

EXPLORING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO RETENTION IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION CENTERS IN SINDH PROVINCE, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study explores the complex challenges of student retention in Non-Formal Education (NFE) centers across Sindh Province, Pakistan, by drawing on the perspectives of adolescent learners, educators, and administrators. Using a qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 purposively selected participants, including six retained learners, six dropouts, three educators, and three administrators across three major cities: Karachi, Hyderabad, and Larkana. Thematic analysis revealed that retention is hindered by a confluence of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. Key deterrents include poverty, early marriages, gender norms, inadequate infrastructure, lack of parental support, and limited recognition of NFE credentials. Psychological challenges such as low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and emotional distress were also found to affect learner engagement. Despite these issues, respondents highlighted promising retention practices such as peer mentoring, motivational counseling, flexible teaching, and parental involvement. The study concludes that a holistic, learner-centered approach—combining

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psychosocial support, inclusive teaching methods, structured transitions, and community engagement—is essential to enhancing student retention. Policy recommendations include formal recognition of NFE qualifications, stronger transition support, professional development for educators, and integration of NFE within the broader educational system.

Keywords: *Non-Formal Education (NFE), Student Retention, Sindh Province, Adolescent Learners, Qualitative, Thematic Analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Non-Formal Education (NFE) describes organized education outside the formal system, emphasizing flexible methods, focusing on the student and being community-relevant; it is most suitable for people who miss out on traditional education such as out of school children, women and rural populations (Howland et al., 2023; Namooq & Agyekum, 2024). Globally, NFE enables inclusivity in learning for everyone, matching SDG 4, mainly in places like Pakistan, working to solve large gaps in access and equality (DAR, 2023; Kaushik, 2025). In Pakistan, NFE is key to addressing unbalanced education and programs like ALP and projects managed by NCHD, BECS and NGOs teach underserved groups such as girls, working kids and internally displaced persons. Yet, issues continue because society is under fragmented administration, there are few common guidelines, certain groups look down on NFE and standard certificates are rarely offered, mainly in regions like Sindh (Datoo et al., 2024; Menon et al., 2024; Narejo & Rahpoto, 2023).

While the government tries to make NFE more accessible for everyone, many people still withdraw from schooling, mainly because they have to choose work over education (Datoo et al., 2024; Shahid et al., 2021). Because of poverty, heavy family responsibilities, uninvolved parental support and child labor, families find it difficult to continue with ongoing NFE activities (Namooq & Agyekum, 2024). Furthermore, because many centers have unqualified educators, old lesson plans and not enough teaching tools, students find education less interesting and useful (Menon et al., 2024; Rafiq & Malik, 2024). Moreover, due to problems with

monitoring, weak infrastructure in rural areas, lack of joint action and diverse policies, these NFE programs are less effective and hard to sustain (Narejo & Rahpoto, 2023; Vaculiková et al., 2021).

There is some research about NFE and its impact on literacy and skills in Pakistan, but there is still a major need for studies that focus on the Sindh province in particular. The majority of literature covers general issues rather than the specific socio-economic and cultural issues people in urban and rural Sindh face (Dato et al., 2024; Narejo & Rahpoto, 2023). Additionally, most current research focuses on policymakers and administrators rather than learning or educating experiences from students or teacher (Namoog & Agyekum, 2024; Vaculiková et al., 2023). Apart from that, most similar evaluations use statistics to focus on losses, while missing out on social, personal and organizational factors that contribute to students dropping out. Thus, it needs to examine the experiences of learners, teachers and administrators through qualitative methods to better see the reasons for dropout and design effective strategies for local use (Kicherova & Trifonova, 2023; Rafiq & Malik, 2024).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

RO 1. To explore the challenges related to retention in non-formal education (NFE) centers in Sindh Province from the perspectives of learners, educators, and administrators.

RO 2. To identify strategies to improve retention rates in NFE centers in Sindh Province based on the perspectives of learners, educators, and administrators.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study has added important local knowledge about why learners leave NFE in Sindh, Pakistan. Even though global studies cover many NFE issues, they fail to include detailed data about Pakistan that is meaningful to learners, educators and administrators (Rafiq & Malik, 2024). Offering a solution to this challenge, the research strengthens academic knowledge and lays the groundwork for future comparative work in similar domains (Kicherova & Trifonova, 2023). It provides useful information for policy-making, the development of programs and changes in institutional practices by finding out what affects retention in NFE centers. The research provides

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useful ideas for government agencies, NGOs and partners globally who focus on literacy and education to improve support for learners, teacher training, encouraging community involvement and ensuring resources are used properly. In essence, the study works toward increasing educational equity, literacy and human capital for those who live in neglected parts of Pakistan (Vaculíková et al., 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative in nature and adopts an exploratory case study design to investigate the challenges and strategies related to learner retention in NFE centers in Sindh, Pakistan. A semi-structured interview guide was developed, targeting key stakeholders directly involved in NFE programs. The interviews aimed to capture in-depth experiences and perspectives of participants, allowing themes to emerge organically. The population of this study includes adolescent learners (retained and dropout), educators, and administrators affiliated with selected NFE centers across Karachi, Hyderabad, and Larkana. These cities were chosen due to their high dropout rates and ongoing non-formal education interventions.

A total of 18 participants were selected using purposive sampling ensuring rich, relevant data from individuals who have direct experience with NFE programs. The sample comprised 6 adolescent learners (3 currently enrolled and 3 dropouts), 3 educators, and 3 administrators from active NFE centers. Interviews were conducted in local languages and later transcribed into English for analysis. The interview guide focused on themes such as institutional support, learning environment, socio-economic factors, curriculum relevance, and community engagement. The responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which helped in identifying recurring patterns and critical factors contributing to retention or dropout.

LITERATURE REVIEW

BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Bronfenbrenner first formed the ecological systems theory in 1979, designed to explain human development across various connecting systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). According to Bronfenbrenner, the theory divides systems into microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem and

chronosystem. Microsystem refers to the environment around a learner, for example, family, teachers, friends and educational places which influence participation in NFE directly. Educational settings and homes are linked in the mesosystem which can influence how well students maintain their learning skills (Härkönen, 2001). Factors in the learner's environment such as parents' workplaces, community organizations and local guidelines, both help and hinder how much people engage in non-formal education (Crawford, 2020). Macrosystem refers to larger cultural, economic, political and social settings that influence how values about education are developed such as the ways in which Pakistan treats issues of gender and poverty. Also, the chronosystem looks at time and its effects, including life changes and major events that shape how people obtain and maintain NFE (Darling, 2007). This theory is important for research on NFE student retention because it explains how students and their surroundings both influence each other, giving a complete overview of the many ways in which different personal, school and cultural factors can influence learning (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022).

RETENTION IN NFE: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND BEST PRACTICES

Retention in NFE programs is seen internationally as a sign that the program is effective, satisfies its learners and promotes inclusion. Strategies that help with retention usually include using flexible learning spaces, designing curricula that match the community and making sure the community is involved. When vocational and life skills are added to NFE in Africa, learners in both Ethiopia and Uganda become more engaged, as shown by Afolayan (2021) and Esther et al. (2021). In Bangladesh and India, approaches that respect gender needs such as safe environments, classes led by women and health classes, have made it possible for girls to stay longer in school (Barigai & Heravdakar, 2021; Hossain, 2023). In both Brazil and Colombia, using community-based monitoring helps ensure accountability and improves people's knowledge of the programs (Carvalho RUDGE & Rebello de SOUZA, 2023). In addition, helping peers, providing scholar meals, setting flexible class hours and advancing teachers' skills in teaching all kinds of learners contribute to success (Rosmilawati, 2023; Vendasco &

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Pugliese, 2024). By using mobile learning in Kenya and radio programs in Sierra Leone, learning could continue during crises (Kildé, 2023). Sequences of learning like UNESCO's Education 2030 Agenda and SDG 4 call for strong, versatile approaches that help people learn and remember new things over their lives (Essomba et al., 2022; Öztemur et al., 2024).

LEARNER MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN NFE

NFE programs for marginalized people depend greatly on learners feeling interested and involved. A mix of internal and external motivation plays a role in learning outcomes and keeping information in mind. Basically, learners are motivated by improving themselves and by skills that matter in everyday life such as literacy, learning a trade and running a small business, mainly when regular schools are not well-developed or seen as relevant (Kicherova & Trifonova, 2023; Rafiq & Malik, 2024). Extrinsic motivation develops with the offering of incentives like stipends, free meals and certificates which help students find work or move on to additional educational opportunities (Ali & Mehmood, 2024; Rosmilawati, 2023). The way students learn is also very important. Teaching ways that are supportive, let students participate and encourage every student help increase a student's involvement, especially if they had problems in school or have low self-esteem (Hiq et al., 2021; Ullah et al., 2021). When people get involved in their community, they are more likely to find locally designed programs important and believable. If learners receive strong emotional and social support at home and at school, they are more likely to continue their studies (Afolayan, 2021; Mishra & Misra, 2022). Using technology, remote learners can take part and everyone can benefit from the flexible learning that helps students stay engage (Almeida & Morais, 2024; Islahi & Nasrin, 2022).

GENDER AND RETENTION IN NFE SETTINGS

In many developing countries, the way society and institutions function often results in more girls leaving NFE programs compared to boys (Berková et al., 2024; Vaculíková et al., 2021). Many girls and women experience difficulties such as being married young, handling household jobs, safety issues and the stigma attached to their gender, that stop them

from staying in school consistently (Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2022; Simac et al., 2021). Because of these things, gender-aware changes are necessary in designing and providing NFE programs. To enhance the retention of girls in education, it is essential to provide safe and friendly environments, increase the number of women teachers, and offer services such as transport and security to address the risks of violence against girls (Afolayan, 2021; Arabacı & Özkan, 2023). Women are able to attend classes and keep up with education thanks to flexible schedules and child support (Datoo et al., 2024; Namooog & Agyekum, 2024). Topics in the curriculum related to women's health, finances and gender equality lead to women feeling more empowered and being more actively involved (Afolayan, 2021; Datoo et al., 2024). It is also important to get men in the community involved through community engagement, as this can greatly support the push for girls to get an education (Namooog & Agyekum, 2024). Stipends, scholarships and meals at school make it possible for girls from low-income families to focus less on money problems while studying (Afolayan, 2021; Helsinger et al., 2023). Some structural barriers to gender equality in NFE can be eliminated by national programs such as BISP, as well as by including gender considerations in budgeting education policies (Namooog & Agyekum, 2024; Naseer et al., 2021).

PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPORTING NFE LEARNERS

In communities where many people are underserved, NFE programs depend on parents and local communities to be actively involved. If parents are engaged in learners' education, students retain information better, are more involved and feel more invested in their learning (Lanyasunya, 2024; Naseer et al., 2021). Taking part in their child's education includes helping pay for costs, cheering for students and even staging events or joining team meetings, guiding their goals and commitment through teachers (Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2022; Lanyasunya, 2024). In some NFE centers, parents are involved by assisting students, giving both emotional and practical support and contributing their abilities to the learning activities (Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2022; Kicherova & Trifonova, 2023). Community members must be fully involved in building supportive places, especially when social

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and cultural challenges are present. Important community figures and individuals collaborate to encourage education, mainly for girls and disadvantaged groups, by challenging tradition and involving the social group in the matter (Kicherova & Trifonova, 2023; Panaoura & Nitsiou, 2023). Assisted by the community, projects can be built, materials supplied and transportation made available, so that education is accessible in even far-off locations (Panaoura & Nitsiou, 2023). Helping NFE programs reflect local knowledge, traditions and languages improves fit for the culture, making the experience more rewarding and outcome-driven for indigenous and rural people (Ndawonde, 2022). In addition, being involved in the community changes how people think about education which raises support for schools and programs by pointing out the improvements in jobs, well-being and social life (Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2022; Ndawonde, 2022). Efficient community support grows in areas with low literacy and female involvement when teams of NGOs, local authorities and educational institutions join efforts to meet the needs of those communities (Simac et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

ROLE OF SEF OFFICIALS

The role of SEF officials in supporting student retention in NFE centers will be multifaceted, ranging from administrative oversight to community engagement. Respondents indicated that their duties will include monitoring attendance, following up with dropouts, and engaging with parents during community meetings, as shared by R1 “I monitor attendance, follow up with dropouts, talk to parents during community meetings.” R2 reinforced this by stating, “My role mainly involves overseeing the operational side of NFE centers and making sure students stay enrolled and engaged.” Several officials acknowledged that student disengagement will be strongly linked to household responsibilities, poverty, and social pressures, especially for girls. As R2 explained, “Family circumstances—like poverty or needing children to work—can pull them out. Then there’s social pressure, especially for older girls.” R10 and R11 further highlighted “academic challenges, gender bias, and long distances to learning centers as additional factors

While SEF will provide vital support such as teacher training, textbooks, and learning materials, many respondents pointed out a lack of targeted retention strategies. R1 emphasized that “the focus on retention-specific initiatives remains weak,” and R5 noted “the absence of targeted follow-up programs despite SEF’s contribution to teaching resources.” R6 and R10 added that while parental engagement activities are initiated, they often lack consistency and follow-through. There will also be a noticeable gap in post-transition support for learners moving to formal schools. R1 admitted that “our support system post-transition is notably weak,” and R2 stressed the need for structured mentorship, stating, “Students transitioning to formal schools often feel lost without structured follow-up.”

The coordination between NFE centers and formal schools appeared underdeveloped, with R3 noting that “without proper coordination, many fall through the cracks.” This gap was also evident from the learner’s perspective; R18 shared, “There was no structured transition. We were simply told to join formal schools, but had to manage on our own.” Educators such as R6 will attempt to mitigate these gaps by regularly communicating with parents and maintaining a strong instructional focus, noting, “This constant engagement is critical for retention.” However, learners such as R13 to R17 shared experiences of exclusion, confusion, and lack of guidance in transitioning to formal schools, with one stating, “I completed NFE but got no help to join a formal school, so I started working.”

Overall, while SEF demonstrates success in foundational areas such as teacher training, curriculum delivery, and provision of learning materials, its efforts to sustain learner engagement and ensure smooth transitions to formal education remain limited. Many learners report feeling unsupported after completing NFE, highlighting a lack of structured follow-up and mentorship. Parental involvement and coordination with formal schools also appear inconsistent (Dattoo et al., 2024). These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes the need for holistic retention strategies including continuous mentoring, structured transition planning, and active community engagement to improve learner retention and

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outcomes in non-formal education programs (Rafiq & Malik, 2024).

BARRIERS TO RETENTION

Learners' retention in NFE centers is significantly affected by intersecting economic, social, gender, and emotional factors. R1 explains, "Some learners lose interest due to household responsibilities, especially girls," while R2 emphasizes, "Poverty or the need for children to work pulls them out of school... social pressure, especially for older girls, to stay home or prepare for marriage." R10 notes that "academic challenges combine with family economic needs and social pressures," and R11 adds that education is often viewed as "a luxury rather than a necessity." Community norms also discourage continuation, as R1 observes, "Girls often stop attending once they reach puberty," and R2 highlights that "families worry about girls' safety or reputation." Emotional struggles further deepen the dropout risk. R2 remarks, "Students need more than academics—they require guidance, life skills, and sometimes mental health support," while R10 points out, "Adolescents face confidence issues, anxiety, and gender-specific challenges." These socio-emotional and cultural barriers collectively create a silent dropout pattern, even among otherwise motivated learners.

Overall, learner retention in NFE centers is undermined by a combination of economic hardship, rigid gender norms, and unmet emotional needs. Financial pressures and household responsibilities often force children, especially girls, out of education (Rafiq & Malik, 2024). Cultural expectations, such as early marriage and concerns for girls' mobility, further restrict access (Dattoo et al., 2024). Emotional challenges, including low self-esteem, anxiety, and lack of guidance, reduce students' ability to cope with academic demands. Without integrated support addressing both socio-economic and psychological factors, even the most motivated learners are likely to silently disengage and drop out (Namoog & Agyekum, 2024).

RETENTION STRATEGIES

To enhance learner retention, various motivation and engagement strategies are implemented across NFE centers. R1 shared, "We try to make

the environment friendly and flexible... small rewards or recognition help keep students motivated,” while R2 noted that events and certificates “encourage students to stay engaged.” Family and community involvement plays a critical role, with R1 stating, “Parental involvement really helps with retention,” and R2 observing, “If community leaders value education, parents follow their lead.” Peer mentorship and engagement activities such as orientation sessions and learning fairs were highlighted by R1 and R7 as essential tools for keeping learners connected.

R3 discussed practical challenges including “larger classes... low confidence... discrimination... transportation issues,” while R18 added, “No follow-up support was given after passing... students fear being stigmatized in formal schools.” Bridging courses and counseling also help, as R3 emphasized, “Motivate learners through bridging courses, counseling sessions, and regular engagement with families,” and R11 suggested “integrating psychosocial support and teacher sensitization.” On a policy level, respondents stressed formal recognition of NFE certifications and simplified admissions. As R5 put it, “Recognition of NFE certifications, NGO partnerships, and parental engagement” are vital, while R14 advocated for “bridge curriculum standardization” and R16 recommended acceptance of NFE students “without heavy documentation.”

Retention in NFE can be improved through learner-centered strategies such as creating supportive environments, offering incentives, and involving families and communities (Ndawonde, 2022). Peer engagement and psychosocial support are also effective in maintaining motivation. Addressing systemic barriers like lack of certification recognition and transition pathways to formal education is essential (Ahmad et al., 2024). Standardized bridging curricula and reduced documentation requirements further support retention. Partnerships with NGOs enhance service delivery and learner follow-up, contributing to improved retention outcomes (Rose, 2009).

INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

Respondents consistently highlight major deficits in infrastructure and essential resources across NFE centers. R6 explains that there is “limited infrastructure... very few facilities like clean toilets,” which directly affects

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the learning environment. R15 echoes this, reporting “insufficient classrooms, teacher absenteeism, no transport or mid-day meals,” making it difficult to sustain learner interest and attendance. R18 further emphasizes the demotivating effect of inadequate facilities, noting, “Most centers lack enough space, no washrooms for girls, and no transport—very demotivating.” System-level shortcomings also pose significant barriers to effective implementation and learner retention. R6 highlights the “lack of formal recognition of NFE curriculum... inadequate learning materials and teacher shortages.” Several respondents, including R10, call for “formal recognition of NFE, simplified admissions, joint monitoring systems” to bridge the gap between non-formal and formal education.

R14 notes the absence of “structured guidance for career transition... poor transition follow-up,” while R16 points out that “facilitators lack specialized training... heavy documentation requirements,” which adds to the burden on both educators and learners. These gaps hinder smooth integration and long-term progress for NFE students. The attitudes of teachers and the broader school environment play a crucial role in either supporting or discouraging learners transitioning from NFE to formal education. R3 observes that “learners struggle with discrimination in formal schools,” often making the transition stressful and alienating. R11 mentions that “teachers lack sensitization to address psychosocial needs,” further isolating learners who already face emotional and social vulnerabilities. R17 adds that “new rules and pressure in formal schools scare transitioning learners,” pointing to the lack of preparedness within the formal system to accommodate diverse learner needs.

Learner retention and transition from non-formal to formal education are challenged by poor infrastructure, limited resources, and lack of basic facilities such as clean toilets and transport (Rafiq & Malik, 2024). Systemic issues including unrecognized NFE certifications, weak coordination with formal schools, and absence of structured pathways further hinder progress (Dattoo et al., 2024). Additionally, unsupportive teacher attitudes and rigid formal school environments contribute to dropout risks, especially for girls and vulnerable learners. Addressing these challenges requires integrated

reforms that combine improved infrastructure, policy recognition, and psychosocial support to ensure meaningful retention and successful educational transitions (Hoppers, 2006).

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS

R4 emphasized that "policies must mandate formal schools to accept NFE students without additional requirements" and called for "transition protocols to ensure continuity of learning." On learner and family support, R1 noted that "parent meetings and follow-ups significantly improve retention," while R9 highlighted the need for "structured counseling and family support programs" to address economic and social pressures. R15 added that "targeted aid for uniforms, fees, and transport" and mentorship build both confidence and trust. Addressing documentation issues, R13 cited "administrative delays" as barriers, and R16 stressed that "excessive documentation" particularly hinders migrant and first-generation learners.

The findings highlight the need for policy reforms, family support, and streamlined administrative processes to improve retention in non-formal education. Clear transition protocols and mandatory acceptance of NFE students in formal schools are essential for continuity (Gada, 2022). Engaging families through regular follow-ups, counseling, and financial aid builds trust and reduces dropout risks, especially under economic or social stress (Esther et al., 2021). Additionally, simplifying enrollment and certification procedures is crucial, as excessive documentation and administrative delays disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including migrants and first-generation learners. Integrated approaches are vital for sustained learner engagement (Namoog & Agyekum, 2024).

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY PERCEPTIONS

Parents show mixed attitudes toward education and NFE. R2 noted, "Some parents are supportive, while others treat education as optional." R3 added, "Parents express concern about discipline in formal schools, bullying, and transportation." R5 observed, "Some recognize the value of education, others are skeptical about the seriousness of NFE." R6 explained, "Parents prioritize work or fear for girls' safety." R7 mentioned, "They view formal education positively but hesitate due to costs and pressure." R18 stated, "Many expect education to yield financial returns or social benefits

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like dowry.”

Parental support for education varies, often influenced by financial constraints, safety concerns especially for girls and expectations of immediate returns. Many families prioritize work or household responsibilities over schooling. These socio-cultural factors create hesitation toward both NFE and formal education, reflecting broader barriers highlighted in the literature on access and retention in marginalized communities (Rahabav & Souisa, 2021).

LEARNER PERSPECTIVE ON RETENTION

R10 shared that learners are “initially excited” but soon face “academic gaps, emotional stress, and social isolation.” R18 noted that while they “love the informal environment,” many “feel afraid or judged” when transitioning to formal schools. Learners initially show enthusiasm for NFE but often encounter academic challenges, emotional stress, and social isolation. The supportive, informal environment of NFE contrasts with the fear and judgment they experience when transitioning to formal schools. These challenges highlight the need for targeted support during transitions to improve learner well-being and retention, as emphasized in existing research on non-formal education experiences (Namoog & Agyekum, 2024; Rafiq & Malik, 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that while SEF has made commendable efforts in expanding access to education through NFE centers, significant challenges remain in ensuring learner retention and smooth transitions to formal schooling. Socio-economic barriers, cultural norms, inadequate infrastructure, and limited psychosocial support undermine student persistence. The absence of structured mentoring, career guidance, and formal recognition of NFE certifications further weakens transition outcomes. Sustainable retention requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach that integrates learner-centered strategies, community engagement, and systemic policy reforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to SEF that it strengthen its retention framework by institutionalizing follow-up mechanisms, emotional and career counseling, and adolescent-responsive models. SEF should invest in ongoing psychosocial support, structured transition pathways, and youth-centered programming to ensure continuity and learner well-being.

It is recommended to teachers and facilitators that they adopt flexible, inclusive, and emotionally supportive teaching approaches. By using interactive methods, offering personalized guidance, and building trust with families, educators can create safe, learner-friendly environments that promote engagement and reduce dropout.

It is recommended to the government and education policymakers that formal recognition of NFE certifications be mandated across public schools. Policies should also address admission rigidity, infrastructure gaps, and coordination between formal and non-formal systems to enable smooth transitions and equitable access to education.

It is recommended to parents and caregivers that they actively participate in their children's education, attend school meetings, and challenge harmful social norms such as early marriage and child labor. Parental involvement is critical to fostering a supportive home environment that prioritizes long-term learning.

It is recommended to community leaders and local influencers that they champion education, especially for marginalized and female learners. By promoting awareness, facilitating school-community linkages, and addressing local barriers, they can build a more inclusive educational culture and improve retention outcomes.



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