

Government Policy on Student Admissions in Relation to the New Student Enrollment System from the Perspective of Legal Utility

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Received:

June 11, 2025

Revised:

June 21, 2025

Accepted:

July 20, 2025

Published:

July 30, 2025

ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the policy shift in Indonesia's student admission system from the Zoning-Based New Student Admission System (PPDB) to the Residence-Based Student Admission System (SPMB), as regulated under Ministerial Regulation of Primary and Secondary Education No. 3 of 2025. This change emerged in response to various forms of malpractice, including falsification of domicile data, seat trading, illegal levies, and disparities in school quality across zones. From a legal perspective, the new policy is examined based on the principles of justice, legal certainty, and utilitarian usefulness particularly the principle of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." The study employs a normative juridical method with statutory and conceptual approaches, drawing from a literature review of relevant regulations and legal scholarship. The analysis reveals that the Student Admission System (SPMB) has adopted utilitarian principles—subsistence, abundance, security, and equity through the expansion of domicile, affirmative, and achievement admission quotas, as well as the integration of Dapodik (Education Data System) and Dukcapil (Civil Registry) to enhance transparency. However, the system still emphasizes administrative solutions, while structural challenges such as infrastructure inequality, teacher quality, and corrupt mentalities remain unresolved. In conclusion, the Student Admission System (SPMB) represents a transitional legal reform initiative that promises greater equity in access and accountability but has yet to address the root structural problems. It is recommended to strengthen legal sanctions against fraud, accelerate school infrastructure development, implement evidence-based evaluations with public participation, integrate ethical values into policymaking, and promote legal and social ethics literacy programs to reinforce the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Student Admission System (SPMB).

Keywords: *Student Admission System (SPMB); utilitarianism; legal usefulness; education; transitional legal reform*

INTRODUCTION

Education represents a fundamental pillar of human development, shaping both individuals and societies. Without education, individuals face limited opportunities for growth and risk social and economic marginalization. In essence, education is a continuous process through which humans cultivate their physical and spiritual

potentials according to the values and culture of their community. It can occur within formal (schools), informal (families), or non-formal (community-based) environments (Tilaar, 2012). Each educational stage—from primary to higher education—plays a vital role in developing knowledge, skills, and character, thereby enabling individuals to contribute productively to society (UNESCO, 2023).

Within Indonesia's education system, student admission policies have undergone several reforms aimed at enhancing fairness, inclusivity, and transparency. The Zoning-Based New Student Admission System (PPDB), first introduced in 2016 under Minister Muhadjir Effendy, sought to ensure equitable access to quality education by limiting student placement to designated zones. This policy was legally reinforced through Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 14 of 2018 and later updated by Regulation No. 1 of 2021. However, persistent issues—such as data manipulation, bribery, and unequal school quality between zones—undermined its credibility (Kemendikbud, 2021).

In response, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) introduced a new Residence-Based Student Admission System (SPMB) through Regulation No. 3 of 2025. This transition reflects the government's effort to address the administrative weaknesses of PPDB and promote a more transparent and accountable framework (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). The policy revision was based on a comprehensive review of admission data from 2017–2024, public consultations, and harmonization with inter-ministerial regulations.

The shift was driven by widespread irregularities in the zoning system. In 2023, for instance, the West Java Education Office recorded 4,791 suspected fraud cases, primarily involving falsified domicile data at the senior high school level. Of these, 1,635 students were disqualified in Bogor Regency alone (Disdik Jabar, 2023). Similar cases in 2024—such as the annulment of 63 applicants in Bandung for using fake family cards—further illustrated the system's vulnerability (CNN Indonesia, 2024). These cases reflect structural disparities in school quality and public distrust toward the zoning-based model.

By contrast, Japan's zoning system operates effectively due to its robust demographic data infrastructure and equitable distribution of educational quality nationwide (MEXT, 2020). The Japanese model demonstrates that equitable school quality and administrative reliability are essential for the success of geographically based admissions.

From a legal-philosophical perspective, the reform aligns with Gustav Radbruch's triadic values of law—justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), utility (*Zweckmäßigkeit*), and legal certainty (*Rechtssicherheit*) (Radbruch, 1932). It also embodies Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle, emphasizing that actions and policies should produce “the greatest happiness for the greatest number” (Bentham, 1789/1988). According to utilitarian theory, a policy's legitimacy depends on its capacity to maximize collective welfare while minimizing harm (Mill, 1863).

In this context, the SPMB system reflects a utilitarian approach to educational governance. By expanding domicile, achievement, and affirmative admission quotas,

integrating the Dapodik–Dukcapil data systems, and prioritizing transparency, the policy aims to optimize benefits for the majority while curbing opportunities for fraud and inequality. This approach fulfills Bentham’s dimensions of utility—subsistence, abundance, security, and equity—in ensuring that educational opportunities are distributed more evenly across regions (Bentham, 1789/1988; Rawls, 1971).

However, while SPMB represents a promising transitional legal reform, its focus remains predominantly administrative. Structural challenges—such as disparities in school infrastructure, uneven teacher quality, and corrupt practices—continue to impede the realization of full educational equity (World Bank, 2022). Consequently, sustained evaluation, legal enforcement, and public participation are necessary to ensure that SPMB not only advances transparency but also achieves substantive justice and equal access for all Indonesian learners.

The transformation of Indonesia’s student admission policy, known as the Student Admission System (SPMB), represents a crucial step in the ongoing reform of the national education system. This policy shift carries significant legal and social implications, particularly concerning the principles of justice, certainty, and legal usefulness (*kemanfaatan hukum*). In this context, examining SPMB through a juridical and utilitarian perspective is essential to assess whether it fulfills its intended purpose of ensuring fair and equitable access to education. This study aims to analyze the legal and practical aspects of SPMB, exploring its alignment with the utilitarian principle of maximizing public benefit. The findings are expected to shed light on potential legal challenges arising from its implementation and to provide a foundation for strengthening education policy toward greater effectiveness, equity, accountability, and societal welfare (Rahardjo, 2019; Friedman, 2020).

METHOD

This research employs a normative juridical method, focusing on the analysis of laws, regulations, and legal principles relevant to Indonesia’s Student Admission System (SPMB) policy. The normative juridical approach emphasizes the examination of legal norms as contained in statutory instruments and authoritative doctrines rather than empirical data. The study is descriptive-analytical in nature, aiming to systematically describe and interpret the legal provisions, principles, and policies that govern the SPMB system. It further evaluates the extent to which the policy aligns with the principles of legal usefulness and utilitarian justice within the national education framework.

Data in this research are derived primarily from secondary legal materials, collected through an extensive literature review. The data sources include primary legal materials, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, relevant laws and regulations—including Permendikdasmen No. 3 of 2025—and related ministerial decrees. Secondary legal materials consist of academic books, journal articles, and expert commentaries discussing education law, public policy, and utilitarian philosophy. Tertiary materials, including legal dictionaries and encyclopedias, are also utilized to clarify terminology and contextual understanding. The process of data collection follows

a documentary research method, which involves identifying, reading, and interpreting relevant legal and scholarly sources systematically.

In addressing the research problem, two primary approaches are employed. The Statute Approach is used to examine legal instruments that directly or indirectly relate to the SPMB policy and its implementation, while the Conceptual Approach explores legal theories and concepts concerning utility, justice, and legal certainty drawn from legal scholarship. Additionally, the study recognizes other complementary approaches common in normative legal research, including the Historical Approach, Case Approach, and Comparative Approach, which enrich the interpretative process and provide a broader perspective on the development of legal norms (Marzuki, 2017; Soekanto, 2019).

The collected data are analyzed using qualitative juridical analysis, which emphasizes logical reasoning, interpretation, and coherence between statutory provisions, legal doctrines, and utilitarian principles. This analytical process aims to produce a comprehensive legal understanding of the SPMB policy's effectiveness, fairness, and alignment with Indonesia's commitment to ensuring justice and public welfare in education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Government Policy on the Student Admission System (SPMB) in Indonesia

In an effort to improve the quality and accessibility of education, the Indonesian government has implemented a significant and comprehensive reform through the issuance of the Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 3 of 2025 concerning the Student Admission System (SPMB). This regulation serves as a guideline for the procedures and mechanisms of student admissions at various levels of education. Article 1 paragraph (1) of the Regulation defines the Student Admission System (SPMB) as “a comprehensive set of interrelated components within the student admission process designed to realize high-quality educational services for all.” Furthermore, Article 2 outlines the key objectives distinguishing the SPMB from the previous admission system, namely:

- a) to provide equitable opportunities for all students to access quality education near their place of residence;
- b) to enhance access and educational services for students from economically disadvantaged families and students with disabilities;
- c) to promote student achievement; and
- d) to optimize community participation in the admission process.

Geographic Justice in Education: Bringing Quality Closer to Every Home

To ensure fair opportunities for all students to access quality education near their residence, the SPMB introduces a fundamental shift from a zoning-based admission system (PPDB) to a domicile-based system. As defined in Article 1 paragraph (20) of Permendikdasmen No. 3 of 2025, the domicile route is “an admission pathway designated for prospective students residing within the area determined by the local

government.” While the two systems appear similar, the former zoning system emphasized uniformity by requiring all regions to follow centralized guidelines, making the zoning route the primary and largest quota in the previous PPDB framework. In contrast, the domicile-based system under SPMB emphasizes regional flexibility, granting greater autonomy to local governments to determine quotas and mechanisms based on regional characteristics.

This includes adjustments such as administrative zoning (rayonization) for remote areas and specific affirmation policies for marginalized communities. The system also introduces technological innovation through the integration of the Dapodik (Basic Education Data System) to ensure data transparency, performance tracking, and digital supervision. Moreover, by allowing greater flexibility in school selection compared to the rigid zoning model, the domicile-based pathway seeks to create a fairer and more adaptive process aligned with the diverse educational needs of different regions in Indonesia.

Strategies for Enhancing the Quality of Education

In pursuit of expanding access to education for students from low-income families and students with disabilities, while simultaneously encouraging academic excellence, the SPMB introduces a fairer and more balanced quota allocation system across admission routes. Article 30 of Permendikdasmen No. 3 of 2025 stipulates that local governments are responsible for determining the percentage of student admissions through various routes, namely the domicile route, affirmation route, achievement route, and transfer/mutation route. The proportional distribution of admission quotas for each route is summarized in the following table

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Student Admission Quotas by Educational Level under SPMB (2025)

Education Level	Domicile Route	Affirmation Route	Achievement Route	Transfer Route	Remarks
Elementary School (SD)	Minimum 70% (unchanged)	15% (unchanged)	Unchanged	Maximum 5% (unchanged)	Remains stable as access to primary education is relatively equitable.
Junior High School (SMP)	From 50% (PPDB) to 40% (SPMB)	From 15% (PPDB) to 20% (SPMB)	Minimum 25% (SPMB)	Maximum 5% (unchanged)	Shows significant change to promote fairer selection and equal opportunity.
Senior High School (SMA)	From 50% (PPDB) to 30% (SPMB)	From 15% (PPDB) to 30% (SPMB)	Minimum 30% (SPMB)	Maximum 5% (unchanged)	Demonstrates major adjustment, increasing opportunities for high-achieving students.

Note: The percentage of the achievement pathway is set at a minimum level because no fixed quota was previously established.

From the above data, it can be concluded that by providing larger quotas and more flexible requirements, marginalized groups—such as those from underdeveloped

regions, low-income families, and minority communities—now have greater opportunities to be admitted and obtain education in their desired schools. Thus, the affirmation pathway plays a crucial role in bridging educational inequality, ensuring equitable access, and creating a more inclusive and just education system. However, several aspects must be carefully monitored during implementation, as mismanagement could lead to discrimination, academic quality decline, and reduced graduate competitiveness. These factors are interrelated and risk creating a counterproductive cycle that undermines the original goals of the affirmation program.

Regarding student achievement enhancement, a key improvement can be seen in the shift from the previous system—where achievement-based admissions relied on leftover quotas—to the current policy, which clearly prioritizes and defines quotas across all education levels. Under the new rules, the achievement pathway in the Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru (SPMB) provides broader opportunities for students to be admitted not only based on their residence but also on their academic and non-academic merits. Article 20(2) of Permendikdasmen No. 3 of 2025 specifies two types of achievements: academic and/or non-academic. For non-academic achievements, SPMB accommodates students with leadership experience, such as active participation in student councils (OSIS) or Scouts. Consequently, this pathway encourages students to strive for excellence, fostering motivation and healthy competition in both academic and extracurricular domains.

Moreover, students with certified achievements from recognized competitions can be accepted regardless of domicile, enabling students from various regions to access high-quality schools without strict geographical limitations. The achievement pathway in SPMB not only benefits individuals but also contributes to overall educational quality improvement. Schools that admit high-achieving students tend to elevate academic standards, thereby enhancing the overall learning environment. Similarly, the affirmation pathway indirectly improves school quality by promoting socioeconomic diversity, motivating schools to strengthen facilities and support programs for underprivileged students. Therefore, schools must enhance infrastructure readiness and human resources (teachers and staff) to adapt to these new admission dynamics. This ensures that the system remains equitable and provides equal opportunities for all students, regardless of background.

Mechanisms and Channels of Public Involvement

To optimize community involvement in the student admission process, the SPMB policy introduces greater transparency by integrating the admission system with Dapodik (Education Data System) and Dukcapil (Civil Registration System). This integration enables the public to verify the authenticity of population data used during SPMB selection, ensuring that the system operates transparently and factually. This innovation aligns with Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, which guarantees the public's right to access and participate in education policy. Dapodik itself is a data management application operated by the Ministry of Education to collect and verify information about educational institutions, students, teachers, staff, resources, and

learning outcomes—updated in real time. Parents play a key role in ensuring the accuracy of their child’s data, including personal identification, residential distance to school, and socioeconomic status, as detailed in Articles 53 and 54 of Permendikdasmen No. 3 of 2025.

The modernization of Dapodik addresses chronic issues in previous systems, such as data inconsistencies, delays in reporting, fraudulent activities, and lack of institutional integration. Under the old *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB) system, many affirmation quotas went unfilled due to poor dissemination of information. In some prestigious schools, the quotas remained vacant, while in others they were oversubscribed. Additionally, some parents falsified residential data to gain admission to favored schools.

For instance, as reported by CNN Indonesia, then-Mayor of Bogor (now Deputy Minister of Home Affairs) Bima Arya received over 300 complaints concerning alleged fraud in the PPDB process for public junior and senior high schools. Verification revealed widespread fake addresses and family registration misuse (KK manipulation) to meet the zoning requirements. Similar issues occurred in Bandung, where forged family registration documents were discovered during the PPDB process. Field verification found 31 students with false addresses, violating Governor Regulation No. 9 of 2024. As a result, 63 applicants from SMA 3 and SMA 5 Bandung were disqualified.

With the digital enhancement of Dapodik, data management quality has significantly improved, and public participation has expanded. Parents, education observers, and other stakeholders can now monitor and verify education data in a transparent manner. Thus, Dapodik functions not only as an administrative instrument but also as a collaborative platform strengthening accountability and effectiveness in national education governance. Consequently, community involvement in Dapodik has made SPMB 2025 a more transparent, accountable, and equitable student admission system. Legally, the regulation provides a solid foundation for fairness in selection, while from an educational equity perspective, it ensures broader opportunities for students across diverse backgrounds.

Policy Evaluation and Recommendations

The *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB) system has long been criticized for falling short of Indonesia’s goal of educational equity due to ongoing irregularities, human resource limitations, and uneven school quality distribution. Indonesia’s education system could learn from Japan, whose zoning-based education model—developed over 30 years—has achieved excellence and uniformity through robust facilities and capable human resources. As former Minister of Education Muhadjir Effendy noted, Japan’s long-term zoning reform ensured sustainable educational quality and equality.

Hence, through collaborative efforts between the central and regional governments, schools, and communities, the *Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru* (SPMB) 2025 reinforces inclusivity and fairness in education. According to Utilitarianism theory, justice is achieved when a policy maximizes the greatest happiness for the greatest

number (Bentham & Mill, 1789). It is therefore the government's duty to ensure that every education policy, including SPMB, yields widespread public benefit. Continuous evaluation and adjustment are essential to guarantee accessibility, quality, and equity for all students. Thus, SPMB 2025 functions as a strategic policy instrument to promote educational equality and enhance the overall quality of Indonesia's education system.

Table 2. Application of Utilitarian Principles in the Student Admission System (SPMB)

Utilitarian Principle	Explanation	Implementation	Remarks
Subsistence (Providing the Means of Living)	SPMB must ensure that every child, regardless of economic background, has access to primary and secondary education.	- <i>Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP)</i> and <i>School Operational Assistance (BOS)</i> : Provide financial aid to underprivileged students to prevent dropout. - <i>Government-Private School Partnership</i> : When public schools are full, the government covers tuition for students enrolled in accredited private schools.	Reflects the utilitarian view that basic education is an essential need for maintaining a dignified life.
Abundance (Providing Plentiful Means of Living)	SPMB must expand opportunities for all students to access quality schools and enrich their learning experiences.	- <i>Quota Expansion</i> : The government increases admission quotas for high-achieving students and those from low-income families. - <i>Digitalization and National Registration Integration</i> : The online system enables students from remote and outermost regions (<i>3T areas</i>) to apply from anywhere.	By expanding access and improving quality, SPMB creates "abundance" in the form of opportunities and educational resources.
Security (Ensuring Protection)	SPMB must guarantee procedural fairness, transparency, and protection against discrimination or manipulation.	- <i>Locking of Education Data (Dapodik) Before Selection</i> : Dapodik is frozen one month before SPMB results to prevent falsification of domicile or socioeconomic data.	Bentham's principle of <i>security</i> is reflected in safeguarding children's rights to compete fairly and safely in the admission process.
Equity (Achieving Equality)	SPMB must correct educational disparities arising from geographic, economic, or social inequality.	- <i>Non-Discriminatory Domicile Priority</i> : Students from both remote and densely populated areas receive equal opportunity to attend nearby schools. - <i>Inclusion of Students with Disabilities</i> : The affirmation pathway accommodates students with disabilities through specialized facilities and assistance.	This policy aligns with Bentham's <i>equity</i> principle—justice is not merely formal equality but also correction of real, structural disparities.

The Application of Utilitarianism in the New Student Admission System (SPMB)

The application of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism in the Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru (SPMB) demonstrates its relevance as an ethical framework for assessing the usefulness and fairness of educational distribution. Each principle—Subsistence, Abundance, Security, and Equity—represents distinct human needs, and the SPMB

reflects a progressive effort to fulfill them. Utilitarianism promotes policies that are inclusive, transparent, efficient, and oriented toward collective happiness, providing a moral foundation for educational reform. Law, therefore, should serve as an instrument to achieve societal welfare and public good. In this sense, legal utility becomes a primary measure of a legal system's success, as usefulness (*kemanfaatan*) is the ultimate purpose of law. This theoretical approach highlights the importance of adapting law to social progress and ensuring that it actively creates justice, order, and welfare.

Based on Bentham's concept of utility, a good policy should generate the greatest happiness for the greatest number. The SPMB policy, as stipulated in Permendikdasmen No. 3 of 2025, aims to maximize social welfare by improving equitable access to education, particularly for communities with limited educational facilities. The transition from *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB) to SPMB can thus be regarded as more beneficial, as it enhances social justice, transparency, and the efficient use of educational resources. However, the SPMB currently functions as a short-term procedural solution, focusing on administrative improvement rather than addressing deeper structural disparities such as unequal school capacity, teacher quality, and infrastructure in remote areas.

While SPMB may reduce manipulative practices such as falsified residential data through data validation between Dapodik and Dukcapil, its long-term effectiveness depends on legal enforcement and public integrity. Weak legal enforcement may encourage *mentalitas koruptif* (corrupt mentality), as described by Koentjaraningrat (1985, pp. 37–45), including tendencies toward negligence, indiscipline, and shortcut-seeking behavior. These traits were evident in prior PPDB implementations through bribery, favoritism, and falsification of data. Without effective deterrents, such behavior risks undermining equitable student distribution and the core goal of equal access to education. Thus, while transparency and data integration strengthen the system, law enforcement remains the ultimate guarantor of justice.

In summary, the SPMB aligns with utilitarian principles in technical terms but has yet to fully satisfy public expectations for high-quality and geographically equitable education. Therefore, SPMB should be positioned as a transitional step toward systemic reform, not as the final solution for educational equity.

CONCLUSION

The policy transition from the *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB) zonation-based system to the *Sistem Penerimaan Murid Baru* (SPMB) domicile-based model, as stipulated in Permendikdasmen No. 3 of 2025, constitutes a significant legal reform in Indonesia's education sector. This reform aims to enhance transparency, equity, and accountability while addressing long-standing issues of fraud and unequal access in the previous system. From a theoretical standpoint, the SPMB integrates classical legal principles of justice, legal certainty, and utility (*kemanfaatan*), aligning closely with Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian philosophy. According to Bentham, a sound public policy must maximize the happiness and welfare of the greatest number. In this sense, the SPMB operationalizes the utilitarian framework through four key principles—

subsistence, abundance, security, and equity—which are reflected in initiatives such as the expansion of access for vulnerable groups, the increase of merit-based admission quotas, and the digital integration of Dapodik and Dukcapil systems to ensure transparent and accountable verification.

Despite these improvements, the SPMB remains a transitional reform, facing structural challenges that extend beyond administrative mechanisms. These include disparities in educational infrastructure and teacher distribution in 3T regions (*terdepan, terluar, tertinggal*), potential manipulation of domicile data due to weak legal enforcement, and unequal distribution of public schools between urban and border areas. Consequently, the SPMB should be regarded as a procedural advancement rather than a comprehensive solution, requiring continuous regulatory evaluation and systemic policy refinement. The policy embodies Bentham's principle of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," yet its long-term success depends on the government's consistency in realizing public benefit and ensuring that educational justice is both substantive and sustainable.

In strengthening the effectiveness of the SPMB, several aspects demand attention. The government must reinforce the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms to deter fraudulent practices, including data falsification and bribery, thereby enhancing public trust and policy legitimacy. Simultaneously, infrastructural development must be prioritized to expand the capacity of public schools, particularly in high-density and 3T areas, ensuring equitable access and quality education. Furthermore, the evaluation of the SPMB should adopt an evidence-based and participatory approach, involving academia, civil society, and independent oversight bodies to maintain adaptability to social dynamics. Ethical and human rights values should also be embedded within policy formulation to balance utilitarian objectives with distributive justice, ensuring fairness for marginalized groups. Lastly, fostering legal literacy and civic ethics through education programs and digital campaigns is essential for cultivating integrity and reducing manipulative behaviors among stakeholders.

Overall, the SPMB represents a progressive step toward a fairer and more transparent educational system in Indonesia. However, its success as a transitional legal reform depends on sustained governmental commitment, effective law enforcement, and active societal participation to transform procedural equality into substantive educational justice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Law and Digital Business, Universitas Kristen Maranatha, for the academic and institutional support that made this research possible. Appreciation is also extended to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) for providing access to relevant policy documents and regulatory references related to the Student Admission System (SPMB). The authors would like to thank the reviewers and editors of the *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature* for their valuable comments and suggestions that greatly improved the quality of this manuscript.

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