



Management of Equivalency Education in Reducing School Dropout Rates: The Roles of SKB and PKBM in Mataram City

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Abstract: School dropout remains a significant sociological and economic challenge to achieving educational equity in Indonesia, particularly amid the policy direction toward expanding 13 Years of Compulsory Education. This challenge is evident in Mataram City, where 1,364 children have never attended school, comprising 329 children aged 7–12 years, 333 aged 13–15 years, and 702 aged 15 years and above. In addition, approximately 856 children have dropped out of school, while 1,676 graduates have not continued their education. This study aims to analyze the management of community-based equivalency education organized by Learning Activity Centers (SKB) and Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM) as a strategy for mitigating school dropout. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation studies. The findings indicate that flexible and community-oriented management practices implemented by SKB and PKBM provide an alternative pathway for reconnecting out-of-school children with the education system. Outreach strategies, functional and contextual curricula, flexible learning arrangements, and the integration of vocational skills contribute to making equivalency education more accessible and relevant to learners' social and economic circumstances. Nevertheless, the implementation of these programs continues to face structural and social barriers, including limited operational budgets, unequal access to educational services, inadequate resources, and persistent negative stigma toward non-formal education. These findings demonstrate that dropout mitigation requires more than educational access; it demands responsive institutional management and sustained collaboration among educational providers, communities, and local governments. Strengthening regulations and partnership mechanisms between local governments and non-formal education institutions is therefore essential to optimize the contribution of SKB and PKBM toward achieving inclusive and equitable 13 Years of Compulsory Education.

Keywords: compulsory education; equivalency education management; school dropouts.

Introduction

The 13-Year Compulsory Education Policy is one of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's strategic agendas to expand access and ensure the continuity of education for all students. This policy aims to ensure that every child has the opportunity to complete their education at all levels within the national education system, from early childhood education (PAUD), elementary school (SD), junior high school (SMP), to senior high school (SMA) or equivalent. The implementation of education at each stage is not only oriented towards academic achievement but also directed towards the overall development of students. In the preschool phase, for example, education plays a crucial role in building readiness for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Furthermore,

at the elementary and secondary levels, the educational process is directed towards strengthening attitudes and values, expanding knowledge, and developing the basic skills students need for social life and further education (Jayanti et al., 2021).

In practice, achieving 13 Years of Compulsory Education faces a number of complex challenges. Formal education has not fully reached all community groups due to its relatively structured implementation, administrative requirements, learning schedules, and uniform educational standards. This condition, in certain situations, can become an obstacle for children who are in social, economic, and geographic environments that are less supportive of educational continuity. Family economic factors, limited geographic access, social conditions, family problems, and social environments can all contribute to children not continuing their education or even never attending school (Inui et al., 2025). Thus, the phenomenon of out-of-school children (ATS) cannot be understood solely as an individual problem, but also as a structural issue related to the ability of the education system to provide services that are adaptive to diverse societal conditions.

This issue becomes increasingly important as the government strengthens its commitment to implementing 13 Years of Compulsory Education. Addressing dropouts and children who have never received an education must be prioritized, as the existence of ATS indicates a persistent gap in the fulfillment of educational rights. The situation in Mataram City illustrates the complexity of this issue. Based on data from the Mataram City Education Office (2026), a mapping using the Mataram Terampil application, developed to identify out-of-school children by name and address, shows that many children remain outside the education system. The data recorded 1,364 children who have never attended school. By age group, there are 329 children aged 7–12, 333 children aged 13–15, and 702 children aged 15 and above. Furthermore, there are approximately 856 children who have dropped out of school, and approximately 1,676 children who have graduated from a certain level of education but did not continue their education to the next level (LTM) (Muttaqin et al., 2017).

These figures indicate that the issue of access to education has not been fully resolved, even in areas that are geographically and administratively the center of government, education, and economic activity in West Nusa Tenggara. Mataram City, as a regional growth center, should have relatively adequate resources to support equitable education. However, the continued presence of children who have never attended school, dropped out of school, or who do not continue their education indicates that the availability of educational facilities does not automatically guarantee that all children can enjoy sustainable educational services (Wirandana & Khoirunurrofik, 2024). Therefore, addressing ATS requires a strategy that focuses not only on building educational facilities but also on identifying target groups, collecting accurate data, implementing a social approach, and providing alternative educational services tailored to the needs of students.

In this context, strengthening policies to prevent and address out-of-school children is a crucial part of accelerating the implementation of 13-Year Compulsory Education. The government needs to ensure that every child outside the education system can be identified, verified, and their problems identified, and then directed to appropriate educational services. This approach also relates to efforts to meet minimum service standards in the education sector. Addressing out-of-school children requires a comprehensive, structured, integrated, and sustainable mechanism through coordination between the central government, local governments, educational units, non-formal educational institutions, families, and the community. Cooperation between stakeholders is crucial because the causes of out-of-school children are diverse and cannot all be resolved through formal school interventions. This policy aligns with the direction of Presidential Regulation (2026), which emphasizes the importance of accelerating the implementation of 13-Year Compulsory Education and addressing out-of-school children through coordination with various stakeholders (PERPRES, 2026), both through formal and non-formal education channels (Lewin, 2009).

When formal education fails to meet specific needs, non-formal education can serve as a safety net, providing a second chance for children and communities to access educational services. Within this framework, the Learning Activity Center (SKB) and the Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) play a strategic role. SKB is a non-formal educational institution within the government, while PKBM has developed as an institution established on the initiative and needs of the community. Both can be important instruments in expanding educational access for groups facing barriers to formal education. Through the Package A, Package B, and Package C Equivalency Education programs, students can receive educational services tailored to their circumstances and needs. These programs provide an

alternative for children who have dropped out of school, have never attended school, or those in communities seeking a more flexible educational pathway (Rogers, 2019).

Equivalency education not only serves as an alternative to formal education, but also serves as an important mechanism for reintegrating students who were previously outside the education system into the learning process. Second-chance education can provide opportunities for dropouts to catch up and regain access to education through more flexible channels. Flexibility in learning time, methods, and location allows educational services to be tailored to the circumstances and needs of students. This approach is particularly relevant for out-of-school children (OTS) who face various obstacles, such as family economic constraints, work demands, geographic distance, and social issues. Flexible educational programs also allow students to organize their study time without having to completely abandon work or family responsibilities. Thus, equivalency education can serve as a bridge to strengthen educational reintegration while enhancing learning sustainability. Through a student-centered approach, non-formal services can provide academic, social, and skills support relevant to daily life, giving out-of-school children a greater opportunity to return to learning and develop their capacities sustainably (Berghe et al., 2024). With this approach, equivalency education can be a means of reintegrating children into the educational ecosystem while providing them with skills they can use in their daily lives.

The success of these equivalency education programs is largely determined by the quality of governance of the institutions that administer them. SKB and PKBM are not sufficient to simply provide Package A, B, and C programs; they also need management capable of identifying student needs, developing relevant programs, building collaborative networks, and ensuring effective learning. Research by Haifa et al. (2025) shows that community-based equivalency education management plays a crucial role in reintegrating dropout students into the learning environment. Three learning principles emphasizing a thoughtful, purposeful, and enjoyable process have been integrated into the implementation of the Equivalency Education Package A, B, and C Programs. This approach demonstrates that equivalency education can be developed not merely as an administrative service to fulfill diploma requirements, but as an educational process that considers the experiences, needs, and development of students (Haifa et al., 2025).

Strengthening governance is also increasingly important because the issue of ATS is closely related to the institutional sustainability of SKB and PKBM. Non-formal educational institutions require leadership capable of implementing change, adequate institutional capacity, and the ability to build collaboration with various parties. In the context of addressing ATS, collaboration cannot be limited to educational institutions and the government. Families, village or sub-district governments, sub-district governments, community organizations, the business world, and various social groups need to be involved in the process of identifying, preventing, and reintegrating children into education. This collaborative model can strengthen institutions' ability to understand the root causes of ATS while providing interventions more tailored to each child's individual characteristics (Novrita et al., 2025).

Lutfiansyah et al. (2026) emphasized that the success of educational institutions in addressing ATS issues is related to several interconnected governance dimensions. These dimensions include transformational leadership, institutional capacity building, multi-stakeholder collaboration, network governance, accountability and transparency systems, synchronization between education department policies and regulations, and the implementation of digital governance and technological transformation. This means that the success of SKB and PKBM in addressing ATS is determined not only by the existence of equivalency education programs, but also by the institution's ability to manage all its resources and networks in an integrated manner (Dadang et al., 2026).

The use of digital technology is becoming an increasingly important aspect in strengthening governance in the management of ATS. The experience of the Mataram City Education Office through the Mataram Terampil application demonstrates that technology can be used to improve the data collection and mapping process for children outside the education system. By-name and address data collection allows the government to obtain more specific information about the child's identity and condition, enabling interventions to go beyond aggregate data. Verified and validated data can serve as a basis for local governments, SKB (School of Education), PKBM (Center for Community Empowerment), and other stakeholders in determining appropriate educational services (Huntington et al., 2023).

Thus, achieving 13 Years of Compulsory Education cannot be achieved simply by expanding formal education capacity. This policy requires an education ecosystem capable of sustainably

connecting formal and non-formal channels. SKB and PKBM can play a role as a bridge for children who experience barriers to accessing educational services through equivalency programs. Meanwhile, digital systems such as Mataran Terampil can strengthen the process of identifying and mapping targets (Sucipto et al., 2021). If accurate data collection, good institutional governance, transformational leadership, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and flexible equivalency education can be integrated, ATS management can be carried out in a more targeted manner. Ultimately, synergy between the government, educational institutions, communities, families, and technology is a crucial foundation in ensuring that the 13 Years of Compulsory Education policy is not merely an administrative target but is truly realized as a guarantee of inclusive and sustainable educational opportunities for all children

Method

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain a deep understanding of the implementation of equivalency education for children outside the formal education system. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the processes, experiences, and practices of managing educational programs within a real-life social context. Case studies allow researchers to comprehensively examine phenomena by considering the characteristics of the institutions, students, and the community environment that are part of the program implementation. Data analysis refers to the qualitative analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman, which is then strengthened by the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The analysis process is carried out through three main interrelated stages: data condensation or reduction, data presentation (data display), and drawing and verifying conclusions. In the data condensation stage, researchers select, focus, simplify, and organize the information obtained during the research process (Miles et al., 2019). Data relevant to the research focus are then grouped according to specific themes and categories. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of narrative descriptions, matrices, or thematic groupings to systematically understand the relationships between findings. The final stage is carried out by drawing conclusions that are continuously verified based on field evidence so that the research results have an adequate level of credibility.

The research location was directed at a pilot program organized by the Learning Activity Center (SKB) and the Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM), which actively implement equivalency education programs for school-age students and students who have graduated from school. The selection of these locations was based on the consideration that SKB and PKBM have a crucial role in providing educational alternatives for people who cannot continue their formal education. Research informants were determined using a purposive sampling technique, namely selecting informants based on the consideration that they have knowledge and experience relevant to the research focus. Informants included leaders or heads of institutions, teachers or tutors of equivalency programs, and students who have dropped out of school (Creswell, 2016). The involvement of various groups of informants allowed researchers to gain diverse perspectives on program management, the learning process, and students' experiences in participating in equivalency education.

Data collection in this study was conducted through technical triangulation utilizing in-depth interviews, passive participant observation, and documentation studies. The use of these techniques aimed to obtain more comprehensive information while increasing the credibility of the research findings. Triangulation allowed researchers to compare and verify the consistency of information obtained from various sources and methods, ensuring that data were not solely dependent on a single data collection technique. In-depth interviews were used to explore the experiences, perspectives, understandings, and program management strategies of the informants involved. Meanwhile, passive participant observation was conducted by directly observing the learning process and institutional activities without being involved in the activities observed. This technique allowed researchers to gain insight into the practices that occur naturally. Furthermore, documentation studies were used to supplement the information through program documents, activity reports, student data, and various relevant institutional archives. The three techniques were then compared to identify any correspondences or discrepancies in the information as a basis for research interpretation. This approach is expected to produce more comprehensive, in-depth, and academically accountable data (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2019). The documentation included graduation data, student profiles, and

relevant institutional documents. The use of several techniques aims to compare information from various sources so as to increase the validity and depth of research findings.

Results and Discussion

Data on Out-of-School Children (ATS) does not always reflect the actual number of people who have not received any education at all. In the context of education data collection, ATS can also reflect discrepancies or inconsistencies between actual conditions in the field and data recorded in the Basic Education Data System (Dapodik). This discrepancy is a significant issue because education data is used as a basis for planning, evaluating, and establishing regional government policies. If ATS data is not updated or verified accurately, this condition can affect the picture of educational development achievements in a region. The existence of relatively high ATS data can also pose a challenge for regional governments in formulating targeted education policies. This data can provide an indication of ongoing problems in fulfilling access and sustainability of education, and is also an indicator that needs to be considered in assessing the state of human development in the region (Smith, 2025). Therefore, the process of data verification and validation is crucial to ensure that policies are truly based on actual community conditions.

In the context of West Nusa Tenggara Province, Mataram City is one of the regions facing the problem of Out-of-School Children (OTCs) and requires special attention in educational equity policies. This situation is crucial because Mataram holds a strategic position as the center of government, education, trade, and economic activity in West Nusa Tenggara Province. The relatively high number of out-of-school children (OTCs) indicates that access to education is not yet fully accessible to all community groups. This problem is not only related to the availability of educational institutions but can also be influenced by family economic conditions, population mobility, social environment, job demands, and student continuity in the educational process.

Regional governments need to strengthen the ATS data collection and information updating system so that every child outside the education system can be accurately identified. Coordination between the Education Office, educational units, sub-district and village governments, SKB, PKBM, families, and the community also needs to be developed on an ongoing basis. Accurate data can serve as the basis for determining the form of intervention according to the characteristics and needs of each child. These strategies can include equivalency education, mentoring, educational assistance, skills strengthening, and flexible learning services. With an integrated approach, the government not only seeks to reduce the ATS rate but also ensures that identified children have the opportunity to return to learning and complete their education sustainably (Witte & Rogge, 2013). Data from the Dapodik (District Education Office) shows that the number of children not attending school in the three categories of Drop Out (DO), Graduate, Not Continuing (LTM), and Never Studied (BPB) is very high, as seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Data on Children Not in School (ATS) Based on Education Level Categories of Drop Out (DO), Graduated Not Continuing (LTM) and Never Attended School (BPB) in Mataram City 2026

No.	Subdistrict	1-6 DO	7-9 DO	10-12 DO	Jmh DO	SMP LTM	SMA LTM	Jmh LTM	Jumh BPB	Ket.
1	Ampenan	34	60	124	218	47	140	187	266	Tinggi
2	Cakra	26	84	47	157	32	68	110	204	
3	Mataram	24	31	61	116	36	90	126	192	
4	Sandubaya	31	64	78	173	31	116	147	160	
5	Sekarbela	23	44	51	118	32	73	105	205	
6	Selaparang	25	33	70	128	17	64	91	152	
	Total	163	316	431	910	195	551	766	1.179	

Source: Pusdatin Kemendikdasmen (modified by researchers) 2026

Based on Table 1, Ampenan District shows the highest number of out-of-school children (ATS) compared to other areas, with three main categories. dropout(DO) recorded 218 children, the category of Graduated Not Continued (LTM) was 187 children, while the category of Never Attended

School (BPB) reached 266 children. These figures require a thorough verification and validation process to ensure they correspond to the actual conditions on the ground. Differences between administrative data and real conditions can be caused by various factors, including the existence of duplicate data, changes in educational status, changes in domicile, or delays in data updates. Therefore, updating data is a crucial step before the government determines the form of intervention for each ATS group.

For the DO and LTM categories, local governments, through the Education Office, can strengthen mitigation strategies by optimizing the role of Regional Technical Implementation Units (UPTD), particularly the Learning Activity Centers (SKB), and involving Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM) as providers of community-based non-formal education. Through the Equivalency Education Program, students can receive more flexible learning services tailored to their circumstances and needs. This flexibility allows students to pursue education without being overly restricted by school age, occupation, or specific social conditions. However, the program's success still requires motivation, responsibility, and the ability to manage their learning process independently. Students who are able to implement self-regulation strategies, both in terms of behavior, development, and motivation, tend to have better engagement and learning outcomes. Therefore, optimizing SKB and PKBM requires mentoring so that educational flexibility truly supports the reintegration of ATS into the learning process (ElSayad, 2024).

Table 2: Data on Children Not in School (ATS) based on
Category Never Attended School (BPB) Drop Out (DO) Not Continuing (LTM)
in Mataram City 2026

No.	Subdistrict	BPB	DO	LTM	Total ATS	Information
1	Ampenan	266	218	187	671	Highest ATS
2	Cakranegara	204	157	110	471	
3	Mataram	192	116	126	434	
4	Sandubaya	160	173	147	428	
5	Sekarbela	205	118	105	480	
6	Selaparang	152	128	91	371	Lowest ATS
	Total	1.179	910	766	2.855	Information

Source: Pusdatin Kemendikdasmen (modified by researchers) 2026

Based on table 2 above, it shows that the data of Children Not in School (ATS) in Ampenan District is high at 671 compared to the other five districts, while in Selaparang District, the ATS data is less at 371. Overall, the ATS data in the six districts of Mataram City averages 475 ATS data, this is a concern for the city government in reducing the ATS data. In terms of the Education Office which is responsible for reducing the dropout rate (DO), students who do not continue to a higher level, as well as verifying and validating (verval) the data of students who have never attended school (BPB) because the data is complex data which is a problem at the central level, especially the basic Education data (Dapodik) which is not yet synchronized.

In addition to the various issues outlined above, the number of students who have never attended school, dropped out, or graduated but did not continue their education remains quite high. The phenomenon of school dropout and student absence from school cannot be separated from the complexity of life issues faced by children and their families. The socioeconomic conditions of the family, the residential environment, and parental support can influence the continuation of a child's education. The first hypothesis in this study is supported by the finding that children from households with better economic and environmental conditions have a greater opportunity to maintain their schooling. Children who are able to persist in education also show a positive relationship with more prosperous household conditions, relatively better fathers' jobs, and higher parental education levels. Thus, a child's decision and ability to remain in school are influenced not only by the student's internal factors but also by the family's economic, social, and educational capital. This situation emphasizes the importance of educational interventions that take into account the student's family background and social environment (Huisman & Smits, 2015).

Various factors can cause children to drop out (DO) or permanently stop attending school. This condition does not arise from a single cause, but rather results from the interaction of various interrelated factors, such as family economic conditions, low parental support, work demands, distance and access to school, social problems, low motivation to learn, and negative experiences during education. Therefore, understanding the risk factors for absenteeism and dropping out is a crucial aspect in designing effective prevention policies. Identifying children at high risk allows the government and educational institutions to intervene early before absenteeism develops into permanent dropout. This approach also requires the involvement of families, schools, communities, and the government to comprehensively address underlying causes. Therefore, prevention strategies are not only oriented towards returning children to school but also ensuring the continuity of education after the child returns. These efforts can be carried out through academic mentoring, social support, economic assistance, flexibility in educational services, and strengthening communication between schools and families. A risk-based approach is expected to reduce the dropout rate while expanding children's opportunities to complete their education (Gubbels et al., 2019).

An alternative solution to addressing out-of-school children (ATS) can be directed at optimizing the role of Learning Activity Centers (SKB) and Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM) as non-formal educational institutions capable of providing flexible educational services tailored to student needs. This optimization needs to be supported by strengthening institutional capacity, improving the quality of equivalency education programs, and developing a sustainable ATS data collection and monitoring system. The central and regional governments have a strategic role in providing adequate resource support, including learning facilities and infrastructure, operational funding, and human resources, particularly competent teaching and education personnel. Furthermore, the government needs to strengthen training and professional development for SKB and PKBM managers and tutors to enable them to handle students with diverse backgrounds and needs. Collaboration with families, village or sub-district governments, community organizations, businesses, and communities also needs to be strengthened to support the process of identifying, outreaching, mentoring, and reintegrating ATS. With this support, SKB and PKBM can become strategic instruments in expanding access to education, preventing dropouts, and ensuring the continuity of education for vulnerable groups.

Table 3: Data on Children Not in School (ATS) based on problems in Mataram City 2026

No.	Subdistrict	Economic Difficulties	Have Work	Don't want to School of Thought	Bully/ Environmental Influence	Early Marriage	Health/ Loss of Motivation	Other Notes
1	Ampenan	40%	50%	0	0	10%	0	
2	Cakranegara	20%	45%	35%	0		0	
3	Mataram	60%	0	0	15%	0	20%	
4	Sandubaya	20%	45%	35%	0	0	0	
5	Sekarbela	40%	50%	0	0	10%	0	
6	Selaparang	65%	0	0	15%	0	20%	
	Total							

Source: Mataram Skilled Application 2026

Based on table 3 above, the cause of the large number of ATS in the six sub-districts is economic difficulties so that students have the potential to help earn a living for their parents, while in Ampenan Sub-district, 50% of children are already working, 10% of the cause is early marriage. Overall, in the six sub-districts where children are not in school, the cause is that they are already working to help earn a living for their parents, supported by the condition of the area as a fishing center, as can be seen in table 4 below:

Table 4: Conditions of District Areas in Mataram City

No.	Subdistrict	Regional Conditions	Information
1	Ampenan	Old city center near the beach, fishing center	
2	Cakranegara	Trade center, cultural tourism, densely populated	
3	Mataram	Administrative area of city planning center of government	
4	Sandubaya	Distribution center of goods and main market of economic wheel	
5	Sekarbela	Handicraft and coastal center, pottery and gemstone artisan area	
6	Selaparang	Place of cultural activities, dense settlement	

Source: Mataram Skilled Application 2026

Based on Table 4 above, in the six districts of Mataram City, the areas with the greatest potential for children not attending school are the central business district, trade center, handicraft center, coastal area, and fishing center. Furthermore, Mataram City is the provincial capital and the government capital, meaning many children are likely to have the potential to work. The government has attempted to address this issue by creating a database application called the Mataram Trampil application.

Based on data from the Mataram Terampil application, the number of out-of-school children (ATS) categorized as having never attended school (BPB), dropping out (DO), and graduating but not continuing (LTM) reached 3,896 in 2026. However, this data still requires a verification and validation process (Verval) to ensure its conformity with the actual conditions on the ground. This process is crucial because there is a potential discrepancy between administrative data and the actual conditions of children and their families. To address this issue, the local government implemented a collaborative strategy by establishing community-based teams in each sub-district. This strategy is aimed at strengthening the data collection, mapping, and handling of ATS by more closely aligning with the community environment. Furthermore, the government is optimizing the role of the Learning Activity Center (SKB) and collaborating with the Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) as non-formal education providers. This collaboration not only serves to expand access to education but also encourages the creation of a reflective and participatory learning environment. Through this process, increasing tutor capacity is expected to produce interrelated changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs in implementing learning (Hudson, 2024). Learning in SKB and PKBM focuses on increasing educational participation rates, reducing school dropout rates and supporting the implementation of 13 years of compulsory education.

Strategic Planning and Mapping Management (Outreach)

The Education Office needs to systematically map areas with the potential for an increase in out-of-school children (ATS). This mapping is crucial as a basis for determining intervention priorities, identifying vulnerable groups, and developing prevention and management strategies tailored to the characteristics of each region. Research shows that the success of program implementation at the Learning Activity Center (SKB) and Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) is strongly influenced by proactive management and non-passive planning. This means that institutions need to actively assess changing community conditions, anticipate the potential emergence of ATS, and develop programs based on student needs. Institutional development strategies also need to consider several important elements, particularly communication and transparency in program management. Furthermore, a balance between institutional tradition and innovation is necessary to ensure educational services remain relevant to community developments. School or educational institution development is also a long-term process that requires consistency and ongoing evaluation. In this context, the existence of a shared vision is crucial for establishing a common direction among administrators, tutors, students, the community, and stakeholders in the daily implementation of education (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024).

The results of the ATS mapping can then be disseminated and followed up at the village level, particularly in areas with a relatively high number of out-of-school children. A village-based approach allows the government and community to more closely identify and address the conditions of children and their families. Its implementation can be strengthened through

collaboration with non-formal educational institutions, particularly Community Learning Activity Centers (PKBM), which play a role in providing equivalency education services. The success of the learning process is greatly influenced by the readiness of tutors in designing and implementing learning activities. Diana emphasized that teacher readiness, student involvement, and the use of the environment as a learning resource are factors contributing to successful learning. However, the implementation of learning still faces several obstacles, such as differences in student abilities and skills, limited critical thinking skills in some students, a tendency to be passive or shy when expressing opinions, and limited learning time. These conditions require attention in the development of adaptive learning strategies (Diana, 2026).

This demonstrates that educational institutions need to continually adapt to the various changes occurring in society. Social developments, technological advances, and changing environmental conditions influence students' needs, characteristics, and learning experiences. Therefore, schools cannot simply maintain conventional learning patterns but need to continuously evaluate and innovate to ensure educational services remain relevant. The use of technology can support a more flexible and interactive learning process, while an understanding of social change helps schools respond to the dynamics of students' lives. Furthermore, environmental issues also need to be integrated into education to foster students' awareness and ability to face future challenges. Therefore, schools' ability to read and respond to social, technological, and environmental changes is crucial to improving the quality and meaningfulness of education for students (Huijboom et al., 2023). These institutions do not wait for students to enroll, but instead take a community-based approach:

1. Outreach Pattern (Pick Up the Ball)

The outreach pattern—or proactive engagement strategy—is an active approach designed to locate and reach school-age children who are outside the formal education system. This strategy is crucial because not all children who have dropped out of school can independently visit educational institutions to seek information about equivalency programs. Consequently, the Education Office can collaborate with village and sub-district officials, local community leaders (RT/RW), community volunteers, and Community Learning Center (PKBM) administrators to conduct direct field sweeps and update data on out-of-school children. This process involves cross-referencing administrative records with actual conditions on the ground, identifying the reasons why children are not attending school, and mapping out appropriate educational needs. This approach also enables the government to identify children who have never attended school, those who have dropped out, and those who graduated but did not continue their education. Thus, outreach serves not merely as a data collection activity, but as an initial step toward building relationships among the government, families, the community, and non-formal education institutions.

2. Persuasive Approach

A persuasive approach is essential once the child and their family have been identified. Not all families view formal education positively; some parents may have had unpleasant experiences—such as financial struggles regarding education costs, a child's academic failure, conflicts with the school environment, or trauma stemming from past educational setbacks. Such circumstances can foster antipathy or skepticism toward schooling. Consequently, the government, in collaboration with Community Learning Centers (PKBM), needs to engage in counseling and persuasive communication with parents, highlighting that equivalency education offers a more flexible alternative. Parents require an understanding of the benefits associated with the Paket A, B, and C programs, as well as the opportunities for further education or skill development following program completion. A non-judgmental approach that respects the family's experiences will help rebuild trust in education. Thus, a persuasive strategy can serve as a bridge to transform skepticism into a willingness to ensure the child once again gains access to educational services.

Flexible Implementation of Functional Curriculum

Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System serves as one of the main foundations for the implementation of education in Indonesia. This regulation provides direction for the development of the national education system to ensure equal access to education, improve the

quality of educational services, and develop the potential of students comprehensively. In its implementation, education policy is also supported by various provisions regarding the curriculum that serve as guidelines for the implementation of the learning process in educational units. One of these is the Decree of the Minister of National Education Number 045/U/2002 concerning the Core Curriculum for Higher Education. These various policies demonstrate the government's efforts to adapt the implementation of education to the dynamics and needs of societal development. Education regulations serve not only as an administrative basis but also as an instrument to direct the improvement of human resource quality. In line with the development of national education, changes in policy and curriculum are necessary to ensure that the learning process remains relevant to social change, developments in science and technology, and the needs of students. Thus, the existence of curriculum regulations and policies provides a foundation for strengthening the Indonesian education system while encouraging the creation of more adaptive, quality, and sustainable education (Mustari et al., 2024). In contrast to formal schools, the curriculum management function in SKB and PKBM prioritizes flexibility of time and methods:

1. Learning Modification

The learning process can be designed using an andragogical approach that places students' experiences and needs as a crucial part of the educational process. This approach is relevant for students who have dropped out of school, some of whom are employed or have independent financial responsibilities. Therefore, learning schedules need to be made flexible through modular and blended learning systems so that students can continue their education without having to leave their jobs. In addition to time flexibility, learning also needs to be linked to students' real-life experiences and conditions. The application of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) can help create relevant, participatory, and inclusive learning, especially in classes with diverse student backgrounds. Thus, the combination of andragogical, blended learning, and CTL approaches can support the continuity of education for students with special needs (Ali et al., 2024).

Modified learning that is more flexible and contextual can provide a learning experience that is more tailored to students' needs. Modifications in teaching are not only related to changes in methods or materials, but also include adjustments to strategies, time, media, and the learning environment. This approach allows students the opportunity to understand the material based on their conditions and experiences. The implementation of flexible learning can also have a positive influence on the development of students' skills, both in academic and practical aspects. In addition to increasing learning effectiveness, a contextual approach helps students connect knowledge with real-life situations. Thus, teaching modification is an important strategy for creating an educational process that is adaptive, relevant, and effective, and able to respond to the diversity of needs and characteristics of students (Sumardi et al., 2026) so that students have knowledge and skills.

2. Vocational Integration

To increase the appeal and value of equivalency education, the curriculum needs to be integrated with skills training tailored to the potential and needs of the local community. This integration could include automotive skills, digital marketing, culinary arts, handicrafts, information technology, or entrepreneurship. This approach offers dual benefits, as students not only gain academic knowledge but also develop skills applicable to everyday life and the workplace. These skills can directly incentivize students to continue their education and increase their motivation to learn. For children who have dropped out of school, the link between learning and economic needs can be a crucial factor in maintaining educational continuity.

In addition to students, improving the capacity of teachers and tutors also requires attention. Educators need to continuously develop professional skills to adapt learning methods to changing student needs, technological developments, and the demands of the workplace. As stated (Dinh & Thi, 2023), educators need to be aware of continuously developing learning methods and improving professional competencies to ensure an effective educational process. In the context of SKB and PKBM, strengthening tutor competencies can be directed at integrating academic material with practical and life skills. Thus, equivalency education is not only oriented towards achieving a diploma but also equips students with life skills, independence, adaptability, and readiness to enter the workforce or develop independent businesses.

Learning communities play a crucial role in impacting not only individual students but also the social environment in which they operate. The existence of a learning community creates an interactive space that allows students to share knowledge, experiences, and skills. This process can strengthen learning motivation, self-confidence, communication skills, and teamwork skills. At the same time, the relationships formed within the community can expand social networks and foster a sense of mutual support among students. The impact of a learning community can also extend to the community level. The knowledge and skills acquired by students can be applied in family life, the workplace, and social activities. Thus, the learning process does not stop at academic achievement but can also generate broader social change. Learning communities can also serve as a means to identify various community issues and encourage the emergence of collaboratively developed solutions.

In the context of non-formal education, learning communities hold a strategic position because they are able to connect education with the real needs of the community. Interactions between students, tutors, families, and the community can build an inclusive and sustainable learning ecosystem. Therefore, the success of a learning community is not solely measured by improving individual learning outcomes, but also by its contribution to strengthening social relationships, empowering communities, increasing community capacity, and creating an environment that supports educational sustainability (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024). In implementing the curriculum, SKB and PKBM remain guided by government policies and regulations, but have room to adapt learning programs to the needs and characteristics of the community. This flexibility allows non-formal educational institutions to develop learning that is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward strengthening practical skills that can be applied in everyday life.

Integrating academic materials with skills such as cooking, sewing, and computer operation is a strategy that can strengthen students' readiness for social life and the world of work. This approach demonstrates that educational success is not solely measured by academic achievement, but also by students' ability to develop their potential and independence. In the learning process, tutors play a crucial role as mentors and facilitators, helping students understand the material and develop their skills. Student-centered, interactive, and contextual learning practices can also create a more meaningful learning environment. Thus, the SKB and PKBM curriculum can serve as empowerment instruments that connect educational achievement with the real needs of the community (Pratiwi & Samudro, 2025).

Obstacles in Organizing Institutions

Despite its crucial role, SKB and PKBM management faces internal and external challenges:

Challenge Aspects	Field Obstacles	Implemented Management Solutions
Resource	The shortage is the number of tutors/tutors who are certified as competent in the qualitative-non-formal field.	Involving professional volunteers and local industry practitioners
Funding	Dependence on BOP (Education Operational Assistance) which is always disbursed late	Building independent business units (Cooperatives/Production of vocational/skills products)
Social Stigma	The view that Package C diplomas are of low quality or "second class"	Advocacy for the success of alumni who have successfully entered college or become successful entrepreneurs

These three aspects pose challenges and obstacles for non-formal educational institution managers, particularly in the implementation of the Package C Program, which is equivalent to secondary education. Learning quality remains a concern because some Package C Program providers in PKBM have not fully implemented innovative, student-centered learning methods. The learning process still tends to use conventional approaches, such as lectures, written assignments, and one-way delivery of material. This learning pattern has the potential to limit students' opportunities to interact, discuss, explore experiences, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Low student engagement can also be influenced by the diverse characteristics of learners, including

differences in age, educational background, work experience, and socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, PKBM managers need to innovate learning through a more participatory, contextual, flexible, and experience-based approach. The use of digital technology, project-based learning, group discussions, simulations, and practical activities can be alternatives to increase student engagement. Furthermore, continuous improvement of tutor competency is necessary to enable them to select learning strategies that are appropriate to the needs of learners.

The Package C program is not only oriented towards completing equivalent formal education but also capable of producing meaningful learning processes and improving the quality of student competencies (Haifa et al., 2025). Despite the various strategies that have been developed, the implementation of equivalency education in SKB and PKBM still faces several limitations that can affect the program's effectiveness. The resources available at the institutions have not been fully utilized optimally, both in terms of teaching staff, facilities and infrastructure, and program management. Financing issues are also a major obstacle because budget limitations can limit the implementation of learning activities and student skill development. Furthermore, unequal government support across regions causes each institution's ability to provide educational services to vary.

Another issue is the suboptimal coordination between stakeholders, resulting in various ATS management programs sometimes being poorly integrated. The managerial capacity of institutional administrators also needs to be strengthened, particularly in planning, organizing, evaluating, and developing institutional networks. Amidst the technology-based transformation of education, disparities in access and digital capabilities also pose ongoing challenges. This situation suggests that strengthening equivalency education requires more systematic support through increased institutional capacity, equitable funding, strengthened coordination, and expanded access to digital technology to ensure effective and sustainable educational services (Dadang et al., 2026).

These obstacles to the implementation of equivalency education can develop into social stigma within the community. Limited facilities, funding, service quality, and the perception that non-formal education is inferior to formal education can affect student interest and parental trust. This stigma has the potential to exacerbate the vulnerability of children who have dropped out of school, as they may feel less confident about returning to the educational process. Therefore, efforts are needed to build public understanding that equivalency education is a legitimate and strategic part of the national education system and plays a vital role in providing learning opportunities for all citizens. Furthermore, expanding access to education, from early childhood education (PAUD) to high school (SMA/SMK), is a crucial strategy in addressing various challenges in human resource development, including the demographic bonus momentum in West Nusa Tenggara. This expansion of access needs to be accompanied by improvements in quality, equitable distribution of services, and strengthening of formal and non-formal education. This step aligns with the government's agenda to ensure the success of the 13-Year Compulsory Education program, a national priority. Thus, the reduction of ATS is not only oriented towards fulfilling educational targets, but also becomes a long-term investment to prepare a generation that has the knowledge, skills, and competitiveness to face social and economic changes (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2026).

Conclusion

Community-based equivalency education management through the Learning Activity Center (SKB) and Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM) is a strategic alternative in addressing the issue of out-of-school children (ATS) while supporting the achievement of the 13-Year Compulsory Education program. The existence of these institutions provides a more flexible educational space for communities experiencing barriers to accessing formal education. Management flexibility is a crucial factor because the learning process can be tailored to the conditions, needs, characteristics, and potential of the local community. Furthermore, the implementation of a life-skills-oriented curriculum enables students to acquire knowledge and skills relevant to their social and economic lives. The success of equivalency education is also influenced by the institution's ability to understand the sociological conditions of the community. A contextual approach can increase student engagement and strengthen the sustainability of the learning process. Thus, SKB and PKBM function not only as alternative education providers but also as instruments for community empowerment in reducing the dropout rate. To support this strategy, the Mataram City Education Office developed the Mataram Terampil application as a means of data

collection and management of out-of-school children. This application allows operators at the sub-district level to access available ATS data so that verification and validation processes can be carried out more systematically. The use of this technology helps the government obtain more accurate data on the condition of children with disabilities (ATS) and facilitates the mapping of educational intervention needs. Integrating community-based equivalency education with digital data collection systems is a crucial step in ensuring that children outside the education system can be identified, verified, and redirected to appropriate educational services.

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