowles (Purwanti, E. 2025) states that learning is not merely an activity of receiving information, but an internal process that enables a person to interpret experiences and give meaning to the world around them. Therefore, understanding the meaning of learning becomes an important element in organizing education that is relevant to the needs of learners.

In formal education in Indonesia, standardized curricula, teaching methods, and school structures often fail to accommodate the diverse characteristics, interests, and learning needs of students. This condition has encouraged the emergence of alternative forms of education such as homeschooling, which offers time flexibility, a personalized approach, and learner independence. The development of homeschooling has strengthened in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period, when flexible and needs-based learning became a primary necessity. According to *Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktik* (2021/2022), since the COVID-19 pandemic, interest in homeschooling has increased due to its time flexibility and methodological effectiveness, which allows learning to be tailored to individual students' needs. Furthermore, Febiyanti et al. (2021) state that perceptions of homeschooling changed during the pandemic, from merely an alternative form of education to a realistic and practical option for adapting learning to the needs of families and students, particularly in the context of a more flexible and personalized curriculum.

One of the educational service programs available in homeschooling is the Independent Equivalency Program

Package C, which is equivalent to upper secondary education. This program not only aims to provide formal recognition of learning outcomes, but also functions as a space for learners who require a more personalized learning approach with flexible time and place. Nevertheless, there are various motivations for learners to participate in the Independent Package C Program in homeschooling, ranging from academic, psychological, and social reasons to the suitability of the learners' preferred learning styles. The existence of these diverse backgrounds causes learners' interpretations of the learning process to potentially differ from those of students in formal schools. For them, learning is not merely about fulfilling curriculum demands, but is closely related to personal experiences, personal goals, and self-identity.

However, on the other hand, equivalency education is still often underestimated by the public. Several studies indicate that equivalency education is frequently perceived merely as a pathway to obtain a certificate and is also confronted with issues related to quality and learning management. Kinasih (2015) shows that in the implementation process of equivalency education, there are various deviations, one of which is that participation in equivalency education programs is oriented only toward obtaining a certificate in order to fulfill the interest of achieving a higher social status and vertical social mobility. Another research finding by Suhendra (2014) states that the quality of graduates from equivalency education remains in the low category. This condition is caused by the limited availability of tutors, the weak learning absorption capacity of the community, and insufficient community participation to support the technical implementation of equivalency education. In fact, the learning experiences of students in this program are highly contextual and personal. Unlike previous studies that mostly highlight the management and effectiveness of homeschooling programs (for example, studies published in the *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan UNY*), this study focuses on examining the essence of the meaning of learning among students in the Independent Paket C program through a phenomenological approach. This research also provides a new contribution to the field of equivalency education administration.

To understand the meaning of learning, a research approach is needed that is capable of capturing students' subjective experiences in depth. A phenomenological approach is considered relevant because it focuses on lived experience and the meanings individuals assign to those experiences. According to Schutz (Sari & Nugroho, 2021), phenomenology enables researchers to understand how individuals interpret reality based on their own perspectives. Meanwhile, Creswell (Rahman & Lestari, 2022) emphasizes that phenomenology is highly effective when researchers seek to explore the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by a group of individuals. Thus, a phenomenological approach provides an appropriate framework for revealing how students of the Independent Package C Program interpret the meaning of learning within homeschooling education.

In the current social and educational context, the theme of the meaning of learning in homeschooling-based equivalency education has become increasingly relevant along with changes in social structures, the dynamics of the world of work, and the growing diversity of educational pathways. Contemporary society is characterized by demands for flexibility, high mobility, and the need for competencies that cannot always be facilitated by a uniform and linear formal education system. These social changes have encouraged the emergence of various forms of alternative education that emphasize personalization, learner autonomy, and contextual relevance, in which homeschooling and equivalency education represent one of the responses to the limitations of conventional education systems.

In addition, the growing awareness of mental health, experiences of learning-related trauma, and individuals' rights to obtain education that aligns with their conditions and potentials have made the issue of the meaning of learning increasingly crucial. Many learners in equivalency education come from backgrounds marked by school dropout, academic pressure, or a mismatch with formal school culture. In this context, learning can no longer be understood narrowly as an academic process, but rather as an existential experience related to the restoration of self-confidence, the formation of identity, and the strengthening of personal agency. Therefore, understanding how learners make meaning of learning becomes key to ensuring that equivalency education is not merely compensatory in nature, but truly functions as a space for human empowerment.

On the other hand, national education policies that emphasize the principles of lifelong learning and inclusivity require stronger legitimacy for non-formal and informal education pathways. Equivalency education can no longer be positioned as a marginal track, but rather as an integral part of the national education system that must be managed in a meaningful and high-quality manner. In this context, a phenomenological study on the meaning of learning in the Independent Package C Program becomes important, as it is able to provide a more humane and contextual perspective for the development of policies, pedagogical practices, and the management of equivalency education in Indonesia.

By examining the meaning of learning from the perspectives of the life experiences of learners, tutors, and program managers, this study is expected to address contemporary social and educational challenges, while also offering a new paradigm that homeschooling-based equivalency education is not merely an administrative solution to the limitations of the formal education system, but also a space for learning transformation that is relevant to the dynamic and plural realities of modern society.

This study aims to understand and reveal the meaning of learning in the Independent Paket C Program at Homeschooling Focus through a phenomenological perspective. Specifically, this study seeks to explore the lived experiences of learners, tutors, and program administrators in interpreting the learning process, the role of pedagogical mentoring, and the non-formal education management practices implemented.

In addition, this study aims to analyze how learning flexibility and structured flexibility in the management of

the Independent Paket C Program play a role in shaping the transformation of learning awareness, the development of learners' identities, and the balance between learning freedom and academic responsibility. Through this understanding, the study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of equivalency education and homeschooling in Indonesia, particularly in strengthening the legitimacy of non-formal education as a meaningful, humanistic, and inclusive learning space.

Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the development of educational science, particularly in the field of non-formal education administration, as well as to provide practical contributions for homeschooling providers. The research findings may support the reform of homeschooling management in order to improve the accessibility and quality of non-formal education in Indonesia, especially in developing equivalency education services that are more oriented toward learners' learning experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it aims to understand the lived experiences of students in the Package C Program in interpreting the learning process at Homeschooling Focus in depth. According to Creswell (Hidayah & Mustofa: 2024), phenomenology seeks to explore the essence of the experiences of a group of individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon. Thus, this study does not merely describe learning behavior, but also reveals the subjective meanings felt by the students.

The research was conducted at Homeschooling Focus, Cingised Street Gg. Badodon 2 No. 8A, Cisaranten Endah, Arcamanik District, Bandung City, West Java, a non-formal educational institution that provides homeschooling services for Packages A, B, and C. This location was chosen purposively because it offers Package C with a diverse range of students and implements a flexible learning pattern that allows for a variety of unique learning experiences.

The subjects of the study were students, tutors, school principals, and parents of students enrolled in the Independent Package C Program. Informants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria:

1. Students or alumni of the Package C Program.
2. Have participated in learning activities for at least one semester.
3. Willing and able to verbally express personal experiences.
4. Do not have cognitive impairments that would hinder the interview process.

The main instrument of this research is the researcher himself. The researcher acts as a collector, processor, and interpreter of data. In addition, the researcher uses supporting instruments such as interview guidelines, field notes, voice recorders, and observation sheets. Before data collection, the researcher performs bracketing (epoche) to control assumptions, biases, and personal experiences so that they do not influence the interpretation of the informants' experiences. The researcher keeps a reflection journal to suspend personal experiences as an educator.

Data analysis was conducted using phenomenological steps referring to Moustakas and Creswell, including horizontal analysis, whereby researchers read all transcript data and identified important statements related to students' learning experiences. Next, meaning units/themes were grouped, whereby similar statements were grouped into relevant themes, such as learning motivation, emotional experiences, relationships with tutors, and personal meanings. Then, textural descriptions were compiled, whereby the researcher compiled descriptions of what the informants experienced based on raw data without excessive interpretation. Structural Description involves the researcher describing how the experience occurred, including the conditions and context that influenced it. Finally, the essence formulation is the final stage, which involves formulating the essence or nature of the meaning of learning for students in the Package C Program.

To ensure data quality, several verification techniques were used, as follows: Triangulation of sources and methods was carried out by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Member Check involved reconfirming the interview results and researcher's interpretations with the informants to ensure they matched their actual experiences. Peer Debriefing involved the researcher discussing with their supervisor or colleagues to obtain input and test the consistency of the analysis. Finally, audit trail involves researchers recording the entire research process, from data collection to analysis, so that the research process can be traced.

This research was conducted in accordance with research ethics as stipulated in Permenristekdikti No. 39 of 2017 concerning Research Ethics. The ethical principles applied include informed consent, whereby research subjects are given an explanation of the objectives, procedures, and benefits of the research before participating; confidentiality and anonymity, which involved concealing the identities of students and institutions in the reporting of research results; non-maleficence, which involved ensuring that the research did not cause psychological, social, or academic harm to students; and academic honesty, which involved presenting research data and results objectively without manipulation. The application of research ethics is important because the research subjects are students in non-formal education who are vulnerable to social stigma.

The phenomenological approach in this study allows for an analysis of the management of the Mandiri Paket C Program from the perspective of the students' lived experience, so that education providers can understand the extent to which policies, service systems, and learning management are truly felt and understood by students. The findings of this study are expected to form the basis for recommendations for the development of

homeschooling management that is more responsive, inclusive, and oriented towards the learning experiences of students.

To gain a deep understanding of the meaning of learning, this study used several techniques. First, non-participatory observations were conducted on learning activities, interaction patterns, classroom atmosphere, and learning dynamics at Homeschooling Focus. The observations aimed to understand the context and setting of the students' experiences. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to explore their learning experiences, motivations, personal changes, and personal meanings related to learning. The interviews were recorded with the informants' permission and transcribed verbatim. Finally, documentation was carried out, including photographs of activities (with permission), institutional profiles, learning schedules, and other documents that could strengthen the research data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Essence of Learning: Flexibility as a Catalyst for Self-Transformation

From a phenomenological perspective, the meaning of learning is understood not merely as academic results or achievements, but as a lived experience consciously experienced by students in the context of their lifeworld. Based on the research findings, the essence of the meaning of learning for students of the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus lies in the flexibility of learning, which acts as a catalyst for self-transformation.

The flexibility of learning is interpreted by students as a space of existential freedom that allows them to be authentically present as learners. Unlike the learning experience in formal education systems, which is often perceived as uniform and oppressive, learning at Homeschooling Focus provides students with the opportunity to determine the pace, strategy, and direction of their learning according to their personal interests and potential. In this experience, learning is no longer perceived as an external obligation, but rather as a meaningful internal process oriented towards self-development.

Phenomenologically, the experience of recognizing and developing one's potential emerges as the main intentionality in the learning consciousness of students. This consciousness is formed through interaction between the freedom to choose areas of interest, tutor support, and a non-dominant learning atmosphere. Learners feel that they are "recognized" as unique individuals, so that the learning process becomes an experience that validates their identity. This flexibility allows for the transformation of learners who may have previously been marginalized by the formal system into confident and empowered individuals.

Furthermore, learning flexibility also serves as a bridge between learning experiences and future orientation. Students strategically interpret learning as a means to achieve their goals, including gaining access to global education through scholarships abroad. In this context, learning is experienced as a process with direction and existential purpose. Academic and non-academic achievements are not only understood as instrumental accomplishments, but as concrete evidence that non-formal education pathways can provide social mobility and self-legitimacy at the national and international levels.

The essence of learning is also manifested in character building. The homeschooling system, which demands independence, provides a learning experience that is rich in personal responsibility. Students consciously manage their time, set goals, and make decisions related to their education. In this experience, learning is interpreted as a process of self-maturation, where values such as discipline, responsibility, and self-confidence are internalized through daily practice, not just through normative teaching.

In addition, the close interpersonal relationship between students and tutors creates a humanistic and contextual learning environment. This relationship fosters a sense of security and comfort that allows students to engage emotionally and cognitively in the learning process. The flexible and dialogical learning atmosphere strengthens intrinsic motivation, so that consistency in learning is not driven by external pressure, but rather by the students' internal awareness and needs.

Thus, the phenomenological essence of the meaning of learning for Package C students at Homeschooling Focus can be summarized as a transformational experience mediated by flexibility. Flexibility in learning does not only function as a method, but as an existential condition that allows students to experience learning as a process of liberation, identity formation, and future achievement. In this context, learning becomes a holistic experience that integrates cognitive, affective, social, and existential dimensions, shaping students as empowered and meaningful subjects in their lives.



Figure 1. Best New Player
Asia Open Memory Sports Championship



Figure 2. MURI Record Holder
Remembering Foreign Languages (Mandarin & Turkish)

The Essence of Learning: Tutors as Bridges for Transforming Learners' Awareness

Within the framework of phenomenology, the learning experiences of students cannot be separated from the role of significant actors present in their lifeworld, one of which is the tutor. Based on the interview results, the essence of the meaning of learning for students in the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus is built through humanistic, flexible, and mentoring-oriented pedagogical relationships. Tutors interpret the learning process not merely as a transfer of knowledge, but as a process of rebuilding learners' awareness of the values and goals of learning.

The diversity of students' backgrounds, interests, and life goals is experienced by tutors as a reality that demands an adaptive and personalized learning approach. Tutors view these differences not as obstacles, but as potential that can be developed. The flexibility of the program allows tutors to relate learning materials to the interests and future plans of students, making learning a relevant and meaningful experience. Tutors understand the achievements of students as a concrete manifestation of the success of an approach that focuses on individual potential.

Phenomenologically, flexibility in learning becomes an existential condition that enables students to experience independence and responsibility in learning. Tutors believe that freedom in managing time and learning methods encourages learners to actively engage in the learning process. However, this freedom also presents challenges in the form of instability in discipline and differences in levels of understanding. Tutors experience these challenges as part of the character-building process, not as learner failure.

The tutor's experience in dealing with students who carry trauma or negative mindsets towards learning shows the healing dimension in the educational process. Tutors realize that some students are still bound by past experiences in formal education that were stressful. Therefore, tutors take on the role of patient and empathetic companions, rebuilding students' trust in the learning process. In this experience, learning is not only cognitive, but also affective and existential.

The learning strategies applied by tutors, such as contextual approaches, reflective discussions, constructive feedback, and setting realistic targets, enable students to gain a deeper understanding of learning. These strategies help learners connect knowledge with their life experiences, so that learning is experienced as a meaningful and applicable process. Gradual mentoring allows learners to grow into independent learners without losing their sense of security.

In the tutor's reflective awareness, there is a shift in the meaning of learning for students. Learning is no longer interpreted as an obligation to meet curriculum requirements or simply to pursue graduation, but rather as a process of self-development and lifelong learning. Tutors observe significant changes in learners' attitudes, from passive and hesitant to active, confident, and responsible for their own learning process. These changes indicate a

transformation in learning awareness.

The essence of learning is also formed through close interpersonal relationships based on trust between tutors and students. These relationships create a safe space for dialogue, where students are free to express their opinions, ask questions, and reveal their learning difficulties. The trust that is built strengthens student engagement in the learning process and facilitates the internalization of positive values such as discipline, responsibility, and clear life goals.

Thus, the phenomenological essence of the meaning of learning for students in the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus, based on the tutor's perspective, lies in the role of the tutor as a bridge for the transformation of learning awareness. The tutor acts as a facilitator, motivator, and companion who helps students rediscover the meaning of learning in the context of their lives. Through a flexible, personalized, and empathetic approach, the Independent Package C Program not only produces academic achievements but also shapes students as empowered, reflective individuals who are ready to face the future.

Essence of the Program: Structured Flexibility as a Space for Negotiation between Freedom and Responsibility

From a phenomenological perspective, the management of the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus is understood not merely as a series of administrative functions, but as an educational management experience that seeks to respond to the real needs of students in their lives. The essence of this program lies in its structured flexibility, which is the school's conscious effort to provide freedom of learning without relinquishing control, guidance, and academic responsibility.

Independent Program Planning arose from management's awareness of the limitations of conventional education systems in accommodating students with special conditions, such as time constraints, high mobility, or a focus on developing specific potential. With this awareness, the program was designed as an existential solution, not merely a technical alternative. Flexibility in terms of time and place, the provision of self-directed learning modules, and scheduled academic evaluations reflect the school's efforts to negotiate the formal demands of education with the realities of students' lives. Case studies, such as those of some students, show how the program is seen as a bridge between personal aspirations and formal academic legitimacy.

At the organizational stage, the essence of managerial experience lies in efforts to maintain the presence of students in the education system even though they are studying independently and online. The appointment of homeroom teachers as the main liaison, the division of subject tutor roles, and the involvement of students in school activities show that independence is not interpreted as a relinquishment of institutional responsibility. Phenomenologically, this represents the school's awareness to remain "present" in the students' learning journey, even if not physically.

The implementation of the Independent Program demonstrates the essence of mentoring as a key pedagogical practice. Tutors are not only present as teachers, but also as significant figures who provide a space for sharing, emotional support, and personal guidance. The learning experience of students is mediated through modules, assignments, and independent projects, but is still enriched with contextual experiences such as visits to legal institutions and support for external achievements. In this context, learning is experienced as an experience that is integrated with real life, not an activity that is separate from the social world of students. The instilling of character values is an integral part of this process, so that education is interpreted holistically.

Supervision (controlling) in the Independent Program reflects management's awareness that flexibility requires limits and balance. Periodic evaluations, intensive communication, and the giving of reprimands and appreciation show that supervision is not interpreted as repressive control, but rather as a form of concern for the overall development of students. Rewards for achievement are understood as recognition of students' efforts and accomplishments, which in turn strengthen motivation and the meaning of learning as a valued process.

The positive impacts of the program, such as increased independence, time management skills, and balance between academic and non-academic activities, indicate a transformation in the attitudes and awareness of students. However, challenges in time management also reveal that freedom in learning requires personal readiness that not all students automatically possess. In terms of management awareness, these challenges are not viewed as program failures, but rather as part of an ongoing development process.

The expectations and development plans for the program reflect management's reflective orientation towards the sustainability of education quality. Efforts to improve the competence of homeroom teachers and tutors, strengthen the mentoring system, and conduct continuous evaluation show that the Independent Program is understood as a dynamic and evolving process.

Thus, the phenomenological essence of the management of the Independent Program Package C at Homeschooling Focus lies in structured flexibility as a space for negotiation between freedom and responsibility. This program provides an educational experience that allows students to pursue their personal potential and achievements without losing their rights and identity as formal students. In this context, program management not only regulates the system but also builds an adaptive, humane, and relevant educational meaning that aligns with the realities of students' lives.

Discussion

The Meaning of Learning for Students in the Independent Package C Program from a Phenomenological Perspective

The findings of this study indicate that the meaning of learning for students in the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus does not stop at the instrumental orientation of obtaining a diploma, but develops as a transformational life experience. Students interpret learning as a space for self-liberation, identity recognition, and a means of developing their potential and planning for the future. These findings are particularly interesting when discussed in the context of previous theories and research findings on equitable education.

Kinasih (2015) argues that in the practice of implementing equivalency education, various irregularities are still found, one of which is the pragmatic orientation of students. Equity education is viewed merely as a shortcut to obtaining a diploma in order to improve social status and achieve vertical social mobility. This kind of orientation causes the learning process to lose its intrinsic meaning and be reduced to merely an administrative tool for social legitimacy.

However, the results of this study show a different dynamic. Although some Package C students at Homeschooling Focus also have clear future orientations, such as continuing their education to a higher level or obtaining scholarships abroad, these orientations do not stand narrowly as mere social status goals. Instead, these orientations are integrated with the process of self-development, potential development, and meaningful learning experiences. Thus, academic achievement and diplomas are not understood as the ultimate goal, but rather as a consequence of a learning process that is consciously and personally experienced.

This difference shows that the flexibility of learning in Homeschooling Focus plays a major role in distinguishing it from the concept of equal education criticized by Kinasih (2015). Flexibility not only facilitates learning efficiency, but also builds the existential awareness of students as learners. In the context of phenomenology, this condition allows for intentional learning that is oriented towards meaning, rather than merely formal results.

When compared with the results of general homeschooling research, such as that conducted by researchers at Yogyakarta State University (UNY), significant similarities and differences were found. The UNY study on homeschooling practices in Indonesia (e.g., by Suryadi & Widodo, 2018) shows that homeschooling is generally understood as an educational alternative that emphasizes flexibility of time, an individualized approach, and a close relationship between educators and students. The results of this study conclude that homeschooling can increase student motivation and psychological comfort, especially for children who are not suited to the formal school system.

However, the UNY study also noted that in some homeschooling practices, the learning orientation still focuses on adjusting the formal curriculum and achieving minimum academic requirements so that students can take equivalency exams. In this context, flexibility is interpreted more in technical and administrative terms, and has not yet fully developed as a space for identity formation and self-transformation.

In contrast to these findings, this study shows that in Homeschooling Focus, learning flexibility has transcended technical dimensions and developed into an existential condition. Students not only feel comfortable, but also feel recognized, trusted, and empowered. The dialogical relationship with tutors, the non-dominant learning atmosphere, and the freedom to determine the direction of learning make the experience of equitable education at Homeschooling Focus closer to the goals of humanistic education.

Thus, the findings of this study complement Kinasih (2015) study with a phenomenological perspective, showing that the Mandiri Paket C Program overcomes the stigma of low quality that a pragmatic orientation in equivalency education is not a necessity, but rather depends heavily on the learning design and educational culture built by the implementing institution. When implemented in a flexible and humanistic manner, equity education has the potential to become a space for authentic self-transformation, rather than merely a means of vertical social mobility.

Theoretically, the results of this study confirm that the meaning of learning in equity education needs to be understood contextually and phenomenologically. Flexibility in learning has been proven to shift the orientation of learning from mere administrative interests to meaningful, empowering learning experiences that are oriented towards holistic self-development.

The Role of Tutors in the Package C Independent Program in Homeschooling from a Phenomenological Perspective

This research finding confirms that, from a phenomenological perspective, the meaning of learning for students in the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus cannot be separated from the intersubjective relationship between students and tutors as significant actors in the lifeworld. Tutors are present not merely as teachers, but as existential companions who mediate the transformation of students' learning consciousness. The meaning of learning is thus formed through life experiences that are interpreted reflectively in authentic dialogical relationships. These findings are in line with the phenomenological thinking in education which emphasizes that the meaning of learning is not objective and given, but rather constructed through relationships, experiences, and awareness directly experienced by the learning subject (van Manen, 2020).

Theoretically, the role of humanistic and empathetic tutors in this study is in line with the humanistic education and student-centered learning approaches. Rogers (in McCombs & Miller, 2020) asserts that meaningful learning occurs when educators are able to build relationships based on unconditional positive regard, empathy, and trust. In the context of Homeschooling Focus, tutors do not position themselves as dominant authorities, but rather as facilitators who help students rebuild the meaning of learning based on their life experiences. This condition explains

why students who previously experienced pressure and trauma in formal education are able to undergo a process of healing and transformation of learning awareness.

This finding can also be explained through Knowles' andragogy theory. Knowles (2025) asserts that adult learning is self-directed, oriented towards life experiences, contextual relevance, and the actual needs of learners. Adult learners do not learn solely because of external demands, but because of an internal drive to understand and make sense of their lives. In the Independent Package C Program, the flexibility of learning and the personal tutor approach allow learners to play an active role in determining their learning goals, pace, and strategies. Tutors function as learning partners who help learners reflect on their experiences, rather than as controllers of the learning process. Thus, the learning practices at Homeschooling Focus represent the main principle of andragogy, namely the shift from teacher-directed learning to learner-directed learning.

In addition, the findings of this study are also relevant to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Ryan & Deci (2020). SDT emphasizes that intrinsic motivation develops when three basic psychological needs are met, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The flexibility of learning at Homeschooling Focus provides autonomy for students to set their own learning pace and approach according to their personal circumstances. Consistent and empathetic tutoring strengthens the sense of relatedness, while gradual support helps students build competence progressively. Therefore, the shift in the meaning of learning from an external obligation to internal awareness, as found in this study, can be understood as a consequence of the fulfillment of the basic psychological needs of adult learners.

When compared to research on homeschooling by Wahyuni & Suyanto (2021) from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY), which concluded that homeschooling in Indonesia is generally chosen because of its flexibility in terms of time, psychological comfort, and incompatibility with the formal school system, this study shows a more in-depth dimension. The UNY study places the role of tutors primarily on academic facilitation and curriculum adjustment so that students can meet national evaluation standards.

Conversely, in the context of the Mandiri Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus, the role of the tutor goes beyond academic functions. Tutors consciously build pedagogical relationships that are therapeutic, reflective, and transformative. The flexibility of learning does not stop at technical and administrative aspects, but develops into an existential condition that allows students to restore their self-confidence, build their identity as adult learners, and interpret learning as a process of self-development.

This difference in findings is also evident when compared to the research conducted by Prasetyo et al. (2022) from the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) on equitable education and community homeschooling. The study found that although the learning approach was relatively flexible, the orientation of tutors and students was still strongly focused on graduation and module completion. The relationship between tutors and students tended to be functional and instrumental, not yet fully developed into a deep dialogical relationship.

In this study, on the contrary, close interpersonal relationships based on trust became the main foundation for the formation of learning meaning. Tutors interpret challenges such as disciplinary instability, social background, and differences in learning abilities as part of the students' maturation process. This view is in line with the concept of reflective pedagogy, which places mistakes, obstacles, and failures as an integral part of the adult learning process (Brookfield, 2021).

Furthermore, the dimension of healing that emerges in the findings of this study enriches the discourse on homeschooling and equitable education, particularly in the Indonesian context. Hidayat and Nurhadi (2023) show that non-formal education students often carry psychological burdens due to experiences of failure, dropping out of school, or stigmatization in formal education. However, not all non-formal educational institutions have the pedagogical capacity to address these affective aspects. In the rural and semi-rural contexts of Indonesia, Kamil and Hardiansyah (2022) emphasize that the success of equitable education greatly depends on the quality of tutor assistance and their ability to understand the socio-cultural context of the students. The findings of this study show that Homeschooling Focus represents a best practice in which tutors act as agents of healing and transformation of learning awareness.

Thus, this study confirms that the meaning of learning in equitable education is not only determined by structural flexibility, but primarily by the quality of pedagogical relationships. Tutors who are humanistic, reflective, empathetic, and andragogically oriented are able to bridge learners from traumatic learning experiences to meaningful, autonomous, and self-development-oriented learning experiences. These findings expand on previous studies of homeschooling by emphasizing the importance of relational and existential flexibility as the foundation of adult learning.

Overall, this discussion shows that the Mandiri Paket C Program at Homeschooling Focus not only serves as an alternative educational pathway, but also as a space for transforming learning awareness. The role of the tutor as a facilitator, companion, and reflector makes the learning process a holistic experience, integrating cognitive, affective, social, and existential dimensions, so that students grow as empowered, reflective adults who are ready to face the future.

Independent Program Management Package C in Homeschooling from a Phenomenological Perspective

The findings of this study indicate that the management of the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus cannot be understood solely as the technical application of management functions, but rather as an educational management experience that stems from an awareness of the realities of students' lives. From a

phenomenological perspective, management is present as a meaningful practice that negotiates learning freedom with academic responsibility. Thus, management does not only function as a system control mechanism, but as a relational space that allows students to remain connected to the formal education structure without neglecting their life context. These findings are relevant for discussion within the framework of G. R. Terry's classical management theory and recent research on homeschooling and non-formal education, particularly in the context of independent Package C equivalency education.

According to G. R. Terry, planning is the determination of goals and the steps that must be taken to achieve them effectively and efficiently (Terry & Rue, 2020). The findings of this study indicate that the planning function in the Mandiri Paket C Program at Homeschooling Focus is not solely oriented towards meeting national curriculum standards, but stems from an awareness of the limitations of the conventional education system in reaching students who have dropped out of school, are under psychological pressure, or have certain social conditions.

The learning plan is designed to be flexible, taking into account the lifeworld of the students, including flexibility in terms of time, place, and learning methods. Thus, the plan is not rigid and normative, but rather adaptive and contextual. This finding expands Terry's concept of planning by adding a phenomenological dimension, namely planning as an effort to bridge the personal aspirations of learners with formal academic legitimacy.

The organizational function in the Mandiri Paket C Program demonstrates consistency with Terry's theory, which emphasizes a clear division of tasks, authority, and responsibilities. The appointment of homeroom teachers as the main liaison, the involvement of subject tutors, and an intensive communication system reflect an organization that aims to maintain student continuity in the education system.

However, phenomenologically, this organization is not interpreted as mere structural control. The managerial structure is understood as a form of institutional presence that ensures students are not disconnected from the educational process, even though learning is conducted independently and online. Thus, the organization does not merely regulate, but also provides a sense of security and certainty of learning for students.

At the implementation stage, Terry emphasized that actuating relates to efforts to mobilize human resources to work optimally toward organizational goals (Terry & Rue, 2020). The findings of this study indicate that the actuating function in the Mandiri Paket C Program is realized through intensive academic, emotional, and reflective mentoring.

Tutors and homeroom teachers not only serve as implementers of the curriculum, but also as significant figures who guide students in managing their motivation, discipline, and self-confidence. This shows that the implementation function is not only instructional, but also relational and affective, which is a characteristic of phenomenology-based education management.

The supervisory function in the Mandiri Paket C Program demonstrates a balanced approach between learning freedom and academic boundaries. Periodic evaluations, intensive communication, and a system of rewards and reprimands show that controlling is not interpreted as repressive, but rather as a form of concern for the development of students.

In line with Terry's view, supervision aims to ensure that activities run according to plan and to make corrections when necessary. However, the findings of this study expand the meaning of controlling as a means of strengthening motivation, forming academic responsibility, and recognizing students' learning efforts.

Comparison with Research on Homeschooling and Equitable Education

Research by Wahyuni and Suyanto (2021) from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta shows that homeschooling management generally focuses on learning flexibility and curriculum adjustment, but academic supervision tends to be lax and highly dependent on the awareness of students and parents. This condition causes some students to experience difficulties in time management and learning consistency.

Research by Putri, Hadi, and Sumarno (2022) from the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia also found that the planning and organization functions of homeschooling-based equitable education are relatively well-run, but the supervisory function is still administrative and graduation-oriented, and does not yet touch on the in-depth development of academic responsibility.

In contrast to these findings, this study shows that the Mandiri Paket C Program at Homeschooling Focus is able to integrate flexibility with structured and humanistic supervision. Flexibility is not interpreted as unlimited freedom, but rather as a learning space that remains within a clear and meaningful managerial framework. These findings support the results of research by Rahmawati and Nugroho (2023), which emphasizes the importance of balancing student autonomy and a consistent mentoring system in non-formal education.

Research Novelty: Phenomenology of Management Mandiri Paket C

The novelty of this study lies in its phenomenological focus on the management of the Mandiri Paket C Program, which has rarely been examined in research on homeschooling and equitable education. Pedragosa and Katenga (2022) highlight a research gap that tends to view homeschooling and non-formal education from a structural and policy perspective, without exploring the meaningful experiences of educational actors in their daily management practices.

This study fills that gap by showing that independent Package C management is not merely an adaptation of formal school management or general homeschooling, but rather a reflective practice born out of negotiations between the education system and the realities of students' lives. Thus, management is understood as a lived pedagogical experience.

Strengthening Findings through Inter-Research Discussions

When examined comparatively, the findings of this study show a unique position in the landscape of research on equality and homeschooling in Indonesia. Unlike Kinasih's (2015) findings, which highlight the dominance of a pragmatic orientation in equity education, where learning is reduced to a means of obtaining a diploma, this study shows that this instrumental orientation is not inherent but is greatly influenced by the learning design and managerial culture of the institution. In the Independent Package C Program at Homeschooling Focus, flexibility combined with humanistic guidance shifts the learning orientation towards a transformational experience that is existentially meaningful.

These findings also complement and expand on the results of homeschooling research by Wahyuni and Suyanto (2021) and Suryadi and Widodo (2018) from Yogyakarta State University, which emphasize flexibility and psychological comfort as the advantages of homeschooling. While those studies still place flexibility within a technical-administrative framework and curriculum adjustment, this study shows that flexibility can function as an existential condition that facilitates identity formation, learning trauma recovery, and the transformation of adult learners' consciousness. Thus, flexibility is not merely a pedagogical tool, but a medium for learning meaning.

From the perspective of the tutor's role, this study reinforces and deepens the findings of Prasetyo et al. (2022) and Putri et al. (2022), which assess that the tutor-student relationship in equitable education is still functional in nature. In contrast to these studies, the results of this study show that a dialogical, empathetic, and reflective pedagogical relationship can transform the learning experience from a traumatic one into a process of recovery and empowerment. These findings are in line with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and Knowles' andragogy, but provide a contextual contribution by showing how these theories are concretely manifested in the practice of homeschooling-based equitable education.

In terms of management, this study reinforces Pedragosa and Katenga (2022) criticism of the dominance of structural approaches in studies of homeschooling and non-formal education. Using a phenomenological approach, this study shows that management functions such as planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising do not only operate as administrative mechanisms, but as living pedagogical experiences. This finding distinguishes this study from previous studies that tend to separate management studies from learning experiences, and emphasizes that structured flexibility is key to negotiating academic freedom and responsibility.

Thus, the discussion between these studies reinforces the argument that homeschooling-based equitable education cannot be assessed solely as an alternative or compensatory pathway. When managed in a reflective, humanistic, and structured manner, as demonstrated in the Mandiri Paket C Program at Homeschooling Focus, equitable education has the potential to become a space for authentic, inclusive, and transformative learning. These findings also confirm the theoretical and empirical contributions of research in enriching the discourse on non-formal education in Indonesia.

Implications: Policy Recommendations for Integrating Homeschooling Management into the National Curriculum in an Effort to Improve Access and Quality of Equitable Education

The findings of this study have important implications for the development of equitable education policies in Indonesia. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System explicitly recognizes non-formal education as part of the national education system. However, the implementation of the curriculum and management of equitable education still tends to mimic the patterns of formal schools.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the principles of managerial flexibility, reflective mentoring, and humanistic supervision be integrated into the national curriculum policies and guidelines for Package C equivalency education. This integration is expected to make equivalency education not only an alternative path to graduation, but also a meaningful, adaptive learning space oriented towards the recovery and development of students' potential.

Table 1. Implications: Policy Recommendations for the Integration of Homeschooling Management into the National Curriculum

Impact Thematic Topic	Key Findings of Research	Verbatim Participant Quotes	Policy Recommendation
Structural Flexibility	Flexibility in learning is effective when balanced with a system of mentoring, evaluation, and supervision.	<i>"If they are given too much flexibility without supervision, children can lose their way. But here they are free, yet there are still people to remind them."</i> (Principal).	The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology needs to develop a flexible-structured equity curriculum model that allows for adaptation in terms of time, methods, and learning pace, while maintaining national standards for

			guidance and evaluation.
The Role of Homeroom Teachers & Tutors as Key Actors	The presence of homeroom teachers and tutors maintains student engagement in the system even though they are studying independently.	<i>“Even though his child rarely attends school, we still feel responsible for supporting his learning process.”</i> (Tutor/Homeroom Teacher).	Equity education policies need to formalize the role of homeroom teachers/tutor assistants with a specific ratio and special training in non-formal and humanistic pedagogy.
Access to Education for Students with Special Needs	The Mandiri Program reaches students with high mobility, special talents, or a history of failure in formal schooling.	<i>“If it weren’t for the Mandiri Program, I might have dropped out of school.”</i> (Student).	The state needs to expand access to homeschooling-based equitable education as a national strategy to prevent school dropouts and reach vulnerable groups.
Integrating Learning with Real Life	Contextual learning and real-world experiences enhance the meaning of learning.	<i>“Learning is not just about modules, but also about the experiences I have every day.”</i> (Student).	The national curriculum for equality needs to provide formal space for project-based learning and experiential learning as part of assessment.
Humanist Supervision (Non-Repressive)	Supervision is interpreted as concern, not rigid control.	<i>“We reprimand them not to punish them, but so that they do not shirk their responsibilities.”</i> (Tutor).	The monitoring system for equivalency education needs to shift from an administrative approach to monitoring based on mentoring and reflection on student development.
Strengthening Independence and Character	Students develop in time management, responsibility, and self-confidence.	<i>“Here, I learn how to manage my own life, not just lessons.”</i> (Student).	National education policy needs to recognize character development and independence as key outcomes of equitable education, on par with academic achievement.
Legitimacy of Non-Formal Pathways	The Mandiri Program provides an equivalent to formal education.	<i>“The diploma is equivalent, but the learning process is much more humane.”</i> (Student).	The government needs to strengthen the social and institutional legitimacy of equitable education, including access to higher education, scholarships, and the world of work.

Synthesis of Implications

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that integrating homeschooling management into the national curriculum does not mean standardizing education, but rather adopting key principles that have proven to be effective, namely structured flexibility, personal mentoring, and humanistic supervision.

In terms of policy, equivalency education needs to be positioned not as a “secondary alternative” pathway, but as a strategic pathway for the state in guaranteeing the right to lifelong learning. The findings of this study show that when education management is designed in line with the realities of students' lives, equivalency education can become a space for transformation, not merely a means of fulfilling administrative graduation requirements.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the meaning of learning in the Independent Program Package C at Homeschooling Focus is not solely oriented towards academic achievement or administrative functions, but is interpreted as a

life experience that is formed through flexible learning, humanistic pedagogical relationships, and adaptive program management. From a phenomenological perspective, the Independent Program provides a learning space that allows students to experience existential freedom and academic responsibility, so that learning becomes a process of complete self-transformation. The novelty of this research lies in the finding that non-formal education management—particularly through the concept of structured flexibility—plays a significant role in shaping meaningful learning experiences, making educational administration a medium for shaping the meaning, identity, and learning awareness of students.

In practical terms, these findings indicate that the homeschooling-based Mandiri Paket C Program model has the potential to increase educational inclusivity and strengthen the legitimacy of equitable education in the national education system. Although this study has limitations in terms of institutional coverage and subjective approach, the results open up opportunities for the development of more adaptive and humanistic equitable education policies. Further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies, using mixed methods approaches, as well as longitudinal studies to deepen understanding of the long-term impact of the Mandiri Program on the sustainability of education and the social mobility of students.

Key Policy Recommendations

1. Development of a National Model for Flexible-Structured Equitable Education by adopting best practices in homeschooling management into national regulations.
2. Special training for tutors and homeroom teachers in equitable education, focusing on humanistic, reflective, and trauma-informed pedagogy.
3. Official recognition of contextual learning and independent projects as part of the national evaluation system for equity education.
4. Expansion of access to Independent Programs in the Regions, especially for students with high mobility, special talents, or at risk of dropping out of school.

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