

## Analysis of Academic Ability Test (TKA) Policy at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Palangka Raya

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) as a new policy of the Ministry of Education in 2025 which is applied to grade XII students, focusing on its implementation in SMAN 1 Palangka Raya and SMAN 2 Palangka Raya. TKA is designed to measure students' critical, logical, and analytical thinking skills, as well as being an instrument for mapping the quality of education and the basis for decision-making for students, schools, and the government. This research uses the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) method based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol, and is strengthened with a *literature review* to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concepts, objectives, benefits, and challenges of TKA. Field findings show that the implementation of TKA in both schools runs in an orderly manner, but presents diverse experiences for students. Subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, and English (*reading* section) are the most difficult, while Indonesian and basic English are considered more relevant to the learning material. Processing time is the main obstacle, especially for questions that require in-depth analysis. In addition, some students feel that some questions do not fully fit the grid, and their preparation is hampered by the school's heavy academic load. Overall, TKA has an important role in mapping students' academic abilities, but improvements are needed in terms of exam duration, student readiness, and instrument suitability so that this policy can run more effectively and support the improvement of the quality of education at the high school level.

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## INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of human resources is one of the strategic agendas in the development of national education. To answer these challenges, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) in 2025 will trigger a new policy in the form of the implementation of Academic Ability Tests (TKA) intended for grade XII students throughout Indonesia. The Academic Ability Test (TKA) is a form of standardized test used to measure students' critical, logical, analytical, and basic academic thinking skills (Putri, et al, 2023). This policy aims to strengthen the education evaluation system by providing a comprehensive picture of students' academic abilities and readiness before completing secondary education. (Firestone & Schorr, 2004)

The Academic Ability Test (TKA) has wide benefits, both for students, schools, and local governments. For students, TKA is a measuring tool to find out academic ability objectively, encourage learning motivation, and function as an added value in various educational continuation paths, including the validation of report cards for the National Selection Based on Achievement (SNBP) in 2026. In this context, TKA acts as an objective measurement tool to see students' basic abilities nationally, so that the results can be used at various levels of decision-making ranging from the individual level to determine majors, at the school level to evaluate the curriculum, to the national level to improve education policies and systems (Sriyati, 2023). In addition, the TKA certificate can be proof of basic competencies such as logic, numeracy, and literacy skills, which are urgently needed in the world of work. This makes TKA relevant not only for high school students who will continue their studies, but also for vocational school graduates who want to work immediately, because the certificate can increase competitiveness and be a consideration in industrial recruitment, SOEs, to the selection of the TNI/Polri and various scholarship programs. (Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003)

For schools, TKA functions as an instrument for mapping the quality of learning. Test results can be used as a basis for reflecting on the teaching and learning process, identifying students' academic weaknesses and strengths, and designing more targeted interventions. Meanwhile, for local governments, TKA provides objective data that can be used to formulate policies to improve the quality of education in a more targeted manner, especially in the aspects of literacy, numeracy, and character development (Pusmendik, 2025).

In Palangka Raya City, SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 are two schools that have started implementing TKA as part of the national policy. The implementation in this first year certainly presents various dynamics, ranging from technical readiness, preparation of instruments, socialization to students, to the use of test results for school quality development. Despite being under the same policy umbrella, the two schools have different internal conditions, academic cultures, and implementation strategies, so analysis of the implementation of TKA is important to see the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in the future. (Wiliam, 2011)

Thus, this article aims to analyze the Academic Ability Test (TKA) policy at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya and SMAN 2 Palangka Raya, including the policy background, expected benefits, implementation process, and its relevance in improving academic quality and readiness of grade XII students. This analysis is expected to contribute to the improvement of the implementation of TKA as a comprehensive and sustainable educational evaluation instrument. (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001)

## METHODS

This study uses the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) by following the PRISMA protocol. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a structured and methodological research approach to collecting, identifying, evaluating, and critically synthesizing all research relevant to a research question or topic, conducted through strict protocols to ensure transparency, objectivity, and adequate coverage. This method provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research, identifies gaps or differences between findings, and produces recommendations for future research, thus providing a deeper understanding than the usual narrative review (Febrianti, 2024). In relation to the implementation of SLR, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) was initially released in 2009 as a guideline for researchers in reporting the reasons for the implementation of the systematic review, the process taken, and the results obtained. As the methodology and terminology in research evolved over the next decade, PRISMA was later updated to PRISMA 2020, which brings improvements in reporting standards and integrates the latest advances in study search, selection, assessment, and synthesis techniques, making it easier for researchers to implement systematic review procedures more accurately and comprehensively (Page et al., 2021). In addition, this study also utilizes the *literature review* to enrich analysis through a critical study of various sources such as journals, books, proceedings, and policy documents, thereby resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts, objectives, advantages, and

weaknesses of TKA and providing a synthesis of relevant knowledge for the development of educational policies and practices.(Bishop, 1997)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Academic Ability Test (TKA)

The Academic Ability Test (TKA) is a standardized assessment designed to measure students' basic cognitive abilities, especially in the aspects of reasoning, problem solving, logic, and understanding academic concepts. In contrast to school curriculum-based tests, TKA focuses on high-level thinking skills (HOTS) and not just testing memorization. In Indonesia, TKA is commonly used in the context of university entrance selection such as UTBK, but is now developing as a tool for mapping academic readiness, evaluation of education quality, and objective selection instruments. With these characteristics, TKA functions to assess students' readiness to continue their studies, provide a basis for fair selection, map educational gaps, predict academic success at higher levels, and encourage improvement in the quality of learning at school (Sriyati, 2023).

In general, TKA is considered effective because various studies show that the value of TKA has a strong predictive power on academic performance in higher education (Justin, 2022). In addition, from a managerial perspective, TKA results data is an important instrument for policymakers in allocating resources, planning programs, and evaluating school quality in aggregate. However, this effectiveness goes hand in hand with a number of challenges. TKA is often considered biased against students from affluent families who have access to intensive learning and guidance facilities. In addition, an excessive focus on standardized tests can lead to curriculum narrowing and increased psychological pressure on students, especially when foreign workers are the main determinant in high-stakes selection.(Stiggins, 2018)

In its implementation, TKA has various advantages such as objectivity, reliability, uniform national standards, and its ability to encourage teachers to develop more analytical and critical learning (Simarmata, 2022). However, foreign workers also have a number of weaknesses that need to be examined. These tests tend to reduce students' abilities to only logical cognitive aspects, thus ignoring other important skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication, and leadership. In addition, the potential for context bias, the effects of stress, its incompatibility with real life, and the risk of commercialization through the rise of tutoring are challenges that have an impact on educational justice. These weaknesses show the need for adjustments in the implementation of TKA so that it does not only function as a measure of cognitive intelligence.(Nichols & Berliner, 2007)

TKA also has wide implications for the education system. For students, TKA encourages the strengthening of critical and logical thinking, but it can trigger anxiety if it is not accompanied by a healthy learning strategy. For schools and teachers, TKA provides encouragement to develop HOTS-based learning and improve the quality of the teaching process. Universities use TKA as an efficient selection instrument, although it is still necessary to complement it with other assessments to overcome the limitations of a single evaluation. Meanwhile, at the national level, TKA provides important mapping related to educational inequality between regions, so that it can be the basis for affirmative program planning, improving educational facilities, and reviewing the curriculum (Dedi, 2025).

From the perspective of the relevance of modern education, TKA is still needed as an objective selection tool, but it cannot stand alone. The current education system demands a more comprehensive assessment, so TKA needs to be combined with portfolios, non-academic achievements, talent-interest tests, and other authentic assessments. The integration of various forms of assessment will produce a more complete picture of students' potential, in line with the principles of Freedom of Learning which emphasizes students' freedom to develop interests and talents. Thus, the existence of TKA is expected to be part of a holistic evaluation system, not only measuring logical abilities, but also paying attention to the diversity of intelligence and learning experiences (Nikla et al, 2022).

From the perspective of Islamic Education Management, TKA policies must be in line with the principles of justice (adl) as commanded by Allah in QS. An-Nahl verse 90. Any form of evaluation that creates injustice or widens social disparities is contrary to the basic values of Islamic education. In addition, Islam recognizes the nature and multidimensional potential of every child, as affirmed in the Qur'an. Al-Isra' verse 84 that each individual has unique tendencies and abilities. Therefore, educational assessments should not only measure logical intelligence, but also support the development of diverse potentials. Through this understanding, TKA can be placed as one of the evaluation tools, not the only one, and is designed to be more fair, inclusive, and in accordance with humanitarian and spiritual values in Islamic education (Has'ad, 2020).

#### **B. Implementation of TKA at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya**

The implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) at SMAN 2 Palangka Raya shows that this activity runs in accordance with the initial goal, which is to map students' academic abilities before graduation. Teachers and schools use the results of TKA as one of the indicators of students' readiness to face higher education selection, as well as as evaluation material to improve the quality of learning in the final grade. (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014)

The results of the interviews showed that some students experienced obstacles in certain subjects, especially Mathematics. RN, a student of grades XII-8, revealed that the Mathematics questions have a higher level of difficulty and are not fully in accordance with the grids that have been studied. He said:

"For the compulsory map, yes, it is quite difficult in the Mathematics section because some of the questions feel far from the grids that I learned."

However, RN assessed that Indonesian and English subjects were actually more relevant to the learning materials in the classroom. In the elective subjects, namely Sociology and Advanced English, RN stated that most of the questions can still be done because they are related to the material that has been discussed in the learning process. The main obstacle that RN felt was not only the difficulty of the questions, but also the time of work that was considered insufficient:

"For Mathematics, the obstacle may be in time as well. The problem is that something is difficult to understand and the time of 50 minutes feels lacking."

RN also emphasized the need for more thorough preparation and a longer duration of the exam for the implementation of TKA in the following years.

Similar findings were also conveyed by DY, a student in grades XII-7 of SMAN 2 Palangka Raya. According to him, the pattern of questions in pre-simulation and foreign workers has similarities, but there are more complex variations, especially in Mathematics. DY revealed that time constraints make students feel more stressed when working on the following questions: "If the pre-simulation is similar, but in TKA the problems are more varied, especially in Mathematics. So because of the limited time, many students feel pressured."

However, DY assessed that Indonesian and English questions still tended to be easy because they were in accordance with the exercises they had done. He added that the learning load that coincides with school activities causes the preparation process to be less than optimal. (Braun & Kanjee, 2006)

#### **C. Implementation of TKA at SMAN 2 Palangka Raya**

The implementation of TKA at SMAN 1 Palangka Raya takes place in an orderly, conducive manner, and reflects the principle of "Honest and Happy" as emphasized by the Ministry of Education. The supervisor ensures that all students follow the procedure well, while students are seen to focus on completing the problem according to the specified time limit.

From the results of the interviews, students showed diverse experiences in dealing with foreign workers. AM, a student of grades XII-4, said that the biggest challenge was in the subject of Physics. He stated that some of the questions were not very relevant to the emphasis of the material taught in class:

"Physics is quite dizzying, because there are some materials that don't seem to be too emphasized when studying. So some of the questions feel foreign and take a long time to think about."

However, AM felt more confident in doing Indonesian and Mathematics because the questions had a similar pattern to class exercises. In the elective subject, namely Chemistry and Informatics, most of the questions are still considered to be reachable because they are suitable for topics that are often discussed in class. AM also highlights time constraints, particularly for Physics which requires a deep understanding before starting calculations:

"The time is the hardest. Physics takes a long time, but time is limited."

Meanwhile, other data shows that female students face different challenges. AL, a student in grades XII-6, said that the main obstacle she faced was in English subjects, especially the reading section. Long text makes the processing time less than ideal:

"The English is quite difficult, especially the reading part. The text is long and the time to work on it feels short."

For other subjects such as PPKn and Basic Mathematics, AL feels more comfortable because the material is consistent with classroom learning. In the Biology and History elective subjects, the difficulty level of the questions is considered to be tolerable even though there are some questions that do not match the grid. AL also highlighted that the burden of school assignments made the preparation of foreign workers more difficult and unfocused.

In general, students of SMAN 1 Palangka Raya hope that the TKA preparation schedule can be arranged more structured and the duration of the exam is extended for subjects that require reading or calculation time.(Shepard, 2019)

Based on the results of research at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Palangka Raya, it is known that the implementation of TKA presents a diverse experience for students. The difficulty level of the questions varies between subjects. Subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, and English, especially the reading section, are the most challenging for students. Meanwhile, subjects such as Bahasa Indonesia and basic English tend to be more relevant and in accordance with the material that has been learned in class.(I, 2011)

In addition, work time is an important factor that affects students' perception of TKA. Many students feel that the available time is not enough, especially for working on problems that require in-depth analysis or reading long texts. Students' readiness is also influenced by the curriculum and the daily learning load, including schoolwork that runs at the same time as preparation for foreign workers. This causes some students to find it difficult to divide their focus on learning optimally.(Koretz, 2017)

While some questions are considered appropriate, some subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and History are considered to have questions that go beyond the grid given previously. This poses its own challenges for students in understanding and solving problems. Based on their experience, many students hope that in the next implementation of TKA, the preparation time can be extended and the duration of the exam longer. Thus, students can be more optimal in doing the questions and get results that better reflect their academic abilities.(OECD, 2019)

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Palangka Raya provides a comprehensive picture of the academic abilities of grade XII students. Subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, and English (reading) were the most challenging, while Indonesian and basic English were considered more relevant to the learning material in the classroom. Processing time is the main obstacle for students, especially for questions that require in-depth analysis or long reading. In addition, the learning load that coincides with school activities affects students' readiness to face TKA. Some questions are considered to go beyond the grid, thus posing additional challenges. In general, students suggest that their preparation for foreign workers be extended and the duration of the exam adjusted so that they can do the questions more optimally. These findings show that although TKA has significant benefits as a tool for evaluating academic ability, careful planning is needed in terms of preparation time, exam duration, and suitability of questions with the

material studied, so that TKA can be more effective in improving the quality of education and mapping students' abilities objectively.

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