



STRENGTHENING SELF-EXPRESSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH FILM SCRIPTWRITING TRAINING AT RUMAH VOKASI HANENDA

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Abstract

The short film scriptwriting training for persons with disabilities, organised by Rumah Vokasi Hanenda in collaboration with the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Surakarta, aims to enhance narrative literacy, creativity, and inclusive participation of people with disabilities within the filmmaking ecosystem. The program was implemented through a community-based empowerment approach that positioned participants as active subjects using methods such as discussion, hands-on practice, and production. The activity involved 11 participants from 10 special-needs schools (SLB) in Yogyakarta, supported by 12 accompanying teachers who served as adaptive facilitators. The training materials covered ideation, premise development, character building, and writing simple scripts, all tailored to the needs of deaf, blind, and intellectually disabled participants. The outcomes demonstrate improvements in the participants' scriptwriting skills, self-confidence, and creative expression. The four scripts produced reflect human values, inclusion, and the participants' lived experiences. This program not only strengthens individual capacities but also fosters a collaborative space that promotes authentic representation of disability in film. The initiative serves as an inclusive learning model that can be replicated to empower people with disabilities in the arts and cultural sector.

Keywords: Training, Disability, Screenwriting, Rumah Vokasi Hanenda

INTRODUCTION

Film is an artistic medium that not only provides entertainment but also serves as a space for expression, education, and socio-cultural reflection by combining moving images and sound to communicate meaning to its audience. As a form of creative communication, film enables individuals to convey ideas, perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of social realities. However, the participation of persons with disabilities in film production particularly in scriptwriting remains highly limited. Restricted access to inclusive education and the lack of space and opportunities for persons with disabilities to channel their creative potential are among the primary contributing factors. In fact, persons with disabilities possess unique and valuable perspectives that can enrich and produce more authentic and empathetic representations in film. However, disability representation in film often remains inaccurate, stereotypical, and confined to being mere objects of the narrative, causing the presence of persons with disabilities to remain insufficiently visible and audible in public spaces.

ISI Surakarta and Rumah Vokasi Hanenda recognise the urgent need for learning environments that enable persons with disabilities to develop artistic skills, including screenwriting. Rumah Vokasi Hanenda, a nonprofit organisation focused on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities, has a vision and mission centred on skills development, inclusive arts programs, and the expansion of collaborative networks, thereby laying a strong foundation for this initiative. Its partnership with the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design at ISI Surakarta, formalised through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), enables the development of structured and inclusive training

programs. Through this activity, the program aims to provide basic, accessible, and participatory scriptwriting training tailored to participants' needs.

In film production, the screenplay is the fundamental blueprint that defines the narrative flow, characters, and visual direction. Scriptwriting is therefore an essential skill that not only equips participants with technical competencies but also opens pathways to employment, fosters self-expression, strengthens identity, and enhances participation in the creative ecosystem. When people with disabilities acquire scriptwriting skills, they gain the capacity to authentically represent their lived experiences and take an active role in producing inclusive films. This training program is grounded in the principles of inclusion and equal access to cultural expression. It aligns with UNESCO's (2017) view that cultural participation is a right for all, including persons with disabilities.

The scriptwriting training designed for this community engagement initiative adopts a community-based empowerment approach. Aligns with the principle that communities themselves are key agents of social change (Chambers, 1997). The approach positions participants as active subjects with voices, experiences, and ideas that must be facilitated. The model aims not only to build technical skills but also to strengthen self-confidence, audiovisual literacy, and the capacity of persons with disabilities to participate equitably in creative spaces. Through this initiative, the program aspires to foster an inclusive and collaborative creative environment that bridges academia, film practitioners, and disability communities.

The objectives of this training include:

1. Enhancing narrative and audiovisual literacy among persons with disabilities.
2. Strengthening participants' self-confidence and creative independence.
3. Promoting inclusive participation in creative processes and the film industry.
4. Developing a humanistic and participatory learning model grounded in community empowerment.

This program is further reinforced by Rumah Vokasi Hanenda's experience in producing the film "Hanenda," which showcases inclusive collaboration and demonstrates that physical limitations do not hinder artistic creation. This experience underscores the importance of providing creative spaces that allow persons with disabilities to be present not merely as subjects of stories, but as authors of their own narratives.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

This scriptwriting training program is designed to foster creativity and self-expression among persons with disabilities at Rumah Vokasi Hanenda. This mentoring program employs a participatory approach that positions participants as the principal actors in the learning process. The approach is intended to create an inclusive learning environment, strengthen self-confidence, and provide space for participants to explore their imagination and personal experiences.

The training activities are conducted through participatory methods that stimulate active

involvement, emphasising hands-on practice to facilitate comprehension of each material component. The participatory approach is operationalised through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, collaborative work, and production activities. This combination of methods enables participants to understand the processes of scriptwriting and real film production, while also offering a collaborative experience that enhances their engagement in the creative process. The training is organised into two main stages:

1. Idea Exploration and Story Development

Participants are encouraged to share everyday experiences from their family, school, and social environments. Their personal narratives, imaginations, and aspirations are then shaped into the foundations of a story. This activity aims to create a space for free expression and to support participants in discovering their creative voice.

2. Story and Screenplay Writing Process

Participants are introduced to the fundamental stages of writing a story for a short film, including:

- a. Identifying the theme
- b. Formulating the premise
- c. Developing characters using the 3D character concept
- d. Writing a synopsis
- e. Structuring the storyline
- f. Writing a treatment
- g. Producing the screenplay

Each stage is designed to provide a structured yet flexible learning experience, tailored to the participants' needs and abilities. Thus, the learning process not only results in the creation of a screenplay but also cultivates comprehensive audiovisual literacy.

RESULTS

The Scriptwriting Training Program, conducted in collaboration with Rumah Vokasi Hanenda, was held at SLB Negeri Pembina Yogyakarta on July 30–31, 2025. This scriptwriting initiative served as an initial step toward exploring the potential of persons with disabilities in filmmaking, while simultaneously raising public awareness of the importance of authentic disability representation on the film screen. The training involved participants representing Special Schools (SLB) across the Yogyakarta region, with each school sending one student and one accompanying teacher. A total of 10 SLBs participated, consisting of 11 participants and 12 accompanying teachers. These teachers also served as facilitators, assisting participants in adapting to the material, mediating communication between participants and instructors, and providing emotional support and motivation to encourage active and confident participation in the creative process.

The training materials required adaptation in both content and delivery methods. The materials were designed to be concise, accessible, and aligned with participants' cognitive abilities, ensuring a comfortable and practical learning experience. For participants with intellectual disabilities, visual approaches, simplified step-by-step instructions, and slow, repetitive explanations were applied with support from accompanying teachers. Participants with visual impairments were assisted by their teachers using supportive tools typically employed in their learning environment. For participants with hearing impairments, visual explanations (PowerPoint materials) and sign language interpreters were provided. The learning schedule was made flexible, including hourly breaks to ensure participants felt comfortable and not overly fatigued.

During the scriptwriting sessions, the 11 participants were divided into four groups: one group of deaf participants, one group of blind participants, and two groups of participants with intellectual disabilities. This grouping was intended to align instructional methods and media with each group's abilities, needs, and communication styles, resulting in a more effective and inclusive training process. The materials were structured using a simple, adaptive approach tailored to participants' cognitive abilities and learning styles, thereby supporting active participation, creativity, and self-expression throughout the learning process.

1. Film and Screenplay

The training began with the screening of two short films: "Hanenda," produced by *Rumah Pemberdayaan* Hanenda, and "Jungkat Jungkit," created by students of the Film and Television Study Program the screenings aimed to provide participants with an initial understanding of narrative structure and cinematic elements. Following the screenings, each participant was allowed to share their opinions and responses to the films. After the discussion, the session continued with an introduction to screenwriting, accompanied by sample scripts drawn from the films previously presented.



Figure 1. Film Screening

2. Theme and Story Premise

The theme is the central idea or core message that the writer intends to convey through the film's narrative. It reflects what the film seeks to communicate to its audience whether it concerns life values, moral perspectives, or social reflections. The theme represents the story's soul, providing direction for character development, conflict, and plot (Armantono, 2016). It is the

narrative's fundamental meaning: what the film is truly about beneath its events and characters (Field, 2005).

The premise is the story's basic idea or core conflict, explaining what happens, to whom, and how it ends. The premise underpins the story structure by outlining the characters, conflict, and resolution within a single coherent idea (Field, 2005).

During the workshop session, participants were allowed to discuss within their groups to identify the theme and formulate the premise of their story. This activity aimed to develop creative thinking, collaboration, and participants' understanding of the fundamental structure of screenwriting. The results of each group's premise formulation are presented as follows:

- a. Group 1: Sugeng, excited to take his school exam, encounters a series of unexpected events, only to realise that the exam day has not yet arrived.
 - b. Group 2: Ferry, a blind YouTuber and environmental ambassador, slips on a banana peel carelessly discarded by Raisa an incident that ultimately changes Raisa's perspective on the importance of cleanliness.
 - c. Group 3: Fajar and Tono, two students with disabilities, lose their sandals due to their peers' misbehaviour. The perpetrators later apologised after recognising their mistakes and acknowledging their jealousy.
 - d. Group 4: Burdened by debts from online gambling, Steven seeks a shortcut through Dimas Kanjeng, a notorious money-doubling fraudster, but eventually learns that greed leads only to ruin.
3. Elements of a Screenplay (Character, Plot, and Conflict)

Characters are the primary agents in a story who experience and drive the events forward. Through characters, the audience understands the film's message, emotions, and meaning. Characters may take the form of humans, animals, or even personified objects. In this training session, participants were asked to develop characters based on the previously formulated themes and premises. Each group was instructed to create a three-sentence description of the main character, covering the character's identity, the goal they seek, and the challenges or conflicts they face. This activity aimed to train participants in building strong, thematically relevant characters while deepening their understanding of characters as the main drivers of plot development in short film scriptwriting.

The plot represents the sequence of events that shape the story from beginning to end. The plot propels the narrative and maintains the audience's engagement. A conventional plot structure consists of three main acts: the beginning (setup), which introduces the characters, situation, and initial conflict; the middle (confrontation), where the central problem emerges, and the protagonist attempts to overcome it; and the ending (resolution), which provides conflict resolution and transformation of the character (Field, 2005). In this training session, participants, together with

their accompanying teachers, worked in groups to construct a simple plot with a beginning, middle, and end. The plot development activity was conducted using colored paper, while blind participants worked with their teachers using screen reader tools on their mobile phones. The purpose of this exercise was to help participants understand the basic narrative structure and the relationship among events within a screenplay. This activity also served as a creative learning medium, enabling participants to express ideas concretely and collaboratively.



Figure 2. The process of creating a storyline

Conflict is the tension or struggle that drives a story. It may arise externally (from the environment or other characters) or internally (from a character's emotions, thoughts, or values). Conflict is the central element that propels the narrative; without it, a story becomes flat and lacks emotional dynamism. Conflict represents the clash between two opposing forces that motivates character development and guides the narrative toward resolution (Lajos Egri, 1946). In this exercise, participants were asked to write the central conflict of their story based on the plot they had previously developed. The activity aimed to train participants to identify and develop sources of conflict relevant to the story's theme and characters. With guidance from accompanying teachers, participants were instructed to understand that conflict is an essential component of a screenplay, advancing the plot, building tension, and illustrating the main character's progression.

The scriptwriting training resulted in four completed works produced by the four participant groups. Three groups wrote their scripts using story card media. In contrast, one group of blind participants developed their script using a specialised application designed to support accessibility for individuals with visual impairments.

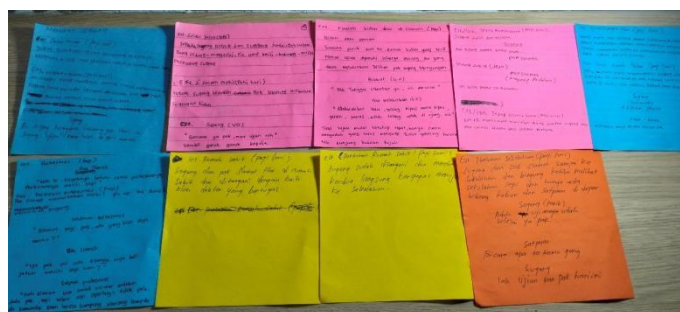


Figure 3. Scenario preparation using story card media

In the final stage of the training, each group presented the results of their screenplay writing to the other participants. This presentation session aimed to develop participants' communication skills for conveying story ideas and to provide a reflective space for evaluating their creative processes. Following each presentation, other groups were invited to offer feedback, suggestions, and appreciation for the work presented, thereby fostering an interactive, participatory, and respectful learning environment.



Figure 4. Participant presentation process

CONCLUSION

The Short Film Scriptwriting Training for Persons with Disabilities at *Rumah Vokasi Hanenda* represents a concrete implementation of community-based empowerment and social inclusion through arts and culture. This program serves as an equitable space for creative expression, enabling persons with disabilities to strengthen their storytelling capacities and articulate their ideas through film.

The training provided a participatory, adaptive learning experience tailored to the needs of participants from deaf, blind, and intellectually disabled communities. The instructional content covered key elements of screenwriting, including the introduction of narrative components, theme and premise development, character building, conflict and plot construction, and the writing of a simple screenplay. The learning process was supported by accompanying teachers who played an essential role in facilitating communication, providing emotional guidance, and bridging understanding between participants and facilitators.

The training outcomes demonstrated that participants produced four short film scripts infused with the values of humanity, inclusion, and empathy. The themes that emerged such as friendship, responsibility, environmental awareness, and the struggle to overcome limitations reflect strong creative potential and the unique perspectives of participants with disabilities. Beyond improving scriptwriting skills, the activity also fostered self-confidence, communication skills, and collective awareness of the importance of authentic and inclusive representation in Indonesian cinema.

Overall, this initiative not only enhanced individual competencies but also reinforced social values such as collaboration, empathy, and equality within creative spaces. With continued support from various stakeholders, this program serves as a replicable model of innovative learning that develops the potential of persons with disabilities in the arts and media.

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