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Unequal Capacity, Unequal Outcomes: A Strategic Analysis of Academic Ability Test Implementation Using an Integrated RBV–PESTEL–SWOT Framework

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of standardized educational assessments may produce unequal outcomes across schools with different institutional capacities. This study examines the implementation of Indonesia's Academic Ability Test (TKA) by integrating the Resource-Based View (RBV), PESTEL, and SWOT frameworks to explain variations in school-level policy enactment. A qualitative multiple-case study approach was employed to examine high-performing, moderately performing, and developing senior high schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Thematic and cross-case analyses were conducted using RBV to assess internal institutional capacity, PESTEL to examine external environmental conditions, and SWOT to synthesize strategic responses. The analysis identified three differentiated implementation patterns. High-performing schools demonstrated strategic and reflective approaches, integrating assessment practices into institutional improvement. Moderately performing schools exhibited hybrid patterns combining procedural compliance with emerging adaptive practices. Developing schools primarily adopted administrative approaches constrained by limited resources, organizational capabilities, and external pressures. These patterns suggest that institutional capacity and environmental conditions jointly shape policy implementation. The findings highlight the potential of an integrated RBV–PESTEL–SWOT framework for understanding differentiated assessment policy implementation. They suggest that standardized assessment policies require capacity-sensitive strategies to prevent existing institutional disparities from translating into unequal educational opportunities. Further empirical investigation is needed to establish the proposed explanatory relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The global landscape of educational assessment has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade, shifting from traditional high-stakes examinations toward competency-based and data-driven evaluation systems. This transition reflects a broader paradigm change emphasizing not only measurable learning outcomes but also the processes and capabilities underlying student achievement. Standardized assessments, once primarily used for accountability purposes, are increasingly positioned as strategic tools for improving educational quality and informing policy decisions (Koretz, 2020; OECD, 2023). Within this context, many countries, including Indonesia, have introduced new forms of national assessment designed to capture students' academic competencies more comprehensively and equitably.

The implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) represents one such policy innovation. Designed as a standardized instrument to measure students' academic performance across key subject areas, TKA aims to provide reliable and comparable data to support educational decision-making, including student selection and school evaluation. However, as with many large-scale policy reforms, the effectiveness of TKA implementation is not uniform across educational contexts. Emerging evidence suggests that disparities in school capacity, infrastructure, and human resources significantly influence how such policies are enacted at the local level (Datnow, 2020; Honig, 2021). This uneven implementation raises critical concerns about whether standardized assessments may inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities rather than mitigate them.

The issue of inequality in standardized testing has been widely documented in the literature. Scholars have argued that differences in school resources and socio-economic contexts can lead to unequal opportunities for students to perform well on standardized assessments (Au, 2022; Smith, 2021). In particular, schools with stronger institutional capacity—characterized by qualified teachers, adequate infrastructure, and supportive learning environments—are better positioned to leverage assessment systems for continuous improvement. Conversely, schools with limited resources often struggle to implement such policies effectively, resulting in a compliance-oriented approach that yields minimal impact on learning outcomes (Volante et al., 2021). These disparities highlight the need to examine not only the design of assessment policies but also the contextual factors that shape their implementation.

From a theoretical perspective, the Resource-Based View (RBV) offers a valuable lens for understanding these differences. RBV posits that organizational performance is largely determined by the availability and effective utilization of strategic resources, including human capital, infrastructure, and institutional capabilities (Barney et al., 2021; Teece, 2020). In the context of education, these resources translate into teacher quality, leadership capacity, technological readiness, and a culture of data-driven decision-making. Schools that possess valuable, rare, and inimitable resources are more likely to achieve superior outcomes, including the successful implementation of complex policies such as standardized assessments.

However, internal capacity alone does not fully explain variations in policy implementation. External environmental factors also play a crucial role in shaping organizational behavior. The PESTEL framework—encompassing political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal dimensions—provides a comprehensive approach to analyzing these external influences (Guerrero et al., 2020; Zhao, 2020). For instance, policy clarity, funding availability, technological infrastructure, and community support can either facilitate or constrain the implementation of assessment systems. The interaction between internal capacity and external conditions thus becomes a key determinant of policy effectiveness.

To capture this interaction, strategic management tools such as SWOT analysis have been widely used to integrate internal and external perspectives. SWOT enables the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, thereby providing a structured basis for strategic decision-making (Benzaghta et al., 2021; Phadermrod et al., 2019). In educational settings, this approach can help schools align their internal capabilities with external demands, leading to more adaptive and context-

sensitive policy implementation strategies. Despite its potential, the application of integrated frameworks combining RBV, PESTEL, and SWOT in education policy research remains limited, particularly in the context of standardized assessment systems.

Existing studies on education policy implementation have largely focused on either internal organizational dynamics or external policy environments, often treating them as separate domains. For example, Spillane et al. (2019) emphasize the role of sense-making processes among educators in interpreting policy directives, highlighting the importance of cognitive and organizational factors in implementation. While this perspective provides valuable insights into how policies are enacted at the micro level, it tends to underplay the influence of broader environmental conditions. Similarly, Verger et al. (2019) examine the global diffusion of accountability policies, demonstrating how international trends shape national education reforms. However, this line of research often overlooks the internal capacities of schools that mediate these external influences.

Another relevant study by Leithwood et al. (2020) focuses on school leadership and organizational capacity as key drivers of educational improvement. The authors argue that effective leadership can enhance school performance by fostering collaboration, building professional capital, and promoting data-informed practices. While this study underscores the importance of internal capacity, it does not explicitly address how external pressures interact with these internal dynamics. Taken together, these studies highlight important aspects of policy implementation but remain fragmented in their analytical approach, lacking an integrated framework that captures both internal and external dimensions.

This fragmentation reveals a critical research gap. There is a lack of studies that systematically integrate internal resource-based analysis with external environmental assessment to explain variations in policy implementation outcomes, particularly in the context of standardized testing. Moreover, existing research rarely employs a strategic synthesis framework, such as SWOT, to translate analytical findings into actionable strategies. As a result, there is limited understanding of how schools can effectively align their internal capacities with external demands to achieve equitable and sustainable policy outcomes.

Addressing this gap is particularly urgent in the context of ongoing education reforms aimed at improving equity and quality. As standardized assessments continue to play a central role in education systems worldwide, understanding the conditions under which they succeed or fail becomes increasingly important. Without such understanding, policy interventions risk exacerbating existing disparities, undermining their intended goals. Therefore, a more holistic and integrated analytical approach is needed to capture the complexity of policy implementation in diverse educational contexts.

Building on this rationale, this study seeks to develop a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) by integrating the Resource-Based View (RBV), PESTEL analysis, and SWOT framework. Specifically, the study aims to examine how variations in internal school capacity and external environmental factors influence the effectiveness of TKA implementation across different school categories. By synthesizing these perspectives, the study also seeks to formulate strategic recommendations tailored to the specific conditions of schools, thereby contributing to more differentiated and context-sensitive education policies.

Ultimately, this research aims to advance the theoretical and practical understanding of education policy implementation by demonstrating that the success of standardized assessment systems depends not only on policy design but also on the strategic alignment between internal capabilities and external conditions. In doing so, it provides a novel contribution to the literature on educational assessment, strategic management, and policy implementation, offering insights that are relevant for both researchers and policymakers.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a multiple-case study design to explore the implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) across different school contexts. A qualitative

approach was considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand complex social and organizational processes involved in policy implementation, particularly how stakeholders interpret, respond to, and enact TKA within their institutional settings. Policy implementation in education is inherently context-dependent and cannot be fully captured through quantitative measures alone; therefore, an in-depth, interpretive approach is necessary to uncover the underlying dynamics and variations across schools.

The adoption of a multiple-case study design enables comparative analysis between different types of schools, thereby strengthening the explanatory capacity of the research. By examining schools with varying levels of institutional capacity, this study aims to identify patterns of implementation, reveal contrasts in strategic responses, and uncover the mechanisms that explain why some schools are able to implement TKA more effectively than others. This design also enhances the robustness of findings through cross-case synthesis, allowing for analytical generalization rather than statistical generalization.

2.2 Research Setting and Case Selection

The research was conducted in several senior high schools representing three distinct categories of institutional performance: high-performing (excellent), moderately performing, and developing schools. The categorization was based on national school ranking data issued by the Ministry of Education, which provides an objective benchmark for distinguishing levels of school performance and capacity. High-performing schools were those ranked in the top tier nationally, while moderate and developing schools represented middle and lower tiers respectively.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select cases that could provide rich and contrasting insights into TKA implementation. Schools were selected based on several criteria, including their performance category, readiness to implement TKA, accessibility of data, and willingness of stakeholders to participate in the study. This approach ensures that the selected cases are information-rich and relevant to the research objectives, while also capturing diversity in institutional conditions and external environments.

2.3 Participants

The participants in this study consisted of key stakeholders directly involved in the implementation of TKA at the school level, including school principals, subject teachers, school administrative staff, and students. These groups were selected because they represent different roles and perspectives in the policy implementation process. Principals provide insights into leadership and strategic decision-making, teachers reflect on instructional and assessment practices, administrative staff contribute operational perspectives, and students offer experiential insights as test participants.

Participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure that individuals with relevant experience and knowledge were included. This approach allows the researcher to access participants who are most capable of providing meaningful and in-depth information about TKA implementation.

2.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. The use of multiple data sources allows for triangulation, which strengthens the credibility and richness of the findings. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of TKA implementation. The interview protocol included themes such as understanding of policy objectives, implementation practices, encountered challenges, and the use of assessment results. Interviews were conducted in a flexible manner to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring consistency across cases.

Direct observations were carried out to capture real-time practices related to TKA implementation, including preparation processes, examination procedures, and coordination activities within schools. Observations provided contextual insights that could not be fully obtained through interviews alone, particularly regarding infrastructure readiness, procedural compliance, and interactions among

stakeholders. Document analysis was conducted to complement primary data sources. Documents reviewed included official policy regulations, school-level reports, TKA implementation guidelines, and internal evaluation records. These documents provided additional evidence on how TKA is formally structured and implemented, as well as how schools document and interpret assessment outcomes.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The process began with transcription and organization of raw data from interviews, observations, and documents. Open coding was applied to identify initial themes emerging from the data, which were then grouped into broader categories.

The analysis was guided by an integrated analytical framework combining the Resource-Based View (RBV), PESTEL analysis, and SWOT synthesis. RBV was used to analyze internal factors, including resources, capabilities, and core competencies within schools. PESTEL analysis was employed to examine external factors such as policy environment, economic conditions, social context, technological readiness, environmental constraints, and regulatory frameworks.

Findings from internal and external analyses were then integrated using a SWOT framework to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with TKA implementation. This integration enabled the development of strategic typologies that reflect the positioning of schools in responding to policy demands. Cross-case analysis was conducted to compare patterns across school categories, allowing for the identification of similarities, differences, and underlying causal mechanisms.

2.6 Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the study, several strategies were employed. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation, combining interviews, observations, and document analysis, as well as member checking with selected participants to validate interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of research contexts and case characteristics, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to other settings.

Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of the research process, including data collection and analysis procedures. Confirmability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail and reflecting on potential researcher bias throughout the study. These strategies collectively strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings and ensure that the results are grounded in empirical evidence.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided voluntary consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, and participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Uneven Policy Enactment: Evidence of Differentiated Implementation Patterns

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) is fundamentally uneven across school categories, revealing a clear stratification pattern driven by institutional capacity. Rather than functioning as a standardized and uniformly enacted policy, TKA is translated into distinct implementation logics depending on the internal readiness and external context of each school.

High-performing schools exhibit a strategic enactment pattern, where TKA is internalized as a tool for pedagogical reflection and institutional improvement. In these contexts, policy is not merely followed but actively reinterpreted and embedded into teaching and learning processes. In contrast,

developing schools display an administrative enactment pattern, characterized by procedural compliance with minimal pedagogical integration. Moderate schools occupy an intermediate position, where implementation reflects a hybrid pattern combining procedural adherence with emerging adaptive practices. This differentiation suggests that policy enactment is not a linear process but a context-sensitive transformation shaped by organizational conditions.

3.2 Internal Capacity Configuration as a Primary Driver (RBV Analysis)

The analysis of internal factors reveals that the effectiveness of TKA implementation is strongly determined by the configuration and alignment of institutional capacity, particularly in terms of resources, capabilities, and core competencies. High-performing schools demonstrate a coherent capacity system, in which high-quality human resources, technological infrastructure, and organizational routines are mutually reinforcing. More critically, these resources are not only present but are effectively mobilized through dynamic capabilities such as adaptive leadership, data-driven decision-making, and collaborative professional cultures. This enables schools to transform TKA from a technical requirement into a strategic instrument for continuous improvement.

Conversely, developing schools are characterized by fragmented capacity structures, where limited resources are compounded by weak organizational capabilities. The absence of assessment literacy, insufficient infrastructure, and reactive management practices constrains the ability of these schools to engage meaningfully with the policy. As a result, TKA implementation remains superficial and compliance-oriented. Moderate schools exhibit partial alignment, where resources are available but not fully leveraged due to inconsistencies in capability development. This partial alignment results in uneven implementation practices and limited optimization of TKA outcomes.

Table 1. Comparative Internal Capacity Configuration Across School Categories (RBV Analysis)

Dimension	High-Performing Schools	Moderate Schools	Developing Schools
Resources	High-quality, well-distributed, and sufficient	Adequate but unevenly distributed	Limited and insufficient
Capabilities	Adaptive, integrative, and innovation-oriented	Partially adaptive, inconsistent	Reactive and dependent
Core Competencies	Strong, institutionalized, and data-driven	Emerging but unstable	Weak or absent
Capacity Alignment	Highly coherent and synergistic	Partially aligned	Fragmented

3.3 External Environment as a Differentiating Amplifier (PESTEL Analysis)

The external environment plays a critical role in amplifying or constraining internal capacity, thereby influencing implementation outcomes. High-performing schools demonstrate the ability to strategically leverage external conditions, transforming policy directives, technological advancements, and community support into enabling factors. In these schools, external pressures are reframed as opportunities, allowing for adaptive responses and innovation. For example, policy frameworks are interpreted flexibly, technological resources are fully utilized, and social support is mobilized to reinforce implementation efforts.

In contrast, developing schools experience the external environment as a set of compounding constraints. Limited funding, inadequate technological infrastructure, and low levels of community engagement create structural barriers that exacerbate internal weaknesses. These conditions restrict the capacity of schools to respond effectively, leading to a cycle of constrained implementation. Moderate schools experience a mixed environmental condition, where enabling and constraining factors coexist, resulting in variable implementation outcomes.

Table 2. Comparative External Conditions Influencing TKA Implementation (PESTEL Analysis)

Factor	High-Performing Schools	Moderate Schools	Developing Schools
Political	Interpreted strategically and flexibly	Procedurally understood	Rigidly followed
Economic	Strong and diversified support	Moderate and limited flexibility	Highly constrained
Social	High engagement and support	Moderate engagement	Low awareness and support
Technological	Advanced and fully utilized	Available but underutilized	Limited and inadequate
Environmental	Conducive and accessible	Moderately supportive	Constrained by geography
Legal	Deep understanding and high compliance	Formal compliance	Administrative compliance only

3.4 Integrated Capacity–Environment Dynamics and Strategic Positioning

The integration of internal and external analyses reveals that the effectiveness of TKA implementation is shaped by the interaction between institutional capacity and environmental conditions, rather than by either factor in isolation. This interaction produces distinct strategic positions across school categories. High-performing schools operate in a high-capacity–enabling environment nexus, allowing them to adopt proactive and innovation-driven strategies. Moderate schools are situated in a transitional nexus, where partial capacity interacts with mixed environmental conditions, resulting in adaptive but inconsistent strategies. Developing schools occupy a low-capacity–constraining environment nexus, where structural limitations necessitate survival-oriented strategies focused on compliance.

Table 3. Integrated Capacity–Environment–Implementation–Outcome Matrix

School Type	Internal Capacity (RBV)	External Conditions (PESTEL)	Implementation Pattern	Outcome
High-Performing	Strong, aligned, dynamic	Enabling and leveraged	Strategic, reflective, integrative	High impact on learning
Moderate	Partial, inconsistent	Mixed conditions	Procedural–adaptive	Moderate impact
Developing	Weak, fragmented	Constraining and limiting	Administrative, reactive	Minimal impact

3.5 Causal Mechanism: From Capacity Disparity to Outcome Inequality

The cross-case analysis reveals a consistent causal mechanism underlying the observed disparities. Differences in internal capacity determine how schools interpret and respond to external conditions, which in turn shape the nature of policy implementation and ultimately influence outcomes. In high-performing schools, strong capacity enables adaptive interpretation of external conditions, leading to strategic implementation and meaningful outcomes. In contrast, limited capacity in developing schools results in constrained responses to external pressures, leading to procedural implementation and minimal impact. This mechanism can be conceptualized as: Capacity Configuration → Environmental Response → Implementation Logic → Outcome.

This finding indicates that inequality in TKA outcomes is not merely a reflection of student ability but is structurally embedded in the interaction between institutional capacity and environmental conditions. As such, standardized assessment policies, when implemented in unequal contexts, may inadvertently reproduce or even exacerbate existing educational disparities.

3.6 Analytical Synthesis

Overall, the results demonstrate that the implementation of TKA is a capacity-mediated and context-dependent process, where institutional readiness and environmental conditions jointly determine policy outcomes. The findings move beyond descriptive comparison by identifying a systemic pattern of inequality rooted in structural differences across schools. This highlights the need

to reconceptualize policy implementation not as a uniform process, but as a differentiated phenomenon shaped by the alignment—or misalignment—between internal capacity and external demands.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the implementation of Indonesia's Academic Ability Test (TKA) varies across schools according to differences in institutional capacity and external conditions. Rather than being enacted uniformly, the assessment policy appears to be interpreted and operationalized through distinct organizational practices. High-performing schools demonstrate a more strategic and reflective orientation, moderately performing schools combine administrative compliance with emerging adaptive practices, and developing schools tend to prioritize procedural requirements. These patterns are consistent with the view that educational policy implementation is shaped by local interpretation, organizational routines, and institutional contexts rather than policy directives alone (Spillane et al., 2019; Coburn et al., 2021). The findings, therefore, underscore the importance of examining how schools translate standardized assessment requirements into everyday educational practices.

From the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV), differences in implementation can be understood through the configuration and utilization of institutional resources, capabilities, and core competencies. Schools with stronger organizational capacity appear better positioned to incorporate assessment information into instructional reflection and school improvement. Conversely, resource-constrained schools may face difficulties extending implementation beyond administrative compliance. This interpretation aligns with resource-based theory, which emphasizes that organizational performance depends not simply on resource availability but also on the capacity to organize and deploy resources effectively (Barney et al., 2021). It also corresponds with research on dynamic capabilities, particularly the importance of institutional adaptation and responsiveness to changing organizational demands (Teece, 2020). Within educational settings, leadership, teacher collaboration, assessment literacy, and data-informed decision-making may therefore represent important capabilities for translating assessment policies into meaningful practices.

The findings further indicate that external environmental conditions interact with internal capacity in shaping school responses to TKA implementation. The PESTEL analysis identifies political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal dimensions as relevant contextual influences. High-performing schools appear more capable of utilizing favorable conditions, including technological infrastructure and stakeholder support, whereas developing schools experience similar policy demands alongside more substantial financial, technical, and organizational constraints. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the contextual nature of educational reform and the role of leadership in organizational improvement (Datnow, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). However, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating that external conditions independently determine implementation outcomes. Instead, they suggest that schools' responses to these conditions are shaped by their existing organizational capabilities.

Integrating RBV and PESTEL provides a broader explanation of implementation differences than either perspective offers independently. RBV highlights the internal resources and capabilities available to schools, while PESTEL directs attention to the wider environment within which those resources are mobilized. The SWOT framework subsequently offers a means of synthesizing these dimensions into strategic considerations. Schools with stronger capacities and supportive environments may be positioned to pursue improvement-oriented strategies, while schools facing internal weaknesses and external constraints may require foundational support before more ambitious assessment practices can be established. This application is consistent with the use of SWOT as an integrative tool for organizing strategic factors and informing organizational decisions (Phadermrod et al., 2019; Benzaghta et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the combined framework should be regarded as an analytical contribution requiring further empirical refinement rather than a fully validated model of policy implementation.

An important implication concerns the relationship between standardized assessment and educational inequality. Although common assessment requirements may promote consistency in evaluation, schools do not necessarily possess equivalent capacities to prepare for, administer, and utilize assessment results. Consequently, differences in institutional resources and organizational practices may contribute to unequal opportunities to benefit from assessment policies. This interpretation resonates with scholarship examining how educational systems can reproduce disparities when standardized expectations are applied across unequal contexts (Au, 2022; Volante et al., 2021). The present findings do not establish that TKA itself causes educational inequality; rather, they identify institutional conditions through which unequal implementation experiences may emerge. Distinguishing between unequal policy enactment and demonstrated differences in student achievement is particularly important because the present study does not provide comparative quantitative evidence of TKA performance outcomes.

These findings have practical implications for educational policymakers and school leaders. A uniform implementation strategy may be insufficient when schools differ substantially in assessment literacy, technological readiness, leadership capacity, and access to professional support. Developing schools may benefit from targeted infrastructure assistance, teacher professional development, and guidance on interpreting assessment information. Moderately performing schools may require support in strengthening collaborative routines and integrating assessment evidence into instructional planning. High-performing schools, meanwhile, may be encouraged to deepen reflective assessment practices and share relevant organizational learning with other institutions. Such differentiated approaches are consistent with arguments that sustainable educational improvement depends on leadership development, organizational learning, and context-responsive reform (Hallinger, 2020; Fullan, 2021). Importantly, these recommendations represent implications derived from the study's interpretive findings rather than interventions whose effectiveness has been tested.

The study also contributes to discussions of educational policy implementation by proposing a capacity–environment–implementation relationship as a possible explanatory framework. Its principal contribution lies in bringing organizational resources, contextual conditions, and strategic responses into a common analytical perspective. However, several limitations qualify this interpretation. As a qualitative multiple-case study, the findings are context-dependent and are intended to support analytical rather than statistical generalization. The proposed relationships also require stronger documentation through case-specific evidence, transparent coding procedures, and explicit cross-case comparisons. Future studies could examine the framework across a larger and more diverse set of schools, incorporate longitudinal observations, and assess whether differences in implementation practices correspond to measurable differences in educational outcomes. Such research would help establish the explanatory value and practical applicability of the integrated RBV–PESTEL–SWOT framework.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Academic Ability Test (TKA) is not a uniform policy process, but a capacity-mediated and context-dependent phenomenon. The findings reveal that variations in institutional capacity—particularly in terms of resources, capabilities, and core competencies—fundamentally shape how schools interpret, enact, and benefit from standardized assessment policies. Rather than functioning as a neutral instrument, TKA produces differentiated outcomes across schools, reflecting underlying structural disparities within the education system.

By integrating the Resource-Based View (RBV), PESTEL analysis, and SWOT framework, this study provides a comprehensive explanation of how internal capacity and external conditions interact to influence policy implementation. The identified mechanism—linking capacity configuration, environmental response, implementation logic, and outcomes—offers a novel contribution to the literature on education policy implementation. It highlights that policy effectiveness cannot be

understood solely through policy design, but must be examined in relation to the alignment between organizational capacity and contextual demands.

The findings also suggest that standardized assessment policies, when implemented in unequal contexts, may inadvertently reproduce or even exacerbate educational inequality. This underscores the limitations of uniform policy approaches in heterogeneous systems and calls for a shift toward differentiated and capacity-sensitive policy strategies. In practice, this implies that governments should move beyond one-size-fits-all interventions and prioritize targeted support for schools with limited capacity, including investments in teacher development, infrastructure, and organizational capability.

From a theoretical perspective, this study advances the understanding of policy implementation by bridging strategic management and education policy frameworks. It demonstrates the value of integrating internal and external analyses to capture the complexity of policy enactment in real-world settings. This integrated approach not only enriches theoretical discourse but also provides a practical tool for policymakers and educational leaders in designing more adaptive and equitable interventions.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its qualitative and context-specific nature. Future research is encouraged to test and refine the proposed framework using larger-scale or mixed-method approaches, as well as to explore the long-term implications of standardized assessments on educational equity and system performance.

In conclusion, the success of education policies such as TKA depends not merely on their design, but on the strategic alignment between institutional capacity and environmental conditions. Without addressing disparities in capacity, even well-designed policies risk reinforcing the very inequalities they seek to overcome.

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