



Addressing Out of School Children after Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 through an Education Futures Lens

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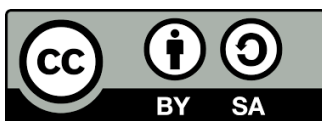
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Abstract

Out of school children (OOSC) remain a structural problem for Indonesian education, affecting 3.78 million children aged 6 to 18. The government has responded with Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 on the Prevention and Handling of Out of School Children, which sets out a cross sectoral national strategy and a target of zero OOSC by 2045. This study examines where the policy is heading after the regulation came into force, using the education futures framework as its analytical lens. The research takes a qualitative approach built on library research and content analysis of policy documents, international agency reports, and the scholarly literature, complemented by one community level case illustration drawn from the author's direct observation. Three findings stand out. First, the regulation marks a shift from sectoral, fragmented handling of OOSC toward collaborative governance that binds central government, regional governments, villages, and communities together. Second, read against the OECD scenarios for the future of schooling and UNESCO's vision of a new social contract for education, the policy still leans heavily on expanding formal schooling and has yet to anticipate how learning pathways may diversify. Third, implementation will stand or fall on the accuracy of integrated OOSC data, the fiscal and institutional capacity of regions, and how flexibly services can reach the nine categories of vulnerable children. The article recommends building futures literacy among policymakers so that the response does more than return children to school; it should prepare a learning ecosystem that stays relevant to the future those children will actually live in.



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INTRODUCTION

The right to education is written into Indonesia's 1945 Constitution and given operational form by Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. The promise, however, has not reached every child. The National Socioeconomic Survey counts 3.78 million children aged 6 to 18 who are not in school, and most of them, around 2.4 million, are of senior secondary age between 16 and 18 (C. Indonesia, 2026). UNICEF puts the figure even higher, at roughly 4.1 million children and adolescents aged 7 to 18,

with a sharp geographic divide between western and eastern Indonesia (U. Indonesia, 2021). West Java carries the heaviest burden of any province, with around 527,000 children out of school (Ekonomi, 2026).

Out of school children are not simply a problem of access. The phenomenon is structural, rooted in poverty, child labour, disability, child marriage, violence, and geographic isolation. Susenas data point to household economics as the dominant cause: families cannot afford schooling, and children are pulled into work to help make ends meet (JPNN, 2025). The pressure falls hardest on socioeconomically vulnerable families, as the COVID-19 pandemic made plain when dropout risk rose among children from poor households (UNICEF Indonesia, 2021). A multilevel study of more than 221,000 Indonesian children shows that the determinants operate on two levels at once, household characteristics such as expenditure and the household head's education on one side, and district characteristics such as poverty rates and local education spending on the other (Muttaqin et al., 2017), which means interventions have to work across levels as well. Over the long run, a large OOSC population threatens the human capital agenda behind the Golden Indonesia 2045 vision, because a child who stops learning today is a low skilled worker two decades from now. It also pushes Indonesia further from Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive, equitable, quality education by 2030.

The government's answer is Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 on the Prevention and Handling of Out of School Children, in force since 26 January 2026. The regulation sits within the drive to accelerate 13 year compulsory education and to meet minimum service standards in education (Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026). It establishes a National Strategy for the Prevention and Handling of OOSC, forms coordination teams at the national and regional levels, and names nine categories of vulnerable children as priority targets. The government aims to bring 645,000 children back into learning within the first five years and to reach zero OOSC by 2045 (InfoPublik, 2026). For the first time, a policy area long fragmented across sectors and agencies has a single binding legal umbrella.

At the same time, the global conversation about education has been shifting from expanding access toward rethinking what education itself should become. OECD (2020) sketches four scenarios for the future of schooling, stretching from a strengthened formal system to the fading of schools as institutions, while (UNESCO, 2021) calls for a new social contract that treats education as a shared undertaking of the whole society. This way of thinking matters for Indonesia's OOSC policy for a simple reason: a child returned to a classroom today will enter work and citizenship in a world reshaped by automation and artificial intelligence. In this article, education futures is used operationally as an analytical frame that judges an education policy not only by how well it solves today's problem but also by how well it would hold up across several possible futures.

Previous studies on OOSC in Indonesia have mostly examined why children drop out at the individual, family, and community levels (Asmaniar, 2021; Asmara & Sukadana, 2017; Hakim, 2020; Mujiati et al., 2018; Wassahua, 2016), evaluated retrieval programs in particular regions, or analyzed the 2020 National Strategy that preceded any

regulation of presidential rank. Few have examined Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 as a new policy, and fewer still have read it through an education futures lens. Yet without an orientation to the future, an OOSC policy risks returning children to the very schooling model that once failed to keep them. Against that gap, this article sets out to (1) map the policy anatomy of Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026, (2) lay out the education futures framework as a lens for education policy analysis, and (3) analyze the opportunities and challenges of handling OOSC after the regulation, along with the implications for policymaking.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of an education futures perspective into the analysis of Indonesia's policy for preventing and addressing out-of-school children (OOSC) following the enactment of Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026. Unlike previous studies that primarily examined the socioeconomic determinants of school dropout, regional educational interventions, and conventional policy implementation, this research interprets the regulation through the OECD's four future schooling scenarios and UNESCO's framework for a new social contract for education. This approach provides a forward-looking perspective that extends beyond immediate school re-enrollment targets by considering the adaptability, inclusiveness, and long-term sustainability of educational services. Furthermore, the study offers a conceptual contribution by connecting regulatory analysis, collaborative governance, and futures-oriented educational planning to identify opportunities and challenges in developing more flexible learning pathways for vulnerable children.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the policy direction and strategic implications of Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 in addressing OOSC in Indonesia through an education futures perspective. Specifically, the research seeks to analyze the regulatory framework, objectives, institutional responsibilities, and implementation mechanisms established by the regulation; evaluate its alignment with the OECD's future schooling scenarios and UNESCO's vision of inclusive and collaborative education; and identify potential opportunities, institutional challenges, and strategic priorities for strengthening OOSC prevention and intervention programs. Through qualitative library research and policy content analysis, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how current educational policies can respond to both existing structural inequalities and emerging educational transformations.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature on educational policy, futures studies, and collaborative governance by introducing an anticipatory analytical framework for evaluating policies addressing educational exclusion. It expands conventional policy analysis by considering not only regulatory objectives and implementation arrangements but also the capacity of educational systems to remain relevant under alternative future conditions. Practically, the study is expected to benefit policymakers, educational administrators, local governments, schools, and community organizations by providing insights into the development of integrated OOSC databases, targeted interventions for vulnerable children, and flexible educational services. The findings may also serve as a conceptual reference for strengthening coordination among

government institutions, educational providers, and community stakeholders in supporting children's return to education and continued participation in learning.

The policy implications of this study emphasize the importance of transforming OOSC interventions from predominantly reactive school re-enrollment programs into preventive, inclusive, and future-oriented educational strategies. National and regional policymakers should prioritize integrated data management, early identification of children at risk of dropping out, equitable resource allocation, and continuous monitoring of student retention and educational completion. Furthermore, educational service delivery should accommodate diverse learning pathways, including formal schooling, equivalency education, community-based learning, and appropriately supported digital education, particularly for children facing economic, geographical, and social barriers. Strengthening futures literacy among policymakers and incorporating scenario-based planning into national and regional education strategies may also improve institutional preparedness for technological, demographic, and socioeconomic changes. Ultimately, these implications support the development of a more adaptive and equitable educational ecosystem aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Indonesia's long-term development aspirations toward 2045.

METHOD

Research Design

This study takes a qualitative approach in the form of library research combined with content analysis of policy documents. The choice follows from the object of study: regulatory texts, planning documents, official reports, and scholarly literature, where a careful reading of meaning and policy direction matters more than quantitative measurement (Zed, 2014). Within the policy studies tradition, the work belongs to analysis of policy rather than analysis for policy; it examines the content and context of a regulation that already exists, then interprets both through a futures oriented frame. The analysis is therefore descriptive and analytical, moving from what the regulation says to what its design implies for several possible futures.

Data Sources

The primary data source is the official text of Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 on the Prevention and Handling of Out of School Children together with its National Strategy annex. Secondary sources fall into four groups: statistical data on OOSC from Statistics Indonesia and the ministry's data portal; reports by international agencies, namely UNICEF Indonesia on out of school children, the OECD on schooling scenarios, and UNESCO on the futures of education; credible media coverage of the regulation's launch and early implementation; and peer reviewed journal articles on school dropout, out of school children, and futures studies in education. As a complement, the article includes one community level case illustration drawn from the author's direct observation in her own neighbourhood. The illustration is anecdotal; it grounds the policy analysis in a real situation and is not treated as generalizable empirical evidence.

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through documentation. The regulation and its annex were retrieved from official legal documentation channels, statistics from government data portals, and agency reports from the publishing institutions' own sites. Scholarly sources were gathered through keyword searches combining out of school children, school dropout, anak tidak sekolah, education futures, and futures literacy, then screened on three criteria: direct relevance to the research questions, credibility of the source, and recency where the claim concerns current conditions. Each selected source was recorded in a simple review matrix noting its type, origin, and the key claims used, so every substantive statement in the article can be traced back to a named document.

Data Analysis Technique

The analysis moved through three stages. The first was data reduction, selecting the articles, policy directions, and strategies in the regulation that speak to the research questions and coding them into anatomy categories: definition, targets, policy directions, institutions, and phasing. The second was data display, presenting the coded material as a policy anatomy narrative and as visual maps, the two pathway flow in Figure 1 and the scenario mapping in Figure 2, so the basis of each claim stays open to inspection. The third was conclusion drawing, reading the displays through the education futures framework, particularly the four OECD schooling scenarios and UNESCO's idea of a new social contract for education, to identify opportunities, challenges, and policy implications.

Trustworthiness

The soundness of the findings is maintained in three ways. Source triangulation compares official documents, statistical data, and the scholarly literature before any claim is made. Theory triangulation reads the same policy material through more than one lens, the OECD scenarios, the UNESCO social contract, and the policy instruments typology, so the conclusions do not rest on a single framework. Finally, the scenario mapping is laid out explicitly in Figure 2 rather than merely asserted, which works as an audit trail: a reader who would place an element in a different zone can see exactly where the disagreement lies. The study's main limitation is the absence of systematic field data; the community illustration is flagged as anecdotal, and empirical testing of implementation is left to future research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Policy Anatomy of Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026

The regulation defines an out of school child as a child aged 6 to 18 who has never attended school, has dropped out before completing a level, or has graduated without continuing to the next level. The definition matters because it widens the scope of intervention from dropout alone to three distinct situations: children who never enrolled,

children who dropped out, and children who finished one level but went no further. That widening matches the structure of the ministry's OOSC data portal, which sorts children into exactly those three categories (Kemendikdasmen, 2026).

On targeting, Article 3 names nine priority categories: children in special regions, child labourers, children with disabilities, street children, neglected children, child victims of violence, children in conflict with the law and children in correctional care, child victims of child marriage, and children in other vulnerable conditions. The list amounts to an official acknowledgment that OOSC are not one homogeneous population but the intersection of several forms of social vulnerability, each calling for a different response. A child labourer in an industrial area needs a flexible learning scheme; a child with a disability in a remote village needs something else entirely.

The substance of the policy falls into three directions. The first is prevention, aimed at children who are still in school but at risk of dropping out, pursued by strengthening education services and equipping schools to detect children at risk early. The second is handling, aimed at children already outside the system, carried out in stages: identification, outreach, return to a suitable education service, and support so the child keeps learning. The third is governance and coordination across agencies and levels of government (InfoPublik, 2026).

Operationally, the prevention track asks schools to become early detection nodes rather than mere providers of lessons. Risk signals such as falling attendance, slipping grades, late payment of school needs, and changes in family circumstances need to be turned into an early warning system acted on by homeroom teachers, counsellors, and school committees. The logic of intervention shifts from reactive to anticipatory, since preventing one child from dropping out costs far less, socially and fiscally, than reaching a child who has already left. The handling track, meanwhile, rests on identification and verification as its foundation, because a child who was never recorded in the education database can only be found through active, door to door, community based data collection. Once identified, the child is referred to whatever service fits the child's situation, formal school, equivalency education, or specialized services, and then accompanied until the level is completed. Figure 1 summarizes the two intervention pathways and the governance foundation beneath them.

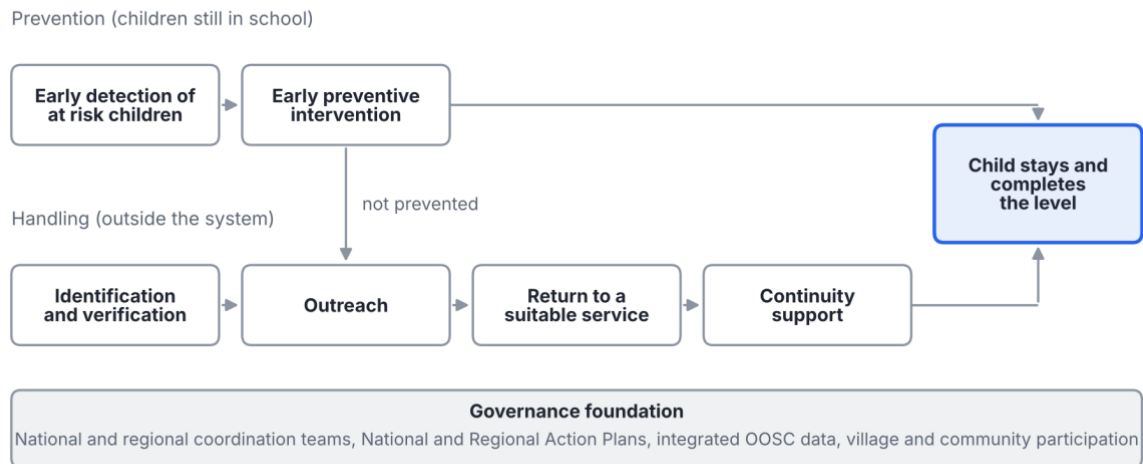


Figure 1. The Prevention and Handling Pathways for Out of School Children under Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026

Source: adapted from Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026

Institutionally, the regulation forms coordination teams at the national and regional levels and requires National and Regional Action Plans. It also hands villages an explicit mandate to prevent and handle OOSC within their authority, including the possibility of drawing on village funds. Community participation is spelled out as well, from reporting at risk and out of school children to taking part in policymaking, running programs, public education, and accompanying children so they return to and stay in learning. The National Strategy is phased, with the first phase running from 2026 to 2029, on the way to bringing 645,000 children back into learning within five years and reaching zero OOSC by 2045.

Compared with the 2020 National Strategy, which rested on a planning document without strong regulatory force (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2020), the regulation raises OOSC handling into a legal mandate binding ministries, agencies, provinces, districts, and villages. In public policy terms, the change reads as a strengthening of authority tools in Schneider and Ingram's (1990) typology, complementing the capacity and incentive instruments already in place such as the Smart Indonesia Program, and making accountability across levels of government considerably clearer.

Education Futures as an Analytical Lens

Education futures applies futures studies to education. Its working assumption is that the future is neither singular nor precisely predictable, but it can be anticipated by exploring what is possible, what is probable, and what is preferred (Inayatullah, 2008). Facer (2011) adds a sharper point: every image of education's future carries social and political choices, so the direction of education is something to be contested and built together, not merely forecast. On this view, a policy is not judged only by whether it

solves today's problem, but by whether it would still make sense across several futures that might actually arrive.

OECD (2020) offers four scenarios for schooling over the next two decades. In schooling extended, the formal system we know grows and strengthens. In education outsourced, societies hand more of the educational function to providers outside school, including online learning and homeschooling. In schools as learning hubs, schools remain but turn into nodes of learning open to communities and varied resources. In learn as you go, formal schooling fades because learning happens anywhere through digital technology. None of these is a prediction; they are thinking tools for stress testing a policy.

UNESCO (2021), through *Reimagining Our Futures Together*, calls for a new social contract for education built on two principles: guaranteeing the right to quality education throughout life, and strengthening education as a public endeavour and a common good. The consequence is that responsibility for education is no longer monopolized by schools and the state; it is shared with families, communities, business, and the media. UNESCO also presses for pedagogies of cooperation and solidarity, curricula that build ecological, intercultural, and digital capabilities, and technology that strengthens rather than replaces the pedagogical relationship.

Brought down to the Indonesian OOSC context, the four scenarios carry different implications. Under schooling extended, success depends on how many children formal schools can take in and hold, so investment flows to new school units, rehabilitated facilities, and fee support. Under education outsourced, vulnerable children risk falling further behind if paid alternatives grow without a public safety net, so the state must guarantee free, recognized alternative routes. Schools as learning hubs offers the middle path that fits OOSC best: the school becomes a referral hub connected to equivalency education, skills training, and community psychosocial support. And learn as you go is a warning more than a promise, because without digital infrastructure and family digital literacy, flexible technology based learning will serve only the already fortunate and widen the gap.

Both frameworks matter for Indonesia's OOSC problem in at least three ways. First, a child lifted out of OOSC status today will join the workforce between 2035 and 2045, when automation and artificial intelligence are expected to remake the structure of work (OECD, 2025), so merely being back in school, without relevant learning, is not enough. Second, the nine categories of vulnerable children named in the regulation are precisely the children conventional schooling finds hardest to serve, which makes the learning hubs scenario and diversified pathways essential. Third, the regulation's mandate for community participation resonates with UNESCO's idea of education as a collective endeavour, so the two can reinforce each other in implementation.

Handling OOSC after the Regulation through an Education Futures Lens

Read against the four OECD scenarios, the regulation's dominant orientation sits in schooling extended. Its core logic treats the return of children to formal education units

as the measure of success, in line with 13 year compulsory education and minimum service standards. That orientation is reasonable, even necessary, for a country still completing basic access. But experience cuts the other way too: many OOSC are children who were once in school and left, which means the existing model has already failed to hold them once. Susenas 2023 records that a third of children who reach secondary education stop before graduating (JPNN, 2025). Returning children to the same model without transforming the service risks producing repeat dropout.

To show the basis for that claim, Figure 2 maps the regulation's main policy elements onto the four OECD scenarios.

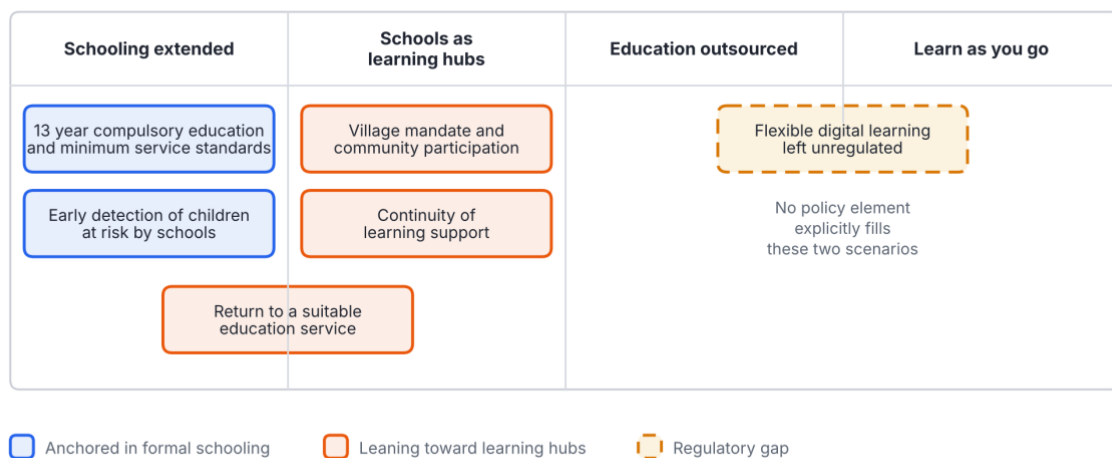


Figure 2. Mapping the Policy Elements of Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 onto the OECD Schooling Scenarios

Source: adapted from Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 and OECD (2020)

Figure 2 shows two core elements resting fully on schooling extended logic, three elements leaning toward schools as learning hubs including one transitional element that straddles both, and one area left unregulated altogether, flexible digital learning. That pattern underpins the conclusion that the regulation remains oriented to expanding formal schooling, since the elements that set the frame and the measure of success sit in the schooling extended zone, while the door to diversification exists but has not been firmly institutionalized.

This is where the learning hubs scenario deserves room. The regulation has in fact left the door open through the phrase return to a suitable education service, which can reasonably be read to cover nonformal routes: equivalency education Packages A, B, and C, pesantren, Sekolah Rakyat, community based learning, and flexible digital models. For child labourers and child victims of child marriage, learning with flexible hours and recognition of prior learning is far more realistic than demanding full attendance in a regular classroom. The coding and artificial intelligence curriculum the ministry has begun to introduce should also not stop at formal schools; it needs to reach the

equivalency route, so that children returning to learning are not left behind by where the curriculum is heading.

Seen from UNESCO's new social contract, the regulation's main strength is its collaborative architecture. The mandate to villages, participation mechanisms that run from reporting to accompaniment, and cross ministerial coordination teams all mark a shift from sectoral responsibility to collective responsibility. In the public policy literature, that shift is known as collaborative governance, an arrangement in which public agencies bring nonstate actors into formal, deliberative, consensus oriented collective decision making (Ansell & Gash, 2008). It also matches the principle of education as a common good that demands the involvement of every element of society (UNESCO, 2021). Experience from back to school movements in several regions shows that door to door outreach by village officials and volunteers decides success or failure, because administrative data alone never reaches the children the system cannot see.

Field evidence strengthens the collaborative argument. A UNICEF assisted OOSC outreach program in Central Java returned nearly 9,000 of roughly 22,000 identified children to learning between 2020 and 2023, a return rate of about 40 percent, by combining data based detection with accompaniment by community volunteers (UNICEF Indonesia, n.d.). The achievement shows the task is not impossible, but it also says something harder: more than half of the identified children still did not come back, so a wider range of services is needed. This is exactly where other instruments, Sekolah Rakyat coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs for children from extremely poor families, equivalency education in community learning centres, and pesantren and other religious education units, need to be positioned as one service ecosystem under the Action Plans rather than programs running on their own.

The macro picture can be given a face through one community level illustration. In the author's own neighbourhood, a village in the Cirebon area of West Java, a neighbour's child completed one level of education but did not continue to the next because the family could not afford it. The case is small and anecdotal, yet it shows three of this article's concerns at their most concrete. First, a child who graduates and simply does not continue never appears as a dropout in the records of the school the child left, so without active data collection at the village level the child stays invisible to a system that only monitors active students. Second, the cause was not academic failure but household economics, in line with the dominant finding of dropout studies in Indonesia (Hakim, 2020; Mujiati et al., 2018), so an invitation to return to learning without financial support and family economic incentives would most likely change nothing. Third, the distance between the policy text and a case like this is precisely the working space of the village mandate in the regulation, because village officials and neighbours are the first to know the child exists, long before any data system records it.

Even so, implementation faces at least four challenges. The first is data. National OOSC figures still vary across sources, from 3.78 million in Susenas to 4.1 million in UNICEF's estimate, and the education database only captures children who were ever enrolled. Without integrated OOSC data that matches civil registration, education, and

social welfare records, outreach will miss its targets. The second is regional fiscal and institutional capacity. Clearing 645,000 OOSC in five years requires consistent Regional Action Plans, while capacity and budget commitment vary sharply across regions and the province with the heaviest burden, West Java, must handle more than half a million children. The third sits on the demand side. If household economics is the dominant cause, education interventions alone will not settle it, so integration with social protection, the Smart Indonesia Program, and family economic empowerment is a precondition, all the more because holding a Smart Indonesia Card has proven to be the single most powerful variable in reducing dropout risk (Hakim, 2020). The fourth is learning continuity. The measure of success has to move from the number of children returned to school toward the number who stay and complete the level, with learning quality assured.

Digital technology also deserves a place as the backbone of implementation. Matching the education database with civil registration and integrated social welfare data would let government build a precise OOSC map down to the village, while predictive analytics could help schools flag children at risk before they actually leave. Used this way, artificial intelligence sits comfortably within the national push to digitize education, provided children's data governance is kept tight and final decisions stay with people. UNESCO's (2021) principle is the right guardrail: technology must strengthen the pedagogical relationship and equity, not replace educators or create a new layer of exclusion for families who are not digitally connected.

Within the education futures frame, these four challenges point to the need for futures literacy among those who make and carry out policy. Futures literacy lets policymakers use the future as a resource in today's decisions rather than merely projecting past trends forward (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015). The future narratives that stakeholders hold also need to be surfaced and widened, because a narrow image of the future constrains which policies seem possible today. In practice, this means National and Regional Action Plans should include scenario testing: how would OOSC outreach work if digital learning becomes dominant, if artificial intelligence reshapes young people's work, or if household economic pressure deepens. Handled this way, the post regulation OOSC agenda becomes more than a catch up project; it becomes an anticipatory investment in the 2045 golden generation.

CONCLUSION

Presidential Regulation Number 3 of 2026 is a genuine policy leap. It lifts the handling of out of school children from a sectoral planning agenda into a national legal mandate binding every level of government down to the village, with a broad definition of OOSC, nine categories of vulnerable children, three policy directions, and a target of zero OOSC by 2045. Read through an education futures lens, the policy still leans on the scenario of expanding formal schooling, even though its collaborative architecture already matches UNESCO's idea of a new social contract for education. The greatest opportunity lies in the phrase return to a suitable education service, which can open the way to flexible, diversified learning pathways for vulnerable children. The greatest

challenges lie in the accuracy of integrated OOSC data, the uneven fiscal and institutional capacity of regions, the economic roots of dropout, and keeping children learning once they return.

The article offers four recommendations. First, National and Regional Action Plans should carry indicators of retention and level completion, not only of children returned to school. Second, the integration of OOSC data matching civil registration, education, and social welfare records down to the village level should be accelerated. Third, flexible learning models and recognition of prior learning should be expanded for vulnerable categories, including bringing future facing content such as digital and artificial intelligence literacy into the equivalency route. Fourth, futures literacy should be built among policymakers and implementers through scenario testing exercises in regional planning. Future research should test the regulation's implementation empirically at the district level, especially in regions carrying the largest OOSC burden, to see where policy design and practice on the ground part ways.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that this research was conducted in the absence of any commercial, financial, or other relationships that could be construed as potential conflicts of interest in the conduct of the research or the publication of its findings.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Rani Santika contributed to the conceptualization of the study, development of the *education futures* analytical framework, data collection and analysis through library research, and preparation of the original manuscript. Rafi Farizki contributed to the identification and analysis of policy documents, interpretation of the research findings, and review and editing of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the refinement of the manuscript and approved the final version for publication.

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE STATEMENT

The authors state that generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used in the preparation of this manuscript. The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI to help improve language clarity and improve the grammatical structure of manuscripts. The use is carried out in compliance with applicable ethical guidelines regarding the use and disclosure of generative AI in scientific research. Each author has made substantial intellectual contributions to this work. The entire content of the manuscript has been carefully reviewed to ensure its accuracy, and the author is solely responsible for the integrity and final content of the manuscript

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