

RECONSTRUCTING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION REGULATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR FULFILLING THE PUBLIC RIGHT TO EDUCATION

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Abstract

Non-formal education is an integral part of the national education system and plays a strategic role in ensuring the fulfillment of the public's right to education, particularly for groups facing barriers to accessing formal education. However, the framework of non-formal education policy in Indonesia still faces issues regarding regulatory fragmentation, implementation disparities, limited access guarantees, and suboptimal recognition of non-formal learning outcomes. This study aims to analyze the legal and policy framework of non-formal education regarding the fulfillment of the right to education and to formulate a policy reconstruction model that is more responsive to community needs. The study employs a normative-juridical method utilizing statutory, policy, and conceptual approaches. The primary legal basis includes Article 28C paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which guarantees the right to self-development through education; Article 31, which affirms the right of every citizen to receive an education; and Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. The findings indicate that while Indonesia's legal framework recognizes non-formal education as part of the national education system, it has not yet fully established integrated mechanisms to guarantee access, quality, sustainability, and the recognition of learning outcomes. Policy reconstruction should focus on strengthening the legal basis, harmonizing regulations, recognizing learning outcomes, reinforcing institutional capacity, and defining the division of authority and financing in a manner oriented toward fulfilling the right to education and upholding the principle of lifelong learning.

Keyword: *Education Policy; Legal Reconstruction; Lifelong Learning; Non-formal Education; Right to Education.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right that must be accessible to every citizen without discrimination. Within the framework of national education, the fulfillment of this right should not be understood solely through formal schooling but also through the provision of non-formal education pathways capable of reaching communities with diverse needs, social conditions, and

barriers to access. Non-formal education holds a strategic position by offering learning opportunities to individuals who are underserved or unable to participate optimally in the formal education system. Yasunaga¹ emphasizes that non-formal education can serve as a vital means of meeting the learning needs of children and adolescents who are outside the school system. Thus, the existence of non-formal education is closely linked to the state's responsibility to ensure the inclusive fulfillment of the right to education.

The legal foundation for fulfilling the right to education in Indonesia is established in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly Article 28C paragraph (1), which guarantees the right to develop oneself through education, and Article 31, which affirms every citizen's right to education. These constitutional provisions are further elaborated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which recognizes formal, non-formal, and informal education as complementary pathways within the national education system.² Nevertheless, the implementation of these legal guarantees requires effective policy measures to ensure equitable access and protection for vulnerable groups, including street children.³ This legal recognition provides an important foundation for understanding the role of non-formal education within Indonesia's national education system. However, the existence of constitutional guarantees and statutory provisions does not automatically eliminate challenges in the implementation and positioning of non-formal education, particularly regarding its recognition and status in relation to formal education.

However, the position of non-formal education within education policy still faces conceptual and institutional challenges. Hoppers⁴ points out that non-formal education has often been perceived as having a lower status than formal education. This perception influences how policymakers and the public position non-formal education within the education system. Yet, Rogers⁵

¹ Mari Yasunaga, "Non-formal education as a means to meet learning needs of out-of-school children and adolescents," *Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics* (2014).

² Mutia Miftachul Janna, Sangkot Sirait, and Mahmud Arif, "Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam UU Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Kebijakan Sistem Pendidikan Nasional," *Kuttab* 9, no. 1 (2025): 228.

³ Rahayu Kojongian, *Pemenuhan Hak Pendidikan Anak Jalanan dalam Perspektif Kriminologi dan UU Perlindungan Anak*. (Pekalongan: Penerbit NEM, 2025), p. 10. See too, Sandy Kurnia Christmas, Anisyaputri Anisyaputri, and Jean Claude Geofrey Mahoro. "Enhancing access to justice for street children through a rights-based perspective on Sustainable Development Goals." *Journal of Judicial Review* 25, no. 2 (2023): 176; Sylvia Agu, "Enhancing Legal Protections for Children in Street Situations," *The International Legal Protection of Children in Street Situations* (2025): 377.

⁴ Wim Hoppers, *Non-Formal Education and Basic Education Reform: A Conceptual Review*, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) UNESCO. 7-9 rue Eugene-Delacroix, 75116 Paris, France, 2006.

⁵ Alan Rogers, *Non-formal education: Flexible schooling or participatory education?*, (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2005), p. 20.

demonstrates that non-formal education has a broad scope, particularly in adult education, and can serve as a policy instrument to expand educational access and support lifelong learning. This situation highlights the need for a paradigm shift: moving from viewing non-formal education merely as an alternative pathway to recognizing it as an integral component of fulfilling the public's right to education.

The issues extend beyond access alone. Recognition of the processes and outcomes of non-formal learning is also a crucial aspect of ensuring equal educational rights. Werquin⁶ explains that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a policy issue involving not only legal status but also the legitimacy of the knowledge and competencies acquired outside formal education channels. In line with this, Colardyn and Bjornavold⁷ emphasize the importance of validation mechanisms for formal, non-formal, and informal learning so that an individual's learning outcomes can be recognized within the broader education system. Without clear recognition mechanisms, individuals participating in non-formal education risk gaining learning experiences without securing the legal and academic standing equivalent to that of formal education participants.

In the Indonesian context, this issue is particularly relevant because, while non-formal education is part of the national education system, the implementation of related policies can still be examined from the perspective of rights fulfillment. Ida Kintamani⁸ demonstrates that equivalency education, a form of non-formal education, plays a role in providing opportunities for individuals to continue their education, including by recognizing the eligibility of graduates to advance to the next level of schooling. For vulnerable groups, the need for non-formal education is even more pressing. Research on street children indicates that education policies must be directed toward ensuring these groups can still exercise their right to education, including through non-formal education.⁹ Protecting the right to education for street children requires

⁶ Werquin Patrick, *Recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes, policies and practices: Outcomes, policies and practices*. Vol. 2009, no. 35. OECD publishing, 2010.

⁷ Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold, "Validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning: Policy and practices in EU member states," *European journal of education* 39, no. 1 (2004): 70. See too, Jens Bjornavold, *Making learning visible: Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe*, Bernan Associates, 4611-F Assembly Drive, Lanham, MD 20706-4391, 2000.

⁸ Ida Kintamani Dh, "Kinerja pendidikan kesetaraan sebagai salah satu jenis pendidikan nonformal," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* 18, no. 1 (2012): 67.

⁹ Syahrul Syahrul and Amika Wardana, "Analisis kebijakan pendidikan untuk anak jalanan di Kota Yogyakarta," *Harmoni Sosial: Jurnal Pendidikan IPS* 4, no. 2 (2017): 118. See too, Rila Hardiansyah, "Nonformal Education as a Strategic Approach to Reducing Educational Inequality: Expanding Learning Access Beyond Formal Schooling," *Injosedu: International Journal of Social and Education* 2, no. 11 (2026): 1390.

policies that facilitate access to educational activities, whether formal or non-formal.¹⁰

Beyond access and recognition, the effectiveness of non-formal education also depends on regulatory quality, adequate funding, educator protection, and a clear allocation of responsibilities between the government and education providers. Studies on non-formal education for children in conflict with the law by Fatmawati Gaffar et al.¹¹ indicate that budgetary constraints and limited policy support can hinder implementation. Furthermore, legal protection for educators and educational staff in the non-formal sector is crucial, as legal certainty and protection for providers are essential for the sustainability of the non-formal education system.¹² Thus, the issue of non-formal education encompasses legal dimensions that extend well beyond the mere delivery of educational programs. These developments highlight the need to re-examine the policy framework for non-formal education in Indonesia through the lens of the right to education. Previous studies have examined access to non-formal education and the protection of educational rights among vulnerable groups,¹³ as well as the role of non-formal education in promoting social inclusion through national policy frameworks.¹⁴ Meanwhile, UNESCO¹⁵ has provided guidelines for recognizing, validating, and accrediting learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning. However, these contributions address distinct dimensions of non-formal education, indicating the need for an integrated legal and policy framework that connects equitable access, recognition of learning outcomes, protection of vulnerable learners and educators, and the fulfillment of the public's right to education.

¹⁰ Syamsul Haling, Paisal Halim, Syamsiah Badruddin, and Hardianto Djanggih, "Perlindungan hak asasi anak jalanan dalam bidang pendidikan menurut hukum nasional dan konvensi internasional," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 48, no. 2 (2018): 362. See too, Dani Krisnawati and Ria Restu Wikansari, "Addressing the Challenges in Protecting Child Victims of Sexual Violence within Non-Formal Education Institutions," *Sriwijaya Law Review* 8, no. 2 (2024): 250; Ida Musofiana and Ahmed Kheir Osman, "Beyond the streets: Rethinking legal protection for exploited street children in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ius Constituendum* 10, no. 3 (2025): 473.

¹¹ Fatmawati Gaffar et al., "Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Nonformal Bagi Anak Berhadapan Hukum (Studi Kasus Pada Sentra Wirajaya Makassar)," *Journal of Lifelong Learning* 8, no. 2 (2025): 95.

¹² Hendra Nurtjahjo, "Proses Demokratisasi Di Indonesia Perlindungan Hukum Bagi Pendidik Dan Tenaga Kependidikan Pada Jalur Pendidikan Non-Formal (PTK PNF) Melalui LKBH," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 39, no. 4 (2026): 3.

¹³ Christian Felix Lumbanraja and Emmilia Rusdiana, "Legal Analysis of Access to Non-Formal Education for Street Children," *Journal of Insan Mulia Education* 3, no. 1 (2025): 18.

¹⁴ Anisa Khamidah, Fakhruddin Fakhruddin, and Amin Yusuf, "Nonformal education strategy for social inclusion: An analysis of national policies," *Jurnal Penelitian Kebijakan Pendidikan* 18, no. 2 (2025): 8.

¹⁵ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, *UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning*, (Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2012).

The urgency of this research lies in the need to ensure that the legal recognition of non-formal education is accompanied by an effective policy framework that guarantees the substantive fulfillment of the right to education. Without an integrated framework, disparities in educational access, limited recognition of learning outcomes, inadequate protection for vulnerable groups, and uncertainty regarding institutional responsibilities may persist. These challenges can undermine the effectiveness of non-formal education as a mechanism for inclusive and lifelong learning.

This study aims to develop a policy framework that positions non-formal education not as a secondary educational pathway, but as an integral part of the state's responsibility to guarantee the public's right to lifelong education. This research focuses on two questions: (1) how is the non-formal education policy framework structured to ensure the fulfillment of the public's right to education in Indonesia? and (2) what rights-based model for reconstructing non-formal education policy can strengthen access, recognition, and the sustainability of community education?

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a normative-juridical method utilizing policy, statute, and conceptual approaches. The normative-juridical method was selected because the research focuses on analyzing the legal framework and policies regarding non-formal education in relation to the fulfillment of the public's right to education. Primary legal materials include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, specifically Article 28C paragraph (1) and Article 31; Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, particularly Articles 4, 5, 11, 26, and 54–55; Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 concerning Education Management and Implementation; and Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards (as amended by Government Regulation Number 4 of 2022), specifically regarding the application of national education standards across formal, non-formal, and informal education pathways.

Secondary legal materials encompass journal articles, books, research findings, and academic publications addressing non-formal education, the recognition of non-formal learning, lifelong learning, and policies regarding the fulfillment of the right to education. Meanwhile, tertiary legal materials serve as supporting sources to clarify terminology and concepts relevant to the study. Legal materials were gathered through a literature review involving the examination of relevant legislation, policy documents, and academic literature. All legal materials are analyzed qualitatively and prescriptively through legal norm interpretation, regulatory gap analysis, and policy reconstruction.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Legal Framework and Policies on Non-Formal Education in Guaranteeing the Public's Right to Education

From a normative standpoint, Indonesia possesses a sufficiently robust legal foundation to position non-formal education as an integral component of fulfilling the right to education. This framework is rooted in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which establishes education as a constitutional right for citizens, specifically through Article 28C(1), regarding the right of every individual to self-development through the fulfillment of basic needs (including education), and Article 31, which affirms citizens' right to education and the state's obligation to administer the national education system. Consequently, non-formal education should not be viewed merely as an alternative program outside the school system, but rather as a state instrument for realizing the right to education in a broader sense.

This framework is translated into operational terms through Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Article 4 grounds the provision of education in principles of democracy, equity, and non-discrimination, while Article 5 affirms every citizen's right to quality education. Furthermore, Article 11 mandates that the central and regional governments provide services and facilities, as well as guarantee the provision of quality education for every citizen without discrimination. In the context of non-formal education, Article 26 is the most critical provision; it explicitly positions non-formal education as a service for community members requiring education that serves as a substitute for, supplement to, and/or complement of formal education, thereby supporting lifelong learning.

The formulation of Article 26 demonstrates that the lawmakers established a concept of non-formal education that is both inclusive and adaptive. Non-formal education is not directed solely at learners who have failed in or are unable to participate in formal education; it also targets members of the community who require life skills development, youth education, women's empowerment, literacy programs, vocational skills and training, equivalency education, and other forms of education aimed at developing learners' capabilities. In fact, non-formal education units encompass course and training institutions, study groups, Community Learning Activity Centers (*Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat* or PKBM), religious study groups (*majelis taklim*), and similar educational entities. This conceptualization aligns with the view of Yasunaga¹⁶ that non-formal education holds a strategic position in meeting the learning needs of children

¹⁶ Mari Yasunaga, "Non-formal education as a means to meet learning needs of out-of-school children and adolescents," *Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics* (2014).

and adolescents who are outside the formal schooling system.¹⁷ From a policy perspective, the existence of a legal framework, facilitators, monitoring mechanisms, and clear non-formal education policies are crucial factors in ensuring that these services do not remain merely temporary social programs. These findings are relevant to Indonesia, as the mere existence of a legal basis does not automatically guarantee equitable access to education.

From the perspective of lifelong learning, non-formal education also holds an increasingly important position. Kicherova and Trifonova¹⁸ demonstrate the close link between non-formal education and lifelong learning policies, while Mursalim and Tech¹⁹ emphasize the importance of interconnecting formal, non-formal, and informal education to build a lifelong learning system. This implies that Indonesia's legal framework possesses a conceptual foundation relatively well-aligned with modern educational paradigms; however, the relationships between these three pathways have not yet been fully established as an integrated system for the recognition of learning outcomes.

The most critical issue lies in the aspect of recognizing learning outcomes. Article 26, paragraph (6) of the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas) stipulates that non-formal education outcomes may be deemed equivalent to formal education outcomes following an equivalency assessment process conducted by government- or local government-appointed institutions, based on national education standards. This provision represents a pivotal element in ensuring learners' educational mobility. Nevertheless, the current framework still treats recognition as an equivalency process dependent on specific assessment mechanisms, thereby failing to fully establish a comprehensive national system for recognizing the diverse learning achievements of the community.

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning has long been a subject of academic discussion. Werquin²⁰ emphasizes that its implementation requires a well-defined legal and institutional framework. The recognition of non-formal learning is not merely a question of legal status but also one of

¹⁷ Muhammad Fajhriyadi Hastira et al., "Inclusive revolution: Children's right to participation and inclusivity in child-friendly schools in Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* 10, no. 2 (2025): 228. See too, Agus Hermanto, Gesit Yudha, and Siti Nurjanah. "The role of masalah mursalah in strengthening religious moderation: A contemporary approach to mitigating radicalism in state Islamic universities in Indonesia." *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 5, no. 1 (2026): 111.

¹⁸ M. N. Kicherova, and I. S. Trifonova, "Non-formal education: The review of current studies." *Образование и наука* 25, no. 2 (2023): 48.

¹⁹ M. Mursalim and M. Inf Tech, "Kebijakan dan Strategi: Membangun Interkoneksi antara Pendidikan Formal, Non-Formal, dan Informal dalam Konteks Pendidikan Sepanjang Hayat di Indonesia (Makalah)," *Kendari. Kendari* (2019).

²⁰ Werquin Patrick, *Recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes, policies and practices: Outcomes, policies and practices*. Vol. 2009, no. 35. OECD publishing, 2010.

legitimacy.²¹ Colardyn and Bjørnåvold²² demonstrate that validating formal, non-formal, and informal learning requires a clear division of roles between public authorities and social actors. Thus, while the inclusion of equivalency provisions in the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas) constitutes a crucial foundation, it is not synonymous with the establishment of a system for recognition, validation, and accreditation that is readily accessible to the public.

A subsequent issue concerns institutional perceptions. Hoppers²³ identifies a historical perception that positions non-formal education as inferior to formal education. Rogers²⁴ also highlights debates surrounding non-formal education as a form of education that is both flexible and participatory. In the Indonesian context, this issue is reflected in a policy tendency to measure education based on formal institutional structures rather than the system's capacity to meet the diverse learning needs of the community.

Regarding institutional regulation, the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 81 of 2013 concerning the Establishment of Non-Formal Education Units outlines regulations covering establishment, requirements, licensing, guidance, supervision, control, and even the closure of such units. This regulation recognizes non-formal education as an educational pathway distinct from formal education, one that can be implemented in a structured and tiered manner. Such regulations demonstrate the state's effort to provide institutional certainty for non-formal education providers.

However, this licensing and institutional approach has not yet fully addressed the issue of substantive access. The right to education encompasses not only the existence of institutions but also the ability of the community to access services that are available, of high quality, relevant, affordable, and sustainable. These findings align with research by Ullah et al.,²⁵ which positions non-formal education as a tool for expanding access for marginalized groups.

²¹ Ernesto Villalba-García, Ilona Murphy, and Manuel Souto-Otero, "The legal basis for the validation of non-formal and informal learning as a route to qualifications and labour market certificates," In *Employment, Training and Lifelong Learning*, pp. 37. Routledge, 2025. See too, Zurmi Afriani and Fepi Trimunir Haryanto, "E-Certificate Policy in Equivalency Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Its Impact on the Recognition of Non-Formal Graduates in Indonesia," *Journal Governance Bureaucratic Review* 3, no. 1 (2026): 65.

²² Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold, "Validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning: Policy and practices in EU member states," *European journal of education* 39, no. 1 (2004): 70.

²³ Wim Hoppers, *Non-Formal Education and Basic Education Reform: A Conceptual Review*. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) UNESCO. 7-9 rue Eugene-Delacroix, 75116 Paris, France, 2006.

²⁴ Alan Rogers, *Non-formal education: Flexible schooling or participatory education?*, (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2005), p. 22.

²⁵ Samee Ullah, Faheem Ul Hassan, and Taj Muhammad, "The role & strategies of non formal education for education access to marginalized community," *Review of Education, Administration and Law (REAL)* 4, no. 3 (2021): 567.

Weyer²⁶ also demonstrates a link between non-formal education and the learning needs of groups outside the mainstream education system, as well as socio-economic opportunities.

Regarding vulnerable groups, the issue of access is of increasing importance. Research by Haling et al.²⁷ highlights the necessity of legal protection for the educational rights of street children, encompassing both formal and non-formal educational activities. Studies by Syahrul and Wardana²⁸ further indicate that educational policies for street children must aim to fulfill their right to education while simultaneously providing social protection. Findings concerning children in conflict with the law reveal a similar pattern: non-formal education can serve as a means to fulfill the right to education when access to regular schooling is obstructed.²⁹

This perspective is particularly relevant within the framework of community-based education. Warin³⁰ links non-formal education to the participatory and inclusive development of a community's future, while Essomba et al.³¹ demonstrate the significance of local public policy in fostering non-formal and informal education. Research by Soedarwo et al.³² and Zikargae³³ also shows that non-formal education rooted in local potential can contribute to community empowerment. Thus, non-formal education encompasses dimensions far broader than mere remedial education; it can

²⁶ Frederique Weyer, "Non-formal education, out-of-school learning needs and employment opportunities: evidence from Mali," *Compare* 39, no. 2 (2009): 252.

²⁷ Syamsul Haling et al., "Perlindungan hak asasi anak jalanan dalam bidang pendidikan menurut hukum nasional dan konvensi internasional," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 48, no. 2 (2018): 362.

²⁸ Syahrul Syahrul, and Amika Wardana, "Analisis kebijakan pendidikan untuk anak jalanan di Kota Yogyakarta," *Harmoni Sosial: Jurnal Pendidikan IPS* 4, no. 2 (2017): 119.

²⁹ Fatmawati Gaffar et al., "Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Nonformal Bagi Anak Berhadapan Hukum (Studi Kasus Pada Sentra Wirajaya Makassar)," *Journal of Lifelong Learning* 8, no. 2 (2025): 97. See too, Fitri Dwi Nurjannah, and Levina Yustitiningtyas, "Pelaksanaan Hak Pendidikan Anak Di LPKA Ditinjau Dari UndangUndang Nomor 35 Tahun 2014 Tentang Perlindungan Anak," *Cakrawala Hukum: Majalah Ilmiah Fakultas Hukum Universitas Wijayakusuma* 22, no. 2 (2020): 120; Fernando Almeida and José Morais. "Non-formal education as a response to social problems in developing countries." *E-Learning and Digital Media* 22, no. 2 (2025): 125.

³⁰ Araya Kanchanapisek Warin, "Reconstructing Community Futures Through Non-Formal Education for Participatory and Inclusive Social Advancement," *Journal of Social Science Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 185.

³¹ Miquel Àngel Essomba et al., "Education for sustainable development in educating cities: Towards a transformative approach from informal and non-formal education," *Sustainability* 14, no. 7 (2022): 4005.

³² Vina Salviana Darvina Soedarwo, Nurul Zuriah, and Ratih Yuliati, "Pemberdayaan masyarakat melalui pendidikan nonformal berbasis potensi lokal dalam membangun desa wisata adat," *JSPH (Jurnal Sosiologi Pendidikan Humanis)* 2, no. 2 (2017): 98.

³³ Mekonnen Hailemariam Zikargae, Amanuel Gebru Woldearegay, and Terje Skjerdal. "Empowering rural society through non-formal environmental education: An empirical study of environment and forest development community projects in Ethiopia." *Heliyon* 8, no. 3 (2022).

serve as an instrument for empowerment, social participation, and community development.

Regarding quality standards, Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 marks a significant development, as it mandates the application of National Education Standards to education provided by the central government, local governments, and the community across formal, non-formal, and informal pathways. The regulation covers national education standards, curricula, learning outcome evaluations, education system evaluations, accreditation, and certification. Consequently, a regulatory basis exists to ensure that non-formal education is not excluded from the national quality assurance system.

However, research findings reveal a gap between this normative framework and actual policy orientation. Regulations recognize non-formal education as part of the national education system; however, implementation approaches remain fragmented across aspects such as access, institutional arrangements, quality, financing, the recognition of learning outcomes, and the protection of educators. These disparities are also evident in research by Nurtjahjo³⁴ which highlights the legal protection of educators and education personnel in the non-formal education sector, and by Aringga et al.³⁵ which reveals a gap in the legal recognition of non-formal early childhood education (*Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* or PAUD) educators.

Indonesia does not face a legal vacuum regarding non-formal education; rather, it grapples with issues of fragmentation and an inadequate policy framework for transforming normative recognition into a substantive guarantee of the right to education. While the UU Sisdiknas has established a solid foundation, particularly through Article 26, the system requires further strengthening through mechanisms such as the integrated recognition of learning outcomes, guaranteed access for vulnerable groups, the institutional strengthening of communities, proportionate quality standards, and protections for educators and providers of non-formal education.

2. Reconstructing Rights-Based Non-Formal Education Policy to Ensure Community Education

The central challenge in reconstructing non-formal education policy lies in transforming existing constructs into a policy framework that is more integrated, rights-oriented, and capable of addressing the diverse learning needs of the community. This reconstruction requires shifting the non-formal

³⁴ Hendra Nurtjahjo, "Proses Demokratisasi Di Indonesia Perlindungan Hukum Bagi Pendidik Dan Tenaga Kependidikan Pada Jalur Pendidikan Non-Formal (PTK PNF) Melalui LKBH," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 39, no. 4 (2026): 3.

³⁵ Rino Dedi Aringga et al., "Kesenjangan Pengakuan Hukum Pendidik Paud Nonformal di Indonesia: Analisis Hukum Empiris Terhadap Ketimpangan Profesional," *Jurnal Civic Hukum* 11, no. 1 (2026): 15.

education paradigm from a mere “supplement to formal education” to an instrument for fulfilling the right to lifelong learning.

Reconstructing non-formal education policy requires an integrated, rights-based framework that responds to diverse community learning needs. The fundamental shift is to position non-formal education not merely as a supplement to formal schooling, but as an instrument for fulfilling the right to lifelong learning. Articles 28C paragraph (1) and 31 of the 1945 Constitution should serve as the normative foundation for this approach, requiring the state to recognize underserved communities as rights-holders entitled to targeted policy interventions. This principle aligns with Yasunaga³⁶, Ullah et al.³⁷ and Haling et al.³⁸ who highlight the role of non-formal education in expanding access for groups outside mainstream education. Accordingly, Article 26 of the UU Sisdiknas should be interpreted progressively. Its recognition of non-formal education as a substitute for, addition to, and/or complement to formal education should support equivalence and complementarity rather than reinforce educational hierarchies. Learning outcomes should be recognized based on demonstrated competencies, not solely on the pathway through which learning occurs.

A rights-based framework also requires Indonesia to move beyond the limited recognition of non-formal learning toward a national system for recognizing, validating, and certifying learning acquired outside formal institutions. Research has consistently emphasized that such mechanisms give legitimacy to knowledge and competencies developed through non-formal and informal learning.³⁹ In Indonesia, Article 26, paragraph (6), could be developed beyond a narrow focus on equivalency education so that recognized learning achievements support further study, employment, professional development, and community economic capacity. However, the government needs to establish an easily accessible mechanism for the recognition of prior learning. This requires accessible prior-learning assessment pathways for learning gained through courses, training, PKBM, work experience, civil society

³⁶ Mari Yasunaga, “Non-formal education as a means to meet learning needs of out-of-school children and adolescents,” *Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics* (2014).

³⁷ Samee Ullah, Faheem Ul Hassan, and Taj Muhammad, “The role & strategies of non-formal education for education access to marginalized community,” *Review of Education, Administration and Law (REAL)* 4, no. 3 (2021): 565.

³⁸ Syamsul Haling et al., “Perlindungan hak asasi anak jalanan dalam bidang pendidikan menurut hukum nasional dan konvensi internasional,” *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 48, no. 2 (2018): 362.

³⁹ Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold, “Validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning: Policy and practices in EU member states.” *European journal of education* 39, no. 1 (2004): 70. See too, Werquin Patrick, *Recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes, policies and practices: Outcomes, policies and practices*. Vol. 2009, no. 35. OECD publishing, 2010; Madhu Singh, *Global perspectives on recognising non-formal and informal learning: Why recognition matters*, (Springer Nature, 2015), p. 10.

organizations, learning communities, and other non-formal settings. Clear responsibilities among government agencies, educational institutions, certification bodies, employers, and communities are essential to make validation credible and workable. With such arrangements, learners would not be required to repeat learning solely because it occurred outside formal institutions.

Regulatory reconstruction should balance legitimate oversight with the flexibility that enables community-based learning to respond to local needs. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 81 of 2013 provides a framework for establishing non-formal education units through requirements, licensing, guidance, and supervision. However, compliance should not become an unnecessary barrier for communities delivering legitimate and beneficial learning. Policy should distinguish proportionate requirements that protect safety and quality from administrative burdens that may constrain community innovation. The same principle should guide the application of Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 on National Education Standards, which includes non-formal education within standards concerning evaluation, accreditation, and certification. This does not mean lowering educational quality expectations. Rather, quality indicators should reflect the distinctive characteristics of non-formal education, including flexibility, contextual relevance, responsiveness to learners' needs, and community-based provision. A proportionate regulatory approach would preserve accountability while avoiding uniform procedures that fail to reflect differences between formal institutions and diverse non-formal learning settings.

The policy framework should also position Community Learning Centers (PKBM) and other community-based education units as strategic partners in fulfilling the right to education, rather than treating them merely as program implementers. The National Education System Law recognizes PKBM as a form of non-formal education unit, while research highlights the contribution of community-based education to empowerment and participation.⁴⁰ This role requires stronger coordination among local governments, PKBM, civil society organizations, businesses, and local communities. Such collaboration should be accompanied by targeted inclusion, since educational barriers differ across social groups and geographic settings. School dropouts, street children, people living in poverty or remote areas, working adults, and individuals in special circumstances may require different service designs and forms of support.

⁴⁰ Araya Kanchanapisek Warin, "Reconstructing Community Futures Through Non-Formal Education for Participatory and Inclusive Social Advancement," *Journal of Social Science Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 185.

Research by Dupuy et al.⁴¹ indicates that regulatory restrictions can create inequalities in educational access for vulnerable groups, while Haling et al.⁴² Syahrul and Wardana⁴³ and Nurjannah et al.⁴⁴ highlight the importance of educational interventions for children facing specific social and legal conditions.

The sustainability of community education depends not only on learners' access but also on the legal status, protection, and material support available to those who provide it. Non-formal educators and education personnel need clear legal protection because uncertainty about their status can weaken the capacity of providers to deliver consistent and effective services. Nurtjahjo⁴⁵ identifies such protection as an important element in fulfilling the right to education, while Aringga et al.⁴⁶ highlight disparities in the legal recognition of non-formal Early Childhood Education (*Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* or PAUD) educators. These concerns demonstrate that the quality of educational services is connected to professional certainty and protection. Financing must likewise be treated as part of the state's obligation rather than as an optional supplement to policy recognition. If non-formal education is formally acknowledged but receives inadequate resources, providers may struggle to reach communities facing the greatest barriers. Inkiriwang et al.⁴⁷ affirm the state's obligation to provide educational facilities for the community; accordingly, financing arrangements should reflect the needs and circumstances of non-formal education services.

Effective reconstruction also requires a balance between national guarantees and local responsiveness. Local governments should have sufficient scope to develop non-formal education policies that reflect the educational needs, social conditions, and resources of their communities.

⁴¹ Kendra Dupuy, Júlia Palik, and Gudrun Østby, "No right to read: National regulatory restrictions on refugee rights to formal education in low-and middle-income host countries," *International Journal of Educational Development* 88 (2022): 102537.

⁴² Syamsul Haling et al., "Perlindungan hak asasi anak jalanan dalam bidang pendidikan menurut hukum nasional dan konvensi internasional," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 48, no. 2 (2018): 362.

⁴³ Syahrul Syahrul and Amika Wardana, "Analisis kebijakan pendidikan untuk anak jalanan di Kota Yogyakarta," *Harmoni Sosial: Jurnal Pendidikan IPS* 4, no. 2 (2017): 119.

⁴⁴ Fitri Dwi Nurjannah and Levina Yustitiningtyas, "Pelaksanaan Hak Pendidikan Anak Di LPKA Ditinjau Dari UndangUndang Nomor 35 Tahun 2014 Tentang Perlindungan Anak," *Cakrawala Hukum: Majalah Ilmiah Fakultas Hukum Universitas Wijayakusuma* 22, no. 2 (2020): 120.

⁴⁵ Hendra Nurtjahjo, "Proses Demokratisasi Di Indonesia Perlindungan Hukum Bagi Pendidik Dan Tenaga Kependidikan Pada Jalur Pendidikan Non-Formal (PTK PNF) Melalui LKBH," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 39, no. 4 (2026): 3.

⁴⁶ Rino Dedi Aringga et al., "Kesenjangan Pengakuan Hukum Pendidik Paud Nonformal di Indonesia: Analisis Hukum Empiris Terhadap Ketimpangan Profesional," *Jurnal Civic Hukum* 11, no. 1 (2026): 15.

⁴⁷ Rizky Rinaldy Inkiriwang, Refly Singal, and Jefry V. Roeroe, "Kewajiban negara dalam penyediaan fasilitas pendidikan kepada masyarakat menurut undang-undang nomor 20 tahun 2003 tentang sistem pendidkan nasional," *Lex Privatum* 8, no. 2 (2020): 144.

Robo⁴⁸ highlights the importance of local legal policies in fulfilling the right to education, while Essomba et al.⁴⁹ identify local public policy as a significant factor in the development of non-formal and informal education. However, decentralization should operate within national rights protections and standards so that the level of protection does not depend on where a learner lives. Consistent with this approach, monitoring should assess whether policies actually fulfill educational rights rather than merely count institutions or participants. Indicators should include accessibility, continued participation, learning outcomes, recognition of achievements, transitions to further education or employment, and the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Yasunaga⁵⁰ similarly emphasizes the importance of strengthening the legal framework and monitoring mechanisms for non-formal education. These measures can help identify implementation gaps and direct policy responses toward substantive outcomes for learners and communities.

Finally, the reconstructed policy framework should preserve the flexibility and participatory character of non-formal education while connecting it more firmly to lifelong learning. Rogers⁵¹ notes that flexibility and participation are important dimensions of non-formal education and may not always be available to the same extent in formal settings. Excessively rigid standardization could therefore weaken the very features that allow community-based learning to respond to learners' circumstances. Regulation should establish minimum protections and quality requirements while allowing learning methods, schedules, locations, and approaches to adapt to community needs. This flexibility should extend across the life course rather than focus exclusively on children and adolescents. Kicherova and Trifonova⁵² position non-formal education as a crucial component of lifelong learning policy, while Mursalim and Tech⁵³ emphasize the interconnectedness of formal, non-formal, and informal education. Accordingly, policy should support adults seeking skills development, career transitions, entrepreneurship, literacy, and

⁴⁸ Basto Daeng Robo, "Kebijakan Hukum Daerah dalam Pemenuhan Hak Atas Pendidikan di Kota Ternate," *Alauddin Law Development Journal* (2021).

⁴⁹ Miquel Àngel Essomba et al., "Education for sustainable development in educating cities: Towards a transformative approach from informal and non-formal education," *Sustainability* 14, no. 7 (2022): 4005.

⁵⁰ Mari Yasunaga, "Non-formal education as a means to meet learning needs of out-of-school children and adolescents," *Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics* (2014).

⁵¹ Alan Rogers, *Non-formal education: Flexible schooling or participatory education?*. Boston, MA: Springer US, 2005.

⁵² M. N. Kicherova and I. S. Trifonova., "Non-formal education: The review of current studies," *Образование и наука* 25, no. 2 (2023): 48.

⁵³ M. Mursalim and M. Inf Tech, "Kebijakan dan Strategi: Membangun Interkoneksi antara Pendidikan Formal, Non-Formal, dan Informal dalam Konteks Pendidikan Sepanjang Hayat di Indonesia (Makalah)," *Kendari. Kendari* (2019).

social learning, ensuring that educational opportunities remain accessible as individual and community needs change.

Based on these findings, the reconstruction model proposed in this study is structured around six interconnected pillars. First, it guarantees rights-based access to non-formal education. Second, it establishes mechanisms for recognizing and validating learning outcomes. Third, it applies proportionate quality standards that reflect the characteristics of non-formal education. Fourth, it strengthens community-based educational institutions. Fifth, it ensures the protection of educators and provides adequate financial support. Sixth, it promotes integrated governance and monitoring involving the central government, local governments, and the community. Together, these six pillars position non-formal education not merely as an alternative pathway, but as a substantive component of the system for guaranteeing the right to education.

Consequently, the reconstruction of non-formal education policy must shift from program fragmentation toward a rights-based system, from an institutional focus toward a learning-outcome orientation, and from administrative equivalence toward the recognition of lifelong learning. This reconstruction maintains the framework of Law Number 20 of 2003 while strengthening its implementation through regulatory harmonization, the recognition of learning outcomes, the protection of vulnerable groups, the strengthening of PKBM and communities, and the establishment of more measurable financing and oversight mechanisms. Through this approach, the state does not simply provide a non-formal education pathway but truly transforms it into a constitutional instrument to ensure that every member of society gains access to quality, relevant, flexible, and sustainable learning opportunities.

D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that non-formal education holds a strategic position in ensuring the fulfillment of the public's right to education; however, the national policy framework still faces challenges regarding the fragmentation of norms, implementation disparities, and the suboptimal recognition of non-formal learning outcomes. From a normative standpoint, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, specifically Article 28C paragraph (1) and Article 31, establishes education as a constitutional right that the state is obligated to guarantee. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System also recognizes non-formal education as an integral part of the national education system under Article 26. Nevertheless, these provisions have not yet been fully translated into policies that guarantee

access, quality, and sustainability, nor do they ensure parity of status between non-formal education and other educational pathways.

Research findings also indicate that non-formal education should not be viewed merely as a complement to formal education, but rather as a mechanism for fulfilling the rights of individuals facing structural, geographic, economic, social, or situational barriers. Literature suggests that the flexibility of non-formal education enables services to reach out-of-school groups, marginalized communities, and lifelong learners. At the same time, the recognition and validation of non-formal learning outcomes are crucial for ensuring that the learning process carries tangible legal and social consequences.

Therefore, policy reform must strengthen the legal framework, harmonize regulations, standardize quality while preserving flexibility, recognize learning outcomes, and clarify authority and funding among governments and communities. Grounded in rights, inclusivity, accessibility, and lifelong learning, these measures should ensure non-formal education effectively realizes the public's right to education. Future research needs to empirically examine the implementation of non-formal education policies, specifically the effectiveness of regulations, the recognition of learning achievements, and the equitable access to education.

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