

Communication Patterns in Nonformal Education: A Literature Review of One-Way and Two-Way Communication and Its Implications for Learning Evaluation

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Abstract

Communication between educators and learners shapes learner understanding, engagement, and the feedback available for evaluating learning. However, existing studies on communication patterns are dominated by formal and early childhood settings, and little is known about how these patterns operate in nonformal education. This study aims to compare one-way and two-way communication patterns in nonformal education and to examine their implications for learning evaluation. Using a qualitative literature review, 17 journal articles published between 2018 and 2026 were identified through Google Scholar and Garuda, selected purposively, and analyzed through content analysis. The findings show that one-way communication is still widely used and is efficient for delivering short, structured information, but it limits feedback and learner participation. Two-way communication encourages active participation, clarifies misunderstandings, and provides feedback that supports the assessment of learners' needs, although it demands more time and stronger facilitation skills. Multi-way communication further strengthens peer learning. Combining these patterns according to learning objectives and learner characteristics is therefore the most appropriate strategy. These findings suggest that dialogic communication can improve the quality of learning evaluation in nonformal education.

Keywords: Nonformal Education; Communication Patterns; One-Way Communication; Two-Way Communication; Learning Evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nonformal education is an educational pathway outside the formal school system that is nevertheless organized and structured, aiming to develop learners' potential, particularly functional knowledge, skills, and character (Republic of Indonesia, 2003; Syaadah et al., 2022). It takes place in settings such as community learning centers (PKBM), courses, tutoring, mosques, and Islamic boarding schools. Because nonformal programs serve learners with diverse needs and backgrounds, their quality depends heavily on the interaction between educators and learners. Communication is central to this interaction: it is not only a means of delivering material, but also the medium through which understanding is built, feedback is exchanged, and learning achievement is judged.

Nonformal education has become increasingly important because it offers learning opportunities to people with diverse needs, circumstances, and characteristics. Its forms include courses, training programs, study groups, community learning centers (PKBM), equivalency education, and life skills education (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). Programs are designed to improve life skills, job skills, academic abilities, and community empowerment, so they must be implemented in line with the needs of learners and the community (Syaadah et al., 2022). Unlike formal schooling, learners in nonformal settings often differ widely in age, background, and motivation. These differences require educators to adjust how they deliver material and interact with learners, which makes the choice of communication pattern a practical concern rather than a purely technical one.

Instructional communication is commonly classified into one-way (action), two-way (interaction), and multi-way (transaction) patterns (Hakim, 2023). In one-way communication, the educator is the

source of information and learners are recipients. This pattern delivers material efficiently in a short time, but it limits feedback and learner participation (Lestari et al., 2025). Studies in early childhood institutions show that it is also the most frequently used pattern (Natasya Siagin et al., 2023). Two-way communication, in contrast, allows learners to ask questions, express opinions, and give feedback, and it has been shown to improve understanding and engagement (Firdaus et al., 2024), including motivation in online learning (Fajriati et al., 2022).

Each pattern has strengths and limitations. Two-way communication requires more time and stronger facilitation skills, and unrestricted discussion can reduce the effectiveness of material delivery, while one-way communication remains useful for brief, structured information (Lestari et al., 2025). Multi-way communication, in which learners also interact with one another through group discussion or experience-based learning, can further strengthen participation. In practice, combinations of the three patterns have been found to work well, as shown in kitab kuning instruction (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Beyond the pattern itself, open and supportive communication builds psychological safety and trust between educators and learners (Hidayat & Eliasa, 2024), and appropriate learning media can make communication faster and more practical (Kurniasari et al., 2024). These findings suggest that no single pattern is always best. Educators need a basis for judging which pattern fits a given learning objective and learner group.

These patterns matter for evaluation. Evaluation of nonformal education is a systematic process of gathering information for decision-making and program improvement, and it covers not only final outcomes but also needs, resources, implementation, and results (Aryanti et al., 2018; Khodijah et al., 2024). In the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model, which is widely used in evaluating Indonesian education programs, the process component examines how learning is implemented and how learners take part (Edriati et al., 2026; Yempormase et al., 2025). Communication between educators and learners is therefore part of what is evaluated, and it also shapes the feedback through which learners' progress and needs become visible.

However, research on communication patterns has mostly been conducted in early childhood, primary, and Islamic school settings (Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Hakim, 2023; Munisah et al., 2022; Wardah et al., 2023), while studies on nonformal education evaluation rarely examine communication explicitly. It therefore remains unclear how one-way and two-way communication should be understood within the evaluation of nonformal learning.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach in the form of a literature review with a descriptive orientation. A literature review was chosen because the study aims to analyze and synthesize concepts, theories, and findings of previous research on communication patterns in nonformal education and their implications for learning evaluation. The study does not involve field experiments or the collection of primary data. Instead, it focuses on an in-depth analysis of secondary data in the form of published academic sources.

The data consist of scientific articles, reference books, and regulatory documents related to nonformal education, educational communication, and learning evaluation. Sources were identified through documentation, by searching academic databases, namely Google Scholar, Garuda, and university journal portals. The search used the keywords "evaluation of non-formal education learning," "one-way communication," "two-way communication," and "non-formal learning interactions." Sources were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research focus. Articles were included if they (a) were published in scientific journals between 2018 and 2026, (b) discussed nonformal education, learning evaluation, or one-way, two-way, or multi-way communication between educators and learners, and (c) were available in full text. Articles were excluded if they did not address communication patterns or learning evaluation, or if they were not scholarly publications. This process

resulted in 17 journal articles that were analyzed in this study, complemented by the national regulation on the education system as a legal reference.

The data were analyzed using content analysis, in which the researcher acted as the primary instrument in reading, classifying, comparing, and interpreting the selected sources. The analysis followed four stages: data reduction, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, relevant information was extracted from each article, including the educational setting, the communication pattern discussed, and the main findings. The data were then organized into themes, namely the types of communication patterns, the effectiveness of one-way versus two-way communication, the impact of communication on learner engagement, and communication strategies. Differences and similarities across sources were then compared to identify how each communication pattern relates to learner participation, feedback, and learning evaluation, and conclusions were drawn in line with the research objectives.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, that is, by comparing findings from different journal articles and references to check the consistency of the information and to reduce reliance on any single source. Only sources from reputable academic publications were used, and all sources were cited in accordance with APA 7th edition.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section synthesizes the 12 reviewed studies that address communication between educators and learners. Table 1 summarizes their context, the communication pattern examined, and their main findings. The results are then discussed under four themes: communication patterns, the comparative effectiveness of one-way and two-way communication, the impact on learner engagement, and effective communication strategies. The implications for learning evaluation are discussed as a separate theme.

Table 1. *Summary of Reviewed Studies*

No	Author (Year)	Context	Pattern Examined	Key Finding
1	Hakim (2023)	Madrasah (MAS Al-Furqon Cimerak)	One-way, two-way, multi-way	One-way communication was the most common, with the educator acting as storyteller
2	Natasya Siagin et al. (2023)	Early childhood education (literature review)	One-way, two-way, multi-way	All three patterns are used, but one-way is the most frequent
3	Ardiansyah et al. (2023)	Islamic school (<i>kitab kuning</i> instruction)	Combined patterns	A combination of one-way, two-way, and multi-way communication makes learning more effective
4	Lestari et al. (2025)	Vocational school (SMK Negeri 14 Medan)	One-way, two-way, transactional	One-way is time-efficient for informative material but lacks feedback
5	Firdaus et al. (2024)	Basic graphic design learning	Two-way	Two-way communication improves learners' understanding
6	Aziz et al. (2026)	Team teaching (funeral prayer topic)	Two-way	Two-way communication improves outcomes and speeds up understanding
7	Fajriati et al. (2022)	Learning during COVID-19 (early childhood)	Two-way (online)	Two-way communication sustains motivation in online learning
8	Wardah et al. (2023)	Elementary school	Communication and motivation	Instruction without communication fails to build motivation
9	Munisah et al. (2022)	Early childhood education (Tasikmalaya)	Two-way, multi-way	Two-way and multi-way communication raise participation
10	Hidayat & Eliasa (2024)	Systematic literature review	Supportive communication	Open communication builds positive relationships, trust, and psychological safety

11	Yuliana et al. (2023)	Early childhood education (RA Tahfizh Al Furqon)	Communication strategies	Educators need clear communication skills to create collaboration
12	Kurniasari et al. (2024)	Elementary school (SDN Kuningan 04)	Communication strategies	Technology makes communication faster and more practical

3.1 Communication Patterns in Nonformal Education

The reviewed studies describe three communication patterns. In one-way communication ("action"), the educator initiates and learners receive. In two-way communication ("interaction"), the educator is both initiator and recipient of messages. In multi-way communication ("transaction"), communication also occurs among learners (Hakim, 2023). Two studies report that one-way communication is the most frequently used pattern, with educators acting as storytellers, even though it produces little active engagement (Hakim, 2023; Natasya Siagin et al., 2023).

Two-way communication is described as more interactive because it creates feedback between educators and learners, who can ask questions, express opinions, and discuss (Firdaus et al., 2024). Multi-way communication is typically found in group discussion and experience-based learning (Munisah et al., 2022). Evidence from kitab kuning instruction shows that the three patterns are often combined and that this combination can make learning more effective (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Communication patterns in nonformal education are therefore flexible and depend on learners' needs and learning objectives. Since most of these studies come from formal or Islamic school settings (Table 1), the findings should be read as indicative of nonformal practice rather than as direct evidence of it.

3.2 Comparison of One-Way and Two-Way Communication

Table 2 compares the two patterns across the aspects most often discussed in the reviewed studies.

Table 2. Comparison of One-Way and Two-Way Communication

Aspect	One-Way	Two-Way
Educator's role	Source of information	Both sender and receiver
Learner's role	Recipient	Active participant
Feedback	Limited or absent	Immediate and reciprocal
Learner engagement	Tends to be low and passive	Tends to be higher and more critical
Time and control	Time-efficient, easier to control	Time-consuming, needs strong facilitation
Best suited for	Brief, structured, or instructional information	Discussion, clarification, deeper understanding
Main risk	Misunderstanding goes undetected	Discussion becomes unfocused if poorly managed

One-way communication is considered effective for informative and instructional material, such as speeches at ceremonies, because it is time-efficient and easier to control (Lestari et al., 2025). Its weakness is the lack of feedback, which can leave misunderstandings unnoticed and make learning monotonous. Two-way communication, by contrast, allows learners to clarify material they have not yet grasped, and it has been associated with better understanding and faster learning than one-way communication (Aziz et al., 2026; Firdaus et al., 2024). It also improves interpersonal relationships between educators and learners.

However, two-way communication takes more time and requires educators with strong facilitation skills, because unrestricted discussion can reduce the effectiveness of material delivery (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). The evidence therefore does not support replacing one-way communication entirely. Two-way communication is more effective for engagement and understanding, while one-way communication remains appropriate for brief, structured introductions. The choice should follow the learning objectives, learner characteristics, and learning environment.

3.3 Impact of Communication Patterns on Learner Engagement

Communication is the main bridge between educators and learners, so the pattern used strongly affects participation. Instruction that consists only of giving orders, without communication, fails to build learners' motivation (Wardah et al., 2023). Under one-way communication, learners mostly listen, which discourages questions, discussion, and the expression of opinions and keeps engagement low.

Two-way communication gives learners room to participate through question-and-answer sessions, discussion, and feedback. When learners feel their opinions are heard, their confidence, motivation, and critical thinking tend to increase. Two-way and multi-way communication have also been linked to higher participation and livelier learning environments in early childhood education (Munisah et al., 2022), and two-way communication helps sustain motivation even in online learning (Fajriati et al., 2022). The relationship between educator and learner matters as well. Open and supportive communication builds trust and psychological safety, which makes learners more willing to ask questions and take part (Hidayat & Eliasa, 2024).

3.4 Implications for Learning Evaluation

Few of the reviewed studies examine evaluation directly, so the following implications are the authors' synthesis of their findings in light of the CIPP model. First, two-way communication produces immediate feedback on what learners understand and where they struggle (Aziz et al., 2026; Firdaus et al., 2024). This gives educators formative information for identifying learners' needs, which corresponds to the context component of CIPP. Second, communication is part of the process being evaluated. In CIPP, the process component examines how learning is carried out and how learners take part (Edriati et al., 2026; Yempormase et al., 2025). The dominant communication pattern and the level of learner participation are therefore useful indicators of process quality. Third, one-way communication gives educators little information about misunderstanding. An evaluation that relies only on final outcomes may miss problems in the learning process that a more dialogic approach would reveal. Evaluation of nonformal education should therefore consider the interactive process and not only learning outcomes (Khodijah et al., 2024).

3.5 Effective Communication Strategies in Nonformal Education

Four strategies emerge from the reviewed studies. The first is clear language suited to learners' characteristics, since educators as communicators need effective communication skills to create collaboration with learners (Yuliana et al., 2023). Educators should also adapt their delivery to learners' experiences and backgrounds, which are especially diverse in nonformal settings. The second is the deliberate use of two-way communication through discussion, questions, and feedback, so that learners feel involved and valued.

The third is the use of appropriate learning media. Interactive presentations, educational videos, and digital platforms can capture attention, reduce boredom, and make communication faster and more practical (Kurniasari et al., 2024). The fourth is building positive relationships through empathy, friendliness, and respect for learners' opinions, together with timely and constructive feedback so that learners can see their progress and address weaknesses (Hidayat & Eliasa, 2024). Together, these strategies can make learners more active, help them understand the material, and support the achievement of learning objectives.

3.6 Limitations of the Evidence

Several limitations should be noted. Most reviewed studies were conducted in early childhood, primary, vocational, and Islamic school settings rather than in nonformal programs such as community learning centers or courses, which limits how directly the findings apply. Several are small case studies in a single institution, and the evidence linking communication patterns to formal evaluation results remains thin. Future research should examine communication patterns and their relationship to evaluation outcomes directly in nonformal programs.

4. CONCLUSION

This literature review shows that communication in nonformal education takes three patterns, namely one-way, two-way, and multi-way, and that one-way communication remains the most frequently reported, largely because it is fast and practical for delivering material. Compared with one-way communication, two-way communication is more effective for learner engagement and understanding because it enables questions, discussion, and feedback, while multi-way communication adds peer interaction that supports participatory learning; even so, one-way communication is still appropriate for brief, structured information, so the choice of pattern should follow learning objectives and learner characteristics. For learning evaluation, communication is both part of the process to be assessed and a source of the feedback that reveals learners' understanding and needs, so evaluation should consider the interactive process and not only final outcomes. Educators are therefore advised to use clear language, apply two-way and multi-way communication deliberately, use appropriate learning media, build supportive relationships, and give continuous feedback. Because most reviewed studies come from early childhood, primary, vocational, and Islamic school settings, these conclusions should be treated as indicative, and future research should examine communication patterns and their link to evaluation outcomes directly in nonformal programs such as community learning centers and courses.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT to assist with language editing, improving sentence clarity, and refining the academic presentation of the manuscript. All AI-assisted content was reviewed, verified, and revised by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, originality, and final content of the manuscript.

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