

# Policy Implementation of the 2026 Senior High School Student Admission System in West Java, Indonesia

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## Abstract

The 2026 reform of Indonesia's senior high school student admission system marked a transition from the zoning mechanism to a domicile-based approach intended to enhance transparency, fairness, and equitable access to public education. As the province with the largest secondary school population in Indonesia, West Java provides an important setting for examining how this policy is implemented in practice. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the 2026 Senior High School Student Admission Policy in West Java, identify the institutional challenges and adaptive responses that emerged during implementation, and explore its implications for educational equity. This study employed a qualitative multiple case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with education officials, school principals, admission committee members, parents, and students, supported by observations and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, while Edward III's policy implementation framework and the educational equity perspective guided the analysis. The findings reveal that the policy implementation has strengthened transparency and expanded access through multiple admission pathways. However, several challenges persist, including uneven public understanding of domicile provisions, disparities in digital infrastructure and administrative capacity, and persistent perceptions regarding differences in school quality. Although the transition to domicile-based admissions has improved perceptions of procedural fairness and widened opportunities for disadvantaged students through affirmative pathways, structural inequalities among public schools continue to hinder the achievement of substantive educational equity. This study contributes to the literature by providing one of the earliest empirical analyses of Indonesia's 2026 student admission reform and demonstrating how policy implementation processes shape educational equity outcomes within a decentralized education system.

**Keywords:** *Policy Implementation, Student Admission Policy, Domicile-Based Admissions, Educational Equity, Senior High Schools, West Java.*



## A. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring equitable access to quality education remains a fundamental challenge for education systems worldwide. The United Nations, through Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, emphasizes the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). Educational access is not merely a matter of increasing school participation rates but also concerns the fairness of opportunities available to students regardless of their socioeconomic background, geographical location, or demographic characteristics. Consequently, student admission policies have become an important

policy instrument through which governments attempt to distribute educational opportunities more equitably while maintaining transparency and accountability.

In Indonesia, the issue of educational equity has been closely associated with the implementation of the New Student Admission Policy (*Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* or PPDB). Since the introduction of the zoning system in 2017, the government has sought to reduce educational disparities by allocating students to schools based primarily on geographical proximity. Although the policy was designed to eliminate the concentration of high-achieving students in certain schools and improve the distribution of educational opportunities, its implementation generated persistent controversies. Previous studies reported problems such as falsification of domicile documents, unequal school quality across zones, public dissatisfaction, and the persistence of the "favorite school" phenomenon (Sutisna et al., 2021; Purwanti et al., 2019). These challenges indicate that policy intentions do not automatically translate into equitable outcomes.

Responding to these concerns, the Indonesian government introduced the *Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru* (SPMB) as a reform of the previous PPDB mechanism. The transition from zoning-based admissions to a domicile-oriented approach reflects the government's attempt to improve procedural fairness while preserving the objective of educational equity. The policy also introduced adjustments to admission pathways, including domicile, affirmation, achievement, and transfer categories. From a policy perspective, this transition represents more than a technical modification; it constitutes an institutional adaptation intended to address implementation failures identified during previous admission cycles.

West Java Province provides a particularly important context for examining this reform. As the province with the largest student population in Indonesia, West Java faces substantial challenges in managing admissions to public senior high schools. The West Java Education Office reported that the 2026 SPMB process involved the mapping of approximately 826,000 graduates from junior secondary schools and Islamic junior secondary schools across the province, requiring extensive coordination among provincial authorities, branch offices, schools, and other stakeholders. The magnitude of this process inevitably increases administrative complexity and heightens the risk of implementation gaps.

Despite efforts to enhance transparency and accountability, the implementation of SPMB 2026 has been accompanied by various challenges in the field. Media reports documented public complaints regarding technical disruptions of the registration platform, unclear information dissemination, difficulties in interpreting new procedural requirements, and the limited responsiveness of support mechanisms. Parents in several regions expressed dissatisfaction with system errors and uncertainties during the registration process, prompting demands for greater institutional accountability. Furthermore, public protests emerged in response to concerns about alleged maladministration and perceived unfairness in the implementation of the policy. These phenomena suggest that changing policy design

alone may not be sufficient to achieve the intended goals of equity and fairness if implementation capacities remain uneven.

From a theoretical perspective, policy implementation constitutes a critical stage in determining whether policy objectives can be translated into effective outcomes. Edward III (1980) argues that successful implementation is influenced by four interrelated dimensions: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Failures in any of these dimensions may hinder the achievement of policy goals, regardless of the quality of policy formulation. In the context of student admissions, effective communication ensures public understanding of policy provisions, adequate resources support operational readiness, implementers' disposition influences commitment and integrity, and coherent bureaucratic structures facilitate coordination and accountability.

Although studies examining PPDB implementation have expanded in recent years, the existing literature predominantly focuses on the zoning system implemented before the introduction of SPMB. Previous research has explored public perceptions, procedural challenges, and the implications of zoning policies for educational access (Purwanti et al., 2019; Sutisna et al., 2021). More recent studies have highlighted the transition toward domicile-based admissions as a promising strategy for improving educational equity, yet empirical evidence regarding the actual implementation of the 2026 reform remains extremely limited. Consequently, little is known about how educational institutions adapt to this policy transition, what challenges emerge during implementation, and whether the reform contributes to more equitable access to public senior high schools.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the implementation of the 2026 Senior High School Student Admission Policy in West Java, Indonesia. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) analyze how the 2026 student admission policy was implemented across senior high schools in West Java; (2) identify the institutional challenges and adaptive responses that emerged during implementation; and (3) examine the implications of policy implementation for educational equity. By integrating Edward III's policy implementation framework with an educational equity perspective, this study contributes to the literature by providing one of the earliest empirical analyses of Indonesia's 2026 student admission reform and by demonstrating how implementation processes shape equity outcomes within a decentralized education system.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Policy Implementation**

Policy implementation represents a crucial stage in the policy process, determining whether policy objectives formulated at the decision-making level can be translated into actual outcomes. Education policies, in particular, are implemented within complex systems characterized by multiple stakeholders, diverse institutional contexts, and dynamic social environments. Consequently, the effectiveness of

educational reforms depends not only on policy design but also on how policies are enacted by implementing actors at different administrative levels.

Among the various implementation frameworks, Edward III's (1980) model remains one of the most widely used approaches for examining policy implementation. Edwards III conceptualized policy implementation as a process influenced by four interrelated dimensions: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Communication refers to the extent to which policy objectives, procedures, and directives are transmitted clearly and consistently to implementers and target groups. Inadequate communication often results in misunderstanding, inconsistent interpretation, and implementation failure.

Resources encompass the availability of financial support, human resources, technological infrastructure, authority, and information necessary for executing policy directives effectively. Even well-designed policies may fail when implementing agencies lack adequate resources to support operational activities. Disposition refers to the attitudes, commitment, integrity, and willingness of implementers to carry out policy mandates. Implementers who demonstrate positive attitudes toward policy objectives are more likely to execute programs faithfully and effectively. Meanwhile, bureaucratic structure concerns the organizational arrangements, standard operating procedures (SOPs), coordination mechanisms, and division of responsibilities that guide implementation processes. Excessively fragmented structures and unclear lines of authority may impede effective policy execution.

The relevance of Edward III's framework in educational settings has been demonstrated in numerous studies. For example, Sururi et al. (2023) found that communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structures significantly influenced the implementation of Indonesia's *Sekolah Penggerak* program, although limitations in budgetary resources remained a major challenge. Similarly, broader reviews of educational policy implementation emphasize that coordination, stakeholder engagement, institutional capacity, and contextual adaptation constitute critical determinants of implementation success (Viennet & Pont, 2017). These findings suggest that educational reforms should be analyzed not only from the perspective of policy formulation but also through the lens of implementation processes that shape policy outcomes.

In the context of the 2026 Senior High School Student Admission Policy (*Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru* or SPMB), Edward III's framework provides an appropriate analytical lens to investigate how communication strategies, administrative readiness, implementers' commitment, and bureaucratic coordination influence the realization of policy objectives. Given the complexity of admission processes involving provincial authorities, branch offices, schools, parents, and students, understanding these dimensions becomes essential for identifying both implementation barriers and institutional adaptive responses.

## 2. Educational Equity Perspective

Educational equity has emerged as a central principle in contemporary education policy debates. While equality refers to providing identical opportunities or resources to all individuals, equity recognizes that students possess different needs, backgrounds, and constraints that may require differentiated forms of support to achieve fair outcomes. Therefore, equitable education involves ensuring that social, economic, and geographical circumstances do not become barriers to educational participation and success.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) defines equity in education through two complementary dimensions: fairness and inclusion. Fairness implies that personal or social circumstances, such as gender, socioeconomic status, or place of residence, should not limit educational opportunities. Inclusion emphasizes the importance of guaranteeing a minimum standard of education for all learners so that no student is excluded from meaningful participation in the education system.

From a philosophical perspective, Rawls's (1971) theory of justice provides an important foundation for understanding educational equity. Through the principle of "justice as fairness," Rawls argues that social institutions should be organized to benefit the least advantaged members of society. Applied to educational policy, this perspective implies that admission systems should prioritize disadvantaged groups and ensure that institutional arrangements reduce, rather than reproduce, social inequalities.

Recent scholarship further suggests that educational equity should be understood not merely as equal access to schools but as substantive opportunities to receive quality education. Jurado de los Santos et al. (2020) argue that educational equity is a multidimensional concept encompassing access, participation, treatment, and outcomes. Accordingly, policies aimed at expanding access must also consider the quality of educational provision available to different student populations.

Within the Indonesian context, educational equity remains a persistent challenge. Significant disparities in school quality, teacher distribution, infrastructure, and socioeconomic conditions continue to influence educational trajectories across regions. Consequently, reforms in student admission policies have increasingly been justified as mechanisms for promoting fairer access to public education. However, whether these reforms effectively address structural inequalities remains an empirical question requiring further investigation.

### **3. Student Admission Policy and Educational Equity**

Student admission policies constitute one of the most visible instruments through which governments allocate educational opportunities. Internationally, admission mechanisms vary considerably, ranging from merit-based selection systems to neighborhood assignment policies. Each approach reflects different priorities regarding efficiency, parental choice, academic excellence, and equity.

Indonesia's admission policy has undergone substantial transformation over the past decade. The introduction of the zoning system sought to reduce educational

stratification by assigning students to schools based on residential proximity. Although the policy was intended to improve educational equity, empirical studies documented various implementation challenges, including public resistance, domicile manipulation, unequal school quality, and persistent preferences for so-called "favorite schools." These findings indicate that admission reforms often generate unintended consequences when broader structural disparities remain unaddressed.

The transition from zoning-based admissions to the domicile-based SPMB 2026 policy represents a new phase in Indonesia's efforts to balance procedural fairness with equitable access. The inclusion of domicile, affirmation, achievement, and transfer pathways reflects an attempt to accommodate diverse student circumstances while maintaining transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, the implementation of this policy involves complex interactions among regulations, institutional capacities, technological systems, and stakeholder perceptions.

Despite growing interest in educational policy implementation, existing studies predominantly examine the earlier zoning-based admission system. Limited empirical evidence is available regarding how educational institutions adapt to the newly introduced SPMB 2026 framework, particularly in provinces characterized by large populations and administrative complexity such as West Java. Moreover, previous studies tend to focus either on implementation processes or educational equity outcomes without explicitly linking the two perspectives.

Therefore, this study addresses an important gap in the literature by integrating Edward III's policy implementation framework with an educational equity perspective to analyze the implementation of the 2026 Senior High School Student Admission Policy in West Java. Through this integration, the study seeks to explain how implementation processes shape equity outcomes and how institutional adaptation influences the realization of fair access to public education.

### C. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative multiple case study design to examine the implementation of the 2026 Senior High School Student Admission Policy (*Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru* (SPMB) in West Java Province, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because this study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of how policy actors interpreted, implemented, and adapted to the newly introduced admission system within different institutional contexts. The multiple case study design enabled the exploration of similarities and variations in policy implementation across diverse settings (Yin, 2018).

The study was conducted in several areas of West Java representing urban, peri-urban, and rural contexts, including Bandung City, Bekasi City, Bogor Regency, Cirebon Regency, and Garut Regency. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and experience in the implementation of SPMB 2026. They consisted of officials from the West Java Provincial Education Office, Branch Education Offices, public senior high school principals, members of school admission committees, parents, and students participating in the admission process.

Data collection continued until information saturation was achieved (Guest et al., 2020).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. The interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of SPMB 2026, while observations focused on admission procedures, interactions among stakeholders, and the operation of digital registration systems. In addition, official regulations, technical guidelines, implementation reports, and other relevant documents were reviewed to enrich and verify the findings obtained from interviews and observations.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analytical process was guided by Edward III's (1980) policy implementation framework, which emphasizes four dimensions: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Furthermore, the findings were interpreted through the lens of educational equity to examine how implementation processes influenced fairness and access to public senior high schools.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed triangulation of data sources and methods, member checking, and the maintenance of an audit trail throughout the research process. Ethical considerations were also observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation, and protecting participants' confidentiality and anonymity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### **D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The transition from the zoning-based admission system to the 2026 Student Admission System (*Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru* [SPMB]) represented not only a regulatory adjustment but also a communication challenge. The implementation process required educational authorities to introduce new procedures, explain the rationale for policy changes, and ensure that prospective students and parents understood the mechanisms of admission pathways.

From the perspective of Edward III (1980), communication constitutes a fundamental determinant of policy implementation. Effective communication requires policy messages to be transmitted clearly, consistently, and continuously. In the context of SPMB 2026, the dissemination of information through official websites, social media, schools, and public outreach initiatives potentially contributed to broader public awareness regarding admission procedures. However, changing a policy that had long been associated with the zoning system inevitably created confusion among some segments of society.

This situation illustrates that policy communication is not merely a process of delivering information but also one of constructing shared understanding. The shift from zoning to domicile-based admissions required stakeholders to reinterpret concepts that had become embedded in public discourse. Consequently, the effectiveness of implementation depended on the government's ability to simplify

technical information, respond to public concerns, and provide accessible communication channels.

Theoretically, this finding reinforces Edward III's proposition that even well-designed policies may encounter implementation difficulties when communication is inadequate. More importantly, it suggests that educational reforms involving significant procedural changes require communication strategies that are dialogical rather than merely instructional.

The successful implementation of SPMB 2026 was closely related to the availability of resources supporting operational activities. Educational institutions were expected to provide administrative personnel, digital infrastructure, technical guidance, and complaint-handling mechanisms capable of accommodating a large number of applicants.

Edward III emphasized that resources encompass not only financial support but also human resources, information, authority, and facilities. In large provinces such as West Java, the complexity of student admissions amplifies the importance of resource adequacy. The increasing reliance on digital systems demonstrates the government's effort to improve efficiency and transparency. Nevertheless, institutional readiness remains uneven due to differences in technological infrastructure, administrative experience, and digital literacy.

The implementation of technology-based services therefore presents a paradox. On the one hand, digitalization promotes accountability and accelerates administrative processes. On the other hand, it may inadvertently disadvantage individuals and institutions with limited technological capabilities. Consequently, resource allocation should not only prioritize technological innovation but also strengthen the competencies of implementers and improve public digital literacy. These circumstances indicate that policy effectiveness depends not solely on the existence of regulations but also on the state's capacity to provide sufficient resources for implementation. The SPMB reform thus reveals that educational equity is inseparable from institutional capacity.

Disposition refers to the attitudes, commitment, and willingness of implementers to execute policy objectives faithfully. According to Edward III, positive implementer attitudes significantly enhance implementation success because policies are ultimately enacted through the actions of frontline actors. Within the context of SPMB 2026, the implementation process required education officials and school personnel to adapt to revised procedures while maintaining fairness and transparency. Their commitment to public service influenced the quality of interactions with applicants and the credibility of the admission process. However, policy implementation should not be understood as mechanical compliance with regulations. Educational administrators frequently encounter situations requiring interpretation, judgment, and flexibility. The transition toward domicile-based admissions therefore demanded institutional adaptation. Implementers needed to interpret technical guidelines, address emerging operational issues, and reconcile formal procedures with practical realities.

This adaptive dimension constitutes an important insight. While Edward III emphasized disposition in terms of commitment and acceptance, contemporary educational reforms suggest that implementers also function as institutional problem-solvers. Their capacity to learn and adjust becomes essential for sustaining policy effectiveness within changing environments. Accordingly, the success of SPMB 2026 depended not only on the willingness of actors to comply with regulations but also on their ability to respond constructively to uncertainty and complexity.

The implementation of SPMB 2026 involved interactions among multiple administrative levels, including provincial education authorities, branch education offices, and school-level committees. Such arrangements reflect Indonesia's decentralized governance structure, where responsibilities are distributed across institutions. Edward III argued that bureaucratic structure influences implementation through standard operating procedures and organizational fragmentation. Clear procedures facilitate consistency, while fragmented structures may impede coordination.

In practice, educational reforms often require extensive inter-organizational collaboration. The effectiveness of admission policies therefore depends on the alignment of responsibilities, information flows, and decision-making mechanisms among implementing agencies. Differences in interpretation and administrative practices can generate inconsistencies that affect public trust. The SPMB reform highlights that coordination should be viewed as a continuous process rather than a one-time administrative requirement. Strengthening communication across organizational boundaries, clarifying institutional roles, and establishing responsive complaint mechanisms are necessary to enhance implementation coherence. Thus, bureaucratic effectiveness lies not merely in procedural compliance but in the capacity of institutions to collaborate toward shared policy objectives.

One of the principal objectives of the SPMB reform is to improve educational equity. The introduction of domicile, affirmation, achievement, and transfer pathways reflects an effort to accommodate diverse student circumstances while promoting fairness in access to public education. Viewed through Rawls' (1971) theory of justice, equitable policies should benefit those who are least advantaged. Likewise, the OECD (2018) emphasizes that fairness requires personal and social circumstances not to become barriers to educational opportunities.

The SPMB framework potentially advances procedural justice by diversifying access routes and expanding opportunities for disadvantaged students through affirmative mechanisms. Compared with a single admission pathway, multiple channels may better recognize differences in social conditions and student achievements. Nevertheless, procedural improvements do not necessarily guarantee substantive justice. Structural disparities in school quality continue to shape parental preferences and student competition. The enduring perception of "elite schools" indicates that educational inequalities extend beyond admission procedures to broader differences in institutional resources and educational outcomes.

Therefore, admission reform should be regarded as one component of a more comprehensive strategy for achieving educational equity. Without reducing disparities among schools, reforms in admission mechanisms may improve perceptions of fairness while leaving deeper inequalities intact.

The transition from the zoning-based admission policy to the 2026 Student Admission System (SPMB) in West Java represents more than a technical modification of admission procedures. It reflects a broader institutional effort to reconcile competing objectives in education governance: fairness, transparency, merit recognition, social inclusion, and public trust. This study argues that understanding the implementation of SPMB requires moving beyond a narrow assessment of procedural compliance and examining how implementation processes shape educational equity outcomes.

Using Edward III's (1980) framework, this study demonstrates that communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure remain highly relevant in explaining the effectiveness of educational policy implementation. However, the findings also indicate that these dimensions interact dynamically through processes of institutional adaptation, ultimately influencing the extent to which admission reforms contribute to educational justice.

First, the communication dimension illustrates that educational reforms involving significant procedural changes require more than information dissemination. Although SPMB 2026 sought to improve transparency through digital platforms and multi-channel socialization, the transition from zoning to domicile-based admissions inevitably generated interpretive challenges among stakeholders. This observation supports Edwards III's argument that clarity, consistency, and transmission are prerequisites for successful implementation.

This finding is consistent with studies examining the implementation of student admission policies in Indonesia. Research on the Jakarta Joint Student Admission System found that fragmented dissemination and limited parental understanding remained major obstacles to effective implementation, despite intensive communication efforts. Likewise, studies of zoning policy implementation reported that inadequate socialization contributed to public confusion, resistance, and perceptions of unfairness. However, the SPMB context introduces a distinctive challenge. Unlike previous reforms that merely adjusted quotas or technical procedures, SPMB altered the conceptual foundation of admissions by replacing the highly politicized notion of "zoning" with domicile-based allocation. Consequently, communication functions not merely as administrative instruction but as a process of reframing public understanding and rebuilding institutional legitimacy.

The resource dimension reinforces the centrality of institutional capacity in determining policy effectiveness. The increasing reliance on digital registration systems reflects efforts to improve efficiency and accountability. Yet the benefits of digital transformation remain unevenly distributed across different contexts. These observations align with broader evidence demonstrating that technological innovations in education often reproduce existing inequalities when institutional

capacities vary substantially. Allen et al. (2024) argued that the implementation of new technologies within educational systems is highly dependent on contextual readiness and stakeholder capability. Similarly, Holstein & Doroudi (2021) warned that technological solutions designed to improve educational equity may inadvertently amplify disparities when unequal access and digital competencies are overlooked.

Within Indonesia, analyses of SPMB implementation have similarly identified infrastructure limitations, digital literacy gaps, and regional disparities as persistent barriers to equitable implementation. Therefore, this study suggests that educational equity cannot be separated from implementation capacity. Policies designed to promote fairness require investments not only in regulatory frameworks but also in the technological and human infrastructures necessary to support them.

Third, the findings highlight the importance of implementers' disposition. Edward III conceptualized disposition primarily in terms of implementers' attitudes, acceptance, and commitment toward policy objectives. The present analysis confirms the significance of these factors. Frontline actors play a critical role in maintaining transparency, responding to public concerns, and ensuring that formal regulations are translated into meaningful administrative practices.

Nevertheless, the implementation of SPMB also reveals dimensions that extend beyond Edwards III's original formulation. Educational administrators frequently encounter ambiguity, unexpected situations, and competing stakeholder demands that cannot be resolved solely through strict procedural adherence. Consequently, implementers engage in continuous interpretation and adaptation. This perspective resonates with contemporary scholarship emphasizing adaptive governance and organizational learning. Studies of collaborative admission policies in Jakarta similarly found that successful implementation depended on the ability of schools to adjust operational practices while maintaining policy objectives. Thus, disposition should be understood not only as commitment but also as adaptive capacity.

The introduction of institutional adaptation constitutes an important theoretical contribution of this study. Edward III's model effectively explains the conditions influencing implementation; however, it offers limited insight into how organizations respond to changing policy environments. The SPMB experience suggests that adaptive institutions, those capable of learning, interpreting, and adjusting are more likely to sustain implementation effectiveness under conditions of uncertainty.

Fourth, bureaucratic structure remains a decisive factor influencing implementation outcomes. The implementation of SPMB involved coordination among provincial authorities, branch education offices, school-level committees, and supporting institutions. While decentralization allows contextual responsiveness, it simultaneously increases the complexity of coordination.

Previous studies consistently identify fragmentation as a major source of implementation difficulty. Research evaluating zoning implementation reported that weak coordination among educational stakeholders undermined policy coherence. Similar findings emerged in studies of collaborative admissions in Jakarta, where

differences in institutional procedures reduced implementation consistency. However, unlike earlier studies that viewed fragmentation primarily as a bureaucratic deficiency, this study suggests that fragmentation also reflects the realities of decentralized governance. The challenge therefore lies not in eliminating institutional diversity but in strengthening coordination mechanisms capable of integrating diverse actors around shared objectives.

More importantly, this study demonstrates that effective implementation does not automatically guarantee equitable outcomes. This distinction constitutes the substantive novelty of the present analysis. The diversification of admission pathways through domicile, affirmation, achievement, and transfer schemes potentially enhances procedural fairness by recognizing the heterogeneity of student circumstances. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds gain opportunities through affirmative quotas, while achievement pathways acknowledge various forms of merit beyond residential proximity.

These observations support the normative principles articulated by the OECD (2018), which defines educational equity through fairness and inclusion. They also resonate with Rawls' (1971) conception of justice as fairness, whereby institutional arrangements should improve the conditions of the least advantaged members of society.

Yet procedural improvements alone are insufficient to achieve substantive equity. Persistent disparities in school quality continue to shape parental preferences, competitive behaviors, and educational trajectories. The enduring perception of "elite schools" indicates that inequalities are embedded within the broader educational structure rather than solely within admission mechanisms.

This distinction between procedural fairness and substantive justice has received limited attention within the literature on student admissions in Indonesia. Existing studies predominantly evaluate whether admission procedures comply with regulations or whether access quotas are distributed appropriately. Research on zoning implementation, principal leadership, and admission evaluations largely focuses on administrative effectiveness and stakeholder perceptions.

The present study extends this literature by arguing that policy success should be evaluated according to two interconnected criteria. The first concerns procedural effectiveness: whether implementation adheres to principles of transparency, accountability, and consistency. The second concerns substantive effectiveness: whether implementation contributes to reducing structural inequalities in educational opportunities.

Accordingly, the transition from zoning to domicile-based admissions should not be interpreted as a complete solution to educational inequality. Rather, it represents an incremental reform capable of improving procedural justice while exposing deeper structural challenges that remain unresolved.

The novelty of this study therefore emerges through three interrelated contributions. First, this study contributes empirically to the emerging literature on Indonesia's post-zoning admission reforms. While existing scholarship

overwhelmingly examines PPDB zoning policies, limited attention has been devoted to understanding the implementation implications of SPMB 2026. Consequently, this study provides an early analytical perspective on how domicile-based admissions reshape educational governance. Second, this study contributes theoretically by extending Edward III's framework through the concept of institutional adaptation. Communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure remain necessary conditions for implementation success. However, their influence is mediated by organizations' ability to interpret changing contexts, learn from experience, and adapt operational practices. This proposition offers a more dynamic understanding of educational policy implementation. Third, this study contributes substantively by bridging the implementation and educational equity literatures. Previous studies have tended to examine these domains separately. In contrast, this analysis demonstrates that implementation quality directly shapes the realization of educational justice. Effective implementation may enhance procedural fairness, yet substantive equity requires simultaneous efforts to reduce disparities in educational quality across schools.

Ultimately, the experience of SPMB 2026 suggests that admission reform should be viewed as one component within a broader strategy for educational transformation. Without addressing inequalities in teacher quality, infrastructure, learning resources, and institutional reputation, admission reforms risk redistributing competition rather than redistributing opportunity. Therefore, future policy initiatives should move beyond debates concerning admission formulas toward comprehensive efforts to equalize the quality of public education. Only through the integration of effective implementation, adaptive institutions, and structural reform can the promise of equitable educational access be meaningfully realized.

## E. CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of the 2026 Senior High School Student Admission Policy (*Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru/SPMB*) in West Java through the lens of Edward III's policy implementation framework. The analysis suggests that the effectiveness of policy implementation is shaped by four interrelated dimensions: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Clear and continuous communication contributes to public understanding and trust in the admission process; adequate resources support administrative readiness and service delivery; implementers' commitment and integrity influence the consistency of policy execution; and effective coordination among institutions strengthens procedural accountability. Nevertheless, the implementation process remains challenged by uneven institutional capacity, varying levels of digital readiness, and the complexity of multi-level governance within a decentralized education system.

This study argues that successful implementation should not be evaluated solely based on procedural compliance. The transition from the zoning-based system to domicile-based admissions has the potential to improve procedural fairness by expanding access through multiple pathways, including domicile, affirmation,

achievement, and transfer schemes. However, the persistence of disparities in school quality indicates that improvements in admission procedures do not automatically translate into substantive educational equity. Structural inequalities embedded within the education system continue to shape parental preferences, patterns of competition, and students' educational opportunities.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it provides one of the earliest analyses of Indonesia's 2026 student admission reform following the transition from zoning to domicile-based admissions. Second, it extends Edward III's policy implementation framework by highlighting the importance of institutional adaptation in responding to changing policy environments. Third, it bridges the implementation and educational equity perspectives by demonstrating that the quality of policy implementation influences not only administrative effectiveness but also the realization of educational justice.

Therefore, future policy reforms should move beyond revising admission mechanisms and focus on reducing disparities in educational quality across schools through equitable distribution of teachers, infrastructure improvement, strengthening institutional capacity, and sustained public engagement. Only by integrating effective implementation with broader structural reforms can the goal of equitable access to quality education be meaningfully achieved within Indonesia's decentralized education system.

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