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Assessing Teacher Readiness in Early Childhood Education: An Analysis of the 2025 UM PPG Trial Question Instrument.

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A B S T R A C T

The academic readiness of PAUD teachersis an important indicator in determining their success in participating in the Teacher Professional Education (PPG). The problem that arises is the lack of comprehensive mapping regarding the level of academic readiness of PAUD teachers, particularly in the context of implementing the PPG tryout. This study aims to analyse the academic readiness of PPG PAUD participants in 2025 based on the results of a tryout participated in by 388 respondents from various regions in Indonesia. The study population consisted of all PAUD teachers who participated in the PPG UM 2025 tryout, with a sample of 388 individuals selected through total sampling. The research method employed was a descriptive, quantitative approach with frequency distribution analysis techniques. The results showed that 76 respondents (19.59%) were in the low readiness category, 256 respondents (65.98%) in the medium category, and 56 respondents (14.43%) in the high category. These findings indicate that the majority of teachers are still at the medium level of readiness, which means the a need for further academic intervention strategies. Therefore, it is recommended that institutions that organize PPG PAUD strengthen their academic provision programs, especially in the form of clinical questions, structured tutoring, and improving pedagogical and professional competencies to support a better transition towards PPG.

Keywords: *Academic Readiness, PAUD Teachers, PPG 2025, Try Out*

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INTRODUCTION

Academic readiness is a condition that describes the extent to which an individual possesses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effectively face academic and professional demands. In the context of Professional Teacher Education (PPG), academic readiness can be understood as the level of cognitive skills and scientific literacy of teachers before they enter the professional education program. This readiness includes the ability to understand theoretical concepts, link theory to learning practices, and develop analytical skills that support the professional performance of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Retnawati, 2019).

In the realm of Early Childhood Education (ECE), academic readiness is crucial because ECE teachers play a strategic role in establishing the foundation for child development during the golden age. UNESCO research (2022) confirms that teacher quality in early childhood education has a long-term impact on learning outcomes and child development. This means that inadequate academic readiness of ECE teachers risks reducing the quality of learning at the early stages, ultimately impacting the competitiveness of national education.

Empirical conditions in Indonesia indicate that teacher academic readiness still faces challenges. According to a report from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2021), more than 60% of PAUD teacher competency test participants still fall below the minimum professional competency standards. A study by Rumpoko and Diana (2022) also found that most PAUD teachers in Central Java are in the moderate readiness

category, with dominant weaknesses in academic literacy and pedagogical competency. Nisa et al. (2024) also noted that PAUD teachers in inclusive classes face difficulties in designing learning strategies due to their weak mastery of basic concepts. This fact indicates a gap between the theoretical demands outlined in the PPG curriculum and the empirical abilities of teachers in the field.

International findings further corroborate this situation. Huang and Chen (2021) reported that ECE teachers in several Asian countries face similar obstacles in integrating theory with practice. Darling-Hammond (2020) even emphasized that teacher education programs that are too theory-oriented often fail to prepare teachers for the complexities of the field. Thus, this research's position becomes increasingly important, as it fills the gap between the PPG policy, which demands high professionalism, and the reality of the academic readiness of PAUD teachers in Indonesia.

The novelty of this research lies in mapping the academic readiness of PAUD teachers through the 2025 PPG tryout instrument, implemented at Malang State University. To the author's knowledge, research on PPG in Indonesia has focused more on curriculum implementation and post-PPG teacher performance evaluation. No studies have specifically analyzed the academic readiness of PAUD teachers before entering the professional program using measurable instruments. Therefore, this study represents an initial mapping based on empirical data from 388 respondents participating in the PPG PAUD tryout. The results are expected to not only enrich the academic literature but also provide policy recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the PPG program in preparing professional PAUD teachers.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey design, aiming to map the academic readiness of PAUD teachers through the results of the 2025 PPG tryout. A descriptive design was chosen because it is appropriate for providing a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied (Sugiyono, 2019).

The study population was all PAUD teachers who participated in the 2025 PPG tryout. The study sample consisted of 388 respondents, drawn using a total sampling technique, as all tryout participants were included in the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The sample comprised a diverse range of educational backgrounds among early childhood education (PAUD) teachers, reflecting the heterogeneity of teachers in Indonesia.

The research instrument was the results of the 2025 PPG tryout, which measures teachers' academic readiness. This tryout included questions designed to assess mastery of pedagogical and professional competencies according to PPG standards. Test results were grouped into three categories of academic readiness: low, medium, and high with ypes of try-out questions pedagogical, content knowledge.

The data obtained were analysed using frequency distribution analysis to determine the proportion of respondents' readiness in each category. Next, the data was visualised in the form of distribution tables and pie charts to clarify the findings. Frequency distribution analysis was chosen because it presents quantitative data concisely and is easy to understand (Neuman, 2014).

The academic readiness of PAUD teachers was grouped based on their scores from the 2025 PPG tryout. The total score was then categorised into three levels of readiness: low, medium, and high. The grouping criteria used a normal distribution approach, considering the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) (Azwar, 2017): Low: score ≤ (M – 1 SD), Moderate: (M – 1 SD) < score < (M + 1 SD), and High: score ≥ (M + 1 SD)

In this study, the distribution obtained was: 76 respondents (19.59%) were in the low category, 256 respondents (65.98%) were in the medium category, and 56 respondents (14.43%) were in the high category. This operationalization allows for a more objective mapping of readiness levels and aligns with the quantitative approach to measuring academic ability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The obtained data were analyzed using frequency distribution analysis to determine the proportion of respondents' readiness in each category. Next, the data were visualized in the form of distribution tables and pie charts to clarify the findings. Frequency distribution analysis was chosen because it presents quantitative data concisely and easily (Neuman, 2014). The analysis steps included: (1) Classifying tryout results into low, medium, and high categories based on scoring criteria established by the organizers. (2) Calculating the number and percentage of respondents in each readiness category. (3) Presenting the analysis results in the form of distribution tables and pie and bar charts as data visualization. (4) Interpreting the results to identify trends in the academic readiness of early childhood teachers.

This method is relevant because it can provide an empirical picture of the actual conditions of teachers, which can then be used as a basis for compiling more targeted academic intervention recommendations (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the academic readiness of the 2025 PPG PAUD tryout participants fell into three main categories. Of the 388 respondents, 76 (19.6%) were in the low category, 256 (66.0%) were in the medium category, and 56 (14.4%) were in the high category. This distribution highlights that the majority of early childhood teachers demonstrated a moderate level of academic readiness, with only a small proportion achieving a high level and nearly one-fifth struggling with low readiness.

Table 1. Distribution of Academic Readiness of PPG PAUD 2025 Tryout Participants

Category of Readiness	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Low	76	19.6
Medium	256	66.0
High	56	14.4
Total	**388**	**100.0**

The distribution of participants' academic readiness does not occur spontaneously but is shaped by various internal and external factors. (1) Previous Educational Background: Participants majoring in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) or related fields were generally better prepared due to familiarity with early childhood pedagogical concepts, whereas those from other majors struggled to grasp PAUD-specific materials. (2) Practical Teaching Experience: Respondents with hands-on experience, such as internships in kindergartens or PAUD institutions, demonstrated higher readiness by effectively linking theory to practice. (3) Access to Learning Resources: Limited access to literature, modules, and digital learning resources posed challenges, particularly for participants from regions with inadequate educational infrastructure. (4) Academic Literacy Skills: Proficiency in reading, writing, and comprehending academic texts was essential, as participants with lower literacy levels tended to struggle with analytical questions and deeper understanding. (5) Learning Motivation and Environmental Support: High motivation, family encouragement, and a supportive social environment contributed positively to academic readiness, aligning with findings by Handayani and Sari (2022) that emphasize the influence of social support on teacher preparedness. (6) Technical Factors in Tryout Questions: The predominance of easy-level items in the tryout instrument led to a clustering of scores in the moderate range, not due to uniform readiness but because the instrument lacked sufficient discriminatory power to distinguish between high- and low-ability participants.

This factor analysis shows that academic readiness is not solely a matter of individual participants, but is also influenced by the educational context, learning environment, and the quality of the assessment instruments used.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of the factor analysis indicate that the academic readiness of PAUD teachers is the result of an interaction between individual factors, the educational environment, and the quality of the evaluation instruments. The finding that the majority of participants fell into the moderate category indicates the need for capacity-building strategies before entering PPG, especially for participants in the lower category.

Consequently, the PPG program needs to emphasize targeted academic guidance, academic literacy training, and enrichment of learning resources. Furthermore, the tryout evaluation instrument needs to be refined to more accurately measure readiness.

Dominance of the Moderate Category in Academic Readiness

The distribution of results shows that the majority of participants fell into the moderate category (66.0%). This indicates that PAUD teachers have sufficient academic foundations, but are not yet optimal enough to be categorized as fully prepared. This finding is similar to the findings of Rumpoko and Diana (2022), who confirmed that most PAUD teachersin Central Java also fell into the moderate readiness cluster, with professional competence being the weakest aspect. This phenomenon indicates a general pattern in Indonesia where PAUD teachersstill need interventions to strengthen their professional competence, both in terms of pedagogy and adaptability in the face of curriculum changes.

The researchers acknowledge that the dominance of the moderate category may also be influenced by other factors, such as learning strategies leading up to the tryout, which tend to be practical (memorization-based) rather than reflective. If PPG can develop case-based and reflection-based learning models, the proportion of the high category could increase significantly.

Academic Literacy and Practical Experience as Key Factors

Participants with low academic literacy and minimal field practice experience tended to fall into the low category (19.6%). Academic literacy, which encompasses the skills of reading, writing, and understanding academic texts, is a determining factor in successfully answering analytical and case-based questions. This finding aligns with research by Nisa et al. (2024), which revealed that early childhood education teachers still face limitations in adapting learning methods for inclusive contexts, particularly due to inadequate academic and literacy skills. This suggests that improving academic literacy is not only important in the context of tryout evaluations but also relevant in everyday learning practices.

Low academic readiness reflects a teacher education system that does not provide adequate academic literacy training from the outset. Psychological factors such as test anxiety also influence outcomes. Further research using a psychometric approach could help understand the relationship between affective factors and academic readiness.

Gaps in Mastery of Educational Technology

Although most participants fell into the moderate category, only 14.4% achieved the high category. One reason for this is the gap in their mastery of educational technology. Research by Budiarti and Shintarahayu (2024) and the TPACK analysis by Koehler & Mishra (2021) found that early childhood education teachers (PAUD) had a good grasp of pedagogy and content, but lacked skills in integrating technology into learning. A similar situation is suspected to have occurred among participants in this tryout, where the evaluation instrument emphasized mastery of basic content rather than technological skills. As a result, most participants were concentrated in the moderate category, while only a few who were able to integrate technology and pedagogy simultaneously achieved the high category.

The limited technological dimension in the evaluation instrument also reinforces the research findings. Achieving the high category would be difficult without an evaluation instrument that explicitly assesses teachers' digital skills. Participants' technological readiness was actually better, but it was not reflected in the instrument, which predominantly focused on theoretical knowledge. Developing a performance assessment-based instrument would be more representative in assessing the academic readiness of early childhood education teachers, particularly regarding technology integration.

The Role of Environmental Support and Learning Resources

The results of this study also show that external factors, such as the availability of learning resources and social support, influence participants' academic readiness. Participants with access to literature, modules, and family or institutional support tend to be more prepared, while limited access causes most to remain in the low category (UNESCO, 2022). Nuraeni, Nuroniah, and Hendriawan (2025), in their study of teachers' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum, indicated that the main obstacles to implementation were a lack of resources and an understanding of the curriculum's philosophy. This is consistent with the findings of this study, which found that environmental support and access to learning resources were significant determinants of the academic readiness of PAUD teachers at UM.

Academic readiness is not merely a product of the individual, but rather a reflection of the educational ecosystem. The PPG policy must not only strengthen the curriculum but also build a learning ecosystem that supports teacher readiness. This distribution may be influenced by socioeconomic factors not directly recorded in the study. Longitudinal research on the relationship between the educational ecosystem and academic readiness will provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Implications for the Evaluation and Development of Try Out Instruments

In addition to individual and environmental factors, the quality of the test instrument also plays a significant role. Based on instrument analysis, the dominance of easy questions results in a concentrated score distribution in the moderate category. This finding reinforces the assertion that evaluation instruments must be designed with a balanced variety of difficulty levels to more accurately map participants' academic readiness (Sudijono, 2018; Retnawati, 2019). Therefore, improving the tryout instrument is an important strategy for more proportionally identifying the readiness of PAUD teachers.

Instrument quality plays a crucial role in determining the distribution of academic readiness. Revising the quality of the questions is not merely a technical matter, but an academic strategy to enhance the professionalism of teachers. Tryout results showing a harmonious moderate category mean that the moderate distribution can also reflect the objective abilities of the majority of participants. The combination of test-based and performance-based assessments will result in a more proportional mapping of academic readiness.

CONCLUSIONS

The academic readiness of PAUD teachers in the 2025 PPG tryout was found to be influenced by a combination of internal factors (such as academic literacy, motivation, and educational background), external factors (including environmental support and access to learning resources), and technical aspects of the evaluation instrument (particularly the level of item difficulty). A predominance of participants within the moderate category was observed, indicating that targeted interventions are required. It is therefore recommended that national policies be directed toward ensuring equitable access to quality learning resources, including digital platforms and professional development modules tailored for PAUD teacher candidates. At the university level, preparatory programs are suggested to be redesigned by incorporating academic literacy reinforcement, question analysis workshops, and structured mentoring prior to PPG participation. Within teacher education programs, greater alignment between theoretical instruction and field practice is advised, alongside the provision of continuous feedback mechanisms and the improvement of evaluation instruments to ensure the accurate measurement of professional competencies. By emphasizing these measures, the professionalism of future PAUD teachers in Indonesia is expected to be strengthened. Furthermore, the findings are positioned to contribute to the broader academic discourse on teacher readiness, while also aligning with global initiatives aimed at reforming teacher education to bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional practice.

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